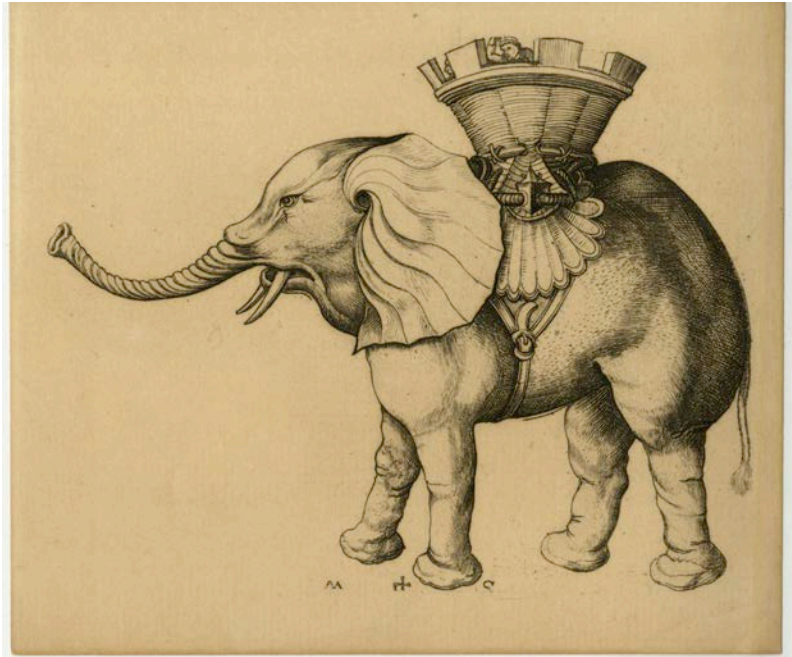


Call for papers: "Animal and Portraiture in the Renaissance"

(17-18 May 2021, Paris & Écouen)



Martin Schongauer, *Elephant*, vers 1483, copper engraving, 12 x 14,2 cm
Paris, musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, Inv. 002.246
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Application deadline: 30 October 2020

"Animal and Portraiture in the Renaissance", 17-18 May 2021, Paris (The Hunting and Nature Museum) and Écouen (National Museum of the Renaissance)

International and multidisciplinary conference organized by Cécile Beuzelin (Lecturer in History of Modern Art, Montpellier 3 University) and Armelle Fémelat (doctor in Art History, CESR Tours), in collaboration with the National Renaissance Museum of Écouen and the Hunting and Nature Museum, Paris.



Bernard Palissy, *Lézard*, third quarter 16th century, glazed terracotta. Écouen, musée national de la Renaissance (EP 518)
© RMN-Grand Palais (musée de la Renaissance, château d'Écouen) / René-Gabriel Ojéda

In his treaty on the dignity of man (*De hominis dignitate*, ca 1486), Pico della Mirandola describes man as an animal without rank, eternally suspended between earth and sky, oscillating between the celestial and the terrestrial, divinity and animality. In accordance with this lack of fixed rank, man also lacks definite form: finding his place is also a question of finding his form; he must model himself as best he can somewhere between the divine and the bestial. This vision of humanity invites us to question the way early modern men and women perceived animals, the place the latter occupied in daily life, and, importantly, the link between animals and portraiture at this time. By considering the use of animals as models and the hierarchical relationship between people and animals during the Renaissance, this conference aims to explore a vital, but largely overlooked aspect of portraiture in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe.

At the heart of this line of inquiry is the humanist conception of the order and hierarchy of living beings and the question of mankind's place within this. Early modern thinkers essentially evaluated their place in the great natural scheme of things with respect to animals. The study of humans and the study of animals went hand in hand, and these intertwined studies were directly related to the development of the art of portraiture.

Individuated images of animals started to appear precisely at the moment when European portraiture entered its greatest period of development. Clearly, in the 15th and 16th centuries, Europeans felt the need to define themselves in relation to animals, even as they sought to distinguish themselves from them and construct an autonomous image of themselves. This seems to be particularly true in the case of artists, as many paintings, sculptures, drawings and literary texts suggest. Self-portraits with animals and self-portraits as animals are particularly interesting in this regard.

The richness of the relationship between animals and portraiture necessitates a multidisciplinary approach, involving art historians, historians, historians of science, scholars of literature, musicologists, sociologists, philosophers, ethologists and veterinarians. By bringing together these different forms of specialisation, we hope to carry out the following objectives:

- Determine the criteria that will make it possible to define the notion of animal portraiture during the Renaissance (anatomical study, degrees of individuation, autonomous portraits, animal imprints).
- Consider how the hierarchical relationship between people and animals, attested by numerous philosophical and literary texts from the 15th and 16th centuries, is reflected in animal portraits and in images associating animals and humans. Certain painted, literary and musical portraits explicitly question this hierarchical relationship, sometimes going so far as to inverse it. Notable examples of this include double portraits where one of the sitters is an animal and texts like Leon Battista Alberti's literary portrait *De Canis*.
- Study the use of animals as models for humans. The quest to understand the animal world in the early modern period involved symbolism, metaphor, the concepts of vice and virtue and advanced physiognomic observation. Heraldry and moralisation, as well as physiognomic theories - in full swing during the Renaissance - undoubtedly shaped the way both animals and people were perceived and depicted. The imitation of animals in,

for example, musical portraits or representations of people dressed up as animals, is also central to this question.

- Further understanding of representations of animals based on imagination rather than observation. A certain number of early-modern depictions of animals may be considered as products of the collective imagination. In the most rigorous encyclopaedic works on animals, observable animals coexist with exotic animals, such as elephants and rhinoceroses, that were known about but not seen by the vast majority of Europeans, as well as fantastic creatures, such as unicorns or hydras, that, although inexistent, were similarly "familiar to the minds" of men at the time. An eloquent example of the role of imagination in the depiction of animals is provided by Albrecht Dürer's famous engraving of a rhinoceros which was based almost entirely on written descriptions.

Proposals may address, but are not limited to the following areas of inquiry:

- The link between scientific study and individual portraits
- Animal imprints and portraits
- Animals as models: from medieval examples to physiognomic theories
- Emblematic animals and portraits
- Resemblance and dissemblance: portraits of people with animals
- Self-portrait as animals : visual arts, literature, music...
- Animal and funeral portraits: mortuary effigies, epitaphs, spoils, trophies, taxidermy
- Exotic animals and fantastic creatures: portraits of imaginary animals

Scientific committee

Cécile Beuzelin (University of Montpellier 3)
Sarah Cockram (University of Edinburgh)
Armelle Fémelat (CESR, University of Tours)
Aurélie Gerbier (National Renaissance Museum)
Christine Germain-Donnat (Museum of Hunting and Nature)
Matteo Gianceselli (National Renaissance Museum)

Presentation of the event

The conference "Animal and Portraiture in the Renaissance" will be international and multidisciplinary. It will open new perspectives by exploring a subject at the cross-section of the humanities and life science. It will give rise to a scientific publication. Speakers will be invited to submit a text of 35,000 characters, in French or English.

The time allotted to each speaker will be precisely 30 minutes. Talks can be given in French or in English.

Application procedures

Proposals should address one or more of the lines of inquiry described above.

A synopsis of approximately 4,500 characters or 700 words, in French or English, accompanied by a curriculum vitae, should be sent to animaletportraitarenaissance@gmail.com

The deadline for application is 30 October 2020.

All proposals will be considered by the scientific committee and responses sent by email in December 2020.

