



# BLENDING

MAGAZINE

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**Benvenuto  
Cellini**  
*Between Fact  
& Fiction*

ARTS | COMMUNITY | TRAVEL | FASHION & STYLE | FOOD & WINE | STUDENT VOICE | ALUMNI

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# *Letter from* **the Editor**

"His whole high, broad form seemed made of solid bronze and shaped in an unalterable mold, like Cellini's cast Perseus." This is how Herman Melville introduces Captain Ahab, the monomaniacal protagonist of the novel *Moby Dick*. Using the Florentine goldsmith's iconic work as a point of reference for his readers to convey the sense of gravitas when Ahab steps on the deck of the *Pequod* for the very first time. This choice might seem odd, given that out of all the Florentine renaissance artists, Michelangelo and DaVinci probably hold more ground in people's imagination. Yet, Benvenuto Cellini has a claim to fame not only because of his legacy in the world of art, but also because of the literary legacy that he left behind. Benvenuto Cellini left us with a memoir penned by himself narrating his life in detail as an artist.

His writing is energetic and direct, outlining the artist's accomplishments and the more controversial accounts of his life, such as his time spent in prison for murder. At the same time, Benvenuto makes us doubt the text's veracity by mentioning exaggerated and fantastical episodes, like the summoning of legions of devils or visions of angels. Over the centuries, Cellini's autobiography has become the blueprint for the stereotype of the Italian renaissance artist, temperamental, curious, and full of life, taking hold into the west's collective imagination and inspiring generations of artists, writers and intellectuals. But there is a tension within Cellini's literary work that you might have already noticed: the tension between fact and fiction, that often leads to the breaking point in between the two allowing it to spill over.

This werry tension is at the center of this issue of *Blending Magazine*. As a starting point, the theme for the Fall 2022 student exhibit is inspired by the autobiography of the renaissance artist and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini. Some highlights of the issue are the fashion article "Fashion Photography: Real or AI-Generated?" by Katya Fredericksen, exploring the new frontiers of technology and simulation in fashion, and the Advance Painting courses exploring the variety found in the simple self-portrait in the article "What's in a self-portrait?" Many more articles, illustrations, and even comic books await you on these pages. We hope you'll enjoy reading this issue as much as we did while putting it together.

Happy Reading,  
The Blending Staff

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# *Final* Student **Exhibit**

**A**t the end of every semester students from the DIVA and SAS, FUA-AUF's art departments, come together for the final student exhibit. This is an opportunity for students to showcase their work and interact with the local community through Corridoio Fiorentino, FUA-AUF's very own art gallery open to the public. Here's a small selection of works from our students from the Fall 2022 Student Exhibit, inspired by the theme "Benvenuto Cellini: Between Fact and Fiction," the same theme of this current Blending Magazine issue.



“Diary of an Oxygen Thief”  
Traditional Darkroom  
Paper: Glossy Ilford FB  
Dimensions: A4 (21 x 29,7 cm)

Isabelle Egwuonwu  
Home institution: Bowdoin College  
Major: Visual Arts and Cinema Studies  
Class: Advanced Film Photography



“Blue Collar Fighter”  
Digital Ink-jet Print  
Format A3 (42 x 29,7 cm), A4 (21 x 29,7 cm)

Sean Donnely  
Home institution: FUA-AUF  
Major: Visual Communication  
Class: Advanced Digital Photography





*Above:*  
"Reflected Realities"  
Digital Ink-jet Print  
Format A4 (21 x 29,7 cm)

Maeve Mugglebee  
Home institution:  
FUA-AUF  
Major: Visual Communication  
Class: Intermediate Landscape and Architectural Photography

*Left:*  
"Backdoors"  
Digital Ink-jet Print  
Format A3 (42 x 29,7 cm)

Evan King  
Home institution: Winthrop University  
Major: Art History  
Class: Intermediate Landscape and Architectural Photography

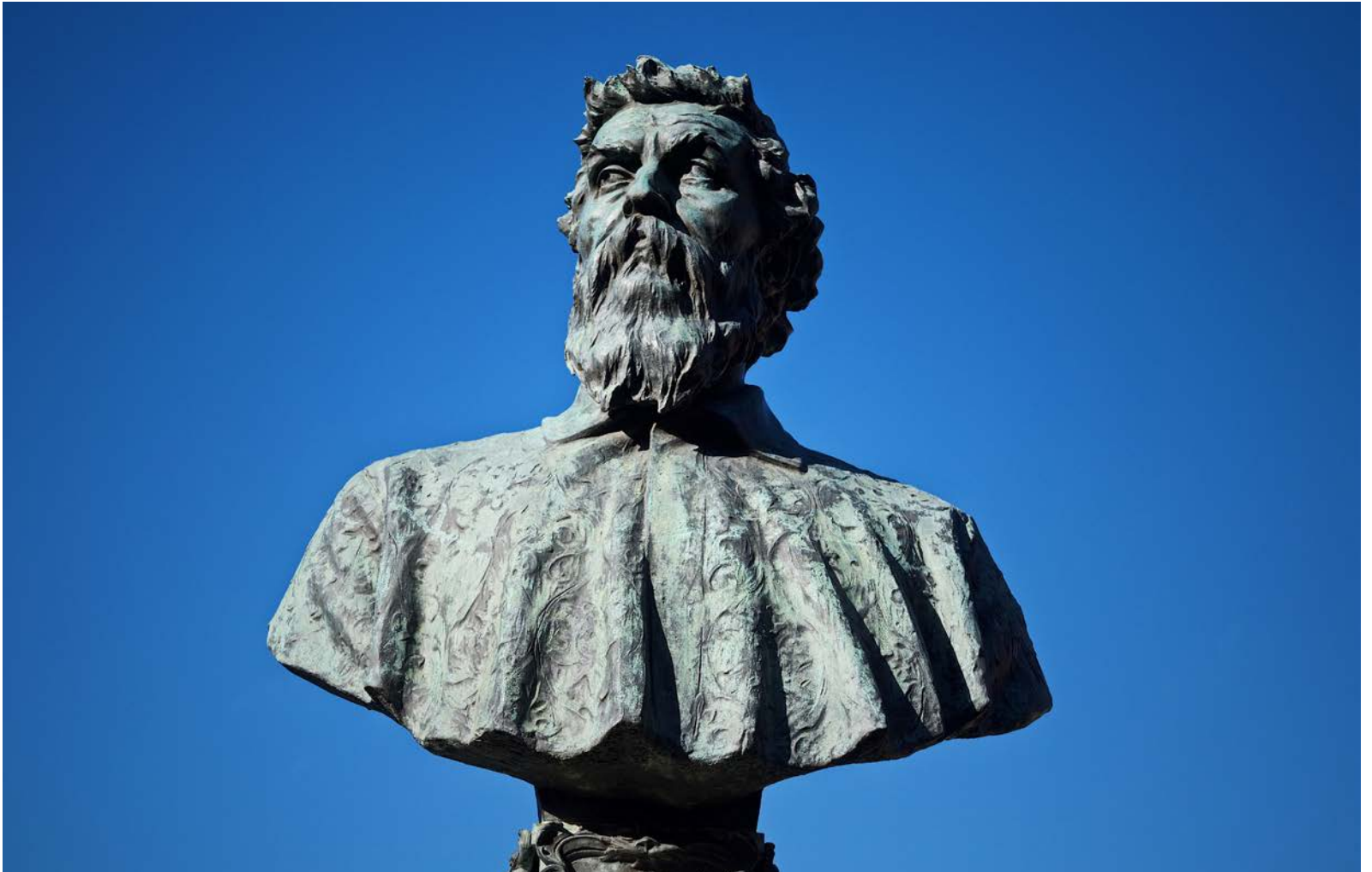
# Art





# Tell Your Own Story: *Autobiography in the Modern World*

By Ciara Colgan | Photo by the Author



In the very first sentence of Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography, he states that every person who has lived a life of any importance should "describe their life with their own hand."

Today, almost everyone has followed his suggestion through the advent of social media. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok have given each of us a chance to document our lives for the public eye, but just like Cellini, we don't always tell our story truthfully. One doesn't have to read too far into Cellini's autobiography to see that he is writing down his life events as if they came out of a storybook. He tells tales of events in which he is the main character, and he is, in fact, the hero of his own story. Although this can be slightly distracting if you are looking for a factual

account of the artist's life, it is also understandable, especially given all the morally gray areas in Cellini's life. It was not rare for Cellini to get into trouble with the law, whether for violence, embezzlement, or even murder, but we do not see that side of him in his autobiography. Cellini retells these events with a bias that makes it seem like he is never in the wrong and makes the reader root for him no matter the bad deed. Today, Cellini's autobiography has become his most significant legacy. His accomplishments in goldsmithing and sculpture are not forgotten among art lovers, but his exciting autobiography has drawn more attention to his life and work. When reading his autobiography, we learn about the events of his life and the people he met along the way.

The leaders and artists he mentions are still well-known today, and Cellini's acquaintance with them makes him more popular by association. One could say that Cellini mastered the art of being famous for being famous long before the social media stars of today.

Cellini stresses the aspects of his life that get him more admiration from his readers. The main takeaway from his autobiography is that he was one of the most talented goldsmiths and musicians of his time, an honorable man who cared for his family, and he associated with some of the greatest artists of all time.

Like Cellini, we all want to be worthy of attention and praise, so we tell an idyllic version of our story on resumes, school applications, dating profiles, and social media platforms. Cellini fabricated fantastic anecdotes, like when his horse managed to do a full backflip with him on it before it landed perfectly on the ground and continued running, and retold mundane events, like his birth, as if he was a gift from God himself. Is this any different, though, from social media today? Perhaps we aren't making up fantastical crimes and glossing over murders and other egregious crimes, but we all tell our stories as favorably as we can.

If you read Cellini's autobiography, it is evident that his story isn't entirely factual, nor does it tell the entire truth. For every tale, such as when he claims that he shot two birds with one bullet, there is another glaring omission, like when he killed a rival in Rome only to be pardoned by the Pope. However, the fantastical retelling of his life's story got him what he wanted, which was to be remembered for centuries.

“ *Just like Cellini, we all want to be worthy of attention and praise, so we tell an idyllic version of our story on resumes, job and school applications, dating profiles, and social media platforms.* ”

# Brutally Elegant: *Giambologna's Abduction of a Sabine Woman*

By Hannah Siemieniaka | Photos by Maeve Mugglebee

**W**hat does the combination of artistic elegance and horror-inducing mythos of Giambologna's *Abduction of a Sabine Woman* say about the foundations of our society?

