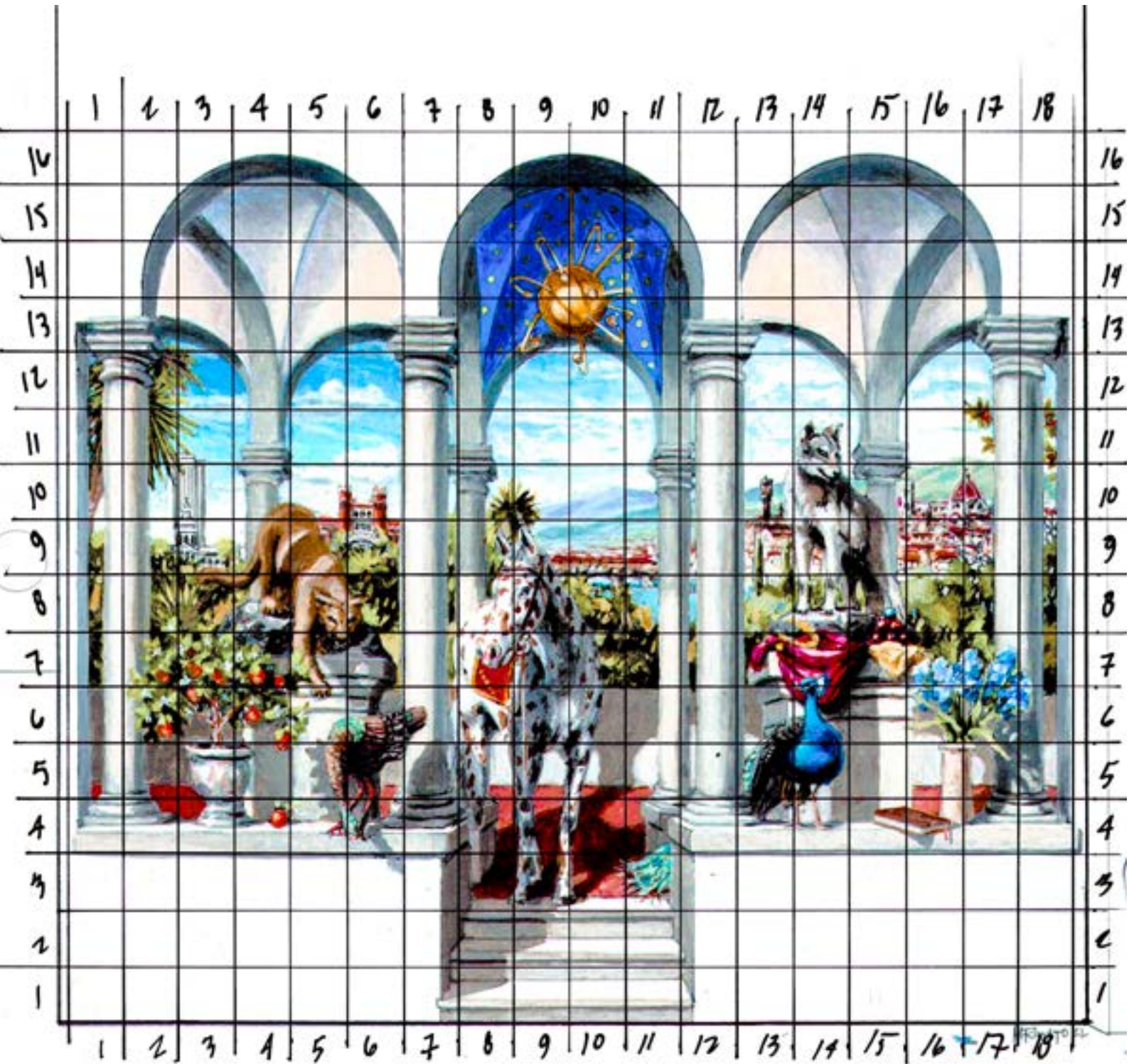


ItaliaNoles



ISSUE 11

A Note From Us:

*The following magazine is the
culmination of the work of
twelve women, six weeks and
one shared experience.*

*Through food, people,
places, art and*

culture, this is an

illustrative journey

of the lasting

impression

created

by the

program.



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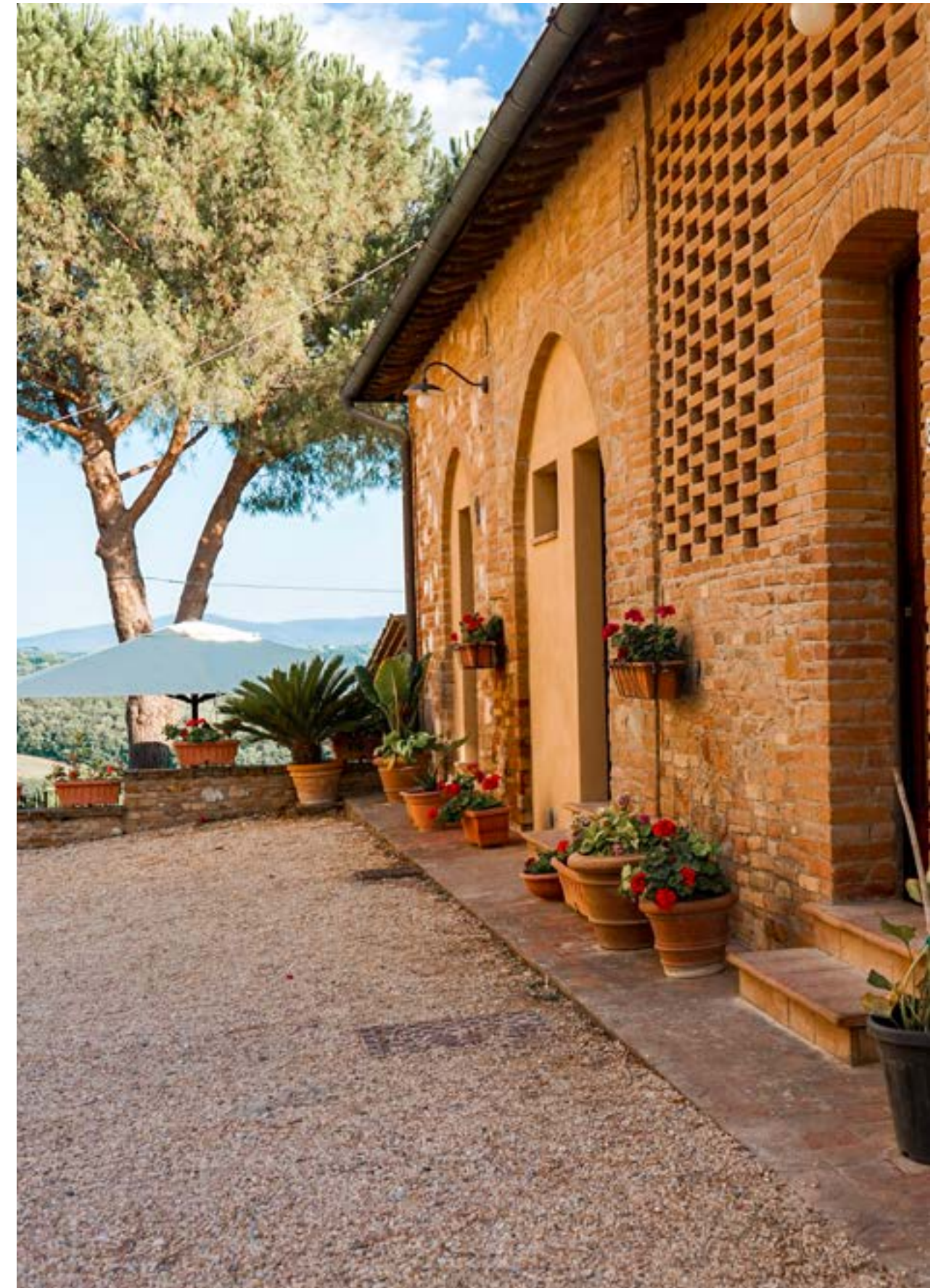
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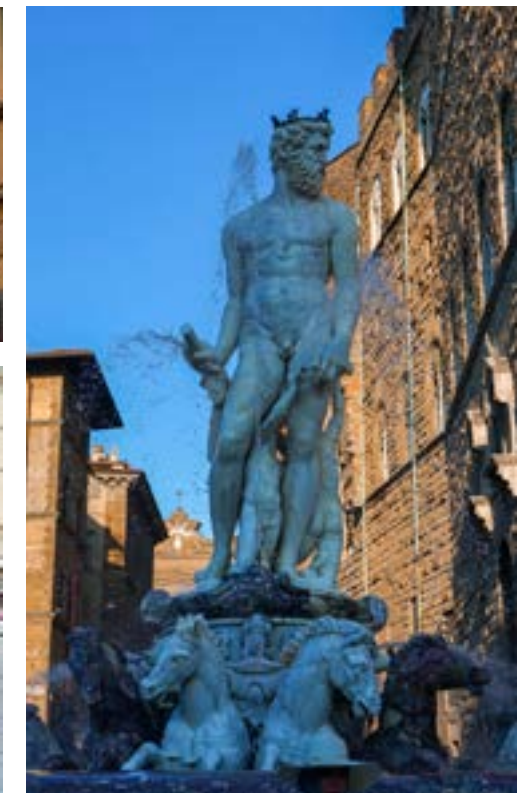
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PLACES

Quaint Corners

By Andi Mastanduno

Valentina Valentina works long shifts at Momo Vintage. She opens the shop at 10:30, and often leaves by 19:30. During her shifts, she balances up-keeping the store, tending to customers and updating the racks with handpicked vintage pieces.

