

Maud Alice Wilson Cruttwell (1860–1939)

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An art historian and a prolific author of monographs on Renaissance artists, Maud Cruttwell (*Fig. 1*) was a disciple of Bernard Berenson and influenced by the aesthetic circle of Vernon Lee. Born of a Jewish mother in an Anglican household, Cruttwell later converted to Catholicism under the influence of the society hostess Lady Ottoline Morrell.

Around the age of thirty, having trained as a painter in London, she moved to Florence where Lee introduced her to Mary Costelloe in 1894. While working in Mary's house, Cruttwell also started to assist Berenson



Fig. 1: Unidentified sitter, probably Maud Cruttwell (identification proposed by Tiffany Johnston), date unknown, photograph, Biblioteca Berenson, Villa I Tatti, Florence, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies.
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with research in art history. After placing a few articles in the *Art Journal* and the publication of her first monograph *Luca Signorelli* (1899), Cruttwell's scholarship developed independently from that of the Berensons. Her six monographs published between 1899 and 1907 show an affiliation with the scientific method of connoisseurship and the aesthetic influence of Walter Pater. Her second monograph, *Andrea Mantegna* (1901), was poorly reviewed by the art press and, following unsatisfactory sales, she terminated her collaboration with the publisher George Bell. With her publication of the first extensive study ever written in English on *Luca and Andrea della Robbia and their Successors* (1902), Cruttwell inaugurated a specialism in the study of Renaissance sculpture. Her subsequent work on *Verrocchio* (1904) challenged many of the attributions advanced by Wilhelm von Bode, which ignited an antagonism between the two art historians that continued after the publication of her book on *Antonio Pollaiuolo* (1907).

During her entire career, Cruttwell worked without any institutional affiliation but contributed to several professional journals, including the *Gazette des beaux-arts* and *L'Arte*. Later, she wrote artistic guides to Florence (1907) and Venice (1909), and her last monograph *Donatello* appeared in 1911. Cruttwell also published a semi-autobiographical novel, *Fire and Frost* (1913), which fictionalizes the cosmopolitan colony of art lovers in Florence. At around seventy, she wrote two historical biographies of the *Princess des Ursins* (1927) and *Madame de Maintenon* (1930). Often described as an eccentric lesbian by her contemporaries, Cruttwell's publications remain a key historiographical resource for many scholars working on Renaissance old masters.