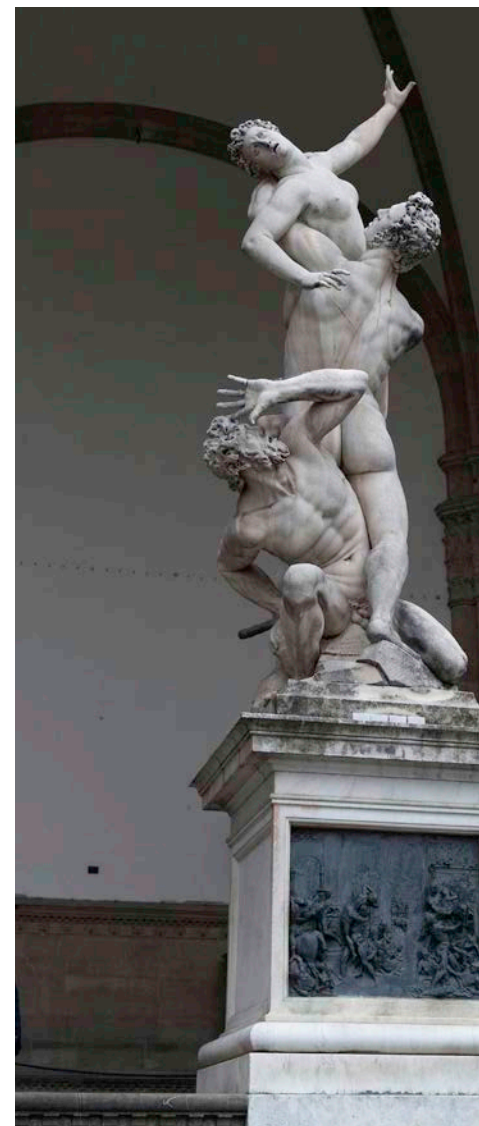
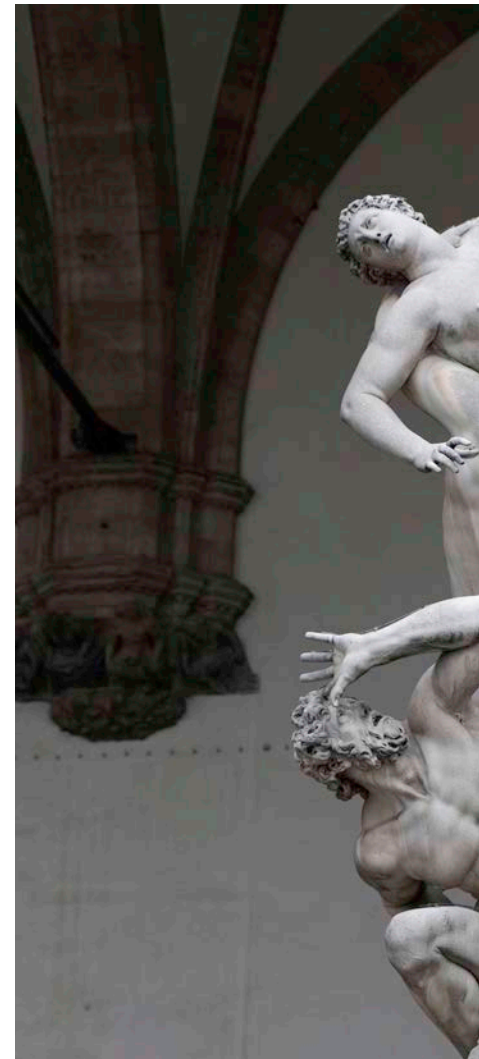
Standing tall at 410 centimeters, the marble work stands in the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence, Italy.

The winding nature of the carvings called "figura serpentinata, invites viewers to walk around the sculpture and take in every methodically carved detail. Carved in 1581-1583, Giambologna (1524-1608) plays into the artistic trends of his time. The High Renaissance period begged for artworks and sculptures to be based on ancient myths, and historians studying the Mannerist art movement would recognize Giambologna for his subject's exaggerated stances and the long, curved lines forever present in his work.

Giambologna created many works in Florence, despite having a Flemish and French background.

Giambologna was a court sculptor for the Medici family, working primarily for the Duke of Tuscany, Francesco I, otherwise known as Francesco De' Medici, with many of his works often influenced by Michaelangelo.

The *Abduction of a Sabine Woman* was a way for Giambologna to showcase his artistic talent and ability when working with marble. He wanted recognition for his work and to be glorified alongside some of the best Renaissance artists of his time. The *Abduction of a Sabine Woman* does precisely this. Even over four centuries





later, Giambologna is hailed as a master of his craft, and the sculpture is considered a triumph.

But how does that compare to the myth on which the sculpture is based?

According to the ancient Roman legend Romulus founded the city of Rome in 750 B.C.E but was immediately met with a major dilemma. The number of men was staggering compared to the number of women. The citizens of Rome could only guarantee the city's success with a strong Roman population. Romulus, thus invited the Sabine people, a native population to the area of the Apennine Mountains, to a summer festival celebration. But to say that it was a celebration is insulting, as Romulus and the Roman men had other, much more sinister plans. Romulus gave a signal to his men by raising his cloak, and the summer celebration turned into horrifying chaos. The summer air turned to confusion and fear as the Sabines watched their mothers, sisters, and wives be taken from them. Every woman who came to the celebration was abducted by the Romans and forced to serve as their wife.

We see this story play out in the sculpture. The violence of the myth is depicted in this piece. We see the emotions through the woman's outstretched arm, looking to grab onto anything to save her, in her face that screams for help, in the Roman's tight grasp. Giambologna carved the violence into every dynamic pose, tense muscle, and wrinkle of the three figures, leaving the viewer alone to wonder about their fates and what it means that our societies were built on the foundations of violence.

The bloodshed that runs from Rome reaches Florence with this sculpture and subsequently touches our societies, our cities, and, more importantly, each of us individually. Does the violence from centuries ago infiltrate our lives today? Is it in our daily routines, our relationships, and our emotions? While there are no clear answers to these questions, we will always be able to rely on art and its ability to show us the duality of life.



# *What's in a* **Self-Portrait?**

By Sarah Spirek, Ava Jenkins, and Tevka Lackmann

**S**tudents from the Advanced Painting course at FUA-AUF have explored the art of self representation through the medium of oil painting, this went beyond just acquiring technique but analyzing what the act of recreating one-self entails on a deeper level. Here is a selection of works from the students that we wish to share with you dear readers.



## *Sarah* **Spirek**

**S**elf-portraiture gives the artist complete control over what is communicated to the viewer. We must be able to analyze these works, visual or otherwise, to determine how much of a work is true, how much is simply left unsaid, or what has been changed or exaggerated. In Cellini's case, we see a great deal of idealization and exaggeration of his life and accomplishments. In traditional portraiture, the artist aimed to depict not only likeness of their subject, but also the wealth, power, virtue, and other positive qualities of the subject.

When creating my own self-portraits, I believe there is always, at least in my case, an initial instinct to idealize my physical attributes, remove eye bags, sharpen a jawline, and smooth over imperfections. But physical attributes are not the only factors in self-portraiture. Frida Kahlo offers an interesting perspective in this conversation. Kahlo's work in self-portraiture is extensive: learning to paint with a mirror while bedridden, she was most frequently her own subject. Rather than idealizing her image or life, Kahlo depicts the painfully truthful reality of her life, including her chronic pain, divorce, miscarriages, and memories.

Her self-portraits do not seek to "beautify" her, nor do they attempt to cover up the hardships she lived through. Kahlo removed all factors of objectification and presented herself as she believed and knew to be true. Kahlo often painted contrasting versions of herself, depicting her turbulent inner world. I am fascinated by the candor in her work, and it is something I strive to cultivate in my own self portraits. I believe everyone has various versions of themselves. That there are parts of us that we prefer to keep tucked away from the world, in a place where we can be authentically ourselves.

In my own work, this split is represented in the two figures, one in full view and one hidden behind the first. I do not believe this separation of self to be negative, but rather an inevitable truth of living. At some point, we all go through painful times, by honoring them and keeping them in place, we can grow and learn from our experiences.

Self-portraiture gives me the ability to peel back the layers of self for the viewer to interpret.

# *Ava* Jen kins

**A**mong all the self-portraits in the history of art, Rembrandt van Rijn's multiple self-portraits stand out among other artists. Although his self-portraits are plenty and spread across his lifetime, in each one, Rembrandt was able to capture a unique emotion.

What inspired me about his work is the solemn awareness of his own mortality.

In my work, I have repeatedly returned to the self-portrait. There is something about the perpetual search to depict one's self that I am fascinated with. In this particular painting, I was inspired by Rembrandt's "Self Portrait with Dishevelled Hair" (1628). Most of his face is shrouded in shadow and blurred along the lines of the shadows. I wanted to capture a similar mood in my painting. I used a reference photo of myself with strong light contrast and dark shadows to reflect the overbearing theme of imminent mortality.



Mortality is a definite outcome for all humans, and as a result, it has controlled many conversations of the human race. The difference, however, is how each person comes to terms with it. Some reject and fear it, thus combating their mortality in any way they can; others accept it peacefully as a fact of life. I think Rembrandt's self-portrait represents a unique combination of both ideas; his expression is melancholic, facing the inevitable dark future, while immortalizing himself in the act.

This is exactly what fascinates me about this type of self portraiture is not only staring back at the viewer but also starring in the face of self annihilation, simultaneously accepting mortality while mocking it.



# *Tevka* **Lack man**

**T**here are so many beautiful sights in this world, and at the roots of my creative process, I aim to capture that. However, especially recently, my art is the medium I use as I search for meaning.

What used to be a means of pretty but simple documentation has morphed into an imperative form of expression. Still, I find myself constantly trying to understand what makes something art - oftentimes, I don't feel like I know the deeper aims or celebrated art in a museum is simply lost on me - and sometimes, the point is that there is no point. I may never know what "art" is, but I know that

when I am creating, I am my best self - especially outdoors. I didn't consciously think about this when making my self-portrait, but the focus is not actually on myself - I just happen to be featured within the painting.

While it was initially a subconscious decision, this accurately reflects how I decide to exist within the world. I just happen to be here. Like with art, I constantly question the point of it all.

**Why am I here?**

**What am I supposed to be doing?**

**Why does it matter?**

I have become fixated on this concept of life having a purpose. What I am coming to realize is it doesn't need to - but I don't mean this in a bleak way. If I think too much about the why, the what, the how, I lose sight of the now.

There doesn't need to be any deeper meaning to life. Mountains and valleys, trees and seas - I am lucky to be alive and exist. To have the capacity to laugh and love, connect and create, to enjoy and experience this wide, wonderful world.

Yes, I just happen to be here. And that is such a gift beyond measure.

# *Community*







# *Debunking* Florentine Myths

By Ana Brockmann  
Photo by Daniel Coppola

**L**ike its people, the city of Florence has its own character and personality. Renaissance Florence is a region characterized by its mastery and pride, by individualistic idealists, warring rivals, scandal, by rebirth. In its struggle to achieve greatness, Florence became an explosion of culture that transformed the world. It is only natural that the city, like its people, should go down as having an almost mythical identity. Here, curiosities can be found in every little alley and piazza. In the narrow streets of Florence, as one passes by the looming towers, and silent statues, history's only remaining witnesses, it is impossible not to ask oneself about them in the first place. In many cases, ancient truths took flight in the words of those who had seen. Whispers of their origins became intertwined with fanciful ideas, and we were left with the mysterious Florentine legends melded into their fascinating selves over centuries. For years, Florentines have noticed a strange

wind gusting just behind the Duomo, and it has become known as the devil's breath. As legend has it, long ago, the Devil chased a priest through the streets of Florence, attempting to steal his soul. Once in front of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, the priest told the Devil that he wished to pray one last time before suffering eternal damnation, and the Devil agreed. So, leaning against the cathedral, he waited for his victim to emerge. The clever priest took advantage of this moment to escape, using a different door of the Cathedral.

Meanwhile, Satan, bored from the long wait, began to snore, thereby creating a chilling breeze. Time passed, and upon learning of the priest's deception, his breath of evil turned into a whirlwind. Since then, the Rifrullo of the Devil has never ceased blowing. But the true culprit behind this tale is no devil. Locals have concluded that it is simply a rogue wind, a strange atmospheric phenomenon.



Let us take a look at another famous myth. On the side of the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, something clearly emerges from the wall, the petrified head of a woman, The Berta. There are three well-known legends surrounding the figure's identity. She has been described by some to be a nun and even a fruit seller. But the most fascinating version occurred in 1326. That year, Cecco d'Ascoli, an avid astronomer, was accused of witchcraft and subsequently burned at the stake. To escape this terrible end, it is said that he made a pact with the devil. He would be saved if he received a single sip of water from an onlooker. So, while he burned, he cried out to a woman, begging her to give him water. Horrified, the woman refused, and in return, d'Ascoli cursed her, leaving behind no trace of this bystander but her petrified face on the wall. Historians have replaced this legend with a more probable explanation: At some point, the decapitated head of a Roman statue was found by someone with peculiar taste, who decided that it would

be the perfect size for an interesting corner piece on that very building.

