

Interpretation of Art from Diversified Viewpoints with an "Artwork First" Lens of Observation and Intuition: Placing the Artwork itself as the Center

A look at the work of a world-renowned scholar of the art of the Italian Renaissance

The history of art during the period of the Renaissance, a time of immense social change, has a long and rich tradition in academic literature both from within Italy and throughout the Western countries. Associate Professor Araki has entered this well-trodden territory with brand new ideas and has already received high praise from other experts for her achievements and for her doctoral thesis that she submitted to the Sapienza University of Rome. We asked Araki about her methodology, which she describes as being "artwork first."

Awarded the Premio Daria Borghese, a prestigious prize for outstanding works on Rome

In February of 2022 with the COVID-19 pandemic still raging, Araki woke up to an email from Italy in her inbox. Still groggy and thinking it was spam, she was about to delete it when she read, "Your work has been nominated for the Premio Daria Borghese. Should you be selected

attend the award ceremony in Rome this May?"

The Premio Daria Borghese, first awarded in 1965, is a prestigious prize

for this prize, would you be available to

The Premio Daria Borghese, first awarded in 1965, is a prestigious prize for works on Rome carried out by international scholars. In the star-studded list of scholars who have received this honor, Araki is still at the beginning of her career and is the first person from an Asian country to ever be awarded this prize.

Araki was nominated for the book *Le Cappelle Bufalini e Carafa*, a collection of her achievements including studies from her doctoral thesis that she submitted at the Sapienza University of Rome. The book was published by Campisano Editore in 2019. Araki still does not know who nominated her for this award, but she suspects that the presence of her book in library collections around the world at prestigious universities, research centers and institutes worked in her favor.



Araki traveled across Italy while she was staying in Rome in order to see the various mural paintings decorating the churches and cathedrals. She described how as she pondered the paintings in these spaces—ones separated from the realm of everyday affairs—she began to feel as if they were speaking to her. The following are a few examples of Araki's achievements, published in her aforementioned book.

1. Project to decorate the walls of the Sistine Chapel frescoes in the 15th century

The Sistine Chapel in the Vatican is best

known for its 16th-century masterpieces by the great master, Michelangelo, namely the fresco ceiling, centered on the Genesis and the Final Judgement, which covers the altar wall. However, not so many people recognize frescoes depicting the Stories of Moses and Stories of Jesus on the side walls of the chapel painted by the four influential painters of the 15th century. One of these artists invited by the Pope to paint the Sistine Chapel was Sandro Botticelli, a painter whose work remains popular amongst art lovers even in Japan. The generally accepted hypothesis on the chronological order of the production of the frescoes is that the four masters discussed the subjects and motifs that should be painted on the walls and how they should be depicted. Then they made "agreements" about working procedures and instructed their own groups of apprentices to produce the frescoes.

However, to challenge pieces of this conventional wisdom, Araki suggested that instead of all the apprentices working together on paintings one at a time under a master painter, it is possible that the masters worked on the Stories of Jesus while the apprentices were assigned to paint the Stories of Moses. She also pointed out that Botticelli's paintings work as an antithesis to those of Pietro Perugino, one of the other masters assigned to the Sistine Chapel. Extreme human poses, which Botticelli depicted, and his dynamic style illustrate the challenge presented at the time for the master painters to express their individuality while still remaining within the constraints of their "agreements." Few art historians had broached the topic of how the frescoes demonstrated competing attitudes during the construction of the Sistine Chapel in the 15th century, and Araki's hypothesis quickly gained recognition in the field.

2. Frescoes in the Bufalini Chapel and the Carafa Chapel

After the completion of the Sistine frescoes, Pinturicchio, one of Perugino's apprentices went on to decorate the walls of the Bufalini Chapel. Shortly thereafter Filippino Lippi, one of Botticelli's



Fig. 1

Award ceremony for the Premio Daria Borghese
In May 2022, Araki received her prize at the Palazzo
Borghese while surrounded by the teachers and friends
who had helped her get there.



