

## New College Conference, Sarasota, Florida March 3-5, 2022

**Session Title:** Artistic Transitions: Visual Considerations and Transformations  
Sponsored by the Associations for Textual Scholarship in Art History (ATSAH)

**Session Abstract:** The focus of this session is to consider physical and metaphysical transitions in sixteenth-century art. Papers explore changes or modifications about interpretation. Observations about new artistic, cultural, political, and religious circumstances may have caused the artistic transformation

**Organizer:** Liana De Girolami Cheney, UMASS Lowell (retired), President of ATSAH  
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**1. Speaker:** Tina Waldeier Bizzarro, Villanova University & Rosemont College  
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**Title:** *Lacunae tempore*: Time Interrupted in Southern Italy's Wayside Shrines

**Abstract:** Roadside shrines of saints and other members of the heavenly Christian community, known in Italian as *edicole*, punctuate the streets and alleyways of Sicily's and the *mezzogiorno*'s lush, sun-worn towns, villages, and mountaintop hamlets. Anchored and vigilant in their often glass-sheltered niches just above the pedestrian's eye-level, these effigies are daily graced with fresh flowers and ex-votos and are nocturnally illuminated by votive candles. Though their styles are various—some bordering on kitschy--these painted stone, wooden, or plaster simulacra all stand sentinel in their hallowed street-side vestibules, guarding and protecting their neighborhood communities. These wayside spaces are quasi-domestic, interiorized, and embellished with homespun offerings, inviting the daily passer-by to slip into another sheltered temporal realm for a minute or two, to take a prayer card from within the interstices of its protective grill, to pause for a prayerful interlude amidst the noise of the day—creating layered temporalities from the early modern through today.

From the early modern period through today, many wayside shrines become the rallying point for serenading and prayer during saints' celebrations or *feste*. As well, during *feste*, effigies descend from their homes to become the *dramatis personae* of village processions and sacred drama. Specially dressed and accoutered for these events--much like their neighbors within local churches--the statues "awaken" to participate in community feasts. This paper will examine some of Sicily's and southern Italy's roadside shrines as they project, literally, from home to community, linking temporal and spiritual relationships.

**Short Bio:** Tina Waldeier Bizzarro, PhD, is Professor of History of Art and Chair of the Department of History of Art at Rosemont College in Pennsylvania. She teaches at Villanova University in the Irish Studies Program and in the Studio Art Department as an Iconographer. She is a medievalist by training, having earned her PhD at Bryn Mawr College researching attitudes toward the medieval from the twelfth century through the nineteenth.

She has done much scholarly research and teaching in Sicily. She began in 1998, when she devised and ran a summer studies program there for 6 years, and continued with a subsequent Fulbright Fellowship (2006) to study Sicilian visual culture. She has traveled and studied the island extensively and is preparing a book on the roadside shrines or "*edicole*" of Sicily and how they formed part of the Sicilian celebration of *feste* or saints' holidays.

Her other publications are on the history of the reception of medieval architecture throughout Western Europe (*Romanesque Architectural Criticism: A Prehistory*, Cambridge University Press, 1992) and the revival of the Romanesque in the nineteenth century ("The Scattered Limbs of the Giant: Recollecting

Medieval Architectural Revivals,” in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, Blackwell, 2020).

**2. Speaker:** Brian D. Steele, Texas Tech University (retired)  
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**Title:** Interpreting Giovanni Bellini’s *Madonna of the Meadow* (c. 1505) as Meditation on the Imitation of Christ.

**Abstract:** I contend that the Italian translation of Thomas à Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ* (1488) establishes a meditational approach by which one can most effectively interpret Giovanni Bellini’s *Madonna of the Meadow* in accordance with Venetian devotional currents c. 1500. At the foreground, Bellini presents the infant Christ as object of viewers’ initial contemplation, just as in the *Imitation of Christ*, standing in Christ constitutes life’s attainable goal. The *Madonna*, evoking multiple iconographic types, embodies the treatise’s central virtue, humility or meekness, and its desired spiritual mood of withdrawal from worldly action and inward contemplation of Christ. Within the landscape, Bellini provides details presented in non-linear distribution which recall a collection of ideas gleaned from hymns, the Mass ceremony, biblical readings, and the *Imitation of Christ*. This approach parallels the *Imitation of Christ*’s presentational structure in the manner of a *rapiaria*, or compendium of spiritual sayings, by which readers encounter similar themes repeatedly for renewed reflection as the means to spiritual growth. Both image and text present temporal issues that prompt varying reflections on life’s vicissitudes and moral lessons they impart while retaining a distant view of the gleaming New Jerusalem, the ultimate goal that believers hope to attain in the afterlife. Collating extracts from the *Imitation of Christ* with visual excursions prompted by Bellini’s imagery demonstrates how well the visual and textual approaches correlate: affinities between image and text in theme, structure, and spirituality imply that the artist was familiar with the devotional approach that the *Imitation of Christ* promoted.

