

# Villa Rossa

Number 54 | Summer 2022

## Voice



BACK TO

*Florence*

**On the cover**

Summer semester 2022 students

**Matteo Romanello, Regan Ryan, Christopher Semenza, and Nicole Pullano**  
on the terrace in front of the Church of San Miniato overlooking Florence

*(Photo by Francesco Guazzelli)*



The **VILLA ROSSA VOICE** is a  
Syracuse University Florence publication.  
We welcome your questions and comments.

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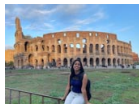
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## Letter from the Director

*This issue is a particularly meaningful one for us here at Syracuse Florence since it captures in vivid detail all the emotions we have experienced in re-opening our program following its closure due to the Corona virus pandemic. Having to put some 350 students on a plane within a matter of days in late February 2020, sending our 70+ staff and faculty members home, and somberly shuttering our doors and windows indefinitely is an experience that will forever be seared into our memories. Yet, the fact that we were one of the first study abroad programs in the world to get back on our feet, however cautiously, one year later will also remain an enduring point of pride for us.*

*It may now be a Covid-19 cliché to say this, but that makes it no less true: in many ways, we turned this immense challenge into an opportunity. The long hours logged by our academic staff, professors, and teaching assistants in creating dynamic virtual classrooms helped us discover innovative new ways to educate that have now helped us transform the physical classroom experience. Having to change what and how we offer everything from fieldtrips and activities to calendars and academic sessions pushed study abroad staff on both sides of the ocean to think outside the box in surprisingly creative and interesting ways.*

*I would like to think that all our stress and hard work in the face of so much uncertainty prepared our soil with the kind of seeds we needed for inspiring new growth. Not only are we looking forward to being back at full capacity in Spring 2023, but thanks to the astoundingly generous 10-million-dollar donation from Syracuse Florence alumnus Daniel D'Aniello and his wife Gayle, we are also set to fulfill a few long-term dreams like making our premises more accessible to people with disabilities and funding scholarships for less privileged students. Our future is as bright as it has ever been.*

*Sasha Perugini*



## Letter from the Editor

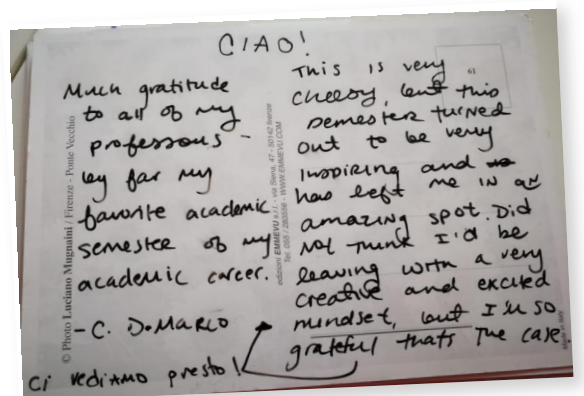
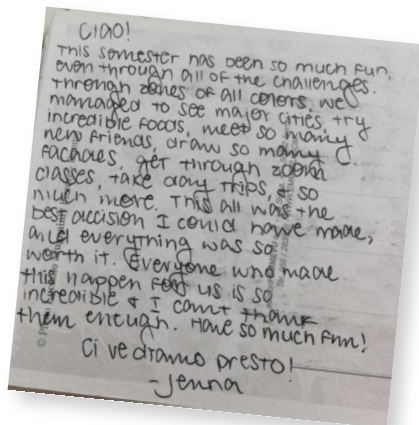
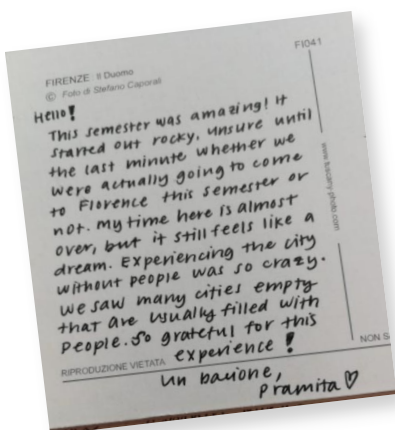
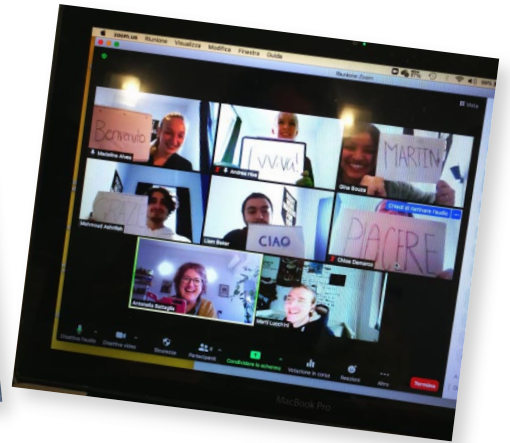
*After a yearlong pandemic-imposed hiatus, we are thrilled to return with a new issue of our inhouse magazine featuring contributions from students and alumni. This publication is a permanent container and showcase for the memories created while attending our program here in Florence. It could be 5 decades ago like Martin Inn, who tells us what it was like to be a student of color in 1960s Florence (page 10); 30 years ago, like architecture student Jonathan Cowles who shares his black and white photos from the 90s (page 12); or 6 months ago, like Angelina Zhang who created a photo essay of her experience as one of the first students to return after our closure due to Covid.*

*Time and again our contributors remind us how transformational studying abroad can be. It might come as a surprise that the benefits of this kind of education can run both ways. Professors also learn something from their students, as Lorenza Tromboni recounts in her story on teaching through the pandemic (page 7). As she mentions, welcoming students back after our closure was incredibly heartwarming, with the first small group in Spring 2021, followed by a larger group in the fall. This was a special cohort of students, with no one seeming to take the experience for granted. Such appreciation is reflected in all the articles here, including odes to food (page 8), literature (page 18), and artisan work (page 14). We do our best here at Syracuse Florence to make sure there is truly something for everyone.*

*Michelle Tarnopolsky*



In the Spring of 2021, Syracuse Florence re-opened its doors to students after a year of pandemic lockdown. The intrepid students who made the courageous choice to study abroad during that time were rewarded with an unforgettable and truly unique experience that included having Italy's monuments and piazzas practically all to themselves. These images, including samples from a postcard project completed in their Italian classes, capture what it was like. For the project, Cartoline Spring 2021, *il filo dei ricordi*, students were asked to recount their experience in an imaginary postcard to a friend or family member.



