

Minority and Majority in Medici Tuscany (Paris/online, 27–28 Nov 25)

Galerie Colbert, salle Jullian, salle Vasari, 2 Rue Vivienne, Paris / Online, Nov 27–28, 2025

Registration deadline: Nov 28, 2025

The Medici Archive Project

This international conference seeks to explore the multifaceted relationships between majority and minority groups in Medici Florence, focusing on how political, social, and cultural dynamics were reflected and negotiated through the visual arts. Under the Medici Dukes—beginning with Alessandro de' Medici and later Cosimo I—Florence underwent profound changes that reshaped its political, social, and artistic landscapes. These transformations had far-reaching implications for marginalized communities and their representation in the arts.

The establishment of the Florentine Duchy led to major political shifts, including the forced exile of Republican supporters, who were branded opponents of the Medici regime. Although Cosimo I later allowed for the reintegration of some fuoriusciti (exiles), the divide between Medici loyalists and dissenters persisted. This political polarization influenced societal structures, and might have also had an impact on the perception and treatment of minorities, such as slaves, vagrants, gypsies, Muslims, and Jews. These groups were often confined to segregated spaces and labeled as “deviant” from dominant social, religious, and moral norms.

A central focus of the conference will be the role of visual arts in constructing, challenging, or perpetuating these dynamics. How were marginalized groups represented in art, and what roles did they play in the visual culture of Renaissance Florence? Additionally, the conference will consider the artistic preferences and tastes of minority communities themselves. Did the artistic expressions or commissions of these groups diverge from dominant Medici aesthetics, or did they assimilate and adapt to the cultural norms imposed by the majority? By examining objects, paintings, and spaces associated with minority patrons, the conference will explore how artistic agency intersected with social and cultural marginality.

By focusing on both societal structures and visual culture, this event aims to offer new research trajectories on how minority and majority identities were negotiated, contested, and represented in art during this pivotal period in European history.

[PROGRAM]

DAY ONE: Thursday 27 November [Salle Jullian]

KEYNOTE LECTURE: 18:00

Kate Lowe (The Warburg Institute)
The Fashion for Black Schiavi and Schiave at the Medici Court

DAY TWO: Friday 28 November [Salle Vasari]

Opening Remarks: 9:30-10:00

Alessio Assonitis (The Medici Archive Project)
Sefy Hendler (HICSA Université de Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne)

Session One 10:00 - 12:00

RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL MINORITIES IN TUSCANY

Chair: Fiammetta Campagnoli (Université de Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne)

Gwladys Le Cuff (Université de Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne - INHA)
Amadeists and the Visual Fortune of the Apocalypsis Nova in Florence: Minority Fratres de Familia, Between Heterodox Dissent and Medici Instrument

Alessio Assonitis (The Medici Archive Project)
The Proliferation of Religious Heterodoxy at the Court of Cosimo I: Printers, Preachers, and Humanists

Piergabriele Mancuso (The Medici Archive Project)
The Medici and the Jews: From the Ghetto of Florence to Global Livorno

Elijah Jaffe (ERC Project FemSMed - Tel Aviv University)
L'intégration d'une esclave dans la communauté juive de Livourne

Discussion

Lunch Break 12:00 - 14:00

Session Two: 14:00 - 15:45

GENDER AND RACE

Chair: Angèle Tence (Université de Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne)

Benedetta Chizzolini (ERC Project FemSMed - Tel Aviv University)
Female Baptisms and Political Power: The Conversions of Enslaved Women in Medicean Tuscany

Brian Sandberg (Northern Illinois University)
"Sono stati pervertiti da un moro": Morisco Communities and Ambiguous Identities in Grand Ducal Tuscany

Yasmine Segol (ERC Project FemSMed - Tel Aviv University)
From Florence to the French Court: Caterina de' Medici's Enslaved Female Servants

Discussion

Coffee Break: 15:45-16:00

Session Three: 16:00 - 17:45

ARTISTIC MINORITIES/MINORITIES AND THE ARTS

Chair: Antonella Fenech (CNRS - Centre André Chastel)

Rebecca Arnheim (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

More than a Pretty Body: Florentine Garzoni and the Visibility of Working Youth in Renaissance Art

Sefy Hendler (HICSA Université de Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne)

When Pontormo's Fresco "Went Up in Smoke": The Fate of Art Outside Hegemonic Taste

Federico Giglio (The Medici Archive Project)

Vasari, the Lives and the Fuoriusciti

Discussion

KEYNOTE LECTURE 18:00

Tamar Herzig (ERC Project FemSMed - Tel Aviv University)

Female Enslavement and Intercommunal Relations in Grand Ducal Tuscany

The Conference will be live-streamed on Zoom:
https://pantheonsorbonne.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_wgrFialdQ0Wn7ZpWCNG71A

International Conference organized by HiCSA—University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and The Medici Archive Project

Organizers: Sefy Hendler and Alessio Assonitis

Keynote speakers: Kate Lowe and Tamar Herzig

Reference:

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