

THE FLORENTINE

Year XIV - February 2018

242

The English-speaking news magazine in Florence

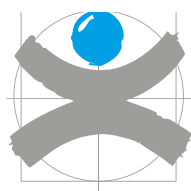
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LOVE IS IN THE AIR

This month's issue is devoted to love—and art. Two acrobatic construction experts hang by a rope in the holiness of Florence Synagogue; their task is to dismantle, secure and reassemble the wooden bars of the temple's dome.

+Black History Month Florence special

+The Valentine's Gift Guide



Publiacqua

OUR 2017 IN NUMBERS

potable water monitoring on

MORE THAN

7,5K

SAMPLES

AND MORE THAN

215K

PARAMETRES

70

MLN EURO

2017 total investments

MORE THAN

1,5

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MORE THAN

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MORE THAN

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via dei Banchi 4 - 50123 Firenze
ph. 055 2306616 - fax 055 5385383
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directed by Marco Badiani

vice-director Giovanni Giusti

graphic & art design Leo Cardini

editor-in-chief Helen Farrell

events & associate editor Mary Gray

head of digital Alexandra Korey

music editor Michelle Davis

culture editor Jane Fortune

staff writer: culture Samantha Vaughn

video Sandro Nardoni

advertising Giacomo Badiani

accounting Deborah Bettazzi

correspondents:

- Maremma Elisa Scarton Detti

- Milan Brenda Dionisi

WRITE TO US AT:

redazione@theflorentine.net
events events@theflorentine.net
advertising pubblicita@theflorentine.net
classifieds annunci@theflorentine.net
accounting@theflorentine.net

direttore responsabile Silvia Bini

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Editor's Letter

Love is in the air

This month's cover is devoted to love—and art. Two acrobatic construction experts hang by a rope in the holiness of Florence Synagogue; their task is to dismantle, secure and reassemble the wooden bars of the temple's dome. It's a project made possible thanks to public crowdfunding and private donations, all conducted urgently and with minimal disruption to the Synagogue's purpose as a place of prayer (see page 4).

More than Carnival season, February is also **Black History Month Florence**, founded in 2016 and now in its third and ever-expanding edition. Focusing not just on African-Americans, but on communities from Africa and its diaspora in Florence and throughout Italy, check out Mary Gray's highlights of the 60+ event showcase on pages 18–19. In conjunction, Deirdre Pirro pens the poignant story of **Alessandro Sinigaglia** (page 26).

February wouldn't be February without **Valentine's Day**. Love it or loathe it, it's hard to avoid Heart Day, so we conjured up a **gift guide for Florence lovers**. From fashion for your four-legged friend to a six-bottle wine "Love Pack", there's something for everyone, ourselves included (pages 24–25). Plus, we venture from vanilla to vibrators with a tour of the city's sex shops (page 20). Spoiler alert: they're not as sordid as you might think.

In this February issue, Cristiano Brizzi celebrates the 275th anniversary of **Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici's** death and her lasting legacy to all humanity (page 21) and Alan Taylor remembers his friendship with Florence-loving author **Muriel Spark** on the centenary of her birth (page 22).

Join us on February 21 at Pint of View (borgo Tegolaio 17R, Florence) for **The Pint of View Challenge**, as the guys at the Oltrarno's hottest hangout pair independent craft beers with Korean-inspired mains and you decide your favourite brew! Email info@theflorentinepress.com to book your spot; reservations required.

Next issue: March 1.

Helen Farrell, editor-in-chief

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Children's library seeks volunteers



The Children's Lending Library of Florence, housed in the undercroft of St. James Episcopal Church but with no specific religious affiliation, is in need of hands on deck for various projects. Saturday readings in English and some other activities have had to be suspended due to a lack of volunteers.

Some of the opportunities available for new volunteers are library duty once per month (following a simple training), reading during story time, and supplying snacks and treats or assisting with crafts and games at fundraiser parties (held around Halloween, Christmas and Easter). The committee meets on the second Friday of each month from 10.30am to noon, but those unable to make the meetings are still welcome to get involved in whatever capacity they can.

To express your interest, email info@st-james.it. For more information about the library, see www.childrenslibrary.altervista.org or www.facebook.com/Childrenslendinglibrary.

TF IN NUMBERS

Top five articles online
this month on TF's website:

The war on bags / Pitti Uomo 93: in pictures / The perfect espresso / Orgies on a dancefloor: Space Electronic / Cheap lunch spots in Central Florence

With thanks to our intern Maria Rees.

wednesday nights: special menu
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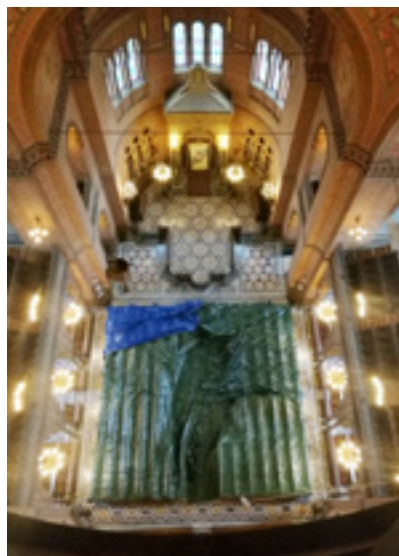
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Restoring the Synagogue

Crowdfunding and private donations



by the World Monuments Fund and the David Berg Foundation, with the collaboration of Fondazione Beniculturali Ebraici in Italia onlus, Jewish Heritage Europe, Adei (Florence) and Centro Giovanile Ebraico Fiorentino.

The restoration is expected to be swift, ending in late March. The area beneath the dome, which is also undergoing reinforcement, has already been cleared and the temple has resumed its usual functions. The work is being conducted by Acrobatic System from Livorno, the same company whose "mountaineering workers" carried out safety checks on Brunelleschi's Dome last autumn. The team is securing and reassemble the wooden objects. The rose window will be restored on-site in an area visible to the public.

The Synagogue was built between 1874 and 1882 by the architects Marco Treves, Mariano Falcini and Vincenzo Micheli, and is lauded as one of the most important examples of monumental architecture. From 1995 to 2010, the entire building underwent a massive restoration of the upholstery, facades and interior decorations, but the dome was not addressed due to a lack of funding.

Restoration has begun at the city's Synagogue.

Following the collapse of some minor wooden objects from the grating and the central rose window, the Opera del Tempio Ebraico launched a crowdfunding campaign that, befitting the urgency of the situation, raised 35,000 euro in 17 days thanks to the generosity of over 80 donors from Italy and overseas. Further help came from the Fondazione CR Firenze, who, as Renzo Funaro, president of the Opera explained, "answered our call promptly and with generosity, offering 30,000 euro in funding, without which it would not have been possible to start and carry out this project." Contributions were also made

See The Florentine's Facebook page for an extraordinary video of the restoration underway at Florence's Synagogue

Column of Justice revived

Restoration funded by billboard sales



The newly restored Column of Justice in piazza Santa Trinita was inaugurated on January 25 by the Mayor of Florence, Dario Nardella. The eight-month long restoration cost 150,000 euro and was funded thanks to the sale of billboard space that covered the outside of the scaffolding.

Over the centuries, the column had become substantially pockmarked, Justice's cape had oxidized, showing numerous holes, and the marble pieces started to come apart. The restoration focused on repairing this damage as

well as adding a brass support to reinforce the statue's left arm, which was determined to be at risk following analyses carried out to better understand the monument's state of conservation. These analyses revealed the presence of micro-cracks on the left arm, which were filled with resin and secured with the support.

The column, along with the Column of Peace in piazza San Felice and the Column of Religion in piazza San Marco, was erected by Cosimo I de' Medici following his appointment as the Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1570. This particular column was gifted to the Medici family in 1560 by Pope Pius IV, who took it from the Baths of Caracalla.

At the top of the column stands Justice, brandishing a sword in her right hand and scales in her left. The statue was entrusted to Francesco del Tadda and his son Romolo, who were experts in carving porphyry. The father-son duo followed the design of Bartolomeo Ammannati. It took 11 years to complete the sculpture, which comprises six individual pieces of stone clamped together with copper linchpins.

Final Eight in Florence

Top-tier basketball at Mandela Forum

Florence has been selected to host the Serie A Basketball League Cup, known as the Postemobile Final Eight, for the first time this February.

After qualifying a place in the preliminaries, the quarter finals will see Sidigas Avellino take on Vanoli Cremona, Venezia Umana Reyer Venezia vs Fiat Torino, Emporio Armani Milano vs Red October Cantù and Germani Brescia vs Segafredo Virtus Bologna.

The Coppa Italia, founded in 1968, has been held regularly since 1984. While the format of the competition has changed over the years, since 2000 eight teams have been ranked to compete for the trophy in back-to-back rounds. The three-day tournament for the men's division will take place from February 15 to 18 at the Mandela Forum.

The games will be broadcast on Rai Sport and Eurosport.



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“Fochi” di San Giovanni (and other saints)

On Florence’s monthly fireworks

OP-ED / Samantha Vaughn



The cool winter’s night of January 24 was warmed up with an unorthodox firework display, or “fochi” as Florentines say. In fact, on the 24th of every month until June 24, the feast day of Florence’s patron saint St. John the Baptist, the city’s skies will be illuminated with explosive fanfare.

Waiting for the Fochi. San Giovanni all year round takes place at Villa Bardini, aiming to spread awareness and appreciation of this yearly event, much loved by locals and eagerly awaited by holiday makers. This year, the popular fireworks show on June 24 will be funded entirely by the Fondazione CR Firenze, but even with 100 per cent funding secured, the question of value hangs—literally—in the air. The non-profit organization, whose operations are not tied to the namesake bank, is often a sponsor for events and initiatives promoting Florence’s cultural heritage, so it comes as no surprise that the institution has stepped in to make the San Giovanni festivities possible. Nonetheless, the plan to host a minute of fireworks on the 24th of every month carries a fraction of the weight that the actual summer celebration does.

The evenings’ schedule unfolds as follows: guests can visit the current exhibition at Villa Bardini from 7pm onward, and at 8pm, fireworks will be launched from the far end of the garden, which can be enjoyed from the panoramic terrace. Following the show, a short talk will be held by an expert on Florence and its historic, folk and religious traditions that inspired the “Fochi,” organized by the recently instituted Osservatorio delle Tradizioni e del Patrimonio Culturale di Firenze (Observatory on the Traditions and Cultural Heritage of Florence). The event series undoubtedly provides an opportunity to promote an oft-overlooked historic element of Florence’s identity.

The importance of patron saints and Florence’s patron saint in particular is certainly a heritage and a history to be lauded and not let slip into oblivion, but in a city where there is so much cultural patrimony in need of funding, the question remains: are fireworks and talks the best target for financial contributions?

Aspettando i “Fochi”. San Giovanni tutto l’anno

Guided tours of the exhibition and the talks (in Italian) are free, with the option to participate in a buffet at the end of the evening for 10 euro. Talks: February 24: Prof. Carlo Sisi: Fochi in Art. March 24: Fabio Baronti, Compagnia delle Seggiole: Readings on the Fochi. April 24: Mons. Timothy Verdon: The Spiritual Symbolism of the Fochi. May 24: Waiting for Fochi dinner with con Prof. Antonio Paolucci. For more information, visit www.bardinipeyron.it.

Reimagining museums

Museo Marino Marini launches Playable Museum Award

Inspired by the rising popularity of smart cities, the Museo Marino Marini has launched a call to action for creatives to pave the way for smart museums.

The Playable Museum Award initiative seeks innovative contributions for the design of pioneering enterprises that reimagine the museum of the future, with the aim of creating a hub of technological, social and cultural innovation that encourages the participation and the active and spontaneous involvement of visitors.

The Playable Museum Award,” says Patrizia Asproni, president of the Museo Marini, “is a challenge and comes from the increasingly evident need to change our way of thinking about museums, especially to attract and involve younger generations.” The organizers are looking for ideas that can shake up the link between people, objects and the museum, bringing out-of-the-box thinking and ways of connecting visitors and the museum to the Marini’s exhibition spaces.

Leading the project is engagement specialist Fabio Viola, a top gamification designer. Viola maintains that the project “is a first step for transforming the Museo Marini into a place of action and interaction, where one can not only ‘consume’ but also ‘produce’ culture.” The key concept here is audience development, a growing focus in the museum world, which the organizers look to increase through inventive projects and methods.

The Playable Museum Award is open to all: artists, designers, architects, makers, developers, videogame designers, musicians, writers, graphic artists, cultural managers, storytellers, urbanists, physicists, mathematicians, biologists, chemists, and so on. The winner will receive a 10,000 euro grant and will have the backing and guidance of the panel of international experts throughout the project’s development.

Visit www.museomarinomarini.it for more information. The deadline for applications in March 31, 2018.

Marketing the past

Uffizi and Archaeology Museum join forces

From March 1, 2018, tickets to the Uffizi Galleries will include free entry to Florence’s National Museum of Archaeology.

This incentive by the Uffizi Galleries is more than a ticket deal; it is part of city-wide efforts to decentralise the influx of visitors, encouraging tourists to venture beyond the iconic landmarks and explore the lesser frequented areas of Florence.

The two museums have been working closely for over a year, with the new ticket scheme forming part of a five-year agreement to develop stronger ties through collaborative research, lecture and workshop series, and exhibitions on archaeology and ancient civilizations. 2.5 per cent of the Uffizi’s ticket sales will be invested in the Archaeology Museum for restorations of artefacts, infrastructure and research projects.

At the press conference, Uffizi Galleries director Eike Schmidt commented, “The renewed connection between the Uffizi and the National Archaeological Museum of Florence highlights the central role of the classical civilizations and disciplines studied to understand the subsequent historical development and today’s and tomorrow’s world.”

For centuries, the Uffizi was famous for its collection of ancient artefacts, originally exhibiting the centuries-old



marble collections of the Medici alongside Egyptian statues and Etruscan and Roman art. With the restructuring of the museum during the Risorgimento, the Grand Duchy’s collection was moved off site with almost the entirety of its exhibits now conserved at the National Museum of Archaeology. This is the type of narration that the city’s cultural officials are hoping will entice true art and history lovers to venture off the usual tourism route.

In 2017, the Uffizi boasted around 2.2 million visitors, while the National Museum of Archaeology in Florence had closer to 65,000, of which only a third were paying customers.

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Struggling Sammezzano

Moorish-inspired castle outside Florence at risk



Tuscany's "Technicolor" castle, Sammezzano, was recently listed as one of Europe's 12 most at-risk monuments by Paris-based cultural heritage organization Europa Nostra and Ibei. The 12 are "finalists" for the organization's definitive list of the 7 most endangered historic European sites, which will be published on March 15. Finalists are spread across 10 different countries and were selected by a jury made up of members from a variety of sectors.

The striking castle in Reggello was the project of a 19th-century nobleman named Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d'Aragona whose vision was inspired by the distant Orient. The castle has since fallen into a state of relative abandon, with

only occasional, exclusive visits organized by the Ferdinando Panciatichi Committee, an association aimed at saving the castle.

Other monuments and sites in the line-up are the historical center of Gjirokastra and the post-Byzantine churches in Voskopoja and Vithkuqi, all in Albania; the historic center of Vienna, Austria; the Beringen coal mine in Belgium; the Buzludzha monument in Bulgaria; the Soviet cable car system in Chiatura and the David Gareji monastic complex, both in Georgia; the Constanța Casino in Romania; the prehistoric rock art sites in the province of Cadiz in Spain; the Greek orphanage of Prinkipo, Prince Islands, in Turkey; and the Grimsby ice factory in England.

Setting the integration bar in Sesto Fiorentino

Guardian spotlights efforts

Florentine suburb Sesto Fiorentino is in the international spotlight after an article titled "How migrants won the friendship of wary Florentines" was published in the online and print editions of *The Observer*, the Sunday sister publication to British daily *Guardian*.


Written by Umbria-based journalist Angela Giuffrida, the January 22 article details an integration project sponsored by Il Cenacolo cooperative, a member of Co&So, and its impact on local social life and perception of migrants. The cooperative manages the "Il Gerlino" migrant center, housed in a converted former hotel in the city center and the subject of controversy and petitions when it was announced last June that 50 asylum seekers would be moving in.

Giuffrida's article also highlighted the current political capitalization on the migrant crisis ahead of Italy's general elections in March, alluding to how it may have exacerbated anti-immigrant sentiment locally. In response, the cooperative put its residents—mainly hailing from Mali, Senegal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan—to work in piazza Vittorio Veneto, a square whose shifting face was the primary source of many complaints. Teaming up with retirees from southern Italy, the Il Gerlino residents worked to rid the square of copious

amounts of cigarette butts. But the clean-up project has evolved into a weekly social meetup on the square, eventually getting business owners: Giuffrida cites bar owner Marco Piombanti's efforts to assist the new arrivals with crafting their CVs and preparing for job interviews.

Il Cenacolo president Matteo Conti said of the article, "It demonstrates that the work Il Cenacolo is doing in the area, and particularly in Sesto Fiorentino, in collaboration with the local administration, is proceeding in the right direction, obtaining effective and important results worthy of international media attention {...} Thinking of how to welcome people in a way that isn't connected to our territory is unimaginable. This, as we can see, generates fear and suspicion. The model that we've developed in Sesto Fiorentino is based precisely on this idea of building important connections with other social groups so that social cohesion is assured and our guests can continue their journey of integration and adaptation in a satisfying way."

Mayor of Sesto Fiorentino Lorenzo Falchi added, "All of our gratitude goes to the Cooperativa Il Cenacolo for making this defeat of suspicion and cultural barriers possible, transforming a conflict into a fruitful opportunity for dialogue."