Fig.2 The Carafa Chapel (left) and its altarpiece, The *Annunciation* (right)

This painting depicts the person who commissioned it (the kneeling man with a red cloak) being blessed by the Virgin Mary (center). Araki explained the reason for this unique iconography in her research, discussing how the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva where the Carafa Chapel is located had a special belief system that it had fostered related to the Virgin of the Annunciation. The Japanese video below provides a detailed analysis of this topic.

10-Minute Lecture to Build Academic Skills: Learning Art History https://youtu.be/wDhgEuGxJpo?si=oy-D4besX8la7sfb





Fig.3 Marbled art

First, dissolve the detergent glue in water to create a marbling solution. Next, sprinkle paints of your desired colors onto the surface of the solution. Then, dip a piece of paper into the solution, and the marbled pattern on the surface of the liquid is transferred to the paper. You have some control over which colors to use and how to pour the paint to some extent, but the final result is always a mystery just waiting to be revealed.



apprentices was commissioned to paint the Carafa Chapel. Araki noticed that the frescoes were strikingly similar and decided to investigate why. Through an in-depth comparison of the two frescoes, she suggested that Filippino had wholly referred to the Bufalini Chapel when he painted the Carafa Chapel. She also delved into the cultural background that informed the visual analogies between the chapels, and she discovered that this fact reflected the competition between the two rival mendicant orders in power in Italy at the time, the Franciscans and the Dominicans. Other scholars praised Araki's scholarship for being the first to identify this aspect of the relationship between these two chapels.

The "artwork first" approach that listens for a piece's intended message

Araki begins her research first and foremost by engaging with the artwork in question. The artwork is the "main character" of her research, and her role is to listen to what it is saying, leaving aside as many preconceptions as possible while making her observations.

From this starting point, she will begin to apply multiple methodologies appropriate to the artwork currently being discussed from stylistic analysis to iconographic interpretation, to the examination of the historical context. Through these processes, the way in which people at the time accepted and perceived the glorious Renaissance

frescoes, and the whole "picture" of them, will be revealed.

For example, Araki discovered vital information that would become a central piece of evidence in explaining the unique iconography of the *Annunciation* (Fig. 2) in the Carafa Chapel through a detailed analysis of the eulogy delivered at the funeral of the client who commissioned the artworks in that very chapel. Araki says that deciphering the interpersonal events of people who lived over 500 years ago is almost like a journey through time and space, or "like a detective novel. It's hard not to get excited."

Art historiography is overflowing with "classics" and established norms that have accumulated over time, making it an incredibly difficult and delicate process for scholars even in the West to propose new theories. Araki, however, has not been bound by these established theories, able to shed light on blind spots in our understanding of history and uncover new facts and ideas one after the another. Araki had this to say, "In some areas, it actually works in my favor to be Japanese, because I have such a different cultural background."

Sharing how to think artistically

Every piece of art has its own light that makes it shine. Araki says that she wants to be "an 'evangelist' who can help more people appreciate the appeal of various works of art." In recent years, she has become increasingly busy, juggling multiple research topics to accommodate incoming requests for writing and collaborative research. At the same time, she is still fully engaged in her personal research and preparation for her single-authored book in Japan. Araki firmly believes that "artworks won't let you down." This is because she believes that if you ask hard enough, they will give you the answers you seek. Araki tells her students that art will support them at various junctures in their lives.

Ultimately, Araki's research approach itself, the effort to "listen absolutely to the voice of a work of art," has an intrinsic artistic aspect. In trying to figure out how to share this way of thinking with her students, Araki came up with the idea of using "marbling" (Fig. 3). This artistic technique can be enjoyable not only for college students but also for children and adults. By using this technique in workshops or similar settings, participants can create pieces based on a common theme, such as "going for a walk" or "impressionism." Visualizing the piece and trying to give it form provides the spark for artistic thinking. Then, by sharing their thought processes with other participants, they can expand on their initial ideas and conceptions.

