



2 December 2022

## 51<sup>st</sup> Basel Renaissance Colloquium:

# Dark Renaissance

While the European Renaissance is typically associated with major artistic, technological, and scientific advancements, their concrete social and political ramifications remain comparatively underexplored. The 51<sup>st</sup> Basel Renaissance Colloquium will seek to discuss these forgotten sides of Renaissance history: *Dark Renaissance* invites us to consider the Renaissance as a period of disruption and upheaval. In particular, we propose to focus on three interrelated thematic axes, giving rise to the following lines of questions (among others):

### ➤ Violence & War

Was there a specific Renaissance brand of violence? Did the re-orientation towards classical antiquity also restore corresponding attitudes towards violent practices? What is the specific Renaissance relationship between warfare and its representation within cultural and aesthetic ideals? Could Renaissance culture even be regarded as an extension of the European Dark Ages, that is, a period particularly prone to violence and violent behaviour as well as social decline? How was violence (and its social and political justifications) renegotiated in light of new theological and/ or humanist impulses and moral ideals?

### ➤ Political Culture

The Renaissance is often thought of as a period of emerging institutions that laid the (theoretical, constitutional, administrative) foundations of the modern state, but can Renaissance political culture truly be regarded as progressive to the wider contemporary experience? To what extent were phenomena such as exile, conspiracy, revolt, and censorship defining characteristics of Renaissance politics and society? How did political actors conceive of political authority and its enforcement, and to what extent was there a conflict between political thought and practice (e.g. Machiavellian vs. humanist ideals; monastic pacifism vs. knightly militarism; *miles christianus* as a unitary model of political authority combining ecclesiastical and secular elements)?

### ➤ End of Times

How did the Renaissance experience of mass death (through the technological intensification of warfare, the rapid spread of infectious disease through established trade routes etc.) affect contemporary perceptions of humankind and the cosmos? How did notions of imminent apocalypse define popular imaginations and contemporary scholarly discourse? To what extent did military and pandemic catastrophes trigger cultural shifts in terms of daily practices, modes of artistic expression, theological and philosophical orientations, and/ or political organisation?

The meeting is intended to address these and related questions from a multitude of angles, including (but not limited to) visual and material culture, political thought, family and gender, political institutions, mentalities, and/ or social practices. We particularly welcome contributions that cut across the outlined thematic scope by combining perspectives from cultural, social, political, and art history and/ or the history of science and medicine. The meeting will allow for individual presentations of about 30 to max. 40 minutes in length, followed by questions and a final roundtable discussion.