

文藝復興時期佛羅倫斯性別意識之解碼：
多納太羅兩件〈大衛〉雕塑的符號結構
—— 形式分析

Deciphering Gender in Renaissance
Florence: A Linguistic-formalistic Analysis
of Donatello's *David* Sculptures

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摘 要

形式主義最初是在 20 世紀初期奠定其作為藝術史學科中重要研究方法的地位，然而，隨著 20 世紀晚期跨領域研究的趨勢，形式主義所關注的議題也從藝術品自身轉向揭示藝術品與社會中，例如階級、種族、及性別等多元現象之間的關聯。本研究是以文藝復興早期雕塑家多納太羅的兩件〈大衛〉雕塑為材料，將藝術品視為社會文化意識昇華後的思緒結晶，藉此透過雕塑品的風格形式，探究文藝復興時期藝術品與社會不同階層群體之性別及情慾意識。

本文是以形式主義的論點切入，並參考當代學者大衛·桑默斯，以及惠特尼·戴維斯兩人對藝術品形式風格和性別議題辯證論述的形式主義理論為基礎。桑默斯的理論關注藝術創作概念中使用修辭學「對立」形式以增添作品輪廓多元化，此概念促發筆者察覺多納太羅雕塑品中符合此論點的對立形式結構。另一方面，戴維斯則是注重藝術形式在社會結構脈絡中的闡釋與解讀，並認為藝術形式中的性別元素皆是社會語言結構的具象呈現。戴維斯的理論讓我得以比較兩件主題且形式結構相似的〈大衛〉雕塑，因為擺設地點不同，被重新編碼賦予的多層意義。透過兩種閱讀藝術形式的切入角度，本研究將〈大理石大衛〉以及〈青銅大衛〉與展示場域的社會脈絡融合，並提出〈大理石大衛〉的形式設計是針對公共的宗教場域，且擺設地點位於政治象徵意味濃厚的宮殿會議室，因此其性別特徵更切合社會中的傳統男性視線。而透過比較兩件作品形式中性別特徵表現手法，以及其擺設地點的差異，進而論述〈青銅大衛〉作品中與社會中酷兒觀看主體的性別情慾凝視間的連結。

關鍵詞：多納太羅、大衛像、形式分析、同性情慾、酷兒理論

Abstract

The formalism study was first developed as an academic discipline in the early twentieth century; however, along with the cross-disciplined design since late twentieth century, it has turned into an approach revealing the formal structure between artwork and other social phenomena such as social hierarchy, ethnics, and gender. In this paper, I explore two early Renaissance *David* sculptures by Donatello. My attempt is to investigate sexual desire through the formal configurations in terms of sublimation of cultural identity underpinning hitherto socio-cultural reality, searching for the centripetal force consolidating the gender in the Renaissance society.

The methodology of this paper is based on two studies: “Form and Gender” by David Summers (1993), and “Gender” by Whitney Davis (1996). On the one hand, Summers’ theory helps me to observe how Donatello transfers the rhetorical skill, antithesis, into the formal design of sculpture. On the other hand, Davis analysis is supportive to read artwork in the social fabric synthetically; moreover it allows me to investigate the gendering elements in two *David* statues. After comparing the formal elements in two *David* statues along with their displaying locations during the Renaissance, I suggest the masculinity in Marble David is correlated with its religious purpose and the public symbol of the government; and the androgynous figure of Bronze David is not ascribed to Donatello’s homosexual tendency; instead, it is a visual evidence of the queer subject in the fifteenth century Florentine social fabric.

