

Global Aldrovandi: Exchanging Nature in the Early Modern World
Participant Bios and Abstracts
(in order of presentation)

Thursday June 16

Morning Session (Chair: Marco Beretta)

10:30 Opening Remarks

Paula Findlen is Ubaldo Pierotti Professor of Italian History at Stanford University where she has also directed the Suppes Center for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology and is one of the founding directors of the Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies. She is the author of *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, and many other studies on the history of museums, collecting, nature, art, curiosity, and science, including *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science and Art in Early Modern Europe*. A Guggenheim Fellow and Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Findlen received the Premio Galileo in 2016. She recently published *Leonardo's Library: The World of a Renaissance Reader, Camilla Erculiani, Letters on Natural Philosophy* (with Eleonora Carinci and Hannah Marcus); and the 2nd edition of *Early Modern Things: Objects and Their Histories 1500-1800*.

11:00-11:45

Davide Domenici (Università di Bologna)

“Indigenous American Knowledge in Ulisse Aldrovandi’s Works”

The paper explores the ways in which Ulisse Aldrovandi’s scholarly practices permitted, both intentionally and unintentionally, the reproduction of Indigenous knowledge. Recent scholarship has stressed how early modern European collectors often misunderstood the non-European objects they treasured, incurring in misattributions which obscured cultural specificities and contributed to the construction of an undifferentiated and exoticist view of non-European peoples. Even if Aldrovandi’s collection and study of Mesoamerican artifacts is clearly inscribed within the wider phenomenon of European colonial appropriation of Indigenous cultural productions, I argue that some of his scholarly practices – such as collecting, describing, and visually reproducing objects, as well as recording others’ collections – allowed the reproduction of highly specific aspects of Indigenous knowledge and social memory which were somehow attached to the objects themselves.

Davide Domenici is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the Department of History and Cultures of the University of Bologna (Italy). He is also Director of the Master Program in History and Culture of Food at the University of Bologna. After participating in several archaeological projects in Peru, Easter Island and Mexico, Davide Domenici has been Director of the Río La Venta Archaeological Project (Chiapas, Mexico, 1998-2010) and of The Cahokia Project (Illinois, USA, 2011-2017). Over the last decade he has been studying the technology of codex painting in pre-Hispanic and Colonial Mesoamerica and the cultural biographies of Mesoamerican artifacts brought to Italy during the 16th century.

Samir Boumediene (respondent) is a researcher at the Institut d’Histoire des Représentations et des Idées dans les Modernités (Lyon) and currently a fellow at Villa Medici (Rome). Trained in history and epistemology, he published his PhD on the history of New World medicinal plants in 2016 under the title *La colonisation du savoir*. He has published several articles on the history of drugs, medicine and plants. His current research deals with the notion of discovery in early modern times and with the history of questionnaires.

11:45-12:30

Caroline Duroselle-Melish (Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C.)

“New World Artifacts, Old Graphic Techniques and Visual Strategies? Woodcuts of Artifacts from the Americas in *Musaeum Metallicum*”

This paper will closely examine extant woodblocks and their woodcut impressions depicting New World objects in Aldrovandi’s volume *Musaeum metallicum* (1648). While the naturalist’s study of these items has been skillfully analyzed (including most recently by Davide Domenici), the techniques and visual strategies used by his woodcutters to depict these objects are worth further exploration. New World objects presented new challenges for Aldrovandi’s craftsmen. Few images of similar artifacts had been printed in books by others and could be used as models (the woodcuts in the *Musaeum metallicum* are most likely some of the earliest printed images depicting such items). Moreover, woodcutters were limited by the constraints of the woodblock medium. This paper will analyze the models and methods used to depict these items, placing them in the context of other woodcuts in the *Musaeum metallicum*, in order to determine the degree of novelty of Aldrovandi’s printed images of New World objects.

Caroline Duroselle-Melish is Associate Librarian and Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Early Modern Books and Prints at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. Her publications include several articles on Aldrovandi, his library, and the book trade. She is currently finishing a project on his collection of woodblocks.

Lia Markey (respondent) is the Director of the Center for Renaissance Studies at the Newberry Library. Her major publications include a monograph, *Imagining the Americas in Medici Florence* (2016), and two edited volumes, *The New World in Early Modern Italy, 1492-1750* (2017) with Liz Horodowich, and *Renaissance Invention: Stradanus’s “Nova Reperta”* (2020). She teaches at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University and has held fellowships at the Folger Library, the Warburg Institute, the Villa I Tatti, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Herzog August Bibliothek. Currently, Lia is collaborating on an exhibition and edited volume provisionally entitled “Seeing Race Before Race,” and participating in the Getty Connecting Art Histories Research Group, “Spanish Italy and the Iberian New World.”

