

Villa Rossa

Voice

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FRIENDS OF
Syracuse Florence

On the cover

Marchese Bernardo Gondi with **Dr. Ruth Chen** and **Chancellor Kent Syverud**
celebrating the 60th anniversary of Syracuse Florence at Palazzo Gondi on May 30, 2019.
(Photo by Francesco Guazzelli)



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

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Letter from the Director

Some of our alumni still write to us to recall the days when they literally put their hands in dirt to help during the 1966 flood. Our students are and have always been an important piece of the kaleidoscopic Florentine world. Indeed, the relationship between Syracuse University and Florence has been one of mutual respect and support from the very start. And over these last 6 decades, it has only grown stronger. During that time, Syracuse has developed many strong relationships—one might go so far as to call them friendships—with many local institutions, businesses, and individuals. These partnerships have helped to make Syracuse an established part of the Florentine community introducing thousands and thousands of students to Italian culture and Florence's enduring beauty. The coronavirus emergency painfully highlighted how much the city misses its international students and how strong these relationships are and will continue to be. I have no doubt that this crisis will strengthen the bonds even further. This is why we have decided to dedicate this issue of the Villa Rossa Voice to our "Friends of Syracuse Florence."

Whether it be the Mayor's office welcoming students, our Misericordia providing health and wellness support, or the many individual internships that give students unique work experience, these relationships help set Syracuse Florence apart. However, they also offer the city a solid platform on which the soul of its constituents can shine. We have many friends to whom we pay tribute, including our host families (page 9); those who run the intercollegiate soccer tournament created by our dear departed colleague Jim Kauffman (page 6); and the Università di Firenze with whom we have particularly robust and lasting relationship (page 8). Without all these Friends in Florence, we simply could not be the outstanding program that we are, and we are honored to be a member of their community. Please enjoy this 34th edition of The Villa Rossa Voice.

Sasha Perugini



Letter from the Editor

The vast majority of the articles in this issue were written in Fall 2019, i.e. before the global coronavirus pandemic turned all our lives upside down. Just one piece, by Erick Lojano-Quispe (page 16), reflects on the experience of having his study abroad dreams dramatically cut short, along with some 350 other Syracuse Florence students, during the unforgettable Spring 2020 semester. Cindy Mei's hard-hitting take on studying abroad as a person of color (page 15), on the other hand, contains a foreshadowing of the pleas being made from the streets by Black Lives Matter protestors at the time of publication. Mei asks if her white peers ever notice the absence of non-white students abroad. One imagines that if they did not before, they will now, especially considering the invitation to understand the Other at the heart of the study abroad experience.

Sports have long provided an ideal forum for just this kind of exchange, as Elizabeth Fairman (page 13) and Nick DeSantis (page 6) discovered by participating in rowing and soccer, respectively, during their semester in Florence. Music, visual art, and food play similar roles in helping people of different backgrounds better understand each other, as conveyed here by Eunice Lee (page 11), Sharifa Lookman (page 14), and Camila Wanderley (page 17). Certainly such efforts to overcome ignorance will feel as compelling as ever when we finally welcome US students back to Florence in this new post-Covid-19 world.

Michelle Tarnopolsky



The Syracuse Florence calcetto team with the late Jim Kauffman

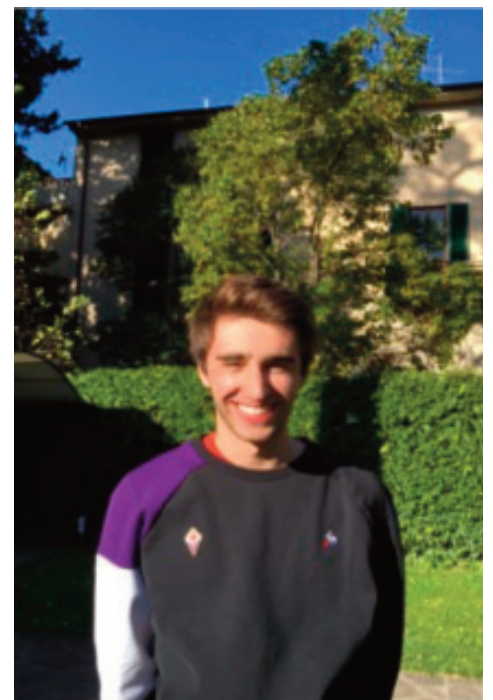
HAVING A BALL

PLAYING SOCCER IN FLORENCE AND REMEMBERING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR STUDENT LIFE JIM KAUFFMAN

by Nick DeSantis (Syracuse University)

When I decided to study abroad at Syracuse Florence, I never expected that would include playing soccer for the school team. Having grown up as a basketball player, catching and dribbling a ball feels most natural to me. Using my feet was a foreign concept, as was quite evident on the first day of practice. Because of my skill set, it was decided that I would be the team's goalie. I could use my hands, but I had a lot to learn about the game and the culture of the sport. Calcetto is a form of 5-on-5 soccer played on a field the size of a basketball court. Most public parks in Florence have a pitch for it. Each semester, the Lions Fountain Pub, which is popular with American students, sponsors a month-long co-ed calcetto tournament for all

the study abroad programs in the city. Lasting around thirty minutes, the games are fast-paced and electric. Students come to cheer on their school's team and the pitch gets extremely loud since fans stand directly on the sidelines. The atmosphere was my favorite part of the tournament. I met students from all over the US, from Spokane, WA to Tallahassee, FL. However, the most interesting players I shook hands with were the local Florentines. These soccer superstars were incredible players and scared the living daylights out of me as the goalie. It was clear the Italians were superior to us Americans, but they welcomed us, nevertheless. Everyone was in the tournament not only to play, but also to have fun.