Old rock music plays softly overhead, the only thing anchoring her to sanity until closing time. In the evening, when she locks up the store, she wants nothing more than to melt off the stress of a long day with a relaxing evening involving drinks and some friends.

At first glance, it seems that there is a scarce variety of quaint places to visit in Florence given the swarms of tourists invading year-round.

While the Piazzale Michelangelo or Piazza Santa Maria Novella have stellar views, coining them as “relaxing” locations seems questionable when they are always crowded with people. So where do the locals sneak off to when they are in need of peace?

For Valentina, one of those places is settled on the South side of the Arno River. “Right next to the Porta di San Frediano, by the river, there is the Santarosa Bistrot,” she said.

From breakfast to beverages, Valentina enjoys meeting there with friends to chat over a meal. The best part, however, is its complimentary garden. “It’s a nice place to sit at and study.”

An apparent safe haven for Florentines, the South side of the Arno is home to another location where Emma, a worker at S.forno bakery who preferred not to reveal her last name, likes to find solace.

“It doesn’t have the best view of Florence, but it is somewhere quiet,” she prefaced. The spot is Bellosguardo, a lookout point that is a thirty-minute walk from the Ponte Vecchio. Devoid of tourism, it offers an unpopular but different angle of Florence’s cityscape.

Venturing over to the North side, Beatrice Del Bianco suggests the Oblate Library as a quaint space to drown out tourists. Beatrice, a clerk at a paper shop called Fedrigoni S.P.A, believes the area is ideal for creatives seeking tranquility and inspiration.

“On the first floor, there is a great view of the city,” she said. “It’s also just a good place to sit, have a coffee and read a book.”

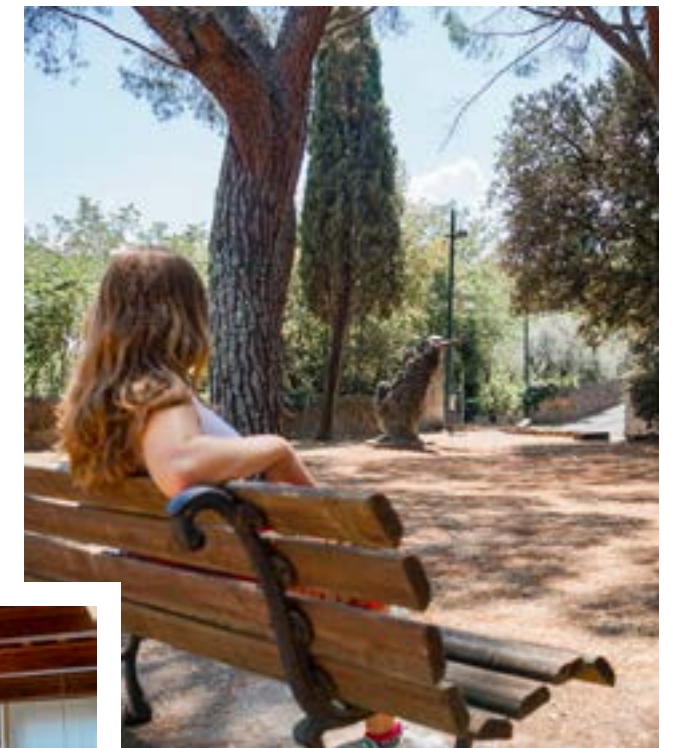
The chaos of the city will swallow you whole without a place of refuge to unwind and recharge at. The hunt for such places can prove to be a challenge without guidance, so why not consider these local favorites?

Grab a coffee, stretch your legs and catch your breath somewhere non-touristy, but equally as culturally rich.

Santa-rosa Bistrot



Bellosguardo



Oblate Library

Florence By Foot: An Adventure in History

By Anna Gutfreund

Michelangelo's Route - South Side:

(Approximately 1 hour walking)

The South side course is challenging, with uphill and downhill climbs. This 5 kilometer course is designed to begin and end at the FSU Study Center. It will take users across the Arno River and up a mountain to Piazzale Michelangelo for a panoramic view of the city. Other highlights include Palazzo Pitti and the Ponte Vecchio.

Route:

1. FSU Study Center
2. Ponte Alle Grazie (includes views of Arno River, Ponte Vecchio and Piazzale Michelangelo)
3. Porta San Niccolò
4. Piazzale Michelangelo (includes views of Rose Garden, Iris Garden and city of Florence)
5. Palazzo Pitti
6. Ponte Vecchio (includes views of Arno River, jewelry shops and historic secret passage over the shops)

End at FSU Study Center



Duomo Route - North Side:

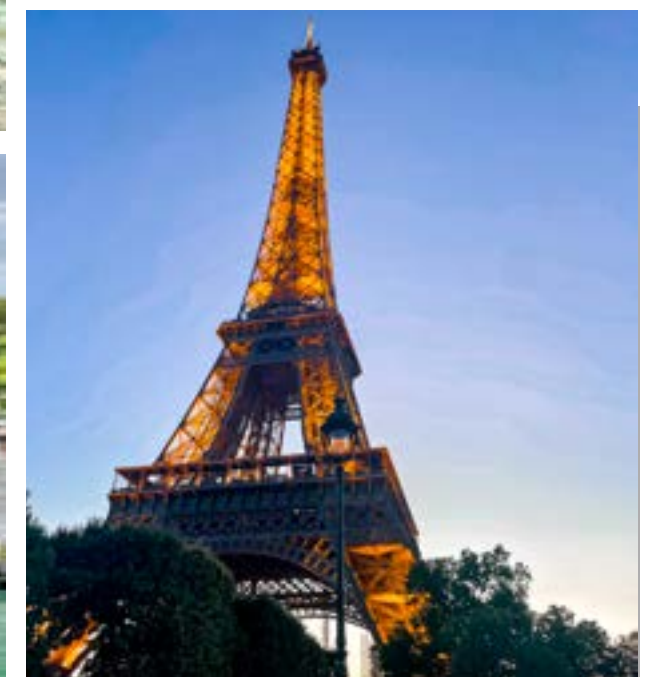
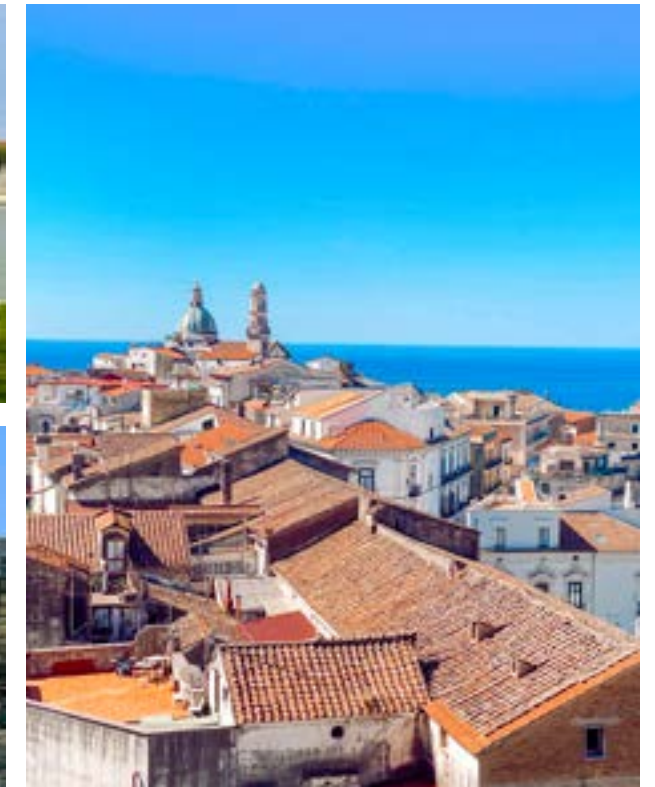
(Approximately 1 hour walking)

The North side of Florence is overflowing with history! This 4 kilometer course is designed to begin and end at the FSU Study Center. It will take walkers and runners to 11 historic sites including the Palazzo Vecchio, Piazzale degli Uffizi, Battistero di San Giovanni, Duomo and Basilica Santa Croce.

Route:

1. FSU Study Center
2. Palazzo Vecchio (includes views of: Gucci, Fountain of Neptune and statues)
3. Piazzale degli Uffizi (includes views of Arno River)
4. Mercato del Porcellino (includes opportunity to rub the bronze statue of a boar for good luck)
5. Piazza della Repubblica (includes views of: carousel)
6. Piazza di Santa Maria Novella
7. Basilica di Santa Maria Novella
8. Basilica di San Lorenzo
9. Battistero di San Giovanni
10. Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore (AKA: Duomo)
11. Museo Casa di Dante
12. Basilica di Santa Croce di Firenze

End at FSU Study Center





FOOD

OMG: No GMOs

By Erin Jennings

“It is illegal to sell the green Kraft Parmesan cheese in Italy because it’s not actually Parmesan,” said Victoria Ambruso, teacher of the International Food & Culture and International Wine & Culture classes.

