



# PALACE WOMEN

OLTRARNO  
ED OLTRE

September to December 2023

**The 'Palace women' programme rediscovers female forerunners  
in the monumental Florentine venues in which they lived and worked**

In Florence, numerous notable women working in government, the arts, patronage, literature and philanthropy lived and worked in the Oltrarno and beyond, over the course of centuries. From September to December 2023, lectures, tours, original artisanship, music, an exhibition and an original video and photography catalogue form part of an events series, organised by **The British Institute of Florence, Il Palmerino Cultural Association and Calliope Arts**, which spotlights past excellence and modern-day creativity from a female perspective.

## **SCORING SUFFRAGE**

**September 29, 2023 at 6pm**

**Lecture / Violin and piano recital – Claudia Tobin, Ruth Palmer, Alessio Enea**

*Lyceum Club Internazionale di Firenze. Palazzo Adami Lami, Lungarno Guicciardini 17 – Florence*

How did music score and underscore the swell of women's increasing liberties at the turn of the twentieth century? Writer and curator Claudia Tobin, with violinist Ruth Palmer and pianist Alessio Enea, set out to uncover the musical sisterhood between a network of European women artists, writers and music critics who took inspiration from Florence, including suffragette composer Dame Ethel Smyth, her friend the writer and activist Vernon Lee frequented Villa San Francesco di Paola. Presented at the Lyceum in Florence, of which these women were members, this event is part of a research grant that connects archives in the UK and Florence, including at the Villa I Tatti Harvard Centre for Renaissance Studies, Lyceum Club archive, the British Institute of Florence, Somerville College Oxford and the British Library in the UK. Reservations required, seating limited: [linda@restorationconversations.org](mailto:linda@restorationconversations.org)

## **FEMALE FORERUNNERS: 'A ROOM OF THEIR OWN'**

**October 18, 2023 at 6pm**

**Lecture by Linda Falcone** (online and on site)

British Institute of Florence, Wednesday Lecture Series. Lungarno Guicciardini 9 – Florence

Lecture admission: 12 euro, reservations recommended

Eleonora de Toledo's purchase of the Pitti Palace – a sixteenth-century decision that triggered the emergence of the Oltrarno artisan district – Vittoria della Rovere's role in inspiring and supporting art and craftsmanship at the Poggio Imperiale, Violante di Baviera's cultural salon at Villa Lampeggi and even Bianca Cappello's unique palace on via Maggio. This talk explores the role of noblewomen and how they were 'influencers' in their day. The 'palazzo' idea is not limited to aristocratic women involved in governance, however. Felicie de Fauveau's art atelier in via degli Serragli is a case in point. Details of how to attend in person or online at [Special Events - The British Institute of Florence](#)

## **FROM BIANCA CAPPELLO TO THE BOBOLI'S GREENERY**

**October 21 (in English) at 4pm**

**Tour with Freya's Florence** Admission: 25 euro per person

Explore a female-run artisan workshop specialised in egg-yolk tempera and gold foil, courtesy of Veronica Balzani in via Pandolfini, before crossing to the 'other side of the river', for a walk along via Maggio, past the Palazzo di Bianca Cappello to Elizabeth Browning's home, Casa Guidi. Visit the Boboli Gardens inspired by Eleonora di Toledo and see the evocative grotta di Madama and the grotta di Buontalenti, focusing on their connection to Bianca Cappello and Francesco I. To conclude, participants will exit at the Annalena entrance of via Romana, for a quick trek through the Annalena Garden, linked to the history of Domenican nuns. Reservations required: [associazione@palmerino.it](mailto:associazione@palmerino.it)

### **Curator-led visit**

## **FROM ISABELLA DE' MEDICI TO EMMA BARDINI, VILLA CERRETO GUIDI**

**October 24, 2023 at 10.30am (in Italian)**

Hosted by Villa La Petraia curator *Giulia Coco*. Admission free

Once a Medici hunting lodge, the villa was designed by Buontalenti by order of Cosimo I. It hosts artworks by Lavinia Fontana and Angelica Kaufmann, but it is most famous for being gifted to Cosimo I's favourite daughter Isabella de' Medici... it would ultimately become the site of her murder, by husband Paolo Giordano I Orsini. Centuries later, in the 1900s, the villa became home to the paintings of Emma Bardini. This collection of portraiture and still-life works reveal a lesser known side of the woman who helped famed Oltrarno 'antiques' dealer Stefano Bardini make international connections in the '*Oltrarno ed oltre*'. Reservations required: [associazione@palmerino.it](mailto:associazione@palmerino.it)

## **PALACE WOMEN: PHOTOGRAPHY AND ARTISANS EXHIBITION**

**October 30 to December 15, 2023**

**Gruppo Fotografico Il Cupolone**

Il Palmerino Cultural Association. Via del Palmerino 6 – Florence

Exhibition open Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays until December 15, from 3.30pm to 6.30pm and by appointment

Ten women photographers from the award-winning Florentine cultural association Gruppo Fotografico Il Cupolone capture the essence of the project 'Palace Women: Oltrarno and Beyond'. Via photo reportage or artistic images, the team is committed to the creation of a photographic archive

spotlighting the modern-day creativity of artisans and art students who find inspiration in the Florence palazzi (and gardens!) that female pioneers designed, developed and 'populated'. From riverside to countryside, they will start with Oltrarno sites and female-run workshops, before moving on to explore villas in other districts, once home and haunt to powerful or creative women.

