RIVISTA

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In this issue:

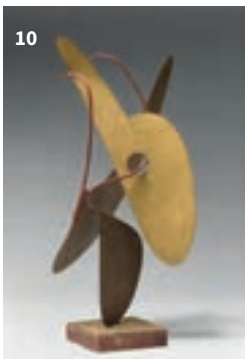
Aquileia: a paradise and a dream for archeologists

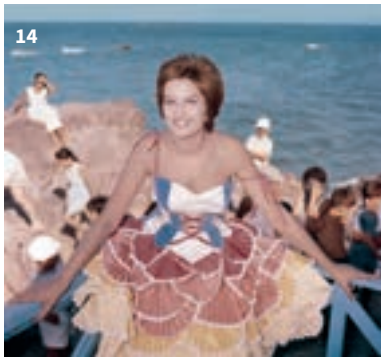
National Portrait Gallery's Italian influences

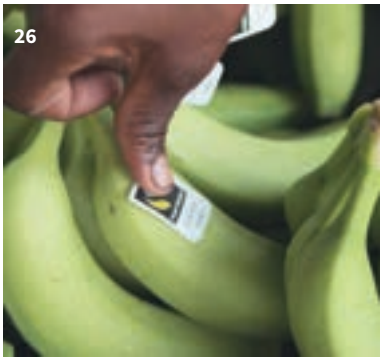
Recalling the Queen's State Visit to Italy

The Lorenzo da Ponte library

BIS British Italian Society







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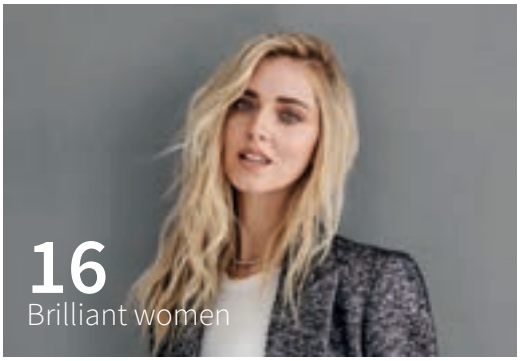
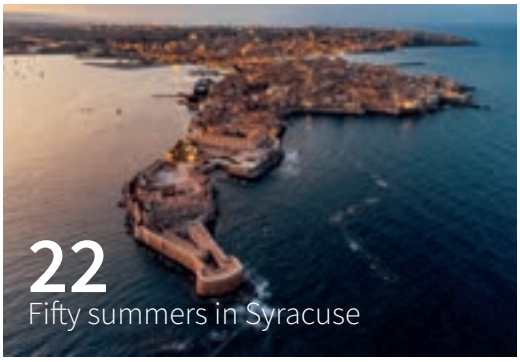




Disclaimer

Review of the year

Richard Northern, Chairman, looks back on the year

2022 has certainly ended on a high for the British-Italian Society. Our President, Olga Polizzi, gave a wonderful At Home party in London to enable members to celebrate the festive season together. Donations from those who attended will make a real difference to our charitable and other activities. We are extremely grateful to Olga and William for their generous hospitality and support.

The Leconfield Lecture was also a very special occasion. Dr Nicholas Cullinan whetted our appetites for the reopening of the National Portrait Gallery in 2023 with an informative account of the redesign and refurbishment of the Gallery, of the rehanging of its art works and of the collection's Italian links. His talk, covering art, architecture and history, kept us all spellbound. Both these November events were sold out. It is encouraging too that our membership numbers are rising again.

We were able to include two extra events in this year's programme. In March, the Thaddeus Ropac gallery in Mayfair kindly arranged a reception and a guided private viewing of their Emilio Vedova exhibition. Then, in June, a group of members were able to enjoy a tour in glorious sunshine of London University's Royal Holloway College at Egham followed by a fascinating talk by Dr Giuliana Pieri in the College's historic picture gallery.

