

Floriana Giallombardo (University of Palermo)

‘Paolo Boccone’s *curious observations* and the Commitment to Visual Communication of Natural History’

In his *Recherches et observations naturelles* (Amsterdam 1674) the botanist Paolo Boccone (1633- 1704) presents himself as an advocate of a new visual method. He was supported by Jan Swammerdam, with whom he shared his scientific observations. Boccone claims to be the first to apply microscopic dissection to figured stones, in order to distinguish accidental shapes from natural ones. Boccone, as many of the members of the scientific community with whom he corresponded, had a strong commitment to painstaking observation and visual communication, that he was able to handle on many levels. The allegorical frontispiece of *Researches* is aimed to present a range of moral and psychological attitudes of the new *natural observer*, drawing on Ripa’s *Iconologia* and its entanglement between word and image. At the same time, a descriptivist attitude is an essential feature for Boccone’s naturalistic illustrations: being fully aware of the need for reliable pictures in natural history, while not being a skilled draftsman, he commissioned professional draughtsman to obtain “images dans le naturel”. In some cases, notwithstanding his labor and expenses, the resulting figures disappointed him. For this reason - in order to pursue *truthfulness, beauty* and *perfection* of his illustrations - he started an original experimentation of direct *nature printing* of botanical specimens.

Floriana Giallombardo attends a PhD in European Cultural Studies at the University of Palermo, where she conducts research on Agostino Scilla, painter and eclectic exponent of the learned empiricism of late Seventeenth Century. As an art historian her research interests involve scientific visual culture, epistemology of images, theory of imagination, with a main focus on early modern Europe. In 2013-2014 she attended the Warburg Institute as a visiting researcher, in the meanwhile she took part to international conferences and wrote about *informational images*.