**Keywords: Donatello, *David*, Formal Analysis, Homoeroticism,
Queer Theory**

I. Donatello's *David* and the cultural background

In the course of the fifteenth century, Donatello was commissioned to create a statute of David twice - once in marble (Fig. 1), and the other in bronze (Fig. 2). According to the survived contracts, the *Marble David* was accomplished in 1409, originally for decorating the choir buttresses inside the Florence cathedral¹; it was purchased in 1416 by the Florentine government, and displayed in the *Palazzo Vecchio* with an additional inscription on the pedestal.² Having been fused with the gothic and all'antica styles graciously, it became one of the most famous works in Donatello's early career, marking the changing trend in aesthetics at the turn of the Medieval and the Renaissance period, as well as establishing a new iconographical reference to David and Goliath.³

The *Bronze David*, commissioned much later, displaying sophisticated all'antica and naturalism elements exemplifies the pinnacle of Donatello's creative finesse. This work is outstanding as the

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- 1 Joachim Poeschke, *Donatello and His World: Sculpture of the Italian Renaissance*, trans. Russell Stockman (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1993), 337. Donatello was commissioned on February 20, 1408. However, this statue was never placed as the origin plan due to the size is too small for such a height, and then moved to Palazzo Vecchio in July 1416 with some minor adoption for its new location.
 - 2 John Pope-Hennessy, *Donatello: Sculptor* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993), 17. Although the *Marble David* was not installed in the cathedral as the original plan and stored in the workshop for couple years, its wide spread fame attracted new buyer, the Florentine government, and were placed in the *sala grande* of Palazzo Vecchio.
 - 3 Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, *History of Italian Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, 5th ed. (N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2003), 307.

first, since antiquity, free-standing nude figure sculpture of real-life size; however, without historical evidence to approve its creation date, motif, patronage, and the location, it is difficult to properly determine the range and the depth of the impact of Donatello's creation. The surviving documents referring to the *Bronze David* recorded its original display location as a semi-public courtyard of the Medici Family's mansion, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi where it had been standing from 1469;⁴ in 1495, it was moved to the stairway of Palazzo Vecchio, inside the city hall of the Florentine government.⁵

For Renaissance artists, it was not unusual to reproduce their most famous and admirable works for different patrons. Therefore, not only did reusing sketches become a common marketing strategy, but also a symbol of artists' fame and popularity in the society.⁶ However, while creating the second David statue, instead of reproducing an identical version, Donatello abandoned most of the design of the marble one, and created a nude adolescent with unclear gendering elements. The formal composition of the *Bronze David* has aroused numerous hypotheses and speculations in the academic studies regarding presumable

4 H.W. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 78. On December 9, 1495, "a David was brought from the house of Piero de' Medici to the Palazzo Vecchio and placed in the center of the courtyard there."

5 Pope-Hennessy, *Donatello: Sculptor*, 147.

6 Michelle O' Malley, *Painting under Pressure: Fame, Reputation and Demand in Renaissance Florence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

homoeroticism embedded in the artwork. What has, however, been generally ignored by scholars, are the continuity of the motif and formal design, and the similarity of displaying locations of the *marble* and the *Bronze David* during the Renaissance.

These locations of two David statues were both the most significant civic centers to the contemporary Florentines; thus, I argue that in such a venue these two sculptures accumulate different ideologies from different social classes, including their religion, polity, as well as their concept of eroticism. Therefore, through examining and comparing the referents and inflections of gendering agreements in the two statues, it is possible to avoid the hitherto pathological diagnosis as androgyny and pedophilia in regard to the homoeroticism hypotheses often associated with the statues,⁷ and to investigate sexual desire in terms of sublimation of the cultural identity underpinning hitherto socio-cultural reality, as well as the centripetal force consolidating the social agreement of gender. For this purpose, it is necessary to develop a new scientific approach that can examine both the formal design of artworks and the contextualization of artworks and the spectators in the social context.

7 Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello*, 85; Adrian W.B. Randolph, *Engaging Symbols: Gender, Politics, and Public Art in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 166; John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: The Fine Arts*, vol. 3, *Renaissance in Italy* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1906), 100-1.