The author in Florence



Coach Jim with students at the Florence stadium

In fact, sports act as a common ground between cultures. The rules of the game are equal for everyone, no matter what language they speak. Nobody believed in this more than the late Coach Jim Kauffman. As the Assistant Director of Student Life at Syracuse Florence, Jim was beloved by colleagues and students alike. In his college days, Jim was a 3-sport athlete at Stanford University, and he believed sports were an excellent way to assimilate to a foreign culture. This is why, just three days after moving to Italy from San Francisco, Jim dropped his middle-school-aged son Casey off at a calcetto field even though Casey didn't know any Italian. It's also why, in 1989, Jim and the owner of the Lions Fountain Pub founded the Fiorenza International School Cup, the Florence study-abroad calcetto tournament that continues to this day. Representing Syracuse Florence, Jim preached the ideals of having fun and playing fair. "Jim was so passionate about coaching the calcetto team," says longtime friend and colleague Melanie Honour. Jim even brought students to FC Fiorentina games so they could experience the environment of a European 'football' match. He also promoted the acceptance and integration of people from all backgrounds and cultures through soccer, joining forces with Professor and Community Engagement Coordinator Vittoria Tettamanti to invite local refugees to play in the tournament alongside the students. Sadly, Jim passed away from cancer in November 2017, but his legacy in the Florence community lives on. Unfortunately, our team

did not advance to the championship. I suppose having a goalie yell out basketball terms during the games was not a formula for victory. However, we managed to achieve something special, nonetheless, and won the inaugural Jim Kauffman Fair Play Award. While we would have loved to also make it to the finals, it was an honor for us to receive a trophy that stands for positivity and compassion on and off the field. I know I'm not alone when I express my deepest appreciation to Jim for having created this opportunity for us thirty years ago to partake in such a unique and rewarding cross-cultural experience.

"It was clear the Italians were superior to us Americans, but they welcomed us, nevertheless. Everyone was in the tournament not only to play, but also to have fun."



Pre-game pow-wow with Coach Jim



"Forza 'cuse!" you would bellow out on the small calcetto pitch during the cold Florence nights. I remember them fondly. Your commanding and boisterous demeanor on the field was only replaced by the kindness and sincere generosity of your heart in the office. You advocated for the acceptance of refugees who left their countries of origin in times of desperation. You supported the growth of immersion opportunities for students. You were fundamental to my success as a student during both my studies abroad and at Syracuse, something for which I am forever grateful. Your determined positive outlook on life was contagious and has made a profound impression on me since meeting you those many years ago. The indefatigable love you showed for your family and students will carry on as you rest now. Thank you for everything you taught me, Jim Kauffman. I am sad to say goodbye. You are missed. Grazie mille per tutto. Sarò il tuo capitano per calcetto, sempre. Buon ti saluto da un amico caro.

By Benjamin Lee,
Fall 2013 and Fall 2015

Although it is not something I had planned to do while living in Florence, my academic life wound up being almost totally monopolized by taking classes at the University of Florence (or UNIFI as it is referred to locally), thanks to Syracuse's Direct Placement Program run by Professor Antonella Francini. The only class I ended up taking at the Syracuse Florence campus was Introductory Italian, while I took the other four at UNIFI: one in history, two in economics, and one in political science. Offered through the Erasmus program at the university's School of Economics and Management, the educational experience did not resemble that of an American study abroad program. Erasmus courses are part of an EU-funded initiative wherein students from different countries across Europe work and study abroad in a common language while earning their university degrees. As a result, my classes were taught in English but populated with students from across the continent. Most of the courses are large, lecture-style affairs in which reading assignments are abundant but rarely mandated, homework is minimal, and guest lecturers appear nearly as frequently as the professors themselves. Class generally begins ten minutes after it is scheduled.

The most enriching part of this experience for me was learning about topics I am passionate about from an international perspective. As an environmental studies major, I understand on a theoretical level that climate change and its numerous ecological repercussions will require global cooperation. But hearing how students from across Europe have personally perceived these changes has expanded my global environmental consciousness immeasurably. Through speaking with students from China to Russia to Germany, my sense of global concerns has deepened significantly on a human level. Compared to the Syracuse Florence students taking just one UNIFI class, I believe taking several allowed me to develop stronger habits and relationships that hastened my cultural adjustment to living abroad.

Another unexpected highlight of attending UNIFI was my daily bike ride to class. The 30 minutes it took me to ride from the stadium area to UNIFI's campus located northwest of downtown allowed me to experience a side of Florence that I had no way of romanticizing before my arrival, but proved equally entrancing. Had I restricted my daily orbit to the *centro*, Santa Croce, and Syracuse Florence, my perception of the city would be quite different. I

The old residential neighborhoods surrounding UNIFI's Novoli campus disrupt ideas of Florence as a city "stuck in time."

would think of it as a place where every statue is an icon, every street corner is indexed in a Fodor's guide; a city that is culturally defined more by its visitors and history than its inhabi-

tants today. Without experiencing the intersection at Viale Belfiore and Viale Redi, my understanding of rude hand gestures would have remained very limited.