This is one example that shows the disparity between food regulations in Italy compared to those of the United States (US). To Italians, the concept of preservatives and chemicals in food is a foreign concept, while, for Americans, it is a normalized practice.

If you live in America, there is a chance you are familiar with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). According to fda.gov, it is “responsible for protecting the public health by ensuring the safety, efficacy, and security... of our nation's food supply,”

So why is it that when looking at the labels of many foods sold in America, half of the ingredients are chemicals and preservatives?

Why is it that a simple bottle of ketchup being sold can vary so differently in ingredients when purchasing it in either of the countries?

Many of these questions lead back to the same issue: the regulations

regarding the preparation and preservation of food in these countries.

America has the FDA, while Italy follows the food standards set by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which includes the General Food Law Regulation that “ensures a high level of protection of human life and consumers' interests in relation to food,” according to food.ec.europa.eu.

Italy itself tends to follow the ‘farm to fork’ rule, meaning the products that are produced and sold in the country are fresh and of the best quality.

Take prosciutto, for example, Ambruso describes how the cut must be “contained in the same place for one whole year to experience all the seasons,” granting the product a PDO or PGI label that lets Italians know of the product’s high-caliber of quality.

An American shopper always has to be on high alert to avoid harmful chemicals in their products, such as Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA)/



Butylated Hydrotoluene (BHT), growth hormones like Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH) and Color Dyes.

On the other hand, the Italian grocery shopper never questions these in their products, as the European Union has banned such harmful chemicals.

So, when an American thinks they’re

getting a healthy product because the label says “NonGMO” or “Organic,” chances are, due to lenient rules surrounding preservatives, they are not.

Italians, on the other hand, can mostly rely on any of their products being fresh, often locally sourced and void of harmful chemicals.

Senza Glutine

By Olivia Menezes

"How are you going to be gluten-free in Italy?"

This is the question that plagued me continuously before studying abroad.

No one wants to feel the wave of hunger wash over them during a busy day in Florence, much less elicit embarrassment from oneself for requiring gluten-free.

Honestly, it almost deterred my decision to study abroad in Florence and opt for a place with a more diverse dietary palate.

However, while they are hard to come by, gluten-free options do exist in the land of pasta and bread.

Florence's gluten-free scene began in the city's heart, only one minute from the Duomo and Piazza Repubblica. Nestled between two rock buildings, the restaurant, which opened its doors in 2014, well ahead of its time, sits in an internal courtyard, providing a haven from the bustling city.

Quinoa is reportedly the first 100% gluten-free restaurant in Florence, certified by the National Celiac Association.

According to a report to the Italian Parliament from the Ministry of Health, 182,858 Italians were diagnosed with Celiac disease in 2017 (* statistics are only communicated every 5 years) compared with less than 172,000 in 2014 - an increase of 6%.

This rise in gluten intolerant individuals has brought more awareness to the

importance of diverse dietary options in Italy.

"Our mission is to eliminate differences at the table, creating a new restaurant [where everyone] can find dishes to fall in love with," said Simone Bernacchioni, Quinoa's chef and restaurateur.

Here, clients can uncover a new menu daily for a reasonable price as the average dish costs only 18 euros.

As easy as a twelve-minute walk away from Quinoa stands Sgrano. The Martini family - prominent Florentine restaurateurs for over ten years - discovered an issue when one of their family members was diagnosed with Celiac disease.

Knowing how limited gluten-free options were in Florence, the family took matters into their own hands and underwent an ambitious new project. Their goal was simple: to create a gluten-free restaurant that reflected the authenticity of the ancient Tuscan flavors.

In 2020, Sgrano Firenze was born with the singular mission to specialize in gluten-free bread-making and schiacciate, a Tuscan treasure. Right away it became popular amongst those who frequented Via dei Neri.

The restaurant was so successful that they opened up an Osteria dello Sgrano for handmade pasta. Sgrano Firenze is the culmination of traditional cuisine with a gluten-free twist.

"How are you going to be gluten-free in Italy?"

Now that you know where to find gluten-free meals without the risk of contamination, we run into another problem: dessert. It is a rarity to find a gluten-free pastry.

In fact, research shows that there may only be one certified gluten-free pastry shop in all of Florence - Bottega Artigiana del Gusto. This spot is celiac

heaven. Not only are there mouthwatering gluten-free desserts, but there is also a myriad of gluten-free ingredients available for purchase at your disposal.

"People from as far as 50 km away come here once a month to buy in bulk and freeze at their homes," says Massimo Del Bianco, the owner of the pastry store.

Although a forty-minute walk from FSU's Florence campus, you can get pastries delivered or consider making the trip by walking or biking. You can stock up on the best gluten-free ingredients and, if you have a sweet tooth, now you know where to get your fix!



After growing up in the Chianti region countryside at a bed and breakfast called Fattoria Poggio Alloro, located in San Gimignano, Sarah Fiorini is the heart of this establishment.

Fiorini, a chef, cooking instructor, sommelier, author, and daughter of Amico Fiorini, is carrying on the history of the three Fiorini brothers who labored as sharecroppers in the Tuscan hills in 1955.

This family offers a fully organic farm to guests and has been in the farming business for nearly four generations.

This once 25-acre business has now grown into having over 200 acres of land to grow a plethora of produce and cereal crops for pasta, olive oils, and wines. A main section of this land is used for growing the grapes and wine production, where approximately 200,000 bottles are produced a year.

Next to the rows of fresh vegetables, Fattoria Poggio Alloro offers 12 rooms to stay in, a vineyard, and restaurant where wine tastings and cooking classes take place.

The Fiorini's talent, work, and dedication to nature and traditions, as well as gastronomic practices are exemplified on the farm and at the table in their union of farming and agritourism: embracing organic agriculture and appreciating the worth of a healthy and sustainable way of life.

Sarah's recipe book, "A Family Farm in Tuscany," captures the old county traditions, authentic organic products, and the spirit and soul of the Tuscan culture that can inspire anyone to put on an apron.

Cooking With Sarah:

An Italian Tradition

By Megan Maiberger & Alejandra Maradiaga-Connor





Pasta Fatta in Casa

Servings: 8

2 cups (220 g) semolina flour

2 cups (220 g) all-purpose flour

6 eggs

1 tablespoon milk or extra-virgin olive oil, as needed

3 tablespoons salt

Mix the flours on a clean work surface; form a tall mound and make a well in the center. Crack the eggs into the well and gently begin to beat with a fork. Mix a tiny bit of the flour with each stroke (this requires patience and cannot be rushed). As the dough begins to thicken and most of the flour has been blended, begin to stir the dough.

If the dough seems to be too dry, add the milk or olive oil. Mix the remaining flour into the dough and work with your hands, kneading until the dough is firm and elastic.

Divide the dough into two balls, cover with a clean towel and allow to rest for about 20 minutes.

Lightly flour the work surface with all-purpose flour and roll out one portion of dough into a large, paper-thin rectangle. Be sure to roll the dough thin enough.

Lightly flour the surface of the dough, then roll it up, starting with the side nearest you. Repeat with the remaining ball of dough.

For lasagna pasta, cut the dough into strips 4 ½ inches (12 cm) wide and the length of the pan. Unroll the strips and let them dry for 2 hrs. For tagliatelle, cut into strips about 3/8 inch (1 cm) wide; for tagliolini, cut into strips about 1/8 inch (3 mm) wide. Unroll the strips and toss the pasta with a small amount of all-purpose flour; let dry for about 2hrs.

Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil, add the salt and then the pasta, and cook for about 5 minutes. Drain well and use according to the pasta recipe.



Torta di Mele

Servings: 8

3 eggs

1 cup (200 g) sugar

1 ½ cups (180 g) unbleached all-purpose flour

½ cup (120 ml) whole milk

2 ½ tablespoons (40 ml) butter, melted

2 teaspoons (10 g) baking powder

½ teaspoon (3 ml) vanilla

3 medium apples, about 1 ¾ pounds (800 g), peeled, cored and cut into wedges 1/8 in (3 mm) thick

Powdered sugar as garnish

Vanilla ice cream (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees Celcius). Butter and flour an 8-inch (20 cm) springform pan, tapping the pan to remove excess flour; set aside.

Combine the eggs and sugar in bowl. Beat at medium-high speed for 5 minutes, or until pale yellow in color and

thickened. Gradually add the flour, milk, and butter, stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl after each addition. Beat at low speed until each ingredient is blended, then increase speed to medium-high and beat for 3 minutes. Add the baking powder and vanilla and beat an additional 2 minutes to blend well.

Turn the batter out into the prepared pan. Arrange the apple slices vertically, with the core side down, in concentric circles in the batter, beginning with the outside edge of the pan and continuing to the center. The arrangement of the apples should resemble a rose in full bloom.

Bake in a preheated oven for about 50 minutes, or until a wooden pick inserted in center of the cake comes out clean and apples are lightly browned.

Remove from oven and cool for 10 minutes. Remove the sides of the springform pan. To serve, cut the warm cake into slices, then sift powdered sugar over each serving. Add a scoop of vanilla ice cream to each serving, if desired.