II. The form of gender in visual arts: the adoption of linguistics in formalistic approach

During the twenty-first century, formalism has transformed from a monotonous art history study into a more extensive approach with its cross-disciplined methodology. Modern scholars such as David Summers and Whitney Davis examine wide-range social phenomena, *e.g.* economic, race, and gender, through the formal representational of artwork; although their perspectives and interpretations of gender in artistic form are focused on different dimensions, nevertheless, they both regard the formal configurations in artwork as signifiers, which implicate, on the one hand, signified indications, and on the other, a social and cultural framework of this formal signal system.

A. The hierarchical order of gendering elements

The importance of formal analysis in art history and art criticism, given to David Summers, was based on the capacity of its systematic language. By applying this language, the historians can discuss the internal realm within artwork itself; retrospect the spirit of the artist or even the specific period, school, and race; also, to describe the outward relationship between the viewer and the artwork. The formalistic analysis regards “form” as a universal language due to the post-Kantian metaphysics believes that the world governed by the nonmimetic idea. With proper method, the form of artwork can assist viewer reaching the synthetic comprehension of all expressions of the human beings.

Consequently, form, on the one hand, is the nonvisible and intellectual component in the artwork; on the other hand, it is itself an expression of the human spirit.⁸ If the art history discipline abandons or forgets this language, it will inevitably face a predicament that the discipline fails to talk about the artwork itself anymore.

According to Summers, language, both word and its meaning, was created within the cultural historical context; therefore, to retrospect the etymological development provides an analogical method of reconsidering the meaning of artistic form, amplifying the connotation of form in the artwork, and consequently referring to broadly understood social contextual history. Namely, the representational object in the artwork can be read as a sign: its formal appearance is the signifier that leads to a correspondent signified. Following this proposition, the artwork is consist of contemporary collective memory that involves in the whole cultural experience in the history.

Summers' semiotic perspective indicates that each gender possesses a distinctive signifier and signified; with the inquiry of the etymological denotation in the artistic form, the historians can reconstruct the ideology of gender in the signal system. Summers points out the intimate relationships between Latin and Greek philosophy and their influences

8 David Summers, "'Form,' Nineteenth-Century Metaphysics, and the Problem of Art Historical Description," in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 374.

on formal configuration of the artwork. He notices that the concept of antonyms, *e.g.* day and night, fire and water, light and darkness, is not only used by writers for elevating rhetorical properties of article or speech; it is also adopted by the artists during the Renaissance to create more elaborate visual quality in the artworks. The conceiving practice of visual “antithesis” consequently corresponds with both the contemporary taste of art, and the acknowledgement of Greco-Roman etymology by Renaissance artists.

The use of antithetical word pairs in literature, or form in visual art, originated in the Aristotle’s analogy between the natural reproduction process and that of making the artifacts: both processes require *form* and *matter*, yet in the natural environment the male’s semen serves as the vehicle for an idea of form which possesses the power to shape the final appearance; on the contrary, the female’s womb plays a more neutral and passive roles which provides potentiality and awaits the arrival of the semen. These two elements, *form* and *matter*, thus was related intimately with the idea of gender, male and female. Although the antithetical concepts supplement each other, in fact they are placed in a hierarchical order where the former is supreme than the latter.

The concept of hierarchical order in genders, as Summers points out, is obvious in Michelangelo’s sculpture *Night*, his painting *Leda and the Swan*, and in the Paolo Veronese’s painting *Vision of St. Helen*. Michelangelo’s metaphorical figure of night as a woman is clearly related to the Aristotelian belief that night a matrix; the woman in *Leda and the Swan* is unresistingly submissive to the swan, which represents

Zeus himself; in *Vision of St. Helen*, she is passively waiting for the vision delivered by the angles. All three works was depicted eye-closed women as a metaphor of the secondary properties in the pair of antonyms words: feminine, passive, waiting, and sleeping.

