

BLENDING

MAGAZINE

THE SEMESTERLY MAGAZINE OF FLORENCE UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS
SPRING/SUMMER 2019 | YEAR 9 | ISSUE 1



HERO OR VILLAN?
SECRETS IN BOBOLI
FLY LOOK OF THE SEASON
ART FOR BREAKFAST

CATERINA & IDENTITY

MEDICI WOMEN & IDENTITY | TRAVEL | GARDENS | FASHION | ARTS | FOOD & WINE | STUDENT VOICE | ALUMNI



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Power. Intrigue. Creativity. Fashion Innovator. Royal Consort. Mother. Survivor. Woman.

These concepts and roles are a but few examples attributed to Caterina de' Medici, who just 14 when she was catapulted into the royal court of Florence in 1533. Much has been written about her persona over the centuries and the complexity of her fabled past will continue to aliment discussion for generations of historians to come.

On the advent of the 500th anniversary of her birth, FUA's hospitality division, Apicius, dedicated its annual spring academic conference to the theme "Caterina de' Medici: 500 Years of Italian Hospitality." The daylong program of panels and speakers explored Caterina's legacy from every angle possible, in particular how a French queen from Tuscany continues to influence dialogs of culture, gender, and politics today. It is through this window of opportunity, examining Caterina de' Medici through multiple perspectives-roles-modes of being, that our editorial team crafted the meta-theme of "Caterina and Identity" as the basis for this issue.

While the many identities and legacies of Caterina de' Medici are explored in compelling articles throughout the issue, some in particular draw personal connections to Caterina de' Medici's identity. Readers may ask: What can we, as contemporary citizens of Florence centuries removed from Caterina de' Medici or as a student body representing lands far away, possibly identify in common with a Tuscan-French Renaissance queen? Perhaps, for this issue of Blending Magazine, a helpful starting point is imagining her as a young person at the cusp of her identities-to-be: identity as a journey, a sense of becoming, or the discovery of self through the lens of opportunity.

Caterina is a prism for our times and we hope that this multifaceted issue provides an ample foray into the reflections generated by this fascinating historical figure.

Happy reading,

THE BLENDING STAFF

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CATERINA DE' MEDICI: 500 YEARS OF ITALIAN HOSPITALITY

By Katie Weiler

The 5th annual Apicius Conference was hosted at Palazzo dell'Ospitalità by Florence University of the Arts on Saturday, March 16. The conference was centered around Caterina de' Medici: Five Hundred Years of Italian Hospitality.

The event began with opening remarks from Vice-Mayor of the Municipality of Florence, Cristina Giachi, followed by FUA Conference coordinator, Marco Di Manno. Journalist Daniela Cavini gave the keynote speech titled, From Florentine Cinderella to Black Queen: A Myth Hard to Die. Events to follow included writer and professor of Art History at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze, Marco Cianchi, and his speech, The Dark Side of Caterina: Poisons on the Table, followed by presentations from the Palazzo dell'Ospitalità. The Palazzo dell'Ospitalità presentations included members of the Academic Committee of Apicius International School of Hospitality, Andrea Trapani, Massimo Bocus, and Giulia Tarabusi as well as a presentation from the Apicius sister school in Korea given by General Manager Yunmi Lee.

The conference also offered many panels, starting with the General Manager of Hospitality at Villa Medicea di Lilliano, Eric Veroliemeulen, and the villa's owner, Diletta Malenchini, who

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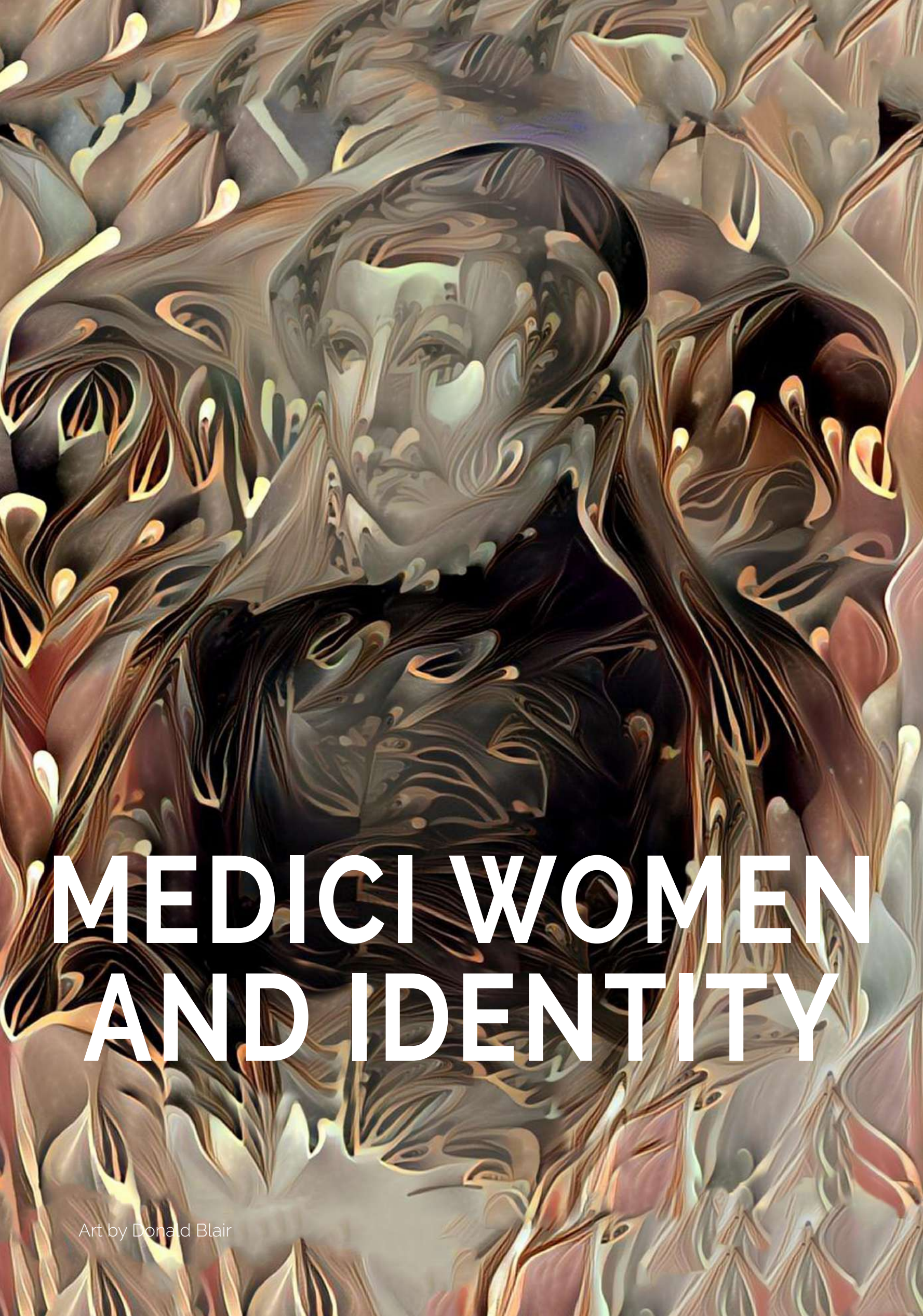
spoke about The Medici Legacy in Modern Hospitality Business: The Case of Villa di Lilliano. Other talks explored the changes in a modern world, such as Dance Music and Shows at The Court of Caterina de' Medici presented by FUA faculty member Fabio Binarelli. Another talk included FUA faculty Andrea Mancini and Caterina and the New Worlds in which the exploration of new continents was compared to current day exploration of space.

The afternoon kicked off with a presentation and tasting session by Apicius Culinary Arts and Baking and Pastry students as well as a guided visit of the Palazzo dell'Ospitalità. The event was interactive to give attendees a taste of the hospitality industry and what it has changed into today. The event came with an assortment of cold cuts and various cheeses from local Florentine sponsors to share delicious parts of the Italian hospitality scene. Featured Italian food producers included Frantoio Pruneti, Pasta Artigianale Fabbri, Acetaia Malpighi, Fattoria Corzano e Paterno, Macelleria Artigianale Savigni, and Riso Acquerello.

The second panel of the day started with Apicius Pastry Chef Simone De Castro and his presentation on Caterina de' Medici and the Art of Pastry. By sharing the basics of traditional French pastries, De Castro was able to share how they were adopted from Florence and were transferred to France with Caterina. He showed macaroons and bignè as well as recipes for the Italian version of custard, crema, that were all originally from Florence.

This event was followed by a student panel which consisted of a blind taste test of 12 different Italian wines. The wines ranged in prices from the high end to the low end of the market. The panel was moderated by Lapo Bartalesi and consisted of students from the course Viticulture and Enology: An Educational Wine Tour II at Apicius.

The conference was brought to a close with remarks from Marco Di Manno on the last five hundred years of the Italian Hospitality industry. The many panelists and speakers offered various insights into the industry today and how it has changed since the time of Caterina de' Medici. The conference gave a wide view of what hospitality has evolved into in the past 500 years and where it will go to in the future. Overall, the conference provided unique insights of hospitality and how it can be traced back to the time of Caterina.



MEDICI WOMEN AND IDENTITY

Art by Donald Blair

CATERINA DE' MEDICI: HERO OR VILLAIN?

by Reese Bentzinger

Schemer. Innocent. Ambitious. Victim.

These are all lenses with which Caterina di Medici has been viewed from. The legacy of this queen has been debated for years in scholarly articles and books.

The benefit of skepticism is a fairly recent development. Caterina's contemporaries had usually painted her as one thing: a manipulator. During her lifetime she had been accused of many crimes, including plotting her brother-in-law's murder and the St. Bartholomew's day massacre, all for the sake of power.

Whether or not she's actually responsible for these things is unknown. However, we can investigate the reasons behind why she stands accused of these crimes. Was she just a victim of circumstance, or is she everything her critics say that she was?

There was one thing which Caterina di Medici certainly wasn't: a conventional woman of her time. She was a woman with a say in political matters, something frowned upon in the 16th century.

Many of her contemporaries brought up that she wasn't seen as beautiful with her common Medici features, such as her protruding eyes. Oftentimes they used her looks as a launching pad to attack her as a person. This was an unfair and hurtful critique, one that was completely unrelated to her decision-making. But it was one that her rivals used to make her seem "unwomanly."

The court had further stacked matter against her favor when she failed to provide heirs during her first decade of marriage. Caterina wasn't exactly the one to blame here, however. Her husband, Henry II of France, practically ignored his wife in favor of his mistress Diane de Poitiers. In fact, de Poitiers had to remind him to visit Caterina for the sake of having an heir. In addition, the couple had a physical problem with conception that required a doctor's advice to resolve. After this cleared up, the couple went on to have ten children.

Power fell into Caterina's hands when her husband died young. Their son and heir, Francis, was made King of France. Due to his young age, Caterina was made his regent. Yet, she lacked the complete power of a monarchy due to a coup by the powerful Guise family. Still, she found a way to work with them and had some say on policy.

Francis was used as a pawn in the battle between French Catholics and Protestants, an argument which Caterina didn't publicly take a side in. She did, however, disapprove of the Catholic Guise family's efforts to take away power from

MEDICI WOMEN AND IDENTITY

the Protestants. The Protestants retaliated against the Guises by attempting to have Francis' regent be one of their own. This resulted in the Protestant leader, the Prince of Conde, being thrown in prison.

Her fate changed with Francis' death at the age of 16. When her son fell ill and she saw little chance of recovery, she made a deal with the Protestants: Make her the next regent in exchange for the Prince of Conde's release. When Francis died, her nine-year-old son, Charles IX, took over. The true power behind the throne, however, was Caterina.

Even with this change of regents, the conflict between the religious factions didn't go away. Seeing the issues between the Catholics and the Protestants as political rather than religious, she attempted a compromise between them. This failed, and tensions continued to boil as Charles grew up.

The conflict exploded with the deaths of thousands of Protestants in what became known as St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. This event is probably the most controversial part of Caterina's legacy. While the massacre was ordered by her now-adult son, Charles, many believed that she was the true mastermind behind the plot. Many painted her out to be a monster who slaughtered those that came between her and power.

As time goes on, this interpretation has become less popular. For one, it goes against Caterina's earlier neutral stance. There is also a lack of evidence proving that she really had anything to do with the plot. Many other theories have been proposed as to who was responsible, ranging from the Guise family to Charles IX. Even though most historians today don't believe that she engineered the conspiracy, it is still used to paint her as a dubious figure.

Her reputation probably stems from that fact that she was determined to keep her family on the throne. Some of her methods were tried-and-true tactics, such as creating valuable alliances through marriages. However, Caterina also had a few unconventional tricks up her sleeve.

