



ÉCOLE PRATIQUE DES HAUTES ÉTUDES - SORBONNE
Histoire de l'art de la Renaissance - Direction d'études: Sabine Frommel

Conférences de Alina Payne, Harvard University

Compositio and the Materiality of Architecture in the Italian Renaissance

- Le 29 mai 2008, (18 h, INHA) : *L'architecture et le tableau: Florence et la façade à sgraffito*
- Le 5 juin 2008, (18h, INHA) : *Architectures et microarchitecture dans la première Renaissance italienne*
- Le 12 juin 2008, (18h, INHA) : *L'archéologie «de poche» et les limites du dessin à la Renaissance*



- 2 -

Compositio and the Materiality of Architecture in the Italian Renaissance

The sources which Renaissance architects used to develop their architectural compositions were not strictly architectural but were drawn from a wider visual field, and often involved heterogeneous material. This was so because the ancient models, imperfectly preserved as amputated fragments and often only apprehensible through a great effort of the imagination, needed to be fleshed out by other means: by architectural representations on ancient coins, plaquettes, sculptural reliefs, cameos etc. It was also so because most artists were active as painters, architects, goldsmiths, woodcarvers and sculptors and were often working in many different media at one and the same time. As result of this complex interaction of artistic domains their architectural work was not limited to buildings but also involved experimental “architectural” compositions in furniture, metalwork, chancels, altars and altarpieces, tombs—in other words in a series of media and scales that were not those of architecture itself.

The categories traditionally associated with the activity of architectural design—from Vitruvius onwards—do not account for the materials and contexts upon which this activity drew and was deployed. They focus on the how not the what: as result what was brought into order (or composition) disappears from view. These three lectures propose to look at the material presence of these multiple sources for architecture, which, when taken under the magnifying glass of analysis cease to be transparent, and regain their “thickness”. The argument advanced is that what was being assembled—enlarged, minimized, placed into adjacency, translated from one material into another—was of as much consequence for the final design as how that assemblage was performed.

These issues will be discussed with reference to specific case-studies that will address three larger issues in three lectures:

- The architectural canvas: the Florentine sgraffito façade
- Architecture and objects in Alberti's oeuvre
- Palladio and portable archaeology: the drawing as ordering agent.