In light of the Aristotelian doctrine, this hierarchy became the most important part firstly in language, than in the visual arts. Summers denotes that the whole human culture is created by two contrasting and inequivalent elements, male and female. From an analogical, broader perspective, the antithetical words and visual forms are naturally complementary to each other. Thus to a degree, they inherit the cultural and social bias toward female even though most of language users and viewers of artwork may not consciously acknowledge such a connotation. However, Summers' binary hypothesis only deals with two opposite genders — male and female — which leaves no room for other sexual interpretation such as the queer gaze. Therefore, I turn to another scholar, Whitney Davis, and reexamine his proposition in regard to form and gender in the visual arts.

B. The social agreement of gender in representational system

For Whitney Davis, his perspective of using linguistic structure to study artistic form is significant different from David Summers' proposition. The semiotic perspective by David Summers indicates each gender possessing distinctive signifier and signified; thus with the inquiry of the etymological denotation in the artistic form, the historians can comprehend the ideology of gender in the signal system.

However, Davis, who also supports the indispensable importance of the formal approach regarding the academic research in the history of art, emphasizes more on the influence of grammar in the signal formulating system. As he notices, words undergo morphological transformations in order to reach concord with the whole context. Applying this grammatical concept to deciphering strategy of the formal configurations in artwork, *i.e.* the representational form of art can be seen as word, which has its individual meaning by itself; but it is necessary to bear in mind that the formal configuration varies depending on the ruling subject and the social agreement. Due to the fact that grammatical rules are created according to the social agreement, thus to understand the rules can help viewers comprehend the phenomenon of gender in artwork as well.

In order to discuss the formal configurations of genders and their representational rules in the artwork, Davis suggests two dimensional approaches: one is to address the “gender *in* representation”, marking the significant differences between male and female, and their different properties such as the sexual genitals. Another called “gender *of* representation,” indicates that a pre-existing subject from the dominant gendering gaze — male or female, or even neither of them — is in charge of the cohesive agreement between different elements in the representational system. Davis regards the gender as an agreement decided by the social interest, convention, and hierarchy; he concludes four grammatical rules that embedded in the social agreements about gender in the visualizing system: social salience, social distinction,

social hierarchy, and government and binding.⁹ The three former rules are focus on the differences between each gender over all; but the latter one: government and binding, concentrates on the grammatical system, cultural identity and judgment of gender it inherited. All the formal elements (human and nonhuman objects) need to conform to the agreement in the limited context. This rule also implicates the dominance of the subject existing and controlling the cohesion in the context even without appearing physically in the artwork.

He regards gender as an agreement decided by the social interest, convention, and hierarchy; moreover, the formal representation of gender is blended with the conventional referent and the inflection that occurs within a limited socio-historical sphere. Consequently, as a contextualized feature, gender encompasses sub-gendering, queer classes within its range, and shall be perceived more as continuum rather than a binary and polarized phenomenon where male stays in clear opposition to female.

Davis manifests this theory with two slightly different versions of *Young Spartans* both painted by the nineteenth century French artist Edgar Degas. In both paintings, Degas conceives totally four figure groups, two male and two female. With the conventional clothes and genitals exposed, the gender of Degas's figure seems unmistakable

9 Whitney Davis, "Gender," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. and Richard Shiff Nelson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 338-9.

in regard to the traditional gaze. The viewers can easily recognize the gender of figures in these two paintings primary because of the significant difference in the formal composition: the diametrical opposite position of two young groups in the foreground, along with two adult groups behind them, foretells the destiny of these young Spartan boys and girls, and assimilates the ambiguous formal gendering elements into its conventional gender category.

Although Degas uses the adult groups as examples to dismiss the *bizarrerie* caused by those young figures for the sake of complying with the conventional male gaze in the nineteenth century society; it is hard to deny the gender referents have been inflected in these two paintings. It is noteworthy that some young figures in foreground in the right group are showing only their backs without exposure of their genitals; the young girls in the left group, with short hair and displaying fierce body language, to an extent, disobey the social agreement of female under the male gaze. From this point, Davis argues that those figures implicate Degas' attempt to replace the conventional referent of the genders with a non-standard, queer, gendering system. Depends on different perspective, these unclear figures can be seen as the inflection of a sub-gendered male (female) subject, reflecting the homoerotic gaze; thus results in the interpretation of the painter's homoerotic desire.

