



BRILL

Winner of the Mattingly Prize, 2022:  
Bradley Cavallo, Independent Scholar

**How did you get into your current research field?**

*Bradley:* By accident. I cannot recall specifically but at one point in late 2018 while perusing the online database of the Galleria degli Uffizi's holdings, I came across Cristofano dell'Altissimo's portraits of Islamic rulers commissioned in the mid-sixteenth century by Duke Cosimo I de' Medici of Florence. The artworks lit my curiosity, and so I began to conduct research out of intrigue rather than any preconceived notion of where that research would lead.

**What have been the main challenges for the kind of research that you do?**

*Bradley:* Access to primary documents and specialized secondary literature presented the main challenge. The concurrence in 2020 of COVID-19, downsizing, and the birth of my first child severely limited my ability to procure the materials — and the time to read it — needed to conclude research. The increased digitization of materials mitigated this difficulty but nonetheless couldn't duplicate the serendipitous discovery of useful information made possible by *in situ* research in such conducive places as the Dutch Institute in Florence.

**Did the article for *Diplomatica* make you think differently about your research?**

*Bradley:* Yes with respect to methodology (introducing me to a field of literature with which I'd been previously unfamiliar) and not necessarily the process of the research itself. Originally, I trained as an art historian focused on the materiality of early modern artworks, i.e., the very substances of the making of the artworks, and the resulting consequences for their visual appearances and receptive interpretation(s). In the case of the artworks treated in my article, I needed to step back from the artworks' physicality, and to think instead of the larger corpus as a singular entity that existed as an *automata* with its own arc of conception, birth, and a gradual dissolution into constituent parts. This is to say that, thinking diplomatically pushed me to consider the artworks in-the-round as an agent of the three-dimensional space of early modern diplomatic encounters among/between other agents — in the broadest possible sense of generating the force of presence necessary to affect other agents.

**Regarding periodisation, what do you think, as an early modern historian, that the contribution of New Diplomatic History is in terms of the early modern / modern-contemporary history divide? What does the consideration of diplomacy as a subject of study over a longer time space bring to the field?**

*Bradley:* New Diplomatic History generates an opportunity to diminish the early modern / modern-contemporary history divide. Although this might sound naïve or taken for granted, I find it useful to recall to myself that periodisation arbitrarily demarcates the scope of each era in the same way that ethno-centric studies do. And just as the Global Turn has begun to penetrate geographical divisions, so too can diplomacy as a subject of study build a more cohesive, diachronic history of socio-political relationships. In both fields, the carefully studious transgression of orthodoxies reveals aspects of historical truths because they involve humans participating in demonstrably analogous activities across space and time.

[Cosimo I de' Medici's Dissimulation of Diplomacy in the \*Guardaroba Nuova\*](#), in *Diplomatica* 4:1.