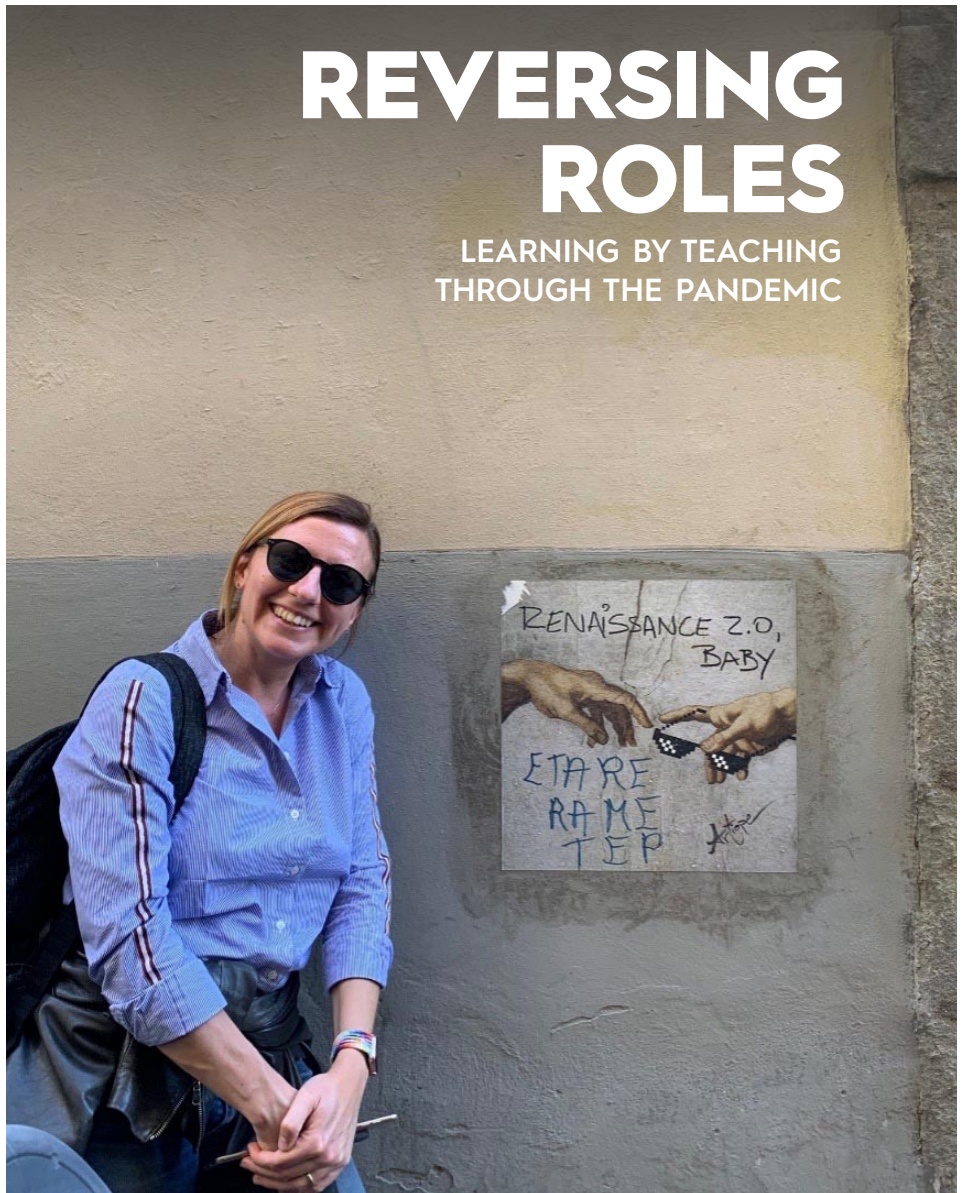
by Professor Lorenza Tromboni

I have spent most of my professional life as a researcher. For years I spent my days working in libraries amid musty manuscripts, rare books, and row upon row of essay collections. I have also worked in groups with other colleagues, but I have always conducted research alone. I sacrificed a lot for this work, first in Italy and then abroad – in Germany and France – but I liked it, it was my vocation. But as time passed, I started to feel like something was missing. All those years spent accumulating information and studying texts from the past only to share them with a small group of colleagues; the discussions and presentations among academics alone; the awards and the publications. I no longer felt as satisfied as I had in the beginning; I felt the need to share and communicate more. Teaching; that's what I was missing!

Yes, because for various reasons my career I had not offered me the chance to teach on a regular basis. Sure, I had taught groups of PhD students and others in Italy and France, but teaching was not an integral part of my routine and I missed it very much.

In 2019, after working at the University of Strasbourg, I wanted to return to Italy to be closer to my family and start a phase of my career in which I could bring together all I had done up to that point. Then I was presented with the opportunity I had been awaiting for so long: a teaching position. Finally! It was September 2019, and I had a course of my own at Syracuse Florence in which we discussed fake news – a subject that had dominated media analysis at every level after the 2016 US elections – hate speech, and other communications-related phenomena foregrounded by social media. It was my first semester and I had nine students. I still remember their names and faces, how they participated, their impressions, our informal talks, and my lectures. By the end of that semester one thing was clear: I was the one learning the most.

I was excited to have a large class for my second semester so I could try out my method and share different perspectives. I felt very comfortable with them and, seeing as it was a communications course, I made it a habit to comment on current news items in class. A few weeks into the semester we started hearing about an epidemic that was claiming victims in China and we tried understanding together what was false and what was true of the confusing information arriving in Europe: the video of the food blogger eating bat soup, the hos-



# REVERSING ROLES

LEARNING BY TEACHING  
THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

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"They said they learned a lot of practical things from my class but I believe I was the one who learned the most!"

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pital in Wuhan built in one week, the declarations of politicians, the images of the sick. And while the World Health Organization started issuing the first press releases, our campus was closed as a precaution, just before the epidemic hit all of Italy with a force we will never forget.

After a period of silence, the students and I resumed contact. By then they had returned home, but classes continued. The bond between us grew stronger than ever as they struggled to participate within the constricts of the time difference as well as stress and fear over an epidemic that was passing through Europe and now landing in the United States. The students demonstrated maturity, willingness, and respect for the work I was doing from afar. At the end of that semester, I was immensely

grateful for and pleasantly surprised by the qualities that distance learning had brought out in them.

Fall 2021 was a special semester with the first sizable group of Syracuse students returning to Florence in person, and their enthusiasm was shared by everyone – faculty and staff alike. I had a small class of students who came with a strong desire to begin again and learn as much as possible. Stories about the pandemic intertwined with the lessons and our experiences helped me explain some key concepts about communication and how the media works. Covid was not over yet, but we managed to distance ourselves from it a bit and use it as a case study for fake news and the 'infodemic' – a pathology more persistent than the virus itself.

It was a short, concentrated semester, and the students themselves concentrated more. They were unable to travel outside Italy like they have in the past, so they were more focused than usual on their host country. We worked, laughed, argued, and talked about the future and their expectations, how they see the world, and how they deal with information-related problems and beyond. They said they learned a lot of practical things from my class but, again, I believe I was the one who learned the most.



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# SAVORING ITALY

A PHOTO ESSAY

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by Angelina Zhang (Syracuse University)

My semester abroad in Florence felt like a piece of life straight out of an oil painting: the colorful market tents, the absence of asphalt concrete, the softly gleaming dawns and dusks rendering the century-old buildings' yellow tint. Every photo captured became a time capsule that preserved the timeliness of this city. Even more impressive than the uncontainable panoramic view from Piazzale Michelangelo was the bustling life happening on every corner of the narrow, cobblestoned streets. The Mercato Centrale always served the most authentic dish while the weekly farmers' market provided the freshest produce.

We were invited to be a part of the city, to contemplate centuries-old statues and weave through the finest museums that display the historical glory of the city. We also ventured outside of the city from time to time. We surveyed and sketched the Grand Canal in Venice while Professors Ponsi and Profeta depicted the surrounding architecture in the finest detail. We invited ourselves into the ancient ruins of the Roman Empire and while standing beneath decaying columns, we gasped and pondered the ambition of our ancestors.

The essence of studying abroad is defined by the invitation to enter an immersive learning environment – it was as if the textbook was unfolding all around us. We spoke Italian phrases to buy fine Tuscan produce while standing before churches constructed by the hands of the greatest Renaissance architects. As an observer behind the lens, I take pride in the photos I captured that preserve the best of our times.







A sketch by the author of Piazza Savonarola, the square outside Syracuse Florence's main entrance.

# SKETCHING FLORENCE

## REFLECTING ON PROFESSOR KRACZYNA'S DRAWING CLASS

by Benjamin Ashton Alexander (Harvard College)

**A**ny attempt to summarize how impactful my Florentine Sketchbook class has been this semester always leads to one word: enlightening. At first glance, it may appear daunting for an individual who hasn't produced a single piece of art since sixth grade to join a class apparently filled with various art and illustration majors. But in truth, not only was I inspired weekly by the talent and craftsmanship I interacted with each day in class, but I also felt privileged, almost at an advantage that I would be learning to explore a (basically) new means of communication in a completely new environment!