CULTURE

The Arno Runs Through It

By Brooke Belforte

Betty Soldi opens her studio's grandiose glass windows and positions herself towards her perfectly landscaped garden, a tranquil space composed of bushes and vibrant flowers. She finds solace in this and draws inspiration from her garden, which is concealed amongst the lively city.

Soldi's artistic success has been supported by the beauty and ambiance of Florence. The creative artist, whose studio is situated in Southern Florence, finds the city difficult to stay away from.

She professed, "I was born in Florence and then I lived in London for 35 years and I've been back in Florence for 12 years." Soldi, amongst many others, found that the culture, lifestyle and civilization of Florence is irresistible.

Florence is home to over 700,000 citizens, yielding a diversity of lifestyles.

The largest contrast of customs can be seen between the Florentines North of the Arno River versus those South of the River.

This River divides Florence into two sections, causing different ways of life for people on either side. The area North of the River is home to many designer boutiques and is constantly flooded with tourists. Conversely, the area South of the Arno is far more traditional and strays away from an urbanized atmosphere.

For instance, Niccolo Merlozzi, a citizen who has lived in the Southern part of Florence for over 12 years, claims that "This part of the city houses a lot of people, but it is not a tourist zone." In addition, Sebastian Rossiso, another citizen living South of the Arno River, states that he has lived there for 16 years. He claims that there are not a lot of tourists and he admires that about

his area. He knows a lot of his neighbors and he would like to raise a family in Southern Florence someday.

When asked about his opinion on the different ways of life between those North of the Arno and those South of the Arno, Rossiso conveyed that "Most people South of the Arno are permanent residents, while many people North of the Arno are not."

Therefore, people who plan on staying in Florence temporarily may be more inclined to reside in the areas North of the Arno River. These areas are far more active and include an array of stores, restaurants and activities that tourists savor.

In agreement with these statements, Amarild Sina, a young resident of the area North of the Arno River, states that "This university area is crowded with a high level of students." This arrangement is working for him now, however he claimed that if he were to have children in the future, he would raise them away from this area.

Lastly, Betty Soldi, an artist and native citizen of Florence, attests to the notion that both areas opposite of the Arno warrant different ways of living. She states "South of the Arno River is a bit more neighborhood, well it's

very much more neighborhood. The center has been taken over by touristic enterprises and it's less neighborhood, less community. So, North of the Arno River is where tourism really developed."

When asked why she chose to live South of the River, Soldi claimed that "My choice to live on the Southern side was to have more of a local living flavor, so you're not completely invaded by tourism."

In Soldi's experience, the Northern areas of Florence are far more cosmopolitan in comparison to the slower-paced ambiance of the Southern neighborhood.

Overall, Florence is a united city, however the people do not all live the same. The modernization and increased levels of tourism and students North of the Arno River has made typical ways of life different from those South of the River.

Those living North of the River may lean towards a suburban lifestyle, while those South of the River may prefer a quaint neighborhood. Although the lifestyles may be contrary, both areas continue to enjoy Florence's rich and everlasting character.



The Italian Way

By Alessandra Ego-Aguirre

Betty Soldi's love for calligraphy and original style sparked from her desire to find a unique project different from her family's handmade fireworks business.

The Florentine native grew up in London and clearly remembers her teachers writing on a chalkboard. She was fascinated by the handwriting and that led her to discover her calling.

The applauded calligrapher, graphic designer and creative thinker, had the opportunity to travel to many countries in Europe and a few cities in the United States before settling back in Florence.

Today, her designs are used by multiple companies, stationary supplies and packaging collaborations. Additionally, she was inspired to start a business that would allow her to continue to use her creativity.

She is co-owner of three hotels in Florence partnering with her husband and friends. Her desire to utilize her creativity in all areas of her life led her to create a Public Relations position for her hotel business.

So, besides her unique creativity, what is arguably the reason of her success? Could it be *la dolce vita*?

Soldi explained that she actually aims to incorporate *la dolce vita*, the sweet life every day. “The secret is to love what you do and do what you love,” she explained.

“Then, there is no distinction between work and life, you are who you are doing what you do best.” Her “starry-eyed perspective” has allowed her to carry this mindset and perspective into all facets of her life.

By embracing an amendable mindset, even commute to work on a summer Friday is viewed as an opportunity to daydream and cultivate new ideas. "Anywhere is an opportunity to embrace the lightness of being," Soldi said.

“And above all letting go instead of controlling, especially in calligraphy and creative aspects of what I do – accessing that sweet spot – a perfect name for it – of divine inkspiration”.

Similar to la dolce vita, Italians take their approach to life a step further by enjoying il dolce far niente, meaning “the sweetness of doing nothing.” “It is about actively enjoying time flowing without the need to be/do/go for more,” Soldi added.

“Considering wherever you are, day-dreaming, lapping up doing nothing



The artist delves into this feeling saying, “I think there are greater extremes between frenzied work opportunities we all feel we need to embrace, and that yearning for that ‘spensieratezza’, carefreeness and calm and suspension of time and the ‘shoulds’.”

The key is to balance and incorporate la dolce vita, spensieratezza and il dolce far niente into life to make it livelier. Especially, to constantly enjoy the moments that are sometimes not as exciting, whether that be getting ready to go

to work bright and early, meeting up with friends for a budino di riso after class or enjoying a moment of silence at the Giardino delle Rose.

The Italian lifestyle is often discussed and equally admired. Elton John, the applauded British singer, said “I love going to places that have an incredible history. I love the Italian way of life. I love the food. I love the people. I love the attitudes of the Italians.” There is beauty in everything. It is all about discovering it.

dolce far niente

Vocabolario Italiano Utile

By Giacomo Sproccati & ITA 2240

Three students in ITA 2240 (Intermediate Italian Conversation) identified three phrases that are helpful for any student while studying abroad. Spending time in a foreign country is a wonderful opportunity to become acquainted with another language. Communicating through a different code opens our eyes on the perspectives and allows to establish a rapport with the local community, which often turns in one of the best opportunities for cross-cultural exchange. Enjoy reading!

Phrase 1 (Alexandria Schneider): “Che cosa ci consiglia?” (What do you recommend?)

Why: When I first learned this phrase, I thought it was very useful because many of the items on some of the menus I didn't recognize. I was very eager to try new things in Florence so being able to ask what waiters recommended allowed me to expand my palette even when I didn't know exactly what I was trying. Not only does this phrase work at restaurants, but I have also used it when asking about certain types of shoes or what water excursions we should go on. This is a phrase that I recommend to students coming to Florence!

Phrase 2 (Catherine Hom): “Il conto per favore.” (The check please)

We often go out to restaurants, and at some point we have to ask for the check. I always make my request in Italian, and I hope sharing this simple phrase will help any student feel more confident.

Phrase 3 (Isabella Sugar): “Posso pagare con la carta?” (Can I pay by card?)

A phrase that I think is very useful is “Posso pagare con la carta” which means “Can I pay with card.” Some places do not accept card especially taxis, so it is important to ask first before doing the purchase or taking the taxi. I chose this one because I have had a few experience where a taxi or store only accepted cash so it was an obstacle especially since the taxi already arrived at my destination and the driver became angry when I said I only have card.

Scared Kiss-less

By Sydney Boyd

Walking up to the trattoria on the side of a lively piazza, Giulia scans the tables looking for her friend.

After seeing countless patients and working for hours, Giulia is ready to unwind and meet with her close friend Emma over bitter-tasting spritzes and a warm, hearty pasta dish.

One question plagues Giulia's mind. How will Emma react when she fails to give her a traditional double cheek kiss? Will Emma understand her hesitation and caution?

Being a native Florentine, the trademark greeting is engrained into Giulia's DNA. However, after having worked closely with COVID patients for more than two years and seeing the virus' effect's first-hand, Giulia has taken a new perspective.

While the Italian's have been known for their warm greetings and the double cheek kiss, their interactions between each other have changed significantly.

Still reeling from the pandemic that struck their beloved country the hardest in 2020, Italians have been forced to change their once typical behavior and greetings.

Kissing each other on the cheek now breaks the social distancing rule and potentially puts you in danger of contracting COVID.

The trademark Italian greeting kiss has now faded into the pre-COVID lifestyle. “Kissing on the cheek and other greet

ings that require close contact have severely lessened due to Covid,” said one pharmacist who preferred to remain anonymous. This once popular behavior has now dwindled into a distant reminder of the past.

Barbara Fanfani, a dentist and Florence native, has found that the lack of typical socializing in the wake of Covid has made it especially difficult for connecting with loved ones and friends.

“Unfortunately, the pandemic has changed the habits of us Italians who usually are very expansive in communicating and socializing! ... Now when we meet, we exchange a nice smile in order to fill the void that Covid has left in social relationships.”

“All this has led us to a social isolation that has created considerable psychological difficulties especially in the elderly and adolescents. In this regard, in the population there is a greater request for help in the psychological field.”

Instead of a cheek kiss, Italians are opting for greetings with less contact, like a friendly smile or even an elbow bump. Something as simple as greeting a family member, now puts you in harms way.

Who knows if the classic Italian greeting will make a comeback once people feel safer, or is this yet another thing that Covid has permanently changed?