But this is not what happened. Bisected by new highways and waterway projects and dotted with more schools and libraries than boutique hotels, the old residential neighborhoods surrounding UNIFI's Novoli campus disrupt ideas of Florence as a city "stuck in time". I look around on my way

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

STUDYING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORENCE

by Natalie Murphy (Reed College)



to school and think, 'I could live here'. I expect I will only know a few cities well in my lifetime, and I feel lucky to now count Florence among them. Attending UNIFI courses in addition to those at Syracuse Florence introduced me to a way of life and education beyond what I have lived in the US or experienced in central Florence. I would recommend the program to any student interested in an even more immersive experience of the city, Italian pedagogy, or the excitement that comes with stepping outside one's comfort zone.

PROFILE OF A SYRACUSE FLORENCE HOST FAMILY

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Words and images by **Alexa Mikhail** (Syracuse University)



"We are not so old to stop. We go on," says Mara and Paolo when I ask them why they have hosted girls for this long. They decided to open their home in this way to give their kids, Sara and Matteo, the chance to talk and live with non-Italian children. They also wanted to practice their English. "That was the beginning of our story," explains Mara. Now, their kids are grown up and have homes of their own, but Mara and Paolo say they never considered closing the door to new students looking to immerse themselves in an Italian household. It has become more than just a hosting experience. "Sono come figlie," says Paolo. They are like daughters.



This is Mara and Paolo Massetani, 61 and 66 respectively. Married for 37 years and living in the outskirts of Florence near the Artemio Franchi stadium, this Italian-raised couple began hosting Syracuse Florence students in 2005. They have had the company of female students from all over the United States every year since. I was number 64.



Each time a girl leaves their home, Mara and Paolo hang their picture up in their guest room to remember that semester's memories. They often come into the room to share stories of the girls. Grace, now 32, was one of the first girls they hosted. She has kept in contact ever since. "We remember when she was here at 20 with her first days and new Italian," says Mara. "Scrivo tutto in italiano, tutto" [She writes all in Italian] says Paolo. They have loved watching the girls grow up. Just days ago, Mara received a letter in the mail with a picture of Grace's ultrasound. She wanted to share the news with her Italian family. "That is something very intense to let people know. It's a moment of life, and we were very, very happy for her," says Mara.



"Each time it is a new experience and we always don't know what to expect," says Mara. She and Paolo say they feel more curious than nervous about the experience. "Some of them the first days they are homesick, but only the first days." The hardest is when they leave. "The mood is sadness because we live together every day and when they leave you know that evening they will not come to dinner."



Mara believes living as an Italian is the sole way to begin to understand the culture of Italy. "Like the importance we give to the food, the way we prepare the food, our time, our habits," she says.



It's the long-lasting connections that have ultimately led Mara and Paolo to host for fourteen years. "We like to know what young people do, where they travel. It's nice to have a wind of youth in the house," says Mara. "And many friends!" adds Paolo. "It's nice to know that in case we want to fly to Michigan," says Mara, "we can call and say we are flying to you!"

LEONARDO AND THE BEAST

A LECTURE BY ROSS KING


Syracuse University
 Florence

Villa Rossa Talks - Fall 2019

LEONARDO'S MONSTERS

ROSS KING

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 19, 2019
6:25 PM VILLA ROSSA - ROOM 13
 REFRESHMENTS TO FOLLOW

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY FLORENCE - Piazza Savonarola 15, Firenze



by Caitlin Mary Petty (Syracuse University)

The year 2019 marked a significant milestone in celebrating the legacy of Leonardo da Vinci: the 500th anniversary of his death. Countless exhibitions, conferences, and events were organized to commemorate this Renaissance polymath and his various contributions to the fields of art, music, mathematics, engineering, anatomy, geology, and botany. Here at Syracuse Florence, we were honored to host Ross King in November for a lecture entitled "Leonardo's Monsters." An engaging lecturer and tour guide, and the author of many books on art and art history, King is perhaps best known for popularizing the Italian Renaissance in titles like *Brunelleschi's Dome*, *Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling*, and *Leonardo and the Last Supper*. King's interest in Leonardo has led him to explore the artist's fables, jokes, and riddles as well as his bestiary – a collection of notes and descriptions of animals and their symbolic, moral qualities. Noting that bestiaries were distinctly rooted in medieval thought, King's lecture offered insights into Leonardo's interests in the unnatural, fanciful, grotesque, and monstrous; interests that are seemingly incongruent with our modern notions of who Leonardo was.

To many, Leonardo was a forebearer of modernity; a 'Renaissance man' whose multifaceted interests in the arts and sciences helped push us towards empirical knowledge, rational judgment, and scientific objectivity. Indeed, his contributions to the study of anatomy and zoology invaluable enhanced our understanding of both human and animal physiology. King used the ermine in Leonardo's famous portrait of Cecilia

Gallerani to illustrate this point, explaining that he studied both humans and animals from life to imbue his artistic depictions with naturalism. Intriguingly, however, Leonardo was also interested in the moral lessons to be learned from legendary creatures like the unicorn, the griffin, and the phoenix, each of which carried their own symbolic potency. As King mused, the fact that someone so reliant on naturalism and empirical evidence could believe in such fanciful creatures

"Part of celebrating Leonardo's legacy means reflecting on how his achievements resonate with us today."

