Winter 2018
ARTH 485/840

Prof. Una D'Elia

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course will explore the materials of Renaissance art, both such well-known and prestigious media as oil paint, gold, marble, and bronze and cheaper materials, such as clay, glass, wax, cloth, stucco, cork, and wood. Artists experimented with media, often mixing materials, by, for example, covering a sculpture made of wood, cork and tow with gesso, painting it, and then clothing it in fabric dipped in more gesso. Jewels and colored glass were inserted into bronze and marble sculptures and painted panels, and sculptures made of tinted wax were given human hair. Paintings were done on copper, stone, and ivory, as well as on the familiar panel or canvas. We will explore such questions as the ways in which cost of materials, their geographical sources, and methods of manufacture relate to meaning, examining how the heterogeneous stuff of Renaissance art conveys notions of class, gender, physical beauty, and spiritual power. This course thus challenges the traditional idea of the Renaissance as a succession of realistic perspectival paintings that create a window onto the world, in which the materiality of the work is irrelevant. We will explore instead a messier, more physical side of Renaissance art.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
A detailed list of readings and requirements will be available at the first class. In addition to discussion of readings and individual research projects, we will be visiting Art Conservation studios, The Agnes Etherington Art Centre, The Miller Mineralogical Museum, and other sites, and trying various techniques in order to study diverse materials first hand.