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Flying the orange flag

38 Tuscan towns earn tourism designation



The Touring Club Italiano has released the names of the municipalities awarded a *Bandiera Arancione* (Orange Flag) for the 2018-2020 period, with Tuscany taking the top spot in terms of numbers: 38 to be exact.

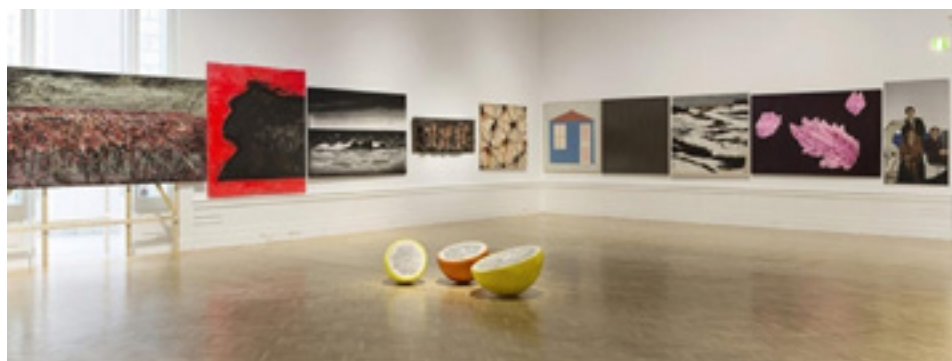
The *Bandiera Arancione* is awarded to towns with fewer than 15,000 residents that not only boast a historic, cultural and environmental heritage, but also offer visitors high-quality hospitality. The award can be considered something of a guarantee for tourists when choosing where to vacation, knowing that in a *Bandiera Arancione* town, they are sure to have a quality experience, with an abundance of culture.

The following Tuscan towns earned the designation this year: Anghiari (Arezzo), Barberino Val d'elsa (Siena), Barga (Lucca),

Casale Marittimo (Pisa), Casciana Terme Lari (Pisa), Casole d'Elsa (Siena), Castelnuovo Berardenga (Siena), Castelnuovo Val di Cecina (Pisa), Castiglion Fiorentino (Arezzo), Certaldo (Florence), Cetona (Siena), Chiusi (Siena), Collodi (Pistoia), Cutigliano (Pistoia), Fossdinovo (Massa), Lucignano (Arezzo), Massa Marittima (Grosseto), Montalcino (Siena), Montecarlo (Lucca), Montefollonico (Siena), Montepulciano (Siena), Monteriggioni (Siena), Murlo (Siena), Peccioli (Pisa), Pienza (Siena), Pitigliano (Grosseto), Pomarance (Pisa), Radda in Chianti (Siena), Radicondoli (Siena), San Casciano dei Bagni (Siena), San Gimignano (Siena), Santa Fiora (Grosseto), Sarteano (Siena), Sorano (Grosseto), Suvereto (Livorno), Trequanda (Siena), Vinci (Florence) and Volterra (Pisa).

Contemporary incursion

L'Attico at the GNAM



The historic gallery L'Attico in piazza di Spagna is celebrating its 60th anniversary with an exhibition at Rome's National Gallery of Modern Art (GNAM).

Scorribanda (Incursion) showcases 39 large works by artists who have displayed at the gallery since the 1950s onwards.

"It's a huge, beautiful space, but one that's hard to tame, so I positioned art by 39 artists linked to my past, installing them on the walls, one next to the other, in continuity," commented Fabio Sargentini, manager of the gallery founded with his father Bruno in 1957.

The exhibits feature the shouting heads of Marco Colazzo, Rodolfo Aricò's *Orpheus* and Luigi Ontani's *Concertino*. Visitors can also admire artworks by Paolo Del Giudice, Luca Patella, Hidetoshi Nagasawa, Pizzi Cannella, Stefano Di Stasio, Pino Pascali and Michelangelo Pistoletto. Two sculpture groups stand at the centre of the show: *Grapefruit, Orange, Lemon* by Nataly Maier and *Inside Group* by Vittorio Corsini.

The exhibition, on until March 3, includes a donation to the GNAM from the L'Attico archives.

A change at an Oscar

Italian film touted for an Academy Award

Luca Guadagnino's *Call Me By Your Name* has garnered four Oscar nominations for Best Film, Timothée Chalamet as Best Actor, Best Adapted Screenplay by James Ivory from André Aciman's book, and Best Original Song (Sufjan Stevens' *Mystery of Love*).

Set in 1983, 17-year-old Elio begins a relationship with visiting Oliver, his father's research assistant, with whom he bonds over his emerging sexuality, their Jewish heritage and the beguiling Italian landscape.

The film by the Palermo-born director, famous for *I Am Love* and *A Bigger Splash*, is up against *The Shape of Water*, *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing Missouri*, *Dunkirk*, *Darkest Hour*, *The Post*, *Lady Bird*, *Get*



Out and Phantom Thread. Actors Armie Hammer and Timothée Chalamet were also in the running for Golden Globes but lost out.

The 90th Academy Awards will take place in Hollywood on March 4.



From Naples to China

Pompeii on year-long tour

The Naples National Archaeological Museum, also known as the MANN, is taking Pompeii to China for a year.

The MANN is loaning art from its vast archives to the Jinsha Archaeology Museum in Chengdu. Among the 120 works and artifacts on loan is the caldarium from the Villa di Pisanella in Boscoreale, one of the best-preserved and most complete examples of private thermal baths from Ancient Roman times. Also arriving in China is the famed balneum, an extraordinary specimen of ancient hydraulics, which has been dismantled and distributed into 14 crates for shipping. MANN director Paolo Giulierini commented, "We hope the

travelling exhibition will bring many visitors to the exhibitions and to our museum, considering the constant growth of Chinese tourists who are passionate about archaeology."

The exhibitions will start in Chengdu during the Sun Festival and continue until May 3, before moving to the Qinshihuang Mausoleum Museum (June 1-August 24), the Tianjin Museum (September 21-December 14), and Wuhan Museum (February-March 2019), plus a fifth museum still to be decided.

The traveling show, titled *Pompeii, The Infinite Life 2018*, is part of the EU-China Tourism Year.

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Best events in February 2018*

by Mary Gray [@verymarygray](#)



SHARING/Storytellers Florence

February 3, 7pm

Todo Modo, via dei Fossi 15r, Florence

Owners of The Beehive hostel Linda and Steve Martinez have been reviving the art of oral lore for two years with their monthly "Storytellers" series in Rome. Now the initiative is coming to Florence for an inaugural edition with a riveting theme: "Turning Point." Members of the online group (see www.theflr.net/storytellersflorence) will vote each month on the evening's guiding topic, but stories can take off in any number of directions. Unlike a traditional open mic, storytellers don't read from scripts or essays, but speak directly to the crowd. Participation in the storytelling portion is not required to attend, and entrance is free (though the "turning point" tales will be best savored with an inexpensive glass of wine in hand).

ILLUSTRATION/From Pinocchio to Harry Potter

February 12-June 3

Villa Bardini, costa San Giorgio 2, Florence

Feed your imagination at this full and vibrant exhibition spanning close to five decades of Italian illustration (1964-2012). *From Pinocchio to Harry Potter* will feature a selection of 300 works from the historic Florentine publisher Adriano Salani, whose popularity exploded after the house released *Harry Potter e la Pietra Filosofale*, the Italian edition of J.K. Rowling's first book in the Harry Potter series. Active since 1862, Salani is one of Italy's longest-running publishing houses; its retrospective will feature not just the illustrations of Salani editions, but a range of archival documents, original flyers and booklets. See www.bardinipeyron.it for opening times and more information.

WINE/Chianti Lovers

February 11, 4-9pm (general public hours)

Fortezza da Basso, viale Filippo Strozzi 1, Florence

Bottoms up: Chianti Lovers is back! The Consorzio Vino Chianti's annual preview event of the previous year's vintage will bring 100 wineries with 500 wines in tow to the Fortezza da Basso. In addition to spotlighting the 2017 production, the event showcases the Riserva 2015. A noteworthy change this year is the participation of the Consorzio di Tutela del Morellino di Scansano: 20 wineries under this jurisdiction will have their production primed for sipping. For connoisseurs and trade professionals (who get exclusive early access between 9.30am-4pm), the event is a sort of year-in-review; for everyone, it's a gleeful tasting spree in the guise of a serious study. For more information, see www.consorziovinochianti.it.

FIGHT/Boxe Night Florence

February 2, 6pm

Nelson Mandela Forum,
piazza Enrico Berlinguer 5, Florence

Boxe Night Florence brings a heavy dose of testosterone to the Tuscan capital, with six blockbuster boxers from around the world taking to the ring. Casual viewers with no established favorite can root for Florentine native Fabio Turchi, 24 years old and holder of a remarkable 13-0, 10 KO rating (that latter acronym stands for his default "knockout" wins, or the times his opponents were unable to get up for a full ten seconds, if you're keeping score). If this all sounds a little heavy-handed for Florence, fear not—unmistakably Tuscan touches will soften the blows. VIP spectators around the ring will enjoy a dinner of regional specialties including *ribollita* and *peposso*. For more information and tickets, see www.theflr.net/boxenightflo.

BODY/Danza in Fiera

February 22-25

Fortezza da Basso, viale Filippo Strozzi 1, Florence

Marvel at the world's masters of motion during the 2018 edition of Danza in Fiera. The dance showcase, open to both trade professionals and the public, has an aptly succinct theme this year: "WOW!" The new installment brings a special emphasis on street dancing, hip-hop and funk styles, with calendar highlights including a kid-friendly freestyle event organized by the Fundanza association (10.30am, February 25) and a hip-hop crew competition called Five Skillz in which each team has seven minutes to show off their moves (3pm, February 24). Among this year's special guests are Marvin Gofin, fresh off of Madonna's 2017 tour, and four-time tap dancing world champion Alexandr Ostanin. For the full program, see www.danzainfiera.it.

POP/Levante

February 26, 8.45pm

Teatro Verdi, via Ghibellina 99, Florence

Sicily-born singer-songwriter Levante is one of those pop stars who it's impossible not to like, with her infectious tunes and crossover talents. (Her debut novel *Se non ti vedo non esisti* was published in 2017, shortly before her third album, *Nel caos di stanze stupefacenti*, hit the airwaves.) Having reached a broader audience as a judge on Italian *X Factor*, she's set to embark on a rock-centric "Caos in Europa" international tour, but her home country concerts will be a bit more subdued, staged at Italy's most prestigious theatres. Tickets for the Teatro Verdi show start at around 21 euro and are available on www.bitconcerti.it.

MARDI GRAS/Carnival in Florence

Throughout February

Various venues in Florence

No need to venture to Venice or Viareggio: Carnival has caught on in Florence. A period of parades and merriment leading up to the somber Christian season of Lent, Carnival typically means mocking authority and indulging our collective id. But family-friendly initiatives are on the local program, with a children's carnival in piazza Ognissanti on February 10 (2-6pm; tel. 055 3244722) and a "toy city" in Sesto Fiorentino from February 3-13 (www.prolocosestofiorentino.it). A more refined option is the Gran Ballo di Carnevale at Teatro della Pergola (February 13), a 19th-century-style masquerade ball held to benefit the Bimbi in ANT project of the Associazione Nazionale Tumori (dress code strictly enforced; see www.ilgranballodi-carnevale.com). On the same night—Fat Tuesday—Teatro Verdi will host Orchestra della Toscana's Carnival concert, a musical journey to Eastern Europe (see www.orchestradellatoscana.it).

CULTURE/Black History Month Florence

Check out our full special on pages 18 and 19.



AGENDA

Thursday February 1
MUSIC & CONCERTS

Eugenio Bennato
Folk musician on "Da che sud e' sud" tour
9pm, Teatro Puccini, via delle Cascine 41,
Florence, www.bitconcerti.it

Friday 2
DANCE & THEATRE

Zero Spaccato
By and with Leonardo Capuano. An intimate
meditation on the word "existence" (Ita)
9pm, Il Laboratorio, via Lanza 64a, Florence,
www.illavoratorio.it, info@illavoratorio.it

EXHIBITS

Black is the color of my true love's hair
Opening of photo exhibition on the
boarded-up windows of Sant'Orsola for
Black History Month Florence - 5pm,
Sant'Orsola, via Panicale, Florence, www.
blackhistorymonthflorence.com

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Sfueài: Elsa Martin & Stefano Battaglia
Duo pays tribute to the contemporary poets
and artists of Friuli - 9.15pm, Sala Vanni,
piazza del Carmine 14, Florence, www.
musicusconcentus.com

PARTY

Carnival Party
"Bomba libera tutti" aka no specific theme. With
DJ Matthew - 11pm-4am, Combo Social Club,
via Mannelli 2, Florence, www.facebook.com/
combo.firenze.1/

SPORT

Boxe Night Florence
Competitors include 24-year-old Florence
native Fabio Turchi - 6pm, Nelson Mandela
Forum, piazza Enrico Berlinguer 5, Florence,
www.mandelaforum.it, www.theflr.net/
boxenightflo

Saturday 3
MARKETS & FESTIVALS

Electronics Fair
Low-cost gadgets - 10am-8pm, Obihall, via
Fabrizio de' Andre/lungarno Aldo Moro,
Florence, www.obihall.it

LECTURES & CONFERENCES

Storytellers Florence
Inaugural gathering of new English speaking
storytelling group. First theme: "Turning Point"
7pm, Todo Modo, via de' Fossi, Florence, see
"Storytellers Florence" Facebook group for
information

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Omar Sosa feat. Gustavo Ovalles
Pianist and percussionist presented by Music
Pool - 9.15pm, Sala Vanni, piazza del Carmine
14, Florence, www.musicusconcentus.com

Stella Maris
New super group with DJ set post-show
10.30pm, Glue Alternative Concept Space,
viale Manfredo Fanti 20, Florence, www.
gluefirenze.com

Rafał Blechacz
Pianist who at age 20 won the 15th Chopin
Prize in Warsaw. Music by Mozart, Beethoven,
Schumann, Chopin
4pm, Teatro della Pergola, via della Pergola
12/32, Florence, www.amicimusciafirenze.it

PARTY

Grease: 40th Anniversary Party
American '50s night. Live set + Maghero DJ
10.30pm-3.30am, Combo Social Club, via
Mannelli 2, Florence, www.facebook.com/
combo.firenze.1

Sunday 4
CINEMA

This is Congo
American photojournalist Daniel McCabe's
debut film for Black History Month Florence,
highlighting the underreported conflict in the
Democratic Republic of Congo
7pm, La Compagnia, via Cavour 50r, Florence,
www.lacompagnia.it

MARKETS & FESTIVALS

Electronics Fair

See February 3 - 10am-8pm, Obihall, via
Fabrizio de' Andre/lungarno Aldo Moro,
Florence, www.obihall.it

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Ilya Gringolts
Violinist goes on a "Bach Odyssey" - 9pm,
Teatro della Pergola, via della Pergola 12/32,
Florence, www.amicimusciafirenze.it

SPECIAL EVENT

Cambio della Guardia: Changing of the
Guard
Arenario of Palazzo Vecchio, piazza della
Signoria, Florence, T 0552616055, www.
comune.fi.it

Monday 5
LECTURES & CONFERENCES

Readings and Dialogues with Writers:
Black History Month Florence edition
With Ishion Hutchinson, poet, and Geronimo
Johnson, writer, both Rome Prize Fellows
in Literature at the American Academy in
Rome. Booking required - 6pm, Villa La
Pietra, via Bolognese 120, Florence, T
055 5007219, lapietra.dialogues@nyu.
edu, www.lapietradialogues.org, www.
blackhistorymonthflorence.com

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Goran Bregović
Bosnian composer-musician accompanied by
19-piece orchestra - 9pm, Obihall, via Fabrizio
de' Andre/lungarno Aldo Moro, Florence,
www.bitconcerti.it

L'Estravagante
Music by Bach and Vivaldi. Stefano Montanari,
conductor & violin
9pm, Teatro della Pergola (saloncino),
via della Pergola 12/32, Florence, www.
amicimusciafirenze.it

Tuesday 6
CINEMA

Alejandro Jodorowski: Poesia Sin Fin
Surrealist filmmaker Jodorowski tells the story
of himself as a young man becoming a poet in

Chile - 9pm, Cinema Odeon, piazza Strozzi,
Florence, www.odeonfirenze.com

Wednesday 7
LECTURES & CONFERENCES

Turner and the 19th Century in England
Lecture by Prof. Andrew Wilton of the Tate
Britain. Booking required - 3-4.30pm, SACI,
Palazzo dei Cartelloni, via Sant'Antonino 11,
Florence, T 055 289948, rsvp@saci-florence.
edu

Make Art, Not Walls
Lecture by Virginia Ryan for Black History
Month Florence - 6pm, British Institute, Harold
Acton Library, lungarno Guicciardini 9,
Florence, www.britishinstitute.it

Women in Revolt 1968-2018
Catharine Stimpson, a pioneering scholar in
women's and gender studies. Booking required
- 6pm, Villa Sassetti, via Bolognese 120,
Florence, T 055 5007219, lapietra.dialogues@
nyu.edu, www.lapietradialogues.org

Thursday 8
EXHIBITS

Black Value
Vernissage of show bringing together past and
present Rome Prize Fellows
6pm, Fondazione Biagiotti Progetti Arte,
via delle Belle Donne 39, Florence, www.
blackhistorymonthflorence.com, www.
artbiagiotti.com/en