Araki smiled brightly as she said, "I feel like I am good at drawing out people's feelings and making them think." Perhaps, with her well-honed observational skills that she has applied to art, she can also listen to the voices of people as well and help them express their individuality and potential.

(Interview and text writer: Yuko Hiratsuka)



The love for the production of musicals lives on through research and education

Although she works in the Faculty of Science and Technology, Araki teaches courses on the history of Western art at the Hiyoshi, Yagami, and Mita campuses of Keio University. She has carved out a unique niche for herself. Her research has won awards such as the Premio Daria Borghese, and her courses are also popular among students from departments other than the Faculty of Letters, such as Engineering. The source of this success? Araki says it started with musicals.

I heard that your interest in Western culture started with musicals. How did that happen?

When I was in middle school, I was really impressed by a performance I saw of the Takarazuka Revue. Of course, I was fascinated by the performances of the top stars like Yūki Amami and Maki Ichiro. I also loved the huge dresses of the female characters and the aesthetics of the world they were portraying. That play planted the seed for my interest in Western culture.

I know that you joined the choir in high school and went on to participate in musicals after graduation, but can you describe what that was like?

When I was in my third and final year of high school, my choir performed *Elisabeth* at the school's annual cultural festival. Since many of us wanted to continue performing after graduation, some of the original members got together and worked on a musical production. We acted on the stage about once a year. Sadly, the group stopped performing around the time that I started working at Keio.

You claim that these musicals have also been useful in your research and teaching, right?

Exactly. The goal of making a musical is to entertain the audience. I put everything even into little details in the process



of putting together a musical. I've found that this also works very well when I'm looking at artworks, analyzing them and writing academic papers. In musical productions, not only do I get to stand on stage, but I have often been entrusted with directing the actors, making rehearsal schedules, etc. In doing so, I devised ways to ensure that all members, with different levels of acting ability, could enjoy the performance while striving for a more advanced performance. These experiences have been invaluable when it comes to my classroom management skills.

What made you decide to pursue a career in Italian art history?

I had always enjoyed appreciating paintings and traveling, but the main reason was that I loved the Western art history classes taught by my supervisor, Prof. Yoshinori Kyotani (then at Kyushu University, now at Gakushuin University). Professor Kyotani respected my unique character and encouraged me to grow and follow my own path. Thanks to him, I was able to develop into the free thinker that I am today.

Did Italian art history present any difficulties for you as a Japanese person?

It was quite a task, but I particularly remember an incident during my first presentation in the first year of my Ph.D. program at the Sapienza University of Rome. One of the professors asked, in front of everyone, mind you, "Exactly how long have you been studying in Italy? Your presentation doesn't make any sense." The topics I discussed in that presentation ended up in a book that I published, which, I might add, would go on to win the Premio Daria Borghese.

It seems like it would be difficult to get anyone to appreciate your work with that kind of prejudice around. How did things change for you to get to where you are today?

When I felt that I had hit a wall with the instruction I was receiving at the Sapienza University of Rome, I stopped going to the university for about a year. At that time, an art historian told me about a one-year scholarship at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. I applied for the scholarship, even considering quitting Sapienza University if necessary. That was when things finally fell into place. I began to study with Prof. Salvatore Settis, an authority in the world of art history, and worked on my research in peace for a year. Prof. Settis was quick to evaluate my work. When he read about my achievements in Pisa, he said that it was "excellent research." Then, when I gave my subsequent presentation at the Sapienza University of Rome my supervising



faculty member, Prof. Curzi, was incredibly enthusiastic. This got the ball rolling again and opened the door for me to finally complete my doctoral dissertation.

You say that your research is "artwork first" and that you try not to get too caught up in established theories or common interpretations that other researchers have published while respecting them, could you elaborate on why this is?

The artwork is the main character in art history. I think it is important to discard my own preconceptions and try to observe what is in front of me as it is. In the classroom, I frequently use games to help students practice "eyes for art" to improve their ability to grasp visual information. Students are very surprised at how much fun they have and ask to do them more often. If you are interested in experiencing these games for yourself, I would love to see you enroll at Keio and take my classes. I can guarantee that it will change the way you see the world, and I think that these skills can also be applied by students in the Faculty of Science and Technology when they have to analyze their experiment results.