is perplexing. Underscoring this apparent incongruence, King suggested that Leonardo's fascination with the monstrous might tell us something about the role of imagination in the artist's mind. The word "monster" comes from the Latin *monstrum*, meaning to warn, instruct, or foretell. For the Greeks and Romans (and later Christian theologians), a monster's birth resulted from a transgression against the natural order. The Roman poet Horace, for example, saw monsters as inventions of an ill mind and discouraged poets and artists from depicting them. As King explained, this idea could stem from the fact that both ancient and medieval conceptions of the human brain saw imagination as connected to the senses, while rationality and judgement were

thought to occupy a higher realm of the brain. Leonardo, on the other hand, wrote notes about assembling a monstrous creature using animal parts like a dog's head, a cat's eyes, a porcupine's ears, a lion's brow, and so forth. Even in his constructions of the unnatural, Leonardo rooted his designs in natural forms. In fact, King noted that for Leonardo, imagination and judgment worked together to process sensory information. King concluded by explaining that Leonardo's interests in the fanciful and the monstrous likely changed over time as his ideas about the role of imagination and artistic creativity developed. Later in life, having witnessed warfare and uncertainty on the Italian peninsula, perhaps he became pessimistic about the potentiality of human ingenuity. Part of celebrating Leonardo's legacy, King stated, means reflecting on how his achievements resonate with us today. Ultimately, this means complicating our notion of who Leonardo da Vinci was.





HITTING THE RIGHT NOTE

SINGING IN FLORENCE'S ST. JAMES CHOIR

by Eunice Lee
(Northwestern University)

As the birthplace of opera and iconic composers like Monteverdi, Vivaldi, and Puccini, Italy is internationally renowned for its classical music traditions. Though centuries old, this musical culture remains very much alive, as Syracuse Florence students can discover for themselves by joining the choir at the St. James Episcopal Church in Florence. St. James was founded by members of Florence's American community around 1850, with the parish becoming official in 1867. Located not far from the main train station, the church is home to a multilingual international congregation, with sister churches in Milan, Rome, Bologna, and Siena. The Florentine chapter stands out for its contribution to the classical music offerings available in the Tuscan capital -- the site of the first public performance of an opera. "Clearly, with that kind of history, Florence holds

a long, proud tradition of vocal music," says Monica Sharp, who has sung with the St. James Chancel Choir for the past three years. "Along with this Florentine pride, one reason I was so motivated to be involved in the St. James choir was because I knew that the level of musicianship would be very high. You cannot swing a cat in Florence without hitting people who are well-trained in music." Sharp explained that in addition to hosting visiting choirs and musicians from around Europe and the world on Sundays, St. James also welcomes American university students residing in Florence to perform in the choir. During the Fall 2019 semester, first-year Syracuse University student Katherine Craig decided to take full advantage of this opportunity. Craig says she was grateful to find such a welcoming community of musicians soon after arriving in Florence to begin her first semester of college. As a classically trained vocalist herself,

Craig was thrilled to discover this opportunity during the Syracuse Florence Orientation, when Sharp made a presentation to students. Craig was quickly integrated and found herself performing in a church service the same day she joined the choir. "I was really nervous, but everyone was so warm and kind," she explains. "This just felt like a natural fit for me. St. James is such a great place to go that's not home or school. It's a good third place to have a community." With its warm, close-knit, and tal-

ented group of singers, the St. James Choir offers Syracuse Florence students the chance not only to form meaningful ties with locals during their time abroad, but also to experience the special power of performing in a beautiful religious space. "It's just such a pleasure to sing in a church in Italy," enthuses Sharp. "When you listen to music that was written for mass like Allegri's Miserere Mei in a church in Italy, you just get chills. I still get them every time I rehearse or sing in a service. There's something to be said for being that close to the music. You feel so connected to Italy. It's a surreal experience."



Do you sing? Do you want to sing? Singers at all levels are invited to join our CLASSICAL CHOIR.

SUNDAYS
9:45am-12:15pm @ St James' American Church in Florence
Coffee after!



RAG REVOLUTION

LEARNING ABOUT SUSTAINABLE FASHION IN FLORENCE

by Ramsay Everitt (Colorado College)

As someone with little interest in fashion or design, I definitely had not expected these to become a focus of my experience while studying in Florence. During my first week of classes, I was introduced to Ilaria Tolossi, the owner of Essère Atelier, after I expressed interest in a doing a marketing-related internship. My prior experience was in retail and marketing, not fashion, so I was not sure how helpful I would be, but I did not want to pass up this opportunity. Since beginning my time at Essère, not only have I found it fascinating to learn more about small Italian businesses and marketing tactics in general, but I have also discovered many ways in which such tactics differ from those commonly used in the United States. I also discovered that I like learning about Italian fashion and design more than I thought.

In late November my marketing professor Simone Anselmi gave our class an insider look at the industry by taking us to a local conference on sustainable fashion. Il Fashion Bello e Buono was held in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence's prestigious town hall, and was organized by fashion brand Es'Givien. CEO Vivilla Zampini opened the event by explaining the importance of promoting sustainable fashion practices and sharing her desire to be a protagonist of this revolution. Most of the speakers, all leaders from the worlds of

"Fashion is the second most polluting industry after oil and many Italian entrepreneurs are driving the sustainable fashion movement by speaking out about this."

either fashion or technology, discussed the need for a circular economy rather than a linear one as a major step in this movement. While our current linear economy, is all about "take, make, and waste", the goal is for fashion companies to adopt one or more of the five business models of a circular economy: life extension; recycle and reuse; sustainable input; product as service; and platform sharing.

Veronica Tonini, Director of Sustainability at the Florence-born Salvatore Ferragamo fashion house, detailed her company's role in this revolution, including the promise of "responsible passion". In fact, Ferragamo uses recyclable FSC paper, which is harvested 100% responsibly; has installed hundreds of solar panels on its buildings; strives to make all its actions transparent; and, last but not least, signed the Fashion Pact along with 32 other companies to focus on saving our planet. Personally, I had never known this about Ferragamo, and I think that due to their large presence in the fashion industry, they will continue to drive the sustainable fashion movement and inspire other smaller companies to move in the same direction.