She knew the power of sensuality, and decided to use this to her advantage by creating her 'flying squadron,' a group of ballet-trained women loyal to Caterina. Using the power of seduction, they had affairs with powerful men who they could persuade to change their minds on an important decision or discover a secret or two from. Everything they did ensured things wound up in Caterina's favor.

Caterina's critics attacked her for the flying squadron. They not only saw it as scandalous, they believed it was downright malicious. But Caterina was hardly the only royal to employ spies in her favor. What made the flying squadron so shocking was the fact that they used the power of seduction to their advantage. The flying squadron was a unique group of spies, one that should be acknowledged as a clever tactic rather than as a purely ruthless one.

The legacy of Caterina de' Medici is a complicated one that has shifted through time like sands in an hourglass. In her life and the first few centuries after her death she was a monster, a boogeywoman for the evils of feminine wiles. But in recent years a more complex portrait has been painted of her.

No, she's not a complete hero, and some of her actions are definitely questionable. But she was a royal, and like all other royals she did what it took to keep her power. She's not a two-dimensional villain, she's a complex person who should be analyzed as such.

The Identity of Florence

by Katie Weiler

Florence's identity is both new and old, a mixture of the past and present. Its time as a leader of the Italian Renaissance allows it to stand out, while those rich pieces of medieval culture remain a framework for the new art Florence continues to sport. Identity cannot be captured in a single moment, meaning a multiplicity of layers exists all at once. To love Florence is to accept all of it, the history, the good and the bad, and everything it has the potential to become.

The Italian Renaissance accomplished many feats, mainly giving Florence a scene on the world's stage. Florentine names became known worldwide, and the city itself seemed to radiate enthusiasm for the arts of this allured time period. Today, artists still work tirelessly to prove the merit of their work in galleries, online and even in the streets. Detailed artwork catches my eye as I contemplate purchasing every unique watercolor I pass on the Ponte Vecchio. You can't ignore the artwork while you try to zigzag past the paintings carefully laid out on the cobblestone.

While Florence embraces the art on nearly every street, it's hard to imagine a time when creating these paintings and sculptures would have gone unappreciated, which is one reason the Medici family played such a critical role in this part of Florence's identity.

The House of Medici made a name for themselves and their family, but more importantly they made Florence a retreat for the arts. They commissioned numerous architectural endeavors and supported sculptors and artists across the Roman Empire. Walking to class every day, I pass the elaborate buildings where they held their political meetings and I see their family coat of arms still proudly displayed on the corners. The highlights of eager tourists in Florence are to visit the places the Medici's commissioned or even lived in. Imagining the Medici sneaking from their homes and across the hidden pathways towards the current day Uffizi gallery paints them to be the original celebrities of Florence, cleverly avoiding the paparazzi or enemies they may have had. You can hardly turn a corner in Florence without running into history of the Florence that their family helped build.

Florence's identity as a patron of the arts, both past and present, can be linked to the Medici family. Once the most powerful family in Florence even after the family

MEDICI WOMEN AND IDENTITY

line ran out, they were still advocating for the city and its connections to the art world. The last of the Medici had no heirs and the Florence they built was under threat of invasion from foreign powers. I can imagine the fear of destruction the large armies brought as they made their way over the lush Tuscan countryside. The Medici impact on the Florence of the Renaissance was already written into the city's history, but thanks to Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici, the artwork that time produced was safe from possible destruction and was allowed to remain a part of the Florence we know today.

Anna Maria came up with a secure will and legal paper known as the Family Pact, that donated all of her and her family's jewelry and artwork to the city of Florence. She would give the new Duke all of her worldly possessions, collections of artwork she obtained from all across Europe, only if he agreed that they were tied to the state and to never let the artwork leave the city of Florence. Florence as a city has had strong cultural ties to the artwork of the Renaissance and to the House of the Medici because of this idea that the art truly belongs to the city itself. The stakes of identity were never on the line for Anna Maria as she would always belong to the Medici family name, but she cared enough for her city that she knew the artwork



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was both a part of her and Florence. So, she allowed the art and culture of the city to remain.

Florence remains a large artistic community that endures and even celebrates a large variety of what we as humans consider art.

A large part of art is in its identity. You may be looking at only one piece of art, but at the same time it has dozens of different identities to different people.

Identity is in the perception of something, and Florence has meant so much to so many throughout its history. When I talk about how Florence has influenced my identity, it won't be the same as someone else's story. I'll talk about the history and all the people and places I visited, but the difference will be in what it meant to me personally.

As a study abroad student, I came to Florence to soak up the history and legacy left by the Medici and Renaissance artwork. I am often baffled at what is impressed upon me and how it has lasted into the twenty-first century. The identity of Florence I am able to encounter comes from the Medici and their strong family name and mission, but it also comes from the people and artwork of today. While I am here in the city, I doubt I will make strides affecting Florence by myself, but in the sense of my own identity, Florence will no doubt affect me and add to my personal collection. In that way, I feel the identity of the Medici have helped contribute to me personally, just as it has influenced others who continue to spread the culture from within the city and remain connected to it long after they leave. Florence's identity exists in those who have experienced it, in both the past and the present.





TRAVEL

REDEFINING HOME

by Christina Engelke - Photos by the Author

How does travel facilitate the creation and development of cross-cultural identities? Looking at this from a study abroad perspective, how does the study abroad experience influence a student's ideas of personal and national identity?

I think somewhere within all of us lies an inherent desire for exploration. This sort of unwavering curiosity for all that is unknown in this world is arguably a critical element of our human nature. Whether this manifests itself in a singular dream destination or an endless array of potential places to see, travel seems to maintain a universal motivation amongst all people. But what is it that draws us all into airplanes, trains, and cars across the globe?

From my own experience, the goals and gains of travel are twofold: outward discovery and inward discovery. Speaking from the perspective of a study abroad participant, the discoveries of my travels have impacted my personal and intellectual growth far beyond anything I have learned within any classroom. I have learned far beyond what I had ever thought possible as a study abroad student from encountering such a variety of cultures first-hand. At such a critical transformative point in one's young adult life, I cannot think of a more stimulating and beneficial environment for a college student to take part in than that of the study abroad experience. One's early 20s are most primarily concerned with the task of self-discovery. Untraveled and inexperienced, I knew for certain that I would never truly know myself until I knew the world.



TRAVEL

With this in mind, I wholeheartedly believe in the priceless impact of travel upon one's sense of self. Furthermore, there is so much more to learn from oneself than that which lies within the confines of a comfort zone. While the Eastern coast of the United States is all that I had ever known prior to my abroad experience, I was sheltered from so much of what this world has to offer. However, my leaving home has not lead me to reject where I came from. In fact, I have undoubtedly earned a newfound appreciation for what the US has to offer. Furthermore, discovering and understanding the differences between our cultures provides us with an increasing sense of compassion. Maintaining a prideful national-identity and developing an evolving cross-cultural identity do not need to be mutually exclusive. On the contrary, earning an understanding of other cultures will only add to one's repertoire of worldly knowledge, which is beneficial in any case. In almost any given scenario, cultural exploration is a critical and beneficial aspect of travel.



"... IT SEEMS TO ME THAT I MUST FIND HOME WITHIN THE ONLY CONSTANT OF IT ALL, MYSELF."

Rather, my sense of home has simply been transformed. Much of my time spent studying in Florence along with my travels to other countries and cities has left my heart feeling torn. In a sense, my home no longer feels isolated and stagnant within New York. Perhaps I will never truly feel at home within a specific place once again. While so many places and people have engulfed me in such a strong sense of love and home, it seems to me that I must find home within the only constant of it all, myself. My surroundings may change, people may come and go, but I will always have myself at the end of the day. Evidently, traveling while abroad has provided me with a self-security and confidence which I have never known. I have come to realize the enormity of possibilities that the world has in store for me as well as all that I am capable of accomplishing. Although I fully sympathize with the notion that the study abroad experience is not for everybody, I strongly believe in the power which any sort of travel can yield upon one's self-concept.

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BEAUTY IN THE RUINS

Discovering Pompeii's Identity

by Olivia Kolkana



I HAVE NEVER FELT SUCH
MUDDLED MESMERIZATION
OF TWO OPPOSING FORCES
AS I DID WHEN STEPPING
ONTO THE GROUNDS OF THE
POMPEII RUINS IN ITALY.

Walking onto the gravel, I instantly felt heaviness - as if I were melting into the ruins themselves and had become responsible for the stories they held. A city of Roman invention and so much promise held captive by the fate of Vesuvius. And at the peak of its time - VII B.C., they didn't even know that the ever-looming mountain towering above them would lead to their destruction. Hell, they didn't even know it was a volcano. In fact, volcanoes were yet to have been discovered. And here we are left basking in the amazement and wonder of its preservation.

It was a hard thing to balance - for every trail I turned to see the volcano in the distance left me haunted with imagination of the day that lava poured from its mouth. I allowed myself to imagine the screams.

Visualize the faces. Feel the chaos. Fortunately or unfortunately, you can't get far without

feeling something - as the plaster casts of those who have died, in the exact position their hearts pumped blood for the last time, are spread throughout the premises. Held in glass cases for public viewing.

Sometimes you can even catch the expression on their faces. It's just as captivating as it is sickening. A paradox of divine confusion.

**"IT FELT LIKE BEING AT
A FUNERAL AND CHOOSING
TO ADMIRE THE GREEN GRASS
INSTEAD OF THE COFFIN."**

It felt like being at a funeral and choosing to admire the green grass instead of the coffin. It felt like choosing to see the glass as beautiful, half full instead of half empty. It felt like saltwater tears pouring into a mouth held open in awe. It felt like a lot of things.

I dare you to walk around alone, and let the solitude produce thoughts of your own making. Let the emotions come. Don't try to push them away. They will come and you have to acknowledge them and let them lead you down through the gardens where vegetation thrived, the markets where neighbors

exchanged gossip, the houses where kids danced and meals were shared, and temples where prayers were whispered.

This is Pompeii. Acres and acres of preserved ruins from 700 B.C. And yet a different kind of life walks here today. And flowers bloom between broken walls. Red and yellow wildflowers bursting with color against the muted tones of fallen walls. Grass as green as ever, choosing to grow on the grounds of so many last breaths. People - from near and far - transporting themselves into another dimension. Nike sneakers and designer bags swaying in between that which is ancient. Phone cameras clicking a million miles an hour. Tour guides desperate for authentic interest, leading groups of all ethnicities around this maze of a city.

You can find a daring attempt at harmony between what was, what could have been, and reality. It's burdensome, but remarkable. Perhaps this is the most confusing depiction of beauty from the ashes to date.

So, dear reader, my point is that one can choose to view the identity of this city as the biggest tragedy of all time - a prospering community who didn't know what was coming. Or, one can choose to identify it as the greatest discovery nearly 1500 years after its extinction, one that has opened up more about ancient civilization than hardly anything else has in history.

Or, you can do what I have done. The preferred route. You can identify Pompeii as both of these existing simultaneously. Perhaps this is one of the only times where tragedy and beauty can collectively rest at the edge of humankind without getting too close to the cliff. I fear if we do not choose to acknowledge one without the other then we are missing the bigger picture that is life.

We can't go back and change the past. But we can be thankful for preservation, and archeologists blessed with a careful hand. We can be thankful for what we know that we didn't before. Then, we can choose for a second to take on the weight of the past. We can choose to acknowledge the echoes of lives lost. And we can choose to take time to marvel at the flowers that bloom in the wake of destruction. Beauty is not beauty without tragedy. Ruins are not ruins without once being complete.

A writer's dream, Pompeii is. A beautiful metaphor for the chaos of life itself. Perhaps it has way more to teach us than we think.

I AM NOBODY

by Stefano Ausenda

It's almost 7 in the evening. I'm on the high-speed train to Naples, and there's only one other person in my booth, a man dressed in black. It's two hours later, and, even though our car is largely vacant now, the man and I are still in the same seats we started in. Despite sitting only a few feet away from each other, we only communicated twice: once when he asked me to watch his stuff while he went to the restroom and once when I asked him to take his foot off of my phone charger. Only two other people have even acknowledged me during this journey: the ticket officer and the person handing out the snacks, both of whom did so only because it's part of their jobs.

It was during this train ride that I realized just how insignificant I was as a traveler, and subsequently, how insignificant all people are while traveling. Even though I was sitting across from the same person for almost three hours, I mattered nothing to him, and he mattered nothing to me. We were both traveling alone, so neither of us mattered anything to anyone else on the train, and no one else on the train mattered to either of us.