All legends and myths have some level of truth. And they are twisted by word of mouth into all kinds of bizarre and chilling stories. Debunking Florentine myths is particularly an art, because the cities legends have developed into what they are over thousands of years, whispered through the lips of millions.



# Roll With It

By Elina Graham  
Photos by Sean Donnelly

**T**he first time I got up on a skateboard, I immediately fell, skinned my knee, and decided that skateboarding was not for me. It took another ten years for me to try again, and though my balance hasn't improved much, my strength for getting up after falling has.

With my interest reignited, I went to the school tennis courts nightly to learn the basics.

That was often the highlight of my day: the cool breeze on my face as I popped in earbuds and cranked up Mac DeMarco, tipping my head up to watch the stars as I flew by on the ground below them. I loved it all, from the buzzy soreness on the bottoms of my feet to my grip tape-scarred thumbs. I debated bringing my skateboard to Italy, but images of me eating it on cobblestone-lined streets kept filling my mind. No big deal, I had thought; I'll skate again when I'm home.

Enter: restless nights lying on my tiny bed, unable to block out the creaks of my old apartment and the perpetual revelry of the piazza-goers below. Until that moment, I hadn't consciously realized how much skateboarding had become a sort of meditation for me, a way to take a break from reality and focus only on what I could do right then and there with the board under my feet. I was still wary of skating in Florence—at this point, and I had just gotten comfortable coasting

over the smooth pavement of tennis courts. How was that going to translate into skating on the cobblestones?

I quickly found out it wouldn't. My deck would have been reduced to splinters via head-on impact with the Chiesa Santo Spirito steps had it not been for a lightning-footed passerby. I didn't have to learn my lesson—cobblestones are a no-go—again. This forced me to do some exploring, though this time, not for the best gelateria or the least crowded bridge. In addition to some pleasant paved streets, I found La Cascine. It has the essential elements for good pushing ground but is almost too perfect and thus can get tedious.

This is what motivated me to check out the Campo di Marte Skate Park. It's a solid park with lots of ledges and ramps, graffiti art reigning supreme, and, midday on a Monday at least, not at all crowded. Right off the bat, two friends granted me an informal interview, and so with the cacophony of the park in the background, the three of us sat down and talked.

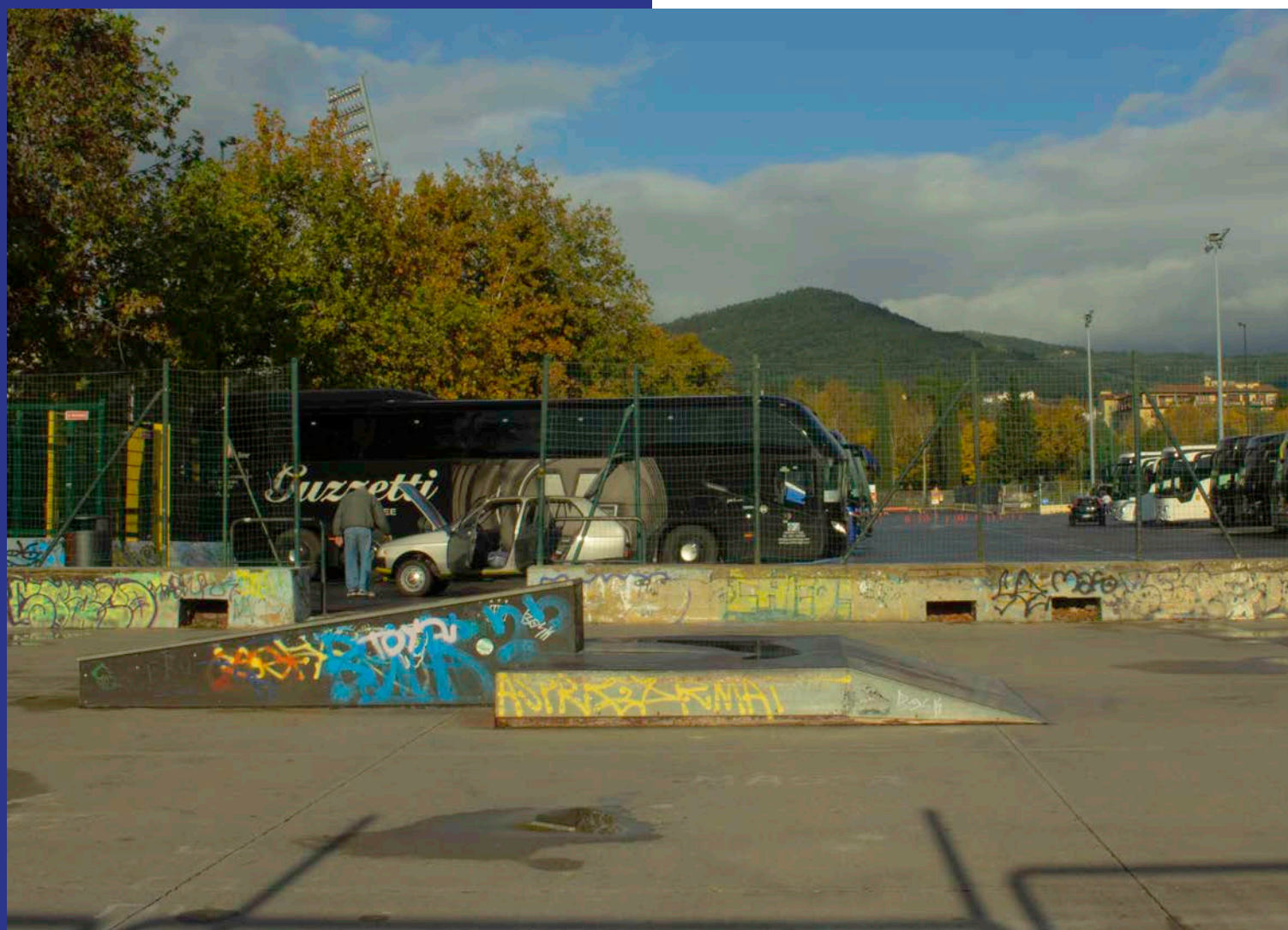
Both guys have been skating for a while and have accolades to their names—Nicholas was Florence's Skater of the Year in 2021, and Giacomo films shorts that add an element of notoriety to Florence's skate life.



First discussed was skateboarding's rise and fall (and subsequent rise); "Skateboarding is an up and down," says Giacomo, "it becomes popular, and then it goes down, nobody skates, except the core skaters." Adds Nicholas, "It's cool now, and maybe in two years, it's not so cool." Skateboarding, once the very definition of counterculture, has become a fad in recent years. Skate apparel brands, like Vans and Thrasher, are commonly worn by skaters and non-skaters alike, as the rise of street style has popularized "skate style." While the on-again, off-again popularity introduces the pastime to new crowds, lots of people pick it up only to ditch it when it's not trendy anymore. However, the ones who are passionate about it will always be around even when the hype dies down: "I'm proud to skate even when nobody skates," Giacomo affirms. Overall though, the Florence skating community has been increasing annually.

Giacomo mentioned that after the Campo di Marte park was built, the numbers rose from the initial core group of about 20. Giacomo and Nicholas wish for more skateparks in Florence, as the current ones sometimes get full to the point where using them is impossible. This will hopefully be resolved soon, as the third rebuilding of the Campo di Marte park will take place in the next few years. The current park opened in 2019 in a community ceremony that the mayor did not attend, as I was told. It's a bummer there hasn't been more support from the city; though lawmakers historically view the skateboarding community as loud, obnoxious troublemakers, this stereotype doesn't encapsulate all that skateboarding has to offer. A city that embraces skateboarding welcomes creativity, non-conformity, and diversity.





Both Nicholas and Giacomo also think more contests would be helpful for the community; they'd bring the skate community together and generate more interest. Currently, in addition to the Florence Skater of the Year contest, there's the Florence Go Skate Day. If you want a sneak peek of this year's event, check out the doc Giacomo filmed of last year's festival, found on the Dokama Skateboards Youtube channel.

And to anyone nervous to start? Don't be. All you need is an interest, a willingness to learn, and a board (and for that, check out Roadside and Feedback skate shops, and especially local Florentine skate collective Dokama Skate, which produces its own decks). "Skating alone isn't like skating in a community—in a community you improve with your friends. If you skate alone, it's more difficult," Nicholas shares, encouraging people to come to the park regardless of level. Local organization Fortezza Crew organizes Meet and Skate gatherings and even offers lessons at the park on weekends.

Before departing, the guys shared some thoughts on the best part of skateboarding. "It's the freedom of expression: no rules. You can skate everything as you want," says Giacomo. Really, that's what skateboarding is all about—trying new things, finding ways around (or, more accurately, over) obstacles, and not letting rules or conventions stop you. And of course, it's a way to meet others who feel the same way: "When you meet someone with the same passion, even if you come from a different background, you feel closer to them," shares Giacomo. Nicholas adds that "even if you meet someone from another country or region of Italy, you feel at home with them because you skate, like them."

I left the park that day feeling the same level of contentment I had.

# Books and *Baristas*:

## How Literary Cafes are Fostering Community in Florence

By Becca Baitel  
Photos by the Author

When many hear “Florence,” they imagine the vibrant yellow of the Ponte Vecchio, highly esteemed Uffizi and the natural beauty of the flowing Arno River. However, one area that is not as well-advertised is the thriving underground literary scene - uniquely offering the space to performers, writers, and creative types of all ages and interests to share their passions with the community. The hidden, yet enticing nature of literary cafes scattered throughout the city remains a mystery to many of Florence’s visitors and residents.

People in search of a more intimate experience in contrast to a large chain have a whole world of literary cafes at their fingertips, including Il Conventino. Founded in 2019, Il Conventino is a charming literary cafe at the edge of the city center. Located in the residential neighborhood of Bellosguardo, I felt soothed by the abundance of green space and trees on the walk over to explore the space, providing a nice break from the hustle and bustle of downtown. Upon arrival, I was immediately greeted by a smiling barista, plants, and an adorable pomeranian dog! I order a latte macchiato con latte di soia as R.E.M.’s “Losing my Religion” plays softly in the background and take a deep breath in as I sit at one of the few high-top tables. The high-vaulted ceilings paired with the scent of fresh flowers lining the tables make for a relaxing, intimate setting for students, bookworms, coffee enthusiasts, and anyone searching for some tranquility. Boasting an impressive menu of various coffees, pizzas, crostini, salad, and more, creating the perfect backdrop for people of all ages to gather together for a meal and some lively conversation. Even during the fall months, I was impressed by the large, arched windows opening

up to a lush, gorgeous courtyard with additional seating for customers and the wide variety of literature stacked high on the bookshelves. As I looked around, I saw a variety of different folks, from the young couple with the dog speaking Spanish next to me, to the older couple who immediately headed straight outside to the courtyard, books clutched in hand.

The cluster of people here on Wednesday at noon fascinates me, and I can’t help but wonder:

*These people could be working but instead they are choosing to spend time here.. Why? What makes this space so special?*

After exploring the space for the afternoon, I quickly got my answer. Just in October alone, Il Conventino hosted a multitude of unique events including The Florence Book Club, jazz shows, painting classes, crocheting, counseling, chess tournaments, and more. Il Conventino’s commitment to creative expression is evidenced by the quote painted on the left side of the entrance in both Italian and English, reading “True art is always to be found when one least expects it, where no one is thinking of it, or mentioning its name. More than anything, art is vision, and very often vision has nothing at all to do with intelligence or intellectual logic.” I believe that Il Conventino leaves this quote up to interpretation by its visitors, but from my perspective, it seems to be quite telling of the business’ mission. Due to its wide array of community events, there is truly something for everyone who enters Il Conventino’s doors, which remained open during the entirety of my time here. This speaks volumes to its, quite literally, open atmosphere for creative exploration and passion, and makes people of all ages and backgrounds feel welcome immediately upon arrival.