Thursday June 16
Afternoon session (Chair: Davide Domenici)

15:00-15:45

Noemi Di Tommaso (Università di Bologna)
“African plants in the correspondence of Ulisse Aldrovandi”

In this talk, we will focus on Aldrovandi's efforts to understand the nature of African flora and find as many specimens as possible through his vast and almost entirely unpublished correspondence. Indeed, during the 16th century, scientific letters were increasingly assuming an autonomous *status* as a literary genre in the history of naturalism, as well as being able to connect people who were extremely distant from each other.

An attempt will be made to reconstruct the way Aldrovandi implemented his botanical garden thanks to the seeds obtained from Cairo or, more generally, from Africa, experimenting with grafts from different geographical areas. And wherever for climatic reasons this was not possible, we will try to trace the direct study of African vegetation in the Aldrovandi's Archives of Nature, namely the dry herbarium and painted herbarium, both aimed also at making up for the technical difficulties of reproducing the African plant microcosm in Italy.

Once it has been clarified that, steady in Bologna, Aldrovandi undertook to get to know and recognise African flora through letters, it becomes essential to focus on the letters involved in this cognitive process, and especially on the correspondents who brought him into contact with this reality.

Noemi Di Tommaso is a Ph.D student in History of Science at Alma Mater Studiorum, Università degli Studi di Bologna. After a double degree in Philosophy at Alma Mater Studiorum, Università degli Studi di Bologna, (BA in History of Philosophy and MA in History of Science), she started her Ph.D research on Ulisse Aldrovandi's manuscripts preserved in Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna (BUB). Her research's topics mainly concern scientific correspondence in the late Renaissance, the creation of scientific networking, the exchange of objects by means of letters, the shift from Latin to Italian as a scientific language, etc. Her first peer-reviewed article is "Ulisse Aldrovandi lettore di Lucrezio," *Physis* 50, 1-2 (2020): 277-294. Di Tommaso is also assistant managing editor for *Nuncius. Journal for Visual and Material History of Science* and assistant managing editor for *Aldrovandiana. Historical Studies in Natural History*, and an active member of the *Officina di Storia delle Scienze (OFFISS)*, *Società Italiana di Storia della Scienza (SISS)* and *The International Association for Neo-Latin Studies (IANLS)*.

Ingrid Greenfield (respondent) is currently Lecturer at the University of Basel in the *Fachbereich Kunstgeschichte*, where she teaches courses in the art history of pre-colonial Africa and its contact zones with Europe, roughly corresponding with the medieval and early modern periods. From 2017 to 2021, she held the postdoctoral position of Assistant to the Director for Academic Programs at I Tatti, where she is now an affiliated Research Associate with the project *Black Mediterranean/ Mediterraneo Nero - Artistic Encounters and Counter-narratives/ Incontri artistici e contronarrazioni*, part of the Getty Foundation's *Connecting Art Histories* initiative.

15:45-1630

Daniela Picchi (Civic Archaeological Museum of Bologna)

Cristiana Scappini (University of Bologna)

“*Per Hieroglyphica ad Aegyptum*”

Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica* (1422), the only systematic treatise on hieroglyphics handed down from antiquity, and the texts attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, the mythical author of Greek-Alexandrian hermetic literature identified with the god Thoth, directed the attention of Renaissance scholars to the millennia-old Egyptian civilisation in an attempt to trace the innermost moral and religious meanings of nature. Moreover, the urban planning of the period in Rome and elsewhere brought to light antiquities imported from Egypt during the Roman Imperial age, making them available to the antiquities market. Ulysses Aldrovandi could not escape this fascination, as is evident from his works and his museum or *Theatrum sive Microcosmus Naturae*, home to some Egyptian antiquities. This paper presents the preliminary results of a study aimed at defining Ulisse Aldrovandi's views on ancient Egypt.