Because this class taught me art is exactly this: a means of communication. I so value my experience in Professor Kraczyna's class because it was never just about creating art or even learning about

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"I was also challenged to discover new ways to capture my experiences and share them in a manner that makes sense to others."

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Florence; rather, it was the marriage between the two. Not only did I get to explore a beautiful city with such a rich artistic history, but I was also challenged to discover new ways to capture my experiences and share them in a manner that makes sense to others. How thrilling it is to ask yourself to produce the amazement I experience when gazing upon the Uffizi's reflection on the Arno River or the inexplicable astonishment when walking through a piazza? This class has been a tremendous experience and I am so blessed to have learned to communicate it with others!

# FROM ALOHA TO ALLORA

## SOUVENIRS OF A SEMESTER IN FLORENCE

by Martin Inn (Syracuse Class of 1966)

One day in 1965, I was sitting in a classroom on 'The Hill', looking out over the bleak snowy Syracuse campus, and seriously wondering how I could survive another year in Upstate New York. Growing up in Hawaii, I had never seen snow, nor felt temperatures colder than 68 degrees. Now I was living and studying in a cold snowy climate, in what seemed like a different culture, far from where I had grown up. I was looking for the Aloha Spirit where there was none.

In the dining hall, I had met classmates who had gone abroad for a semester to study in Florence. It seemed to me that they had returned as different people, in the same bodies and clothes, but otherwise totally transformed, although I couldn't figure out exactly what now made them different. It was almost as if they had been kidnapped by aliens and had received a new-person implant.

Somehow their outlook had changed; the details of how they dressed were a little different, and they were newly sophisticated in a way that I didn't understand. I tried to talk with them about their experiences in Italy, but they were like war vets who didn't want to talk about the war except with other vets, perhaps feeling others wouldn't understand what they had experienced.

My curiosity was piqued, just at the point when I desperately wanted to get out of Syracuse. It was then that I went for an interview with Harold Vaughn, the new director of the Syracuse in Florence Program. Although my grades were not exactly exemplary, he took a chance and admitted me. I feel eternally grateful to him, because my trip to Florence marked one of the most important periods of my life. I, too, was going to be transformed.

That summer, along with the other students in the program, I boarded the *USS Constitution* in New York City and sailed under the Verrazano Bridge to begin my adventure with a ten-day voyage across the Atlantic, with stops at six exotic ports of call.

While on board, we began our first Italian language lessons, studying for four hours in the morning and then going over our lessons in the afternoon by the pool. Seriously? There were about 36 students in our program, with a ratio of two or three girls to one guy; it was truly a 20-year-old's dream.



The author with the Buoninsegni family in the fall of 1965

My Italian teacher was Maria Pia Casanuova, who also presided over group meals during which we could speak only Italian. The goal was to get us fluent enough to get by with our Italian host families as soon as we met them. Unlike today, almost no one in Italy spoke English, so it would be a sink-or-swim situation. During the voyage, I became close friends with one of my favorite teachers, Piero Colacicchi, a sculptor whose father ran the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence.

The trip across the Atlantic in the summer was mostly smooth sailing. When we passed the Azores, the first land we had seen in almost a week, our anticipation grew. At our first stop, Casablanca, we spent the day walking around, and I decided to buy a *djellaba*—the local male garment—to wear. I must have been a sight to behold—a tall Asian male wearing hiking boots, jeans, and a picturesque long white hooded robe. We also visited Gibraltar, where we hiked to the top of the Rock and were greeted by the famous monkeys, before going on to Majorca, Sardinia, Naples, and Genoa.

On the bus from Genoa to Florence, we passed by the famous quarry at Carrara that provided the marble for Michelangelo's *David*. The white marble looked like snow on the peaks of the dark mountains. We finally arrived in Florence that evening, and our host families picked us up in front of the Villa Rossa in Piazza Savonarola. My hosts, the Buoninsegni family, Luisa, Lisa, and Paolo, took me home to their beautiful villa overlooking Florence in the hills near Fiesole. My bedroom window looked out over the rolling vineyards and olive trees towards the town of Settignano, and each morning I could hear church bells ringing in the distance.

The first night with my family, I was served kidneys for dinner. I didn't want to seem impolite or ungrateful, but I had just become a vegetarian a month earlier, and I had a hard time swallowing each bite. Every morning, the *contadino*, the local farmer, would come and bring me a bottle of milk, still warm from his cow, for my breakfast of milk with bread and jam.

To get to school, I walked a mile along Via Benedetto da Maiano to the nearest bus *fermata*. During the thirty-minute bus ride down the hill, it was apparently hard for people not to stare at me. Not only was I the only Asian in that part of the country, but I also had long hair and was dressed in a rather outrageous manner. I wore a short silk scarf tied around my neck like a cowboy, jeans, and hiking boots. I was also the tallest person on the bus and able to look over everyone's head.

One morning as I was leaving the villa, to my surprise Garland Jeffreys, a Syracuse classmate who had been on the program the year before, showed up at the front door. It was as if I went into a time warp because I had just said goodbye to him in NYC three weeks earlier. He had also lived with the Buoninsegni family and had become close to Luisa, the *mamma* of the house. I later discovered that Garland was the first African American to be admitted into the Program. He was initially rejected because it was thought that Italians would not accept an African American to live among them.

One day, Garland took me on a hike through the vineyards behind the villa and up towards Fiesole. We approached a medieval tower hidden in the forest on the other side of a large pond. We had to take a rowboat to get to the landing on the opposite side where we were greeted by a large blue-and-white Della Robbia terracotta. It was truly a fairytale setting.

One of the most memorable afternoons early in the semester was having tea with Signora Teraldo in her historic villa where Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning had lived and written some of their most memorable poems.

My usual routine after morning classes at the Villa Rossa was a walk around the center of Florence and a visit to the Bargello or the Uffizi, or to some other iconic site, where I would eat my lunch. Sometimes I would climb to the top of the cupola of the Duomo and munch on panini or sit on one of the footings of the Ponte Santa Trinità to watch the Arno flow by.

All that beauty and art at every turn had a profound effect on me. I would ask myself: "Why is art so important to us?" "Why is music so important?" "Why do we pursue beauty?" My answer was, "Because it feeds our soul and spirit and it's this that makes us human." As all that visual stimulation to my brain began to work its magic, I felt myself changing with each day I spent in Florence. Things began to move for me.

Being away from the US with all its troubles and its involvement in Vietnam gave me a new world perspective. My values and what I treasured most changed. Was I becoming more human or cultured or sensitive? Was this change in me the same transformation that I perceived in my classmates who had gone before me?

In mid-semester, we had to change families and I moved in with a family named Cini. The head of the household had a furniture business with his wife, two daughters, Marta and Monica, and a son, Giovanni. Their *nonna* also lived with them. She would tell me stories about the war and how the bombs fell on Florence, destroying her city. It was a portent; a year later, she wrote to me describing the terrible floods that devastated Florence and so much of the precious art that I had been so fortunate to see.

Christmas was coming, and I spent my last night in Florence walking through her deserted streets on my way home to my family. I said goodnight to the streetwalkers in front of the *Duomo* and to the city I had come to love. A man originally named Tony Benedetto would sing about how he left his heart in San Francisco; well, I left my heart in Florence that night.

