Risky Business: Public Portraits in Renaissance Italy

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Tools from economic analysis and art history – risk management and patronage studies, respectively – help us understand the complex dynamics involved when a powerful individual attempted to project a public image of self through an artistic commission. Such transactions constituted risks, as documented in a plethora of examples throughout history. In the first part of this presentation, Sutherland’s painting of Winston Churchill provides the basis for a new framework for considering portraits. The second part considers various Renaissance portraits that fit within the proposed categories, and the third part explores one case study in greater depth.

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