We held two zoom lectures, in January and September, on the ancient Roman authors Cicero and Ovid and on four Inspiring Italian Ladies. Dr Charles Avery gave another talk, full of expert insights, on renaissance bronze-founders and sculptors in the Veneto to a joint meeting with Venice in Peril. We also had live lectures on Amadeo Peter Giannini, founder of Bank of America; on the rise of private museums in Italy; and on the impact of innovation in design and furniture on the art world in Italy in the 1960s. The Charles de Chassiron Memorial Lecture in June provided a moving and nostalgic account of the cultural significance of popular singer Mina and her life and times. We are grateful to all our speakers.

The Society made grants during the year to support worthy artistic, academic and other projects in line with its aims. These included:

- a donation of £300 to the Tricolore Theatre Company for a joint production with University College, London of a tribute to Joseph Grimaldi, *The Clown in Popular Culture,* in March 2022.
- a contribution of £500 in part-sponsorship of the Keats-Shelley Young Romantics Prizes in 2022.
- a donation of £500 to the committee organising *Spettacolo Falcone* in London in November 2022 to mark the 30th anniversary of the assassination of Judge Falcone.

On a sad note, the Society, like the nation, mourned the passing in September of Her Majesty The Queen. The Queen had visited Italy on five occasions, including three State Visits (in 1961, 1980 and 2000). She had also hosted four State Visits by Italian Presidents to the United Kingdom. Sir John Shepherd gives a lively account of the Queen's most recent State Visit to Rome and Milan in 2000 on page 30. Some of you may also remember that a British-Italian Society delegation had the honour of being presented to HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh at a reception at St James' Palace in London in 2002 to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

We welcomed a new Italian Ambassador to London in the autumn. We are grateful to Ambassador Inigo Lambertini for agreeing to act as our Patron and for the support he has already given us. We also thank Dr Katia Pizzi, the Director of the Italian Cultural Institute and a long-standing friend of the Society, for her active and valued collaboration.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the excellent service which Rhuna Barduagni continues to provide to the Society and its members, and to thank Philippa Leslie for producing another great edition of this magazine.

We have an exciting programme of events for 2023. I look forward to meeting you all there.

Richard Northern,
BIS Chairman

Great minds weep alike

Cicero and Ovid in exile

A talk by Gabriele Rota

Jane E. Everson reviews a fascinating, scholarly and richly illustrated talk

When Dante's ancestor Cacciaguida tells Dante, in *Paradiso* XVII, of his forthcoming exile, he stresses firstly: 'Tu lascerai ogne cosa diletta / più caramente', before highlighting the homely and domestic things which Dante will miss. His speech, however, begins by characterising Florence as a cruel stepmother, as the poet underlines the most important of all the things he regrets in exile: exclusion from the city of Florence. As repeated verses in the *Divina Commedia* emphasise, it is the loss of political, social and cultural involvement in Florence, all that had made his life worthwhile, which is for Dante the bitterest pill.

As Gabriele Rota made clear in his rich and fascinating discussion of the responses of Cicero and Ovid to the experience of exile, Dante stood in a long and illustrious tradition. For both Cicero and Ovid it was enforced absence from Rome, from the political, social and cultural heart of the Roman world which was the most traumatic aspect of exile, and both wrote at length about their experience of exile – Cicero in speeches and letters, Ovid in collections of poetry.

The perspective of being in exile

As Rota explained in his introduction it is unusual to consider Cicero and Ovid together from the perspective of being in exile. Ovid was born in the same year, 43 BC, in which Cicero was brutally executed for his opposition to Mark Antony and his involvement in the civil strife following the assassination of Caesar. Ovid thus never experienced the political rivalries and power struggles which characterised the late Roman Republic and in which Cicero played a major role as both politician and lawyer. Cicero, on the other hand, did not survive to see Mark Antony overthrown by Augustus and the emergence of the Roman Empire. Indeed Rota suggested that had they ever met, Cicero and Ovid would probably have disliked each other. Cicero's standing as a writer in many different genres, a superb orator and master of Latin prose style has never been surpassed. Ovid too, though often associated with light-hearted and morally questionable writings, was a master of Latin poetic metres, the greatest poet of his generation, but perpetually overshadowed historically by Virgil.