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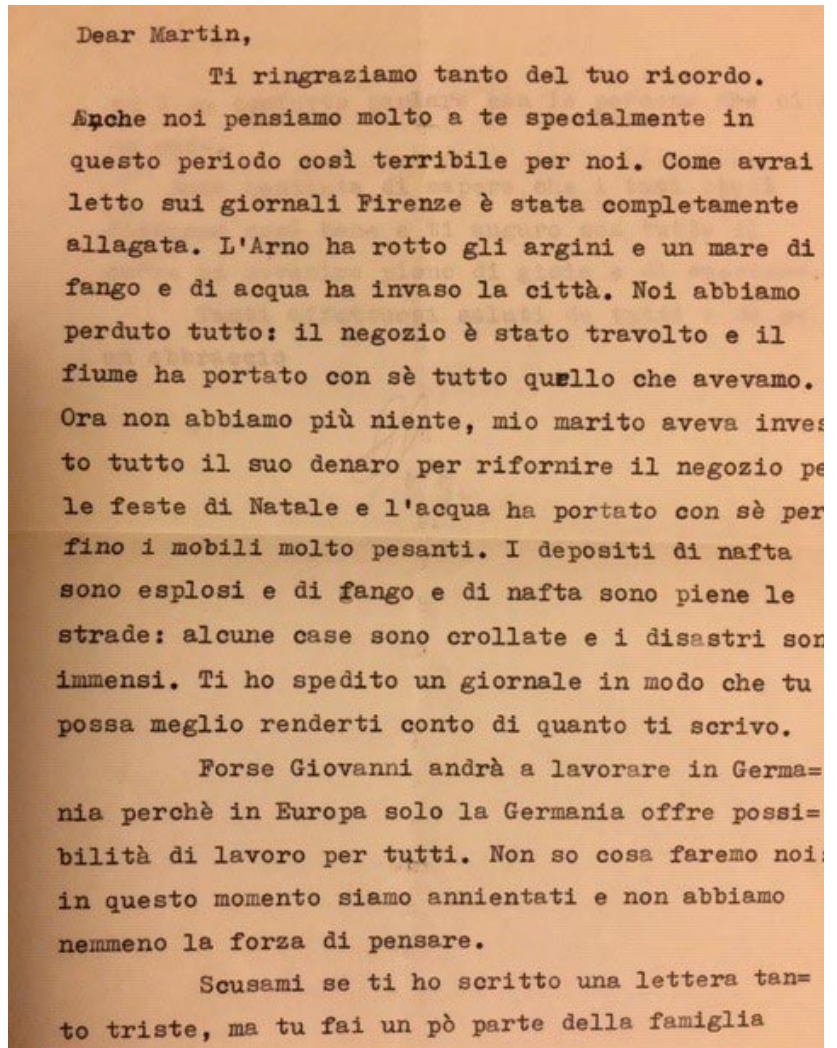
"A man originally named Tony Benedetto would sing about how he left his heart in San Francisco; well, I left my heart in Florence that night."

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When I left that semester, I returned to Syracuse to finish my last semester before graduating. Every now and then I would have a recurring dream of returning to visit Florence but not being able to see all the great art that was important to me.

In 2019 I was fortunate enough to visit Florence again and to visit the Villa Rossa. I went on a tour with Dr. Sean Nelson to revisit some of my favorite sites and was also guided by Paola Vojnovic, Elaine Ruffolo, and Carrie Anne Murgidge, who all had the same experience of attending Syracuse in Florence and being transformed by this incredible city. I also had the pleasure of meeting Sylvia Hetzel who runs the library at the Villa Rossa and urged me to write something for this publication.

I will always feel grateful to Harold Vaughn, who took a chance with me, and gave me the opportunity to change. Although I wasn't able to find the Aloha Spirit in Upstate New York, I discovered it within me while studying in Florence. This was my Renaissance. These are my souvenirs of Florence and my semester in Italy so many years ago.



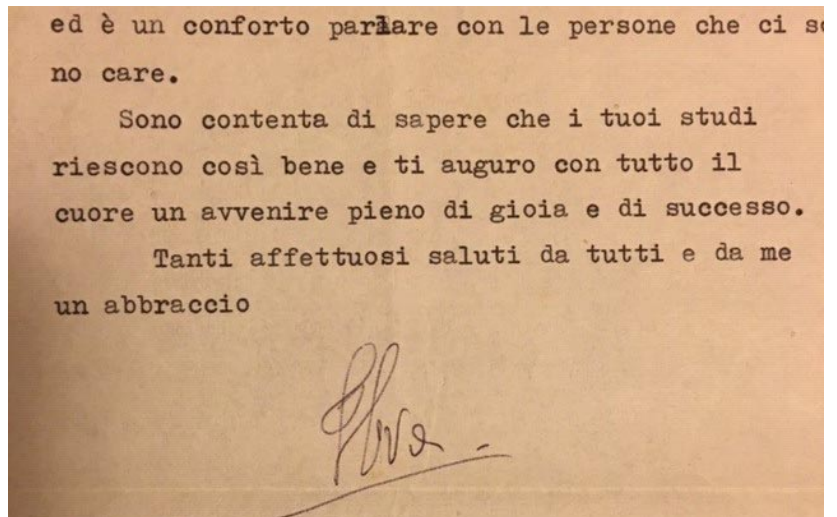
Dear Martin,

Ti ringraziamo tanto del tuo ricordo.

Anche noi pensiamo molto a te specialmente in questo periodo così terribile per noi. Come avrai letto sui giornali Firenze è stata completamente allagata. L'Arno ha rotto gli argini e un mare di fango e di acqua ha invaso la città. Noi abbiamo perduto tutto: il negozio è stato travolto e il fiume ha portato con sé tutto quello che avevamo. Ora non abbiamo più niente, mio marito aveva investito tutto il suo denaro per rifornire il negozio per le feste di Natale e l'acqua ha portato con sé perfino i mobili molto pesanti. I depositi di nafta sono esplosi e di fango e di nafta sono piene le strade: alcune case sono crollate e i disastri sono immensi. Ti ho spedito un giornale in modo che tu possa meglio renderti conto di quanto ti scrivo.

Forse Giovanni andrà a lavorare in Germania perchè in Europa solo la Germania offre possibilità di lavoro per tutti. Non so cosa faremo noi: in questo momento siamo annientati e non abbiamo nemmeno la forza di pensare.

Scusami se ti ho scritto una lettera tanto triste, ma tu fai un pò parte della famiglia



ed è un conforto parlare con le persone che ci sono care.

Sono contenta di sapere che i tuoi studi riescono così bene e ti auguro con tutto il cuore un avvenire pieno di gioia e di successo.

Tanti affettuosi saluti da tutti e da me un abbraccio

Papa



CINI  
• Viale Milton 65  
FIRENZE

A letter from the Cini's, the author's second host family, after the flood of 1966

# PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORIES

by Jonathan Cowles  
(Syracuse Florence alumnus '90/'91)

I was studying architecture at Syracuse University and to my amazement we were told that our fourth year was to be spent in Florence! That had to be the best year of all. I have such fond memories of the Villa Rossa and the program there. We all enjoyed all the classes, from taking Italian language to wine tasting. I also took photography so I could use the darkroom to develop my film. Part of the architectural curriculum was a field trip class where we would go to various cities and learn about the great architecture and culture. That year was a big wake-up call for me to see that my life at home was very different than other parts of the world and there is so much to see. I will be back for sure! Currently I'm an architect in Phoenix AZ with a wife and 2 sons, and still taking film photos!



Camping out in the Cinque Terre (I'm on the right)



The light coming through the window was amazing



Camping on the Island of Vulcano



At the Vatican



You know this one but the fun story here was a snow ball war with an adjacent school!



