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Panel title: Envisioning visions in the early-modern period

Organizer: Group for Early Modern Cultural Analysis

(F.N.R.S. – Université Catholique de Louvain)

Chair : James Clifton (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston)

**Walter S. Melion** (Emory University)

“‘Quae lecta Canisius offert et spectata diu’: The Pictorial Images in Petrus Canisius’s *De Maria Virgine* of 1577”

Published in 1577 as the second volume of Petrus Canisius’s two-part refutation of the Magdeburg Centuries, the *De Maria Virgine (Mariale)* offers a summa of Marian doctrine, but also doubles as a meditative text, whose five parts describe and justify the Virgin’s virtues. Prefacing each subsection is a woodcut print of an icon of Mary, accompanied by a poem expounding the image: the *Salus Populis Romani*, the Virgin as Daughter, Bride, and Mother of God, the Virgin Annunciate, the Virgin of Sorrows, and the Immaculate Conception (Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin). The prefatory woodcuts complement Canisius’s prefaces and certify that the *Mariale* issues equally from the author’s reading of Marian texts and viewing of Marian images (*quae lecta Canisius offert et spectata diu*). My paper examines how these prints implicitly represent the act of beholding the *effigies Mariae Virginis* as central to the program of the *De Maria Virgine*.

**Agnès Guiderdoni-Bruslé** (F.N.R.S. – Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium)

At the threshold of the image: Vision narratives

This paper will present an aspect of a research in progress, comparing the narratives and the pictures representing mystical visions, or rather visionary experiences in the early modern period. My point is to study the transcription (which is also the translation) of the visionary experience, then its perception by the reader and the beholder – its perception either as a mental image, inner image, or as a metaphor, a figure, or as (recalling) a material image. This is a heuristic way to try to follow the complex process of assimilation of a spiritual experience to an

image that is successively or simultaneously mental, verbal, and material. I will analyse vision narratives reported in manuscripts written in the 17th century by French nuns (mainly ursulines and Visitation nuns).

**Andrea Catellani** (Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium – GEMCA)

From Illusion to Truth. On Figures and Degrees of Vision in J. David's *Duodecim Specula* (Antwerp, 1610).

Image and vision are central elements in European spiritual culture of the early modern period. In particular, in the Jesuit literature, to see means also to contemplate and to meditate, and it means also to “discover God in all things”, following the example of St. Ignace Loyola's *Spiritual Exercices*. Visual images become “figures” in a really deep sense: they are capable of breaking the limits of senses, and of leading from the condition of fall to the rebuilding of the original divine image in man. The Jesuit Jan David gives us a wonderful example of this culture of visual spirituality with his *Duodecim Specula* (Antwerp, 1610). This rich meditative illustrated book is built around the central metaphor of mirror. The analysis will try to show which kind of vision is involved in the process of spiritual conversion. How vision and the subject of vision are represented, in texts and images? Which are the effects of this vision, and what are the links with the different elements of soul? How the crucial passage from illusion and appearance to truth is described and depicted? This close examination will involve some confrontation with another similar work, the Joseph Filère's *Le Miroir sans tache* (Lyon, 1636).