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré
Show by the late artist, an Ivory Coast native
who also had a second identity as Cheik Nadro,
"He who does not forget"
6pm, SACI Gallery, Palazzo dei Cartelloni,
via Sant'Antonino, Florence, www.
blackhistorymonthflorence.com

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Urban Soul: Tormento + Guest (TBA)
Golden age hip hop
10.30pm, Combo Social Club, via Mannelli
2, Florence, www.facebook.com/combo.
firenze.1/

Friday 9
DANCE & THEATRE

Andrea Pucci in...Tolleranza Zero
Pucci explores the "absurd obstacles" of
everyday life (Ita) - 9pm, Obihall, via Fabrizio
de' Andre/lungarno Aldo Moro, Florence,
www.obihall.it

Saturday 10
DANCE & THEATRE

Magic Florence
Fifth edition of major magic showcase
presented by the masterful Mattia Boschi
of Florence - 4.45 & 8.45pm, Obihall, via
Fabrizio de' Andre/lungarno Aldo Moro,
Florence, www.obihall.it

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Sam Amidon & Guano Padano
Multi-instrumentalist and contemporary folk
singer Amidon's sound has been compared
to Nick Drake's - 9.15pm, Sala Vanni,
piazza del Carmine 14, Florence, www.
musicusconcentus.com

The Partners in Crime
Preview of new album Hoodoo Souls /
aftershow by Little DJ - 11pm, Combo
Social Club, via Mannelli 2, Florence, www.
facebook.com/combo.firenze.1/

Denis Matsuev
Music by Beethoven, Tchaikovsky - 4pm,
Teatro della Pergola, via della Pergola 12/32,
Florence, www.amicimusciafirenze.it

PARTY

Glue Carnival Night
O Bonde Carmelindo & Mariane Reis with
Fricat - 10.30pm, Glue Alternative Concept
Space, viale Manfredo Fanti 20, Florence,
www.gluefirenze.com

Sunday 11
MARKETS & FESTIVALS

Chianti Lovers
Consortio Vino Chianti's annual preview
event of the previous year's vintage: 100
wineries, 500 wines - 9.30am-4pm trade
professionals, 4-9pm public, Fortezza da
Basso, viale Filippo Strozzi 1, Florence, www.
consorziovinochianti.it

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Le Concert des Nations
Jordi Savall - 9pm, Teatro della Pergola,
via della Pergola 12/32, Florence, www.
amicimusciafirenze.it

Monday 12
EXHIBITS

From Pinocchio to Harry Potter
Opening day - Villa Bardini, costa San Giorgio
2, Florence, www.bardinipeyron.it

GUIDED VISITS

Abolitionist History Tour
A visit to tombs of abolitionists buried
in Florence's English Cemetery - 4pm,
Cimitero degli Inglesi, piazzale Donatello
38, Florence, www.florin.ms, www.
blackhistorymonthflorence.com

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Marco Rizzi, Enrico Dindo, Alessandro
Carbonare, Pietro De Maria
Music by Debussy, Messiaen - 9pm, Teatro
della Pergola (saloncino), via della Pergola
12/32, Florence, www.amicimusciafirenze.it

Tuesday 13
APERITIVI & DINNERS

Vintage Aperitivo
A gourmet aperitivo to highlight FLY's vintage
and consignment selection - 6-9pm, FLY
Fashion Loves You, borgo Pinti 20r, Florence,
www.facebook.com/FLYfashionlovesyou

LECTURES & CONFERENCES

Common Threads: Cloth, Color, and the
Slave Trade in Early Modern Kongo and
Angola
Cécile Fromont of the University of Chicago
for Black History Month Florence. Booking
required - 6pm, Villa La Pietra, via Bolognese
120, Florence, T 055 5007219, lapietra.
dialogues@nyu.edu, www.lapietradialogues.
org, www.blackhistorymonthflorence.com

THIS MONTH’S MOVIES

It’s Oscar season at the Odeon! All films are in original language with Italian subtitles, except where noted. Visit www.odeonfirenze.com for showtimes.

All films are in original language with Italian subtitles, except where noted. Visit www.odeonfirenze.com for showtimes and more details on each film.

CALL ME BY YOUR NAME

FEBRUARY 1-4

Directed by Luca Guadagnino, critical darling *Call Me By Your Name* is up for 4 Academy Awards. Based on André Aciman’s novel of the same name, the story is set in northern Italy in 1983 and follows the development of a summer romance between Italian-American teenager Elio (Timothée Chalamet) and a charismatic visitor named Oliver (Armie Hammer), his father’s research assistant.



THE POST

FEBRUARY 8-13

In the spirit of *All the President’s Men* and the more recent *Spotlight*, *The Post* is a journalism-centric drama, based on a true story, highlighting the necessity of investigative reporting. It centers on the *Washington Post*’s attempts to publish the *Pentagon Papers*, revealing a cover-up spanning four different presents. Meryl Streep stars as Katharine Graham, the first female publisher of a prominent U.S. newspaper. Directed by Steven Spielberg, *The Post* has 2 Academy Award nominations under its belt.

THE DISASTER ARTIST

FEBRUARY 26-28

Produced and directed by James Franco, this biographical comedy-drama tells the backstory of Tommy Wiseau’s *The Room*, a universally panned movie frequently cited as one of the worst ever made. Aspiring actor Greg Sestero (Dave Franco) and the strange and elusive Tommy Wiseau (James Franco) meet in an acting class and head to Hollywood together. The real Sestero’s book on the experience was used as the basis for the film (nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay).

DARKEST HOUR

FEBRUARY 5-7

Joe Wright’s British war drama is set in the early days of World War II and Winston Churchill’s tenure as Britain’s Prime Minister, taking its title from a term Churchill coined to cover the period between June 1940 and June 1941. The film, up for 6 Academy Awards, features Gary Oldman as Churchill with Lily James and Kristine Scott-Thomas.

THE SHAPE OF WATER

FEBRUARY 14-18, 21-25

Guillermo del Toro’s fantasy-drama leads the pack of Oscar contenders with a whopping 13 nominations. *The Shape of Water* tells the story of Elisa Esposito, an isolated, mute janitor working in a secret government research facility who befriends a strange amphibian-humanoid creature being kept in captivity. With Sally Hawkins, Octavia Spencer and Michael Shannon.

Florence Writers: Travel Writing Workshop
With journalist Liz Shemaria. Booking required
- 2-5.30pm, St. Mark's English Church, via Maggio 18, Florence, info@stmarksitaly.com

MUSIC & CONCERTS

ORT Carnival Concert
Journey through Eastern Europe for Mardi Gras - 9pm, Teatro Verdi, via Ghibellina 99, Florence, www.orchestradellatoscana.it

SPECIAL EVENT

Il Gran Ballo di Carnevale
Elegant, old-style masquerade ball held to benefit the Bimbi in ANT project of the Associazione Nazionale Tumori - Teatro della Pergola, via della Pergola 12/32, Florence, www.ilgranballoodicarnevale.com

Wednesday 14

EXHIBITS

To whom it may concern: a belated and sonorous register
Sound installation by Anike Joyce Sadiq and Sinethermba Twalo for BHMF, playing on blackness as a trope - 7pm, SRISA Gallery, via San Gallo 53r, Florence, www.blackhistorymonthflorence.com

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Alice Michahelles and Francesca Tavianì
Music by Chopin, Vaughan Williams and Chaplin - 6pm, British Institute, Harold Acton Library, lungarno Guicciardini 9, Florence, www.britishinstitute.it

Thursday 15

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Guè Pequeno
Self-appointed "padrino" of Italian rap on his Gentleman tour - 9pm, Viper Theatre, via Pistoiese/via Lombardia, Florence, www.Indf.it

Friday 16

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Fire!
Swedish supergroup - 9.15pm, Sala Vanni, piazza del Carmine 14, Florence, www.musicusconcentus.com

Saturday 17

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Dunk
Italian band, DJ set to follow - 10.30pm, Glue Alternative Concept Space, viale Manfredo Fanti 20, Florence, www.gluefirenze.com

Andrea Lucchesini
Part of Schubert-Schumann series
4pm, Teatro della Pergola, via della Pergola 12/32, Florence, www.amicimusicafirenze.it

Sunday 18

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Jerusalem Quartet
Music by Hayden, Beethoven, Bartok
9pm, Teatro della Pergola (saloncino), via della Pergola 12/32, Florence, www.amicimusicafirenze.it

SPECIAL EVENT

Anna Maria Luisa Day
Free admission to Florence's civic museums to commemorate the Electress Palatine
Civic museums of Florence, www.museicivicifiorentini.comune.fi.it

Monday 19

LECTURES & CONFERENCES

Museums, Memory and Politics: Educating about "Difficult Knowledge"
Booking required. Will discuss the 9/11 museum in NYC; Civil and Human Rights Center, Atlanta; My Lai Massacre memorial, Vietnam; Museum of Deportation near Florence - 6pm, Villa Sassetti, via Bolognese 120, Florence, T 055 5007219, lapietra.dialogues@nyu.edu, www.lapietradialogues.org

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Schumann Quartet
Music by Beethoven, Shostakovich, Schubert
9pm, Teatro della Pergola (saloncino), via della Pergola 12/32, Florence, www.amicimusicafirenze.it

Tuesday 20

EXHIBITS

Open Studios at SACI
Graduate students show work - 7.30-9.30pm, Jules Maidoff Palazzo for the Visual Arts, via Sant'Egidio 14, Florence, www.facebook.com/SACIFlorenceArt

Wednesday 21

APERITIVI & DINNERS

The Florentine Wine Club Dinners: The Pint of View Challenge
Beers paired with Korean mains. 28 euro, booking required- 8pm, Pint of View, borgo Tegolaio 17r, Florence, info@theflorentinepress.com or at the pub

LECTURES & CONFERENCES

Il lato nascosto dell'ovvio (eccezionale, naturalmente).
Lecture in Italian by anthropologist Maria Luisa Ciminelli - 6pm, British Institute, Harold Acton Library, lungarno Guicciardini 9, Florence, www.britishinstitute.it

Thursday 22

MARKETS & FESTIVALS

Danza in Fiera
Opening day of dance festival - Fortezza da Basso, viale Filippo Strozzi 1, Florence, www.danzainfiera.it

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Riki
Pop star who made his name on Amici di Maria De Filippi - 9pm, Obihall, via Fabrizio de' Andre/lungarno Aldo Moro, Florence, www.obihall.it

Friday 23

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Lust for Youth
With aftershow - DJ set by Sara Beaufort & Chiara Violenta of Boys & Girls (Covo Club)
10.30pm, Glue Alternative Concept Space, viale Manfredo Fanti 20, Florence, www.gluefirenze.com

Saturday 24

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Hagen Quartet
Music by Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Webern
4pm, Teatro della Pergola, via della Pergola 12/32, Florence, www.amicimusicafirenze.it

SPECIAL EVENT

Eritrean-Ethiopian Cooking Class
With Almaz of Corno d'Africa for Black History Month Florence (see our special this issue). Booking required - 11am-1pm, Cucina LdM, Mercato Centrale, piazzale del Mercato Centrale, www.theflr.net/almazldm

Sunday 25

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Barcelona Gipsy balkan Orchestra
On their Avo Kanto Italian tour - 9.15pm, Sala Vanni, piazza del Carmine 14, Florence, www.musicusconcentus.com

Monday 26

LECTURES & CONFERENCES

"L'Italia non e' un paese meticcio"
Citizenship, racism and belonging in contemporary Italian political discourse. Booking required - 6pm, Villa La Pietra, via Bolognese 120, Florence, lapietra.dialogues@nyu.edu, www.lapietradialogues.org

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Levante
Sicilian pop singer-songwriter
8.45pm, Teatro Verdi, via Ghibellina 99, Florence, www.bitconcerti.it

Tuesday 27

DANCE & THEATRE

ABBA Dream
Tribute to the legendary Stockholm pop group - 9pm, Obihall, via Fabrizio de' Andre/lungarno Aldo Moro, Florence, www.obihall.it

Wednesday 28

LECTURES & CONFERENCES

The Concept of Modern Art in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance
Lecture in English by Robert Brennan
6pm, British Institute, Harold Acton Library, lungarno Guicciardini 9, Florence, www.britishinstitute.it

ONGOING

APERITIVI & DINNERS

Thursdays at the Enoteca
Cycle of winter gatherings for wine and liquor lovers - Thursdays at 8.30pm, Eataly Firenze, via de' Martelli 22r, Florence, www.facebook.com/eatalyfirenze

CINEMA

Centenary of Finnish Independence
Women in Finnish film exhibition and screening of "Valkoinen peura" ("The White Reindeer") - Until February 8, La Compagnia, via Cavour 50r, Florence, www.cinemalacompagnia.it, www.facebook.com/unafinestrasulnord

Documentary Month
5th edition with theme "The Human Continent" - Until February 11, La Compagnia, via Cavour 50r, Florence, www.cinemalacompagnia.it

British 100 Film Festival
Celebration of British film and theatre as part of The British Institute of Florence's centenary festivities - Ongoing, Odeon Cinehall, piazza Strozzi, Florence, www.odeonfirenze.com, www.britishinstitute.it

EXHIBITS

Lucas Cranach
Portraits of Martin Luther from the Medici collection - Until February 4, Sala del Camino, Uffizi Gallery, piazzale degli Uffizi, Florence, www.uffizi.it

Made in New York
Keith Haring, Paolo Buggiani and co. and the true origins of street art - Until February 4, Palazzo Medici Riccardi, via de' Ginori, Florence, T 0552760340

Richard Long: ARNO A V O N
Site-specific work by English artist, known for his contributions to the Land Art movement from the 1960s forward
Until February 10, BASE Progetti Per L'arte, via San Niccolo' 18r, Florence, www.baseitaly.org

Adrian Paci: Lights to Serve the Night
Paci explores mobility as an ontological condition of the human race - Until February 11, Museo Novecento and Le Murate, Florence, www.museonovecento.it

Dionysian Capucci: Sketches for the Theatre
A collection of sketches of costumed, androgynous, fantastical figures for a fantasy theatre set by the Rome-born fashion designer
Until February 14, Andito degli Angiolini, Palazzo Pitti, Florence, www.uffizi.it

Eliseo Mattiacci
28 works including drawings, watercolors and installations - Until February 24, Galleria Poggiali, via della Scala 35a-29a/r, Florence, www.galleriapoggiali.com

Black is the color of my true love's hair
Photography exhibition centering on identity documents for Black History Month Florence
February 2-March 1, Sant'Orsola, via Panicale, Florence, www.blackhistorymonthflorence.com

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré
Works by the Ivory Coast native, also known as Cheik Nadro, "he who does not forget"
February 8-March 1, SACI Gallery, Palazzo dei Cartelloni, via Sant'Antonino, Florence, www.blackhistorymonthflorence.com

To whom it may concern: a belated and sonorous register
Site-specific sound installation by Anike Joyce Sadiq and Sinethermba Twalo for Black History Month Florence
February 14-March 3, SRISA gallery, via San Gallo 53r, Florence, www.blackhistorymonthflorence.com

Black Value
Past and present Rome Prize Fellows comment on blackness in a global context and challenge viewers to rethink definitions of "value" - February 8-March 17, Fondazione Biagiotti

Progetti Arte, via delle Belle Donne 39, Florence, www.artbiagiotti.com/en

Textiles and Riches in 1300s Florence
Wool, silk, and painting
Until March 18, Accademia Gallery, via Ricasoli, Florence, T 055290832, www.galleriaaccademiafirenze.beniculturali.it

From Brooklyn to the Bargello: Giovanni della Robbia, the Antinori lunette and Stefano Arienti
Giovanni della Robbia's Resurrection returns to Florence - Until April 8, Bargello Museum, via del Proconsolo 4, Florence, www.bargellomusei.beniculturali.it, www.antinori.it

Reliquary of Montalto
14th century object from Le Marche on display - Until April 8, Bargello Museum, via del Proconsolo 4, Florence, www.bargellomusei.beniculturali.it

Monet Experience
A multimedia and videomapping experience of reproductions of some of Claude Monet and his contemporaries' works - Until May 1, Ex-Church of Santo Stefano al Ponte, piazza Santo Stefano, Florence, www.monetexperience.it

1927: The Return to Italy
Salvatore Ferragamo's return to Italy after a fashionable period in the United States
Until May 2, Salvatore Ferragamo Museum, Palazzo Spini Feroni, piazza Santa Trinita, Florence, T 0553562846, www.ferragamo.com/museo

From Pinocchio to Harry Potter
Five decades of Italian illustration from Florentine publisher Adriano Saldi - February 12-June 3, Villa Bardini, costa San Giorgio 2, Florence, www.bardinipeyron.it

MARKETS & FESTIVALS

Danza in Fiera
For professionals and the public: a mix of performances, workshops, conferences and marketplace - February 22-25, Fortezza da Basso, viale Filippo Strozzi 1, Florence, www.danzainfiera.it

Firenze Winter Park
Ice skating; performances; Ice Stock (similar to curling); food stands
Until February 25, lungarno Aldo Moro (ex-Area Kontiki, Obihall), Florence, www.firenzewinterpark.it

Black History Month Florence: 3rd Edition
60 events: cinema, art, dance, theatre, kids' activities, culinary workshops and more - Until February 28, various venues in Florence, www.facebook.com/bhmf, www.blackhistorymonthflorence.com

MUSIC & CONCERTS

Song/Writer Showcase
Song/Writer Showcase (led by singer-songwriter Patti DeRosa) highlights original work by local creatives on first and third Tuesday evenings of each month (with occasional exceptions/date changes; see Facebook page) at 9pm - Superfox, via della Vigna Vecchia 27, Florence, T 0552399503, www.facebook.com/showcaseflorenceitaly