Boat ride in Venice



The gang in our apartment on Viale Don Minzoni



# GLUTEN-FREE IN ITALY

## TIPS FOR CELIAC TRAVELLERS

by Amreeta Verma (Syracuse University)

**B**efore studying abroad in Italy, I was nervous because I have celiac disease and need to maintain a gluten-free diet. To my pleasant surprise, it was really easy to find food I could eat. Italian culture is centered around food and as the number of people with celiac disease has grown in Italy, many more gluten-free options have become available. Here are 5 tips and tricks I used while in Italy, and a list of my favorite places to find gluten-free food in Florence.

### 1. LEARN HOW TO SAY “SENZA GLUTINE”

While many Italians are familiar with the phrase “gluten free,” it was very helpful to learn how to say “senza glutine” in Italian. If you’re nervous about being able to communicate your dietary restriction(s), you can order an allergen card online that has a description in Italian. That way you can guarantee there are no communication issues! On menus, you can also look for the GF symbol or Allergen #1 which usually represents wheat, but it is always important to double check with the waiter to make sure an item is safe to order.

### 2. SHOP AT THE ESSELUNGA GROCERY STORE

With multiple locations in Florence and elsewhere in Italy, Esselunga has a wide variety of gluten-free food available. There are several different brands of rice and bean-based pastas, offering various shapes like spaghetti, penne, and lasagna. Just be careful to read the packaging because the GF pasta is in the same aisle as the regular pasta! There are a bunch of different gluten-free bread options as well, but the most popular brand is Schar. Equilibrio is a prominent brand for celiac-safe snacks like cookies, plum cakes, and madeleines. I always ate a snack on the way to school, and the café at the Villa Rossa sells a few different Equilibrio products too!

### 3. GLUTEN FREE ON-THE-GO

As an architecture student, I went on a lot of overnight field trips to other cities in Italy. Sometimes we only had 45 minutes for a lunch break, not enough time to order a sit-down meal. I learned it isn’t always easy to get a quick gluten-free meal because the ingredients aren’t always ready to go. To make sure I always had something to eat, I kept snacks in my bag, like granola bars, and I would make a sandwich in the morning, usually with Nutella or jam. Sometimes, I would keep a few slices of GF bread in my bag and then order meat and cheese at a shop to assemble my own sandwich! That way I would still have a fresh meal like everyone else, even if I couldn’t order a hot panino.

### 4. HELPFUL APPS

The Associazione Italiana Celiachia (AIC) has an app where you can look for gluten-free restaurants near you. They have a 15-day trial version that I used during my first few weeks in Florence before I got acquainted with the area. There’s also an online database for GF restaurants called Guida Rapida Celiaci that has restaurants organized by category. If you don’t want to cook or eat out at a restaurant, delivery apps like Uber Eats and Deliveroo allow you to input gluten-free as a keyword and find restaurants for you.

### 5. DON’T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS

All the waitstaff I encountered in Italy was very accommodating of my allergy and were willing to help me find an option on their menu for me to eat. Many restaurants allow you to alter a meal so it’s gluten-free by switching out the type of pasta or bread that comes with it. Don’t let your allergy hinder your chance to try new foods while abroad, especially when Italy has so many great options for you to try!

“To my pleasant surprise,  
it was really easy to find food I could eat.”

### MY FLORENCE FAVORITES:

**1. Ciro and Sons** was my favorite gluten-free restaurant in Florence. They have a separate gluten-free kitchen so there is no cross-contamination with other allergens and anything on the menu can be made without gluten. My favorite dishes were the Gnocchi alla Sorrentina and the Diavola Pizza.

**2. Ristorante Lorenzo de’ Medici**, another gluten-free dedicated restaurant, is located right across the street from Ciro and Sons! My favorite meal on their menu was the truffle ravioli.

**3. Risotteria Melotti** has a fully celiac-friendly menu with rice-based antipasti, primi piatti, and dolci. It has 3 Italian locations -- Firenze, Roma, and Verona -- and they even have a branch in NYC. I went to both the Firenze and Roma locations. The menus vary slightly, but the arancini was great at both places.

**4. Gelateria Santa Trinita** is across the Arno River but has a great selection of gluten-free gelato and gluten-free cones too!

**5. Antico Caffè Torino** is a small café down the street from the Villa Rossa that has a rotating menu so there are always new options to try. They have various different salads and risottos that I would buy for lunch if I hadn’t cooked something the night before.

I hope your time abroad is as food-filled as mine. **Buon appetito!**

# MAKING IT IN A MAN'S WORLD

MEETING LEATHER WORKER STEPHANIE LEHMANN

by Laveena Lee (Syracuse University)

**T**his past spring, I studied abroad in Florence, Italy for the first time. My first time in Europe. My first semester away from my college. A lot of firsts. In each of these, there were little windows of time in which something magical happened, a moment that was pure in the sense that it was natural and un-staged. One of these was a class site visit. This might sound minor compared to other travel stories you would expect, but this window of time was one of the most educational, beautiful, meaningful moments I had the opportunity of experiencing. It was a visit to a *pelletteria*, Italian for leather shop.

Antonella Salvia, our Italian professor, had asked our class to meet on the other side of the Ponte Vecchio, a part of the city that I had not visited before. All I knew about this day's trip was that we were going to visit a woman-owned artisan shop. I met up with two other girls from my class and we sat

"If I am a success, it is all because of me. It represents absolute freedom for me, a means of empowerment."

around a circular bench in excitement, searching the sea of people for Antonella's signature red hair. Finally, a flowing purple coat and a cute red bob whizzed past us on a bike, and we heard "Buongiorno

*ragazze, come state?"*

Together we followed Antonella through the narrow streets until we finally arrived outside a tiny shop. Its handwritten sign read "Borse e Portafogli/handmade fatto a mano". Standing at the doorway in her dark green apron, brown leather boots, and low bun was Stephanie Lehmann, a German born leather worker. She welcomed us through her mini doorway into her workshop where she makes all her products.

The first thing I noticed were all the colors. Above our heads was a canopy of leather pieces piled one over the other. Tools and gadgets were stacked up against one wall. On the other side were drawers and cabinets full of shimmering add-ons, buttons of all shapes, and devices that I had never seen before. A leather bag and wooden clamp stood on a large workbench among pins, chisels, paints, glues, and other tools. Everything was organized and ready to be used.

Stephanie introduced herself. Speaking in Italian, she explained to us what her specialties were and what leather work really looks like. We asked a barrage of questions including how long she had worked in the field, what the process was from start to finish, and why she had a passion for this craft.

As I looked around the workshop, I was amazed that all her products were made by hand. There were pendants shaped like Florence's cathedral dome in brown, blue, black, and green; wallets, purses, and backpacks in various shades, some with suede and others with intricate patterns, all with the embossed *Frau Leman* logo.

It just so happened that we were all girls on this trip, and we spoke about the role of gender within the artisan industry. After living in Italy for three months, I had noticed I had rarely seen a woman-owned artisan shop. For me, it is of utmost importance to represent women in society and change the dialogue around gender roles.

I asked Stephanie what it meant to be a woman in this field, and she explained that,

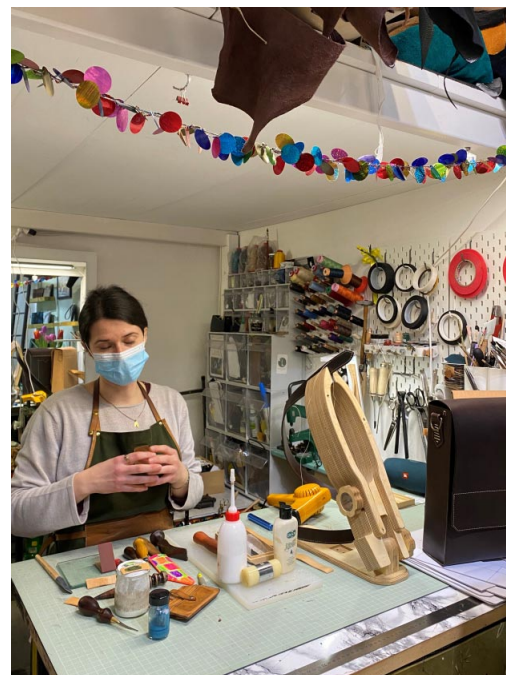
"A man who comes here would trust another man much more when it comes to craftsmanship. There is this stereotype, this prejudice, that craftwork -

Lehmann in the doorway of her shop

manual work- is reserved for men and men only, even if it's changing for my generation. But, if I am a success, it is all because of me. It represents absolute freedom for me, a means of empowerment." By the end of our visit, I understood a lot more about leather making, and I also had an appreciation for how hard Stephanie Lehmann works and how much she loves what she does. This little window of time, only about two and a half hours, was an experience that I will never forget. Stephanie's story inspired me very much, and I hope it will for others as well.



