

**EPHEMERA MADE PERMANENT:  
THE CREATION, COLLECTION, AND DISPLAY OF  
PORTRAIT DRAWINGS IN EARLY MODERN ITALY**

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ABSTRACT

This project delves into the multifaceted role of portrait drawings within artistic production and portraiture. Previous scholarship has primarily centered on their function as preparatory studies or as examples of highly finished drawings. However, early modern collectors challenged these artworks' ephemeral nature by preserving and displaying them in private collections. Through their role in gift exchange and occasional display in collections, portrait drawings acquired social, economic, aesthetic, and creative significance. This additional layer of meaning surpassed their initial purposes as preparatory or presentation drawings, rendering them worthy of preservation and exhibition.

The portrait drawing's personal nature is examined in various ways, beginning with a perspective of the artistic workshop: Here, the portrait drawing functions as a visual record of the collaboration and friendships developed within that space. The embedded intimacy by which the portrait drawing gained currency as a token among friends was also used to cultivate an appearance of closeness among diplomatic entities within the courtly sphere. The familiarity with the portrait drawing also stems from its perception as more "truthful" than other types of portraits because it was done from life. This truthfulness, along with the rapidity of execution (i.e., the portrait was done quickly), contributed to exploring and establishing notions of identity among patrons, sitters, and collectors of such artworks with their exchange and display, intentionally highlighting certain aspects of the person's self.

The dissertation opens with a historiographical and theoretical framework assessing the characteristics shared by portraiture and drawings and how they impact our understanding of

portrait drawings. Chapter 2 explores the private, intimate nature of portrait drawings by focusing on the artistic workshop and the familial bonds and friendships growing there. Chapter 3 evaluates the political and diplomatic function of the portrait drawing among courts and how it cultivated familiarity and identity within the nobility while examining its exchange and collection. Finally, the dissertation concludes by discussing the display of portrait drawings and their functions once their status has risen from being merely a part of the artistic process to constituting autonomous, collectible objects in their own right.