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CAA Chicago 2020 - Affiliated Society: Association for Textual Scholarship for Art History (ATSAH)

Traditional Session 90 Minutes

Pre-Raphaelite Art, Visual and Material British Culture

Request for Thursday 10:30 Am- to 12:00 Pm or Friday/Saturday 2:00-3:30 PM

Session Title: Nature in Art: Horticulture of Beauty, Love, and Poetry

Abstract General Session:

The session on Horticulture of Beauty, Love, and Poetry presents quests about the interpretation of Nature in Art. Physical and metaphysical representations of landscapes, plants, flowers, gardens explore aesthetic and creative expressions as well as conveying alchemical, philosophical, and symbolic meanings. Since the topic is so vast in art, the focus will be in this visualization created by painters and poets during the Romantic, Pre-Raphaelite, and Symbolist movements.

Organizer Liana De Girolami Cheney, President of ATSAH
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College Art Association Membership: 391

Chair: Maureen Pelta, Moore College
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College of Art Association Membership 9760

Presenter 1 Karen Hillson, New Hampshire Institute of Art

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College Art Association Membership: 6541

Title: *Ut pictura poesis: The Role of Delacroix's Landscapes in the Palais-Bourbon*

Abstract: Even before Delacroix emerged as the rising star of the Romantic school, artists had claimed social equality with poets, and had severed any vestigial connections to artisans. Immersed in the culture of the Romantic salons, and inspired by the writings of Madame de Staël, the *Barbus* poet Charles Nodier, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, and others, Delacroix imagined himself in an Orpheus-like role, as a leader and creator of civilization. He believed that the artist, like the poet, possessed spiritual knowledge that enabled him to solve the mysteries of nature; it was the artist's task to restore harmony between the physical world and the world of the mind. Delacroix's landscapes in the *Orpheus* hemicycle and pendentives of the Palais-Bourbon are not merely backgrounds for the figures, but serve to illuminate the artist-poet's role as interpreter of nature.

Short Bio: Karen Hillson specializes in the painting and prints of nineteenth-century France. She received a B.A. in art history from Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, and a Ph.D. in art history from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Dr. Hillson has taught at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, the University of Arizona, Tucson, Rivier University in Nashua, New Hampshire, and St. Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire. She currently serves as Chair of Art History at the New Hampshire Institute of Art, where she has collaborated with faculty to create a more diverse and inclusive curriculum. Dr. Hillson has presented on art history pedagogy at the National Art Education Association Convention, the Teaching Innovation and Creativity Conference, and the Higher Education Assessment Conference.

Presenter 2. Jennifer Bates Ehlert, Salve Regina University

jenniferehlert17@gmail.com

College Art Association Membership: 134882

Title: Flower-Kings: Images of Renewal and Death in John William Waterhouse's Male Figures

Abstract: John William Waterhouse often sets his paintings in forests, deep with foliage, flowers, and lush vegetation to portray a dream-like world that encourages fantasy and reflection. Waterhouse's artwork contains a reverence for things unseen. The seasons, with their cycles of death and renewal, weave a thread throughout his canon. This is evident in his works *The Awakening of Adonis*, *Hylas and the Nymphs*, and *Echo and Narcissus*, three Flower-Kings who, like early spring blossoms, have a short-lived beauty that is as lovely as it is tragic.

The term "Flower-King" is directly related to Germaine Greer's work in *Beautiful Boy*, where she calls Narcissus a "spring-flower hero" (197) and Adonis "the ultimate flower-hero" (198). This essay carries that theme to Waterhouse's paintings, who positioned these doomed males surrounded by nymphs and goddesses, and flowers, enhancing their relationship to flowers and nature. These seemingly innocent paintings

tell the same story of young women enjoying the short-lived pleasure of these Flower-Kings; picking them at the height of their beauty, in verdant landscapes that remind us of the renewal of life. In Waterhouse's lush landscapes young men are as fragile as spring blossoms and wither under the female gaze of desire. The Flower-Kings never last, but they do return.

Short Bio: **Jennifer Bates Ehlert**, a PhD student in Salve Regina University in the Humanities program, received her MLA in 2017 from Harvard University Extension School. Her master's thesis *New Sculpture, Visual Culture, and the Role of the Female Gaze in John William Waterhouse's Paintings* won the Crite Memorial Prize for outstanding thesis. Publications include chapters in *Radiance and Symbolism in Modern Stained Glass: European and American Innovations and Aesthetic Interrelations in Material Culture* and articles for the *Pre-Raphaelite Society Review*, *Athanor* and *Iconocrazia*.