It was with these thoughts of my relatively insignificant existence in mind that I began to think of a quote by the Greek king Odysseus. He once said to the cyclops he was fighting that "he is nobody." And, my experience on the train to Naples that night definitely confirmed to me that, at least when traveling to and first arriving in a new place, that quote is true. We are all nobody.

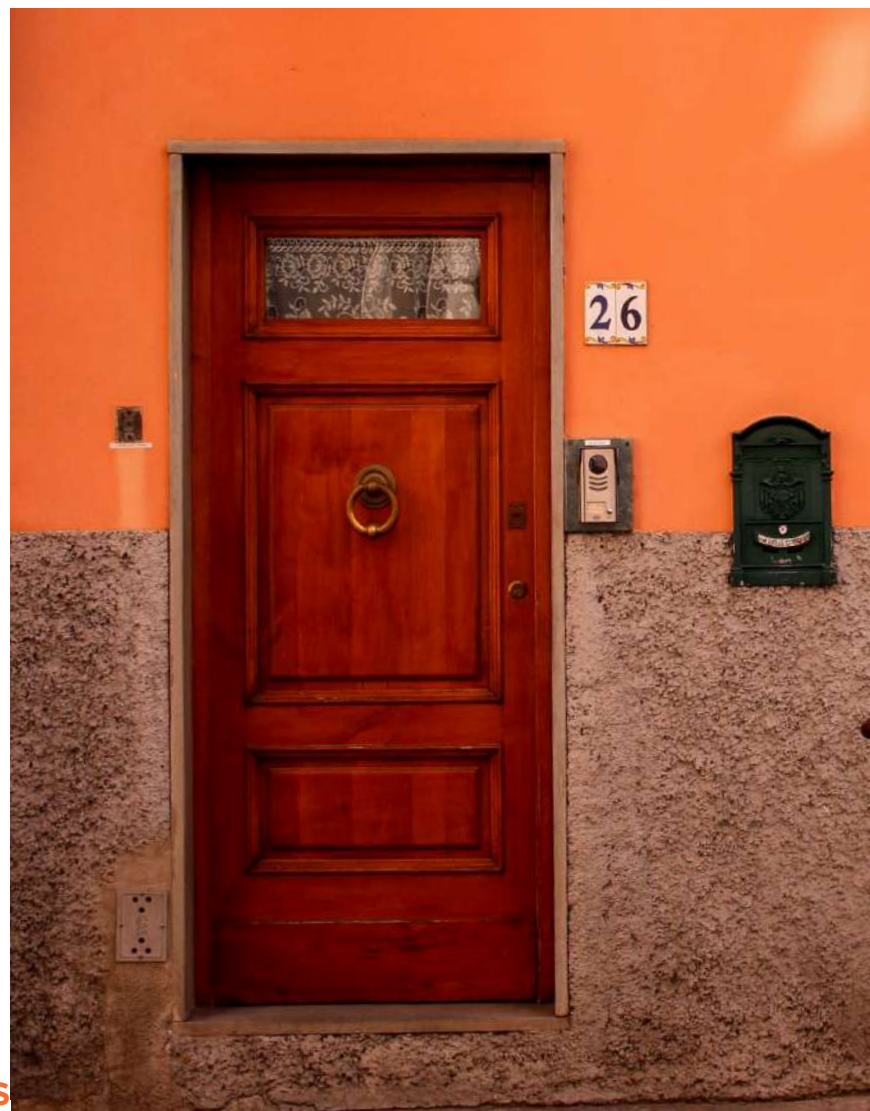


TRAVEL

When we travel to a new place, we are often unknown to everybody, making our current identity and sense of individuality essentially meaningless. If I wanted to, I could have become a completely different person from when I left Florence to when I arrived in Naples, and because no one knew me there, no one would have noticed. But, I was essentially the same person when I arrived in Naples from when I left Florence three hours before.

Once I re-boarded the train to return to Florence two days later, however, I believe that I was a slightly different person. I came to Naples having several negative stereotypes and expectations about southern Italians. When I left Naples, almost all of those negative connotations were gone, and I had an even bigger and better appreciation for the

If my mindset changed over only two days, I can't even think about how much I've grown and changed since I arrived in Italy back in January. I gave up some aspects of my identity, but I've gained so much more than I lost. I think that every traveler, no matter how old they are or where they come from, returns home a different person from when they arrived, whether it be drastically different or only slightly. I remember before coming to Florence, my study abroad advisor said that "if you're never uncomfortable while traveling, you're not doing it right." And I must say, having traveled a lot now, I can't agree with her more.



THE FERMI PARADOX.

THE EFFECTS OF DISCOVERING NEW WORLDS. OR... NOT DISCOVERING THEM

BY MELANIE MARGOLESE

ILLUSTRATION BY JASMIJN SWEERE

The Fermi Paradox is the contradiction between the high probability of the existence of extraterrestrial civilizations, and the apparent lack of contact with such civilizations. Our galaxy is so large that there are 10,000 planets for every grain of sand on Earth (and then some!). So where is everyone, and what does that mean for us? Is everything we are doing and fighting for ultimately for nothing? Do we have a purpose?

The observable universe is about 90 billion light-years in diameter, and there are at least 100 billion galaxies in it. So, where are all of the aliens? At this point, we should have already come into contact with them. So why haven't we? This paradox was coined by an Italian physicist named Enrico Fermi in 1950 over lunch one day when he began to ask, "Where is everybody?"

There are a number of possibilities that attempt to explain the Fermi paradox. Some suggest that intelligent extraterrestrial life is extremely rare. We might even be the first of our kind. One theory suggests that all of the intelligent species reached a certain point in their development but were destroyed by a catastrophic event in the development of technology. There may even be some species that are just not interested in us because comparatively, we are underdeveloped. Maybe nobody else has been able to develop the technology necessary to travel the distances through space either. And maybe, we actually are alone.

The idea that we are alone in the universe begs the question: why are we here? In a melodramatic, introspective podcast series "The End of the World," writer Josh Clark explores existential risks and examines humanity's place in the universe. With the vastness of the Universe and near-impossibility of solutions in minds, he introduces even more questions that are sure to keep you up at night.

Trying to wrap your mind around the millions of possibilities is overwhelming, and analyzing the purpose of life and our place in this universe is even more daunting. What you can focus on though, is yourself. The end of the world may very well be approaching but with no way to find an answer to the millions of questions pertaining to extraterrestrial life, it is important to focus on yourself, and your identity. If one of the theories is correct, and aliens take over the world next week, what will our legacy be? What will they learn about humanity, the complicated mix of cultures and stories that goes back centuries? While the theories and possible apocalyptic futures may be out of our hands, our music, our art, and our history are not.



GARDEMS



Secrets in Boboli

by Riley Jenson - Photos by the author

There is a place, at what feels like the highest peak in the city, where I feel most serene. It's not hidden, simply tucked away; a secret garden. A place that is only found by those who are dedicated and willing to explore.

It is here that I have found myself most; here that I am able to speak my mind and tell my secrets. The garden is a maze, a place of organized chaos. It is clean and structured, but somehow has no direction or sense. Like me, its edges are rigged and worn, but its beauty prevails. I stand along the garden's edge, and feel a connection to this unfamiliar city; one that I don't feel anywhere else. It's in these whereabouts that I am most content. The path is sunken in. I am able to spot the footprints of those who walked through before me. Like me, this path has a story to tell. The crumbling gravel holds stories and memories. The roots of the blooming flowers and symmetrical hedges run deep underground. Like me, they bloom and fade with time. The garden is surrounded by two opposing images. I look one way and face the countryside, a snapshot filled with sage, moss, and emerald greens.

There is a tall tower that stands in the distance; it's impossible to tell what it is, or if it's anything at all, but I enjoy the mystery of it. I listen closely and hear the faint roar of a mower and it feels like I'm home. It feels like I'm laying in the backyard, and I smell the

freshly chopped grass. I turn the other direction and overlook the city skyline filled with burnt-colored roofs. The garden is distanced from the noise, but somehow, it still carries the the experience of the city. Like me, the garden finds perfect harmony between the two. The garden and I need the exhilaration of the city to thrive, but can't seem to find clarity without distance. This is the secret to this garden, and to me. I look down at the steps I've climbed to get here. I feel like I'm always climbing, but now, I have nowhere left to go but down. The garden resides next to a porcelain museum; a museum filled with delicate, beautiful entities that remain locked in glass cases. The museum compliments the garden. The two are a perfect pair.

I am a person who can never stand still for long, and like me, the paths in the garden continue; there is no end, only a beginning. I catch myself circling the small path; I find it satisfying. Like me, the garden runs free, but remains organized and polished.

This place feels happy, like the sun shines brighter here. I can imagine the glow from the moon as it illuminates the garden. I imagine it's filled with shadows, small creases that the dim light can't reach. I bet it looks almost like a patchwork quilt. It's at nightfall when the secret garden rests. It's during this time, that like me, the paths no longer bear the heaviness of expectations and appearance. The botanical greenery hides the imperfections. The secret garden resembles collateral beauty, for it's what's unexpected that matters most.



A Place of Happiness and Hope

BY WILLIAM CAMPBELL

It's rare that one can find a spot that so perfectly reflects who they feel they are. For as many people there are in the world, there are infinitely more hidden places. But sometimes these places can be found. Such was the case when I walked into the Giardino delle Scuderie Reali. This circular park next to the famous Boboli Gardens connected to me as soon as I stepped foot inside. All around me was the calm, collective fun that I search for in everyday life. People letting their dogs loose, with those pets proceeding to go absolutely wild with enjoyment as they run around playing with one another and other pet owners. It's not just pets and their owners who occupy this park. There are students, sitting on park benches or on their own blankets, studying silently or socialising with one another. Little children are running about and playing while their parents walk around the park.

The amount of happiness and overall joy on display in this park is what I have been looking for all my life. Not only that, but it's a simple and basic kind of joy that is seemingly lost in the present day. It is the act of going out and enjoying time with friends, be they our furry companions or those who walk on two legs. Far too often are we consumed by overwhelming sadness and despair as we are exposed to what is happening all over the globe.

But in this place, this simple park, it feels as though all of the negatives in my life just disappear.

It's a sanctuary, keeping the darkness away. Even with the park coming out of winter, it still radiates with a green livelihood that I have not seen before. The trees are barren, but feel as though they are ready to come to life at any moment. It isn't even local Italians who frequent the park, though they are the majority. I have heard English, French, and even some German being spoken as people stroll around, gathering in the atmosphere of the neighbor to the Boboli Gardens.

It is this sanctuary that I feel reflects who I am, and who I will always attempt to be. While all of the world may seem to fall into chaos and hate, there needs to be some sort of bastion. Of course, I am not so arrogant as to think that I alone can be this bastion. But I am always going to attempt to be that spark for people's happiness. Just like Giardino delle Scuderie Reali, I want to be the thing people turn to when they want to feel happy. After all, there's only so much people can do to be happy in this one life they get. If I can do my part to make it that much better, I will consider my job as a human being fulfilled. After all, that's what we're all looking for, right? Happiness, either through a park or a fellow human.



Spot of Calm

BY MICHAEL GOTTSCHALK

By the Arno River in Florence lies Parco 19° Reggimento Artiglieria. It's nothing special, hidden from plain sight below the level of the street. There are no playgrounds for kids, no soccer fields, no café. There are a few trees that break up the lush green lawn on the bank of the river. On weekdays, when the weather is nothing special, the park is mostly empty. As winter turns into spring, more people decide to spend their time there. There are often groups of friends having picnics and sunbathing as well as many couples taking advantage of the romanticism of a riverside paradise. The open space is very versatile. The majority use it for relaxation purposes, but there are a few who walk a different line. I've seen a pair of guys string a tightrope between two of the trees, as well as a group of middle-aged women doing Pilates, and kids playing soccer. Anybody who wants to engage with the park is allowed.

It is vastly different from the fast pace of the city above. I live by the Duomo. I can't walk very far out of my apartment without bobbing and weaving my way through a massive tour group. I often have to dive out of the way of an oncoming bike or car, head-first into a barrel roll as if I am in an action movie. I do enjoy the lightning quickness most of the time. There is never a shortage of something to do, see, or eat (my favorite). Florence is an incredibly diverse and beautiful city and I still love to wander and get lost. I found the park by doing just that, while running in no particular direction along the river, looking for a place to stretch.

Anxiety is a true monkey on my back. It is loud and aggressive sometimes, constantly poking and prodding before screeching in my ear. Running is one of the more effective methods I have used to grab the monkey and throw him into the river. When I found the park, I discovered another method. I'll sit in the grass for a while, listen to the birds, watch the people. Most times I camp out under a specific tree, sometimes journaling or writing stories about what I see. My tree is in the center of the park, sheltering me from both the sun and the (occasionally intense) public displays of affection from the aforementioned couples. I come here after most of my runs on the trail along the riverbank. It is so easy to relax that it becomes a fight to avoid a nap. The breeze and the hum of the nearby break wall practically force you into a sleepy submission after a while. You can actually walk on the wall, right over the water, if you so choose. Fishermen seem to enjoy this corner.

