



SMART MUSEUM OF ART
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Lust, Love, and Loss in Renaissance Europe

April 8–June 13, 2021

The Smart Museum of Art re-opens with a new exhibition that offers insights into the experiences of Renaissance artists and audiences, organized by the Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry



The Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry at the University of Chicago's Smart Museum of Art presents ***Lust, Love, and Loss in Renaissance Europe***, a new exhibition in which passion, violence, and virtue emerge as fundamental, intertwined elements in artworks created for private homes as enjoyment or edification. The exhibition—which opens to the public by free, timed reservation on April 8, 2021—features more than 40 paintings, prints, sculptures, and luxury wares. These artworks played an essential role in intimate, familial experiences, while also shaping and responding to massive intellectual, political, and religious shifts throughout Europe between 1400 and 1700. Together, the works illuminate the many ways that Renaissance objects lay at the heart of public rituals and individual relationships, offering insights into the social, sexual, cultural, and visual experiences of their audiences.

Lust, Love, and Loss is curated by Nora S. Lambert, PhD candidate in the Department of Art History at the University of Chicago, as the culminating project of a Mellon graduate curatorial fellowship offered through the Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry, the Smart Museum's home for curricular engagement with the University.

“This project invites us to see these remarkable Renaissance artworks not in isolation, but in context with one another, providing insights into everyday life of the time,” said **Nora S. Lambert**, Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow at the Smart Museum of Art. “In recent decades, art historians have conducted incisive research on objects produced specifically for societal rites of passage in fifteenth-century Tuscany, such as weddings and births. Such artworks shed light on private as well as public life, and women's experiences especially. These works speak to both the joys and the anxieties attendant to the rituals in which they were used and viewed. With this exhibition, I had the opportunity to extend

that research to works of art not explicitly considered ‘domestic,’ such as sixteenth-century Dutch engravings, to see how they might also reveal deeply felt concerns, beliefs, and aspirations.”

“We are very pleased to be able to support this wonderful exhibition by Nora Lambert, a promising young curator and historian of Renaissance art,” said Issa Lampe, Deputy Director for Academic and Curatorial Affairs and Director of the Feitler Center. “Curatorial Fellowships such as this one, which is supported by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, can enable academic museums at leading research universities to diversify the curatorial profession, while also advancing exhibitions as manifestations of original research in the field of art history.”

“It’s thanks to important programs like this one at the Smart Museum’s Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry that our doctoral students have the opportunity to curate their own exhibitions, training simultaneously as curatorial and academic scholars,” said Niall Atkinson, Associate Professor of Art History and Chair of the Department of Art History at the University of Chicago. “In this show, Nora Lambert investigates an alternative form of looking at the Renaissance and allows us to hear the echoes of voices that still speak from the past through these works of art.”

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW



Lust, Love, and Loss offers glimpses into the lives of Renaissance artists and their audiences, through objects that were created for private homes as enjoyment or edification. Painters, printmakers, and craftsmen, inspired by popular literary sources including Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, and the Bible, interpreted their stories for everyday settings. Many of the works of art on view were pivotal to familial rites such as betrothals, marriages, and births, while others offered guidance for grappling with the unending social, religious, and political upheaval throughout Europe between 1400 and 1700. Christian audiences for all of these images sought stability from both biblical and classical exemplars as they contended with their rapidly evolving worlds.



The exhibition is divided into four sections. **“At Home in the Renaissance”** features objects that surrounded families in their homes, such as painted *deschi da parto*, or birth trays, and investigates the alignment between private life and public obligation. **“The Realm of Venus”** examines the ways in which tales of the classical goddess of love and beauty captivated artists for centuries, providing both a tantalizing source of inspiration and a cautionary means of instruction.

“Paragons of Virtue” expands to consider other stories of exemplary women from the Bible, mythology, and ancient history, along with the ways in which artists depicted women’s bodies as sites of conflicts about virtue and desire. The final section, **“Morality and Mortality”** explores images of Death personified, and the connections artists made between erotic love and punishment during a period of exceptionally innovative printmaking in Northern Europe.