SPECIAL EVENT

French Language Week
Language level assessments offered free, course discounts - Until February 3, French Institute, piazza Ognissanti 2, Florence, T 055 2718823, www.institutfrancais.it/firenze

Open Mic Nights
Community event for writers and readers in Florence—from poets & playwrights to novelists, journal keepers - First Wednesday of every month, Tasso Hostel, via Villani 15, Florence, marisa@mondodicorpo.com.au, www.tassohostelflorence.com, www.facebook.com/openmicflorence

Trivia Nights + Mega Mondays
Trivia every Monday. Free entry. Come make new friends & enemies! Plus, enjoy Mega Monday specials (double the size of your burger for free) - Mondays at the Red Garter, 9pm, via de' Benci 35r, Florence, T 0552480909

Wings Night
40 cent wings. 10 wings + fries, 5 euro
Wednesdays & Thursdays at the Red Garter, via de' Benci 35r, Florence, T 0552480909

Karaoke & DJ Sets

Free entry, runs all night

Fridays & Saturdays at the Red Garter, via de' Benci 35r, Florence, T 0552480909

NFL Sundays

Brunch and live televised sports all day

From 11.30am, Sundays at the Red Garter, via de' Benci 35r, Florence, T 0552480909

Speakeasy English Aperitivo

Multilingual happy hours with wine and snacks, conversation, chance to find language exchange partners. 7 euro cost includes two glasses of wine. Visitors to town are welcome! Wednesdays from 7.30pm to 10.30pm, Santarosa Bistro + various venues in Florence (check Facebook page for potential venue changes), www.facebook.com/speakeasyenglishfi

Firenze Drawing Club

Draw, doodle (or don't), make new friends Year-round, various venues in Florence, www.theflr.net/drawinfi

SPORT

Yoga Dipinti

Ashtanga yoga in a unique setting. Limited mats available; BYO if possible - Fridays 6-7pm, weather permitting; Orti Dipinti, borgo Pinti 76, Florence

Parkrun

Designed to bring together all ages, nationalities and fitness levels for casual fun runs in the Cascine - 9am every Saturday, Cascine Park (viale del Pegaso), Florence, www.parkrun.it/register

St. Mark's: The WayMarkers Walking Group

English church group offers guided walks on the first Wednesday of each month, in and around Florence, Lucca, Pisa and Siena Year-round, various locations in Florence and Tuscany, T 0572409143, thewaymarkers@stmarksitaly.com, www.facebook.com/thewaymarkers

UPCOMING

LECTURES & CONFERENCES

Children's Fiction Workshop

With editor and children's fiction author Lisa Robbins. Tickets and booking required - 6-8.30pm, March 1, St. Mark's English Church, via Maggio 18, Florence, info@stmarksitaly.com, www.facebook.com/Florencewritersitaly

Florence Writers Publishing Day

Get advice from industry professionals and agents at this all-day event. Book early 9am-6pm, April 14, St. Mark's English Church, via Maggio 18, Florence, info@stmarksitaly.com

CHILDREN

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Children's Carnival

Parades and festivities "in piazza", put on by the Associazione Borgognissanti 2-6pm, February 10, piazza Ognissanti,

Florence, T 0553244722, www.facebook.com/associazioneborgognissantifirenze

Toy City

Kid-friendly festivities for Carnival

February 3-13, various venues in Sesto Fiorentino, www.prolocosestofiorentino.it

It's Storytime!

Reading in English of "Outfoxed": Harold is not like the other foxes. He can't stand eating chicken, yet he ends up accused of leading a chicken-smuggling crime ring! 5pm, February 18, Children's Library at the British Institute, Harold Acton Library, lungarno Guicciardini 9, Florence, www.britishinstitute.it

Kids' Violin Lessons

Free violin lessons (with 10 euro annual fee for membership in Amici del Nidiaci cultural association). Violins provided Thursdays at 6pm, Nidiaci Garden, via d'Ardiglione 30, Florence, www.nidiaci.com

English Lessons

Learn English by singing, dancing and playing - Mondays at 5pm, Nidiaci Garden, via d'Ardiglione 30, Florence, T 3491575238, www.nidiaci.com

Teatrino del Gallo

Puppet theatre, cinema workshops, concerts, exhibitions, conferences and talk shows Year-round, garden at Libri Liberi, via San Gallo 25r, Florence, T 3386024335, www.teatrinodegallo.it

Italiano 10+

Weekly group reading classes for primary school children whose first language is not Italian - Mondays at 5pm, BiblioteCaNova (Isolotto), via Chiusi 4/3a, Florence, T 055710834

Children's Library at the British Institute

English books for children in a 'room with a view' over the Arno. All books can be borrowed for a month with a library membership card. Stay up to date on library events by sending an email to library@britishinstitute.it

Monday-Friday, 10am-6.30pm, British Institute of Florence, lungarno Guicciardini 9, Florence, library@britishinstitute.it, T 05526778270, www.britishinstitute.it

The Children's Lending Library of Florence

An English-language volunteer-run library open to everyone. Children's books, DVDs & activities. See website for opening hours St. James church building, via Rucellai 9, T 3283282757, www.childrenslibrary.altervista.org

Firenze Moms 4 Moms Network

For English-speaking mothers in Florence. Playgroups, mom's night out, couples' night out and more - infotiscali@firenzemoms4moms.net, www.firenzemoms4moms.net

Agape Christian Community-

Metropolitan Community Church (MCC)

2nd and 4th Sunday of the month, 11am. Worship in English at noon on the 4th Sunday of each month - Casa del Popolo di Settignano, via San Romano 1, info@mccfirenze.org, www.mccfirenze.org

Beato Angelico: Holy Masses of the Artists

Basilica di San Marco, T 0552679079, www.beatoangelicomedaglia.com

Chiesa del Santi Michele e Gaetano

Sunday Mass at 8.30am; traditional Latin Mass, Sundays at 11am & weekdays at 7.30am - P.za Antinori, www.sangaetano.de

Florence Gospel Fellowship International

Sunday service at 6:30pm (evangelical) Via de' Benci 9, T 3351505784, www.fgfint.blogspot.com

International Christian Fellowship of Florence

Sunday service at 10:15 a.m. Prayer and Praise on Thursdays at 7pm. Services in English Via dei Biffi 1, T055285148 or T055825282, icfchurchflorence@gmail.com, www.icfflorence.com

Methodist Church Christian Worship

Tues, 7-9pm (Eng), Sun 10:30am (Ita w/ translation) - Methodist Church, via de' Benci 9, Pastor Alison Walker, T 055288143, www.firenzchurch.com

Mosaico Church

Evangelical. Sunday 11am services in English and Italian - Caffè Deco' in piazza della Libertà 45-46/r, www.mosaicochurch.org

Santa Maria del Fiore

Mass in English on Saturdays at 5.00pm Piazza del Duomo, T 055294514

Santi Apostoli

Mass in English on Sundays at 10:30am Piazza del Limbo 1, Florence, smurphy@legionaries.org, T 3392425734, www.facebook.com/CatholicsInFlorence

St. James Church (Episcopalian)

Eucharist every Sunday at 9am and 11am. The church also accepts food bank donations on Sunday mornings - Via B. Rucellai 9, T 055294417, www.stjames.it

St. Mark's English Church (Anglican)

Tuesday, 5.30pm Evening Prayer. Wednesday, 5.30pm Said Mass. Thursday, 5.30pm Contemporary Worship. Friday, 5.30pm Chaplain Consultation Time & 6pm Book of Common Prayer Mass. Sunday, 10.30am, Sung Mass. Solemn Choral Evensong, 6pm, February 11; Ash Wednesday services, 7am & 7pm, February 14 - Via Maggio 16, T 055294764; www.stmarksitaly.com, www.facebook.com/stmarksitaly

Santa Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi

Catholic Mass in French every second Sunday at 11am - Borgo Pinti 58, T 0552478420

Jehovah's Witnesses

Sunday 1.30pm, Tuesday 7pm Via Vivaldi 1, Scandicci

JEWISH

Shir Hadash

Jewish Reform/Progressive congregation T 3486913059 - 3489362564, www.shirhadashfirenze.com

Jewish Synagogue

Shabos: 8:45am - Via Farini 4, T 055245252, www.moked.it/jewishflorence

NEAR FLORENCE

EXHIBITS

Feathers and Hats

Anita Mori at Cesena - Until February 28, Domenico Michelacci Straw Museum, Signa, T 055875700, www.museopaglia.it

Leonardo: An Impossible Exhibition

Recreations of some of the ultimate Renaissance man's works - Until December 31, Villa del Ferrale, via Pistoiese 8, Vinci (FI), T 0571568012, www.leonardounamostraimpossibile.it

MARKETS & FESTIVALS

Calenzano Carnival

February 11, piazza Gramsci and via G. Puccini, Calenzano, T 055 883262, www.comune.calenzano.fi.it

Antiques and Secondhand Fair

Crafts and more - February 18, via Dante Alighieri, Dicomano (FI), www.comune.dicomano.fi.it

IN TUSCANY

CINEMA

Moonlight

Academy Award winner. Screening for Black History Month Florence satellite event - 7pm, February 2, New York English Academy, via San Paolo 11, Pisa, www.newyorkenglishacademy.com

EXHIBITS

Escher. Beyond the Possible

Dutch artist known for his woodcuts and lithographs - Until February 11, Palazzo Blu, lungarno Gambacorti 9, Pisa, www.palazzoblu.org

Ambrogio Lorenzetti

Multisite exhibition dedicated to the painter most famous for his "Allegory of Good and Bad Government" - Until April 8, various venues in Siena, www.santamariadellascala.com

LECTURES & CONFERENCES

English reading of contemporary African poetry

Black History Month Florence satellite event - 7pm, February 16, New York English Academy, via San Paolo 11, Pisa, www.newyorkenglishacademy.com

MARKETS & FESTIVALS

Viareggio Carnival

Floats with political bite, masquerade balls, parties, kids' activities, general revelry - Ongoing until February 17 with parades on February 4, 11, 13, 17, downtown Viareggio, viareggio.ilcarnevale.com

Il Pagliaio

Local and seasonal fruits and veggies, bread, cheeses, honey, crafts, clothing, cosmetics, ceramics; entertainment - 9am-7pm every fourth Sunday of the month, piazza Matteotti, Greve in Chianti, www.facebook.com/IlPagliaioGreve



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DETTO NON DETTO/ SAID NOT SAID

Director of *The Florentine* **Marco Badiani** speaks great English, but, when it comes to idiomatic phrases, his choice is to be the king of the 'detto non detto,' offering creative literal translations of Italian idioms. His colourful turns of phrase never cease to make us laugh. In this column, we serve up the finest 'Marco-isms' of the month.

Put the cart before the cattle

Italian: **Mettere il carro davanti ai buoi**

Meaning: Put the cart before the horse

Give the rag

Italian: **Dare il cencio**

Meaning: To mop

Florence Haiku

by Helen Farrell



Festa-like frolics,
satire streams by the sea
this election year.

The project: Haiku inspired by Florence

Follow the full anthology: #FlorenceHaiku on Twitter



Sorcerers without apprentices: Leonardo Becucci

ARTISANS / Amelia Éclectique

As Florentine tourist tracks go, the streets encircling the Accademia's entrance are some of the city's most congested. Constantly filled with art-frenzied visitors, all of whom are eager to get an eyeful of Michelangelo's *David*, the surrounding shopfronts reflect the surge in multinational chains and corporations pervading Florence. Yet amid this contemporary chaos, one blink-and-you'll-miss-it facade has endured over eight decades; a relic of what once thrived in this central neighbourhood.

From his now-unique positioning on via degli Alfani, **Leonardo Becucci** proudly upholds three generations' worth of high-calibre craftsmanship. His livelihood comes from the artisanal trade of lampshade-making—the purveyors of which are referred to as *paralumi* or *lumai*—requiring a patient approach in stark contrast to today's standard manufacturing methods. With his grandfather having set up shop in the early 1940s, and his father entering the family business aged just 15 in 1946, Becucci joined their ranks in 1994 and has tirelessly toiled away ever since. "I remember, from a young age, being fascinated by my father's toolbox, which had the same instruments that my grandfather would have used: pliers and screwdrivers. I'd come along to the workshop while I was studying in high school, and I'd always enjoyed working with my hands, so joining my father was a natural evolution."

Entering into Becucci's evocative *bottega* feels like nothing less than a time warp: row upon row of ivory paper residing amongst ornate upholstery trimmings, with a multitude of lamp commissions at varying stages of completion decorating one grand table.

These visual highlights include a stunningly elaborate candle base, replete with gilded gold detailing, which was crafted in the 1700s; the client who brought it in trusted no other workshop to maintain it. Becucci considers the shop layout more chaotic than creative, but the eclectic displays only add to its charm, transporting visitors into a realm far removed from the smartphones and selfies taking place a few doors down. During my visit, two long-standing customers—a father and daughter duo—engage Becucci on his expertise, a reassuring testament to the workshop's healthy influx of clients. He nonetheless stands as a one-man operation and, much like the time-hallowed artisans dotted around San Frediano and Santo Spirito, securing an apprentice is tricky for more reasons than one. "Even if you can find someone willing to do the job, I wouldn't have the time to train them up, because it can take years, and still get through my workload."

In a consumer age filled with quick-fix furnishings, Becucci's quality-driven ethos allows any *paralumi* owners to enjoy the full benefit of their investment purchases: "Sometimes you'll find clients returning with lampshades made 40 years prior that would have gone strong over those four decades. Industrial ones might only last five or so years nowadays, their very make-up is more prone to deterioration." Even if lampshade repairs aren't at the top of your to-do list, it's well worth taking a moment or three to step inside this resonant *bottega*: if its walls could talk, preserving the artisanal heartbeat of authentic Florence would be that much easier.

Originally hailing from Dublin, **Amelia Éclectique** pens fashion and culture articles from her newly adopted home of Florence. Continuing on a writing ethos that champions the most eclectic of emerging design talents and creative innovators, you'll find her fawning over the city's abundance of gold-embellished ceilings and uncovering vintage treasure troves. @ameliaeclectique / www.lafemmeelectique.com

TF x Pint of View

Pint of View: food, beer + cocktails



Cached in a quieter quarter of the Oltrarno, **Pint of View** hums without being noisy.

This borgo Tegolaio hangout is fast becoming The Place to Pint with its industrial chic black-metal shelving and spotlighting, Renaissance-vaulted ceilings and catchy graphic-led signature walls. The **passion for beer** immediately shouts out via the Scrabble-esque wooden block lettering raised up on rare runners. Don't come to Pint of View in search of wine—there isn't any, and there's a reason for that. The guys have a beer background, something that shines through during service. From salty Dutch beers to sour fruit ale from Piedmont, sweet bock from Florence's Archea brewery and hoppy draughts from Bavaria, the owners—essentially beer sommeliers—advise on the best independent beer to pair with your tastes and the dishes you're ordering.

Then there's the **food by 27-year-old Korean cook Yejin Ha**. Finger lickin' Seoul fried chicken served with a spicy sauce, really good coleslaw and marinated daikon. Flavoursome Man-Du dumplings filled with pork, tofu, soy beansprouts and leeks. Seriously moreish Bossam wraps: roasted pork belly with soy sauce served on lettuce leaves with a soy, tuna, garlic and sesame oil pesto. The Doinjang Ramen is one of the best

in Florence: umani overload through its beef and vegetable broth, soy sauce, marinated egg, beansprouts and a slice of well-sourced meat.

Finish the feasting as **bartender Sacha Meccoci expertly prepares cocktails** at the eye-catching counter. Earthy and ethereal, the Sweep cocktail is a finalist in Florence's Campari Barman Competition: vodka, pepper shrub, pineapple, lemon, Campari and egg white.

Watch out for forthcoming events at Pint of View: they recently opened for a very British Sunday lunch and plans are in the pipeline for beer flights and takeaway cocktails.

Join us on February 21 for an indie beer and Korean-inspired pairing dinner. Email info@theflorentinepress.com to book. 28 euro.

Pint of View

Borgo Tegolaio 17R, Florence

www.pintofview.it

FB Pint of View / Instagram @pintofviewflorence
Open daily for dinner; Monday-Wednesday + Sunday 6pm-midnight; Thursday 6pm-1am; Friday+Saturday 6pm-2am

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FIND YOUR DIFFERENCE

POSTERHEROES – Shaping the future

Posterheroes: Shaping the Future is an international communication and social graphic art contest organized by Favini, PLUG – non-profit cultural association and IED – Istituto Europeo di Design.

The contest invites the international creative community to express their vision of the future as a 70 × 100 cm poster, starting with the choices we make every day.

The Posterheroes contest is open to individuals or groups (in this case a single representative will be required) with the submission of up to three entries each. Works can only be submitted online by following the uploading procedure on www.posterheroes.org.

The cut-off date for submissions is February 17, 2018 at 11:59 pm GMT+1.

The participation in the contest is free.

IED Firenze. For almost 50 years, the Istituto Europeo di Design has been operating in the fields of education and research in the disciplines of design, fashion, visual communication and management. Today, the IED is an ever-expanding international network that issues first-level academic diplomas and organises three-year courses, master's courses, continued professional development and advanced training courses. www.ied.edu/florence

When music moves mountains

THE VIBE / Michelle Davis

The word mountain takes on manifold metaphorical roles with singer-songwriter Sam Amidon's latest release, *The Following Mountain* (Nonesuch records). Like wild peaks, the melodies meander in spurts of intensity, a beautifully balanced soundscape of jazz-tinged folk. Like mountains fixed in time, legendary musical giants Milford Graves, Sam Gendel and Shahzad Ismaily guided Amidon towards higher visions in song and composition, and like a mountain digs its roots into ancestral soil, the album is deeply grounded in American tradition.