Parco 19° Reggimento Artiglieria is a spot of nature in a giant city. It is a spot of calm in a chaotic mind. That is why I connect to it so much. I relate to it; I see myself in the park. It is an area of quiet reservation, hidden among areas of noise and bluster. Sometimes it is lonely, even boring when compared to the other areas of the city. Like me, it is removed, self-conscious even, but the removal doesn't stop the park from welcoming anybody who finds it with open arms.



FASHION

Art by Donald Blair

FLY

LOOK OF THE SEASON

Styling & Article by Sydda Champ & Skylar Hubbard
 Modeled by Skylar Hubbard | Photos by Tara Kelly

Embrace your femininity while taking a ride on the wild side. Being a disco cowgirl is more than just an aesthetic, it's a lifestyle. Life can be a disco and a rodeo all wrapped into one when you decide to ignore the status quo and just have fun. Wear that tutu that's been sitting in the back of your closet, use that glitter eyeliner. Let your style showcase your amazing individuality and allow your inner self to shine through.

This spring/summer is diving back into the 70's with prints, bell bottoms, and sequins which is what inspired our sparkly denim combo. Denim is always on trend but styles change with each season. We chose a wide leg denim jumpsuit from our student designer Kianna Jue to rock this current 70's trend while still being comfortable and practical. If full patterns are too far outside your comfort zone, you can opt for just a pop of pattern like we did, choosing a jumpsuit with an accent stripe down the side. To add a little spice, layer a sparkly element like this vintage button down wide collared blouse. If the summer sun gets too overbearing wrap it around your waist for a different look that's just as striking.

As the cherry on top, don't forget your handbag and shoes! Here we paired this look with vintage embellished off-white Versace heels and a white leather bucket bag with eyelets by Alexander McQueen to add some edge. With these strong and unique pieces, you're ready to hit the road, sand, or city alike.

Everything we used to accessorise this jumpsuit is vintage sourced and your closet can be, too. Shopping vintage is a great way to add some unique and fun pieces to your wardrobe, while lengthening the life cycle of clothing and supporting local business. With the upcoming trends and the amazing vintage selection on the market today, you are sure to find clothing and accessories to embrace your own person.





SOCIAL MEDIA AND CULTURAL IDENTITY: HOW CATERINA'S HIGH HEELS CHANGED THE WORLD OF FASHION

By Kerre Lattanzio

ILLUSTRATION By Lavinia Zavalloni (ISIA Firenze Student)

Social media platforms allow fashion to grow and gather new influences and inspiration. Instagram serves as a large benefit to the fashion industry and the world's designers, because its efficient photo capabilities provide a platform in which creations can be displayed to a worldwide audience. Whether the designer is up-and-coming or well-known, a group collaboration or an independent fashion piece, each item created has the potential to reach large sums of people in a rapid amount of time. This helps them gain popularity and become a vital part to the fashion industry through serving as a trend or a new attempt on a traditional look. Similar to the way Caterina de' Medici is credited as the creator and icon for high heels, social media and its powerful influence not only allows creations to be witnessed globally, but also helps fashion designers gain worldwide recognition for the creation of their product and if it is successful, gain a following that has potential to grow (Chards, 2018).

The spreading of fashion around the world through social media does not interfere with the concept of 'cultural identity' that is expressed through the apparel and fashion accessories that people use to express themselves around the world. Social media allows the latest and most select fashion trends to be displayed on a global platform, but international interpretations of the fashion that is being displayed varies from country to country. The cultural and societal norms that are established in each country around the world affect how these styles are worn, despite the fact that people with access to social media are able to locate the same fashion content that is posted and displayed online.

Caterina de' Medici is a primary example of cultural identity remaining in fashion. Her use of high heels was a fashionable and innovative way for her to demonstrate her power among the individuals in her court, and to gain attention from her husband, Henry II, for her height in order to decrease his attraction to his mistress, Diane de Poitiers (Chards, 2018). The use of the high heel was a political aspect for Caterina de' Medici, because it was a cultural characteristic of her role in society and the time she lived in. However, the reason for the use of the high heel has changed over time. High heels still remain very common and popular fashion in contemporary times, but they no longer serve as a symbol of politics. Instead, high heels serve as a cultural symbol of attraction and of individual preference among individuals worldwide.

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Female celebrities are mostly depicted in high heels, and are the most seen on a large scale through the power of social media. Although fashion trends are displayed internationally, celebrities are among those that help maintain cultural identity in the fashion world. On the red carpet, the celebrities gather on the world stage to display fashion that is new, from around the world, and sometimes even replicating fashion that has been worn throughout history. Despite how similar the styles that are being worn are, despite all efforts, no two pieces are exactly the same. The individual wearing the pieces contributes to the uniqueness of the fashion that is being displayed in his or her outfit.

Individualism is another concept that contributes to the survival of cultural identity in the fashion industry. Caterina de' Medici's height is one of her most well-known and distinctive characteristics that set her apart from other influential rulers of her time (Chards, 2018). Without her height, the invention of high heels would be missing her fashionable touch and creativity that has been celebrated, improved, and repeated in the fashion world over the centuries. Similarly, the celebrities that promote international styles are individually making each look and piece their own. The looks that are represented on the red carpet, like Caterina de' Medici and her high heels, will always be attempted to be recreated. However, no matter how successful these attempts are, the authenticity found in each individual's outfit cannot be recreated. It is the originality of individuals that overall contribute to unique differences in the fashion industry and to maintaining cultural identity in global fashion.

Caterina de' Medici used her height to create fashion that benefited her politically during her rule, and her use of the high heel highlights fashion as a physical manifestation of identity and self-expression. Caterina de' Medici has left a long-lasting mark on the fashion industry; without her individual qualities, high heels and the uniqueness of cultural identity in the fashion industry would not be as universal or as significant as they are in the present day.

BLENDING



Vittorio Ricci
Legacy Tailor of Florence

BY BRIDGETTE BACON - PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

"For thirty-three years, Ricci grew his name by creating handcrafted garments commissioned by the citizens of Florence."

Down the little street, Via dei Pucci, at number 35/r, lies what appears to be a small tailor shop that most may pass without a second glance. What lies behind the small glass door is a three-story business that is brimming with Florentine history, good conversation, and the hard work of an artisan.

Vittorio Ricci began his life-long career as a tailor when he opened his first shop in 1967 in Via Martelli 7. He started out making suits for men, as was the trade-norm for the era. He later expanded his business audience by designing clothing for women, with the help from his two sisters, one of which he credited to be the right arm in the business. He released Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter collections to his private clients, some of which debuted in the respected Villa Cora Hotel. For thirty-three years, Ricci grew his name by creating handcrafted garments commissioned by

the citizens of Florence. At one point, he had a client list with around two thousand names. But, by the late 90's, Ricci began to notice a shift in the market. With the demand increasing for clothing of designer labels from department stores, there seemed to be less of a market for unique handmade clothing with a price tag that was not competitive against brands like Versace. By 2000 Ricci decided it was time to put the Vittorio Ricci label to rest and instead make a profit by making private alterations for clients whose Versace jackets needed to be tailored to their personal figure.

Ricci's business has thrived while operating on this model. A truth that is easy to see, for during the interview Ricci never stopped working. He spoke of his life and his business, both of which are heavily entwined, while he measured and chalked the line



for a hem, cut, then steamed the seam line before basting it. All done with a fluid practiced hand, that seemed to work on its own while Ricci reminisced and smiled for the camera. When asked what is his favorite activity, he said that making these necessary adjustments to his clients' wardrobe is what he enjoys most.

Ricci eventually gestured to follow him downstairs. Down a few flights of a spiraling, tiled staircase and around a corner, a fantastic array of fabric and color came into view. Racks of finely made dresses, blazers, jackets, and pants encircled the wide room. Ricci explained that these were all pieces from his past ladies-wear collections. With great enthusiasm, he pulled out some of his favorites and displayed them as if it was just another day in his old showroom. With a wide grin he presented a plaid dress that would be 'en vogue' today and then followed up with an equally impressive purple houndstooth blazer. Excitedly, he flashed a vibrant magenta skirt and jacket set. Then for the finale, he showed off a few items from a past Spring/Summer collection, placing emphasis on a bright yellow jacket that lit up the room just as much as his face did with pride.

When asked how identity plays a role in his work, he explained that tailoring simply is his identity. He has been in this trade since the 60's and has loved every minute of it. He continued by explaining that when he creates a piece for someone to wear, he feels as if they are wearing his identity out on the streets of Florence, for they are wearing a Vittorio Ricci original! He then illustrated that when a piece is made by a tailor, it starts with the person that it is commissioned by. The process starts by creating pattern pieces based off measurements of the client. It also incorporates identity into the process by choosing fabrics, buttons, and pockets that best suits client personality. The result, a beautiful harmony of Ricci's skilled labor and the client's identity. A duet that is scarcely sung in the current decade, where mass produced brand labels reign supreme and originality has gone by the wayside.

So, pay Vittorio Ricci a visit to get a taste of Florentine craftsmanship, or, if the inner seam of your mass produced Gucci slacks have burst.





"With great enthusiasm, he pulled out some of his favorites and displayed them as if it was just another day in his old showroom."



CATERINA'S WORLD OF FASHION

by Bronwyn Morgan

Caterina de Medici was born on the 13th of April in the year 1519. She was born a few days after one of the most recognizable and intelligent artists, Leonardo Da Vinci, passed away.

She was influential, intelligent and one of the most powerful women in history. In fact, her name, Caterina Maria Romola Di Lorenzo de' Medici, is still worthy to this day. Caterina de' Medici, as we all acknowledge her by, was born in one of the most powerful Florentine families of all time, the Medici family. She was the daughter of Lorenzo II de' Medici. After a few days of giving birth to Caterina, her mother Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne (who came from a French noble family) died, and a week later her father passed away as well. After the death of both her parents in such a short period of time, Caterina was moved from one family member to another, but was mainly brought up by her grandmother and her aunt. Later on, she passed under the care of two of her father's relatives, Pope Leo X who was born in 1475 and died in 1521 and Pope Clement VII, born in 1478 and whom perished in 1534. In 1523, her uncle Pope Clement VII (also known as Cardinal Giulio de' Medici) decided that Caterina was to move and live in Palazzo Medici Riccardi. Because during the time period of 1527 the Medici were overthrown, Caterina was forced to spend a few years of her life in various convents before she was to join Pope Clement in Rome. During this time she was brought



up by nuns in a strict and disciplined environment. It was arranged for young Caterina to marry Henry, the Duke of Orleans and the second youngest son of King Francis I of France. In the year 1533 on the 28th of October, Caterina married King Henry when they were both fourteen. The wedding was set up and organized by Pope Clement VII, a Medici relative. During the years the royal marriage, Caterina gave birth to ten children, the first child being born in the year 1543. A painting of Caterina's wedding was created as a gift to her to document the ceremony, and provides a fascinating first glimpse from a fashion perspective. The painting shows the pope giving Caterina's hand to King Henry's, and for reasons unknown was created seventeen years after the actual event.

The reason for the delay is a mystery, but the work is a beautiful representation of how Caterina is dressed. Important to observe is her height, which is about the same as her spouse. Her wedding dress is intricately extravagant, and she wears heels embroidered with floral patterns. The heels were purposely strategized, as history tells us. Threatened by her rival, King Henry's lover Diane Du Poitiers, Caterina elevated her shoes in order to enhance her height in comparison to Diane. High

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heels were not utilized during the era but fortunately for her Majesty, she knew a talented shoemaker back in Florence who was able to assist her. Caterina had a small platform added to shoe soles for height and stability. It did not take long for other royal members to start imitating the new shoe design. The trend became so popular that King Louis XIV designated the heel only to noble families, and only for certain heights in order for the King to always remain the tallest person in the room. Caterina had particular standards on how a woman should look when they entered the courtroom. In her eyes, a thick waistline

was detrimental to the gracefulness of a woman's body. It is not certain that Caterina was ever involved in creating the corset, but she demanded it to be worn and to be taken seriously. The corset went through various transformations for construction and materials used. One in the 16th century was even made completely out of iron, while others in different periods utilized fabrics and lace-up closures. Ultimately, though Caterina experienced many ups and down in her lifetime, fashion was an ever-present tool for personal expression and even as a solution for difficult situations.