The 42 objects featured in the exhibition are drawn from the Smart Museum’s collection as well as collections from across the United States: the Art Institute of Chicago, Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University, Chazen Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Cleveland Museum of Art, Davis Museum at Wellesley College, Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, Grohmann Museum Collection at Milwaukee School of Engineering, Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami, Middlebury College Museum of Art, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, Saint Louis Art Museum, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art.

RELATED PROGRAMS

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Smart Museum will present an array of free virtual programs, including a series of webinars featuring Renaissance scholars discussing issues of gender, sexuality, domesticity, and intellectual history. A complete list of programs will be posted to the Smart Museum’s website at smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/calendar.

VIRTUAL TOUR

The Smart will produce a narrated video tour of the exhibition, available for streaming later this spring at smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/exhibitions/lust-love-and-loss-in-renaissance-europe. The exhibition webpage will also include a downloadable packet with the checklist of works of art and accompanying texts, in support of remote teaching and learning.

VISITING THE SMART MUSEUM

The Smart Museum of Art is open with special public hours and visitor protocols this spring, including timed reservations, limited capacity, and required face coverings. Guests can make a reservation via Tock by visiting www.exploretock.com/smartmuseumofart and can review current protocols at smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/visit.

Hours

Thursday, 11 am–4 pm

Friday, 11 am–4 pm

Saturday, 11 am–4 pm

Sunday, 11 am–4 pm

In addition, the exhibition will be open on Wednesday by special appointment for University of Chicago groups.

ABOUT

Organized by the Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry, *Lust, Love, and Loss in Renaissance Europe* is curated by Nora S. Lambert, Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow at the Smart Museum of Art, and Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Art History at the University of Chicago.

Support for this exhibition has been provided by the Smart Museum's Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Endowment, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, Mary Smart and the Smart Family Foundation of New York, and the Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry Fund.

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Images:

Master of the Apollo and Daphne Legend, *Daphne Fleeing from Apollo*, c. 1500, Oil, formerly on panel, transferred to canvas. Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1973.45.

Francesco Xanto Avelli da Rovigo, *Footed Plate with the Death of Virginia*, dated 1539, Tin-glazed earthenware with lustre decoration. Saint Louis Art Museum, Museum Purchase, 10:1933.

Luca Cambiaso, *Venus and Cupid*, c. 1570, Oil on canvas. The Art Institute of Chicago, A. A. Munger Collection, 1942.290.

Giovan Gioseffo dal Sole, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, c. 1695, Oil on canvas. Lent by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Bernard H. Ritter Family, 77.24.

Hans Burgkmair the Elder, *Lovers Surprised by Death*, 1510, Chiaroscuro woodcut. Saint Louis Art Museum, Friends Fund and the Julian and Hope Edison Print Fund, 219:1995.

Jan Brueghel the Younger and Hendrick van Balen, *Venus at the Forge of Vulcan*, 1617, Oil on panel. From the Grohmann Museum Collection at Milwaukee School of Engineering.

About the Smart Museum of Art

The Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago is a site for rigorous inquiry and exchange that encourages the examination of complex issues through the lens of art objects and artistic practice. Through strong community and scholarly partnerships, the Museum incorporates diverse ideas, identities, and experiences into its exhibitions and collections, academic initiatives, and public programming. The Smart first opened in 1974. Admission is always free.

About the Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry

The Smart Museum's Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry advances connections—across the University of Chicago's fields and disciplines—through which all students and faculty can powerfully experience and study works of art. The Feitler Center fosters interdisciplinary scholarship, highlights the many ways that art can animate that scholarship, and supports the University's core commitment to free and open discourse.

Smart Museum of Art

The University of Chicago
5550 S. Greenwood Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60637

smartmuseum.uchicago.edu

Press contact:

C.J. Lind, 773.702.0176, cjlind@uchicago.edu