Jews, Arts and the Mediterranean (1450-1750) (Florence, 12 Jun 26)

Palazzo Alberti, via de' Benci 10, Florence
Deadline: Mar 1, 2026

The Medici Archive Project

International Conference "The Jews, the Arts and the Mediterranean (1450-1750)" organized by The Medici Archive Project (Florence), Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (Université Paris-Saclay), Fondazione Ugo e Olga Levi (Venice) on Jewish artistic culture, patronage, production in the early modern Mediterranean at Palazzo Alberti, via de' Benci 10, Florence, June 12, 2026.

A period of major sociopolitical transformations and profound cultural and spiritual ruptures – from the discovery of the New World to the rise of religious dissent – the early modern era marked for Jews the beginning of a long phase of arbitrary legal impositions, among which were the creation of ghettos, first in Italy and then in the rest of Europe. Despite these legal, economic, and social discriminations, small groups of Jewish intellectuals, artists, musicians, and artisans managed to weave fruitful relationships with the cultural and political elites of Italian and Southern European courts. Starting from this premise, some strands of historiography have often failed to recognize the interpenetrating interactions that took place beyond, and the connections that were triggered between different social groups thanks to the porous nature of the barriers of separation.

Clear evidence of this phenomenon can be found in the world of craftsmanship and the arts, both visual and musical. A systematic review of historical sources shows that in these areas the legal restrictions imposed upon Jews were repeatedly disregarded – by Jews and Christians alike. Such “exceptions” often extended far beyond the specific spheres of the disciplines involved, giving rise to more complex exchanges.
The purpose of this conference is to identify, contextualize, and historically define the significance of these phenomena; to analyze the education, working conditions, and material production of Jewish musicians, artists, and artisans in the early modern Mediterranean. All forms of artistic production (music, visual arts, performing arts) and craftsmanship were essential activities for the functioning of daily life, and in particular for the artistic life (theater, concerts, performances, visual arts) of a court, a city, or a given place.

The organizers – Piergabriele Mancuso (The Medici Archive Project) and Jorge Morales (Université de Versailles – Saint-Quentin) – invite proposals for 20-minute unpublished papers in English, Italian, French, which address topics including, but not limited to:

- Collecting and Patronage Patterns (Visual Arts, Literature, Music and Theater)

- Decorative Arts
- Jews as Artistic Brokers
- The Ottoman Empire and the West
- The Jewish Maghreb
- Port Cities and Cultural Exchange
- Women and the Arts
- Book and Print Culture
- Artistic Dialogue between Sephardic, Italian, and Ashkenazi Cultures
- The Architecture of Sacred Spaces
- Northern European Jews in the Mediterranean
- Artistic Theory and Practice

Submission:
To apply please send a PDF with an abstract (max 250 words) and a short bio (max 100 words) by March 1, 2026 to: education@medici.org

Successful applicants will be notified on April 1, 2026.

Selected papers will be included in an edited volume published by the Medici Archive Project Series with Brepols/Harvey Miller.

Reference:
CFP: Jews, Arts and the Mediterranean (1450-1750) (Florence, 12 Jun 26). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 15, 2025 (accessed Nov 12, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/51342>.