Lehmann holding up a piece of crocodile skin



Lehmann with the tools of her trade



Photos by Laveena Lee

Photos by Francesco Guazzelli



# ONE OF A KIND

## VISITING WOMEN ARTISAN WORKSHOPS

Some artisan materials on display at the event.

**D**uring the 2022 spring semester, eight Italian language classes visited the workshops of eight Florentine women artisans to learn about their ancient crafts. The project, jointly organized by Community Engagement Consultant Zama Mbense, Academic Office Assistant Michelle Tarnopolsky and Italian Department Coordinator Loredana Tarini, was capped off with an event at the Villa Rossa in which the artisans displayed their wares and a film about the project was screened (viewable on our Youtube channel [here](#)). Professor Tarini kicked things off by describing the project and introducing various students who delivered moving testimonials about the experience. Then two distinguished guests addressed the guests: Alessandro Sorani, the president of Con-fartigianato, with whom the project was organized, and Florence Town Councillor for Equal Opportunities Benedetta Albanese. The event was a heartfelt tribute to the treasures Florence offers our students, who were very inspired by how these women keep these important traditions alive.



Watching the film about the project by Michelle Tarnopolsky.



Town Councillor for Equal Opportunities Benedetta Albanese speaks to the Dini sisters.



Student Laveena Lee recounts her experience visiting a women-owned artisan shop with her class.



Professor Loredana Tarini addresses the audience.

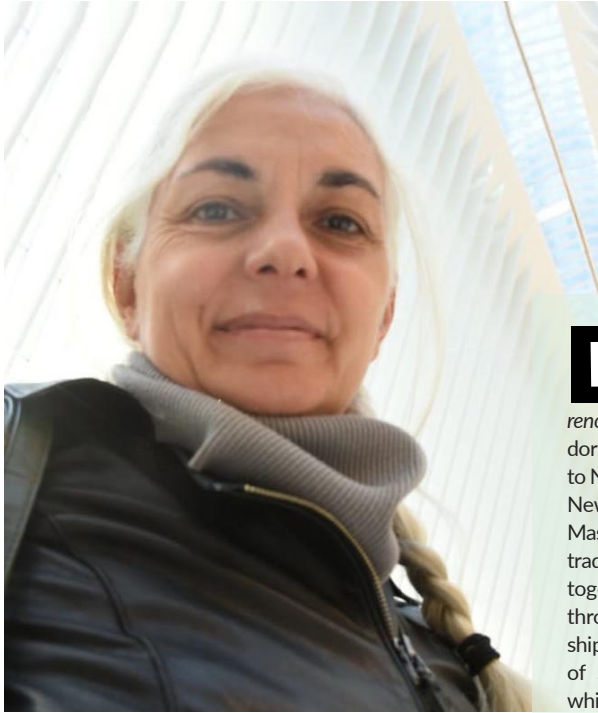


Artisans, event organizers, and Councillor Albanese in the garden of the Villa Rossa.

# FROM TUSCANY TO NYC

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
FRANKY FOUNDER  
ELENA FRIGENTI

by Antonia Mufarech  
(Northwestern University)



Elena Frigenti

**E**lena Frigenti was born in Livorno, Tuscany, and has worked as a journalist for over 30 years, contributing to *La Repubblica*, *Il Tirreno*, and women's magazines published by Mondadori Editore. In September 2019, a year after moving to New York City, she co-founded Franky in New York with her Florentine husband Massimo Basile. Like a gathering around a traditional *tavolo*, the online project brings together Italians and Italo-Americans through "words, beauty, food and friendship." Frigenti is currently writing the story of 500 Italian Americans, a project for which she is garnering the help of Syracuse Florence interns. All photos courtesy of Elena Frigenti.



Elena

Massimo



**AM: Why did you create Franky in New York?**

**EF:** Before moving to the U.S., we had this interest in Italian American culture, as we realized that Italians and

Italian Americans were not as connected as they should be, despite sharing common roots. So, we decided that it was time to deepen these bonds. We started brainstorming back in Italy, and when we moved here, we founded the organization. Our goal is to share any information that can be of interest to the community, such as news from Italy or stories about Italians living in America.

**AM: Why "Franky"?**

**EF:** The name Franky is a tribute to Frank Sinatra, who is a great example of an Italian American committed to achieving his goals. "Franky" is also a very common Italian American name in New York, a city that invites us to dream. "If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere..."

**AM: How would you describe your target community?**

**EF:** One thing that I have learned during this job is that there are different types of Italians: there are the Italian Italians, the Italian Americans, and the people who are not of Italian descent but feel Italian in some way. Italy actually means a lot to

the world, and I did not fully understand this until I moved to the United States. For example, I love my language, but I deeply understood the value and the beauty of the Italian language while being here, because I saw how much people love it. I like this new perspective that I have acquired, because I appreciate Italian culture even more.

"Italy actually means a lot to the world, and I did not fully understand this until I moved to the United States."

**AM: How has being from the Tuscan region inspired you to keep on writing about Italian culture despite living in the United States?**

**EF:** Being Tuscan is a big part of the deal I would say. I am very lucky to have been born there. First of all, the language—all the poets, such as Dante and Petrarch—were Tuscan, so it is a big reason to be proud of my roots. Each time I tell someone that I am Italian, I instantly feel like an object of wonder for the audience. But more specifically, when I say that I come from Tuscany, they are totally in awe of me! So I understand that I am really lucky to be from there, and it also makes it easier for me to be a bridge between the two cultures.

**AM: Can you tell us about your upcoming project, "Who's Who of Italian Americans"?**

**EF:** "Who's Who" will be a book, conceived as a directory, listing in alphabetical order the names of Italian Americans, with a brief biography for each. We want to tell the stories of everyone, and have celebrities next to ordinary people. Our goal is to have 500 biographies for the first edition, and these will mostly consist of actual interviews.

**AM: Why is it important to tell the stories of 'unsung heroes'?**

**EF:** The stories of famous people have already been told and are already known. Talking about the 'unsung heroes' is much more important, because they are the backbone of Italians who have helped Americans, and they deserve to be celebrated. It is important because we are losing track of our memory, so if we don't tell their stories, they will be forgotten. Also, sadly, the Italian community in the United States is losing the use of its own language. For example, many Italian American children do not speak Italian, and have lost this important part of the culture. Therefore telling the stories of these people is, in a way, keeping the Italian language and culture alive.

**AM: What do you miss the most about Tuscany?**

**EF:** The food. The people I love, of course. And I really miss the Mediterranean Sea. I was born in a coastal town, so I am used to having the sea in front of me. In Manhattan, I live on an island, so I can't complain. But it is not the Mediterranean. Hopefully I will be there next summer.