For both, Rome was the centre of their universe and the source of both their daily activities and their inspiration. Removal from Rome meant the loss not just of livelihood, but also of friends, contacts, social interchange, and, in Cicero's case, his political career. Rota explored in detail the similarities and differences of the experience of exile and what each wrote about it.

Opposite: *Ovid among the Scythians, 1862*, by Eugène Delacroix, Oil on wood, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Title page of *Metamorphoses*, 1618

Scythians at the Tomb of Ovid, 1640, by Johann Heinrich Schönfeld, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

The impact of exile

Cicero, he suggested, although only formally exiled on one occasion, in 58 BC, following the enactment retrospectively of a law making the execution of senators illegal (which Cicero had authorised following the Catiline conspiracy in 63 BC), carried the trauma of that experience with him for the rest of his life. He was haunted by it during the long months of waiting to receive pardon from Caesar after Caesar's defeat of Pompey, in 48-47 BC, and again when he withdrew from public life and Rome after the death of his daughter Tullia. The impact of exile never left him. Nevertheless, as Rota stressed, there are a number of ways in which Cicero's exile might seem less traumatic to us. He was recalled from the formal exile, which did not require him to reside very far from Italy. He was able to choose where to spend his exile, as long as it respected a minimum distance from Rome. And his period of exile lasted only about one year.

Ovid's exile, on the other hand, was never rescinded; he was banished, in 8AD, to almost the furthest point of the Roman Empire, Tomi on the Black Sea coast; and died there unrecalled. In many ways, therefore, it is Ovid's experience of exile that seems closest to Dante's. In other ways, however, Cicero seems the closer model. Cicero's assets in and around Rome were confiscated, in a visible and tangible sign of the humiliation of exile, while Ovid suffered no such losses, even if, in Tomi he could not enjoy them.

Cicero's exile and the reasons for it (and indeed the reasons for his repeated traumatic absences from Rome) are all well documented by contemporary sources and by Cicero himself. But the causes of Ovid's exile remain to this day mysterious. Ovid himself speaks only of the causes being a poem and a mistake, without giving any details. The lack of independent sources for Ovid's exile, together with the ambiguous, playful and unreliable stances evident in his writings have led scholars to question whether he was ever exiled at all and to suggest that the writings from exile (the *Tristitia*) were merely an experimental new genre. Rota argued that Ovid was indeed exiled, and that the many books of exile poems are too numerous to be merely an excuse or experiment. He suggested that it was perhaps Ovid's playful adaptation in the *Ars Amatoria*, of a moral, didactic approach to topics such as love and sexual relationships, at a time when Augustus had embarked on a state-directed moral crusade, which best explained the poem part of Ovid's offence. And yet, that would make Ovid the only Roman poet censored for his writings. As for the mistake, that remains obscure, seemingly something Ovid saw and should not have done, or saw and did not report.

The fact of being exiled

For both Cicero and Ovid, Rota was keen to stress, it was the fact of being exiled, not of being in exile, which hurt the most. The loss, as with Dante, of power, status, honour and reputation; the difficulty if not impossibility of clearing one's name when far removed from the forum in which that should happen; and the realisation of a power struggle in which one was the loser. As Dante suggests, malice, ingratitude, corruption and personal and political hostility were among the causes for Cicero and Ovid too:

Qual si partio Ipolito d'Atene / per la spietata e perfida noverca / tal di Fiorenza partir si convene. / Questo si vuole e questo già si cerca / e tosto verrà fatto a chi ciò pensa / là dove Cristo tutto dì si merca.