Michelle Davis: Tell us about your new record. Was it challenging to write and record original material and was that the "mountain" you had to climb to reach new creative heights?

Sam Amidon: Each album I have made has been a new adventure in some way. This one started with a great day of improvisation in Brooklyn with Shahzad Ismaily, Milford Graves, Sam Gendel, and later in the evening Juma Sultan came by. These are all inspiring musicians to work with. They also brought with them their memories of playing with some of my musical heroes: Milford from playing with Albert Ayler and Sonny Sharrock, and Juma from playing with Jimi Hendrix. It was a new challenge to start an album from scratch and to build it up through writing, instead of using the folk songs as I have in the past. It was good to go back to that state of fear where you simply don't know where it is headed and allow it all to grow. Leo Abrahams was crucial in giving me the context for this all to happen.

MD: Speaking of peaks, it appears that mountains have always piqued your interest. Your fifth album's first single *Lily-O* was titled *Blue Mountains* and *I See the Sign* included *Climbing High Mountains* among its tracks. Even this record's first single is called *Juma Mountain*.

SA: There's a small mountain near the town in Vermont where I grew up. It's called Mount Wantastiquet, which is a Native American name meaning "rattlesnake mountain". When I was a teenager I would walk up to the top of this mountain every few days. I always wished I could bring it with me when I travelled. I imagined that I could someday have a "following mountain", which would follow me everywhere I went, so that I could walk up it if I need be!

MD: The album's gestation involved moving across the pond, as it was recorded between Brooklyn and London. How did this affect the turnout? You've actually relocated with your family to the British capital. Are you enjoying your new homebase?

SA: Yes, the first couple of days, working with Shahzad and Milford, were at Brooklyn's Figure 8 Studios, and then the rest of the time I was in London recording the rest of the album at Leo Abrahams' home studio. I would drop my children off at school, take the train out to where Leo lives and make crazy music all day long, and then go pick the kids up from school. It was very satisfying, like a day job. I do like London and I love being able to travel all over Europe to play music.

MD: The word jazz seems to have consolidated itself into the Amidon

lexicon. Tell us about how your style has changed and if you are leaning towards the idea of tackling other genres in the future.

SA: I love jazz, but I am definitely not a jazz musician. It is more that I love improvisation and I am interested in improvisation as part of music. But I am open to whether that improvisation is coming from the perspective of a jazz musician, or free improvisation, or even the improvisation in the phrasing of a great folk fiddle player, or the improvisation that you hear in somebody like Nico Muhly's orchestral arrangements, where his composition has such a playful and open quality that you can hear it is resulting from his own listening in the same way that an improvising musician would work.

MD: Coming from a musical tradition that mostly lived on thanks to oral transmission, becoming live material that changed and warped through time and interpretation, how do you think changes in technology and fruition have affected the development and spread of folk music?

SA: I think the advent of recording was a huge change in the early 20th century, as soon as you could record a folk musician singing and playing instead of just transcribing the notes onto paper which

wouldn't really capture what they were doing. In a way, it's a great thing that happened then because it gave us the chance to document so much incredible music before it disappeared. But what's great about a lot of folk music is that much of it is still going strong.

MD: Are you looking forward to mixing your Cali-Appalachian folk roots with the Italo-Western vibes of the Po Valley marauders Guano Padano this February? How did this unique collaboration come into being?

SA: I can't wait to meet and play with Guano Padano. The musicians from this group wrote to me a while back, and as soon as I was living in London again I wrote to them about putting something together. It will be interesting and fun to combine our music. There is a lot of overlap between our repertoire and sound, but there are also some interesting differences. In their music I hear the amazing tradition of Westerns, including the great Italian elements of that tradition, whereas my music has more Eastern elements in terms of British folk and New England where I'm from. So yeah, it's gonna be great!

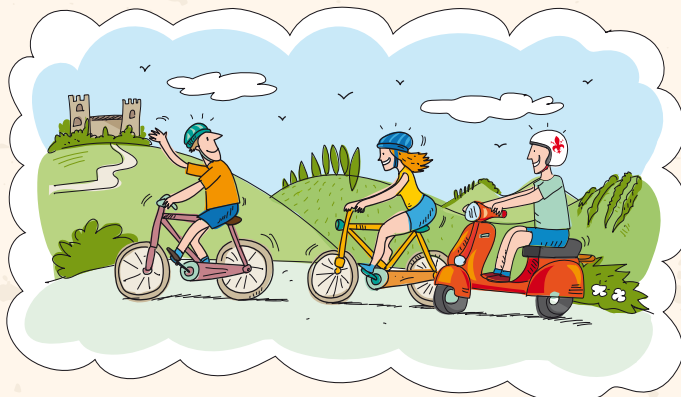


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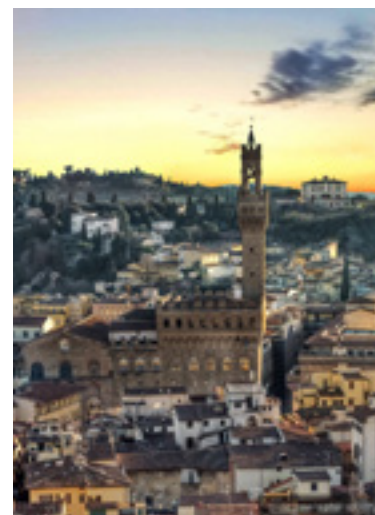
This is our tribute to the masses of visual takers (or thinkers) who catch instants and unknowingly store them in the fragile memory of their smartphones. So this column is for you hashtagger audience. Repost on Paper is our chartaceous way of saying thank you for posting #florence. Keep tagging @ or #theflorentine to be selected.



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RENTAL DIARIES // VOL.8

by Mary Gray

Takeover tenants, part 1

If you rent in Florence but don't expect to live your entire life in one palazzo, you will probably one day navigate the hurdles of early withdrawal from a housing contract.

One of these is pinning down a takeover tenant. The landlord, if amenable to your departure request, will delegate this task to you. It's fair enough, functioning as your "payment" for leaving sooner than you said you would.

Finding a takeover tenant will seem easy. Particularly if your apartment is well-priced, attractive and in a desirable location. But if it is all those things (in Florence, no less), you aren't moving.

Things will initially look promising. Friends will express enthusiasm for the room/flat/converted garage you're vacating. But once prompted to actually commit, their interest will prove as empty as the chorus of "Ci vediamo presto" sung among acquaintances at gatherings with free buffets.

This author got lucky. (So I thought.) My roommate fatigue flared up right as a friend decided she couldn't remain in her expensive (*one bed*) Room with a view. We'd pull off the perfect switch, *Strangers on a Train* style.

In retrospect it could only have been perfect if she'd been a stranger, period. Passing your place to a friend is the real estate equivalent of a lotus birth. Once-minor house issues are bound to snowball, and the guilt for getting out while you could will then creep in. Remotely invested in someone's happiness? He or she shouldn't be your takeover tenant.

It's not the Christian approach, perhaps, but there was that whole bit about showing hospitality to strangers. Just go ahead and hand the entire house over to them.



INTERVIEW / Helen Farrell

The man behind Pitti Uomo

As the winter's Pitti trade fair series comes to a close, **Andrea Cavicchi**, president of **Centro di Firenze per la Moda Italiana**, talks to *The Florentine* about the future of fashion and Florence as a centre of it all.

Helen Farrell: Pitti has just ended and three of the city's most important museums are currently displaying fashion-focused exhibitions. Would you agree that Florence is enjoying a fashion heyday again?

Andrea Cavicchi: Yes, the transition has been an important one. A three-year agreement was signed in 2006 by the members of Centro di Firenze per la Moda, the Pitti group's holding company and includes the Region of Tuscany, the Municipalities of Florence and Prato, the Metropolitan City of Florence, the Chambers of Commerce of Prato and Florence, comprising 14 members that control all the Pitti companies, of which Pitti Immagine is one.

The project's intention two years ago was to link the value of culture and heritage with fashion, so that these were not two separate worlds, because we realised that each one needed something that was missing. It has been an enterprising initiative, backed by Uffizi Galleries director Eike Schmidt, who has an understanding of modern culture that reasons almost at a business and fundraising level.

The aim was to transform the Costume Gallery into the Museum of Costume and Fashion, making it the first Italian fashion museum, recognised by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism. It was already a costume gallery, but it was more about the preservation of old costumes and clothing; it had a dusty environment but interesting archives. What it lacked were modern fashion exhibits, such as gowns and collections. Thanks to financing from the Centro di Firenze per la Moda, now there are also newly inaugurated archives as well as acclimatised, secure storage space.

This led to the *Karl Lagerfeld – Visions of Fashion* exhibition in June 2016 in the Palatine Gallery, which made quite an impact since it was a slightly sacrilegious affair, with the gallery's beautiful paintings paired with screens, photos and digital images of Lagerfeld. Finishing in late October 2017, *The Ephemeral Museum of Fashion* was a collaboration with Olivier Saillard, the former director of the Palais Galliera in Paris. The idea was to put on an ephemeral exhibition, because creating a fashion

exhibition means representing an image. This June there will be a third exhibition featuring Italian fashion designer Stefano Pilati, which will follow the course of men's fashion from the 1980s to 2000.

Our intention is to renew the multi-annual agreement, maybe even by five years, because culture requires planning over a period of time.

HF: This year the inauguration of Pitti Uomo was attended by the Italian minister of economic development Carlo Calenda in Florence's renovated Chamber of Commerce. What message did the Centro di Firenze per la Moda aim to send to the worlds of fashion and business?

AC: Starting with my predecessor Stefano Ricci the approach of the Centro di Firenze per la Moda and the inauguration of Pitti Uomo have changed considerably. The event used to be held in a small, overheated room with a low ceiling at the Fortezza, and it was hard to access. It was Stefano Ricci's determination that brought it to the Palazzo Vecchio in January 2014 to draw attention to the occasion, especially since it is the first event of the year in Florence to involve the whole city.

The aim has been to reinforce the message of Pitti, which is practically a national affair. Hosting the opening at the renovated Chamber of Commerce was a means of reinforcing this bond, since the Chamber of Commerce has recently invested 70 million euro in its makeover and it has reinstated a Firenze Fiera board of directors. (The president of Chamber of Commerce Leonardo Bassilichi is also the president of Firenze Fiera). Currently the most important phase is the transformation of the Fortezza, which although a beautiful location lacks the amenities needed to host trade fairs like Pitti Uomo, in terms of toilets, Wi-Fi and bars, three elements that are fundamental.

HF: At the inauguration of Pitti Uomo, you spoke of the importance of investing in the training and development of the future of fashion. What will this investment entail?

AC: We discussed this matter this morning at the fashion board instituted by minister Calenda. Several topics were brought



HF: During Pitti, editor-in-chief of *British GQ*, Dylan Jones, spoke to students at Polimoda, stating that the catchword for this decade is "renewable". Do you think the sustainability "trend" will continue?

AC: Sustainability is fundamental in fashion, but in the last few years it has had more allure in terms of communication than production. Speaking from my professional experience, outside of Centro Firenze per la Moda, I've been the president of the Confindustria Prato and later Confindustria Toscana Nord, and I currently represent Detox—we are the only industrial association to have an agreement with Greenpeace, rather like devil and holy water, and have agreed to work on developing a sustainable textile industry. This project is focused on chemical analysis and is very technical, so it doesn't have much appeal with the youth and the industry, nor with fashion and style magazines, yet it's a fundamental aspect, for if we intend to produce sustainably we must eliminate toxic substances from our production cycle. Today, we don't have a clue of how many toxic substances we emit into our cycles, even by simply washing a t-shirt from a shop. We import contamination from products not made in Italy, because while certain products have been banned for 20 years in Europe due to European law, products are still being imported control-free with these substances.

Sustainability is fundamental to fashion. It still has an appeal with the consumer who wants to know if the clothing is sustainable or if it's made from regenerable fibres? We should return to quality fashion, which doesn't burn out through products so quickly, and certifying the sector more. This may go against a consolidated business system, so the question is how much is the international business system willing to change, moving it away from fast fashion.

Ethics are essential too. Some big firms are working on ethical projects, redeveloping the entire production chain, to ensure zero risks like the tragic events in Bangladesh four years ago, when a factory collapsed which was manufacturing garments for several international brands, killing 1,500 people who were working in conditions of slavery. If the consumer does not open their eyes to the products they buy, and there is no consumer responsibility, we are the ones need to work to change this.

forward, with fundamental themes being sustainability in the field of fashion; training and development, supported in particular by the Centro di Firenze per la Moda; millennials, a new category that is difficult to define and understand; and promotional fashion events, especially those in Milan. The Centro di Firenze per la Moda was assigned the delegation of a committee to discuss training and development in fashion; everyone was slightly taken aback that this task was assigned to Florence! Our mission has been to invite the nation's top fashion schools, such as Polimoda, Marangoni, IUAV and the Università Politecnica di Milano to form a board. We presented the idea of a "White Book" on the development of Italian fashion, which will be written in English and will promote fashion internationally. It will include how to pursue a career in fashion in Italy, therefore it is also a tool of Italian marketing. We have seen that international-standard schools are well-organised in terms of marketing, such as Polimoda or Marangoni. But each school moves independently, such as the IED, which is establishing links with China, Korea and Japan. But there is no national plan. There's no national spokesperson for these institutions, therefore we proposed the creation of a permanent watchdog, an authority that can represent all the fashion institutes, recognising the needs of the schools and which can propose territorial marketing projects.

Another important topic is ranking. The international ranking of fashion schools is managed by websites like The Business of Fashion and Fashionista, which we Italians call "marchettari", meaning they are tied to the schools by financial interests. Italian fashion schools never rank higher than sixth place. What we intend to do is develop a culture of ranking in our schools, because many are unable or unwilling to understand how important ranking is, and simply carry on without understanding how to promote themselves with this vital tool. All these rankings are in English and the logic of evaluating schools is American. Often, we reason with Italian methods, which means that we just don't know how to climb any higher.



01

Even the Met's highly controversial announcement that the admission fee will no longer be a simple suggestion for patrons could not dull the luster or quell the excitement around *Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman and Designer*. All signs at the largest art museum in the United States point to Michelangelo as the unadulterated star of the season. The wall-to-wall crowds, who brave Arctic-like mornings in Manhattan, fighting to catch a glimpse of his drawings would make any Florentine proud. With all eyes turned toward this complex exhibit that takes hours to view properly, few visitors have the stamina to make their way beyond the soaring choir screen that spans the medieval gallery and deep into the recesses of a new wing to see a far more mysterious Renaissance treasure. At any other time, in any other museum, it would be the belle of the ball, but here it stands in the shadow of a giant.

While they might not be in the spotlight, there is nothing humble about *The Silver Caesars*. A Renaissance Mystery exhibition. This breathtakingly luxurious collection of 12 monumental silver standing cups represents the apex of the craft of Renaissance metalwork. The tazze stand more than a third of a meter tall, and while their shape is similar to drinking bowls from antiquity, silverware of this quality was intended only for display. From Julius Caesar to Domitian, each cup celebrates one of the Caesars with inordinately detailed scenes of their achievements as they were described in *Lives* by Suetonius. The Roman historian filled his colorful account with diabolical deeds, although the scenes on these tazze, crafted in low-relief style, only depict the Caesars' triumphs. Even Nero's notoriously bad behavior during the Great Fire of Rome is reframed to focus on the virtue of his support for the arts. And while it seems impossible not to air the dirty laundry of Caligula, who was exceedingly cruel and likely insane, even his tazze manufacture the memory of a generous relationship with the Roman

At any other time, in any other museum, it would be the belle of the ball, but here it stands in the shadow of a giant.

people. These overwhelmingly positive representations would make for fitting centerpieces to adorn the banquets of an extraordinarily powerful Roman family—they quickly found their way into the collection of a Roman family who hailed from Florence.

The provenance of these 16th-century cups is veiled in mystery. Since they would seem to depict scenes based on prints created in 1589, they cannot be older than their publication. We do not know exactly where the silverware was made, the names of the craftsmen or who the original patron was, but the Aldobrandini family was the first recorded owner. The family was quick to proudly add their crest to these treasures. Ippolito Aldobrandini, who was elected Pope Clement VIII in 1592, was born into an eminent Florentine family living in the coastal Marche town of Fano. The fact that he purchased these cups before his rise to the papacy speaks to Ippolito's bold ambition. The new kid in town with his eye on the papal prize, he wanted to associate himself with the greatest leaders in Rome's history as he clawed his way to the top. It has been hypothesized that the Hapsburg leader Albert VII of Austria visited Aldobrandini and sold his friend six of the cups; Albert likely gifted the rest of the set. The family kept the tazze until 1769. They later appeared in London in 1826 under the false assumption that they had been crafted by Benvenuto Cellini. But by that point, because the tazze can be disassembled, they had been mixed. Many Caesars were standing over reliefs displaying the



03

The Silver Caesars

NYC / Christine Contrada

While place cards marking empty spaces is a typical sight in the museums of Florence, taking a stroll through the Bargello might cause one to wonder if they had missed a Michelangelo fire sale. A significant sampling of the great Renaissance artist's works have been loaned to a major international exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

02



01 Netherlandish?, The Vespasian figure from the Aldobrandini Tazze, ca. 1587–99, Gilded silver, Private Collection

02 Netherlandish?, Livia and her infant son Tiberius escape a forest fire (detail from the Tiberius dish from the Aldobrandini Tazze), ca. 1587–99, Gilded silver, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Dr. W. L. Hildburgh Bequest

03 Netherlandish?, The Titus dish from the Aldobrandini Tazze, ca. 1587–99, Gilded silver, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon

achievements of their peers. These scenes contain elements of the 16th century, such as clothing styles and architectural designs that were common to northern Europe. This imagery supports the theory that the cups were cast in the Netherlands before making their way back to Italy. The biggest mystery is how they survived the test of time so well.

