Illustrating Love: From Myth to Manual
March 22nd-23rd, 2019
Georgia Museum of Art

8:30-9:15AM Coffee

9:15-9:30AM Welcome

9:30-10:45AM The Provocative Erotic

Mandy Richter, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Art history
“Erotic Nudes? Towards a Contouring of ‘Stimulating Images’ in Renaissance Italy”

Despite the tendency of several scholars to apply anachronistic notions of “eroticism” to the study of Renaissance art, it is well established that certain images of nudes were indeed created in order to stimulate the fantasy of the beholder. In the first half of the sixteenth century, several works of art already enjoyed a level of infamy due to their erotic or even sexual content, which was most often disguised, occasionally explicit, and in rare cases indecently offensive. This paper will attest to the diverse categories of works of art identifiable across media (paintings, cassoni and spalliere, drawings, prints, maioliche etc.) in order to expose the multifaceted nature of the decorum of the nude. That is why, for example, representations of nudes in prints tend to explore the outermost boundaries of decency, as shown by the series I Modi by Marcantonio Raimondi and Giulio Romano. By means of sequential case studies, my paper will categorize distinct notions of “erotic”, “sensual” or “sexual” images of nudes operative in early sixteenth-century Italy and provide historically accurate alternate terminology than has previously been used in art-historical studies.

Mara McNiff, University of Arizona, Art history
“Enea Vico’s Loves: A Study in One Antiquarian’s Affair with Early Modern Erotica”

Enea Vico da Parma (1523-1567), renowned engraver and antiquarian under the patronage of the Medici in Florence, is not the name one generally thinks when discussing Renaissance erotica. Giulio Romano, Marcantonio Raimondi, and even Giacomo Caraglio have become household names for the erotic prints of the mid-sixteenth century. This omission of Vico from the canon, however, discounts his studied addition to true erotica. The prints engraved by Enea Vico, celebrated for their skill and careful study, embody his narrative as a celebrated classicist in Renaissance Italy. Sometime after 1539, during the infancy of his training, Vico’s prints show a marked
contrast from his later career of portraits engraving and studies of antique artifacts, turning his attention to a more libidinous enterprise. Vico chose two scenes; *The Loves of Mars and Venus* after Giovanni Battista Scultori (1503-1575) and *Venus and Mars with Vulcan at his Forge* after Parmigianino (1503-1540), copied together sometime around 1543.

Vico’s engraving of *The Loves of Mars and Venus* is inspired by Scultori in 1539 with one blatant addition: a narrative poem in the lower register. This print stands out, from both earlier works like those of Caraglio, or the erotic *Modi* of Romano and Raimondi. What Vico’s print does offer is a true return to the erotica of Ancient Rome, to the poems of Ovid, and paintings of Pompei. *The Loves of Mars and Venus*, depicting the adulterous affair between gods at the moment of discovery by Apollo, is one of the latest in this twenty-year tradition (1525-1545) of Renaissance erotic art. Vico’s work as an antiquarian is shown by a strict adherence to classical narrative and palatable motifs, a stark contrast to the more pornographic prints that inspired the tradition decades earlier.

10:45-11:15AM Coffee Break

11:15-12:45PM Literary Reflections

Jungyoon Yang, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Art history

“*Amsterdam Mercantile Adaptation for Conspicuous Epithalamic Illustrations*”

Amsterdam patrons added extra zest to their epithalamia both through the verses of a popular poet and an accompanying image, the crucial aim of which was to present instructive ideas about marriage. An example of this trend can be found in the nuptial publications for the wedding of Emanuel Colijn de Thovion and Catharina Cloppenburg of 1622. One contains a print titled “Ons Brand, Aan Bandt” (Our fire, tamed) that explains the image while teaching the newly married couple about “the law of marriage (Echtens Wet)”. The image is no longer a purely decorative element accompanying congratulatory wishes, but encapsulates instructive ideas about marriage by broadening the scope to include the classical concept of *ut pictura poesis*. Compared to other early seventeenth-century epithalamic illustrations, the Colijn de Thovion and Cloppenburg image shows its sophistication by elaborating on the mythological story of Venus and Cupid, visualising the social convention of marriage through adopting the iconography of the matrimonial yoke.