Following the grammatical analogy, Davis suggests deciphering the formal structure of agreement in the artwork for the purpose of recognizing the dominant class and its agreement. This research structure allows the historians to avoid the traditional binary separation

between male and female, masculinity and femininity; then to inquire the other gendering classes and its sexuality presented in the artistic form.¹⁰ Davis' grammatical method connects the formalistic discipline in the history of art field with the social historical framework, creating a new discourse in terms of the formulating process of the gender and the sexuality in different classes; meanwhile, it juxtaposes the artwork with other contemporary evidences, suggesting a synchronic and synthetic formalistic discipline.

C. Hybrid nature: the adoption of linguistics in formalistic analysis

After having examined the semiotic and grammatical analogies proposed by Summers and Davis respectively, I have noticed the hybrid nature of a new linguistic-formalistic approach. The study of gendering conventions in the society by Summers can be seen as part of Davis' theory, gender *of* representation, and helps to understand how Donatello transfers the rhetorical skill, antithesis, into the formal design of visual arts, and how he inflected the conventional representational system. On the other hand, along with Davis' grammatical aspect of gender *in* representation, it exemplifies the way of identifying various gendering gazes that dominates the system.

10 Whitney Davis, "Sexuality," in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Both approaches can be used to understand the gendering forms in the artwork; while the Summers' model marks the sexual difference in the system; the Davis' appears to be more important for it discusses the difference of genders not merely within the representational system but in a larger social context, pointing out that the gendered forms in the artwork, in fact, are conformed to the preexisting gendering subject that controls all formal rules in the context. This doctrine raises awareness of the distinguishing differences between each gendering classes; it also endows the formal configurations with credibility in tracing back the original grammatical agreement in the social historical constrains. This research structure allows the historians to avoid the traditional binary separation of male and female, masculine and feminine, and opens then to inquire the other gendering classes and their sexuality presented in the artistic form. By synthesizing linguistic and formalistic studies, this new method is capable of discussion of form and gender in visual arts through the artwork itself, and through intertextualization within the social framework.

III. The linguistic-formalistic perspective of Donatell's Two *David* sculptures

A. Searching for gendering forms in Two *David*

Focusing on the study of human figures in the Renaissance artwork, Summers notices in his studies of Renaissance human figures, the

serpent line of human figure, *contrapposto*, is the visualization of the Greco-Roman rhetorical skill-antithesis, which was developed according to the binary separation of male and female in the society.¹¹ However, the application of rhetorical skills-antithetical design is ostensible in Donatello's works not only on the *contrapposto* of figures, but also on the decorative details.

In both *David* sculptures, Donatello depicted David as young hero instead of the traditional mature man image as King or Prophet; moreover he does not adopt the iconographic design of triumphant David holding Goliath's head, as Taddeo Gaddi's fresco in Florence (Fig. 3), but conceives David stepping on the head of Goliath. The composition of David standing over Goliath amplifies the hierarchical order between two characters; also it signals the innovation and creativity of Donatello.

In *Marble David*, Donatello attempted to endow *Marble David* with admirable masculine merits as he did in another sculpture of his – *Saint George* (Fig. 4). Both characters, David and St. George, are God-blessed warriors; they act serenely and fearlessly, their faces are magnanimous, noble and pious. It is clear that the two statues both have the immanent characteristics of heroic virtues, such as bravery, activity, decisiveness,

11 David Summers, "Contrapposto: Style and Meaning in Renaissance Art," *The Art Bulletin* 59, no. 3 (1977): 339.

and creativity. Donatello conceived the heroic character in marble to enforce the boy's masculinity and virtues, as well as to contrast with the viciousness of human beings represented by Goliath, along with numerous other instances of the antithetical formal contrast, such as: alive and dead, standing and lying, open and closed eyes, peaceful and ferocious facial expression; hair texture.