The "Parole & Pizza" event in an Italian pizzeria in downtown Manhattan



The first cycle of conversation in a Brooklyn café





# PRESENTING YOURSELF

## GENDER AND ARTIST WEBSITES

by Anna Wood  
(University of the South)

Website of Spanish artist Juan Muñoz

**Editor’s Note:** This article is an edited version of a paper the author submitted for the completion of her internship.

**T**his past spring semester, I interned at a small, local contemporary art gallery called Galleria Mentana. While I was gathering information on artists for the gallery, I was looking over hundreds of artist profiles, and I noticed patterns not between countries, but in how males and females represented themselves both on their websites and their Instagram pages. The results were somewhat shocking. Some of the main differences were in the font, website structure, language and text presentation, and inclusion or not of self-photographs and information. The main demographic of artists was Western European aged between 20 and 50. Older artists, in general, had less of a social media presence or even no website at all.

All the conclusions made during my research are based on the majority, and I understand there are always outliers and exceptions when making sweeping conclusions like the ones I have made. When making these assumptions, I felt backwards in my thinking and making gender-based stereo-

types, which was something that I wanted to be wrong about. However, this was not the case. As early as the first day, when I was looking at Dutch artists, I noticed how different the websites

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“As early as the first day, I noticed how different the websites of females were from those of menempowerment.”

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of women were from those of men. They were much more organized, with more brightly colored and pastel color schemes and more elaborate fonts. There was almost always a photo of the artist on the front page. The language was more explorative and loquacious. An example of their artwork was often shown on the homepage. I sometimes had to search extensively for contact information.

By contrast, males represented themselves in a much more structured and mechanical way using more “masculine,” neutral colors like gray, blue, black, and white. On occasion, there would be a photo of the artist on the front page, but typically it would only be found in the biogra-

phy portion. Something that surprised me was that often the photo was in black and white. Given that it is 2022, I was not expecting this. I wondered if this was for more aesthetic purposes. Most, if not all, of the artist’s works would be on the homepage organized in some form of collage or columns. Very rarely did I have to move to another tab to find the works of art.

The opportunity to explore artists from all over Europe was an interesting space that I do not think I would have been able to experience without the internship at Galleria Mentana. The stereotypical differences between men and women in their representations of themselves were intriguing and fascinating. Because in 2022, people and works of art seem so modernized and fluid, it was interesting that there were still similarities in these predisposed ideologies that were held towards genders.



Website of Dutch artist Elisa Eekhout

BUY ART - SUPPORT UKRAINE



Peace. Truth. The People.  
Ukraine Forever.

Website of Ukrainian artist Tatyana Ostapenko



Anna Kraczyna and John Hooper. Photo by Gaia Stampa

# A NOSE LOST IN TRANSLATION

JOHN HOOPER AND ANNA KRACZYNA'S NEW VERSION OF PINOCCHIO

by Antonia Mufarech (Northwestern University)

**C**arlo Lorenzini, whose pen name was Carlo Collodi, was a Florentine journalist and satirist born in 1826. He contributed to many cultural and political periodicals and began writing for children in the mid-1870s. Collodi's "The Adventures of Pinocchio" was published in 1881 in installments in the children's newspaper *Il Giornale per i bambini*. Two years later, it was published in book form. One of the most universally recognized and translated books in the world, the message of the original has been lost in translation. John Hooper and Anna Kraczyna's 2021 English edition of *Pinocchio* aims to remove the sugar coating that has been sprinkled on this story, unveiling a more complex meaning.

**AM:** Given that *The Adventures of Pinocchio* is one of the world's most translated books, what sparked the idea of writing another translation?

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"I then realized that this book had many layers of meaning and that its message is not necessarily about what will happen if you tell a lie."

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**JH:** When we were both working at Stanford, Anna commented that she realized that *Pinocchio* is a much more complex book than people in the English-speaking world realized.

**AK:** I started reading the book to my son when he was a child—I believe very much in reading out loud to your children. As I was reading, the beauty of the Tuscan language was immediately apparent, and I had never realized how beautiful the

language is. I then realized that this book had many layers of meaning and that its message is not necessarily about what will happen if you tell a lie.

**AM:** How would you describe the real moral or message of the story?

**AK:** At the beginning of the book, the talking cricket says that if you don't go to school, you will become a donkey and people will take advantage of you. That's really the main message of the book: if you don't go to school, you'll become a donkey, live the life of a donkey, and you'll probably die the death of a donkey as well. And, you will remain a puppet. You won't become a human being. You can only become a human being if you go to school and if you learn from your mistakes.

**AM:** Why do you think this story went from a moral about education to one about lying? Did Disney's 1940 film have an impact on this mistranslation?

**JH:** Yes, I think it did. The nose business was definitely not central to Collodi's original project because it was published as an installment work in a newspaper for children. At the end of his first run of installments, Collodi leaves poor Pinocchio hanging by his neck from a tree and apparently dying—or maybe even dead. That's the way he wanted the story to stop. By that stage, the message transmitted is that if you don't go to school and get yourself an education, then you're going to get into trouble. But the message about lying and the nose growing—that hasn't been transmitted.

**AM: Are there any instances in which Pinocchio's nose actually grows in Collodi's first run of installments?**

**JH:** There are two occasions in which the nose grows, he does have that. But there's no association with lying. It's only in the book that he develops that idea. I think that then Disney sees this as a visually arresting metaphor that he can use. Therefore, he builds his film around fibbing—which was a perfectly just thing for an animator to do—but it definitely decontextualized the entire story.

**AM: Why is it so important to ensure that Collodi's original message and language are transmitted?**

**JH:** Collodi's original version had the deeper message of getting yourself informed and that, with some kind of social responsibility, you can acquire your humanity. Although this profound message is completely lost in the animated version, this version was incredibly successful. It was such a brilliant film that it overwhelmed the original story.

**AK:** I think that it was time for a translation that was as faithful as possible to the language that Collodi uses. I grew up in the countryside in Tuscany, so I have an ear for all the subtleties of the Tuscan language. Of course, it's impossible to

translate that totally faithfully into any other language. But, we really did a very careful job to remain as faithful as possible to Collodi, giving at the same time readability in English.

**AM: What makes this edition different from all the others?**

**AK:** This is not a rereading of what Collodi did—it's actually, truly, what he intended to do. And we tried to bring that out in the annotation.

**JH:** The annotation really is central to what we've done, because we've tried to strike a balance between readability on the one hand and faithfulness to the original story on the other. But having said that, what makes this book unusual and original is that it's got almost 200 notes in which we try to highlight all the different layers of reading the novel.

**AM: Why is "The Adventures of Pinocchio" a story that is still relevant nowadays?**

**JH:** I think that, first of all, a lot of what is mentioned in the text is as true about Italy now as it was then. Pinocchio is partly a satire on Italy and the Italians. For example, most Italians complain about the judicial system. In the book, Pinocchio goes to court and the judge is an ape, and Pinocchio gets put in prison for being gullible. On a wider scale, this story seems to be ringing a bell with a lot of people at the moment. Not just in

Italy, but I do think some of it is because people do see it as being a book about lying. That said, in an era of fake news—the whole issue of what is true and what is not true—this is very important. But it also rings other bells. Pinocchio is a kind of man-made robot. That too, I think, is of interest at a time of concern about artificial intelligence.

**AM: Why is Pinocchio such a prominent figure in Italian culture?**

**JH:** The very fact that Pinocchio is a puppet, that he is a creature without control of his destiny and susceptible to the manipulation of others, is part of the reason why Italians have taken him into their hearts. Italy's history is one of foreign domination, of Italians constantly having to be the puppets of other people, of other nations. Every army on Earth seems to have marched, at some point, across Italy. Pinocchio is one of those rare fictional characters in whom an entire population seems to be able to make out their reflections.