Daniela Picchi is Head of the Egyptian Collection of the Civic Archaeological Museum of Bologna and Secretary of the International Committee for Egyptology (CIPEG) of ICOM, after having been a member of the board for many years. She plays an important role in the study, protection, and enhancement of numerous minor or unknown Egyptian collections in Italy. Her scholarly work, which focuses on both the history of collecting and material culture, investigates the beginnings of the reception of ancient Egypt in Italy and Europe. In particular, she is studying and publishing the history of the Bolognese Egyptian collections from Aldrovandi onwards. Another ongoing research project is the *Bologna Mummy Project* (BOmp) in collaboration with the Institute for Mummy Studies of EURAC Research in Bolzano.

Cristiana Scappini is Librarian at the University of Bologna. She studied the historical collections of the Alma Mater Museum of Zoology (see *L'Ostracion gibbosus del Museo Aldrovandiano in I Musei Universitari di Bologna: Immagini*). Together with Maria Pia Torricelli, she investigated Aldrovandi's Museum and the results were published in *Lo studio Aldrovandi in Palazzo Pubblico (1617-1742)*, edited by Sandra Tugnoli Pattaro. Her interest in Aldrovandi's collection became the focus of her dissertation in Egyptology, entitled *Ulisse Aldrovandi and the perception of Egypt*, under the supervision of Daniela Picchi, with whom she has continued to deepen this research ever since.

Matteo Martelli (respondent) is professor in History of Science at the University of Bologna, and PI of the ERC project AlchemEast. His research focuses on Graeco-Roman and Byzantine science – with particular attention to alchemy and medicine – and its reception in the Syro-Arabic tradition. His publications include *The Four Books of Pseudo-Democritus* (2014) and *Collecting Recipes. Byzantine and Jewish Pharmacology in Dialogue* (2017; edited with L. Lehmhaus). In the framework of the *AlchemEast* project is currently working on a critical edition and translation of the alchemical books by Zosimus of Panopolis as preserved in the Syriac tradition.

Friday June 17
Morning session (Chair: Lia Markey)

9:30-10:15

Barbara Di Gennaro (Bologna)
Aldrovandi's *Farmaceutica*. Global Knowledge, Local Action

Was Ulysses Aldrovandi's pharmacy local or global? This paper explores the global and local dimensions in Aldrovandi's ideas and practices regarding pharmacy. On the one hand, stood his grandiose project for creating and stabilizing knowledge about world *materia medica*. Such a project was global in geographical scope and it envisioned the systematization of indigenous knowledge from all over the world by European scholars with a centralized organization. On the other hand, the place that the naturalist accorded to new foreign *materia medica* in medical practice was limited. Partially, this was because Aldrovandi supposed that the distribution of plants apt to medicinal use in each and every region was uniform. Furthermore, an analysis of Aldrovandi's use of the terms *local* (*nostrano*) and *foreign* shows contradictory meanings. The ambiguity between *local* and *global* in Aldrovandi's pharmacy shows the coexistence in his work of both a pragmatic and visionary dimension in constant, fertile, and apparently unproblematic dialogue.

Barbara Di Gennaro earned a PhD in 2021 at Yale University in the History Department and the History of Science and Medicine Program. Her dissertation focuses on the medicines culture and market in early modern Italy, using theriac—the most famous drug in the Western world up to the nineteenth century—as a case study. In 2015, she was awarded the Jerry Stannard Memorial Award for the History of Pharmacy and the Annals of Science Essay Prize for “Craft, money and mercy: an apothecary's self-portrait in sixteenth-century Bologna”. She also published her work in *Nuncius* and in several edited volumes.

Iolanda Ventura (respondent) (PhD, University of Florence, 1999) is Associate Professor of Medieval Latin at the University of Bologna. Her research deals with the history of medieval medicine (especially pharmacology and pharmacy) and the origin and transmission of pharmacological texts in Medieval manuscripts. She is currently preparing a critical edition of the Salernitan pharmacological collection *Circa instans*, and a book on the development of pharmacology and of the theoretical background of pharmacotherapy during the 13th century.

10:15-11:00

Rebecca Zorach (Northwestern University)

“Per totum universum insinuans’: Fossils and Formative Powers, the Local and the Global”

Over the course of the later sixteenth century, European natural philosophers began to temper the widespread theory of celestial influence on the formation of living and nonliving beings that had been derived from Albertus Magnus. Aldrovandi struggled with this position and eventually turned to a notion of vital or formative powers perfusing the entire universe, including earthly species, whether living (plants and animals) or nonliving (minerals). The question came to the fore in Aldrovandi’s reflections on fossil shells in particular, in both the *De reliquis animalibus exanguibus* (1606) and *Musaeum metallicum* (1648), where he saw evidence of earth and stone taking on the shapes of shells. In this paper I look to Aldrovandi’s sources in direct visual observation and in the writings of authors both ancient and modern who made reference to minerals, fossils, and mollusks in northern Europe, the east and west Indies, and Egypt and the Red Sea. Finally, I consider the ramifications of this position for understandings of form as both a natural and an artistic property.