It is no secret that Florentines love sitting down for a meal together, and that is what makes these spaces so unique. Here, friends can gather together, share drinks and food, all while being surrounded by their favorite books. Florence has its share of literary cafes in addition to Il Conventino, including La Cite, located directly off of the Ponte Alla Carraia. Behind its doors, the quaint, yet lively cafe offers an impressive collection of both English and Italian literature available for purchase. However, do not be fooled by its more confined space, as the cafe is known for hosting small concerts open to the public! Between its live music, extensive literature, and prime location, this chic cafe is well worth a visit. Cafe goers can be seen lounging on their couches and armchairs, split between two cozy levels.



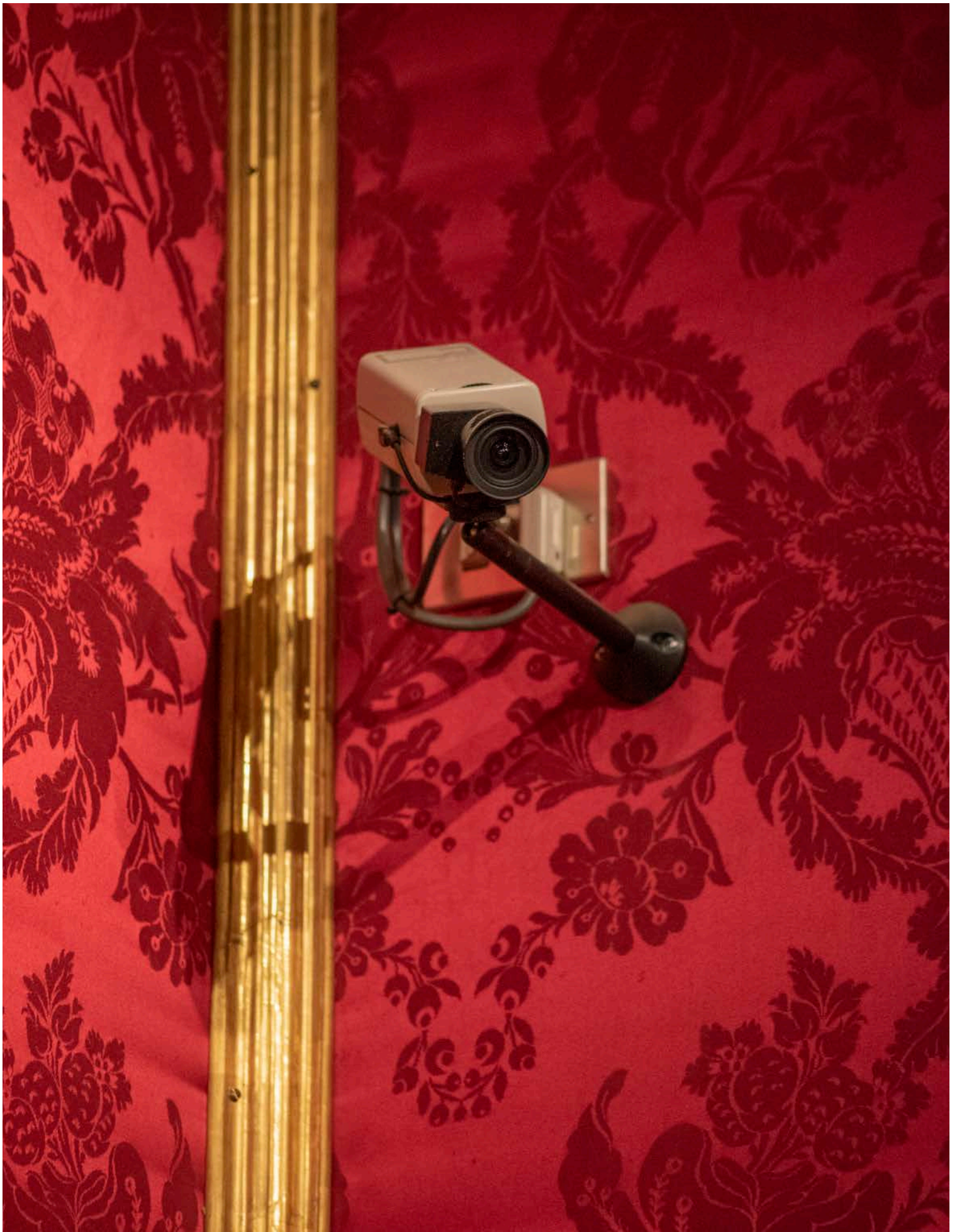
Preserving these spaces during a time inundated by technological advancements is crucial for the well-being of all of us, as well as future generations. These spaces provide a safe, home-like environment to completely unplug, be fully present, and engage with community members and friends over a mutual love for books. The events hosted by these cafes create a platform for young artists to not only express themselves, but also meet other like-minded individuals and hone their skills in a safe, laidback, and non-judgmental environment. No matter who you are, how old you are, or what you are passionate about, you matter and you are welcomed here, and that is a precedent Il Conventino and many of these other cafes set extraordinarily well.

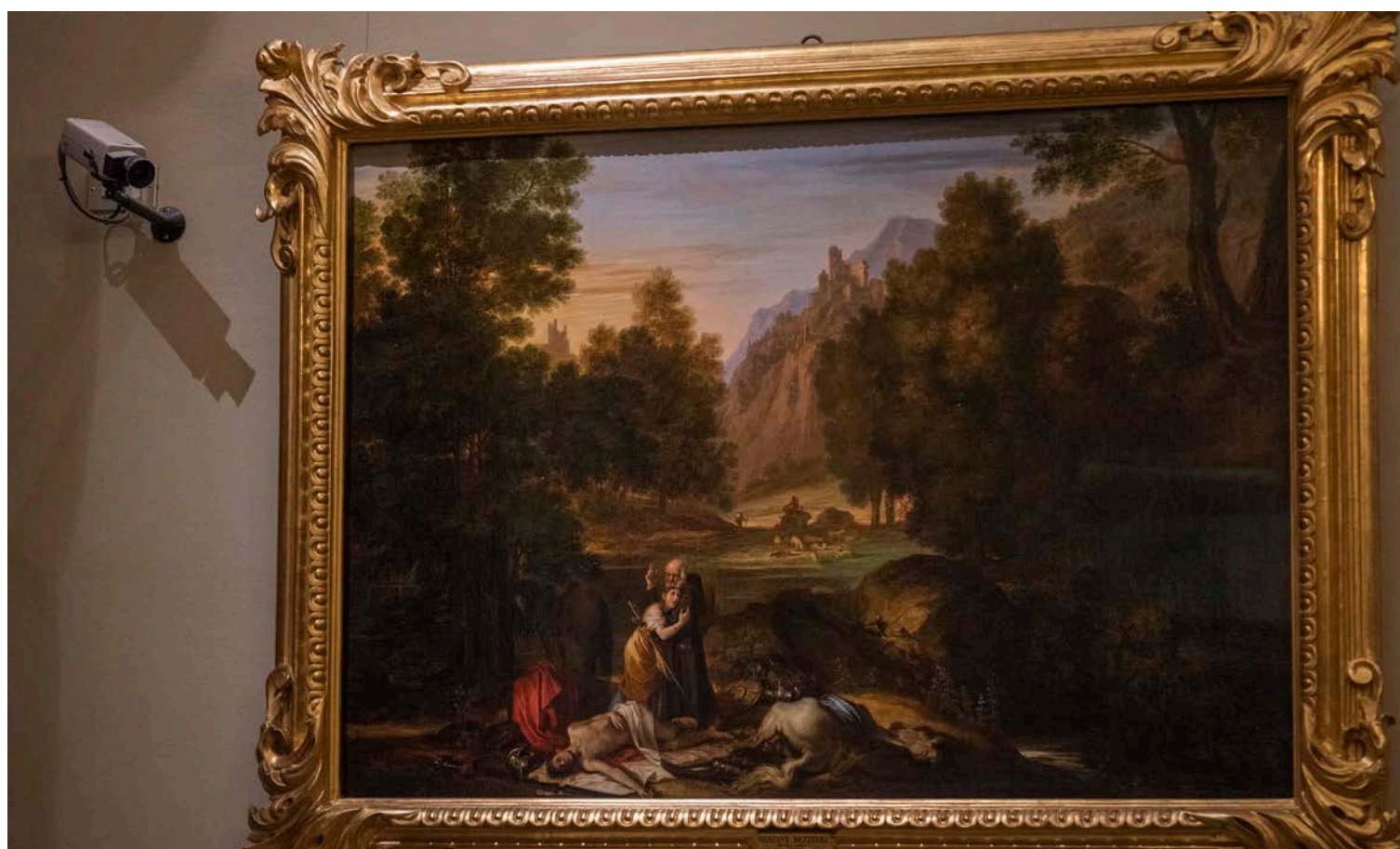
# There's a fly on the wall

Photo Series by RT

**W**hen I first started photographing in Florence, I mostly focused on people which created got me into arguments about consent to be in photos. I would point out security cameras to anyone who yelled at me for taking their photo. This made me realize we don't pay much attention to how much we're being recorded without consent. Security cameras line the walls and traffics lights in Florence, keeping track of our every move. These photos present the fly-on-the-wall feeling that surveillance cameras always possess. Whether they're on the street or the walls of a royal museum, those soulless lenses just watch. Nothing more, nothing less.







# *Travel*





# *How Does Travel Translate Onto Social Media?*

By Lily Leonard  
Photos by Alex Azabache, Giuseppe Mondì,  
and Jack Ward from Unsplash

**W**e live in a constantly evolving world- one where we're all contestants in a race to see and experience the next big thing, willingly or not.

There have always been intrinsic value on the basis of traveling and seeing the world. In putting yourself in uncomfortable situations and finding your own direction- much like students who have chosen to study abroad.

With that, there is an emphasis on independence and self discovery, something that breeds a lot of thoughtfulness and growth amongst anyone seeking to experience what the world has to offer- which is not something you can put a price on. And now more than ever, that is being tainted by the profound impact and the hold social media has over our lives.

With traveling, we gain opportunities and an appreciation for the world around us- and personally I don't want to let it pass me by. I too, am guilty of wanting to snap cool photos of a new place, whether it makes it to social media or not. Which begs the question: are we missing the experience entirely if we're too caught up in posting about it and portraying it for social media?

There is an undeniable intrinsic link between travel and social media. As time progresses, social media has increasingly impacted the travel industry, especially as over the last decade in which we have seen the biggest rise in social media usage, outage, and influence. How many times have we planned our travels based off of a picture we saw on Instagram?





## And what makes a travel destination “Insta-worthy?”

Take Mykonos, Greece for example. How many times have you seen an influencer post in the insta-famous white building backdrop? The destination has quickly become one of the most popular travel destinations, but would it be worth the visit without the pleasing aesthetic? According to research conducted in 2019, 86% of people, 92% of which are Gen Z, have researched a destination after seeing a post about it online.

“Social Media can be a powerful motivator and influence when it comes to making travel-related decisions- just think of the power of FOMO”, says JoAnna Haugen founder of Rooted, a solutions platform at the intersection of sustainable tourism, storytelling, and social impact. She also stated in her article that another report revealed over 1/3 of people use social media as their travel inspiration, with 60% of people sharing their own content from their travels or vacations. Additionally, over 1 million travel-related hashtags are searched every week; a clear indicator that the majority of today's generation not only get their news from social media, but make their decisions based on what they see there. Now, people are traveling ‘under the social influence,’ which puts a large emphasis on luxury lifestyles and spending money so you can show it off on social media. “There’s the argument that influencers are really only influencing influencers now. It’s usually sponsored content, it’s not an affordable option for the average traveler. And so it’s not reality,” says James Asquith, founder and CEO of travel platform Holiday Swap. Some argue that it is up to the viewers to fill in the gaps in regards to the context of what they see online, but now more than ever, it is becoming increasingly difficult, as it has set up and enabled so many false expectations. This is seen not only with celebrities and influencers, but with all people in the form of an unspoken competition across all mediums of social media. It begs the question: what purpose does travel really serve? And with that, is social media doing more harm than good? If the meaning of travel has shifted so much to the point where now the purpose it serves is to show off and mimic experiences we see online, we’ve lost the essence of what it means to travel and the ways it can enrich our lives.