In my paper, the private background and social climates of the birth of this imagery will be investigated: the identity of the artist who executed both the epithalamic verses and the imagery, the taste of the patron and the collusion of the desire among other prominent Amsterdam merchants who wanted to adorn their epithalamia with
illustrated imagery. It is certainly a salient feature of the Amsterdam mercantile adaptation of the literary tradition of epithalamia that it signalled an embrace of conspicuous consumption, which is Veblen’s famous classical terminology of economic ethics. By questioning why the radical enhancement of presenting the most attractive style of wedding booklets in the early seventeenth century, I will argue how illustrated epithalamia could be an innovative medium for building the cultural identity of the liberal patrons, as well as a vehicle for escalating ostentation and trend-chasing in order to stage a high society wedding.

Morgan Macey, University of South Florida, Humanities
“Adaptations of Ovid’s Metamorphoses in Sixteenth Century France: Physical and Moral Recontextualization in the Tapestry of Narcissus at the Fountain”

As a result of Ovid’s prominence in Northern Europe from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries, French adaptations of and commentaries on the Metamorphoses from this period abound. Although scholarship on the moralization of Ovid often privileges manuscripts, my research privileges tapestry. Specifically, I address the physical and moral recontextualization of the Narcissus myth in the French tapestry of Narcissus at the Fountain (c.1500). I argue that the lavish clothing, lush garden, ornate fountain, and solemn reflection are both decorative and didactic; the tapestry displays the patron’s status and engages the viewer’s sensorium, while simultaneously alluding to the dangers of profane, or unsubstantial, love and challenging the reliability of the senses. Firstly, I explicate the social and ornamental functions of the tapestry by demonstrating how the designer modernizes and localizes Ovid’s account of Narcissus. Secondly, I explicate the didactic function of the tapestry by demonstrating how courtly poetry, such as the Roman de la Rose (c.1230-1245), and ethical commentaries, such as the Ovide Moralisé (c. 1317-1328), allegorize the Greco-Roman myth. I emphasize that the tapestry’s departure from Ovid’s account is not the result of an ignorance or dismissiveness of the Metamorphoses on the part of the patron or designer, but instead a familiarity with, and admiration for, French adaptations of and commentaries on the Narcissus myth.

Delphine Calle, Ghent University, French Literature
"From Marriage Chest to Tomb”

Renaissance Florentine marriage chests incarnate the tensions that haunt early modern love and marriage conceptions. Combining a socio-economical function and symbols of affective relations, they act on the intersection of the public and the private. They reflect the conflict between arranged marriage and passionate love as shown on the mythological images on the chests.

Gradually early modernity begins to value relations based on mutual sympathy rather than on interest. In early seventeenth-century France, clergymen such as
François de Sales opposed to arranged marriage preferring heaven-made bonds. These shifts influence visual arts and literature. In his Spectacles d’horreur (1630), Jean-Pierre Camus connects both: relating gory tales in the most imagery language, the writer-bishop aims for moral awareness.

In my paper I will question love and marriage in Le Cœur mangé (the eaten heart). Camus adapts a medieval story, in which a husband takes revenge on his adulterous woman by making her eat her lover’s heart. This courtly tradition decries the cruelty of jealousy, while allowing adultery inspired by true, courtly love. In Camus’ adaption, Crisèle loves Memnon, but her parents marry her to the rich Rogat. Virtuous, Crisèle stays loyal to her husband, but her heart belongs to Memnon. When he dies, she reveres his heart in a silver box. Rogat, jealous, makes his wife eat Memnon’s heart.

This seventeenth-century tale uses violent and cruel images to better question early modern marriage. Like the marriage chest, it combines references to celestial or virtuous marital love and to mythical passion and adultery, while rewriting the courtly tradition. Moreover, Camus represents the tension between the public (society, appearances) and the private (affect), as a conflict between loyalty of the flesh and loyalty of the heart. Marriage chests no longer ought to contain precious goods, but a loving heart.

12:45-2:30PM Lunch Break (Note: Joe Frank Commons closed on weekends)

2:30-4:00PM Desire, Devotion, Deception

Maryclaire Koch, SUNY Buffalo, Art history

“Chagall, The Song of Songs, and Reciprocal Desire”