Rebecca Zorach teaches and writes on early modern European art, contemporary activist art, and art of the 1960s and 1970s. Particular interests include print media, feminist and queer theory, the Black Arts Movement, art and ecology, and the multiple intersections of art and politics. Her books include *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance* (Chicago, 2005), *The Passionate Triangle* (Chicago, 2011), and *Art for People’s Sake: Artists and Community in Black Chicago 1965–1975* (Duke, 2019). She is currently a Visiting Researcher for three weeks at the University of Bologna while completing a book on the early modern view of Nature as an artist.

Monica Azzolini (respondent) is a historian of early modern science, medicine and the environment, with particular focus on Italy but increasingly extending my research to transnational networks. She has taught at the University of Cambridge (U.K.), the University of Washington (U.S.A.), the University of New South Wales (Australia), and the University of Edinburgh (U.K.) and held fellowships at I Tatti - The Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, The Warburg Institute, London, and the Shelby Cullom Davis Center at Princeton University. Her research has been supported by the British Academy, The Leverhulme Trust, The Royal Society of Edinburgh, The Carnegie Trust, The European Commission, and The Global Challenges Research Fund (AHRC/NERC/EHSC). She has published widely on Leonardo da Vinci’s anatomical studies, Renaissance astrology, and courtly science. She joined the University of Bologna in the autumn of 2017 as Associate Professor in the History of Science.

11:00-11:45

Hannah Marcus

“Aldrovandi in Old Age: How an Elderly Man Saw his World”

This talk is first and foremost a contribution to our understanding of the long life of Ulisse Aldrovandi on the 500th anniversary of his birth. It is a tribute to an idiosyncratic scholar that helps us to make sense of how he engaged with his own legacy in a period simultaneously of great intellectual activity and the beginnings of his own physical and mental decline. At another level, I hope that this essay can serve as a methodological intervention, urging scholars to foreground the life course as a unit of analysis. In the case of Aldrovandi, doing so has yielded not only biographical insights but also a new understanding of his own scholarly processes. To the question: How did this elderly man see his world? The answer would surely be through blurry lenses, with numerous aids and helpers, and with an eye constantly to his own past and his collections’ future.

Hannah Marcus is Associate Professor of the History of Science at Harvard University. She is the author of *Forbidden Knowledge: Medicine, Science, and Censorship in Early Modern Italy* (University of Chicago Press, 2020), and the translator of Camilla Erculiani’s 1584 *Letters on Natural Philosophy* (The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe, Toronto, 2021). Her current book project, *Methuselah’s Children: The Renaissance Discovery of Old Age*, is a study of ideas about longevity and experiences of advanced old age in early modern Italy.

David Lines (respondent) is Professor in Italian Studies at the University of Warwick and Director of Warwick’s Centre for the Study of the Renaissance. His research focuses on the intersections of history, literature, and philosophy in the period 1300–1750. In addition to publishing on Renaissance ethics, politics, and natural philosophy, he has been studying the teaching of arts and medicine in the early modern Italian universities (especially Bologna); a monograph on that subject is forthcoming: *The Dynamics of Learning in Early Modern Italy: Arts and Medicine at the University of Bologna* (Harvard University Press). He is Senior Editor of the book series Warwick Studies in Renaissance Thought and Culture (Brepols).

Friday June 17

Afternoon session (Chair: Paula Findlen)

14:15-15:00

Alessandro Tosi (Università di Pisa)

“Images from the East. Ulisse Aldrovandi and the Orient”

In the three volumes of his *Ornithologiae* (1599-1603), Ulisse Aldrovandi showed a number of images of “Indian” birds that he had received from Marquis Cesare Facchinetti, nephew of Pope Innocent IX, originally donated to Gregory XIII by the Japanese legation that arrived in Italy in 1585.