Presenter 3: Liana De Girolami Cheney, Università di Bari, Italy

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College Art Association Membership: 391

Title: Edward Burne-Jones: The Rose a Mythical Flower of Love and Death

Abstract: Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) like his fellows Pre-Raphaelite painters was fascinated with natural history. His quest for botanical accuracy is visualized in *Green Summer* (1864), *Love among the Ruins* (1870), *Beguiling of Merlin* (1874), and *The Legend of the Briar Rose*. (1890). Burne-Jones's depiction of nature combines the natural or physical representation of recent scientific discoveries with metaphysical associations of philosophical and poetical conceits about love. For Burne-Jones, sweet briar roses became a complex symbol with idiosyncratic meanings. The rose is symbol of balance. The beautiful color of the flower contrasts with the foliage's unique scent, a poetical allusion of spring as well as love. But the thorny branches of the rose are an ancient symbol for pain and pleasure. Burne-Jones played with this motif in his painting in order to capture the perplexity of love experienced in his life for his model Maria Cassavetti Zambaco (1843-1914), a beautiful Greek sculptress. However, he was also challenging the artistic superiority of painting over photography at that time.

Short Bio: Liana De Girolami Cheney, PhD, Professor of Art History (emerita) UMASS Lowell, is presently an Investigadora de Historia de Arte, SIELAE, Universidad de Coruña, Spain and the University of Aldo Moro in Bari, Italy. She is the recipient to the Albert Nelson Marquis Life Achievement Award. From the University of Miami, Florida, she received a BS in Psychology, a BA in Philosophy and MA in History of Art and Aesthetics. Her Ph.D. in Italian Mannerism and Baroque is from Boston University, MA. Dr. Cheney is an author and coauthor of numerous articles and books, including: *Botticelli's Neoplatonism in his Mythological Paintings*; *Giorgio Vasari's Teachers: Sacred and Profane Love*; *Giuseppe Arcimboldo: The Magic Paintings*; *Agnolo Bronzino: The Florentine Muse*; and *Edward Burne-Jones's Mythical Paintings*.

Presenter 4: Cassandra M. Sciortino, University of California, Santa Barbara
cassandra.margarita@gmail.com
College Art Association Membership: 64082

Title: Flowers without borders: *La Festa dell'arte e dei fiori* in fin de siècle Florence

Abstract: This paper considers how Florence, in the decades following its loss as the new nation's capital, came to refashion itself as a new, cosmopolitan capital of European culture. One important way the city achieved this was by drawing on the potent image of a garden of flowers, which was well established in its cultural patrimony. In 1896, the *Società di Belle Arti* and the *Società Toscana di Orticultura* organized a major international exhibition that made the connection between the city's floral patrimony, particularly as it related to the frenzied revival of Botticelli, and actual flowers: the *Festa dell'arte e dei Fiori*. Held from December 1896 to May 1897, the exhibition's sheer size and scale in a major area in the city astonished many Florentines. Attracting more than one hundred thousand visitors, it stretched from the Via dei Vecchietta and Teatina to the Piazza of San Gaetano, and a section of the Via del Campidoglio. The exhibition showed the work of 400 artists and 683 works of art. It featured symbolist-aesthetic painting, including works by Edward Burne-Jones, George F. Watts, and Lawrence Alma-Tadema, along with major Italian symbolist painters such as, Aristide Sartorio and Telemaco Signorini, and dozens of other Florentine and Italian painters. German symbolist painters, such as Arnold Böcklin, and French, and Belgium artists were also represented. The sculptor Attilio Formilli rendered a polychrome poster of "Flora" in homage to Botticelli's *Primavera* to promote the exhibit. The importance of the exhibition rested in its intention to overcome regional and national boundaries, which had been less effectively attempted in Rome. This paper focuses on how the image of a garden and flowers, as it crossed with art, served to facilitate a transnational cultural agenda and expression of cosmopolitan identity in Florence at the end of the nineteenth-century so contributing to the vitality of internationalism as a motivating force in modernism.

Short Bio: Cassandra Sciortino is an art historian with a BA in art history from the University of California, Berkeley, her M.A. in art history from the University of California, Santa Barbara where is completing her dissertation for her PhD in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture. She has published on British art and Dante, French symbolist art, art as cultural diplomacy, and reviewed for the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. She was a two-year Kress Research Fellow at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence. She is a scientific organizer with Euroacademia in Vienna where she has hosted panels on art and diplomacy. She recently was a contributing author for the exhibition, *Truth & Beauty: The Pre-Raphaelites and the Old Masters*, ed. Melissa Buron (exh. cat. Legion of Honor, San Francisco 30 June–30 September 2018).

Discussant: Sarah Lippert, **University of Michigan-Flint**

Short Bio Associate Professor of Art History and Director of the Visual Arts Program at

the University of Michigan-Flint. She also serves in the Master of Arts in Arts Administration program. Lippert is a Modernist scholar of late eighteenth- through late nineteenth-century French and British art. She holds a PhD in Art History from The Pennsylvania State University and has been the recipient of a Samuel H. Kress Travel Fellowship in the History of Art, as well as a fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Her recent article “Salomé to Medusa by Way of Narcissus” appeared in *Artibus et Historiae*, while “Jean-Léon Gérôme and Polychrome Sculpture” appeared in *Dix-Neuf* in 2014. Additionally, her book *The Paragone in Nineteenth-Century Art* is being released with Ashgate. Dr. Lippert is the Director of the Society for Paragone Studies and serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the new journal *Paragone: Past and Present*.