Fast fashion has become such a hot topic, and it is a term that I believe many people do not fully understand. At Essère, Ilaria and other interns create all the clothing by hand, reusing all the fabrics and making sure nothing is wasted. Similar to the School of Leather, Essère aims to get into the minds of the consumer to create something that can be reused, created with fabrics they want, and innovative.



All photos taken at the Il Fashion Bello e Buono conference at the Palazzo Vecchio in November 2019

They use recyclable materials and, unlike many larger clothing stores, their pieces are entirely unique.

Fashion is the second most polluting industry after oil and many Italian entrepreneurs are driving the sustainable fashion movement by speaking out about this. In 2015, the production of a whopping 97% of the clothing sold in the US was outsourced to other countries. Eighty-seven percent of the garment workers helping to make those clothes are women making around \$2 a day with no health benefits or financial security. Yet many consumers in the US and around the world continue to shop in fast-fashion stores like Forever 21 and H&M who are driving these problems. Not only has working with Ilaria at Essère changed my view of the fashion industry and sparked a newfound respect for handmade clothing, but this conference spurred a new interest in the conversations about sustainable fashion that are beginning to happen around the world and what industry leaders like Salvatore Ferragamo are doing to create change.



A BOAT AWAY FROM HOME

CULTURAL EXCHANGE THROUGH SPORT

by Elizabeth Fairman
(Bates College)

My coaches always told me to hold on tight to both oars so I don't flip the boat. That was the only advice I could remember on the September day I found myself 4,000 miles away from home, praying that I was not about to plunge headfirst into the Arno River. As a collegiate rower, I knew I had to maintain my fitness while abroad and an online search of rowing clubs during my second week in Florence led me to the Società Canottieri Firenze. I spoke perhaps six words of Italian at that point, so with the help of Google Translate and a very patient receptionist, I gained admission as a visiting member to the club. Situated in a cave-like building below the Uffizi Gallery, it comes with a dock and nearly a mile of water to row in.

While rowing challenges include blistered hands and an aching back, from my first day at the Società in September, I navigated tests unlike any I had ever experienced before. For one thing, my lack of Italian made it hard to understand the spoken rules of the place, let alone the unspoken ones. Each club has their own set of the latter. Back at the Bates boathouse, for example, there is a door that only coxswains and coaches can use. At the Società, I warily watched other members to make sure I was not committing some distasteful faux pas. My cultural education began the first time I took out a boat. Stammering and gesturing my way through an initial conversation with a Canottieri coach, I managed to explain that I wanted to have a "singles test." To take out a single scull without supervision, I had to prove that I could launch it and turn it without flipping over. After we placed the Galileo in the water, I put in the oars and took off my shoes. That

was when I experienced a totally foreign sensation: I had an audience.

This was the opposite of what my coach at Bates, Peter Steenstra, had prepared me for. Every year he reminds us that to succeed, each rower needs to morph into members of a cohesive unit, their eight oars gliding in and out of the water at the same time, smooth and indistinguishable. In other words, as a rower you should not stand out. Yet, here I was now with hundreds of eyes (and phone cameras) trained in my direction from the Ponte Vecchio.

"Now, not only can I chat with the coaches about weather and wind conditions on the water in Italian, but I can also enjoy the customary cappuccino with a member after we have taken out a double sculling boat together."

Miraculously, I managed to stay afloat and dock the single without going for a swim. As I learned to steer around the four bridges and countless other rowers on the water, I also started picking up on the Società's practices on land. My first lesson was about the social etiquette of the weight room, where you replace each weight on the rack when you're finished, and you say "ciao" to other members when you enter and leave the room. I also learned to ask a staff member for help in taking out a boat. Now, not only can I chat with the coaches about

weather and wind conditions on the water in Italian, but I can also enjoy the customary cappuccino with a member after we have taken out a double sculling boat together.

For these past few months, my familiarity with rowing has allowed me to connect to another culture and language. I have done the same workouts I normally do at home on one of the most beautiful bodies of water in the world, and I have formed relationships with people while barely speaking their language. Ironically, thousands of miles from my Bates boathouse, each time I take my first strokes in the boat in my white uniform with its red Florentine stripes, I feel more connected to home than ever.



Inside the Società Canottieri boathouse



ONE TO REMEMBER

THE GUASTI MONUMENT PHOTO CONTEST

by Sharifa Lookman
(Syracuse University)

No artwork, or art-related space or site, is static. In response to war, weather, and human intervention, they adapt and evolve; as artifacts left for rediscovery, they accrue layers of materials, meaning, and memory. The Park of Remembrance in Fiesole, established in 1924 in memory of Italian soldiers lost in World War I, is particularly evocative of this. In 1964 it was extended by architect Giovanni Michelucci with a panoramic terrace that became the setting for a monumental abstract sculpture in bronze: Marcello Guasti's Monument to the Three Carabinieri (1964), the subject of the exhibition Marcello Guasti, Giovanni Michelucci e il Monumento ai Tre Carabinieri that recently took place at the Archaeological Museum in Fiesole. Giovanni Michelucci e il Monumento ai Tre Carabinieri at the Archaeological Museum in Fiesole. Guasti's sculpture was erected to commemorate Italian military heroes Alberto La Rocca, Vittorio Marandola, and Fulvio Sbaretti, who sacrificed their lives on August 12, 1944 to protect ten civ-

ilians held hostage by German troops. The very nature of the sculpture conveyed—a full forty years later—the Park's initial message; that is, the need to reflect on military lives lost and victories won. Yet, with these additions, the space also welcomed new life. Guasti saw his sculpture as "leaping towards the infinite" and Michelucci wanted the newly opened park to "let in life, people, the sun, [and] lovers." Guasti and Miche-

