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Session I. Sainly Associations, Holy Space, and Imaginary Realms in Renaissance Art

This session provides new perspectives on works of art produced in Florence, Flanders, and Germany in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The first paper treats two trecento paintings made for the Bigallo and the Misericordia, prominent Florentine confraternities. A reexamination of the historical circumstances and inventory records reconsiders issues of ownership, which ultimately bears on the identity of the depicted saints. The second presentation continues the religious theme, discussing the altarpiece Hugo van der Goes created for the Trinity Hospital in Edinburgh in 1479. The paper analyzes how, in lieu of perspective, the artist used inconsistencies in composition, structure, and lighting to express the sacred, the invisible, and the symbolic. Spatial and religious issues are also considered by the third panelist, who discusses the contemporaneous engravings produced by Martin Schongauer. Challenging medieval notions of flatness and decoration, the artist's masterful play of line and blank areas of space was meant to dazzle the beholder, while prompting their contemplation of imaginary realms.

Chair: Robin O'Bryan, University of Virginia
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Bio: Robin O'Bryan (PhD, University of Virginia) is an art historian specializing in the art of the Italian Renaissance, with a particular interest in issues related to the subculture, parody, and especially dwarfs. Her published articles have appeared in journals such as *The Art Bulletin*, *Source*, *The Medal*, *Preternature*, and the *SECAC Review*, and in anthologies including *The Routledge Companion to Art and Disability*, and a volume on *Games and Game Playing in Early Modern Art and Literature* which she edited for Amsterdam University Press (2019). She is currently serving as primary editor for a collection of essays on *Giants and Dwarfs in European Art and Culture, ca. 1350–1750: Real, Imagined*,

Metaphorical (forthcoming, Amsterdam University Press) and has recently completed an expansive study on dwarfs in Italian Renaissance art and culture.

Speakers:

Speaker 1. William R. Levin, Professor Emeritus of Art History, Centre College

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Title: A Tale of Two Confraternities, Two Saints, and Two Paintings

Abstract: The Misericordia and the Bigallo were leading philanthropic foundations in late-medieval and Renaissance-era Florence, with offices located several blocks from one another. Members of the Misericordia fulfilled their charitable calling on behalf of needy compatriots in diverse ways, while their Bigallo counterparts focused on maintaining hospitals for the ill and hospices for pilgrims and wayfarers. Burdened by poor administration, the Bigallo was united to and moved in with the thriving, well-managed Misericordia in 1425. The two were again separated administratively in 1489 but continued to share the same headquarters until about 1525, when the Misericordia transferred elsewhere, leaving its original offices to the Bigallo. While the latter organization honored as its creator and patron Saint Peter Martyr, frequently portrayed as such in artworks for the Bigallo, he was often acclaimed as founder of the Misericordia, too. Surprisingly, the famous *Bigallo Triptych* of 1333, owned by that company, noticeably features not Peter but Saint Francis of Assisi, who inspired the Misericordia in its charitable endeavors. Another well-known painting from about 1360 illustrating Peter Martyr establishing the Bigallo, doubtless commissioned by that company, also conspicuously includes Saint Francis. The task here is to untangle this web of confraternal relationships and saintly allegiances.

Bio: William Levin, a specialist in Italian late-medieval and Renaissance art, is professor emeritus at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, where from 1986 to 2010, following brief periods of employment elsewhere, he taught the entire chronology of Western art history as the lone art historian. He earned his bachelor's degree in history at Northwestern University, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1970, and master's and doctoral degrees in the history of art at the University of Michigan in 1973 and 1983, respectively. Now in retirement, Dr. Levin continues to lecture, research, and publish principally on expressions of the concept of charity in art, history, and literature, and on the artistic patrimony of philanthropic organizations in late-medieval and Renaissance Italy, with particular emphasis on the Misericordia Company of Florence. He regards images of neighborly love as important manifestations of the profound societal changes sweeping Western Europe during his period of specialization.

Speaker 2: Giovanna Guidicini, Senior Lecturer in History of Architecture and Urban Studies, The Glasgow School of Art

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Title: A sacred space within a sacred space: Hugo Van der Goes' Trinity Altarpiece in the Trinity College Kirk, Edinburgh

Abstract: The painted ecclesiastical spaces appearing in Hugo van der Goes' Trinity Altarpiece (1478–79), have been understood to loosely represent what is known of this triptych's setting - the now largely lost Trinity College Kirk, built in Edinburgh from 1460 for Queen Dowager Mary of Guelders. This paper will consider the inconsistencies in composition, structure, and lighting as a vehicle for expressing the sacred rather than earthly character of the painted space, in the context of the experimentations with perspective undertaken by van der Goes and other Netherlandish painters of the time. The interactive, tactile, three-dimensional character of triptychs – to be displayed opened or closed, ritually revealed, and ceremonially translated – will be investigated to establish the relationship of the two painted spaces appearing on the inner and outer doors of the Trinity Altarpiece with each other, and with their physical

surroundings. This paper also discusses whether, inspired by van der Goes' investigations of representation of sacred spaces on a movable and moving object, a modern digital reconstruction of the lost spaces of the Trinity Kirk, could represent an effective vehicle for making the invisible, the holy, and the symbolic present in the visitor's bodily experience.

Bio: Giovanna Guidicini is a senior lecturer in the history of architecture and urban studies at the Glasgow School of Art; she is a trained architect and got her PhD in the history of architecture at the University of Edinburgh in 2009. Dr. Guidicini's research explored the urban spaces of performance in Early Modern Scotland, but her most recent work considers how space was understood and represented in late fifteenth century Scotland, through various media such as spectacle, paintings, maps, and writings. She is particularly interested in the Hugo van der Hoes' Trinity Altarpiece, and on modern representations of space through the digital medium.

Speaker 3: Susan Maxwell, Professor, University of Wisconsin—Oshkosh, maxwells@uwosh.edu

Title: The Power of Emptiness in the Engravings of Martin Schongauer

Abstract: Martin Schongauer revolutionized the art of engraving in the late fifteenth century. Unlike his predecessors whose understanding of the printed medium were closely tied to its roots in metalworking, Schongauer recognized that, in a medium of black and white where form and modeling are created by line alone, the white void of the paper proves a powerful tool in creating atmosphere and depth. Delicate, barely visible lines that disappear into the void create atmospheric perspective and introduce the concept of time, allowing us to imagine a journey into the distant landscape. I will argue that this understanding of the power of blank space is not necessarily a given. Where earlier printmakers were steeped in medieval traditions of flatness and decoration, Schongauer understood how to harness not only the engraved line, but also the blank areas, or void spaces, to convey a sense of depth and meaning that ultimately confronted the viewer with the divine. Where Aby Warburg famously placed "God in the details" of Northern fifteenth-century paintings, viewers of Schongauer's religious engravings would find God in the empty spaces.

Bio: Susan Maxwell is Professor of Art History in the Department of Art the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, specializing in Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque art history with an interest in the history of prints, drawings, and theories of collecting and display. In addition to a 2011 monograph, *The Court Art of Friedrich Sustris: Patronage in Late Renaissance Bavaria*, more recent publications include "Graphic Diplomacy: Drawings and Prints in the Collections of the Late Renaissance Court of Wittelsbach Bavaria" (2023), "Maximilian I of Bavaria" in *Bellum et Artes* (2021), "Artful Negotiator: Peter Paul Rubens' Intervention in the Cause of Catholic Bavaria" (2019), and "Lazy Foreigners and Indignant Locals" (2017). She has been a DAAD research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science and the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, and an Honorary Fellow at the Historisches Kolleg Munich.