I am happy to say that many students have told me, "Before, when I went to art museums, I had no idea what to look for, so I usually left there without taking much time. Now, I can spend three or four hours completely immersed in my observations, and the next thing I know, it's closing time!" As a teacher, this is the best feedback you can get.

Is there anything you keep in mind when you give lectures?

I always try to remember to remain neutral and not to impose my own assumptions, even in my teaching activities. If I had to describe my teaching style, I would say that I try to have a "philanthropic" approach, where I love all my students equally. The first step in writing academic papers is always to rely on my intuition. I feel that I am drawing on a skill set that is completely separate from "rote learning." If possible, I also want my students to acquire some of these skills while they are still in college. To encourage this, I try to incorporate classroom activities where students are able to converse and create together, rather than just me talking at them all the time. I try to create an atmosphere in the classroom where students can openly exchange ideas.

Is this part of what you had in mind when you started the marbling workshops (as seen in the research introduction)?

Ultimately, despite all the difficulties and frustrations I encounter, I really enjoy my research in art history. Learning should, first and foremost, be fun. I try to incorporate playful elements into teaching. However, if I do this by making students draw or dance, for example, those who are not good at the given task may feel at a disadvantage. Marbling, on the other hand, is not a matter of skill. It is a technique that anyone can enjoy and feel satisfied with their final product.

Recently, I have been working together with Prof. Masayuki Kohiyama of Keio University's Department of System Design Engineering to experiment with sustainable initiatives that incorporate disaster prevention, citizen science, and art. For example, if disaster prevention maps or guides only say "this place is dangerous," readers may be intimidated and shy away. However, by incorporating art into the process, it may be possible to raise awareness while also having the participants enjoy learning about disaster preparedness.

I would like to create opportunities to hold workshops not only for Keio University students, but also for people of all ages in Japan and overseas. We may visit some of Keio's affiliated schools sometime soon. I look forward to meeting everyone when we do.

○ Some words from students ... **○**

• When I looked at class surveys filled out by students, I found a rare example that said this class is worth taking. It's incredible that she makes new discoveries that overturn established theories and argues in a way that even those of us without special knowledge can understand. I thought that the class was great because it made you think.

Prof. Araki is very kind and receptive to other people's ideas, so she helped create an atmosphere where it was easy for students to share their own interpretations and opinions. She also gave a lot of feedback on our group work. (This is a paraphrased summary based on conversations with two students.)

(Interview and text writer: Yuko Hiratsuka & Kaori Oishi)

For the full text of this interview •••••••
https://www.st.keio.ac.jp/en/kyurizukai/

I want to equip the next generation with the skills needed to research art history

Fumika Araki

Specializes in the history of Italian Renaissance art. She majored in art history at Kyushu University's School of Letters and later received a master's degree from the Department of Art Studies in the Graduate School of Humanities at the same university. In 2012, she received her Ph.D. in art history (Storia dell'arte) from the Sapienza University of Rome. In 2013, she began a postdoctoral position at the University of Tokyo through the JSPS Research Fellowship for Young Scientists. In 2015, she joined Keio University's Faculty of Science and Technology (Department of Foreign Languages and Liberal Arts) as an assistant professor. She was promoted to her current position in 2022. She received the "Foundation Award" from the Kajima Foundation for the Arts in 2013 and the "Premio Daria Borghese" in 2022.



Fumika Araki's ON and OFF

Connecting everyday experiences with research

I have always loved travel and art, so the line between my work and personal life when it comes to art history research is blurry at best. However, I think that all of my experiences, both the good ones and the bad ones, help to enrich my life and my research. When I think about it, there are so many things I should do or want to do that it feels like I've been running at top speed for as long as I can remember. I look forward to seeing what exciting things await me in the days ahead.





I am blessed to have good friends and a supportive community, including my classmates at the Sapienza University of Rome, my family, and my colleagues, some of whom are family friends. I cherish the time we get to spend together despite my hectic schedule.

