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*The Netherworld as Mirror: Technology and Religion in the Painting of Netherlandish painters between Florence, Naples, and Rome*

My research project examines the status of painting in the artistic centers of Italy between epistemic and religious innovations. The *fiamminghi* were associated with a central achievement of northern art: the ability to imitate the most diverse effects of light and thereby materials with paint and brush. In Rome, Florence, and Naples, painters from the north were confronted with the demand for this specific *maniera*, which they in turn combined with new and innovative pictorial inventions.

While studies to date mostly focus on the early heyday of these artists in Italy around 1600, the present research project aims to explore the work of northern painters in Italy in the late 17th century and early 18th century. In order to argue for an analysis beyond the view of the bent as a counter-motion to the orthodoxy and elitism of Counter-Reformation Rome, my research aims to examine the cultural and theoretical intertwining of the painters into discourses on art, nature and philosophy. Small-scale landscapes and genre scenes as well as magical and fantastical scenes are to be analyzed not as expressions of dissent, but in connection with cultures of knowledge and religious practices shaping the reception of different genres in the early modern period.

The project seeks to explore the entanglement of painting and imagination on the basis of selected works of art and art theoretical texts as well as thinkers such as Newton, Boyle, Hooke and Boerhaave. The time between 1650 and 1720 was shaped by a pluralization of religious and philosophical thinking and the project aims to unravel the interconnections between *maniera*, matter, and philosophy by taking the netherworld or underworld as a focus point, combining ideas of the location of hell, the antique, caves and catacombs, as well the early modern body.

The metaphorical yet highly productive idea of invisible realms beyond the individual's control connected patrons and painters. Religion and magic, materiality and imagination, society and theory, the project argues, cannot be separated in the sphere of early modern art production, though their relationship depends heavily on different sites of knowledge.