"Submissions came from far and wide: youth and adults, amateurs and professionals, Italians and Americans."

lucci foresaw a site that would continue to regenerate far beyond their own time. How, then, do we experience this space decades later? Posed by the show's co-curator, Syracuse Florence Art History Professor Jonathan K. Nelson, this question was the subject of a photo contest accompanying the exhibition. As Nelson explained, the competition was "a way to engage

the community, and especially young people, in the exhibition, monument, and park." Open to all, the only stipulation was that the submission be a set of three photographs, at least one of which had to include Guasti's Monument. Submissions came from far and wide: youth and adults, amateurs and professionals, Italians and Americans. From February until the end of August this contest prompted a pilgrimage of sorts; beginning at the base of the hill of San Francesco, photographers would process upwards towards the park, gaining with each step hints of the panoramic view to come and a promise of the Monument that would be there to greet them. The submissions themselves attest to this charged yet diverse journey: we see the monument ethereal at sunset, vibrating in direct sunlight, and surrounded by people at midday. Each point of view is distinct, and together we get a sense of the park as a site rife with nostalgia, hope, and vitality and the monument as a technically complex form that shifts at every angle.

Nelson, together with the other members of the jury – Mirella Branca, co-curator of the exhibition, and Pietro Pollini, a practicing photographer – judged the entries on their aesthetic and technique, looking for original shots that reinterpreted the park and monument. Jake Yulo, an undergraduate student at Whitman, took home the Youth Prize, a win he credits to the encouragement of Professors Stefania Talini and Francesco Guazzelli at Syracuse Florence, where he studied during the Spring 2019 semester. "Infrared photography's familiar yet ethereal aesthetic is meant to mirror the experience of visitors to The Park of Remembrance," wrote Yulo, describing his process and inspiration. "Even those who know the story of the Three Carabinieri are still mystified upon arrival." Merging the bright yet faded colors of infrared filters with classically composed shots of the park and monument, Yulo's photographs suggest both past and future.

For many, the contest was their first introduction to Guasti and the monument. "I was unaware of the significance of the space before photographing, and thus, my eyes were opened to its importance," says Michelle Ayer, former Syracuse Florence graduate student and TA and winner of the Honorable Mention. Through the art of photography, contestants learned not only about the history of Fiesole and its German occupation, but also about 1960s sculptural art. "Art creates and inspires more art," remarked an audience member during the awards ceremony that took place in Fiesole on September 20, 2019. The astute observation gets at the core of the competition and, perhaps, the ambitions of both Michelucci and Guasti.

Photos by Jake Yulo (Syracuse University)



I started my semester in Italy watching a beautiful sunrise through the airplane window while landing in Rome. It was 7 a.m. and I felt fresh faced and tingly, despite having sat through a 10-hour transcontinental flight. The sunrise was a physical marker of this magical moment, when I felt the pure excitement of an adventure beginning. The magic dimmed, however, when I stepped into the orientation hall later that first day: I was staring at over 200 white faces.

I am from Chicago. My family lives 10 minutes from Chinatown. My elementary school was less than 15% white. The very foundations of my character were shaped by growing up alongside non-white folks. This is why the stark difference of the Syracuse Florence program was the very first thing I noticed. I carry this awareness with me like a turtle carries around its shell. My experience is borne out by the statistics. The most recent Institute of International Education Open Doors report shows that Italy is the second most popular place for Americans to study abroad after the United Kingdom. According to the Study Abroad section of the U.S. State Department, one in every 10 students goes abroad during college. Of these, 29.2 percent are students of color: 10.2 percent Hispanic or Latinx; 8.2 percent Asian; 6.1 percent black; and 4.7 percent multiracial and Native American.

The lack of financial accessibility to travel and live in another country for a whole semester contributes substantially to this discrepancy. The fees just to attend university in America continue to skyrocket, and the cost to study abroad represents an additional financial burden for all students. Even if supplemented by need-based financial aid, the cost of airfare alone may discourage a lower income student from applying. Such financial roadblocks are disheartening, since ideally every American college student should have the privilege to study abroad. Representation or finances should not stop anyone from being able to participate in the metamorphic exchange of language, culture, politics and food that the experience affords.

Students of color who do make it abroad can have positive, life-changing experiences. My first time in Italy was two years ago during my senior year in high school on a class trip. In my Latin teacher's words, it was "just a taste of Italy, so that I hope you'll come back on your own one day." And here I am. In fact, she had said that after seeing the disappointment on my face when I found out we weren't going to see Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling. This time around, my class got a private tour of the chapel itself. Writing about his own time studying in Italy, African-American HuffPost journalist Thomas Noah said, "For the first time, I felt my American identity could really shine." In fact, to Italians, my identity as a hyphenated American does not count. I am American, full stop. With my water bottle

"The very foundations of my character were shaped by growing up alongside non-white folks. This is why the stark difference of the Syracuse Florence program was the very first thing I noticed."

A QUESTION OF COLOR

ETHNIC DIVERSITY WHILE STUDYING ABROAD

by Cindy Mei (Emory University)



swinging by my side and my blatant American accent as I ask for *un cornetto* at the coffeeshop, I am perceived as American before anything else. And the cancellation of the Chinese part of my identity comes as a relief to me. I am defined as a whole in Italy; whereas in America, I will always be Chinese first and American second. Chinese-American.