This is especially true for my husband who (unlike me) is incredibly calm and naturally kindhearted. He is my best friend, and I am so grateful that he is always there to offer a level-headed opinion when I am working through a problem. I have learned that our lives are shaped by our encounters with other people.







I often visit museums here in Japan and abroad, regardless of my specialty, so I go see collections that are from the past, present, East, or West. I also like to travel, so I am quick to attend international conferences. Personally, I find that enjoying beautiful art and scenery, encountering new value systems, and eating delicious food (a personal favorite), are all important "fuel" for my research.



My life has changed dramatically since the birth and raising of my son. I remember thinking, in the midst of the incredible joy and emotions after the birth, struggling to process the fact that another human being had come out of my body, that I had committed myself to an absolutely



massive new project.
Balancing work and
parenting is no easy
task, but it is so
rewarding to care
for someone whose
presence means more
to me than my own
life.

I have taken many lessons in dance, piano, yoga, cooking, flower arranging, etc. One of my best learning experiences, however, is tea ceremony, which I took lessons for all the way from my first year in elementary school until college. When I went to



hiding in the bathroom to cry.

Even so, I absolutely love the culture of tea ceremony and still do it occasionally with my family. Recently, I have started doing ballet again to get back into shape and have been enjoying good food by taking a cooking class. The photo here is with Chef Watanabe, owner of the French restaurant, Les Sens.



I have found that my experience in musical production and my attitude of "entertaining the audience" have served me well as a researcher and teacher.





La Grande Officina. Arte Italiana 1460-1500 (André Chastel, Rizzoli)

Italian translation of Le Grand Atelier d'Italie 1460-1500 (1965), written by André Chastel, who taught art history at the University of Paris and the Collège de France. This book is an incredibly memorable read on Italian Renaissance art from my first year studying abroad at the Sapienza University of Rome. In order to fully grasp the words on the page, I have taken this book with me to museums and churches to explore the artworks it mentions. By comparing it with the French original and the Japanese translation, it has also proven to be a helpful guide in my language learning journey.

Kindai Kaigashi [A History of Modern Painting] (Shūji Takashina, Chuokoron-Shinsha)

When people hear the name Shūji Takashina, they usually think of Bi no Shisakuka Tachi [Those Who Contemplate Beauty] or Meiga wo Miru Me [How to Look at Masterpieces]. But the book I want to introduce today is Kindai Kaigashi. This book is a very easy to read, even for an inexperienced student of French art history like me. Like all his books, it is a commentary on art, but it is also a book that evokes emotion. I also feel that it is an excellent guide to how Japanese people can approach and understand Western art. I am constantly rereading Prof.

Takashina's works.

Kagaku no Hon [Book of Science] (Complete set of 10 volumes, Satoshi Kako, Doshinsha)

Now that I am a parent, I have had the wonderful experience of rediscovering Kako's picture books and experiencing a new depth to them that I didn't realize as a child. This 10-volume series uses things that are familiar to children in their environment to help them develop scientific thinking skills. In the seventh volume, Nandaka Boku ni wa Wakattazo [I figured out what it is!]. Children can learn about various materials and their properties. In the afterword, the author writes that memorization is not the most important thing, rather, "I wanted to pursue something simpler, deeper, and more fundamental --- a scientific attitude and the reason of science." I think this is a great series of books to remind us that learning is fun and can begin with the things closest to us before expanding outward.

Journey Under the Midnight Sun (Keigo Higashino, Shueisha)

Keigo Higashino is known for his incredibly detailed descriptions of action, people, and scenery, making it so that you can practically feel the temperature, hear the sounds, and experience the physical sensations that unfold as you immerse yourself in the story and watch the world of his books come alive before your very eyes. Although Journey Under the Midnight Sun takes a look at the dark side of humanity and there are some parts that are almost painful to read, I think that this book proves how Higashino has transcended the mystery genre and created a true piece of literature. It's also an absolute page-turner, so be prepared to lose some sleep!