ART

DISCOVERY

By Anna Giulia Tonetto

ARTWORK by Anel Tulgenova, Anna Giulia Tonetto, Shay Waldsmith

I am discovering my own Identity.

A body is poised in front of me, a pair of green eyes, staring. This reflection is supposed to mirror my Self. Am I this physical being, or do I own one? Time has a particular interest in this matter. It has proven at innumerable intermissions that the only Constant variable through its passing is the Breath sustaining us. For all other Illusory Ideas of Self are continually shifting, drifting, morphing into a renewed version of the one that existed five minutes before. Identity is defined as "The characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is." ¹ and has its roots from the Latin 'idem', meaning 'same'. To this I will reply: Are we really the same over an entire lifetime? The memory I have of me from Kindergarten links me to the person that has existed in those years, but the attributes that made Me, are not the same anymore. We are ceaselessly moving forwards, updating ourselves, even on a molecular level.

Therefore the discovery I have made is that my sense of Identity-and all the set beliefs that I had engraved into stone, are but a way to reassure myself from the weight of Existence. All experiences moves us towards a new direction, and each word we set unto paper, forges a new link to whomever shares them outside of oneself. It is a perpetual circle that twirls, swings, spins in all directions, and brings us, both physical and spiritual, towards a new sense of Identity. I am not the same person I was when I started writing this paper. I am not the same person I will be tomorrow.

... that I needed to be confronted with my unorganized and
everything for the last minute. I do not know how to
organized plan. Not that I had ever wished. I project fault
anything outside of myself and do not take any respons
my faults. I used to enjoy doing things. Creating
they were emanations of the darkest and most
recessed emotions of my self. My individuality
go through the self judging filter
resides inside of my brain. I
lively, regenerating,
thy of attention Unworthy of
need by myself negation of
, only brings death to the
understanding that the neg
necessary for there to have
positive. And to ha
positive it is near
thought the negative
must be acknowledged
stood, and loved for it to c
expand. It must be checked for wh
that any evolution is attained there
less report act only
negative



Inner Sunset

by Emily Flick

Identity is obscure.
It is left when you are stripped down of all energies
positive or negative.

The raw spectrum of light shining through our embodiment of the soul.
Sometimes shining brightly and occasionally darkness overcomes us.

Darkness can overwhelm and swallow our identity.

We sometimes feel the need to sneak into someone else's identity while suffocated
by this darkness.

Either stealing,
borrowing, learning, or editing what other people have to offer.

Taking a swim into someone else's subconscious is dangerous, and beautiful.
When we do this we often forget to listen.

Listen to yourself more.
We tend to reach for help in the outside world when we need to nourish our inside
world.

We must cherish;
The pleasure and the pain.
Within ourselves.

We have both of them, always dancing around within us.
We need them to absorb and grow.

They wake up every day and wait to see how we will let them dare to balance us.

One can quickly smother the other.
Constantly pulling back and forth wearing on the mind and body.

We often worry so much about who we are, who we need to be, who others are.
We lose the sense of self all together.

Every day we live in a precious area between the sunrise and the deep glowing sunset
that fades to dark. We are stagnant and flowing all at once, in-between.

We tend to be afraid to let our inside world; outside.

There are many choices we forget we have.

I like to choose to watch every sunset.
Even if I am not outside, I watch. I imagine, I feel in my heart what the colors
may be.
I identify them, hold them close, and let them go in the back of my mind.

I believe each day has its own identity just like us.
Rather the evening be gray and dark, almost as if the sun is gone forever.
Or lustrous and marbled across the sky.

In the end all that you can control is how you paint your inner sunset.

An Inner Identity

By Devin Timpone

Devin Timpone brings readers past the surface of the painting she created for the Spring 2019 edition of the Fine Arts course Words, Paintings, and Emotion: The Mindmap of Creativity.

The mind can take you to a place only limited by how far you allow your imagination to travel. For me, this is a place I visit when I am inspired. Watching a movie, listening to music, or reading a book are all ways I can become in touch with this mental universe. It is a wondrous place, bold and mystical, a garden for my thoughts to grow and flourish like roses. It is a way for me to walk on the edge of myself and think in full, vibrant color. Suddenly new ideas rise to the surface and a light has been shined on what was in the dark. It is a way to clear my mind, but also fill it with rich, beautiful ideas and fantasies. For a few moments I am a child again, full of curiosity and excitement.

This place is somewhere to escape, get lost, and explore my deepest emotions, wonders, fears and desires.

It is a place I visit in my dreams, constantly drifting between here and there, or somewhere in between. I wake up clinging to those thoughts and replaying them in my head, trying my best to collect them all and hold onto them for keepsake.

My inner world is a haven for creativity, where I am spirited and motivated. Here, I



am free, like the air. I am liberated from time, space, and gravity. I trust my senses and my instincts. I fly high like like a bird, with my head in the clouds, and wind in my hair. My inner world is a place that knows no boundaries. It invites me to aspire to heights, grow and evolve, and embrace change. I've started to look for it in everyday life. It has become a challenge to make it part of my reality. Since I've visited my inner world, the world I grew up in has never been satisfactory again.

ART FOR BREAKFAST AT CASA SCHLATTER

by Jasmijn Sweere | photos by Bridgette Bacon





The B&B Casa Schlatter lets you experience a night in an artist's house. When you enter the home there is a self portrait of Carlo Adolfo, the great-grandfather of Alessandra Schlatter, owner of the B&B, that invites you to have a look at the artworks that he created more than 100 years ago. As you walk in, a familiar feeling immediate sets in: the living room walls and the rest of apartment are filled with Carlo's works. This is why Alessandra decided to transform the home into a B&B museum.

Carlo Adolfo Schlatter is a talented but little known artist born in 1873. His testament forbid the sale of his paintings and so they were kept in the family along with the home. The apartment remained unused for many years because family members didn't know what to do with both the house and the 300+ artworks it contained. Then came Alessandra Schlatter, the Carlo's great granddaughter, who saw the old gallery for the first time as a young child and immediately fell in love with the place. Years later she decided

to renovate the artworks and the apartment, and in order to raise the necessary funds she opened a B&B. When Alessandra started with the renovation of the house she first repaired the roof and had three bedrooms added. Each room has its own theme: for example, Emma's room is fully pink, with a triptych hanging above the double bed. Casa Schlatter became reality since then and has already been active for 10 years. Alessandra still has many plans for the place and despite the hard work, she tells me that her guests inspire her to keep going and to continue taking care of this unique little world.

Carlo's family was originally from Switzerland and used to own a large bank. In order to improve the business, the family moved to Rome and Carlo's father was consul of the Vatican. Under Giuseppe Garibaldi's plan to unify Italy, everything went downhill for the Schlatters as the Vatican's power and territory diminished, causing the family bank to fail. Carlo built the home that would become Casa

**"I AM ALWAYS
HAPPY TO SHARE
HIS STORY."**

Schlatter in the 1890s as an escape from the hectic city center. The area, once occupied by grassy fields, has become a lively neighborhood as Florence has expanded.

Carlo was always struggling with money and disagreed with his parents' career suggestions. He met a girl named Emma and it was love at first sight. The two got married and Emma quit the boarding school she was enrolled in, to the chagrin of her parents. She started writing poems and making sculptures. Sometimes the couple did not have enough money to buy food. Carlo did not want to sell his paintings so he sought to make a living from making copies of paintings and other handicrafts. Emma died at a young age because of an infection that



may have been caused by a bath that she took in the Arno River. Carlo was devastated and decided to hang a plaque with a carving of Emma's face in the hallway. This part of the family history carries much emotion for Alessandra, and she shed a few tears while telling the story.

Casa Schlatter continues to share Carlo's story with B&B guests and to inspire his great-granddaughter Alessandra.

Amongst the many plans she has for the place, one of her aims is to create a non-profit association to support other families and individuals whose unknown private art collections are deserving of greater attention.



ENIWA & WINE FOOD & WINE FOOD & WINE



LE RICETTE DI CATERINA

Caterina de' Medici brought much of the Florentine and Italian culture with her to France, and the Italian Advanced I students explore her influence on French cuisine.

ZUPPA DI CIPOLLE

by Carmen Turner

Caterina de' Medici è stata una donna forte, intelligente e di grande gusto. Oltre ai suoi successi politici come regina di Francia, ha anche rivoluzionato la cucina francese ed influenzato profondamente l'etichetta e la moda francese. Mangiare dovrebbe essere un'esperienza sociale e piacevole e Caterina de' Medici lo aveva capito. Aveva capito come usare le spezie per migliorare il cibo invece di utilizzarle per mascherare i sapori, e l'importanza e la qualità unica di ogni piatto. Ha insegnato ai francesi come mangiare con una forchetta e ha introdotto cibi e piatti come carciofi, piselli, broccoli, torte, verdure candite, bignè, crema pasticcera, gelati, lattuga, pasta, pasta sfoglia, scaloppine, sorbetto, spinaci e zabaione. Si ritiene che sia arrivata in Francia con i suoi cuochi e pasticceri personali. Uno dei piatti francesi più famosi è la zuppa di cipolle, ma la ricetta in realtà è nata a Firenze e si chiama "carabaccia". La carabaccia è preparata usando cipolle, olio d'oliva, salvia, brodo vegetale, uova, parmigiano e pane tostato. Il nome è rimasto invariato fino a quando Caterina de' Medici ha portato la ricetta in Francia ed è diventata ampiamente nota come zuppa di cipolle francese.