Study abroad administrators do seem to be increasingly aware of the need to talk about these issues. In early October, the Syracuse Florence Student Life Office hosted a lunch-hour discussion on Diversity and Inclusion featuring Black History Month Florence founder Justin Thompson as a guest. But out of the 240 students enrolled this semester, a full six registered to attend the talk and only half of these, including myself, attended. To add to this disparity, there were more staff members present than students. A collective heaviness hung in the air as we waited in silence for other students to show up.

The gap between the importance my white counterparts ostensibly place on diversity and inclusion and what their actions say is disconcerting. It makes me wonder if they even notice their own whiteness and the silent privileges it confers. Do they notice the absence of non-white students?

Have they ever asked themselves why their number totally overwhelms that of visible minorities? I posed these questions to Amy Kleine, Assistant Director for Health and Wellness, one of the staff members who attended the diversity talk. "No, because I am white," she said. Her truthful answer, said in complete self-awareness, makes all the difference. In fact, she said that by having direct, honest conversations with the traditionally more diverse First Year students whom she mentors, along with other students of color, she is able to recognize this in herself as well as be more sensitive to this issue for these students. The blissful ignorance of whiteness reminded me of a quote by novelist Haruki Murakami: "Most people in the world don't really use their brains to think. And people who don't think are the ones who don't listen to others." I wrote this piece because I would like to share my experience as a person of color studying abroad, to share the discomfort I feel walking into my 9 a.m. class and not seeing a single person who looks like me or could relate to me. On behalf of all students of color and our right to literally broaden our college experiences and our lives, I just need you to listen and understand what difference really means and how we experience it.

SHORT BUT SWEET

ATTENDING SYRACUSE FLORENCE
WHEN THE CORONAVIRUS
PANDEMIC STRUCK ITALY

by Erick Lojano-Quispe (Syracuse University)

I am a Civil Engineer major graduating in 2022 and I went to Florence, Italy for my spring semester of sophomore year to study abroad. Although short, the experience was extremely fun since I was able to explore Tuscan culture and visit other cities such as Rome. My favorite part was being able to live with a host family. This is truly a great opportunity for students because they make you feel like family instantly; you have meals together and talk about what you did that day. In addition to engineering, I also took classes in political science and Italian literature. While they were all structured in a similar way to those offered on the main campus, the differences in the engineering classes took some time to get used to. In Florence they are more theory based, with the professors providing conceptual ideas that you have to work out yourself. Unfortunately, my time abroad was cut short due to the rising number of Covid-19 cases in Italy. Syracuse responded accordingly, suspending the program and advising all the students to book a flight for home. I did so as soon as I could, and Syracuse was able to compensate me for the cost of the flight. Originally, we engineering students were given two options: to return to main campus after the spring break or to switch to online classes. Of course, the main campus eventually switched to online classes as well, so most of us remained in the classes we had begun in Florence. Due to the online transition of the entire university, Syracuse also provided a partial meal and housing reimbursement for both main-campus and study-abroad students. The transition for those of us who had been abroad took some time to get used to because of the difference in time zones between us and our Florence based professors. Fortunately, they compensated for this by uploading PowerPoint presentations and extending the time window for quizzes and exams.

MANGIA, MANGIA!

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW WHEN EATING OUT IN ITALY

by Camila Wanderley (Syracuse University)

Enjoying the food is arguably a top highlight of visiting the gastronomically blessed country of Italy, no matter the city or the season. Italians also take their cuisine very seriously -- this is why it is always so good! To get the most out of your experience when eating out in Italy, here are five things to keep in mind about Italian culinary culture.

1. RESTAURANT TYPE

There are three categories of restaurant in Italy: *osteria*, *trattoria*, and *ristorante*. A *ristorante* is usually more formal with a larger dining area. The menu is à la carte with fixed prices and a professional kitchen staff prepares the food, which tends to be more sophisticated. A *trattoria* is less formal and the prices are lower than those in a *ristorante*. It is usually smaller, with little decor, and tends to be family-owned, with the mom and the grandma cooking the meals. Finally, an *osteria* is a small wine bar that serves simple meals. There are fewer options on the menu, which is usually printed on a piece of paper or written on a blackboard, and they tend to change daily.

2. MEALTIMES

In Italy, people eat late and they take their time. Most restaurants won't even open before 12:30pm for lunch and 7:30pm for dinner, and they often close in between those two meals. However, in more touristy areas you may find places open and serving food all day long.

3. THE MENU

Eating in Italy is an art, and the menu reflects this. You start your meal with an *antipasto* (a starter or appetizer), which is usually a regional specialty or a plate of cold cuts and cheeses. Then comes the *primo piatto* (first course): soup, pasta, or risotto. There are many options to choose from but Americans should know there may be less sauce than what they are used to. The *secondo piatto* (second course) is a meat, poultry, or fish dish, or a vegetarian substitute. It doesn't come with sides (*contorni*) so you need to order those separately. Lastly, there is a *dolce* (dessert) and a nice little espresso (never cappuccino) to help you indulge in the prolonged conversations Italians enjoy at mealtime, bearing in mind that Italians drink their *caffè* after finishing dessert.