One can easily imagine as we gaze at the scene of Julius Caesar halting his army on the banks of the Rubicon river that it would not have been lost to the Aldobrandini that Florence was founded by Caesar's troops when they built an encampment on the banks of the Arno in an area where it was possible to cross the river. When the Aldobrandini proudly displayed the cups during feasts they would most certainly have proven a historical conversation piece. Candlelight would dance dramatically across glistening triumphal marches passing the monuments of ancient Rome to highlight the military victories of successful leaders. The emperors stand triumphantly in the centers of the tazze surrounded by their achievements. The stories are oriented toward their gaze and not that of the viewer. The Aldobrandini had surrounded themselves with depictions of good omens for their future success in Rome. In one scene, a stray dog gifts Vespasian a human hand during breakfast as a sign that he will be given tremendous power. In another

scene, a runaway ox bows before Vespasian acknowledging his future as an emperor. Weighing more than 82 pounds, this silver sat on the Aldobrandini family table like a weighty stack of money.

It is delightfully brazen to put your political ambition right on the table in the form of an illustrated, glittering piggy bank. It is easy to forget in an all-too-quiet gallery how exceptionally rare it is for these 12 cups, normally scattered among private and public collections, to come together in their original splendor, or even that they survived at all. After more than 150 years apart, they will soon be disassembled and separated again. They are a playful reminder that power is always ephemeral.

The Silver Caesars: A Renaissance Mystery

Until March 11, 2018
The Met Fifth Avenue
Robert Lehman Wing, Gallery 955,
First Floor
www.metmuseum.org

Christine Contrada earned a Ph.D. in Italian Renaissance history from Stony Brook University in New York. She has taught Italian history and culture for over a decade. You can read about her adventures at www.wiselya-wayward.com.



Black History Month Florence

BHMF / Mary Gray

Booker T. Washington suggested that success should be measured not by one's station in life, but "by the obstacles overcome while trying to succeed." Celebrations of Black History Month around the world—the observance officially takes place in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and the Netherlands—aim to illuminate the experiences, achievements and struggles of black citizens, but frequently fall short in representing cultures outside the African-American tradition. With its third edition currently underway, Black History Month Florence embraces a broader approach.

What is Black History Month?

Black History Month's origins go back to February 1926, when Harvard-educated historian Carter G. Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, aimed to spread awareness of African-American contributions to society by introducing the first Negro History Week. In 1976, under President Gerald Ford, it was expanded to a month, concurrently with celebrations of the United States' bicentennial.

And Black History Month Florence?

BHMF was founded in 2016 by Justin Randolph Thompson and Andre Halyard in collaboration with Andre Salvatore Mi, with Janine Gaëlle Dieudji and Matias Mesquita joining the team in 2017. In a marked departure from the general scope of United States observances, BHMF focuses not just on African-Americans, but on communities from Africa and its diaspora in Florence and throughout Italy.



BHMF: 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

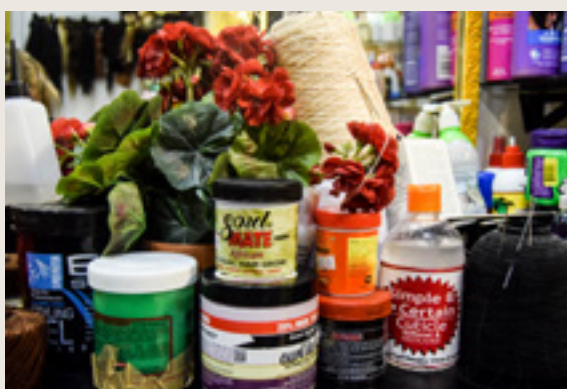
Black is the color of my true love's hair // February 2-March 1

"Black is the color of my true love's hair/His face so soft and wondrous fair," Nina Simone once sang. The R&B-jazz icon's ballad and its explicit reverence for blackness inspired the title of this photography exhibition, which opens on February 2 at 5pm at the former convent of Sant'Orsola. Through the work of artists **Martina Bacigalupo, Joana Choumali, Adjie Dieye, Kevin Jerome Everson, Délio Jasse** and **Tommaso Tancredi**, the exhibition explores the myriad meanings enmeshed in identity document photographs—the implications of belonging and community; the inherent problems in the standardized viewing of such documents; and the cementing of legal status, prompting reflection on all those still aspiring to it. Curated by Janine Gaëlle Dieudji and Justin Thompson, with support from the nearby Fondazione Marangoni and Elettra Officine Grafiche, the show is placed in direct, poignant dialogue with its site, the bricked-up, abandoned windows of Sant'Orsola, where it will stay on view until March 1.

Abolitionist history tour // February 12, 4pm

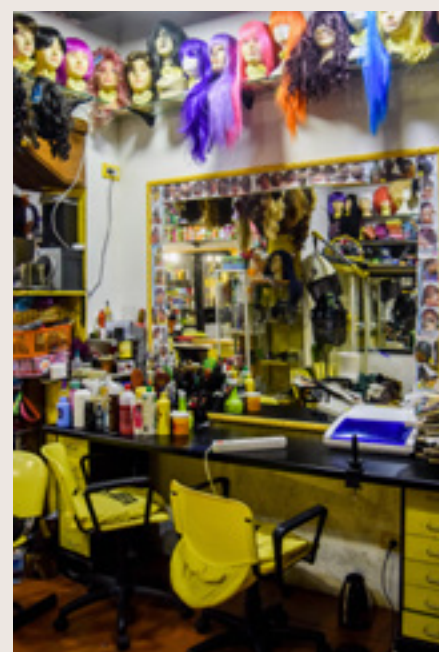
Julia Bolton Holloway, charismatic custodian of Florence's English Cemetery, will introduce visitors to the grounds before a scholar-led tour through the tombs of some of the famous abolitionists buried here. Novelist Elizabeth Barrett Browning is among them: it may surprise some to know that she came from a wealthy Jamaican slave-owning family, and was herself part black. Other figures featuring into the tour include Theodore Parker, Frances Trollope and Richard Hildreth. In discussing the topicality of the tour, Holloway, who works extensively with Florence's Roma population, stresses that today brings new incarnations of the same battles, highlighting the parallels between the ruthless separations of Roma families and those of black slaves in the United States.

Business spotlight



Black Queen via Panicale 14

Frontwoman-owner Tina is the high priestess of hair in via Panicale, with the consistent braiding clientele to prove it. Her salon has been active for the full two decades she's been in Florence, running largely on return customers who bring the beauty shop banter. She politely declined our request to take her portrait, cracking: "My picture's already everywhere. I'm the Black Queen."



Ph. Michelle Davis

View the full BHMF program on
www.blackhistorymonthflorence.com



Black Value

// February 8-March 17

Primed to be a cornerstone of this year's BHMf, *Black Value* is an art exhibition co-organized with **The American Academy in Rome** and supported by the **Galleria Continua** in San Gimignano (and satellite locations around the world). Opening on February 8 at 6pm at the Fondazione Biagiotti Progetti Arte, *Black Value* brings together past and present Rome Prize Fellows—Sanford Biggers, Abigail DeVille, Kevin Jerome Everson, Lyle Ashton Harris, Beverly McIver, Senam Okudzeto and Nari Ward—all linked by their exploration of marginalized communities and individuals in shifting socio-cultural landscapes. Uniformly informed by their perspectives as US nationals abroad, but hardly monolithic, the fellows and their selected works comment on blackness in a global context, challenging viewers to think about societal definitions of *value* and, in turn, to reassess their own.

Eritrean-Ethiopian cooking at Cucina LdM

// February 24, 11am-1pm

Chef **Almaz Mehbrahtu Burule** is the famous face of Florence's Eritrean-Ethiopian eatery Corno d'Africa (see below), a foodie favorite in the San Iacopino area. She brings her culinary wizardry to Cucina LdM at the Mercato Centrale for a lesson a little outside the institute's standard repertoire. Eight lucky participants (book fast!) will learn the fundamentals of Eritrean-Ethiopian cuisine under her guidance, including the ever-important coffee ritual. On the menu are appetizers (*tabulle*, *sambusa*), meat dishes (*zighini* is the most-requested meal at Almaz's restaurant), and sides (*shiro*, *tum'tumo*), all paired with *injera*, a spongy flatbread central to Ethiopian tradition. Reserve your spot at www.theflr.net/almazldm.



Ph. Giacomo Badiani



Corno d'Africa

via San Iacopino 12

Beloved among Florence's culinary-curious, Corno d'Africa is owned by a pair of longtime lovebirds who opened this Eritrean-Ethiopian restaurant on Valentine's Day in 2009. Almaz (of Eritrean origin) singlehandedly runs the kitchen, with her Florentine beau Franco keeping tabs on the house. Hospitality (toward an overwhelmingly Italian customer base) is everything at Corno d'Africa: as Almaz insists, it's not in her nature to ask houseguests when they're leaving.

To whom it may concern at SRISA // February 14-March 3

SRISA's gallery in via San Gallo has teamed up with Radio Papesse and BHMf for *To whom it may concern: A belated and sonorous register*, an original, site-specific sound installation by 2015 Villa Romana fellow **Anike Joyce Sadiq** and author-artist-stylist-DJ **Sinethermba Twalo**. Billed as a "soulful smokescreen," the duo's installation comprises two turntables and a smattering of hijacked AV equipment. Expect minimal visuals and maximum commentary: the work plays with the idea of blackness as a trope. Through auditory experience and its abrupt, "scratched" conclusion, *To whom it may concern* provokes thought about the concepts of "sampling," cultural mashups and appropriation. See and hear the spectacle in good company at the vernissage (February 14, 7pm).

Make Art, Not Walls at the British Institute

// February 7, 5.30pm

The BI's Harold Acton Library invites members* to join a guest speaker in navigating the murky—or are they?—waters of migration issues. "Make Art, Not Walls" will feature a presentation by Italian-Australian artist **Virginia Ryan**. A painter, photographer and sculptor who studied in Canberra and Edinburgh, and now works between Italy and West Africa, Ryan's work regularly benefits from her longtime collaborations with artists, musicians and anthropologists. A screening of Matteo Ferrucci's and Bernardo Angeletti's *The Art of Migration* (English with Italian subtitles) will follow the lecture.

*One-day membership option available

Out of town highlights // Various dates

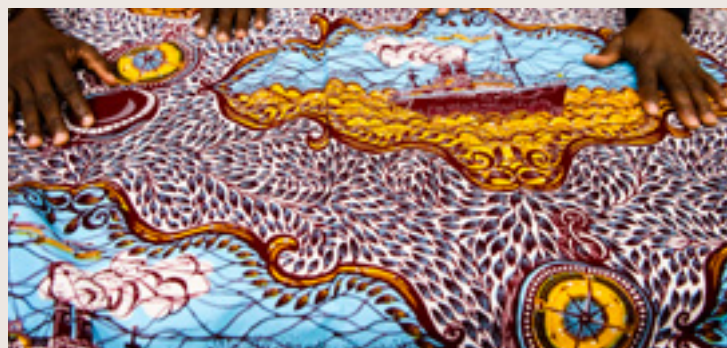
BHMf partners in Pisa, Bologna and just up the road in Settignano extend the initiative's reach beyond the Renaissance city. New York English Academy in Pisa will host an original language screening of Academy Award for Best Picture winner *Moonlight* (February 2, 7pm, info@newyorkenglishacademy.com), a poignant coming-of-age tale based on the play *In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue*. Later literature moves to the forefront with an English reading of contemporary African poetry at the same venue (February 16, 7pm). Get moving on February 10 (2-8pm) and 11 (10.30am-4.30pm) at Nijinsky dance school in Settignano: the Giguywassa company will present two days of African dance and percussion workshops for beginners. Finally, Bologna's Bravo Caffè (www.bravocaffe.it) brings the good vibes with concerts on February 8 (Carmen Souza) and February 17 (Jennifer Phillips).

Lectures at Villa La Pietra // February 13, 6pm + February 14, 6pm

NYU Florence's wide-ranging La Pietra Dialogues series will host four BHMf talks: we've selected two highlights. **Cécile Fromont**, scholar and professor of African art and architecture at the University of Chicago, will give the first, titled "Common Threads: Cloth, Color, and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Kongo and Angola". Fromont's lecture is set against the backdrop of west central Africa during the slave trade, exploring intersections of religion, power and slavery through two types of cloth. The following day, **Mauro Valeri** of the Department of Equal Opportunity in Italy's Council of Ministers will speak on "Black Italians: A History that Still Needs to be Written." Valeri's talk will be given in Italian with live English translation. Booking is required for both events: email lapietra.dialogues@nyu.edu.

This is Congo at Cinema La Compagnia // February 4, 7pm

The debut documentary film of American photojournalist Daniel McCabe, *This is Congo* takes an intense, uncompromising look at the underreported conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the stories of both soldiers and civilians. The film premiered in Venice in September 2017 to mixed reviews, with *Variety* calling it both a "busy, absorbing study" and one that "sets itself a bar it can hardly hope to meet in just 90 minutes." Shown in original language (English, French, Swahili, and Lingala dialogue) with Italian subtitles, the screening is part of La Compagnia's Documentary Month (*Mese del documentario*) series, overseen by the Associazione Doc.it.



Ph. Waxmore

Waxmore

via Vincenzo Gioberti 61 + at Mimi Furaha, borgo degli Albizi 35r

The brainchild of Italian anthropologist and stylist Maria Cristina Manca, Waxmore is a vibrant line of clothing, accessories and home goods combining Italian textiles with African wax print fabrics. Its via Gioberti showroom opened in November 2017, after a six-month job training for Samba, Youssif, Kayally and Ousman—all asylum seekers hailing from different parts of Africa. Ousman and Youssif have since joined the team of Italian tailors as apprentices, and another training is in the pipeline for 2018, pending funding.



From vanilla to vibrators

ORGASMIC / words + photos Alice Fischetti

Florence boasts quite a reputation for the romance-related, yet this seemingly vanilla city is no stranger to spice. Its range of sex shops is fitting to its smaller scale, meaning there's no room for picky here. From modest shops to raunchier spaces, this ABC sorts through the lewd to offer options whose hospitality makes even R-rated content approachable and shame-free.

Tasteful temptation

As its name suggests, this shop takes the seedy out of sex shops and puts classy in its place. **Perché l'amore è un arte** is a one stop shop for first-timers and Florence's tasteful crowd. A selection of stylish lingerie and more moderate toys deck the entrance (think candy undies), which is swiftly swapped for high-quality BDSM gear, including handcrafted leather collars, cuffs and whips. The adjacent salon, neatly located off the street, sports a wall of curated appliances, from *design* vibrators to a range of more racy costumes and attire. The shop tempts you in discreetly, as its bright interior and kinky windows only hint at what's inside: without a storefront unveiling the heat of its offerings, visitors feel comfortable strolling in. And despite its smaller size, female staffers keep the space stress-free by attending to every customer with discretion and care.

Via Borgo Albizi 65R
www.sexyshop.firenze.it

Automatic loving

For many, the thought of looking someone in the eye and saying, "I'll take this one!" is enough to avoid sex shopping altogether. But if you're feeling flushed about kinky tastes, Florence offers a staff-free option. At **Sex Lovers Sexy Shop H24** (remarkably not a Star Wars erotica droid), peruse all the goods you like in a 24-hour self-service shop with no personnel in sight. And though unsupervised sexy areas generally beget Florence's sketchier crowd, the refined wine-red walls, modern machines and SMS shopping hotline makes this spot ideal for a reserved and classy clientele. As the shop likes to say, "commit the oldest of sins in the newest of ways". And don't forget your *tessera sanitaria* (Italian national healthcard) for this one, as a swipe is required to enter.

Viale Petrarca 44
www.sexloversfirenze.com

Smooth in Scandicci

This Scandicci sex shop, run by smooth-talking sexologist Antonio, is catered to the ladies, vaunting an array of costumes, lube, massage oils, vibrators and more for its 90 per cent female clientele. (Fun fact: Antonio sells strap-ons to women more than any other toy.) Located a short walk from Scandicci's main square, **Le Tentazioni** is a favorite among Florentines, and for good reason. Besides Antonio's respectful and informative approach ("I love eroticism and I hate porn," he explains), the tiny shop boasts both classy and raunchy selections, from stylish plugs to in-your-face DVDs. Its more risqué selection means modesty takes a toll, though only for a short while: beyond the initial façade, the well-lit, open-concept space offers a comfortable refuge for shoppers—and far from passing eyes.

Via Piero Calamandrei 9
www.letentazionifirenze.it

Sultry seduction

This sexy shop is fit for a queen. Owner Franco greets guests with a cheery smile that puts nervous newcomers at ease. Like other shops in Florence, **Stranamore** focuses on the female crowd: women's products are today's biggest sellers, hence the wall of high-end vibrators and lack of overtly pornographic material. Besides Franco's laid back and no-shame approach, the shop is neatly organized into well-defined sections with an initial foyer, making shopping for specific products a breeze. And in a sultry corner tucked behind a 70s-style beaded curtain, you'll find that sex-shop staple of DVDs to peruse, though placed out of sight as to soften the room's general aesthetic. The selection is limited but carefully considered, based entirely on client demand.