MACARONS E BESCIAMELLA

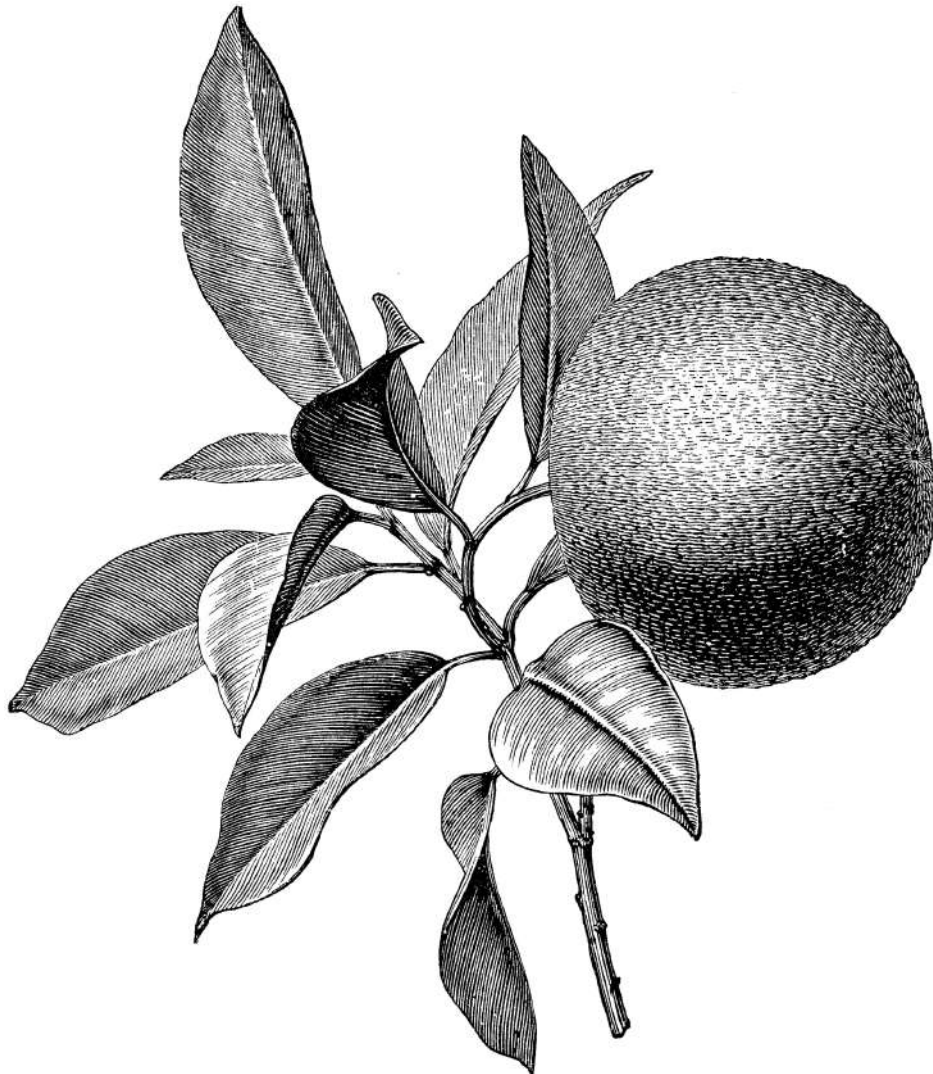
by Claudia Curro and Katie Lyons

Caterina de' Medici, figlia di Lorenzo de' Medici, sposò il principe Enrico II di Francia a soli 13 anni. Oltre alle sue opinioni politiche, Caterina è nota per aver portato con sé molte influenze italiane, fra le quali la danza e il cibo. È infatti stata Caterina a far diventare il balletto una parte significativa della corte francese ed ha sottolineato l'importanza delle arti performative nel dimostrare la ricchezza e la cultura di una nazione. Caterina ha avuto un impatto ancora più grande sulla cucina. Ha introdotto cibi e piatti come la besciamella e i macarons, che sono oggi fondamentali nella cucina francese. La besciamella, o salsa colla come veniva chiamata per il suo aspetto simile alla colla, era una ricetta della Toscana rinascimentale. Ad oggi la besciamella viene utilizzata in lasagne, maccheroni e formaggio, e pure di patate. È facile da fare grazie ai pochi ingredienti necessari: basta un po' di farina, latte, burro, noce moscata e un pizzico di sale! La parola macaron deriva dalla parola italiana "maccherone", che significa pasta fine. Il primo macaron fu preparato con zucchero, farina di mandorle e albume d'uovo, che sono ancora oggi le basi della ricetta. Nel 1500 i macarons iniziarono ad essere realizzati con due metodi diversi, quello italiano e quello francese. Gran parte degli ingredienti sono gli stessi. Tuttavia, è il metodo per creare il macaron che è diverso. Il metodo italiano utilizza una tecnica che prevede l'aggiunta di sciroppo di acqua zuccherata riscaldato insieme agli albumi d'uovo crudi, mentre vengono battuti. Anche se sembra più complicato e ha più passaggi, questo metodo crea un macaron stabile. Il risultato è un biscotto friabile, polveroso e delizioso. Il metodo francese invece, non usa la miscela di acqua zuccherata, ma monta gli albumi d'uovo crudi con lo zucchero per creare una base più leggera e soffice. Anche se questa parte può sembrare più semplice perché ha meno passaggi, questo metodo è invece il più difficile a causa della delicata meringa. Mentre si continuano ad aggiungere gli altri ingredienti, è importante non mescolare troppo. L'aspetto generale del dolce ha una forma più piatta. Questo metodo crea un biscotto meno dolce, e la consistenza ha il gusto gommoso che tutti conosciamo quando si morde un macaron.

HOW DID GELATO COME ABOUT?

By Bronwyn Morgan

We all prefer a flavor of one of Florence's well known iced desserts. Even on the coldest nights, it's hard to resist the sweet, desirable taste of Gelato, as you walk past a Gelateria on the way home. This is all thanks to Bernardo Buontalenti, a man of many talents including architecture, sculpting, painting, and designing. Back when the Medici ruled, Bernardo was requested to organize a celebration party to welcome Spanish guests of the Grand Duke. For this event, Buontalenti went out of his way to put together live performances, fireworks, and created a dessert made with cream and various flavours such as oranges, lemons, and bergamots that were mixed together and then frozen. Legend has it that Bernardo Buontalenti had an underground room built with cork and wood to collect water from snow and rain, and his idea for Gelato came from the snow he kept. He got creative by adding cream and eggs to his recipe, which turned the concoction from an icy sorbet to a creamy gelato.



NEW BUSINESS

IN AN OLD WORLD

BY MELANIE MARGOLESE

PHOTOS BY BRIDGETTE BACON



TOAST! The best thing since Caterina de' Medici. Florence has a rich culinary history embedded into its culture, made apparent by the countless cafes and trattorias on every street corner. So when Fabrizio Porchiani decided to open l'Tosto, a modern spin on toast and panini, he took a big risk by entering into an already established market.

l'Tosto was founded in 2015 and is located on Via dei Servi, right near the Duomo. The shop's aesthetics provide a stark contrast compared to the rest of its neighbors, as it is painted bright yellow and covered in chalkboards and hashtags. This sandwich shop offers over 15 different menu options, with combinations that cater to different palates from all around the world.

Caterina de' Medici is known to have spread Italian influence in food and hospitality to the French courts when she was married to King Henry II in 1533. Today, this spread of culture and influence continues all over the world, with l'Tosto being no exception. Porchiani says that "the goal of the establishment is to create a fast food shop but with a large emphasis on the quality of the sandwiches."

The menu options vary widely, and feature everything from bacon, egg, and cheddar sandwiches, to brie and fish. These generous sandwiches are unique and the only ones of the kind in Florence. With a target demographic of millennials and tourists, social media played a large role in the initial establishment of the business.

The Instagram account, @itostofirenze, has over 9,000 followers and features posts highlighting the menu items.

The secret to success combines the originality of the products with smart marketing tactics and delicious food that caters to almost any taste.




I'GNORANTE € 6,00
+drink € 7,00

'Nduja, Scamorza, Pomodoro a fette

'Nduja (spicy spreadable pork salami), smoked cheese, tomatoes





I'PARMIGIANO € 6,00
+drink € 7,00

Melanzane, crema di parmigiano, mozzarella, salsa di pomodoro

Eggplant, parmigiano cream, mozzarella, tomato sauce

Inhabiting a Page

by Lea Rose Allbaugh

Tightly closed and thoughtfully protected, my journals reflect me at my core. They are my closest confidants through life's celebrations, tribulations, and mundane moments, and they occupy the space where my travels live in technicolor. Each one is carefully chosen and acts as its own character in the chapters that make up my personal narrative. Each account I have curated represents a destination I have flirted with or fallen for.

My handwriting has taken new forms, from bubbly lettering to tangled cursive, as I discover myself through different lenses. Where the letter "L" was once a blunt line, it is now a looped gesture, lazily formed by my right hand. In earlier journals, my world was seen through fresh eyes. This was reflected in my hurried handwriting. I pressed my pen firmly onto the pages, as if I had to jot down these novelties before they escaped me altogether. The cursive words that are now drawn above those grey lines are lighter and more contemplative. My lettering has become more complicated, because my world has too.

I stop, ponder my surroundings and experiences, and take time to write what I really mean. I am compelled to flush out these thoughts because of the fleeting nature of my senses and emotions. I live in these pages because I can explore the boundaries of my mind. Here, I am present. On smooth pages with sharp edges, my discoveries are limitless, and I feel at home amongst the blank canvas. I write to myself as if I am writing to a friend. People and places are introduced, and experiences are unraveled in their rawest forms. Nonetheless, writing without any sort of filter is oftentimes more intimidating than writing any kind of academia. I breathe through my black inked pen and exhale enough vulnerability to scribble down my truth. To my journal, I am unapologetic.

Both my journals and travel destinations are physical spaces. From place to place they house people in the past and present who carry connections and collaborations of thoughts, ideas, and memories. Between the sloping curves of my capital letters and the valleys of cities I visit, both make up the geography. From one journal to the next, my diction changes, much like my language transition from English to Italian. Leather shops and gelaterias line the streets of Florence as mementos of what the city offers at first glance. Similarly, the train tickets and dried, pressed flowers I paste into my pages hint at experiences from a surface level.

Whether I walk ten minutes to the supermarket to buy a bottle of freshly squeezed orange juice, or take planes and trains to France and eat macarons, my journals are my travels. I develop a relationship with each destination as if it were a person. Some I develop close, intimate bonds with, while others are remembered for

... features. Some cities pass me by while others force me to
... ks altogether. Between myself and whatever physical space I
... connection is always exchanged. Like the number of destinations I have
encountered, and empty notebooks I have conquered, these are the cumulative
building blocks of who I am becoming as a writer and a traveler.



Guarda

By Sophia Lascaris

He likes to sit against the giant wooden doors of the Santo Spirito Church almost every day of the week. He always meticulously selects a spot where the sunlight will strike for the following few hours. Like a lizard, he remains completely still for minutes at a time. His expression stern, his lips lightly pressed together and his forehead scored with a frown that was once nicknamed "the Grand Canyon." The only visible movements come from his eyes and fingers following the flow of words he records on his little green notebook.

The recognition of his identity lies in the depth and beauty of observing himself through his momentary surroundings.

His most intimate space is comprised of a variety of factors; and if not at a quintessential equilibrium, the illusion then becomes fractured - the sun, the seating location, and his pen. These ingredients concoct the oxymoronic escape he experiences in a piazza full of people. Despite the diverse diegetic occurrences that take place every day, and the noises and sounds that accompany them, he is able to find absolute peace within this sphere of city elements. The roadworkers unearthing the uneven cobblestone with large hammers and the sound of machines churning cement, or the children lazily playing tag and the pigeons scurrying away from them lure his attention but they don't dare break his tranquil elation; they merely become part of the harmony.

The sun remains crucial to this state of mind and having survived yet another long winter, it becomes a gift from the heavens when it's hot enough for him to feel the burn on his bare shoulders, and when it's too hot to drink his circadian American **BLENDING** light,

his vision grows brisk and all his surroundings gain radiant clarity.

A tiny entity prevails as the protagonist of one of these mornings.

She seems curious, exploring every centimeter of the notebook, from the edges of the pages to the back and all the way to the top again. She looks so content every so often cooling herself in the minor shadows created by the space within the small metal spiral and the folds of paper. She proceeds to accompany him on his peaceful journey there against the walls of Santo Spirito for the rest of his stay, never leaving the premises of his diary or his hands. "Guarda" shouts a young girl from across the square. A name that was a perfect name for the microscopic spider. As she struggled to crawl over his arm hair, he felt akin to this being's spirit. Guarda was so little and so unimportant to everyone else but him. She was overlooked, unnoticed by anyone, yet she was preciously beautiful in her void blackness. She looked like a minuscule black hole - an entrance to another dimension, and she indeed proved to have the power to transport him into another miniature universe.

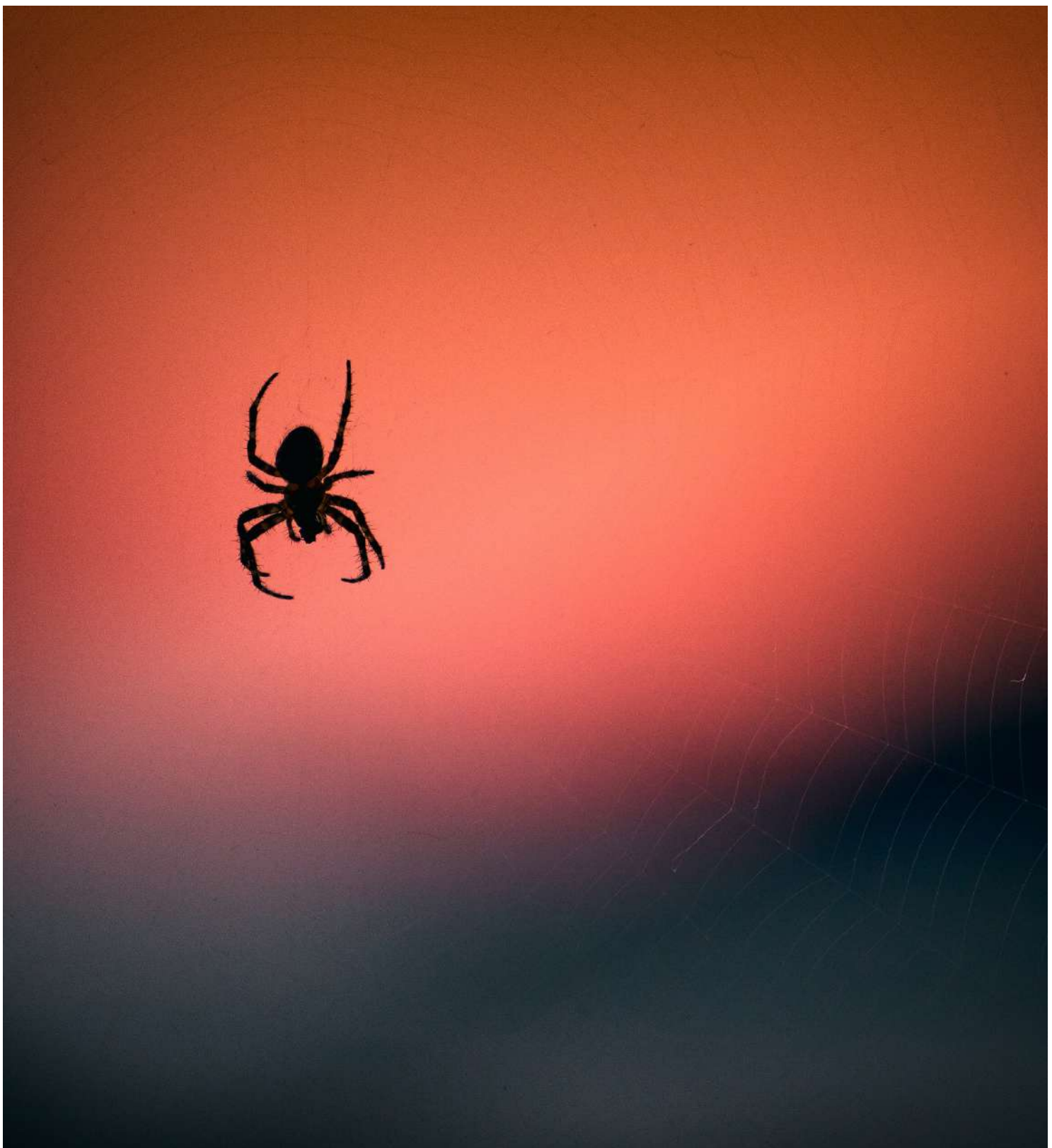
He then comes to be consumed by the motions of his pen, the ink tracing his fingertips and replacing the whiteness of the paper. He is enamored by the apparent autonomy his letters gain once they are realized on the page and he inevitably distracts himself from what he is trying to convey in his words. Letters, shapes, and ink seem, in this state, to overpower observations a

ON READING AND WRITING

conceptions. Guarda once again returns to investigate these proportionally great black lines. She halts in front of the bolder ones, hesitant that she can make it across the letter "l"'s barrier. He draws conspicuous shapes in front of her and she dances around them, following his whimsical path...