**Short Bio:** Brian D. Steele, Ph.D. University of Iowa, with specialization in Venetian Painting of the Renaissance, is Associate Professor of Art History (retired) in the School of Art at Texas Tech University. His research focuses on 16<sup>th</sup>-century Venice: investigation of works by Giovanni Bellini, Titian, and Paolo Veronese engages issues of iconography, site, function, and viewer reception. He has presented papers at meetings of the College Art Association, Renaissance Society of America, Sixteenth Century Studies Conference, and South-Central Renaissance Conference, and has authored essays in such venues as *Studies in Iconography*, the *Sixteenth Century Journal*, and *Source: Notes in the History of Art*. Recent publications include “*Clarissa Strozzi*: Titian’s Portrait of the Bride as Young Girl,” in *The Early Modern Child in Art and History* (2015); “The Politics of Representation: Paolo Veronese, Benedetto da Mantova, the *Wedding at Cana* for S. Giorgio Maggiore,” *Iconocrazia* 10 (2016); “Force Constrained: Hercules in Sixteenth-Century Venice,” *Iconocrazia* 13 (2018); and “Open Secrets: Allah’s Presence in Mantegna’s *S. Zeno Altarpiece*,” *Iconocrazia* 17, *Iconocratic Studies in Memory of Sarah Lippert, I* (2020).

**4. Speaker:** Debra Murphy, University of North Florida  
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**Title:** Revisiting *The Holy Family with the Young St. John the Baptist*

**Abstract:** In 2011, the first scholarly examination of the *Holy Family with St John the Baptist* attributed to Giorgio Vasari (1511- 1574), was undertaken during the year of the many celebrations of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary this great artist, architect, courtier and writer.

The painting came into the Cummer Museum in Jacksonville, Florida in 1989. It was purchased from Sotheby’s as part of the sale of works from the estate of Walter P. Chrysler, who died without a finalized will. The panel was acquired in a state of disrepair and without a provenance. It was expertly restored and was attributed based on stylistic analyses to the hand or studio of Vasari dating to the 1540s. X-rays showed a number of revisions. A description of the X ray findings were described in a report written

to former director Robert Schlageter 2 July 1990 from Fodera Fine Art Conservation. Inquiries to Fodera Fine Art Conservation were not returned. At the time of the original article, the museum did not have or was unable to locate images of these X-rays.

Returning to this subject a decade later, renewed efforts to locate the x-rays and identify a mysterious seal on the back of the painting, may shed additional light on this beautiful work.

**Short Bio:** Debra Murphy, PhD, served as the inaugural chair of the Department of Art and Design at the University of North Florida from 2004 and 2019. She is currently Professor of Art History at UNF. Her scholarly pursuits are divided between sixteenth century Italian studies and her publications on the art, patronage and collections of northeast Florida. Her article "Context and Meaning: An Investigation of *The Holy Family with the Young St John the Baptist*, Attributed to Giorgio Vasari in the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens, Jacksonville, Florida," was published in *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, and forms the foundation for her presentation. She served as the president of SECAC from 2008-2011 and was recognized for excellence in teaching and exemplary achievement from that organization. She founded the UNF annual program to Italy and was honored with an endowed scholarship for study abroad in her name. She was named a "Cultural Icon" by the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville for her contributions to the arts in the community.

**4. Speaker:** Liana De Girolami Cheney, UMASS Lowell (retired),  
President of ATSAH  
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**Title:** Giorgio Vasari's *Tomb of Michelangelo: A Spiritual Celebration*

**Abstract:** Under the guidance of Vincenzo Borghini, administrator of the Accademia del Disegno, and Giorgio Vasari's artistic director of the Academy, an elaborate funeral ceremony took place on July 14, 1564 in the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence to honor the 'divine' Michelangelo, who had died on February 18, 1564 in Rome. Five months after Michelangelo's burial in the Church of SS. Apostoli in Rome, his body was secretly retrieved and brought to Florence for solemn Florentine funeral memorial. The funerary monument was honored and paid tribute to Michelangelo's greatness in the Fine Arts (architecture, painting and sculpture). The tomb was completed in 1578. An architectural extravaganza was invented by the humanist Vincenzo Borghini and carried on by Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) and his Florentine assistants. The architectural composition reveals Vasari's artistic appropriations Florentine Quattrocento type of humanistic tomb for *uomini famosi* but with the flare of Mannerist conceits. Vasari's artistic endeavor emphasized the reverence for deceased artist as an *uomo famoso* (famous man) as well as an *anima mundi* (the world soul). This type of celebratory tomb will influence the composition of honorific tombs in the following centuries, in particular, Galileo Galilei's Tomb in Santa Croce, Florence.

**Short bio:** Liana De Girolami Cheney, PhD, Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award, is President of the Association for Textual Scholarship in Art History, Visiting Researcher in Art History at the University of Aldo Moro Bari, Italy, and SIALE, University of Coruña, Spain. She is emerita Professor of Art History at UMASS Lowell, USA. Prof. Cheney is a Renaissance and Mannerism scholar, author, and coauthor of numerous books and articles, notably, *Giorgio Vasari's Teachers: Sacred and Profane Art*; *Giorgio Vasari's Prefaces: Art and Theory*; *Giorgio Vasari's Artistic Manifestations*; *Giuseppe Arcimboldo: Magical Paintings*; *Agnolo Bronzino: The Florentine Muse*; *Lavinia Fontana's Mythological Paintings*. Her article on "Leonardo da Vinci's *Annunciation: The Holy Spirit*," in *Artibus et Historiae* (2011), 1-16, received an Award for Excellence in Scholarly Research and Publication from SECAC in 2013. She received an Award for Excellence in Scholarly Research and Publication from SECAC on her publication on "Leonardo da Vinci's *Annunciation: The Holy Spirit*," in *Artibus et Historiae* (2011), 1-16. Her forthcoming *Giorgio Vasari's Sala degli Elementi*.