Via Aretina 275/e
www.stranamoresexshop.it

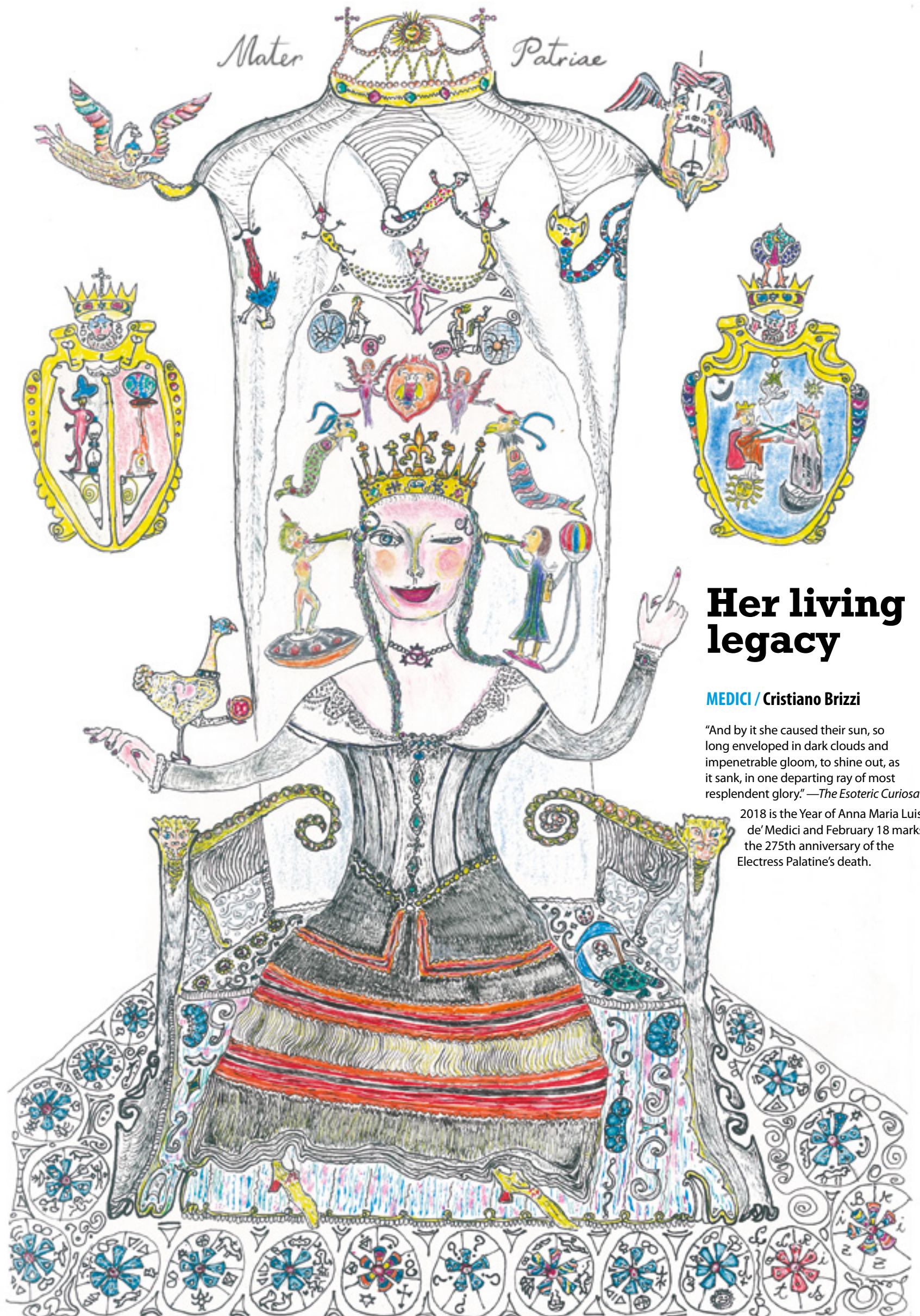
Erotic for everyone

If tasteful and modest are your sex-shop musts, then beware, this shop isn't for the faint of heart. With apparently the largest erotic DVD collection in Florence, **Sexy Shop Kickdown** has absolutely *everything* you can think of (and things you probably couldn't imagine). The store's goodies are set up as a labyrinth of mirrored-glass cases, where admiring objects isn't so unlike perusing a museum. Despite its rather crude (and overwhelming) décor, the kind-hearted staff explains the ins and outs of sex toys like a well-prepared Florentine tour guide. This fetish/LG-BTQ-friendly store may appear a bit intense at first, but its high-quality offerings (USB-chargeable vibrators, extensive BDSM section, *Eros Veneziani* lingerie and latex attire) have kept this favorite running for over 18 years.

Via Francesco Baracca 3
www.sexyshop.it/punti-vendita/sexy-shop-kickdown-firenze

In Italy, providing or exposing pornography to minors under 18 is illegal, meaning anything beyond design vibrators and modest gear requires an 18+ sign and tinted windows. Keep in mind that these legal requirements are no indication of unsafe or dodgy environments.

For **Alice Fischetti**, an Italian-American "halfie," a grad school semester in Florence somehow became two years and counting. Besides working on her soft Tuscan "g" and fangirling the Renaissance, she spends her time teaching languages and sipping Chianti in the Oltrarno area. Follow her on Instagram at [@a_fischetti](https://www.instagram.com/a_fischetti).



Her living legacy

MEDICI / Cristiano Brizzi

"And by it she caused their sun, so long enveloped in dark clouds and impenetrable gloom, to shine out, as it sank, in one departing ray of most resplendent glory." —*The Esoteric Curiosa*

2018 is the Year of Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici and February 18 marks the 275th anniversary of the Electress Palatine's death.

Muriel Spark in 1957, the year her first novel, *The Comforters*, was published.

Remembering Muriel Spark

LITERATURE / Alan Taylor

It was by chance, not design, that Muriel Spark went to dwell in Tuscany. Nothing in her past suggested she was the kind of person who would embrace life in the countryside. Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1918, she had lived mostly in big cities—London, New York, Rome—until she settled in the rambling, dilapidated, 14th-century rectory 15 or so kilometres from Arezzo owned by her friend, the artist and sculptor Penelope Jardine. In the beginning, Spark flitted between her base in Rome, a palatial palazzo, and the Val di Chiana. In time, however, she discovered that she preferred living among vineyards and olive groves than in clamorous streets clogged with traffic. Most importantly, it was a place that was conducive to work, where there were few interruptions and demands on her time could be managed.

She was then in her fifties and an internationally fêted writer. Having always thought of herself as a poet, she did not publish her first novel, *The Comforters*, until 1957, at the relatively late age of 39. It was both a commercial and critical success, and praised by the likes of Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene who, like her, were converts to Catholicism. Four more novels swiftly followed. As witty as they are profound, they established Spark as one of the great writers of her generation. It was with her sixth novel, however, that she became a phenomenal bestseller.

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, which drew directly on her Edinburgh upbringing and schooling, was published almost in its entirety in a single issue of *The New Yorker*. It was subsequently made into an immensely popular, Oscar-winning movie in which Maggie Smith—who was voted best actress—starred as the enigmatic, eccentric, elusive Miss Brodie. The enduring appeal of *The Prime* allowed Spark to determine her own future and where and how she wanted to live.

Italy had been on her radar since childhood, thanks to her favourite teacher, Miss Christina Kay, who was clearly the model for Miss Brodie. It was Miss Kay, for example, who would not hesitate to divert from the subjects she was supposed to be teaching to tell her young charges of her holidays in Italy, of her admiration for Mussolini and his *fascisti*, and of her love of the Renaissance artists, in particular Giotto. “We ought to be doing history at

For Spark, the appeal of Florence and its Tuscan hinterland was multifarious.

the moment according to the time-table,” she remarks to her class of impressionable girls. “Get out your history books and prop them up in your hands. I shall tell you a little more about Italy. I met a young poet by a fountain. Here is a picture of Dante meeting Beatrice—it is pronounced *Beatrichay* in Italian which makes the name very beautiful—on the Ponte Vecchio. He fell in love with her at that moment.”

For Spark, the appeal of Florence and its Tuscan hinterland was multifarious. She loved the art and architecture, the simplicity of the food and the ubiquity of wine, and the stunning landscape. From the window of her study she surveyed a scene that looked natural but had in fact been sculpted by human hands. Her favourite time of the year was from autumn through to Christmas. With Penelope Jardine at the wheel of their Alfa Romeo, she liked to visit places new and familiar, thinking nothing of motoring the length of Europe to visit a cathedral or gallery.

I got to know her in 1990 and whenever I visited we would spend long days touring

the surrounding town and villages or calling on her many friends who lived in Florence, Cortona or Arezzo. Near where she lived was the castle-hamlet of Gargonza, one of the many places to claim an association with Dante. She never tired of what is known as the Piero della Francesca trail, especially the village of Monterchi where Piero’s wonderful fresco *Madonna del Parto* was to be found, and the bijou town of Sansepolcro, where his *Resurrection* has pride of place in the local museum.

Muriel, as I now knew her well enough to call her, was smitten by the understated culture of such places, by their quiet ambience and slow and civilized pace. Lunch was an unhurried affair. Once, in Sansepolcro, we were seated next to a table of American tourists, one of whom kept looking over at Muriel. Eventually, she summoned up the courage to leave her companions and approach us. Politely apologising for interrupting our meal, she asked if she could have the pleasure of being in the company of Muriel Spark. Muriel smiled and told her to pull up a chair. Another carafe of wine was ordered and an already jolly lunch became even jollier.

It was often said in the British press that Muriel was reclusive. Nothing could have been further from the truth. She simply liked solitude. All she required was peace in which to get on with her writing. In Tuscany she wrote some of her greatest novels, including *Loitering with Intent*, *A Far Cry from Kensington*, *Symposium* and *Aiding and Abetting*, which takes as its inspiration the mysterious case of Lord Lucan who disappeared into thin air after murdering his children’s nanny whom he had mistaken for his wife. Muriel’s final novel, aptly titled *The Finishing School*, appeared in 2004, two years before her death at the age of 88 in Villa Donatello, a private hospital in Florence. She was writing almost until she drew her last breath. She is buried in the cemetery of the tiny village, Oliveto, surrounded by vines and olives, and within sight of the house that was her last home.

Appointment in Arezzo: A Friendship with Muriel Spark is published by Polygon. Available from <http://amzn.to/2n1qFOv>

Alan Taylor, who was born near Edinburgh, Scotland, has been a journalist for more than 30 years. He was deputy editor of the *Scotsman* newspaper and managing editor of Scotsman Publications. He is co-founder and editor of the *Scottish Review of Books*. He contributes regularly to many publications, including the *Times Literary Supplement* and the Glasgow-based *Herald*. His books include *The Assassin’s Cloak: An Anthology of the World’s Greatest Diarists*, *Glasgow: An Autobiography* and, most recently, *Appointment in Arezzo*, a memoir of Muriel Spark, of whom he was a friend for many years, which was published in 2017. He lives between Glasgow and the Scottish Borders, and takes every opportunity to visit Florence and environs.

Marry me and make music

JANE'S GEMS / Jane Fortune

Angelica Kauffmann painted her “auto-biographical” self-portrait called *The Artist Hesitating between the Arts of Music and Painting* while in Rome in 1794. The torn Angelica was encouraged to abandon her painting to pursue a career in music, a traditionally female environment. She ultimately chose to continue as a visual artist and set off for “the temple on the mountaintop” with a bit of encouragement from the Allegory of Painting.

Musical talent aside, Kauffmann’s keen interest in music was not uncommon. The upcoming exhibition **Early Women Artists and Musicians**, opening on March 8 at Ponte a Ema’s Oratorio di Santa Caterina delle Ruote as a partnership show between the **Uffizi** and the **Municipality of Bagno a Ripoli**, has spurred me to reflect on the fact that many female painters did indeed want music to be perceived as a crucial part of their creative identity. Artemisia Gentileschi, for example, took up a lute and painted herself as Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of music, and later invited her younger colleague Arcangela Paladini to model as the saint for another of her works.

In many cases, there was a vested interest in a female artist’s desire to include musical references in her paintings. One reason is that, for hundreds of years,

European women contracted advantageous marriage proposals thanks to carefully crafted art marketing, known as the pre-marriage portrait. Italy’s history abounds with women artists hired for this very purpose: immortalizing their female sitters as a very good catch. But what happened when the time came for women artists to paint their own pre-marriage portrait? Was “making themselves beautiful” the primary goal? Not usually. It was far more common for them to show themselves to be well versed in the secrets of the harpsichord and spinet! A musically inclined woman meant an educated woman and the presence of a musical instrument in a female self-portrait symbolized a well-rounded education, which also most certainly included reading, writing, arithmetic and sewing, as well as dancing and needlework—all taught rigorously within the home sphere.

Women artists with works in Florence, like Marietta Robusti and Sofonisba Anguissola, also used the “music muse” idea in their self-renditions, but Lavinia Fontana’s story is one of my favorites. Her earliest self-portrait, in storage at the Uffizi, was painted for her future father-in-law Severo Zappi. Fontana’s red dress “said it all” for viewers of her time: red was the color Bolognese noblewomen wore on their wedding day. Two other important



Self-portrait, *Hesitating between the Arts of Music and Painting*, Angelica Kauffmann

“hidden messages” can be found in the background of this 1577 painting. Firstly, there’s a serious maidservant who is holding the artist’s sheet music. Art historians believe the servant’s presence was intended to boost Fontana’s social status figuratively, as the Zappi family was a notch above her own. Secondly, further in the background, there is an easel, which establishes her as a working artist. Incidentally, the painting did its job wonderfully and “Lavinia virgin/maiden of Prospero

Fontana” wed Gianpaolo Lappi, a minor painter who found his true vocation in caring for the couple’s 11 children, while Lavinia pursued her astoundingly successful career.

So, although photography was still a figment in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in some ways, “the art of image” was no less important than it is today. Using music as a way to boost one’s status and credibility? We know it worked for Lavinia.

Author and philanthropist, Dr. **Jane Fortune** is founder and chair of the Advancing Women Artists Foundation and creator of the Jane Fortune Research Program on Women Artists in the Age of the Medici at the Medici Archive Project. Her books include *When the World Answered: Florence, Women Artists and the 1966 Flood*; *To Florence, Con Amore: 90 Ways to Love the City*; *Art by Women in Florence* and *Invisible Women: Forgotten Artists of Florence*.



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The Valentine's gift guide for Florence lovers

In love in Florence? It's perfectly normal. You fall in love with the city, then you fall in love with a local, a Duomo-eyed doggy or/and your neighbourhood *circolo*.

Here's *The Florentine's* guide to gifts this Valentine's Day.

For wine buffs

No matter how you feel about the big red heart day, opening up a bottle of wine will most likely be involved. What better way to get ready for a little romance this Valentine's Day than with a **six-bottle Love Pack** from organic winery **Querceto di Castellina**?

This holiday pack features two bottles of their unique white wine blend called Livia, a bottle of extra-virgin olive oil and a bottle of each of the estate's red wines: L'aura Chianti Classico, Sei Chianti Classico Gran Selezione and Podalirio Merlot. The six-bottle selection is offered at a special holiday price of 119 euro (20% discount), plus shipping costs. Purchase online or at the winery.

Querceto di Castellina, Località Querceto 9, Castellina in Chianti (SI)
www.querquetodicastellina.com



For your man in Florence

Gift a "manband" to the male in your life. This **handcrafted silver men's bracelet** surely hits a romantic soft spot with its moving marine motto: I look at the sea / nothing around / among the waves in the middle of the sea / blue like the sky / blue like the sea. The original design is by **Fabio Corsini**, a Florentine silversmith whose workshop is located outside Florence, on the road to Chianti. He's in in love with (you guessed it...) the sea, but Fabio can craft singular pieces in line with your tastes, even with lasting lyrics in English. Price on request.

Gioielli Corsini, via Chiantigiana 38, Bagno a Ripoli (FI)
www.gioiellcorsini.it



For food explorers

Bologna is a Italian city designed for cultured food lovers. Learn why one of its nicknames is "La Grassa" with **Curious Appetite's boutique food + wine tour** in Emilia-Romagna's capital, just 30 minutes from Florence. This tour indulges in the culinary legacy of Bologna over espresso, artisan baked goods, cured meats, prized cheeses, a fresh pasta-making hands-on demo with tasting, gelato and more with a local historical guide and true expert. Curious Appetite also offers a **food lover's crawl in Florence**—if you're too in love to leave Florence even for a day.

www.curiousappetitetravel.com

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For your fashionable four-legged friend

Emma was dog garment stylist Simone Fammoni's close companion for 14 years, a bull terrier with a strong but sweet character. Launched in winter 2017, **Emma Firenze** creates canine style that pairs with our own: leashes like our belts, sweaters like our artisan pullovers and bowls like our designer tableware. Dog owners can buy off the peg or spoil their hounds rotten with made-to-measure clothing and knitwear items using prized fabrics like Casentino *panno* and kaleidoscopic knitwear. We especially love this **handmade striped pure new Merino wool sweater** (starting from 178 euro), a warm yet lightweight garment that's perfect for the spring.

www.emmafirenze.com

For dyed-in-the-wool romantics

When all is said and done, we crave cuddles. And cashmere is as snuggly as it gets, especially when it hails from the Mugello market town Borgo San Lorenzo and available from the luxury store two minutes from the Duomo. Handmade in 100 per cent maxi yarn cashmere, **Il Borgo Cashmere's beanie** (410 euro) with a fox fur pompom is contemporary, super soft and undaunted by winter chills. Il Borgo has been in the same family since 1949; they know their goats.

