



Università Ca'Foscari Venezia

PROJECT ACRONYM AND TITLE: AUTOREN - Automata and Power in the Culture of Machines of Renaissance Florence, Milan and Venice (1400-1600)

FUNDING PROGRAMME: HORIZON 2020

CALL: H2020-MSCA-IF-2020 – Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellowship

DESCRIPTORS: History of philosophy, History of ideas, intellectual history, history of science, techniques and technologies, Epistemology, Logic, Philosophy of science

HOST DEPARTMENT: Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage

SCIENTIFIC RESPONSIBLE: Marco Sgarbi

FELLOW: Zanetti Cristiano

FINANCIAL DATA:

Project total costs	Overall funding assigned to UNIVE
€ 269.002,56	€ 269.002,56

ABSTRACT:

This interdisciplinary project aims to innovatively fill a gap in the fast-growing historiography on automata, focussing on the social, cultural and material history of these types of machines in Renaissance Italy. For the first time, AUTOREN will investigate the history of automata in the areas of Milan, Venice and Florence between 1400 and 1600. These three Northern Italian engineering traditions are among the most thriving early modern cultures of machines, and they have been researched for their seminal influences on the development of European useful machines: these are traditionally related to warfare, construction, hydraulic and industrial technologies and timekeeping. Surprisingly, the most elaborate mechanical achievements of Renaissance Italy did not belong to such a positivist idea of utility, but to those functions directed at animating a symbolic organism that conveyed a multi-layered intellectual message often undecipherable to our contemporary eye. AUTOREN will examine these other layers of the concept of mechanical utility in relation to philosophy, representation of power, knowledge-seeking activities, piety and marvel. Among these symbolic machines, for the first time, AUTOREN will comparatively explore state-funded mechanical projects such as cosmomorphic automata (planetary contrivances demonstrating the movements of all the heavenly bodies) and a surprisingly understudied group of still extant anthropomorphic automata (especially self-propelled spring-driven automata). Crafting a toolbox at the crossroads of archaeometry and the historiographies of philosophy, art, science and technology AUTOREN will be able to highlight overlooked Northern Italian contributions to technological innovation and trends in mechanical projects to European early modern culture of machines at the dawn of that long epistemological shift known as the Scientific Revolution.

Planned Start date	Planned End date
1 st October 2021	30 th September 2024

PARTNERSHIP:

1 California Institute of Technology	Pasadena (USA)	Coordinator
2 Università Ca' Foscari Venezia	Venice (IT)	Partner
