

THE OBJECT AS A WORK OF ART:
PROS AND CONS OF THE ART MARKET IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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It could be argued, I think, that the modern idea of a work of art—an object of intrinsic value independent of its subject, material, technique, function or provenance—was a Baroque creation, and that the development of this idea was intimately related to the development during the seventeenth century of a true art market. The purpose of the session will be to test this admittedly risky hypothesis in three basic and interrelated contexts: theory, that is, the development of a vocabulary, including the term "work of art" itself, serving to give verbal expression to the new concept and its ramifications; authenticity and originality, that is, the distinction in terms of value between autograph and copy or fake, and between master and assistant or imitator; and finally, the art market, that is, the role of free exchange not only in determining financial value, but also in establishing the very notion of aesthetic value as an independent category. Papers in any of these contexts will be welcome, with preference given to those proposing to discuss the conceptual framework in relation to concrete examples. Although the focus will be on the seventeenth century, this chronological unit will not be rigidly observed.