**AM: Why is it important that the language of Pinocchio is true Tuscan Italian?**

**AK:** Pinocchio has a very Tuscan language, which is recognizable as Tuscan to any Italian. But also, the inspiration that Collodi took from real people and places in Florence—it's all incredibly Tuscan. And the fact that Collodi's inspirations came from Tuscany is central to what Collodi was trying to do, which is to unify Italians.



Anna Kraczyzna beside her translation of Pinocchio. Photo by Antonia Mufarech



**SASHA PERUGINI**

In 2021 Dr. Perugini stepped down as Co-Chair of the Steering Committee for the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) Regional Committee for Tuscany to fully dedicate herself to her new role as AACUPI representative at EUASA (European University Association of Study Abroad). She remains a member of OSAC's steering committee and continues to work closely with the US Consulate General on safety and security matters. Between 2020 and 2022 Dr. Perugini was tasked by the Florence Chamber of Commerce and the Association of Business Owners of Tuscany, Florence, Arezzo, and Siena to lead seminars on women, governance, and the gender gap. In parallel she published her 6th book, *"Tacchi e Spilli: stereotipi e pregiudizi non solo al femminile"* (Mauro Pagliai Editore) on gender stereotypes and social media. She is now regularly invited to speak on women, leadership, and the gender gap at conferences and within cultural institutions: most recently at the Petrarca Society in Arezzo, the Dante Alighieri Association in Bern and for the National Association of Confcommercio. Dr. Perugini has been mentoring for the European Association for International Education Mentorship programme since 2013 and recently published an article about this experience with her last mentee, Dr. Arum Perwitasari. One of her lectures on international students, internationalization, and study abroad programs has been selected for the EAIE 2022 Conference in Barcelona.



**ERIC NICHOLSON**

In November 2021 Eric Nicholson gave a talk entitled "Female Artistry Outwits Male Grand Tourism in Seicento Rome: *The Feign'd Curtizans*, by Aphra Behn," at the Early Modern Rome 4 conference, held in Rome and Bracciano, and in March 2022 he presented on "Theatrical Travels Across Floating and Fortunate Islands, Mediterranean and Transatlantic," for the panel "Island Stages, Real and Fantastic," which he also organized, for the Renaissance Society of America Meeting in Dublin, Ireland. Earlier in 2021, he published the article "Crossing Borders with Satyrs, the Irrepressible Genre-Benders of Pastoral Tragicomedy," for the special issue of *The Italianist* on "Genre-Bending in Early Modern Performative Culture," edited by Jessica Goethals and Eugenio Refini. Most recently (April 2022), he recorded the English version of interviews in the documentary video "Save the Ukraine Monuments (SUM)," part of a 4CH project for the European Competence Centre for the conservation of cultural heritage.



**JONATHAN NELSON**

Jonathan Nelson had a number of publications in 2021. A lecture originally given at Syracuse, for Black History Month Florence, and then at the Courtauld Institute in London (2020), was published as "[Ethiopian Christians on the Margins: Symbolic Blackness in Filippino Lippi's 'Adoration of the Magi' and 'Miracle of St Philip'](#)" in the British journal *Renaissance Studies*. Another paper originally presented at Syracuse: "[Cancer in Michelangelo's Night. An analytical framework for retroactive diagnoses](#)" was published as part of the acts of a conference he co-edited: *Representing Infirmary. Diseased Bodies in Renaissance Italy*, (Abingdon, 2021). The same year, he co-authored "[Italian Renaissance Portraits that Disappoint: Isabelle d'Este, Francesco del Giocondo and Other Disgruntled Patrons](#)", in the acts of a conference he co-edited: *Bad Reception: Negative Reactions to Italian Renaissance Art* which appeared as a special number of the journal *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* LXIII. Finally, he published a short article with a new attribution to Botticelli: "[Botticelli Interprets Petrarch's Triumph of Love: An Overlooked Drawing in Ravenna](#)" in *Source: Notes in the History of Art*.



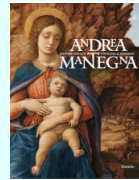
## MATTEO DUNI

In 2020, Matteo Duni co-edited a special issue of the journal *Genesis. Rivista della Società Italiana delle Storiche*, devoted to *Immaginare la stregoneria*. He also published two chapters in collective volumes: "La costruzione della strega: fama, indizi, prove (Italia settentrionale, XV-XVI secolo)", in Vincenzo Lagioia, Maria Pia Paoli, Rossella Rinaldi, eds., *La fama delle donne. Pratiche femminili e società tra Medioevo ed Età moderna* (Viella, 2020); and "Lawyers vs Inquisitors: Ponzinibio's De lamiis and Spina's De strigibus", in Jan Machielsen, ed., *The Science of Demons: Early Modern Authors Facing Witchcraft and the Devil* (Routledge, 2020). As the President of ASAUI he contributed a chapter on "L'Alta formazione internazionale e il suo valore per l'economia toscana" in the volume *Montecatini Terme Patrimonio dell'Umanità. Il valore di una città, le prospettive di un territorio* (Nerbini 2022). He also participated in the 2021 RSA virtual meeting with a paper titled "The Uncertainties of Their Delusory World": Friedrich Spee, Deluded Witches, and Italian Legal Skeptics".



## CARLA FRONTEDDU

In May 2022, Carla Fronteddu published an essay titled "Occhi Letali- Gli Invidiosi di Purgatorio XIII" (Deadly Eyes - The Enviars in Purgatory Canto XII) in which she comments on canto XIII of Dante's Purgatory and the passion envy. The essay is part of the collective commentary *Il Visibile Parlare. Cento voci contemporanee per la Commedia di Dante Purgatorio* (Visible Speech: A Hundred Contemporary Voices on Dante's Divine Comedy - Purgatory), published by *Le Lettere*.



## MOLLY BOURNE

In 2021 and 2022 Molly Bourne presented her research at two international conferences: Early Modern Rome 4, held in Rome in November 2021, and the Renaissance Society of America annual meeting, held in Dublin in April 2022. Both papers concerned Andrea Mantegna's non-extant decorations for the private chapel of Pope Innocent VIII, which he painted between 1488 and 1490 in the Villa Belvedere but that was destroyed in the eighteenth century.



## DOROTHEA BARRETT

In Winter 2021, Dorothea Barrett published the article "Eating Kebabs on the Ponte Vecchio: First-Year Writing and Global Perspectives at NYU Florence" in *Voyages: Journal of Contemporary Humanism*, Issue 11 (Florence, Italy: New York University at La Pietra), published online here.



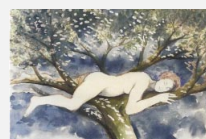
## SIMONE ANSELM

From 2020 to 2022, Simone Anselmi developed various training, consulting, and coaching initiatives, including a year-long project with work safety company *Tuttosicurezza*; two projects on marketing, communications, leadership, and personal development for freelancers in Tuscany; a marketing and communications strategies project on sustainable travel in Tuscany for local food and hospitality businesses; team-building activities for sustainable travel company *Quality Made*; and a business-development and customer-engagement project for executives of pharmaceutical company *Medtronic*.



## KIRSTEN STROMBERG

In 2021, Stromberg completed a residency and project/exhibition at Murate Art District as part of a research and exhibition platform called *Progetto RIVA* focusing on Florence's Arno River and involving artists, scientists, activists, curators, sociologists, architects, and others. Her piece was a synesthetic installation of visual art and musical scores inspired by the relational ecology of plants along the river.



## SWIETLAN N. KRACZYNA

In August 2021, an exhibition of Swietlan Kraczyna's artwork was held in the Galleria Comunale di Barga. Entitled "Dreaming Amongst the Ancient Limbs," the show featured a series of mixed media works inspired by Cesare Pavese's poem *Notturmo* depicting a nude female figure sleeping in a tree.