# Beyond the City & Into Nature

## *Hike Monte Ceceri*


By Mikaela Benitez  
Photos by the Author

There is not only history within the Florence city center, but just outside of it as well. It is a great experience to explore the hills and discover the natural aspect of Florence. Florence has much to offer from the stone quarries, to the legend of Leonardo da Vinci's flight, to just a hike in nature.

Located on the northeast edge of Florence standing 414 meters high, almost covered completely by forest is Monte Ceceri. Locals gave it this name because the shape of the hill resembles the bump on the beak of a ceceri swan. Originally the mountain was barren, but a call for reforestation in 1929 led to its beautiful and plentiful appearance today. It is hard to believe that the hill was barren at one point due to the amount of flora present today. From the hill, you can appreciate the cityscape of Florence and the valley of the Arno river.

There are a few ways to make your way to Monte Ceceri, either by a bus ride or a bike ride. However, if you feel adventurous, you can walk from the city to the hiking trail. It is beautiful walking the streets of Florence and Fiesole, exploring quiet roads before arriving at the start of the hike. Not taking the bus means you may be exhausted at the end of the day; however, experiencing the views, the side streets, and the feeling of making it to the top feels rewarding.

On the hike, you can find the retired quarries of pietra serena, a soft stone that is a warm gray color that is easily accessible on the hills. It is one of the most common stones used by Florentine sculptors and architects. Some notable artisans include Benvenuto Cellini, Giorgio Vasari, Michelangelo, and Brunelleschi. While it was a source of the material it was also a place for artisans to train in traditional work. Two notable caves are Cava Braschi and Cava Fratelli Sarti. For safety reasons, people are not allowed to enter Cava Braschi; however, the entrance still demonstrates the impressiveness of the quarry, the quarrying techniques used to create it, and the defining



layers of the stone. Cava Fratelli Sarti is a resting place to pause and observe some local works that have been created. Around the hill, you can find some stones carved into different shapes such as a plate of food set with a fork to the side and recreations of the first flying machine. Also, take this opportunity to marvel at the arrangement of the stone layers in the upper quarry face just a few steps away.

Also at the top is the Pizzale Leonardo da Vinci, a terrace with tables and a view of Florence. According to legends, Leonardo da Vinci and his pupil Tommaso Masini climbed Monte Ceceri to test his flying machine. Before this, all recorded attempts at flight had failed. He would go to the hills to observe the birds in flight which inspired him to create and test his machine there. His drawings included the flights of birds and the flying machine made of two large wings, operated with pedals and levers. The project was to be capable of supporting the weight of a human. The optimal spot was a steep drop-off on the mountainside where the flight was said to have occurred. The legend goes that the machine seemed to glide for 1000 meters before landing abruptly in the area now known as Largo Leonardo da Vinci. A stone monument sits at the pizzale stating, "The great bird will take its first flight over the hill of his great Cecero, filling the universe with amazement, filling all the writings and eternal glory with his fame to the nest where he was born," that commemorates da Vinci. Overlooking the view that the flying machine may have faced was inspiring. Leonardo da Vinci had written, "Once you have known flight, you will walk the earth looking at the sky because you have been there and you will want to return there." This seems to give the sky, birds, and flight seems to take on a new meaning at this hill.

Taking time to explore outside the city center of Florence gives you a more enriching experience for your visit. Not only can you get away from the tourist-filled city, but you can explore the natural features of Florence.

# *Food & Wine*





# *Buried* Treasures

by Michel Williams | Photo from the FUA-AUF Archive

Centuries ago, the hunt for truffles began. On a quest to search for hidden treasure underneath the ground, the fungus was practically begging to be found because of the specific smell it emits. Designated as a dish consumers eat primarily with their nose, the aroma is what sparked the initial attraction. Recently, the romanticization of truffles triggered a phenomenon spanning across the entire globe.

With truffle based dishes, truffle stores and truffle chips, the possibilities are seemingly endless.

Now, even the connotation associated with the word “truffle” ignites excitement and eager anticipation for the food. Due to the extreme popularity, the cost and demand has increased substantially. Whether it is because of the overwhelming abundance of flavor or the status is still undetermined. With the cost of truffle ranging from hundreds to thousands of dollars depending on the type, truffle appears to be a staple for the rich. Similar in prestige to caviar, some people choose to order foods like these simply because

of the high class value it symbolizes. Because of the “snap eats first” mentality, there has been an uptick in ordering food for its reputation. Rather than enjoying the dish, people are focused on taking the best pictures to flaunt their food for all their followers to see. Director of Food and Wine Studies and Executive Sous Chef at Florence University of the Arts Massimo Bocus spoke about the overall value of the item. With the cost of truffle ranging from hundreds to thousands of dollars depending on the type, truffle appears to be a staple for the rich. Similar in prestige to caviar, some people choose to order foods like these simply because of the high class value it symbolizes. Because of the “snap eats first” mentality, there has been an uptick in ordering food for its reputation. Rather than enjoying the dish, people are focused on taking the best pictures to flaunt their food for all their followers to see.

Director of Food and Wine Studies and Executive Sous Chef at Florence University of the Arts Massimo Bocus spoke about the overall value of this precious item.

“Truffle is truffle. There is nothing



close to it. It's not something I think should be on an everyday table.

It's a pleasure you have to appreciate little by little," Bocus said.

For this reason, he firmly believes the price is justified. Although it has an incomparable taste, truffle is not a luxury meant to be consumed on a consistent basis. By waiting for the season and periodically eating truffles, people develop more of an appreciation that it is indeed worthy of, according to Bocus. As a professional in the culinary industry, Bocus admits people order the dish for both the status and culinary experience. "If you use it properly, it really adds a great experience," Bocus said. "It sounds trendy to say I had truffles, but it's something to save for a special occasion.

If you can afford it all the time, it loses its specialness."

In reality, the truffle flavored dishes advertised and being served to customers in most restaurants contain aromatic oils made to chemically recreate the smell of natural truffle. In this scenario, the intensity of flavor is completely artificial.

Unfortunately, lots of the public are

under the impression that all truffles taste and smell like this. Since they are not getting real truffle, Bocus proposes restaurants should be upfront with their customers regarding what they are actually eating. Artificial and authentic truffles are two different culinary experiences. Even authentic truffles within themselves have different aromas and flavors depending on the type. With over 100 species, no single truffle is the same. Instead of expecting the same intense flavor, Bocus advocates for customers to appreciate each individual truffle. In order to successfully accomplish this, simply turn off the phone and enjoy the meal.

Fragment Food is meant for consumption. Snapping pictures, adding filters and posting on social media is not part of the culinary process. Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook and TikTok can wait. Rather than instantly going for the phone when the food arrives and boasting about your truffle pasta, take in the aroma and take in the flavor.

Only then will people be able to properly savor the taste of truffles by learning to become more conscious consumers.



# *A Match Made in Tuscany:* **Vin Santo & Biscotti**

By Mikaela Benitez | Photo from the FUA-AUF Archive

It's the end of dinner, and you just had an amazing Italian meal. Is there a better way to end a great meal than with dessert? A simple treat, biscotti, matched with a glass of sweet wine, Vin Santo, is the perfect way to complete a regional meal. Enjoying this dessert at face value is good, but knowing the history behind the wine and cookie makes this Tuscan delicacy a joy to enjoy. Knowing where the wine is from enriches your experience with every dish prepared.

The Antinori family has been committed to winemaking for six centuries since 1385, and craftsmanship has been passed down twenty-six generations. Their business has worked to incorporate innovative decisions while still maintaining respect for the traditions held for centuries. As the current honorary president of the company says, "Ancient family roots play an important part in our philosophy, but they have never hindered our innovative spirit." The family's historical heritage is in Tuscany and Umbria, but they have invested in other areas across Italy and abroad.

They describe the time and dedication that goes into crafting their Vin Santo. The middle to end of September is the optimal harvest time for ripened Trebbiano grapes. Grapes for Vin Santo are harvested from the Antinori estate in the Chianti Classico region. The grapes are carefully selected from the vineyard, placed into small crates, and then taken to the cellar, manually placed on bamboo mats in a drying room, or hung in the air on special frames. The grapes are left to dry until the end of December, when they are gently pressed and then put into small "caratelli", or casks, with different wood types where alcoholic fermentation occurs. Vin Santo Marchese Antinori is meant to age in the caratelli for about three years and then be blended and bottled. The production of vin santo goes back to the Middle Ages and is considered a regional specialty of Tuscany. The Antinori family has always produced this wine. Vinsanto Chianti Classico

Marchese Antinori is an amber color with gold highlights. It is sweet smelling, with traces of apricots, candied oranges, dates, raisins, chestnut flour, almond paste, and amaretto. It is dense yet has a freshness to it. The aftertaste taste of cocoa powder gives the wine complexity. They have multiple vineyards around the Tuscan area open to tasting Vin Santo and the many other wines they produce.

Biscotti comes from the Latin word *biscoctus*, which means twice-baked and the history of this cookie dates back to the Roman Empire. Designed to be a leisurely treat, meant to serve as nourishment for travelers due to the less-perishable nature of the cookie. During the Renaissance, it resurfaced in Tuscany. According to legends, a Tuscan baker brought them back to his community and served the cookie with sweet wine. In Tuscany, biscotti was referred to as *Cantucci Di Prato*. Now no longer a practical cracker but a treat filled with almonds using local ingredients. Today, these biscotti is rarely served without Vin Santo. Typically served after dinner and is a time for conversations and a digestive at the end. The pairing was deemed the "holy grail" as the biscotti is dry and less sweet than the wine. The wine and cookie flavors work very well together; the almond flavors of the biscotti meld with the complex fruity flavor of the Vin Santo for an amazing pairing. The dry cookie cushions the intense flavors of the wine, but it also softens the cookie so that it is an easier bite without losing flavor. Purists would say that the only way to enjoy your biscotti is in wine; however, coffee and milk are other great choices to dunk your biscotti.

Learning about a regional specialty only makes your experience that much more special. Next time after dinner, be sure to look for the Tuscan dessert and give it a try. And even ask where the wine and biscotti are from because it will only enhance your meal and experience.

# *Fashion*





# *Classic with a Twist*



Styling and Concept by Ornella Kristall Fanciulli  
Photography by Julia Vogel and Haley Cary  
Models: Berenice Cadet and Aurore Petetin  
Collection created by students of  
the Introduction to Fashion Photography  
and Writing for the Fashion Industry courses



Evoking the classic aesthetic inspired by the fashion icons such as Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly with a modern touch. Elegant looks of vintage dresses with minimal accessorizing with pearls and handbags.

Here we see Berenice and Aurore wearing black and white outfits and matching accessories, like pearls, fancy jewelry, and leather details. It is a great way to wear and customize it in many different and fun ways. It invites you to wear basics with a genderfluid empowering twist. This allows you to express your personality without being too bold. You notice the contrast between the two styles worn in different ways yet indicating the same aesthetic. You may find timeless pieces in your wardrobe without having to go too far.



Red bag with metal studs - Bata  
Two piece of skirt and crop top made of  
85% viscose 15% nylon - Vintage piece

Black sleeveless crop top 99% polyester - Zara



Satin Heels - Vintage Piece



Satin sleeveless black dress - Tally Weijl  
Gold metal belt - H&M





Black and white short blazer jacket  
55% polyester 45% viscose - Zara

# Interview with Terrana Studio

By Gabriele Ziukaite | Photos by Gabriele Ziukaite

One day while exploring the Santo Spirito neighborhood that is known for its artisan workshops, a certain studio caught my eye - Terrana Studio. With bright neon lights and colorful jackets and sweaters displayed outside, I was immediately hooked. Inside the store I was met by the owner, Gaetano Terrana, who specializes in one of a kind painted clothing pieces. While he didn't have the exact jacket I wanted, I was able to come back the very next day to find the piece waiting for me.