Life of a Florentine Dog

By Sydney Boyd

I am ready to go outside. I have been pacing around for the last hour, confined and cramped in this rather hot apartment. Hang on! I hear the sound of footsteps nearing. My heart begins to race. The front door is opening. Mamma Mia! I am going for it. I am bolting towards it.

At last! I am finally outside able to get some fresh air. Cobblestones are all I know since I so rarely go to a park. Welcome to my life as a Florentine dog.

The abundance of dogs in a city built of stones, with virtually no green landscape is puzzling. But, there may be a simple answer for this recent growth of dog ownership in the historical city: lockdown during the pandemic.

During the strict restrictions that Italy faced during Covid, residents were not allowed to leave their apartments and homes. However, Italians reportedly found a loophole: dogs. By owning a fluffy pet, the law allowed them to go outside to walk their companions a short distance away from their homes.

Although Florence is trying to adopt a dog-friendly culture, the city's landscape makes owning a dog a true challenge. The Renaissance capital features 39.54 square miles, inhabited by al-

most 400,000 people, and filled with historical landmarks, buildings, and cobblestone streets unfriendly to dogs. Importantly, Florence's city center offers little to no public parks or green spaces.

"Living on the South side of the Arno River makes it much easier to have a dog, compared to the North side," said Ilaria Mugnaini, a local Florentine dog owner. "I'm particularly lucky because I live in a green area with a lot of parks." Mugnaini, one of the many Florentines who decided to adopt a dog during the height of Covid, added.

Residents have other solutions to this ongoing challenge. TuscanHound, Florence's longest-standing pet sitting company, offers services to combat the lack of dog-accessible spaces. "Soon after restrictions were lifted, the company felt the effects of the increase of dogs in the city," said Chloe Waller, manager of TuscanHound.



"We noticed the fact that there aren't many parks, and thus created what we call the TuscanHound Villa," she added. "Housing up to eight dogs, located outside of the city center situated on 15 acres of land, this space provides a grassy refugee, comfortable rooms and even a pool for the dogs to enjoy and take a break from the city," Waller said.

Waller also provided an interesting insight into how Florentines can adapt their lifestyle as a dog-owner. "People have to adjust their schedules for walking to cooler times in the day, before

8 o'clock in the morning and after 7 p.m."

Despite Florence's best efforts to adopt a dog-accessible culture, the simple lack of public parks and green spaces in the city center makes it difficult to own a dog. With an increasing number of dogs living in the city, will Florence move towards implementing more green spaces in the city center, or will these dogs only know the cobblestones and crowded streets that they walk on every day?



The Words We Don't Say

By Alejandra Maradiaga-Connor

Sipping a spritz at Piazza Michaelangelo café two Italians are visibly deep in conversation and appear to be erratically making signs with their hands. It is only by getting into earshot that one realizes they are exclaiming, “che buono!” while simultaneously twisting their index fingers into their cheek.

Known for their exaggerated hand gestures, Italians use the motions to describe everything from fear, humiliation, pride, or happiness. A finger pressed up against the thumb signifies, “I wasn’t born yesterday” while gently circling one’s hand means, “whatever.”

The Italian way of communicating with their hands is rooted in the expression of different underlying tones. It adds more meaning to their words, which is deep-rooted in their culture.

Victoria Ambruso, M.A. Communication Studies & Master of Food. Culture, says “Hand gestures are important because they act as a second common language. It’s not just [a] simple “thumbs up.” A gesture adds value to a conversation, conveying the emotion the speaker feels or perhaps helps to describe other people.

With an acute sense of the cross-cultural perspective, she recounts when she first arrived in Italy. When she had no idea what people were saying since they utilized gestures instead of words.

One example that stays at the forefront of her memory is when her cousin was describing her sister and only said “You know Camilla, she is--” and finished the sentence with a hand gesture.

“I was so confused and said, “she’s so what?” and she did the hand gesture again not realizing that I had no clue what she was saying. Then she explained that the gesture she used meant “You know Camilla, she is difficult.”

In hindsight, the language of hand gestures is magic. They are a type of literal nonverbal communication that has a direct meaning and is designed to emphasize what is already being said.

Functioning as punctuation, they transform expressions into exclamation points, periods, and question marks. In a finer way, they have a significant impact on what defines an Italian.

It’s not surprising that they use approximately 250 hand gestures, according to Isabella Poggi, a psychology professor at Roma Tre University and an expert in gestures.

So, where did this custom originate?

Ambruso states “the historical significance is important to highlight and the fact that it’s a nonverbal unifier.”

Gestures have a complex history that extends far beyond a folk story, and it is linked to Italy’s lengthy history of invasions by countries attempting to impose their languages and customs.

According to historians, hand gestures arose as a means of communication among people who did not share a common language during Ancient Greek colonization of the Mediterranean coast and foreign domination by Austria, France, and Spain from the 14th to the 19th centuries.

Adam Kendon, the author of *Gesture*, defines this notion as an evolution of gesturing in densely populated locations like Naples as a way of “marking one’s territory” or drawing attention with their bodies.

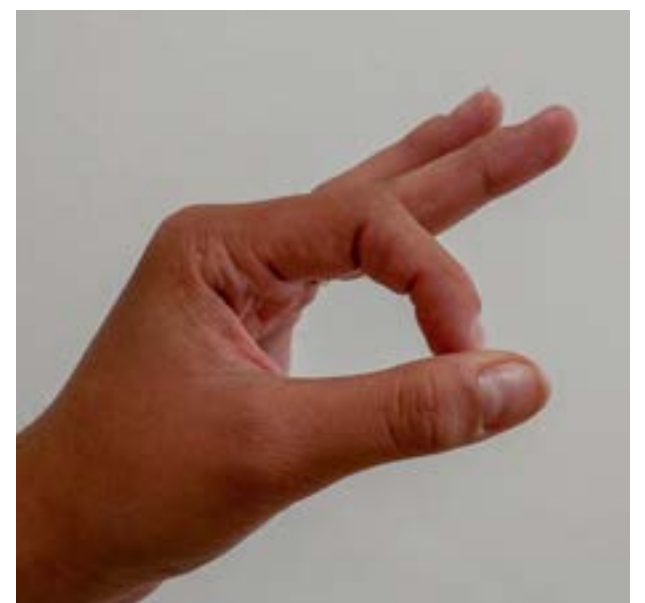
According to Andrea De Jorio, a priest and archaeologist, present Italian gestures are nearly comparable to those depicted in ancient Greek vases discovered in Naples.

As a result, it is indisputable that gestures evolved much more gradually than verbal languages.

Nevertheless, this very expressive nonverbal communication has now become standardized, with its own dictionary.

However, whether you realize it or not, you are most likely already able to understand and communicate in Italian through body language.

Raising your index finger to talk or laying it on your lips to request silence are great translations of Italian hand gestures.





EVENTS

Gearing Up for Game Time

By Sydney Boyd & Andi Mastanduno

Winning a championship title is no easy feat. With two championship titles under their belt- Fall 2018 and Fall 2021 - and the tournament starting in October, the FSU Florence Renegades soccer team is about to start their quest to bring home a third championship win.

Each fall and spring semester, the FSU Florence Program offers students the chance to join their co-ed soccer team and participate in the Fiorenza International School Cup Futsal tournament. The tournament is played differently compared to typical 11 on 11 soccer, where there are only five players on a team and played on turf instead of actual grass.

In Fall 2021, the FSU Renegades clinched the 30th edition of this tournament. After a hard-fought game

against the European School of Economics, the score was tied 2-2 when it came down to penalty kicks. It was in this shoot-out that Florida State took home the win.

"Since the spring of 2017, not one semester has gone by where we either have not been in the semifinals or finals," said Frank Nero, Director of the FSU Florence Program, and coach of the FSU Futsal Renegades.

After going through the tryout process, students are placed on one of two teams depending on their skill set and intentions for playing. Joining the more advanced team comes with the expectation of winning the tournament and beginning practices as early as the first week of the fall semester.

In order to prepare, students must first become comfortable playing futsal, which requires a fast-paced energy from players. "During practice, we work on that sort of mentality, that the game is different," said Nero. Once a week, the team practices an hour to two hours, growing accustomed with the size five futsal ball, smaller goal and learn how to move efficiently on a turf field.



To do this, Coach Nero would organize scrimmages with local Italian teams to show students the true nature of futsal.

To grow more skilled as a team and become familiar with playing together, players often spend their free-time practicing. "I lived with two other people on the team and we would go to the gym together and stretch together before games," Nicholas Podvia, a member of the Fall 2021 winning team recalled.

"Part of the preparation is word of mouth," said Nero. "Students who have come and have done the program, especially the freshmen and first year abroad attendees, when they go back home, they talk to the seniors in high school who play soccer, as they start

thinking about whether they want to do the program."

Physical and mental preparations coupled with the right mindset stand as crucial factors for the team's success.

Nero emphasized the fact that some of the FSU Renegades' opponents often demonstrate difficult behavior that may at times disturb the team's concentration and focus.

"They're gonna be constantly yelling at the referees and getting in their face, and the minute that we let that get under our skin, and get to us, we're gonna lose the final," Nero said he told them. "We're gonna lose the trophy if we react or lose our cool," and that's what I remember saying to them," Nero added. "The kids responded perfectly, and despite being out-muscled and out-weighted, we held our own, kept it a tie, and then won on penalty kicks."