Identity and its Intricacy always seem to be capable of living on in all shapes and sizes. From the microverses of these tiny insects, to the systems of our own

bodies, to the elaborate complexes of our cultures, to the macroverses of the immense space outside our solar system and our galaxy, nature seems to always have a way to give life, freedom and diversity to all her substances. Becoming part of this tremendous cosmic order and perceiving the sheer vastness of its species and their individual characters leads me to embrace this very statement as my own identity - living on in everything that gracefully grazes my senses.



Caterina on Reading

BY HEATH LARSSAN AND CASSIDY MORALES

PHOTO BY MARIE-MICHELLE BENSASON

As we approach the 500-year anniversary of the birth of Caterina de' Medici, it is important to look at the contributions that Caterina and the Medici family brought to the world of arts and culture in Italy. Caterina contributed greatly to the arts, and more importantly to the world of literature. Literacy as a tool of knowledge for the common people, as well as the use of literature in the form of bibliotherapy, was certainly recognized by Caterina and the Medici family.

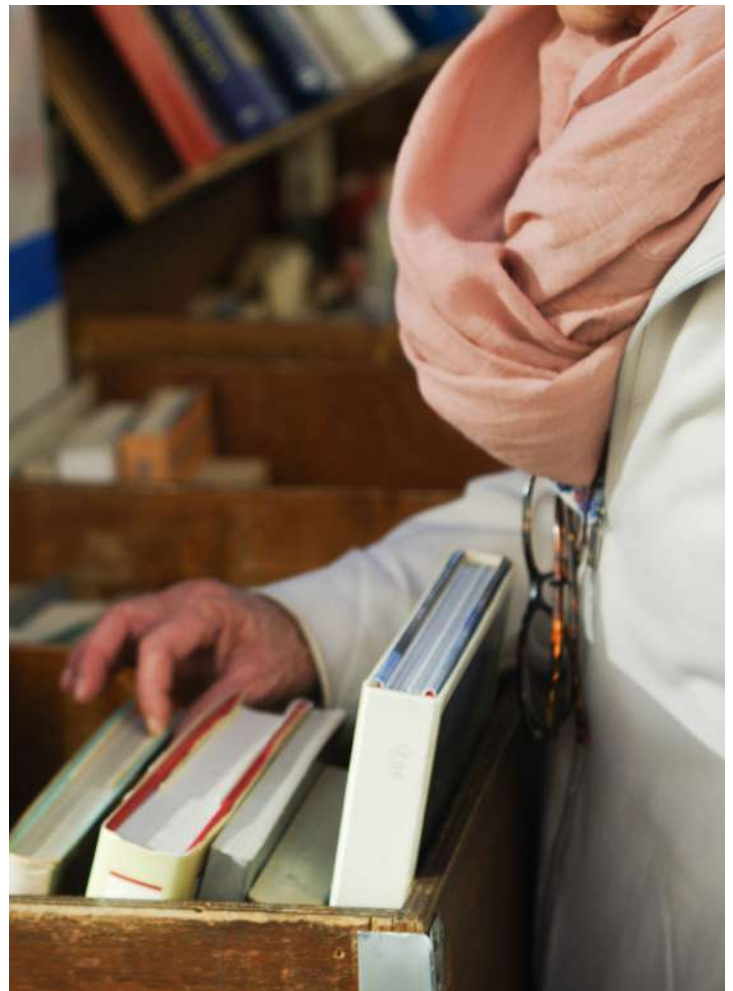
The Medici family patronized a number of libraries throughout Florence. The first public library in Florence was patronized by Cosimo de' Medici in 1444 inside San Marco, paving the way within the realm of public literacy and access to knowledge. Cosimo understood the importance of public libraries and the power that the access of knowledge provided. In 1523, the construction of the Laurentian Library began, commissioned by the Medici family to showcase the family's intelligence and its rightful place as a family of culture in Florence. Moreover, Caterina, born in 1519, had a great love for the arts, from theater to architecture and to literature as well.

Caterina's love for the arts was then brought over to France after marrying her husband Henry II of France, who would later become king. It was here that Caterina became a major influence of the French Renaissance, bringing forward the ideals of the Medici family and drawing inspiration from her father-in-law. Caterina's court was highly literate and she also managed a collection of books in the Louvre. As well as writing her own works of literature, Caterina patronized many French poets that would write numbers of works for court festivals and royal entries.

Caterina seemed to have a great understanding of the beauty and power that literature can

have on an individual. This is not at all far from the ideas we have today about bibliotherapy and the benefits of its uses. From exploring one's emotions to being able to relate to a character and a plotline, or even just reading as a means of relaxation, literature is a tool that can be easily accessible to almost everyone. Caterina's knowledge of this spanned beyond her years, as well as the knowledge of the implications and uses of literature and books for healing in the 16th century.

As the 500-year anniversary of her birth approached, let's remember the contributions she brought to the arts, as well as the powerful tool of literature. After all, 16th century or 21st, who doesn't love reading a good book?





STUDENT VOICE

A young man with a mustache is shown in profile, looking out over a city at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and blue. In the background, a cityscape is visible with a prominent dome, likely St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The man's face is in the foreground, and the city is in the background.

AN IDENTITY IN LIMBO

By Hailey Koebrick

My boots clack down the streets, their echo accompanied only by the bell of a bike in the distance. I like the attention it draws as I walk. I prefer to exist in a limbo, blending into the crowds of locals but catching the eye or rather the ear in subtle ways. This limbo feels safe. Never fully vulnerable, never fully closed off. By living and traveling in this in-between space I never have to define myself in relation to the world around me. I am no one, nothing more than a ghost passing through. I never put down roots for too long, I never fully unpack. I grew up in a temporary world and that has followed me into early adulthood. To me, home was always a state of mind, not a physical location. I build my home with familiarities; the laugh of a friend, my morning walk, the feeling of denim jeans, the warmth of the sun on my face as I stroll along the Arno, the clack of my boots.

In a city that's so small yet feels so full, the eye contact I make as I walk helps satisfy my need for human interaction. The man on the corner catches my eye as he drags on a cigarette for warmth. I imagine a life for him; his family and friends, what kind of wine he likes, his profession. He now lives in the perception of the city I have created in my head. It's easier to exist here than to confront the "otherness" I feel in Italy. I know I will never belong in the physical city but the one I construct out of idiosyncrasies and neuroses is a life raft in a sea of chaos. Maybe I prefer to live in the castle in my mind because I am not ready to cope with being no one. To be no one is to be so comfortable with your identity that you can mold it to your surroundings with ease. I am not there yet, and that's okay. One day I might be vulnerable enough to travel fully in the tangible world and embrace everything that's thrown my way.

Until then, I try to "pass" for a local when I can, although my strawberry blonde hair betrays me most of the time. Like most students here, I don't speak Italian, but that doesn't mean I can't communicate. I use their eyes and body language to fill in the gaps. A shrug, a slouch, a dart of the eyes; all indicators of their meaning. To them I am no one, a fleeting flash of blonde that responds to their Italian with empty eyes.

As I roam through Florence, I am thankful for the opportunities that force me out of my head and onto the streets. The jostle of a passing tour group, the smell of fresh schiacciata, the pink brushstrokes of the Tuscan sunset. I traipse through the city I now inhabit, before being swallowed by the mass of people in the city center and once again become nothing more than a pair of clacking boots.

Caterina's Fluid Cultural Identity

By Abby Hopkins, Katey Granoff, Mikenzie Clark

People often develop a new cultural identity upon travelling to a new place; Caterina de' Medici is a prime example. At the age of just 14, Caterina, who married King Henry II of France, moved from Italy to France. Transitioning from one culture to another, Caterina took with her specific characteristics of the cultural identity she had already developed in Florence, and brought them with her to influence French cultural norms. Specifically, Caterina was known to have assisted in significantly defining French cuisine and culinary culture in France. She is best known for teaching the French how to use a fork, and this transition forever changed the identity of French cuisine.

Much can be said for even the simplest of acts. When moving from one place to another, Caterina had no other option but to adjust and adapt. With her she brought Florentine traditions, while picking up others from her new lifestyle. This illustrates that the simple act of traveling has the power to connect people of all cultures. The global world plays a significant role in our cultural identities. It alters depending on the culture in which you are submerged. Caterina's mythologized persona is a great example of this and as a result, the influence that she had eventually spanned worldwide. Having said, there is no single identity that spans over the entire globe, as there are far too many individuals, communities, and cultures to be combined into one that could be generalized.

Caterina de' Medici was able to remain true to the culture she was born into, as well as she is able to conform to the culture that she is immersed in. Studying abroad pushes students to step out of their comfort zone and incorporate their new homes lifestyles into their own. The process is challenging at first, but once students become acquainted with their new situation, daily activities play out more smoothly. Once they feel more comfortable in their new home, students travel to other neighboring countries in Europe, and repeat the process of trying new things all over again. Not only do students try new things, but they also introduce their culture and leave a footprint behind wherever they adventure to. Travel is so impactful and important because it inspires people to be brave enough to visit new and unfamiliar places.

Students studying abroad in Italy eventually absorb the way of life and make it part of their culture. After a month, students know when to cross the street and when to let a Vespa pass, they know how to bargain for a good price and they remember to incorporate "Ciao" and "Grazie" into their croissant-ordering routines. Although many daily activities differ from the typical lifestyle of the study abroad student, the student is able to blend the lifestyle of their new surroundings into their previous ones. This is similar to Caterina de' Medici's transition from France to Italy. She meticulously fused French cooking techniques with Italian dining customs of the upper class. It can be debated whether or not Caterina introduced these traditions and customs from homesickness or simply from indulgence, but we would like to believe she genuinely thought she had a way to help people and improve many lives. Caterina de' Medici gave the French dining room what it needed most, class and a sense of nobility. It shaped history and gave French food its renowned culinary reputation. As students studying abroad, we should all strive to be travelers indulging in new cultures.

The Fairy in the Belltower

By Bronwyn Morgan

Florence's cathedral, Santa Maria del Fiore, stands tall and proud in the center of the city, a great landmark to all. The marble, with its green, red, and white detail, shines bright as it stands under the spotlight of the sun. Many of us have rushed in line to climb the bell tower or to take photos of the cathedral's famous "cupola."

Legend has it that there was a young shepherd named Giotto di Bondone. He was a gentle soul. He would gather his herd of sheep and keep them close to him on his adventures. There was one little lamb in particular who would always stay close to Giotto, and he could never understand why it was so attached to him. Whenever the herd stopped to rest, Giotto noticed that the little lamb always laid down on the same stone. He decided to follow the little one, as they had become very close. Unfortunately, as Giotto laid down next to the lamb, he realized that it had peacefully passed away.

Giotto heard a voice in his head, which he soon realized belonged to the little lamb. They were words of encouragement and reassurance, explaining that because of Giotto's unconditional care, love, and appreciation towards the little lamb, it had transformed into a fairy who would follow him everywhere, assuring his safety. The fairy said "Giotto, in return for your kindness, I grant you to become a man of talent, an outstanding sculptor as well as an artist."

As the little lamb's words would reveal, Giotto became a renowned sculptor. When Giotto passed away, the little lamb remained as a fairy living in the famed bell tower that Giotto had designed. Legend says that there is still a bond between the two souls and that when anyone decides to climb up the tower, they will be supported by the little fairy saying:

"Go on, Signora, go up the stairs, oh go!
'Do not be afraid, my lady! For I am here below."