Participating artisans inspired by Vittoria della Rovere, Elizabeth Browning and the women of Villa Petraia include Ilaria Ceccarelli and Ayako Nakamori (fabrics and natural chord), Kristie Mathieson (grès) Jane Harman (wood), Andrew Stone (watercolor woodblock prints), Negar Azhar Azari and Brenda Luize Roepke (jewelry). The exhibition will include a series of works inspired by Medici women patrons, crafted during the Palace Women student grant programme at the Liceo Artistico Statale di Porta Romana e Sesto Fiorentino, focused on papermaking, serigraphs and printing on textiles. The exhibition opening includes the premiere of 'Artisans and Palace Women', a video by Florence-based Russian video-maker Olga Makarova. Photographers: Alessandra Barrucchieri, Valentina Bellini, Sabina Bernacchini, Cinzia Carmen Cardellicchio, Paola Curradi, Maria Grazia Dainelli, Cristina Garzone, Cecilia Franchi, Maria Laura Fineschi, Daniela Giampà, Sandra Lumini, Viola Parretti and Antonella Tomassi, curated by Simone Sabatini. **Inauguration reservations for 6pm on October 30.** For more information and reservations: [associazione@palmerino.it](mailto:associazione@palmerino.it)

## BOOK PRESENTATION

**November 14, 2023, 6pm**

### ***Palace Women: Where Florence's Women Made History***

[Il Palmerino Cultural Association. Via del Palmerino 6 – Florence](#)

Family palaces, spiritual retreats, cultural salons, hunting lodges and garden oases – native and adoptive Florentine women carved their place in history inside the venues they frequented: Villa La Petraia, San Francesco di Paola, the Medici Villa of Poggio Imperiale, Villa di Cerreto Guidi, Casa Guidi and Palazzo di Bianca Cappello. Join us for the presentation of an evocative photography book featuring the collective works of 10 female photographers from Gruppo Fotografico Il Cupolone, enhanced by the shared stories of scholars, artisans, musicians, historians and curators who give a voice to pioneering women of the past (The Florentine Press, 2023). Free admission, reservations required: [associazione@palmerino.it](mailto:associazione@palmerino.it)

## Curator-led visit

### **FROM BALLROOM TO BOUDOIR, VILLA LA PETRAIA'S WOMEN**

**November 28, 2023 (in Italian), 3pm**

[Hosted by Villa La Petraia curator Giulia Coco. Admission free](#)

Villa La Petraia, one of Tuscany's most celebrated Medici villas, seen from the perspective of the many women whose presence can be felt there, starting with Christina of Lorraine, to whom the villa was given after her marriage to Grand Duke Ferdinando I in 1589. A glimpse of Medici women can be found in the villa's fresco cycle *The Glories of the Medici*, featuring notable figures like Catherine de' Medici (with daughters on her left) and Maria de' Medici. In the 1800s, during Florence's stint as capital, the villa became a favourite of Rosa Vercellana, King Vittorio Emanuele's morganatic wife, known as 'La Bella Rosina'. In her boudoir, expect rare pastels by 18<sup>th</sup>-century female artists, including Giovanna Fratellini and Violante Siries Cerroti. For more information and reservations: [associazione@palmerino.it](mailto:associazione@palmerino.it)

## PRE-RAPHAELITE 'SISTERHOOD' IN THE VILLAS OF BELLOSQUARDO

**November 29 2023 at 6pm**

**Lecture by Francesca Baldry** (*online and on site*)

[British Institute of Florence, Wednesday Lecture Series. Lungarno Guicciardini 9 – Florence](#)

Lecture admission: 12 euro, reservations recommended

*Elizabeth Boott, whose alter ego Henry James captured in Portrait of a Lady, lived in Florence's Villa Castellani at Bellosguardo and her experience shines a light on the pre-Raphaelite 'brotherhood's' female perspective, as she and other 'muses' carved their space as painters in their own right when they sojourned on the hills of Florence. Mary Spartali Stillman's over 170 works illustrate how romanticizing 'the Renaissance' was a marketable genre. Painter Evelyn De Morgan, also a Bellosguardo aficionado, was a rebellious suffragette and spiritualist who produced some of the turn-of-the century's most evocative angel images, while in Florence from 1895 to 1914. Their presence in the city and its outskirts in the second half of the Nineteenth century, shaped the image of contemporary Florence. Details of how to attend in person or online at [Special Events - The British Institute of Florence](#)*

Participating institutions: Lyceum Club Internazionale di Firenze, Gruppo Fotografico Il Cupolone, Intreccio Creativo, Liceo Artistico Statale di Porta Romana e Sesto Fiorentino, Villa Medicea La Petraia, Villa Medicea Cerreto Guidi, Palazzo Spinelli.

Project Coordinator: Linda Falcone, Restoration Conversations

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Palace Women image: Virginie Houdet, Oltrarno Gaze, 2022



PIANO SVILUPPO E COESIONE DEL MINISTERO DEL TURISMO PROGETTO FINANZIATO CON LA DELIBERAZIONE CIPESS N. 58/2021 AREA TEMATICA "COMPETITIVITA' IMPRESA" SETTORE INTERVENTO "TURISMO E OSPITALITA'" TITOLO DEL PROGETTO "ENJOY RESPECT & FEEL FLORENCE"