The whole experience was wonderful and I was amazed by Gaetano's dedication to his work, so I decided to come back and interview him.

**What got you interested in fashion?**

I started to paint on clothes when I was very little, because my mom bought me very boring clothes and I would try to put art on clothing. I love art [and] fashion [so] I put them together and created my concept "fashion is art".

**When did you open your studio?**

Five years ago I painted for Burberry, then Gucci and Louis Vuiton. After I finished painting the collections for the luxury brands, I decided to express myself without limits and I decided to open my first store in Via Romana and the second one in Via Ghibellina 129.

**How did you come up with your particular style?**

I love street art, expressionism art, and primitive art. My style is very expressionist, I love surrealism, I love color, cartoons, video games... And this is all a concept of my art.

**Do you think that your art represents you personally?**

Totally. For me, to paint a piece of clothing is the same as to paint a canvas. I use mainly white clothes as my canvas. I don't copy, I invent. I use the same process as you would painting a canvas.

**Some of your clothing items have the words "I am not Gucci" written on them. What was the idea behind them?**

That's very simple - I am not Gucci and





# *Fashion Photography:* **Real or AI-Generated?**

By Katya Fredericksen | Photos by Katya Fredericksen



Is Artificial Intelligence slowly beginning to replace the need for fashion photography? If so, will we even notice the difference between what is real and what is computer-generated? Fashion photographers are responsible for the selling of clothes, but taking a deeper look into the field, they play much more of a crucial role in our lives. In their hands lie the power to sell a dream, or a sense of identity through visual storytelling, appealing to our emotions on a level beyond solely selling products. It is an art that allows the audience to delve into the world of the designer or model themselves, connecting fashion to culture and society. With the rise of consumer culture that exists through social media marketing, fashion photography is an integral part of the growth of brand awareness, ultimately establishing brand voices in consumers' minds. Fashion photographers are responsible for editorials, advertising campaigns, street photography, runway, catalogs, and fashion magazines. Fashion-related advertisements are constantly in our realm of awareness. Whether we absorb it consciously or subconsciously, consumers are always on the search for finding themselves represented in the campaigns and visuals by the

companies they purchase from. Our memory of fashion is even said to rely more heavily on the images captured and published rather than the fashion itself. However, the future of fashion photography is completely in question with the rise of 3D-rendered clothing and digital photoshoots. During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, brands, the fashion industry, and photographers had to make changes in the ways they operate. The next decade may be seeing a major shift within marketing and e-commerce.

Extremely realistic computer-generated fashion models are already being created in addition to virtual branded garments and accessories mapped onto the AI model's bodies. AI models and influencers are already being used by world-renowned brands including Nike, Dior, Prada, Balmain, and Kenzo amongst many others. With many of these 3D renderings, people cannot tell the difference between real people or digitally-created people due to their realistic features. Tech companies are already working on developing algorithms where digital models





can mimic the poses of e-commerce and commercial models. Using new body mapping technology, models are able to use “virtual try-ons” or “virtual fitting rooms,” in which they upload their own photos and are able to view fashion products on their bodies to see how it would look and fit. Though virtual photoshoots can reduce waste, decrease costs, and improve efficiency, it could also replace the creativity that a real life shoot between a photographer and model entails.

In addition to AI-generated fashion images and virtual photoshoots, fashion non-fungible tokens, or NFTs, have also been introduced. Many fashion brands have already begun to create clothing NFTs in which customers can “wear” on their digital avatars. Dolce & Gabbana has designed and dropped “The Impossible Tiara,” made from “gems that can’t quite be found on Earth,” sold for \$6 million.

“*Fashion photographers are responsible for the selling of clothes, but taking a deeper look into the field, they play much more of a crucial role in our lives.*”

Artificial intelligence is seeping into all creative avenues, which serves as a potential threat to the creative industry. Artists have poured their life into developing their crafts, all for an almost identical AI-generated image to be recreated easily, for free, and within seconds. Though human created art will hopefully continue to carry more value than computer-generated art, brands may start to embrace this new technology as it will save them time and money in the end. Does the use of AI create a completely fictional sense of reality and could it ever fully take the place of human creativity? Is artificial intelligence destroying the need for the field of fashion photography, or is it simply a new form of innovation providing humankind with enhanced efficiency?

# *The Imperfect is The Perfect*

By Emma Fraser | Photos by Emma Fraser

**B**ags, jackets, boots and shoes— the possibilities are endless when it comes to leather products in Florence, Italy. Around every corner there is a shop or cart, often hollering relentlessly at tourists to purchase their surplus of goods. But, where can someone find real, genuine leather? The issue of whether sellers are properly sourcing their leather and those who are giving their customers knock-offs, is not uncommon in the streets of Florence. The street vendors selling vibrant colored bags and more wallets than anyone knows what to do with, are known to scam people. Whether it is verbally telling customers the bags are real, or by slapping on the “Made in Italy” emblem, vendors will do whatever they can to sell their products. Faux leather has been around for years, often because it is easier and faster to produce. The more leather products a retailer has, the more they have the potential to sell. Faux leather, often consisting of polyurethane, polyvinyl chloride (vinyl), silicone or even nylon and rayon, is found all over Italy. Here, it is most commonly seen in the large tourist shops

where thousands of “pristine” bags and wallets hang. Natural hide-leather products, made of real, organic fibers, are much harder to find. The processes needed to obtain and then curate goods from this leather take time, which some sellers don’t have or want to take. The quantities of high quality leather are dwindling not only in Florence, but all over Italy.

On a quest to find genuine products in Florence, the Scuola del Cuoio, the Leather School of Florence, located right behind the Santa Croce Basilica, is one of the last remaining factories that produce genuine leather products. What was once a church before the second World War, the Scuola del Cuoio has transformed the building into a workshop and storefront. Here, people can see first hand how artisans craft leather bags, wallets and small knick knacks by hand and only from the best sourced leather in Italy. Nicoletta Guasti, “Niki,” works at the School, showing tourists the curators and products within it. She highlights the fact that every single product made at the school is “never identical and always different.”

# Bag Bag

Niki asked her customers to watch Francesco, a highly esteemed craftsman at the school, as he customized a belt, altering its size and imprinting a customer's initials into the leather with gold. "It only takes a few seconds to imprint, or else it will burn and won't come out," says Niki, who observed Francesco

with a watchful eye. She was very upfront in saying that the attention to detail and quality, along with the process— using olive oil so that the gold stays attached to the leather— "is going to die." She knows that their school is one of the last that treats its leather production with the utmost care. Francesco left his audience with a smile and a personal creation, a patch of leather with a gold flower imprinted on it—it was a representation of his personality and technique. For Niki and the school as a whole, curating quality leather products and fashionable pieces is about "taking the past to our present,"



using the traditional techniques to ensure quality and satisfaction.

Like Niki and the Scuola del Cuoio, the Officina Fiorentina on Florence's most popular leather street, Borgo De Greci, takes pride in their production of true, genuine leather goods from Italy. Along with leather bags, shoes and small trinkets, they also sell high fashion items like silk scarves and wool. The shop is family run for years and focuses on selling only authentic leather goods to tourists and local consumers. For them, the selling happening today in the streets of Florence is not real, they are selling "fake



leather” and telling customers that it is real solely because of its “perfect seams” or imposter tags.

The brother - sister duo at the shop were extremely passionate about their products, and wanted to make it clear that everything was checked, registered, and went through the different steps required in Italy to be called authentic leather. They tell consumers that when shopping for leather goods, “feel it, check the price, and look at the stitching. If it is perfectly straight stitching, it is not real. Perfect ones are not real.” The store undergoes many regulations and steps so that they can acquire and use genuine, Italian leather. Bags here have small stitching errors that represent the time and effort the artisan took to curate the product.

Keeping up to date with worldwide events is also a crucial factor for their business in terms of production of genuine goods and retail costs. “The silk and wool prices are rising due to what is happening in Ukraine,” and therefore they must sell them at a higher price. “It is a balance of price, quality and worldwide events,” they say.

Like the scarves, leather is not much different in terms of the competition it brings to Florence. The Scuola and Officina are just two of a few remaining shops in Florence that sell only the best leather goods. They believe that faux leather is hard to compete with when they are selling them at such low prices in the streets and to people who do not know better, or, to people who do not care to buy higher quality leather. They know that even though those faux leather bags may seem





beautiful at first, they won't last. Their products however, will. While most visitors to Florence are taken aback by the many street vendors selling various leather products and are drawn in by the wide variety of colors and styles, the real leather is off the beaten path. The faux leather is a trap for many, but not for those who understand the value of handmade, ethically sourced goods. While the stitching may be imperfect or the color is slightly different because of the hide it was crafted from, the real leather is in the hands of those who take time to source and produce their products in the most regimented ways. It is in the hands of those who care about production and the next customer who walks through the door. And, it is the hands of curators like Niki and Francesco, who approach their customers and products with kindness and respect, who will keep the creation of authentic leather goods alive.



“

If it is perfectly straight stitching, it is not real. Perfect ones are not real.

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# *How Trends* **Never End**

By Kira Curtin | Photo by Dana Dragotta

**W**hat do you think when you hear the words “expressing oneself”? Many different things could pop into one’s mind. One could think of art, love, or sticking up for something you believe in. However, when I hear the words “expressing myself,” I think of fashion and the fashion industry. Fashion is a form of art that can be used to show who you are without having to say it by combining creativity and confidence through what you choose to wear. Fashion and styling have been a significant influence on people for centuries. In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Medici Family greatly inspired other people’s fashion all over Europe. Through my research, I found similarities between the Medici family’s clothing and celebrities’ fashion. The Medici women and other elite, powerful women in the Renaissance Age wore expensive tight-fitting gowns that puffed out after the waist and went

down to their ankles. Popular fabrics included silk, velvet, and lace. Wealthy women often accessorized with elaborate fancy jewelry. Eleonora di Toledo, the daughter of the Viceroy of Naples, who married Cosimo I in 1539, was buried in a beautiful silk and velvet gown when she died. Silk was an important and impactful asset to the Florentine economy during this time. In her article, “The Art of Power Dressing in Renaissance Florence,” Amber Butchart writes, “the Florentine wool and silk guilds were influential bodies, and the export of cloth was vital for the economy. Alongside banking, the wool and silk industries were key to Florence’s extraordinary wealth” (2019). Beyond self-expression and status, fashion also signified an important industry for Florence. The Medici women of the Renaissance Era inspire 21st-century celebrities, who often influence fashion trends and styles. Catherine de Medici



brought several new ways to dress fashionably. She introduced stilettos and corsets, even credited with inventing high heels. After her husband's death, Catherine started normalizing wearing the color black. Even after all these years, Catherine de Medici has inspired Dior's Spring and Summer 2023 show. Celebrities today have followed in the footsteps of Catherine de Medici and Eleonora di Toledo. At grand high-fashion events, celebrities dress in similar silk and lace gowns, wearing high heels and stilettos in the style of Catherine de Medici. At the 2022 Met Gala, Kendall Jenner wore an all-black outfit with a fuller skirt which resembles what the Medici women would wear. Bella Hadid wore a silk gown with a prominent statement pendant around her neck at the Red Carpet in 2017. Although fashion and styling outfits have modernized and shifted after all these years, many fashion choices today reflect the stylistic notes of the Medici women.