These clear antithetical formal contrasts, therefore, on the one hand, fit into the traditional male gaze concept, and reinforce it at the same time. On the other hand, unlike the distinctive antithetical design of *Marble David*, the formal design of *Bronze David* is, to an extent, incompatible with the traditional social agreement of masculinity. The nudity of David is not just a technique display of lifelike tactile value of human skin, but also stimulates the sensational imagination of viewers of female rather than the male body; thus it enhances the feminine features of this statue that redirects viewers' attention from the moral allegory to the corporeal expression of this object – the expression that is, in fact, of feminine nature.

However, to add to that perplexity, the feminine quality does not dominate this work either. There are two elements primarily that counterbalance the *Bronze David*'s feminineness. First, Donatello put a sword into David's right hand, with which David had slain Goliath. Additionally, a feather tuft being the panache of dead Goliath's helmet intimately embraces the David's right leg and stretches nearly up to his groin (Fig. 5). From the etymological perspective, the feather symbolizes a bird, and *bird* means in Italian language male genitals;

that notion is even further reinforced by the sword that is obviously a phallic symbol.¹²

On the perspective of bible story, the sword was originally belonged to Goliath; in the formal configuration, the feather was part of the giant Goliath's armor. These two elements build the interacting, flowing, but unsteady gendering connection between two characters; I, therefore, propose that in addition to the nudity of this statue, which is common in lots of Florentine artwork in fifteenth century,¹³ the controversy of *Bronze David* is more profoundly accused by the inflection of conventional gendering elements in formal configurations. Donatello tries to complement David's lack of masculinity by allotting Goliath's male attributes to the formal configuration of David. Nonetheless, his alternations contradicted the traditional gendering references, and resulted in an ambiguous gendering referent floating between masculine and feminine, which did not fit in the dominant male gaze in society.

B. The gendering agreement and the influence in artwork: location and its viewers

So far, the formal analysis of two statues lends itself to explanation of the gendering elements in the representational system; according to

12 Randolph, *Engaging Symbols: Gender, Politics, and Public Art in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, 170-2.

13 Ibid., 153-4.

Davis, the next step is to evaluate the mutual agreements of gendering references from the artists and the spectators from the perspective of the social context. The display locations of both *David* statues had served as remarkable civic spaces in Florence, and they naturally were permeated by social and cultural traditions. Thus, the variations of formal configurations thus make these two *David* statues become ideal to examine the referent and inflections of gendering agreements in different social classes. Moreover, I propose to apply Davis' theory gender of representation for seeking the secondary, queer, gendering agreement in the society.¹⁴

Following Davis' purport, the legitimacy of the *Marble David* as a masculine hero was amplified not only through its intended clear antithetical formal contrasts but simultaneously by the spectators themselves who endowed the statue with conventional male gaze within the political social framework in Sala dei Gigli in Palazzo Vecchio, which is decorated with Florentine symbols such as Lilly and Lion. Under this political environment, the viewers can easily connect *Marble David* with the authority of this city, therefore not only the original design was for the city's religious center, but also the later location of this work must comply with the dominate sexuality in the society, *i.e.* the heterosexuality.

14 Davis, "Gender," 342.

On the other hand, recent reconstruction study of *Bronze David* indicates that the *Bronze David* was installed in the middle of the courtyard of *Palazzo Medici-Riccardi* and faced the city's thoroughfare *Via Larga* (Fig. 6 and Fig. 7).¹⁵ Based on this setting, Adrian W.B. Randolph suggests two viewing points of this statue, the front and the back, and establishes hypothesis that Donatello designed the front and the back part for two classes of spectators, the ordinary public and the Medici elites. He suggests that the front part of this statue that facing the street is complied with the conventional public gaze; however, the back part is exclusively to fulfill the homoerotic desire for Medici family since only the family members can use the stairway. His analysis of *Bronze David*'s homoerotic was based on Davis' theory "representation *in* and *of* gender". Through distinguishing two viewing points, the front and the back, he establishes hypothesis that Donatello designed the front and the back part of *Bronze David* with different erotic gaze in order to satisfy variously erotic desires in different viewing classes.¹⁶ However, this claim loses its validity after taking into consideration that *Bronze David* eventually left the courtyard of Palazzo Medici-Riccardi; therefore, it is more reasonable to regard artwork and its location as an entirety, then to investigate the agreement of representation in the context.