Metamorphoses (Ovid, trans. by Zenya Nakamura, Iwanami Shoten)

Greco-Roman mythology, along with the Bible, is required reading when studying Western art history. Metamorphoses was written by the ancient Roman poet, Ovid, and describes various stories in which mythological characters are transformed into various creatures and objects. They are very entertaining and have served as inspiration for many of the dramas and children's stories we all grew up with. While these are "pagan" stories from a Christian perspective, their influence on Western thought cannot be understated. There were even medieval textbooks based on Metamorphoses that applied a Christian lens to these stories.

What does it actually mean to integrate art and science? Fumika Araki

Since 2022, I have been working with members of Associate Professor Jorge Almazan's lab at the Faculty of Science and Technology's Department of System Design Engineering to improve the atmosphere of the northern part of the Hiyoshi campus. The first thing we did was build the "Hiyoshi Pavilion" where the Fifth Building used to be. The following year we decorated the Green's Terrace with orange-colored films in order to make it feel more festive. To raise awareness of this initiative, Prof. Almazan and I scheduled regular events, lectures, and workshops to promote the students and

faculty members involved with our projects. We also displayed study models for the pavilion in the Hiyoshi Media Center (library). I believe that this project contributed some to the revitalization of that part of the campus. In addition, the "Hiyoshi Pavilion" created by the Almazan Laboratory was featured in the Italian architectural magazines *Area* and *Arketipo*. We received some feedback from first-year students who told us that they had heard about the project back when they were in high school.

However, I have to admit that I think the best part of the project is what happens behind the scenes. We have administrators involved in the project that allow all of our members to contribute using their unique strengths. The meetings are student-led, and everyone shares their thoughts and opinions openly with each other. Of the various projects I have been involved in, I feel that

none has been as open and transparent as this one, and this has inevitably led to incredible results. I think that this is a shining example of diversity in action. We have Prof. Almazan, who has cultural roots in Spain. We also have faculty members from the Yagami Campus and Hiyoshi campuses working together. In addition, faculty, staff, and students have crossed institutional boundaries to make this project a reality.

Running a project like this, on top of my regular teaching and research, takes a great deal of time and energy. I talk regularly with the ever-supportive secretary of the Hiyoshi Office of Art History about what else still needs to be done, and we work diligently for the event. And yet, when it is all over, I know we are all happy to have taken part. In some ways, preparing for an event reminds me of putting on a show. But perhaps I am possessed by the god of the stage.

理 工 学 Information

Keio Artificial Intelligence Center Creating a new center at the forefront of next-gen AI research

Keio University established the Keio Al Center (KAI) and appointed Komei Sugiura, a professor with the Department of Information and Computer Science at the Faculty of Science and Technology, as the director. KAI is based in part on a cooperative partnership with Carnegie Mellon University, one of the world's top universities in Al and robotics research and aims to promote research in cutting-edge Al technology while collaborating with industry leaders. The opening ceremony for KAI was held on September 24, 2024, with United States Ambassador Katherine E. Monahan and corporate representatives in attendance to celebrate the occasion.





For more information about KAI, please refer to the following press release. (Japanese language)

https://www.keio.ac.jp/ja/press-releases/files/2024/9/24/240924-4.pdf

Editor's postscript

The cover of this issue is based on the painting of the *Mona Lisa* as requested by Associate Professor Araki. When we went to shoot the cover, we used an image of the *Mona Lisa* to adjust and match Associate Professor Araki's pose to that of the original. During this process, everyone in the room commented with observations about the painting and its subject, discussing the model's physique, the way she placed her hands on the chair in front of her, and the angle of her face as it turned toward the painter.By the end of the session, I felt like I could see so many hidden details in the *Mona Lisa* that I had never stopped to consider before. I was hit with the realization that I had accidentally found myself enjoying the "art of appreciating art" that Associate Professor Araki had discussed during her interview. I like to think that this moment gave me a small glimpse into her world and research. (Fuhito Sugihara)

Issue Cover: An hommage to the Mona Lisa

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