With the fall semester approaching, the FSU Renegades must prepare themselves for the challenge of regaining the championship title, carrying on the legacy of the preceding team.

The reason why Florida State has remained a notable competitor is due to the shared spirit of all Seminoles. "Our team has a lot of heart. I think that's one of the things that characterizes us the most since 2016. We may not have the most skilled players, regardless of their gender, they always leave everything out on the field," Nero concluded.

TikTok: Your Guide to Study Abroad

By Anna Gutfreund

Businesses all across Florence have started creating their own TikTok accounts. Popular locations such as All'antico Vinaio, La Prosciutteria, Pino's Sandwiches and Antico Noe now all have accounts, and they all happen to be competing panino shops.

So, why such an aggressive desire to move to this relatively new social media?

Ever since its release in 2016, TikTok has been downloaded three billion times and to date has over a billion active users with numbers continually

growing. Data shows that once the pandemic took full effect in March 2020, TikTok broke a record with its highest quarter-over-quarter growth.

Its appeal comes from its short-video format accompanied by numerous effects, sounds, filters, graphics, interaction opportunities and trends to participate. TikTok's features make it easy to create and view videos. According to the Pew Research Center, about half of 18-29 year-old Americans use TikTok, making them the largest demographic using the app.

In fact, multiple FSU Florence students confessed they interacted with videos about Florence and Italy because they knew it would be beneficial to them in the future. They shared videos with each other so they could feel prepared with basic information before arriving.

Aydyn O'Brien, a FSU Florence Broad Curriculum student said she came across a lot of content on her 'For You Page' and also searched for videos that could inform her on the proper clothing to pack, "secret" spots to visit and cities to travel to on the weekends.

She said that she most enjoyed watching videos from "other young adults that were either traveling abroad for fun or school." O'Brien found that she trusted these creators the most because "videos of average people that go viral are honest and not doing it for money," she said.

Mallory Valentine, another FSU Florence Broad Curriculum student, said her favorite creator was Kacie Rose. Valentine appreciated the American perspective and through Rose's videos found out one can go under the Trevi Fountain and used her tips to find authentic gelato.

Kacie Rose, a US native now a Florence resident, gained influence and a large

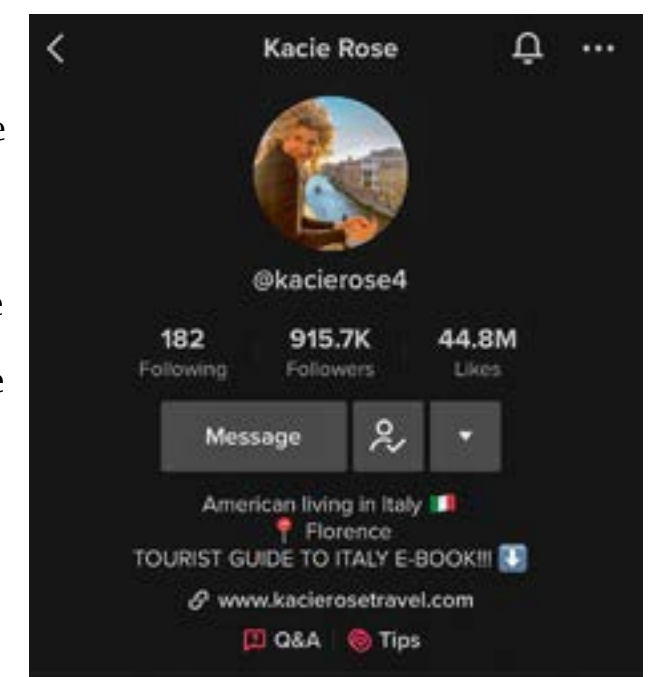
following by accident. She created her first viral TikTok in January 2021 about how she met her Italian boyfriend.

Hours later, she counted more likes and comments than she ever could imagine and new followers were even begging for more content. To date, she now has 909.6 K followers with whom she shares content about her life, the Italian culture, important information and tips.

Today, few would question the influential power of TikTok, particularly when it comes to travel. TikTok may even be the first place Gen Z goes to learn.

Yet, Yana Wengel, author of "The TikTok effect on destination development: Famous overnight, now what?", and her colleagues researched how viral TikTok videos can impact tourism trends.

Their findings revealed that TikTok may lead to overtourism, which is mostly caused by social media influencers. Locations become popular overnight thanks to viral videos, and many times this can overwhelm the communities that have these hidden gems, like All'antico Vinaio.



Line & Dine: All'antico Vinaio

By Megan Maiberger

Since May 2022, All'antico Vinaio, a small restaurant tucked in Via dei Neri 65, 74, 76, and 78, has set the standard for all other paninis.

Created in 1989, this restaurant may seem absent and sleepy early in the morning, but when the Santa Croce bells ring at noon, lines are already wrapped around the building. The wait can be anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour.

Regardless of the wait, "you just have to do it, you have to try the panini before you leave, no matter what," said Taylor Kennedy.

So, why is All'antico Vinaio arguably the most desired place to get a panini?

On May 9, 2022, a TikTok user by the name of @gowithgarret posted a short video explaining his experience and giving his review for All'antico Vinaio.

He posted small clips of himself inside this narrow restaurant space, went through the ordering process, what sandwich he bought, and after showing the sandwich and the extreme size, he gave his overall opinion. He showed the viewers exactly what to expect, so that they may be prepared once they reach the front of the line.

The rest seems to be history for the Florentine panini shop. To date, this TikTok has received 4.4 million views and over 466k likes, thus giving All'antico Vinaio more exposure and consequently potentially lengthening their already long lines that serve as free advertisement.

It is unlikely for someone to walk

down Via dei Neri, without stopping to either wait in line or at least make a note that they must come back to see what the hype is all about.



In Pursuit of the Maillot Jaune

By Hailey Pflaumer

Italy's leading sports daily *La Gazzetta dello Sport* published an article on June 8 alluding to a possible Tour de France start in Florence in 2024.

Every year, cities in France and abroad vie for competition to host a Tour de France stage departure and arrival.

The prestige is even higher for a Tour de France grand departure. Based on information from *La Gazzetta*, the Tour de France would reportedly start at the top of Piazzale Michelangelo, a large square located on the South side of the city with panoramic views overlooking the Arno river.

Although nobody confirmed the rumor thus far, a recent article published July 20 in *Corriere Fiorentino* established that the regions of Tuscany and Emilia Romagna had indeed submitted their application to Amaury Sport Organization, the organizers of the Tour.

With an acceptance, Florence would become the grand starting point of the 2024 Tour de France. This would mark the 26th time in history that the event would start outside of its host country. In 2023, Bilbao will be the 25th.

Upon reaching out to Davide Cassani, former coach and cyclist, Stefano Banacini, President of Emilia-Romagna, and Dario Nardella, current mayor of Florence, ItaliaNoles was unable to confirm the information published.



The Tour de France director for the past 15 years, Christian Prudhomme, said to the Italian media, "The Grand Départ project from Italy is concrete: I hope with all my heart that the signature will be reached in a short time."

The project is said to be completed by 2024, or at the latest, 2025. In hopes of an earlier year, the country would like to honor cyclist Ottavio Bottecchia. He was the first Italian to win the Tour in 1924, making 2024 his centenary. As a country with such a connection to the Tour, the cyclists have only ever passed through the Alps during the stages.

One major obstacle in Prudhomme's plans is alleged cross vetoes between

Italian regions for the venues of the stage. As preparation for the project draws closer, he said, "There is a joint candidacy of the regions of Tuscany and Emilia Romagna and a proposal presented by Piedmont as official. We are working on a solution starting from these two projects."

With lots of decisions still to be made, Prudhomme has not lost hope that if an agreement can be reached, "The departure from Italy could be one of the best ever in the history of the Tour de France." Italy is full of beautiful architecture and landscapes. It is the perfect scene for the 111th Tour.



A Date with Donatello

By Andi Mastanduno

Along the packed streets of Florence, red posters placed around the city captivate many onlookers and tourists alike. In bold white letters, the posters announce a limited-time exhibition commemorating the life and artistic contribution of Donatello, the acclaimed Florentine artist.

Held at the Palazzo Strozzi and Museo Nazionale del Bargello museums, Donatello, Il Rinascimento marks the first time that one hundred of Donatello's works, imported from museums around the world, are on display in one location.

Additionally, some pieces were granted exclusive access to join the exhibition, displaying them in a new museum for the first time. This rare occurrence, combined with immersive storytelling through artworks, sends Florentines and foreigners flocking to witness the historical event before its end on July 31, 2022.

"Many of my friends teach Art History and I know many of them flew here specifically to see the exhibit," said Danielle Callegari, a professor of Medieval Italian Literature at Dartmouth College. "I would not

have discouraged them now that I've seen them."

Nicknamed the "Father of the Renaissance," Donatello shook the city of Florence back in the 15th century with his proficiency in sculpting. He was often commissioned by churches and the Medici family to carve sculptures of

important scenes and figures, many of which can now be seen in museums or still standing tall around the city.