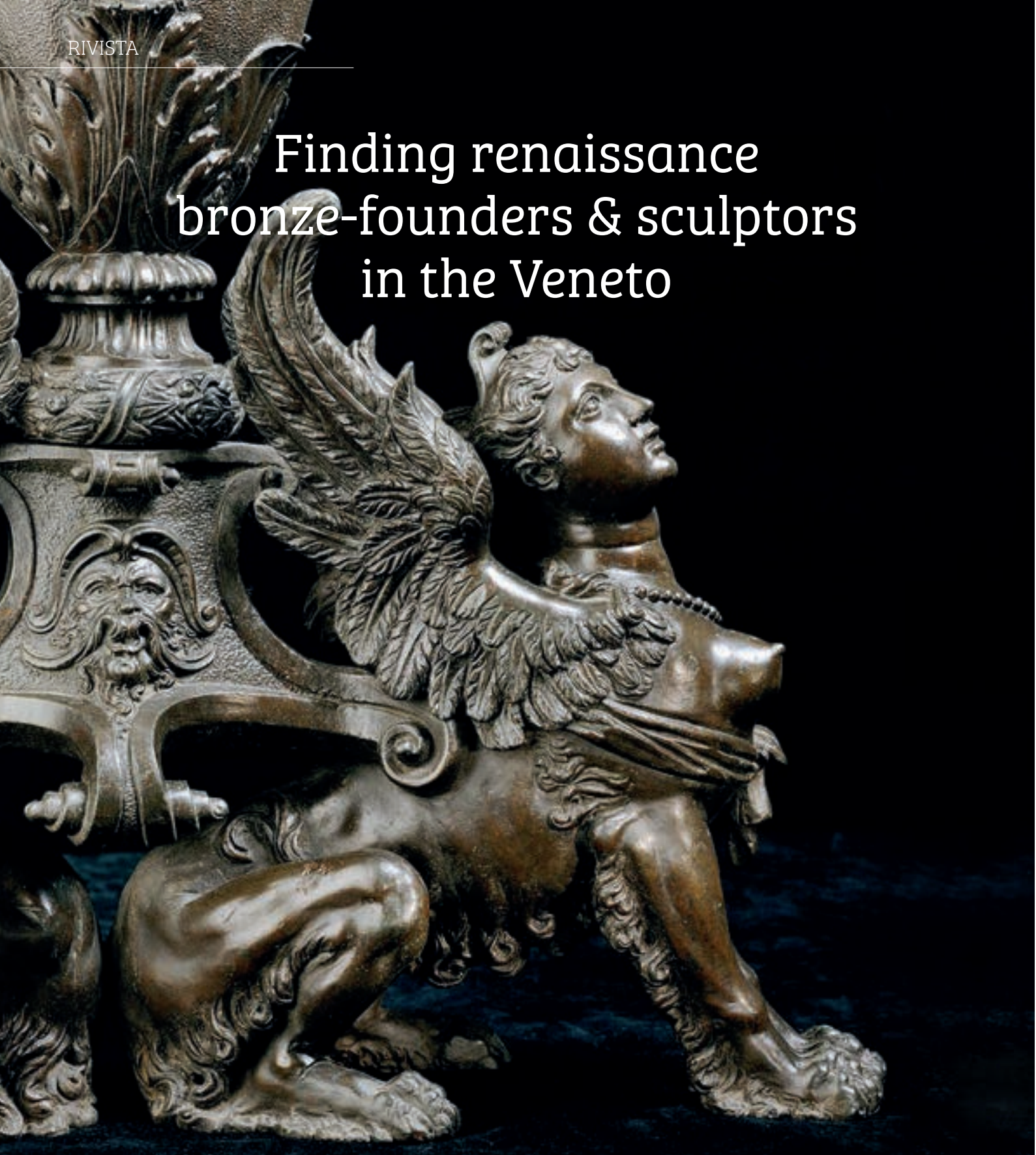
Dante like Ovid died still an exile, still lamenting the cruel perfidy of the city he loved.

This fascinating, scholarly and richly illustrated discussion of two major figures of Latin politics and culture was warmly received and stimulated a number of questions and comments, including parallels with the use of internal exile under the Fascist regime.