Marc Chagall (1887-1985) is known as the “painter of love.” His universal appeal is often attributed to this aspect of his work, because love is viewed as a fundamental human experience that transcends culture and language. However, I argue that Chagall’s renditions of this abstract notion were not universal. They reflected a particular vision that emerged from his Jewish background. This points to the fact that while Eros is transcultural, it is also understood in varying ways. My presentation analyzes the link between Chagall’s celebratory depictions of love and the body and his formation in Jewish culture. It explores issues surrounding Eros, and the tension between traditional Jewish and Christian understandings of these. I focus in particular on Chagall’s Song of Songs paintings I-V (1955-8). These illustrate the ancient love poem, also known as The Song of Solomon [Shir ha-Shirim]. In the first-century, Rabbi Akiva said, “The entire universe is unworthy of the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel. All the Writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.” This statement is surprising, since the poem does not mention God once. On the contrary, it is the story of the sexual awakening of two unmarried lovers, or what William
Blake described as the “lineaments of gratified desire.” Chagall’s illustrations for the centuries-old text reinvigorated it in the language of modern art. His motif of floating lovers, sensually converging with each other and the surrounding landscape, reveals culturally-specific notions of Eros and the body that lie at the heart of the poem itself. “Chagall, The Song of Songs, and Reciprocal Desire” explores Chagall’s unique depictions of love, how they were formed by the complex framework of rabbinical traditions, Hasidic mysticism, and European modernism.

Elizabeth Browne, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, History, Theory, and Criticism of Art and Architecture
“Clodion’s Touching Subjects: Love and Devotion in Revolutionary France”

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, the French sculptor Claude Michel, called Clodion (1738-1814), produced a series of diminutive terracotta figures of young women dressed à l’antique lovingly holding aloft small children. More famous for his cavorting satyrs, nymphs, and bacchantes, produced for a private audience of aristocrats, amateurs, and financiers since the 1760s, these sentimental subjects have been cast as a type of “light Neoclassicism,” made for his former elite clientele, émigrés returning to France following the Terror. Yet, this dismissive categorization fails to address the means by which Clodion’s terracottas of young women and children are, in fact, implicated in Revolutionary and Republican utopias of love and devotion as a means of regenerating the French population and spirit. Often associated with the Neoclassical paintings of Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) and his students that thematize combat or heroic sacrifice, this paper instead explores another strain of Revolutionary imagery that emphasized sensuality and sensibility (sensibilité), particularly evident in depictions of fecund women and adoring mothers. Nurtured by a Rousseauian vision of nature and of motherhood, images, objects, and performances proliferated celebrating these sensual and amatory virtues as fundamental to national, Republican renewal.

Clodion’s series of young women with children exemplify this trope of the sensual “regenerative” female body, and this paper examines these works’ shared iconography with revolutionary prints devoted to love of patrie, a comparison never before published. Examining these political prints, imagery from Republican calendars and almanacs, and performances such as that of the “Living Goddess” and the rosière, this paper seeks to contextualize Clodion’s works within a revolutionary-era aesthetics of love in the aftermath of war, rather than as nostalgia for a lost epoch, as his nineteenth-century biographers were wont to assert.
Meagan Khoury, University of York, Art history
“A Most Pleasurable Deception’: the Gentildonna Bolognese as Bravura in Lavinia Fontana’s Autoritratto alla Spinetta”

Although understudied, Lavinia Fontana’s prolific career encompassed large public commissions as well as intimate portraiture. As a female artist, this success was only possible due to the unconventional matrimonial arrangement her father Prospero negotiated with the Zappi family. In a rejection of typical gender norms of the time, the nuptial contract favored the bride’s family: Gian Paolo Zappi would leave his ancestral home and move into the Fontana household; the Fontanas would provide no cash dowry; and Gian Paolo would remain at home to care for the children while Lavinia pursued her profession. In her 1577 nuptial Self-Portrait at the Spinet, Fontana self-fashions as a gentildonna: cultured, graceful, learned, and talented. In addition to this traditional, polished domestic presentation, Fontana includes objects, such as her cassone and her easel, alluding to her non-traditional intentions for her marriage.

Johnson and Grieco concede that while “the Fontana self-portrait has usually been defined – and often dismissed – as a self-aggrandizing painting that was meant to assert her place within a developing tradition of women artists”, strong evidence suggests its true value resides in insights regarding its role in Fontana’s betrothal; indeed, within Renaissance Italian matrimonial practices in general. A close reading of the painting’s domestic interior will examine how objects of matrimonial symbolism point to a nuanced self-representation. Following a feminist framework, this essay will argue that Lavinia Fontana did much more than play the perfect gentildonna in her Self-Portrait. Fontana seized this opportunity – her own nuptial portrait – to invert gender roles by differencing herself from the typical Italian bride and from the typical painted woman.

Co-chair Closing Remarks