

Renaissance Word and Image Tales in light of the Digital: An Intermedial Reconstruction

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Abstract

Renaissance artists and writers, including Leonardo and Michelangelo, challenged themselves with the composition of original word and image tales of hybrid nature in the form of fables, emblems, performances, and poems. Being considered as secondary efforts in respect to their public portfolios, these fragmentary expressions have been interpreted by the critics as recreative works aimed at courtly consumption; however, they have a great scientific potential and might offer precious insights into their authors' processes of reasoning.

In my project, *Fable, Emblem, Poem, Performance : Renaissance Word and Image Tales {LesFablEm}*, I employ digital technologies, such as TEI Publisher, IIF, and Virtual Reality, to analyze recurrent patterns in fables, emblems, poems, and performances, by examining their sources and aims toward the creation of a shared hieroglyph language made of literary, artistic, and scientific terms. I claim that these word and image tales serve their authors to explore the divide between nature and technological advancement and they concur in the redefinition of the traditional hierarchies of disciplines.

Situating itself within the early modern word and image research area, the project contributes to the current debate on visual culture scholarship within the digital humanities, and reflects upon their relationship with studies of intermediality, by producing an invaluable research dissemination output that uncovers Renaissance authors' thought processes. The final outcome would include an interoperable, durable, and scalable digital database that incorporates digital editions, Virtual Reality reconstructions and exhibits – which not only explores Renaissance artists and writers' transdisciplinary modes of investigation, but it also opens to multiple uses across different forms, media, and fields of study.

Keywords

Word and image tales, Intermediality, Early modern, Digital humanities, Creative process

Bio

Giuditta Cirnigliaro received her Ph.D. in Italian Studies with a focus on Art History from Rutgers University in 2018, with a thesis on Leonardo da Vinci's fables and emblems. She holds a Laurea degree in Lettere from the University of Milan, and a BA and MA in Fine Arts from the Brera Academy and the Glasgow School of Arts. She was Postdoctoral Fellow at Roma Tre Digital Humanities Laboratory, and is currently an adjunct professor at the Università degli Studi di Milan, working on the intersections between Italian literature and the visual arts. She has published articles on Leonardo, word and image, digital and material studies, the edition of Leonardo's "Favole e profezie" with Carlo Vecce (Garzanti, 2019), and the monograph "Leonardo's Fables: Sources, Iconography and Science" (Brill, 2023).

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