



Kunsthistorisches  
Institut  
in  
Florenz

Max-Planck-Institut



MAX-PLANCK-GESellschaft

UNIVERSITY of York

# **DRAWING IN/ SCREENING OFF**

## Metaphors of the Veil Beyond Painting

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A workshop by the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz Max-Planck-Institut  
and the History of Art Department of the University of York

**FRIDAY JUNE 13, 2014  
FIRENZE, PALAZZO GRIFONI**

This workshop discusses the potent metaphors of the veil as elaborated upon by modern Italian artists and architects. It will examine Alberti's use of the veil in the conceptualization of perspectival constructions, Pollaiuolo's multi-tiered gauzes, the architectural screens in Neapolitan convents and encompass Maderno's, Corradini's and Monti's *statue velate*.

A collaboration of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz Max-Planck-Institut and the History of Art Department of the University of York (from where all the speakers come), the workshop unfolds as three papers. Its rationale is to offer a way of thinking about the metaphors of the veil that transcend painting, as Helen Hills argues in the final contribution.

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### Program

*Florence, Palazzo Grifoni*

*Friday June 13, 16.00-19:30*

16.00-16.10

#### **Emanuele Lugli and Gerhard Wolf, Opening Remarks**

16.10-16.50 (the last 15 minutes are always for Q&A)

#### **Gabriel Williams, *The 'Veiled Face Trick' and Sculptural Labour in 19th-century Britain***

The 1850s and 1860s saw a surge in the production of statues of veiled women for the British market. These were largely produced by Italian sculptors, chief among them the Milanese expatriate Raffaele Monti (1881-1881). Yet the success of veiled sculptures was matched by sustained hostility, and the 'veiled face trick' crystallised into an art-critical byword for meretricious illusionism, worthless novelty, and everything that British sculpture and its patrons should shun. Attacks on veiled sculptures associated certain kinds of imitation (such as the imitation of inanimate fabric as opposed to living flesh in white stone) with types of labour and trade-based viewing habits. By doing so, critics framed sculptural illusions as acts of artful charlatanism exploiting an uneven market for spectacle. But as this paper outlines, the criticism of veiled sculptures was itself a form of imitative leitmotif put to work to demonstrate professional skill in the same kaleidoscopic market. This paper examines this interplay of veils in text and veils in marble as a telling study in the theoretical construction of the sculptural medium.

16.50-17.30

**Emanuele Lugli, *Lippi's Absorbing Veils***

Scholars take the veils on Filippo Lippi's Madonnas as realistic signs of female modesty. At most they see decorative overtones in them. Yet, their original, complicated arrangements call for conceptual inspection. In this paper, I argue that Lippi's veils assume a sort of catalyst function for an extensive reflection on the nature of the painting medium. Lippi's veils draw you in; their coils, folds and puffs negate the implalpable bidimensionality that is often considered their chief attribute. Anti-Veronica, anti-Alberti, Lippi's veils offer an alternative route, which was also seized by Antonio Pollaiuolo, whose veils open to the architectural. With their elaborate volutes and loose folds, Pollaiuolo's transparent headgears turn his figures into caryatids and reveal the veil as a blurring device which overcomes mediatic differences.

17.30-18.00

**Break**

18.00-18.40

**Helen Hills, *The Veil and the Implication of Architecture***

Art history has examined and conceived the veil, to a remarkable degree, pictorially—indeed, almost overwhelmingly so. For long perceived primarily as drawn across, around, and behind altarpieces, history paintings and portraits, the veil has more recently received attention from art historians investigating the ways in which ambitious early modern painters took issue with, exploited, and developed what Mary Pardo has called "the architectonics of woven cloth". But architecture's engagement with the veil remains neglected. This is not coincidental. Indeed, in what seems to me to be an interesting and revealing veiling, art history's pursuit of the veil—its expressly pictorial pursuit—has served to flatten out or efface the architectural engagement with the veil that the perspectival pictorial requires. Thus art history discursively flattens out architecture and veils it. This paper examines the veil in relation to nuns and convents, architecture and body, and interrogates Alberti's pictorial perspective to identify the work of veiling as at once architectural and corporeal, but above all in art historical discourse as a veiling of the architectural.

18.40-19.30

**Roundtable discussion chaired by Mary Pardo  
followed by Gerhard Wolf's concluding remarks**