15 Firenze Musei, *Donatello: Il David Restaurato* (Firenze: Giunti, 2008), 28-33.

16 Randolph, *Engaging Symbols: Gender, Politics, and Public Art in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, 142-3, 149-50.

In contrast to the religious and political connotations of the *Marble David*, which were dominated by male authority in the society, consequently the interpretation of this statue was linked with the conventional masculine values. The locations of the *Bronze David*—firstly in the courtyard of *Palazzo Medici-Riccardi*, and later in the stairway of the town hall, both implicate a significant factor of the *Bronze David* statue: its inappropriateness to display under pure male gaze spheres. While the *Bronze David* was initially designed for the *Palazzo Medici-Riccardi* with its all constraints coming from the private status of the venue, the semi-public and semi-domestic location provided Donatello with more freedom in inflecting the male gendering referents in the traditional representational system.

The ambiguity emerging from the *Bronze David* figure: adolescent or adult, fearsome boy with feminine features, corresponds perfectly with the ambiguity of the character of the display location: semi-public/private, and semi-political/residential, or maybe neither; and as much as the venue exemplifies a new type of social loci coming to life in the Renaissance, the iconic androgyny captured by Donatello in *Bronze David* signals the birth of a new category of Renaissance audience, an audience that was ready and able to perceive the statute not as a product of homoerotic tendencies residing in the very author of the statue, or in Renaissance artists or the Medici elites in general, but as an outcome of an interplay of opposite, contradictory vital forces that brought queer subjectivity to existence.

IV. Conclusion

During the twenty-first century, formalism study has moved from a monotonous art history boundary to a more extensive scope along with the cross-disciplined methods. Much of its essence as an academic method to deal with the objective configurations was developed in the course of late nineteenth to early twentieth century by Heinrich Wölfflin. His formalistic categories aim to create clear principals, then to comprehend the specific spatio-temporal conditions through artwork.¹⁷ In order to supplementing formalistic approach in order to deal with contemporary academic interests in the social context, scholars like David Summers and Whitney Davis exemplify the way to inquire issues such as gender in the formal representational system in light of the linguistics study. On the one hand, Summers uses artistic form as a signal, and retrospect the etymological origin to elucidate the hierarchical order in the gender representation. On the other hand, Davis regards formal representation as an embodiment of social and cultural agreements; consequently, it is possible to identify the social agreement of gender in the artwork. Moreover, it is necessary to distinguish the ruling gender and its agreement firstly, then to inquire the meanings of different formal configurations in artwork.

17 David Summers, "Form and Gender," *New Literary History* 24, no. 2 (1993): 385.

The purpose of applying the linguistic-formalistic analysis was to examine the artwork as a complex integrating intersubjective sexual desire in the social and cultural fabric. Donatello's young heroic David has deeply influenced the artistic tradition of this motif in Florence, both iconographically and formalistically.¹⁸ However, it is also noteworthy that Donatello tries to express different ideologies to the viewers with the same motif. The masculinity in *Marble David* is correlated with its religious purpose and the political symbol of the government; therefore, it was conceived as a work following the tradition and complying with the "appropriateness" standards of the Renaissance Florentine publicity. In contrast, the alteration of gendering agreement in *Bronze David*, along with its displaying location, indicates that queer eroticism has emerged and been cultivated in the society, and changed the representation system of gender. In light of the new methodological scope, the interpretation of androgyny in *Bronze David* is not ascribed to Donatello's homosexual tendency; instead, it is a visual evidence of the queer subject in the fifteenth century Florentine social fabric.