At the time, his sculpting techniques and attention to human anatomy birthed a new artistic era based on classical ideals that strayed from the traditional medieval style of that period or what is known today as The Renaissance.

The exhibition initially attracted worldwide attention because of its sense of completion. Featuring anything from Donatello's earliest pieces to recreations of his art from other names like Brunelleschi and Giovanni Bellini, viewers gain a clear sense of the artist's influence on the Renaissance era throughout his life.

Pietro Antichi, a Florentine art teacher, raved about the contribution put in by the curator and museums, saying that there was a strong effort to bring together these masterpieces. As a fan of Donatello's work, he was ecstatic to see that structurally, they did a really good job.

FSU Florence's Art, Architecture, and Artistic Vision professor Sarah Mathieson agrees that the showing's construction intrigues viewers the most. "The exhibition seeks to give the audience an unprecedented look at Donatello's groundbreaking body of work that marks a shift in the history of Western art," she said.

Inside the exhibition, a diverse spectrum of people share the space. Students whispering their thoughts on the San Giovanni Battista sculpture, children peering wide-eyed at the sculptures towering above them, lone ticketholders listening tentatively to audio guides as they float between rooms.

They are all there because of a common admiration and anticipation to witness this monumental event.

When other works, like Michelangelo's *David*, are typically written high on the itineraries of newcomers traveling to Florence, Donatello's artistic footprint becomes overshadowed. Donatello, The Renaissance is a powerful initiative that restores the significance of the revolutionary's impact in a uniquely complete and immersive way for all to enjoy.





ART

A Blank Canvas

By Caroline Hamon

A blank canvas is a new beginning. Endless possibilities, countless ideas and chances for error can make a blank canvas feel daunting. Yet, Frank Nero, Director of the FSU Florence Program, was determined to conquer the imposing bare walls of the newly renovated FSU Florence Study Center acquired in 2019.

The question was, where to begin? “Art creates an identity for a community,” Nero said. Florence is the city of art, the home of the Renaissance. He innately knew that the best way to display the FSU Florence identity was through art.

As an art historian, Nero thought this should be executed through a mural, harking back to the traditions of Italian frescoes from the Medieval and Renaissance eras. From there, it just became a matter of identifying an artist and a theme.

Through what seems to be fate and a series of happy accidents, Nero came upon Michael Rosato’s work in late 2019 - specifically, a mural he had completed in Baltimore featuring a large portrait of Harriet Tubman. Immediately intrigued, he later discovered that Michael Rosato was a Florida State alum.

Even more coincidental, he was also an alum of the FSU Florence Program. As the stars aligned, it was evident to Nero that there was no better person to execute such an important project for the Florence Study Center.

Rosato had a transformative experience in Italy that changed the course of his life. “There’s magic here,” Rosato said about Florence. If it was not for the Florence program and the time he spent in Italy, Rosato believes he would not be pursuing his passion for art in the capacity that he is today.



Never could he imagine that he would return to Florence to create a piece of art that is the culmination of his life-long artistic passion and his deep connections to a program he holds so close to his heart.

When approached by Nero with the opportunity to teach the current generation of FSU Florence students while working on this special project, Rosato reacted with a strong affirmation.

Now, over three years in the making, Rosato and Nero’s vision finally came to fruition. It wasn’t until June of 2022, Rosato and his twelve students began the process of bringing this mural to life.

The story behind this mural is the tale of a bridge—imagery befitting a city built on the Arno River. The connection between Florida State University and

the city of Florence has been solidified by the university’s identity within the new Study Center.

Rosato explains how the intention of this mural is to be a visual representation of two cultures merging together to create life-changing experiences for students.

Nero wanted students to collaborate and learn with an artist to create a lasting masterpiece that would visualize this idea of connectivity.

Reini Encarnacion, one of the twelve students who worked on the mural, explains the personal significance of this project. “It’s an honor to be such a big part of something that is so big to the Florence program and to the university that will be there for a very long time,” she said.



As for the symbolism of this piece, it showcases the bond between FSU and the city of Florence – a relationship of almost sixty years.

Rosato chose specific symbols, like animals, plants and landmarks that represented each respective city. The Ponte Vecchio connects the Tallahassee side of the mural to the Florence side and serves as the symbol bridging both cultures into one continuous image.

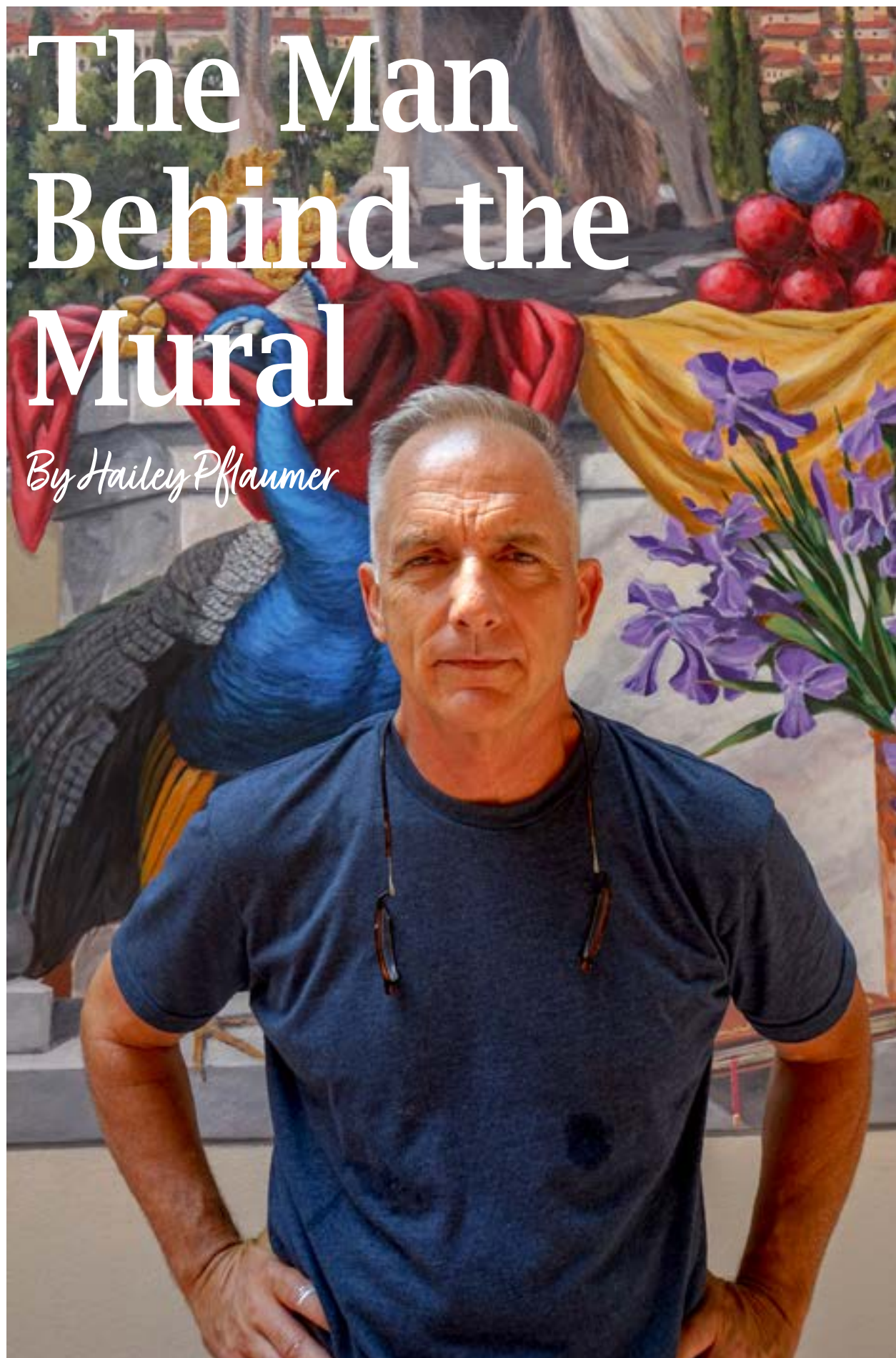
Nero added that this study center, with its central location and deep ties to the city, is intended to serve as a meeting place for Florentines and Floridians alike. Nero explained that there's no better way to display this than through a mural that portrays the shared his-

tory of Florida State University and Florence.

Officially unveiled on July 21, this mural serves as a focal point of the FSU Florence Study Center. Rosato and his twelve students will leave a lasting impression on the campus. Rosato speaks to how each student was a core part of the process of creating a lasting piece for the Study Center.

"I can tell that each one of my students have an incredible pride for what they did on that wall." Undoubtedly, this mural will impress with its beauty and its message, but it will also hold a deep personal meaning for past, current, and future students of FSU Florence.





The Man Behind the Mural

By Hailey Pflaumer

Q: What is your background and artistic journey?

A: I started painting at the age of 31, self-taught, no art school, no art class, no boundaries. It started out with a lie. I told someone I knew how to paint, so they put a paintbrush in my hand, but I had no idea what I was doing. I took to it well and I haven't stopped since. That's all I do is paint murals. I learned by doing, I learned by making mistakes. If I had to paint a portrait, I would go see Rembrandt. I would stand in front of these paintings and that is how I basically taught myself the process of painting.