4. TIPPING AND SERVICE

Italians usually only leave a tip at a restaurant when the service is truly exceptional. Diners are also often charged a *coperto*, a one to two euro fee just for being there (technically to cover bread, cutlery, and table cloths), so don't be surprised when that shows up on your bill. In Italy, service is a little slower than in the US, and you sometimes can find yourself waiting for a very long time to be assisted. Don't worry about calling over your server -- this is not considered rude here.

5. MISCONCEPTIONS

As outsiders, American students might have small cultural misconceptions. For example, dipping bread in olive oil is not something Italians do before their meals -- it is only common during olive harvest season (November) when the freshly pressed oil is considered more of a delicacy than a garnish. You may also get a weird look from your server if you ask for a cappuccino after your meal, since Italians avoid consuming milk after about 11am. Subtle differences like this are something you can also pick up with time, so don't be afraid to ask a local and show genuine interest in learning about and adapting to their food-centered culture.

"In Italy, people eat late and they take their time."



S&F WATCH

STAFF & FACULTY WATCH



SASHA PERUGINI

In February 2019 Perugini was appointed Co-Chair with the US General Consul of the Steering Committee for the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) Regional Committee for Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, and San Marino. In 2020 Perugini was appointed to serve on the Forum on Education Abroad's 2020 European Conference Committee. In April 2020 she published two accounts of the COVID-19 pandemic: "The Colours of COVID" in the online magazine *Adamah* and "I colori del COVID-19" in the online blog magazine *InnovaTalk*. Perugini also serves as a mentor for the European Association for International Education Mentorship programme.



MATTEO DUNI

Matteo Duni presented papers at two workshops run by the Laboratorio di Storia Moderna of the Università di Firenze, "Contro la caccia alle streghe" in May 2019 and "La strega, l'Altro" in May 2020. In October 2019 he gave a talk on "L'invenzione della stregoneria: teologi, inquisitori, giuristi (1300-1600)" at the Seminario magistrale di Filologia umanistica at the Università di Macerata. In 2020 he also published two articles with Routledge: "Witchcraft and Witch-hunting in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy" in *The Routledge History of Witchcraft*, edited by Johannes Dillinger; and "Lawyers versus Inquisitors: Ponzi-nibio's *De lamiis* and Spina's *De strigibus*" in *The Science of Demons: Early Modern Authors Facing Witchcraft and the Devil*, edited by Jan Machielsen. As President of the Association of Scholars at American Universities in Italy, he co-edited *Insegnare tra due mondi*, the first-ever survey on the status of teachers at US university programs in Tuscany presented at the Auditorium of the Regione Toscana in June 2019.



FRANCESCA PAROTTI

In 2019 and 2020, Francesca Parotti presented at two international conferences. She served on three juries: for the NAO Challenge, the largest humanoid robotics competition in the world; the Italian finals of the FIRST LEGO League; and a robot olympics. She became Materials and Design Coordinator for the MARS CITY project to provide a test bed for field studies to prepare for missions to Mars. Parotti serves on the scientific advisory board for Krein, an aerospace company based in Tuscany. With her project she won the Vespa prize for innovation in 2019, the 1st FISAD International prize at the Accademia Albertina di Torino 2019, and the gold medal for sustainable design at the Fassa Prize 2020. In October 2019, she helped organize the conference Under the Bamboo Tree.



ANTONELLA FRANCINI

In Fall 2019 Garzanti published Antonella Francini's translation of Pulitzer Prize winning poet and Harvard professor Jorie Graham's most recent volume of poetry, *FAST*. In May 2020 she gave a virtual lecture for the School of Creative Writing of the journal *Semicerchio* on narrative techniques in the work of US fiction and short-story writers Amy Hempel and Lauren Groff. As a freelance journalist, she has continued to write about American fiction and poetry for *Alias*, the literary supplement of the Italian newspaper *Il Manifesto*.



MOLLY BOURNE

Molly Bourne served on the advisory committee for the exhibition *Andrea Mantegna: Rivivere l'antico, costruire il moderno* curated by Sandrina Banderà and Howard Burns, held at Palazzo Madama in Turin (12 December 2019-20 July 2020), and contributed the following essay to the catalog, published by Marsilio editore: "Mantegna e tre generazioni di Gonzaga."



LORENZA TROMBONI

In 2019 Lorenza Tromboni created two videos to popularize the relationship between politics and intellectual production that were shared on Youtube and other social media outlets. She gave a paper on "When a project gets digital: the case of INSPIRE" at the Renaissance Society of America's annual meeting in Toronto. She also published the following articles: "La discesa di Carlo VIII in Italia: l'impatto culturale di un evento politico tra XV e XVI secolo" in *Rinascimento* and "Ancient and Contemporary consumption of propaganda" in *Esperluette. Arts&Research*. In 2020 she published the article "Il linguaggio profetico dell'animale politico. Nodi tematici e linee di sviluppo" in *Philosophical Readings*.



MICHELLE TARNOPOLSKY

Michelle Tarnopolsky published a piece on the history of Italian feminism, "Patriots, Partisans, and Politicians", in the program of the play *My Brilliant Friend*, based on the Elena Ferrante Neapolitan trilogy by April De Angelis and performed at the National Theatre in London from November 2019 to February 2020.



JESSICA VOLPE

In February 2020, Jessica Volpe was invited to deliver a welcome address in the Salone dei Cinquecento at Palazzo Vecchio to the incoming cohort of students studying in Florence for the Spring semester. The "Welcome Day" event was sponsored by the Comune di Firenze, AACUPI, and the US Consulate. Program directors and past students from other study abroad programs in Florence also shared a few words of welcome and volunteer associations were present to provide information on opportunities for students to engage in the community while abroad.