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18 Randolph, *Engaging Symbols: Gender, Politics, and Public Art in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, 155-60.

Figures:

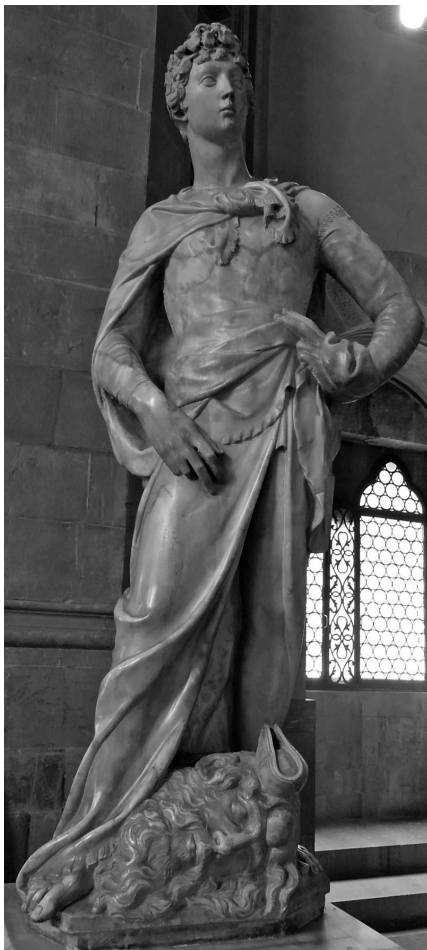


Fig. 1 Donatello, *Marble David*, marble, 191cm height, 1408-9, Museo del Bargello, Florence. (Photo: Ko-Ching Chao)



Fig. 2 Donatello, *Bronze David*, bronze, 158cm height, 1430?-50?, Museo del Bargello, Florence. (Photo: Ko-Ching Chao)



Fig. 3 Taddeo Gaddi, *David*, fresco, 1330-5, Santa Croce, Florence. (Photo: Ko-Ching Chao)



Fig. 4 Donatello, *St. George*, marble, 209 cm height, 1415-7, Museo del Bargello, Florence. (Photo: Ko-Ching Chao)



Fig. 5 Donatello, *Bronze David* detail, bronze, 158cm height, 1430?-50?, Museo del Bargello, Florence. (Photo: Ko-Ching Chao)

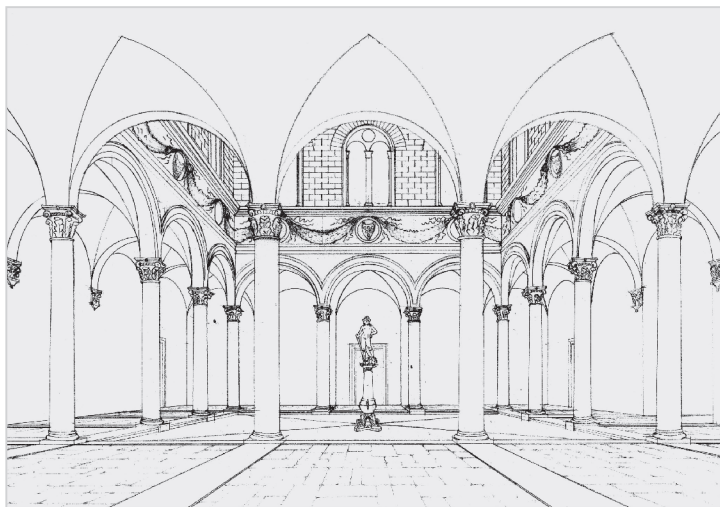


Fig. 6 The reconstruction of *Bronze David* in the courtyard of *Palazzo Medici- Riccardi* in 1495. (Designed by Themistocle Antoniadis)¹⁹



Fig. 7 The courtyard of *Palazzo Medici-Riccardi*.²⁰

19 Firenze Musei, *Donatello: Il David Restaurato*, 33.

20 Ibid., 32.

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