Il Borgo Cashmere, via Tosinchi 46R, Florence / www.ilborgo.it





For spa aficionados

Close your eyes and listen to the sound of water flowing, feel the steam on your face and unwind amid the scent of essential oils. Saunas, pools a plenty and relaxing massages are a dream come true at **Asmana Wellness World**, Italy's biggest spa complex just outside Florence. Treat you and your loved one or best friend to a **wellness experience package** this Valentine's to escape the stress of the city while sipping a cocktail under a starry sky. Available directly from Asmana or online.

Asmana, viale Allende 10, Campi Bisenzio (FI) / www.asmana.it



For young bookworms

Looking to keep your kids occupied this February? **Paco & Camelia: The Venus' Mystery and Other Secrets** (13.90 euro) is a whimsical illustrated book, in English or Italian, set in Florence for children aged six and up. Secret passages, magic, unexpected twists and lots of laughter: the story ends hinting at a new adventure, eliciting readers' curiosity to find out what will happen next. Written by Francesco Ciaï, the founder of the **Claudio Ciaï Foundation**, a portion of the proceeds are donated to support children victims of car accidents.

www.pacocamelia.com



For language lovers

Love yourself this February 14—and beyond—by learning Italian. Set in a medieval monastery surrounded by olive trees and boasting breathtaking views over Florence, **L'Olivo Italiano** Italian language and culture school runs a **Survival Italian Weekend**. Learn how to order at a restaurant, meet new friends, go grocery shopping and ask for directions, the course comprises fun practical lessons based on short conversations with your partner. The intensive weekend course is available as a Valentine's special costing 390 euro per couple, consisting of six 100-minute themed lessons, a free shuttle to and from the Bagno a Ripoli bus stop/complimentary parking, course materials included.

L'Olivo Italiano, Scuola di Lingua e Cultura Italiana, via del Bigallo e Apparita 18, Bagno a Ripoli (FI)
www.lolivoitaliano.it



For fusion foodies

Soft lighting and a lotus-leaf ceiling set the scene for a romantic heart to heart at One Night in Beijing Fusion Bar & Restaurant. Seduce your beloved with the Eastern promise of a drink imbued with Sichuan syrup, saffron or ginger before indulging in Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese and Thai-inspired dishes. Dote on the tofu and prawns, a tastebud-tantalizing blend of flavours and consistencies: an explosive mix, not unlike a Valentine's night that goes according to plan. If all goes wrong, console yourself at the bar—it's open until 2am. The restaurant is reminiscent of a film set: a striking nineteenth-century building emboldened by fusion-style furnishings.

One Night in Beijing Fusion Bar & Restaurant, via il Prato 14R, Florence
www.onenightinbeijing.it

For your mum, aunt or best friend

Step back into the nineteenth century at **Münstermann** in piazza Goldoni. But this is no museum; it's an English-American pharmacy that's been serving Florentines and foreigners with affordable and effective lotions and potions since 1897. The rich, replenishing **Honey and Almond Face and Hand Cream** (18 euro) is made on-site, a tonic for skin of any age on chilly winter days and nights. Pamper further with the matching plastic-coated textile bag woven in Como (28 euro), a one-of-a-kind thought from Florence.

Münstermann, piazza Goldoni 2R, Florence
www.munstermann.it



How to survive Valentine's Day (without crying) by Vincenzo D'Angelo

Love is beautiful, but sometimes it ends up not happening. Luckily, there are a lot of things to do in Florence to heal yourself and survive the worst day of the year for every broken heart.

1. If you find yourself at a table for two, eat for two. Nobody will ever know that you ate a double cheese pizza—even your metabolism will understand.
2. Binge-watch the first season of *Medici: Masters of Florence*. You'll spend the whole night rooting for Contessina de' Bardi (what a fierce queen!) until you fall asleep.
3. Have a long relaxing walk beside the Arno while listening to good music and watching the sunset over the Ponte Vecchio (But *do not* listen to Adele's *Someone Like You*, for your own sake).
4. Do something fun. Go visit a museum, have a nice dinner with friends, buy souvenirs for your relatives abroad, treat yourself to some new clothes.
5. Embrace the "I Am Single" moment. Eventually, one day, someone will show up at your front door with cue cards, just like in *Love Actually*.

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Alessandro Sinigaglia

After Mussolini's fall and the armistice had been signed, German troops occupied Florence for almost a year between September 1943 and August 1944. A climate of fear, suspicion and betrayal pervaded the city while resistance against Italy's former allies and the remnants of the fascist dictatorship grew stronger as Allied forces moved north along the peninsula.

On Sunday, February 13, 1944, a particular diner at a trattoria in via dei Pandolfini must have recognized the danger he was in when he saw two components of the ruthless and hated "four saints" gang of killers, thugs, delinquents and torturers enter in the company of their female companions. The two new arrivals belonged to this crack unit of the Special Services Section of the 92nd Legion of the Militia Black Shirts, the fascist secret political police force under the sadistic command of Mario Carità, whose headquarters were the elegant but by then infamous Villa Triste along via Bolognese. Directly answerable to the German SS in Italy and closely linked to Mussolini's Italian Social Republic, the "saints" were at the trattoria clearly looking for someone. More than likely they had been tipped off that their prey, Alessandro Sinigaglia, a black Jewish communist partisan, who unwisely often ate there because it was close to where he used to live in via Ghibellina, was sitting at one of the tables. They were hunting for Sinigaglia, who used the battle name "Vittorio", because he had organised and led one of the first communist-inspired *Gruppi di Azione Patriottica* (GAP) of partisans in Florence, whose purpose was to engage in guerilla warfare and sabotage. The 42-year-old unarmed Sinigaglia made a break for it, but on reaching the street he was shot five times in the back. Lying dead on the ground, his assassins gouged two gold teeth from his mouth.

The friend with whom he was eating, Pietro Lari, a glazier from Empoli and fellow member of the GAP who had fought

with Sinigaglia in Spain, met an equally atrocious fate a day short of seven months later. Immediately taken prisoner at the trattoria, he was sent to the SS controlled concentration camp at Fossoli, not far from Modena where, together with 66 other antifascists and Jews, he was shot in reprisal for the death or injury of seven SS soldiers in a train derailment for which partisans were blamed.

Alessandro Sinigaglia was born in Fiesole on January 2, 1902, the son of David Sinigaglia, a Jew from Mantua, and his first wife Cynthia White, an African-American woman born in Missouri during the era of the struggle to abolish slavery. The couple had met at Villa Smith, owned at the time by a wealthy family from Vermont who had made their money in railways. Now the villa is known as Villa La Fonte, or Bel Riposo, and is part of the European University Institute.

After training as a mechanic like his father, Sinigaglia did military service on submarines in the Royal Italian Navy. In 1924, on his return to Fiesole, he joined the Communist Party of Italy, which had been founded in Livorno in 1921 and was outlawed by the fascist regime in 1926. To avoid arrest, in 1928 he fled to France and then to the Soviet Union where while working as a mechanic in a factory he attended political school and became a convinced Leninist. Moving to Switzer-


land, on behalf of the party, he organized Italian communists who had escaped there before joining the republican side in the Spanish Civil War. Serving aboard a republican battle cruiser, Sinigaglia played an active part in clearing the Barcelona port of Falangist mines. In 1939, after General Francisco Franco's victory, he sought refuge in France, but was arrested and imprisoned at Vernet Camp with other survivors of the International Brigades. He remained there until 1941 when the Vichy authorities handed him over to their Italian counterparts and he was sent to the concentration camp on Ventotene, an island in the Tyrrhenian Sea on the border between Lazio and Campania, where many influential antifascists were detained from 1926 onwards. Freed in August 1943, Sinigaglia returned home

only to be killed six short months later, the first "gappist" to die in Florence.

In honour of his memory, on June 6, 1944, the 22nd bis Garibaldi Assault Brigade was formed and named after Sinigaglia, operating around Bagno a Ripoli, Rignano sull'Arno, Incisa, Figline Valdarno, Greve in Chianti and Impruneta. Among those fighting in its ranks were many former prisoners of war, including 23 Russians, 3 Poles, 3 Yugoslavs and 2 Americans. On the morning of August 11, 1944, this brigade was the first to enter Florence through Porta Romana, heralding the beginning of the city's liberation.

A plaque erected by the members of the Florentine Resistance forces on the 18th anniversary of his death marks the place outside via dei Pandolfini 21 red where Sinigaglia was executed. It reads "here on 13 February 1944 died, massacred by the Nazis, the heroic partisan commander Alessandro Sinigaglia, silver medal holder for military valour". Today, we could add, a black Florentine who died in the cause of freedom.

Deirdre Pirro, author of *Italian Sketches: The Faces of Modern Italy* and *Famous Expats in Italy*, published by The Florentine Press, is an international lawyer who lives and works in Florence. Her writing focuses on modern Italy, its people, its history and its customs. Follow her on Twitter @dp_in_florence or contact her at ddpirro@gmail.com.



Why did Einstein's wife move to Italy?

Who was named "A stomach with a head"?



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COOK+EAT / Helen Farrell

The purple potato

Forgive me while I wax lyrical about purple potatoes—again. One lunchtime, my excitement at this tubular discovery resulted in my foisting violet mash on *The Florentine's* team at our usually laid-back communal table.

A native of the Peruvian Andes, the *vitelotte noire* have sunken their roots into Tuscan soil, in the Casentino. Oblong and knobbly, they are also lauded as the truffle potato. A primitive potato variety, the violet peel and interior are caused by high levels of anthocyanins, and the fabulous thing is that the colour remains, if a little diminished, when cooked. The taste is not unlike chestnuts with a sweetish flavour and a lingeringly lovely hazelnut aftertaste. Plus, research has shown that the purple potato is good for us, its antioxidants fighting free radicals and providing a helping hand against heart conditions as well as being low in calories.

The French author Alexandre Dumas, who incidentally dedicated a book to Florence after living in the city for a year in 1835, was a big fan of purple potatoes, describing them in his posthumous 1873 *Grand Dictionnaire de cuisine*: “The best of all potatoes are undoubtedly the purple ones, known at Paris’ Les Halles market by the name *vitelotte*.”

This vibrant spud is having a moment on the restaurant scene too. The “Below Zero” dish by Michelin-star chef Peter Brunel at Borgo San Jacopo sees the purple potato served with yogurt, coconut, mango and caviar, while El Inca Peruvian restaurant in the Gavinana neighbourhood serves its native tuber as gnocchi and as a side order to its hearty meat-based main courses.

The floury texture makes the purple potato perfect for gnocchi—and the shade ideal for Fiorentina fans.

Enjoy!

RECIPE

Purple potato gnocchi with sage butter *Serves 4*

Ingredients

1kg purple potatoes (I used the Blue Salad variety from Casentino, available from Esselunga)

300g all-purpose flour, preferably “00”, sifted

1 medium egg, lightly beaten

20 g butter

2 sage leaves

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

Boil the potatoes with the skin on for about 30 minutes until tender. Set aside to cool, then remove the peel and mash well.

Add the flour, egg and salt and mix with your hands to form a firm dough. Roll into a thin sausage on a well-floured work surface and flatten slightly. Cut into small oblongs, using the tines of a fork to leave a pattern on the surface of each gnocco. Cover with a clean cloth and leave to rest for 20 minutes.

Bring a large pot of salted water to the boil. Add the gnocchi and cook until they rise, one by one, to the surface. Drain well.

Melt the butter with a couple of sage leaves in a small frying pan over low heat. Stir the sage butter into the gnocchi. Season with salt and pepper and serve.



Wine pairing

Alto Adige is my go-to region when it comes to lighter reds that spare nothing on the nose. A Schiava and Lagrein blend from near Bolzano, H. Lun's St. Magdalener 2016 comes up smelling like violets (!) with nutty nuances. Or come back to Casentino for Cuna 2013 by Podere Santa Felicita (see article to the right) for a sky-high, acid-high, freshest of tannins and longest of finishes Pinot Noir. A wine to write home about—you'll swiftly forget the purple potatoes.



Wine+music

COOK+EAT / Helen Farrell

I only wanted to see you bathing in the purple rain” ... As a words person if I were to pick out a piece to pair with this month's recipe, it would be Prince's iconic song. The pluckiness of the drums not unlike pulling the potato dough into bites and the staccato-esque vocals floating in the auditory stream like dumplings to the water's surface. Then there's the purple word association...

At the most recent *The Florentine Wine Club event*, our music editor Michelle Davis, aka IMDAVIS DJ, took to the turntable to match music and wine notes, bolstered by creative tapas, at Enoteca de' Macci. Top winemakers Stefano Amerighi and Federico Staderini chose the compositions to pair best with their creations. Staderini went first with his 100 per cent Pinot Noir Cuna 2012, served super cold, “straight from the mountains,” as the superlative winemaker put it. As we sipped, Ravel's *Boléro* played as contrapunto. The orchestral piece repeating the same musical motifs 18 times as the wine took us on a journey from the mountains to the sea, opening, descending, widening and winding to a crescendo of suppleness and seduction.

Next up, Amerighi changed the tempo with his now-cult Syrah 2014, or “La Syrah”, as the Cortona winemaker specified, for him, the femininity of the varietal. His track of choice? A chillax-and-zen tune

by American alternative rock musician Mark Lanegan for the calmly energetic wine and its signature elegance. Back to Staderini for a different vintage of his luscious Cuna and Leonard Cohen's *Suzanne*. “I was touched by Cohen's last songs. Written when he was very sick, he was able to express all his humanity. Even with a broken voice, he expressed his love for being on Earth.” And for our DJ: “For me, *Suzanne* is an untold promise, like Platonic love. This song—and this wine—lingers like a dream, like unrequited love.” And to finish, something special, a preview of Amerighi's pure, high-altitude Pecorino from the Marche, titled Noé. A wine not yet released to market that contains the saddest of stories: Noé was Stefano's partner in this project, who was tragically killed by the 2016 earthquake. Grown at 900 metres above sea level, made in a cave without water or electricity and three hours from his Cortona base, Amerighi defines this passion project as “crazy and psychedelic, as revealed in the rhythms of German krautrock band Neu!”

Music distracts us, letting our rational side slip away to bring out the poetry, allowing us to reset our sight, scent and taste buds. The night was a fun exercise, an excuse to get together, make new friends and catch up with old ones, laugh, love and be ourselves. In essence, the reason why wine and music make the perfect match.

Keep in touch with the TF Wine Club: info@theflorentinepress.com

For sweethearts

INDULGE / Maria Rees

Ever since the merchant Francesco Carletti introduced cocoa to the Medici court in 1606, Florence has boasted a long history of artisan chocolate making. Ahead of the 14th edition of the Fiera del Cioccolato in piazza Santissima Annunziata from March 2 to 11, we take a look at Florence's finest *cioccolaterie*.



Vestri

If indulging in guilt-free chocolate has been a lifelong fantasy, then a visit to Vestri might just be in order. This family-run business has been operating for over 30 years, producing creations from the finest specimens of cocoa beans directly sourced from their plantation in the Dominican Republic. Their Body & Soul range of chocolate bars claim an extensive series of beneficial properties from fighting fatigue to improving your memory, and even lowering cholesterol and preventing type 2 diabetes. The gelato is exquisite.

Open Monday to Saturday 10:30am to 7:30pm, closed on Sundays

Borgo degli Albizi 11R, Florence
www.vestri.it



Cioccolateria Ballerini

For those not content with simply tasting chocolate, witness the production process firsthand as you enjoy a cup of *cioccolato caldo* at the Cioccolateria Ballerini. Opened in 1936, this shop not far from Florence's main train station has been dedicated to handcrafting artisan chocolate for almost 20 years, boasting over 50 types of pralines. Beyond the chocolates, crunch on the traditional Tuscan delicacies, including panforte, ricciarelli and cantuccini. The chocolate lab is visible from the store's café, so you can comfortably observe the chocolatiers at work throughout the day.

Open Monday to Saturday 7:30am to 8pm, closed on Sundays

Borgo Ognissanti 132R, Florence
www.cioccolateriaballerini.it



Donamalina

But why merely observe when you could be making sweet stuff yourself? Discover your inner chocolatier at Dona Malina's shop-laboratory in the Le Cure neighbourhood, which has been running for over 10 years, experimenting new recipes on a daily basis and offering a variety of tailor-made courses. Named after the Aztec princess who allegedly introduced the conquistadors to the delights of cocoa, treat yourself to the Taste Box One di DonaMalinaTM for an astonishing chocolate experience. Plus, the gelato is worth the walk from the city centre.

Open Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 8pm, closed on Sundays

Via Reginaldo Giuliani 11R, Florence
www.donamalina.it



Rivoire

Rivoire remains the most historic and renowned chocolatier establishment in Florence's city centre. The decadent store was opened in 1872 in piazza della Signoria by Enrico Rivoire, the official chocolatier to the House of Savoy. To this day its master chocolatiers make traditional delicacies according to the original recipes of the time, offering an assortment of pralines and gift boxes as well as an array of chocolate pastries and desserts. Sipping a hedonistic hot chocolate topped with whipped cream while watching Florence happen is an unforgettable experience.

Open daily 7:30am to 9:30pm, closed on Mondays

Piazza della Signoria, Florence
www.rivoire.it

An Anglo-Russian third culture kid, **Maria Rees** was brought up in Fiesole and finally gave into the urge to come back to Italy after completing a degree in music at Bristol University. A true Fiorentina at heart, while attempting to carve a career in journalism, she is making up for lost time starting with the local *pasticceria*.

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