Important documents for a good knowledge of Asian avifauna and bound, therefore, to meet great success in ornithological literature between the XVII and the XIX centuries, such images help chart Aldrovandi’s geography all the way through to East Indies. Between art and science, setting them in a wider historical context can therefore be an opportunity to reflect from a new perspective on the central role of images in the work of the naturalist, with many unexpected connections to modern imagery.

Alessandro Tosi is Associate Professor of History of Modern Art at the Department of Civilization and Forms of Knowledge, University of Pisa. He conducts research in the history of arts from the early modern to the present age, with a focus on the relation between art and science. He has published a large number of papers in these fields of research, and his papers have been presented at many national and international symposia and conferences. Since 2007, he has been Scientific Director of the Museo della Grafica in Pisa.

Maria Vittoria Spissu (respondent) is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow. Her research project is entitled “Communities of Concord: Building Contentment and Belonging through Emotional Images in Early Modern Europe and Beyond” and hosted by The Center for Renaissance Studies at the Newberry Library, Chicago. She is Senior Assistant Professor of Early Modern Art History at DAR, UNIBO. She has published on Flemish-Iberian altarpieces/illuminated books, connections/networks in the Mediterranean Renaissance and Habsburg World, and Otherness (images of Jews, Muslims, Ottoman Turks, and converts). She co-edited *The Myth of the Enemy: Alterity, Identity, and Their Representations* (2019) and is part of the COST Action “Islamic Legacy: Narratives East, West, South, North of the Mediterranean (1350-1750)” and “Spanish Italy and the Iberian Americas” (Columbia University/Getty Foundation).

15:00-15:45

Elena Canadelli (Università di Padova)

Luca Tonetti (Università di Bologna)

“Aldrovandi’s collections in circulation: assembling and disassembling objects during the Napoleonic era and beyond”

Ulisse Aldrovandi’s collection has gone through many changes and relocations throughout its history—from his private home to the reconstitution of his museum in Palazzo Poggi on the occasion of Aldrovandi’s tercentenary in 1907. These changes reflect the different significance attributed to Aldrovandi and his scientific endeavour on a local and global scale. This paper will focus on the moving of Aldrovandi’s collection from Bologna to Paris, in 1796, when French commissioners sent by Napoleon had some specimens from the collection removed and transferred to the Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle. These included the Herbarium and the collection of watercolour plates. Most of them returned in 1816 thanks to Marino Marini, as a result of an agreement between the Papal State and some naturalists from the Muséum (Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, André Thouin, René Just Haüy). We will thus examine three different phases of this suggestive process of mobility of objects: the transfer of part of the natural history collection from Bologna to Paris following Napoleon’s requisitions; the restitution in 1815-6; the reorganisation (and dispersion) of this collection as part of the reform of the scientific cabinets at the University of Bologna.

Elena Canadelli is Professor in History of Science at the University of Padova and scientific responsible of the new Botanical Museum of the University. She is editor-in-chief at *Nuncius. Journal of the Material and Visual History of Science* (Brill) and President of the Italian Society for the History of Science. Her research interests focus on science museum studies and visual studies in science, with special attention to cultures of collecting natural history objects in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 2019, she co-edited the volume *Behind the Exhibit: Displaying Science and Technology at World’s Fairs and Museums in the Twentieth Century* (The Smithsonian Scholarly Press, with M. Beretta, L. Ronzon).

Luca Tonetti is a Research Fellow in History of Science at University of Bologna. He received his PhD in History and Philosophy of Science from Sapienza University of Rome, with a dissertation on Giorgio Baglivi and his reform of medical practice in the *De praxi medica* (1696). He has since held a postdoctoral fellowship at the Centre d’études supérieures de la Renaissance (CESR), University of Tours, and at the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel. Since 2017 he is a member of the editorial team of *Nuncius. Journal of the Material and Visual History of Science* (Brill), now serving as Book Review Editor. He has a particular interest in the history of early modern science and medicine, particularly anatomy and medical practice in Italy in 17th and 18th centuries. He is currently working on Marcello Malpighi’s unpublished manuscripts preserved at Bologna University Library.

Paolo Savoia (respondent) is Assistant Professor of the History of science at the University of Bologna. He works on the history of early modern science, medicine and knowledge, and on the historiography of science. His latest publications include *Gaspare Tagliacozzi and Early Modern Surgery: Faces, Men, and Pain* (Routledge, 2020), and *Gendered Touch: Women, Men, and Knowledge-making in Early Modern Europe* (co-edited with Francesca Antonelli and Antonella Romano, Brill, 2022).