Jane Everson is Emeritus Professor of Italian Literature in the School of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures at Royal Holloway. Her focus is medieval and early modern Italian literature and culture. She is a Trustee of the BIS.

First-century AD bust of Cicero in the Capitoline Museums, Rome

Finding renaissance bronze-founders & sculptors in the Veneto



Joseph de Levis of Verona (1552-1611/14) and Andrea de Alessandri of Brescia and Venice, alias 'Bresciano' (1524/25-1573)

Diana Darlington describes the research which prompted this fascinating topic

This article is based on the talk given by Dr Charles Avery on Monday 21 February 2022 at The Society of Antiquaries, London, jointly with The Venice in Peril Fund. Dr Avery has recently published two books on which this talk was based: *Joseph de Levis & Company Renaissance Bronze – founders in Verona (2016)* and *Il Bresciano: Bronze Caster of Renaissance Venice* (2020)[1]. (The British Italian Society paid for the professional indexing of the de Levis book.)

Dr Avery explained that he had studied and published on Joseph de Levis and his family in Verona for the best part of his career and fortunately for the historian the de Levis family signed and dated their products; their clients and patrons were often identified by the addition of their coats-of-arms and initials. Venice and metal working are closely linked and the word 'Ghetto' became closely associated with the Jewish goldsmiths and bronze casters living and working in the area – the word Ghetto is taken from the Italian 'gettare' to cast. The principal products of the main Renaissance foundries were bells, cannons and mortars, with the casting of sculptures forming a comparatively small proportion of output.

Some of the principal products of the de Levis were bells, not just very large ones for use in churches but personal ones such as that depicted by Raphael in his portrait of *Pope Leo X de' Medici with Two Cardinals.* The inclusion of the gilded bell signifies his position of command. Other bells are known cast with dates in the 1580s bearing the trademark LCVF for 'Levis & Company in Verona made this'. Some table or desk bells had classical figures as handles and similar figures were used as handles to bowls and inkstands.

De Levis as sculptor and bronze caster

That Joseph de Levis produced sculptures, often collaborating with a designer, Angelo de Rossi, is demonstrated by the inscriptions on a pair of figures of St John the Baptist and St George in the church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Verona. But Joseph was equally skilled at sculpture himself, as shown by a large bust with a bronze head on red Verona marble shoulders, possibly a self-portrait, (in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool), which would appear to be his work alone.

The foundry also produced items with Jewish inscriptions, such as a mortar with stylised menorah and Hebrew characters, now in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; but productions with a definite Christian iconography were also made. Joseph, or possibly his brother Santo (the inscription is unclear), was responsible for a Deposition after a plaque by Tibaldi, from a design by Parmigianino. Joseph's nephews, Servo and Ottavio, also produced items with a Christian theme. A particularly beautiful plaque of the Virgin and Child with the arms of the Candini family, is signed by Ottavio de Levis. Marked examples from the foundry have been found bearing dates up to c.1624.

Bresciano's masterpiece: the Paschal Candlestick of 1563-5

Turning to Il Bresciano, Dr Avery said that the trigger for turning his research over two decades into a book was his recognition in 1996 that a firedog of 1568 from the Bute Collection was a cousin of the Paschal Candlestick signed by Andrea Bresciano in Santa Maria della Salute. In fact, this candlestick was not originally made for Santa Maria della Salute but for Santo Spirito all'Isola, a monastery and church on a small island in the Lagoon. This church, now lost, was designed by Sansovino. In 1604, the candlestick was described as meriting great consideration, to be unequalled and to be the work of Andrea Bresciano (1524/25-1573). Andrea di Bartolomeo di Alessandri came from Brescia to work in Venice as a bronze-founder. Bresciano's masterpiece, the Paschal candlestick (1563-5 and 60 cm high excl. its stone pedestal) consists of three triangular main sections, the top depicting scenes from the Old Testament with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the middle section with David, Joshua and Moses and the base with scenes from the New Testament, the Annunciation, Pentecost and St Peter preaching. Dr Avery linked the Paschal candlestick to a fragmentary pair of Venetian firedogs which came up for sale at Christies in 1996, from the collection of the Marquis of Bute at Mount Stuart. Robert Adam had referred to one of these firedogs being at the Marquis of Bute's house, Luton Park, Bedfordshire, which Adam had depicted on a raised Adam-style pedestal with added branching candlesticks. Dr Avery demonstrated