Q: When you talk about painting do you remember specifically the circumstances at that age of 31 that led you on that day, where were you, what happened?

A: I remember 31 because when I turned 30, I thought if I don't chase my dream, to be an artist I never will. My real journey started 1981 when I studied here on the Florence program, and we went down to Rome, to St. Peters Basilica. I saw Michelangelo's Pieta and a tear came down my face. I thought I want to do that, create beauty, or create something that had an impact like that piece of art had on me.

Q: Since you didn't go to art school, you say you have no boundaries. Do you think that is why you chose murals over canvases?

A: I didn't choose to do murals, they chose me. When I lied to that guy 35 years ago, he was painting a mural at the time. I had never held a brush aside from a roller but that day I started. Because he was a muralist, I worked with him for a year painting. It came to me fast and within a year, I was being asked to paint things on my own and the rest is history.

Q: Can you explain how you started painting on your own?

A: When I first started, he paid me \$100 a day, which I couldn't believe I was getting paid to learn how to paint. Learning the medium was the most difficult part but within a year I was doing 70-80% of the paintings and he would tweak them. After completing a job for the Texas Rangers Stadium, he was going to sign it after I had painted all 68 hall of fame portraits. I thought you know what I'm not that stupid. And that was it, after that job we separated, and I started on my own.

Q: What would you say was the most liberating mural that you created, the one that ignited everything else?

A: My very first job was the US Fish and Wildlife Center, the Eastern National Wildlife Refuge. The board director came in to our first meeting and said, "If I can't walk into the painting, you don't get paid." It was liberating and incredibly fearful. The most liberating part of the experience is that I had a huge fear going into it and I had a huge success coming out of it. Every bird in the painting was a challenge at that point in my career. The amount of growth I had after, I thought I know I can do anything. It might take me a while, but I know I can do it.

A True Leather Artisan

By Hailey Pflaumer

Antonella Fantechi sips her hot bitter cappuccino as she walks past Gucci and Prada. She rarely looks at their extravagant window displays. She prefers artisanry with imperfections. "An authentic Italian leather bag should not have a perfectly straight stitch," she says. "The lining should be hand painted, bleeding over the width of the leather."

The 59-year-old Florence native pushes on. Unphased. Her home away from home is just two streets west where tourists are as rare as Fettuccine Alfredo in Florence.

Located on the first floor of a seemingly residential building on Via Del Sole, lies a small leather workshop and store front bearing the Cellerini name since Silvano Cellerini opened the shop in 1967.

Producing just two customized bags a week, this small shop goes unseen by the public eye. Their priority is to accentuate the beauty of authentic Tuscan leather at the hands of a skilled craftsman, not to boast the name of the brand.

As Antonella's daughter, Isabella Taddei said, "There is a small inner circle of local craftsman, and we all know when someone is trying to imitate what it means to be truly Italian made."

Before the Cellerini family turned over

their business to Fantechi family in 2018, Antonella worked for the original owners for ten years.

To this day she and co-owner, Alessandra Fantechi, her younger 55-year-old sister, carry the same care and attention to detail in every product, just as Cellerini did.

Whether it be a small wallet or an extravagant customized purse, no stitch is left unfinished.



"True artisanry is shown in the imperfections"

-Antonella Fantechi

Upholding the same level of mastery as the Cellerini family is a daunting task, but the history on the walls guide the three women in this endeavor. Fantechi said a messy shop is "the best way to work," as the paper patterns of every customized piece the brand has crafted since the 1960s hang from the ceilings to the floors' of the three room workshop.

The yellow tarnished geometric pieces of paper guide the 23-year-old daughter's favorite part of the process: the initial cut of the calf or pig skin leather. Although only having 4 years of experience, Isabella uses her love for animation and design to conceptualize how each cut will lay on an imperfectly perfect purse.

As Alessandra finishes gluing the base of the customized blue leather bag in place she says, "Most of our customers are actually American and Japanese, because they want the authentic products you can't buy in the States, but the local Italians all seem to want the big-name brands."

However surprising that may be, the hands of these three women tend to every piece just like Silvano Cellerini did when he was first repairing purses back to their original state. From one family to another, the level of craftsmanship and appreciation for the product itself was never lost.



Beneath the Canvas

By Caroline Hamon

To many, Florence is synonymous to the word “art.” Florence is a vibrant city and the founding place of the Renaissance art movement. To this day, trailblazers have flocked to Florence to cultivate skills, broaden portfolios and of course, sell their work to tourists and locals alike.

Lining the streets of some of the most historical monuments, artists display their vibrant watercolor and acrylic paintings of the Florence landscape.

Many of these artists put their own twist on their cityscapes, making their work the perfect souvenir for visitors who seek a unique handmade piece to remember their travels.

It may be difficult to find your favorite piece in a sea of canvases, but oftentimes the true souvenir is hearing the artist’s story.

Two women, in particular, shine as examples of their art being more than just a beautifully painted cityscape. Carmella Rizzi and Susanna Casari have been selling their artwork outside

the Uffizi Gallery for over 40 years. Their artwork adorns the plaza just as the artwork inside adorns the walls of the gallery, yet oftentimes their stories are left untold.

Carmella combines sketch-like line-work with broad, abstract streaks of subtle color, creating a simplified depiction of incredibly detailed Florentine structures. When she is not selling her art, which has been selected for an exhibition in Bologna for Italian watercolor artists, she is teaching art in secondary school.

Walking up to her stand, she greets with a large smile and a quiet “Buongiorno” before immediately talking about her work in a mixture of Italian and English. Within the first few minutes of the conversation, she mentions her “gatto” present in many of her pieces. She explains that she prefers her personal work, which can also be found scattered throughout her cityscapes. These pieces are more abstract, and have a more vibrant,

whimsical appearance. This seemingly small element, of adding her cat to Florentine cityscapes, is a way for her to incorporate a sense of personality into something that does not normally allow for such sentiment.

Further down the Uffizi Plaza, Susanna Casari’s vibrant cityscapes are neatly aligned on a stand. Her appearance matches her work, with her colorful choice of lipstick and large statement jewelry adorning her neck.

Her work lacks linework but has bright pops of oranges, pinks and yellows, creating amazing sunset skylines. She began her art stand immediately following graduation from the Istituto D’Arte Di Castelmassa. Once a graphic designer, she now considers herself a “free professional” and prefers selling her picturesque paintings than being constrained by a corporate job.

To her, these cityscapes are much more personal than her other work. She explains that they come directly from her mind and are easier to create than other works, such as portraiture. She engages buyers by telling the story of her life and the discovery of her passion for art, and you can’t help but cling to her free-spirited personality and love for a city she’s called home for 40 years.

Both of these women show the depth and story behind the rich colors of the Florence art culture. They are only a few of many artists that are eager to share their stories and provide a life-long token of your time in Florence. It is easy to go to a museum to learn about famous artists, but sometimes the best stories are from those who are unknown to most.



Who Are You, Carla Bru?

By Andi Mastanduno



Situated in the Oltrarno neighborhood, on the south side of the Arno River, Carla Bruttini's studio doors remain ajar all day. It beckons anyone inside with the calming aroma of burning incense and soothing melodies of lo-fi music.

One of the few female artists in Florence, Bruttini, nicknamed Carla Bru, uses this space as a creative oasis to produce, display and sell her pieces. Alongside her own work inside is the art of other well-known Florentine street artists—Blub, Exit/Enter—who have inspired her to use the streets of Florence as a gallery for her work.

"I started [street art] because I had many friends that were street artists," Bruttini said. "So it was like a natural following."

Since her involvement, Carla's name gradually became recognizable throughout Florence, propelling her career forward. "It helped because people outside could see my art instead of needing to be in a museum," she said.

The impact of her art has been so renowned that her studio is even a stop for street art tour groups who come barreling through, analyzing her space and purchasing her designs.

While street recognition does generate extra revenue, stamping her work onto the sides of buildings also allowed Carla to further spread the positive and empowering messages that her work emulates.

The two street pieces that gained the most traction with onlookers are *Shaman* and *Kindness*, which are also two of Carla's favorite works. "[Shaman] represents the power of the woman and power of the human being," she said.

It depicts a woman curled into a ball with her eyes closed, red hair floating

upwards. "I made her hair red because it is fiery," further invoking strength into the piece.

The latter work, *Kindness*, is a simple image of a plucked flower delicately held between someone's fingers, but the meaning speaks volumes: It is a reminder for all to love and be kind to one another. "I wanted to share something that everyone can understand," Carla said, explaining the image. The hand gesture in the piece is a signal of kindness that anyone can recognize, regardless of the language they speak.

The symbolism behind Carla's work extends further than its imagery, however.

Her unique art medium combining paper collage with paint began serving an alternate purpose than just pops of color later in the artist's life. "The paper was what I used as color in my paintings, but now I like to use paper with certain words that have to do with what my painting is about."

Carla continues to work diligently on creating new paintings and spreading impactful messages through imagery and media. She is transitioning away from using the streets as her museum, but she will never forget its impact on her career. Her street art opened her up to a whirlwind of connections, financial opportunity and proper recognition of her creative talents to audiences she would not have reached otherwise.

"People outside could see my art instead of needing to be in a museum."

- Carla Bru

