

## FLYING AND FLOATING IN EARLY MODERN SCULPTURE

My research project “Flying and Floating in Early Modern Sculpture” aims to shed new light on an art form that has been partially overlooked in current art historical research: sculpted works of art. Sculpture—together with painting and architecture—is historically one of the core disciplines in the field of Art History and was thus treated equally in early modern theoretical thinking. Sculpture in the early modern period derived from the statues of antiquity and the harmonized *contrapposto*. However, during the first half of the sixteenth century sculptors began to experiment with the image that had to be placed firmly on the ground. When the Fleming Giovanni da Bologna, called Giambologna (1529–1608), cast his first bronze sculpture of the flying *Mercury* he accomplished to loosen the tight grip between statue and its plinth.

The project will bring together a variety of different media, spanning early modern art theoretical treatises, sculptures, prints, as well as literature. A central question is why sculptors, artists, artisans, and scientist of natural philosophy began simultaneously to question the possibilities of flying and elevation. Da Vinci’s flying machines, the first bird’s eye view map, and Giambologna’s daring approach in bronze sculpting must have been located in similar scholarly circles. By applying art historical research together with theories from social studies, anthropology, theology, literature, and theatre, I want to investigate diachronically such early modern visualizations of flying and floating. My hypothesis is that sculpted art works reacted to contemporary innovative theories and publications while at the same time being the only artistic medium to achieve the illusion of elevation itself.