The next time you visit Giotto's bell tower, don't be frightened when you hear words of encouragement - it is the fairy who faithfully supports you during every step of your climb.

ALUMNI PROFILE

INTERVIEW WITH FUA AMBASSADOR, ASHLEY KHOURI

BY FUA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION | PHOTO BY ASHELY KHOURI



TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF.

My name is Ashley Khouri. I'm from Erie, Pennsylvania but I go to Duke University in North Carolina. I'm majoring in Biology with a concentration in Neurobiology and I'm on the Pre-Medical track. The first time I came to Florence was thanks to a scholarship in high school that allowed me to choose a study abroad program anywhere in the world. I picked Florence because FUA's pre-college program appealed to me the most for the classes that were offered and because it catered exclusively to high school students like myself. When thinking about what I wanted to do for a summer study abroad during college, I knew it had to be related to

pre-med, and FUA was able to arrange a pre-clinical placement for me in Florence.

WHAT DOES IDENTITY MEAN TO YOU?

To me, identity is the way by which I know myself. It is a sense of who I am today, who I was in the past, and who I will aim to become in the future. This definition encompasses all of the little pieces that come together to form an identity: awareness of strengths and weaknesses, personality traits, behaviors and cultural influences, just to name a few.

WHAT MAIN LESSONS HAVE TRAVEL AND STUDYING ABROAD TAUGHT YOU?

Traveling and studying abroad have taught me a multitude of lessons and for that, I could not be more thankful. Spending time away from the States taught me to understand and love what I'm unfamiliar with – it brought me out of my comfort zone. Being abroad taught me to value impermanence. Going abroad, I always had a set date that I'd be leaving on. I knew I wouldn't be able to stay there forever (no matter how much I wanted to), and I knew that the people I met would return to being thousands of miles away at the conclusion of my experience. Nonetheless, this taught me to take advantage of every opportunity, make the most of every minute I had and make connections with people I would not have ever had the opportunity to meet otherwise.

HOW HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE IN ITALY AFFECTED YOUR LIFE BACK HOME?

My two experiences in Florence, once as a senior in high school and once as a junior in college, allowed me to learn valuable life lessons that I was able to bring back home with me. Reflecting back on my time, I believe that it greatly expanded my cultural bubble. Being immersed in Italian culture – living in the same building as locals, going to my placement at the local hospital, meeting students from the area, speaking the language - taught me so much more about the culture than I ever could have learned from a textbook. Having such an immersive first-hand experience seemed daunting at first, but upon coming home, I brought with me an open mind, and the knowledge that I cannot truly understand another culture's norms, traditions, and beliefs, without intermingling myself in them first.

IF YOU LOOK AT YOUR TIME BEFORE FUA AND YOUR TIME AFTER LEAVING FLORENCE, HOW DID YOUR SENSE OF IDENTITY CHANGE?

Before going to FUA, I had always been in my comfort zone. I had gotten used to being in a community where everyone was more-or-less like me; there was little room for diversity. My sense of identity reflected much

upon what my peers were like. After spending time at FUA, this changed. I met people from all over the world – France, Egypt, Turkey, Thailand – not just from Italy or the United States. Amongst spending time with people, who were seemingly very different from me, it forced me to really think about who I am, who I was, and who

I will be. My culture, my experiences, my strengths and weaknesses...they were all very different than the people I was surrounded by - and that is what made my experience so much more worthwhile. Although it may seem contradictory, by learning about others' cultures in a country foreign to me, I was able to learn more about my own culture and background as well. Being "different" from my peers for the first time forced me to think about myself as an individual, rather than part of a collective whole. I think this is something that we all need in our

lives and I am so thankful that I was able to come to know both others and myself because of FUA.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

I plan on going to to medical school after graduation. I am still unsure about a residency focus, but I am thinking Oncology or Radiology for now. I should in theory stay in the US but my preference is to try living elsewhere.

Le Palle de' Medici

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BY BRIDGETTE BACON | ILLUSTRATION BY THE AUTHOR

While walking around the streets of Florence, Pisa, and Rome, look up, for you will start to see a commonality between these historic locations: the Medici family crest. Don't know what that is? Well, the Medici family crest, or Le Palle de' Medici, features a shield with five to six (the amount varies on what year the crest was made) round balls on it. This crest is the coat of arms of Florence's most influential family dynasties of the Renaissance, the House of Medici.

The Medici are known for being the first to open a banking system in 15th century Florence, a business that increased their wealth and power exponentially. As purveyors of the arts, the Medici wealth funded the construction of many notable monuments in Florence. These places include the Uffizi Gallery, Fort Belvedere, and the Boboli Gardens. They also commissioned works by Michelangelo and Botticelli, attributing notability to Florence for being the hotspot of the Renaissance. For this reason, when walking the streets of Florence, you will notice Le Palle de' Medici in many locations around the city. From the corners of buildings to ceiling frescoes in the Uffizi, the shield with the distinct little balls will not be hard to miss.

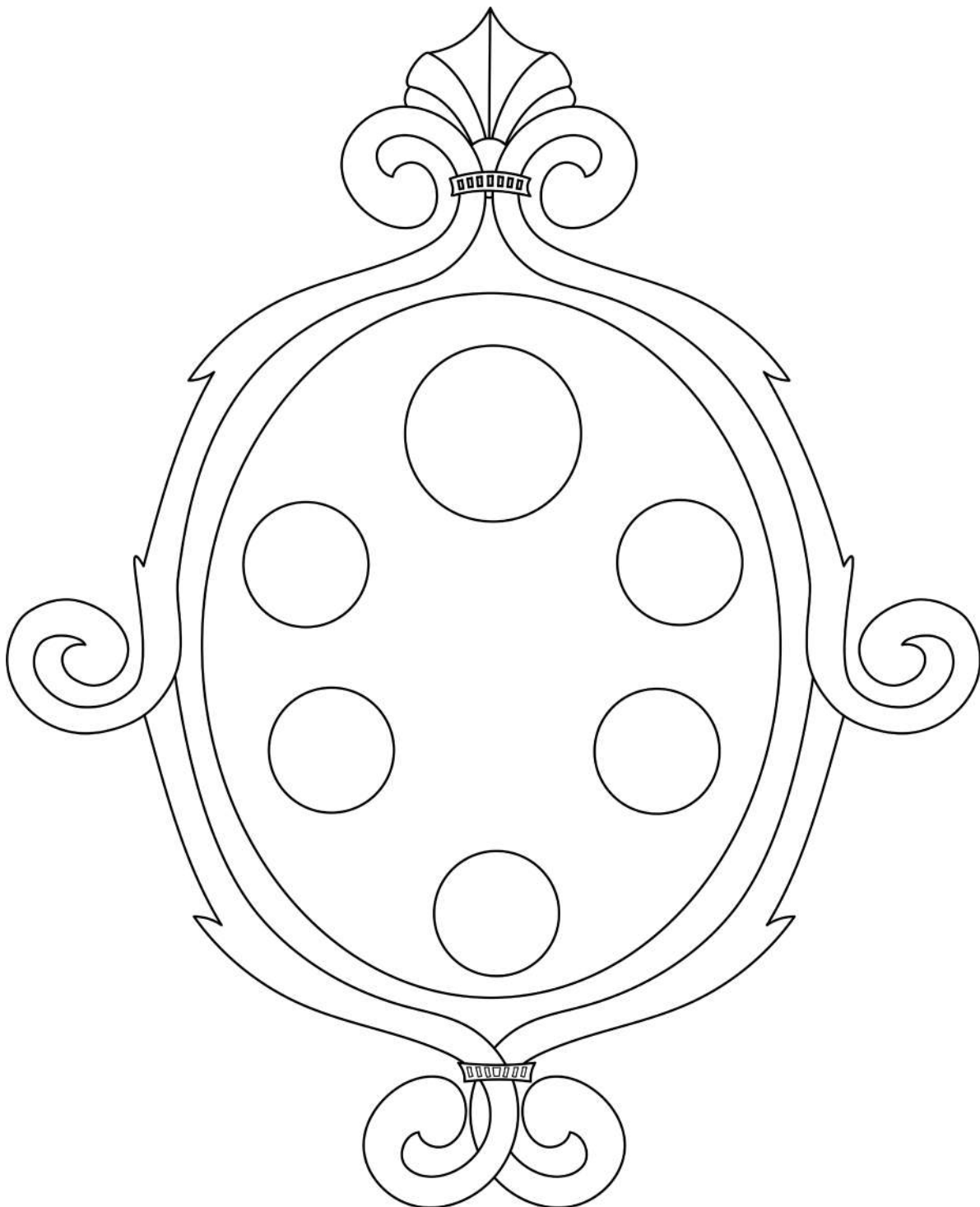
Try making a game out of counting the amount of locations where you see the crest; you may be impressed by the number.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

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Le Palle de' Medici is known for the color of its balls, do you know what colors these should be? Do you know which one is different and why? Well, if you do, grab your colored pencils, pens, or markers and get to it! Once completed, snap a pic, post it, and tag #FUABlendingMag in the description.

Have fun!





My friends and I were walking down the streets of Florence looking for our next adventure in a night full of memories. A sign offering a seance with a gypsy fortune teller caught our eyes and we wandered in.

The room was full of mirrors, which duplicated the many knick knacks lining the shelves. There were beaded curtains at the entrance which moved and clicked as we made our way inside. The glass windows let in light that bounced off the mirrors and made the laid out crystals dance around the room.

The woman, sitting in the back of the shop, asked who we wanted to communicate with, and before we could stop to think my friend Catie said, "We're doing a report on Caterina de'Medici, that could work."

Instantly the gypsy slapped her hands on the table with the new smell of incense burning in the background. Her head shot back and she began to murmur in tongues. Gradually, the sounds became coherent and Caterina de'Medici introduced herself as the queen.

First, she started speaking in Italian and French. We barely understood all of her words, but luckily we were still able to sense what she was communicating.

My friend shared her studies on Caterina, "She was notorious for consulting with Nostradamus and other aspects of the occult..."

"As the queen I had a number of resources at my disposal - I simply had connections to the best minds in the world and of course that made people jealous; especially the men," the gypsy spoke while in a trance, and we felt the closeness of Caterina in the orange incense that filled the air.

We were all stunned by her quick response.

"Don't forget girls, if you play your cards right you won't have to listen to a man your whole life."

Catie noticed a Queen of Swords tarot card laying on the table next to all sorts of unidentifiable objects relating to the gypsy's craft. She summoned up the courage to ask Caterina her next question.

"Caterina, were you always aware of the influence you would have on the modern world?"

"If you're a queen and don't have influence, well then you're not a very good one. You see those high-heeled shoes you're wearing, for that you have me to thank for giving you a more equal footing with the men in your lives." There was a slight pause as the girls let her sharp words sink in.

"As a Queen I didn't have the easiest time with the King. He was more interested in his mistress than the duties a King should attend to first. It took nearly ten years until I conceived, and even then it was mostly my scheming that got us that far. I constantly looked for solutions to the infertility and with it I made friends in unassuming places. People accused me of witchcraft, but they simply had no proof."

"What was it like leaving Italy at such a young age?" asked one of the other girls.

"At fourteen? I was already a woman by that time. My marriage was arranged and my duties were attended to. I brought my whole life with me, honestly France should be thanking me for bringing such high class with me to French court."

"Ask about the parties..." one of the girls said to another. "What were your parties like?" they both asked.

"My parties were the most elaborate in all of Europe at that time. If there wasn't gossip the next day, or I didn't gain any valuable information, then the party was a flop. But don't worry, I always put on the best shows and got what I wanted. The shows were somewhat of a distraction, but I used them as a political tool as well. Look at it as Renaissance networking, I gave them things like ballet and a good time, and I got the better part of the deals we made."

"What deals did you make for your daughter's wedding?"

"I can only assume you mean Marguerite and her wedding to the Protestant. The other daughters and their weddings were quite boring when compared to that particular occasion. Of course, I guess it is unfortunate what happened to all those people, but I will tell you what I told my daughter. I was attending to the intricate wedding plans, and the mother of the bride couldn't orchestrate such terrible things on her daughter's special day, although it was a day to remember. I simply can't have you thinking I'd do something like that - is that all my legacy is good for?"



The girls all looked around at each other, knowing more than they did when they came in, but somehow having even more questions.

The gypsy muttered as she transformed back into herself, promptly asking for the 20 euros we owed her, or if we possibly wanted to contact someone else for an additional 10.

We paid our debts to the gypsy and left the shop in a hurry. We decided we had enough contact with the dead for one night, but maybe we'd decide to ask other questions later.





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