Both wealthy Florentine women and celebrities today exhibit their status through fashion. While the Medici men demonstrated their power through the art, they sponsored and where they lived, the women, especially Catherine de Medici, showed power through their expensive clothing. Similarly, celebrities today wear the most expensive clothes to display the money and power they have as well. Celebrities constantly compete to wear the most fashionable clothing and accessories. To seek other opinions on power and fashion, I interviewed three people. I asked, "Is there a connection between power, clothing, and modern-day celebrities that you notice? Do modern-day celebrities have an influence on you like the Medici family had on Europe at the time?" The first interviewee responded, "I definitely see the link between what celebrities wear and how they display themselves. They do have the money to wear whatever they want, and they tend to pick high-end luxurious outfits even if it's ugly. Most designer clothing is bold and, in my opinion, not my favorite style. I feel as though less expensive clothing influences me. TV shows and social media gives me ideas on what I could wear. I don't buy what celebrities wear to look like a celebrity. I actually like the product if I buy it" (DC). The second respondent answered, "Yes, I think that famous people have a sense of entitlement and choose to wear the more expensive items to show that sense of entitlement and to show off the power they have. Not everyone can afford what they buy, and that is made known. And then for the second question, I would say yes, I am influenced by celebrity fashion because I do like a lot of their styles. I don't buy the high-end products but take inspiration from it on my own budget" (GV). The last person I interviewed stated, "There is definitely a connection between those. Celebrities dress to impress. I don't think I am influenced by celebrities at all. I am not really into fashion and styling personally" (CC). Through my interviews, I noted the consensus that celebrities today do show their status and power through clothing. There are many ways a person can show off the power they hold. People's fashion and clothing has been used to influence others and exhibit their power. There are similarities between the Medici family clothing and modern-day celebrities. The Medici women influence some modern-day celebrities, and these celebrities may inspire the 21st trends as well. Although the Renaissance Age continues to inspire high fashion, my interviews showed that celebrities have less influence on the daily fashion choices of the general public than the Medici women. While the Renaissance Age was centuries ago, it still impacts the fashion world today.

# *Student Voice*







# The Little Man *on the Little Street*

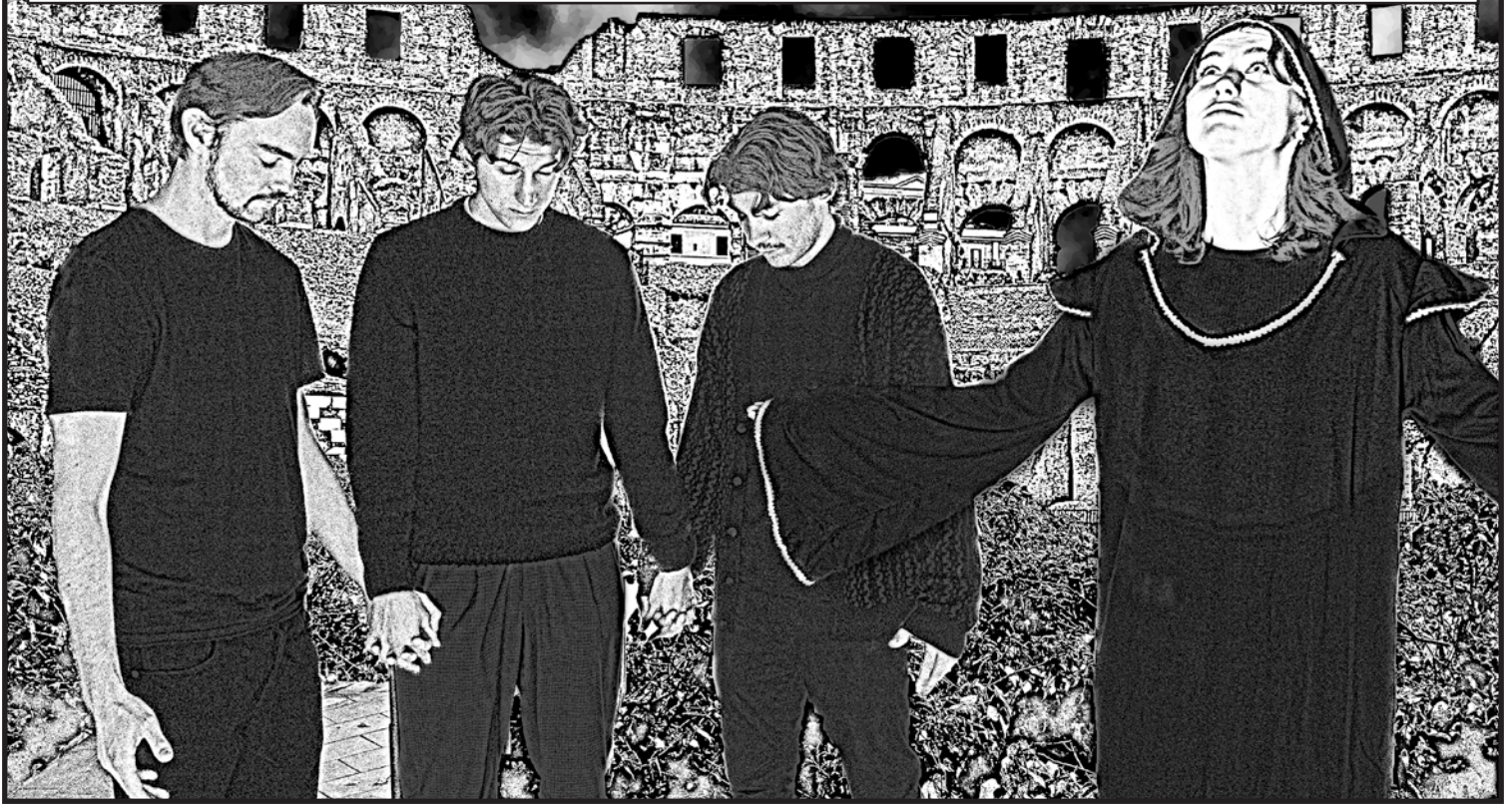
By Tyler Richardson  
Photo by Juno Catral

I did not catch the name of this young gentleman but I have some words to offer about his role in my lunch this afternoon.

I stumbled upon this trattoria that was nothing more than a room with a handful of tables and stools. It was half past two and filled for lunch. I strolled past to notice a setting for two, but I was alone. I took my seat and grinned at the fact that I was indeed the only American dining. My finite Italian vocabulary is masked by my ability to use perfect pronunciation. I ordered the Pappardelle al Cinghiale and pulled out my journal. I began to write about the tiny details of the tiny room on this tiny street. After a few moments, my food arrived. I took a breath before starting when all of a sudden there appeared, a tiny old man. He walked inside and brushed past me as I took my first bite. And then something beautiful happened. A simple paternal gesture. The touch of a palm on my shoulder followed by a gentle squeeze. “Buon appetito” the little man said. Smiling through a mouthful, I glanced over to find the table next to me had also taken notice of the exchange. Their endearing chuckles were palpable.

Following my espresso, a woman named Naomi would inform me of his historical place within this kitchen. He used to run another shop in the space before going on pension and was known in the neighborhood as “the mayor” in translation. They referred to him as such for having all the keys to all the doors in all the buildings. When Naomi and her husband opened after his retirement, they couldn’t help but adopt him as their little helper. He has a little stool just outside the doorway where he keeps watch of his street. Helping out lightly and keeping things orderly outside, in return he eats for free. I’m sure I’m not the first to think about the kindness he exudes but I certainly won’t forget this meal. I felt at home with every bite. And all my gratitude goes to the tiny man with the tiny stool on the tiny street.

BENVENUTO CELLINI GATHERED HIS PEERS AND AN EXPERIENCED PRIEST IN THE COLOSSEUM. HERE THEY WILL PARTAKE IN A CEREMONY TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE DEAD.



# CELLINI'S JOURNEY INTO NECROMANCY

Based on a "true" story from the memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini

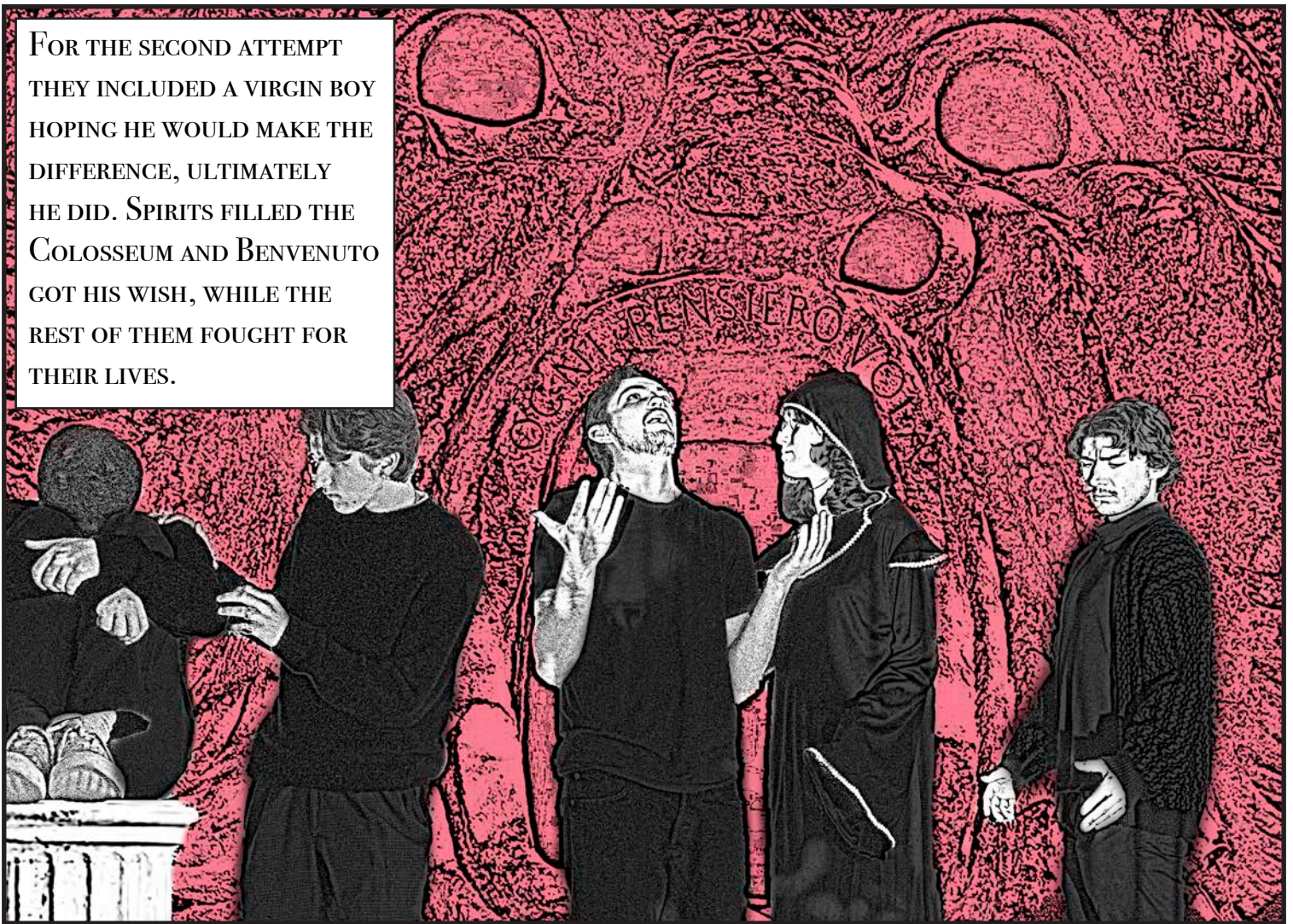
Creator: Carly Frommer

Talent: Gavin Juviler, Tommy Ray, Vienna Ritchie, Robert Lee, Mathew Culver

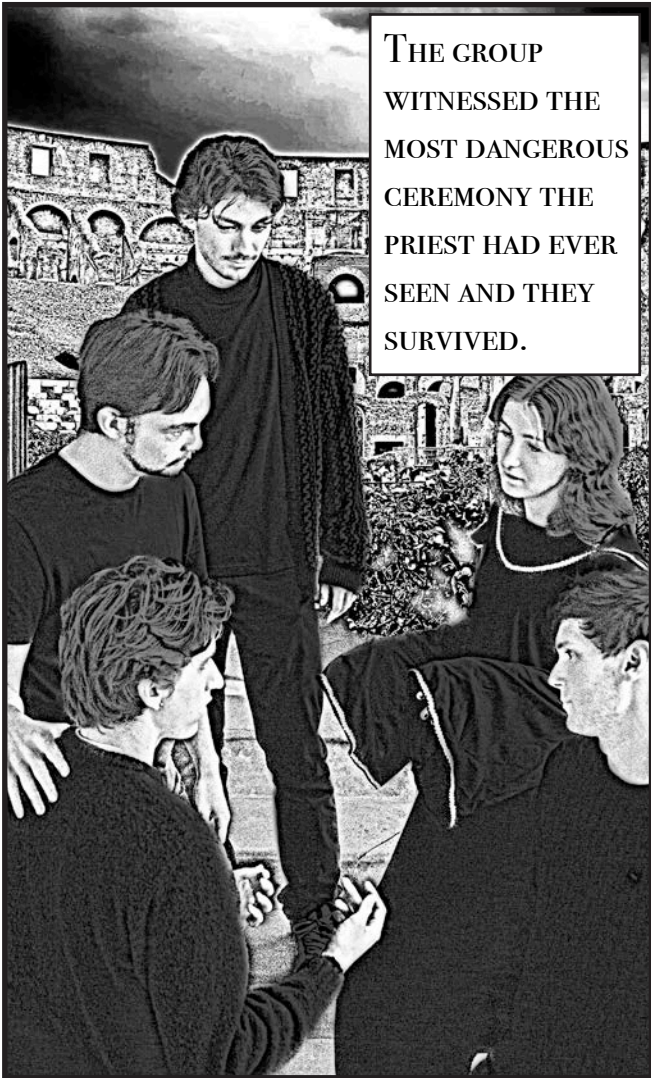


THE PRIEST BEGAN RECITING INCANTATIONS WHILE BENVENUTO PLEADED TO THE SPIRITS. HE WISHED TO REUNITE WITH HIS SICILIAN ANGELICA BUT NO SPIRIT ANSWERED HIS PRAYERS. THIS ATTEMPT AT SPIRITUAL

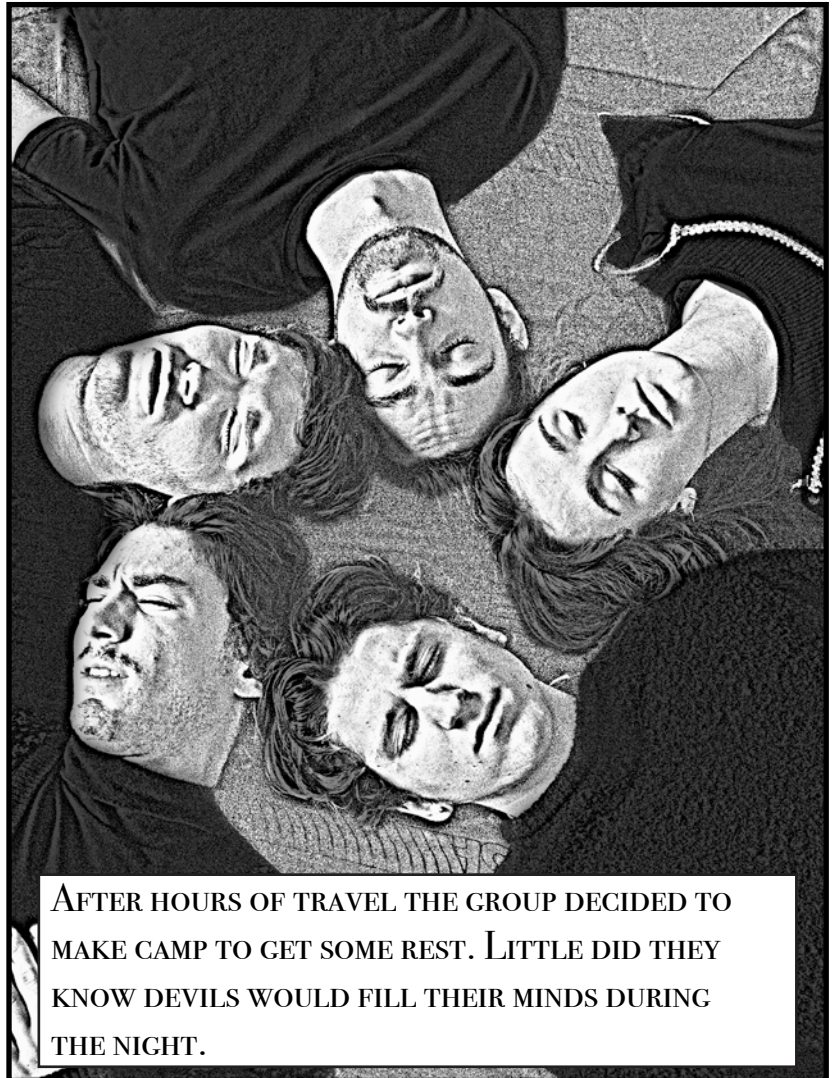
FOR THE SECOND ATTEMPT THEY INCLUDED A VIRGIN BOY HOPING HE WOULD MAKE THE DIFFERENCE, ULTIMATELY HE DID. SPIRITS FILLED THE COLOSSEUM AND BENVENUTO GOT HIS WISH, WHILE THE REST OF THEM FOUGHT FOR THEIR LIVES.



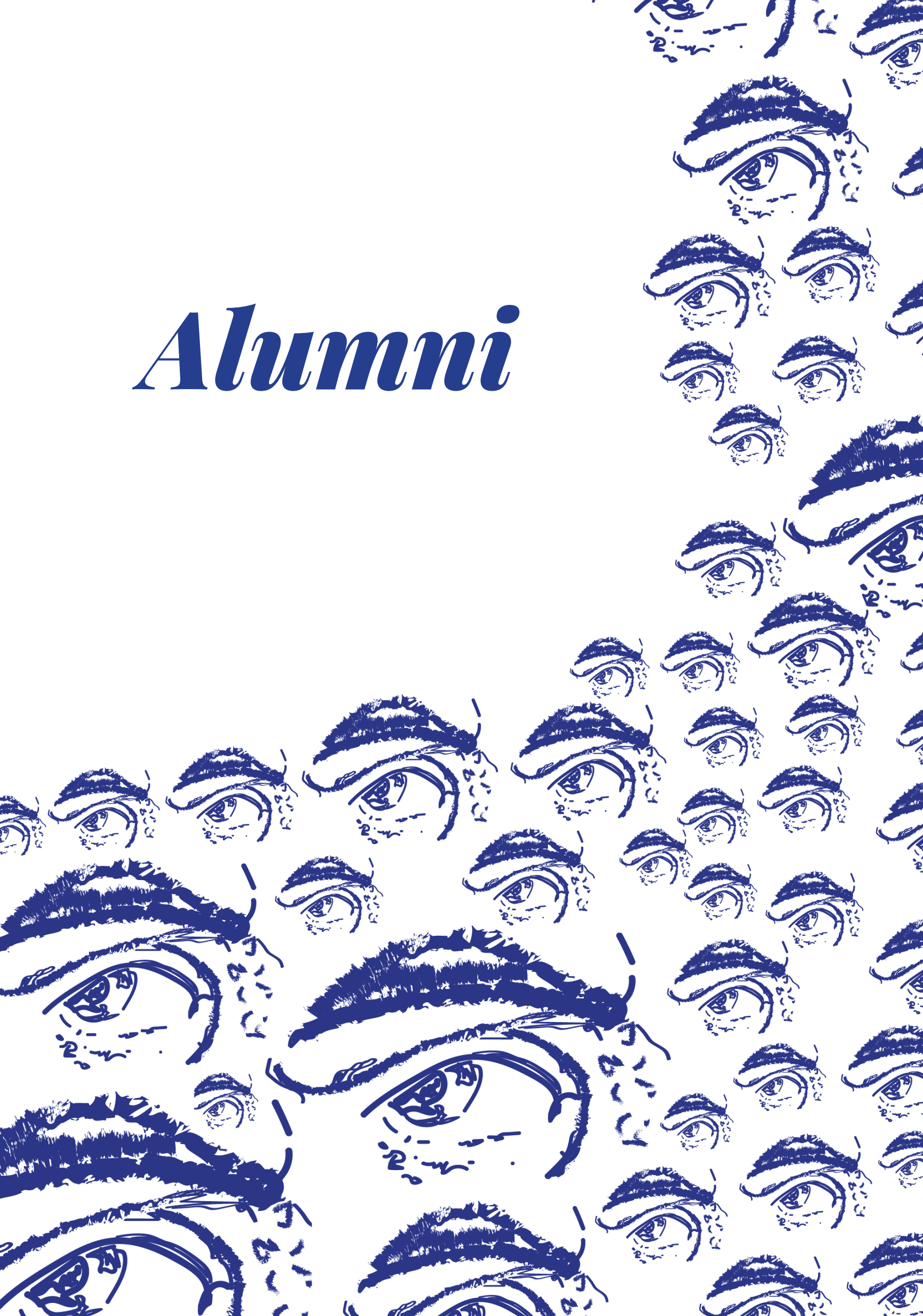
THE GROUP WITNESSED THE MOST DANGEROUS CEREMONY THE PRIEST HAD EVER SEEN AND THEY SURVIVED.



AFTER HOURS OF TRAVEL THE GROUP DECIDED TO MAKE CAMP TO GET SOME REST. LITTLE DID THEY KNOW DEVILS WOULD FILL THEIR MINDS DURING THE NIGHT.



# *Alumni*







# Sydney Mason

## **I**ntroduce yourself and tell us why you've decided to come and study at FUA-AUF!

Ciao! My name is Sydney Mason and I studied at FUA-AUF for a semester in Fall 2017, I loved & missed it so much I decided to go back for a second semester Fall 2018! When studying abroad first crossed my mind I was a freshman in college struggling to find my place. All the friends I had made at my home university, Southern New Hampshire University, were planning on transferring schools for Sophomore year. I thought to myself, I either stay here and maybe things get better or I take a risk and study abroad not knowing anyone. Studying abroad meant having unforgettable experiences, traveling, meeting new people, and emerging myself in a new culture all while working towards my degree in Graphic Design. After multiple study abroad meetings, research, and talking to previous study abroad students I decided Florence would be the absolute best fit for me.

## **W**hat were the highlights of your study abroad experience?

Aside from the obvious, fantastic food, wine, and scenery Florence also has an ample amount of art, culture, and rich history. With choosing Florence came choosing FUA-AUF, they offer so many unique hands-on classes and internships that interested me, it was almost like they knew exactly what I needed. The classes I took ranged from graphic design, wine, culture and Italian speaking classes, but my favorite was the Photography Internship with David Weiss. I was new to the photography world and felt very anxious but excited about being a part of this internship. The students I was working with were from all over

the world, had a lot more experience than I, and were full time students at FUA-AUF- intimidating to say the least! Surprisingly, it ended up being the best internship I've done to this day. I was challenged artistically to look at things from a different perspective, learned how to use a professional camera, and post production to fit a certain style. Fast forward to today and I use a professional camera almost every day for my career! I work for Start Line Brewing Company in Hopkinton Massachusetts where I am constantly photographing content for social media and design merchandise as well as beer can labels! I owe David Weiss a huge thank you for teaching me the ropes of photography and giving me the confidence to go out and photograph anything and everything!

## **H**ow do you feel about your experience looking back?

Studying abroad was one of the best decisions I made for myself and I encourage everyone to take the risk! You will not regret it. As I said before, I went into this experience alone both semesters but what makes that important is that I came out with best friends. To this day, I am friends with people I met while abroad and we still reminisce on all the fun times we had in Florence!

## **W**hat's your advice for anyone interested in coming to study in Florence?

My advice to anyone thinking about studying in Florence at FUA-AUF is TAKE THE RISK AND ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE! Studying abroad was seriously one of the best, most transformative experiences of my life.



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