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Dissertation

**RENAISSANCE LANDSCAPES AND THE FIGURATION OF
GIAMBOLOGNA'S *APPENNINO*: AN ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS**

by

CATHERINE WALSH

B.A., Vanderbilt University, 2000

M.A., Boston University, 2002

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CATHERINE WALSH

Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2015

Major Professor: Jodi Cranston, Professor of History of Art and Architecture

ABSTRACT

This dissertation pioneers an ecocritical examination of the colossal monument *Appennino* (1580) by Giambologna (1529-1608). Because of its scale, form, and materials, the *Appennino* calls attention to the natural environment in an emphatic manner. A sculpted human figure, a representation of a mountain, and discrete passages of natural landscape are present in it. Living rock, fragments of lava and stalactites, and plant life simultaneously figure the human form and the Apennine landscape. These figurations prompt consideration of the relationships between art and nature and between illusion and materiality in Renaissance art. These interactions can be understood not only as generative processes, but also in terms of destructive ones. I argue that these art-nature and human-landscape interactions illuminate environmental concerns of the Renaissance.

A central concern of this dissertation is how the interactions between art, nature, and beholders in the Italian Renaissance reflect latent ecological anxiety. To demonstrate this, I take the *Appennino* as a point of departure and situate it within multiple frameworks: sixteenth-century natural history, botanical, and geological endeavors; early

modern reception of landscapes; art historical tropes of art-nature relationships; and Renaissance artists' engagement with nature. In Chapter One, I survey the scholarship on this monument and explain how the materials used to create it were understood, used, and valued during the Renaissance. In Chapter Two, I discuss the comprehension and experiences of mountains and caves (the environments that produced the *Appennino's* materials) in the Renaissance. In Chapter Three, I examine the multiple iterations of landscape within the monument, drawing attention to art theoretical issues such as "third nature," the "image made by chance," and tension between illusion and materiality that are manifest in the *Appennino* and that illuminate its entropic situation. In Chapter Four, I consider the multiple ways that the human figure can be understood relative to the monument and how the *Appennino's* figural form engages art history in an exceptional manner, destabilizing conventional art historical notions of form and style. Finally, I evaluate the ecological and ecocritical significance of the monument's afterlife, arguing that the *Appennino* maintains an ambivalent relationship with nature.