The Paschal Candlestick c. 1563-5 by Il Bresciano

that evidence shows that these firedogs originally came from Palazzo Soranzo in Venice and were indeed the work of Bresciano. Robert Adam criticised the workmanship of these items by commenting that "they are evidently the composition of some painter or statuary who has sacrificed the simple and the graceful to the busy and the picturesque".

Other firedogs attributed to Bresciano are known, including some with figures of Vulcan and Venus and Venus and Mars along with other large candlesticks, door knockers and figures of saints and classical heroes.

Dr Avery compared two ewers, a recently discovered one signed by Joseph de Levis, c.1600, the other by Bresciano, the Calzolari Ewer. The de Levis ewer was most probably designed by de Levis' collaborator, de Rossi, and is inspired by examples from classical antiquity. The rather restrained design of the de Levis contrasts strongly with the Calzolari Ewer which is overwrought with decoration, which Dr Avery describes as being a classic example of '*horror vacui',* every inch of its surface being covered with narrative and ornament. Perhaps these two ewers, each the product of a Renaissance bronze-caster of the highest order, prove the truth of Robert Adam's comment about Il Bresciano.

Diana Darlington

1 *Avery Charles, Joseph de Levis & Company, Renaissance Bronze-founders in Verona. (Philip Wilson, London 2016) and Avery Charles, Il Bresciano, Bronze – Caster of Renaissance Venice. (Philip Wilson, London 2020).*

Diana Darlington is a former Vice Chair of the British Italian Society. She is currently editor of the Oxford Ceramics Group Newsletter.

Global finance and the migrant

The story of Amadeo P Giannini, founder of Bank of America

Linda Northern remarks an extraordinary life, described with passion by presenters Dr Valentina Signorelli and Dr Cecilia Zoppelletto

Amadeo Pietro Giannini, otherwise known as Amadeo Peter Giannini, was a second generation immigrant, whose Italian father had moved to California to take part in the 19th century gold rush. Amadeo proved to be an extraordinary entrepreneur. He founded Bank of America (and its forerunner Bank of Italy) and provided banking services to the local population, especially hard-working immigrants, for whom the existing banking system did not cater.

After a warm welcome from BIS chairman, Richard Northern, we learned from the presenters about the life and times of this extraordinary man, who is credited as the inventor of many modern banking practices. He was one of the first bankers to offer banking services to middle-class Americans, not just the upper classes. He pioneered the holding company structure and established one of the first modern trans-national institutions. He founded Bank of Italy (later Bank of America), which by the 1930s was the largest commercial bank in the world.

A P Giannini (1870-1949) was born on 6 May 1870 in San Jose, California. He was the first son of Italian immigrants from Favale di Malvaro in Liguria, 25 km from Genoa, a picturesque village, which has 457 residents today. His father was Luigi Giannini (1840-1877) and his mother was Virginia (nee Demartini) Giannini (1854-1920). His father continued in gold during the 1860s and returned to Italy in 1869 to marry Virginia and bring her back to settle in San Jose. Luigi purchased a 40-acre farm at Alviso in 1872 and grew fruit and vegetables for sale. Four years later he was fatally shot by an employee over a pay dispute. Amadeo witnessed the murder of his father. He was just seven years old. Luigi's widow Virginia, with two children and pregnant with a third, took over operation of the produce business. In 1880 she married Lorenzo Scatena (1859-1930) who began L.Scatena and Co, which Amadeo would eventually take over. Giannini figlio worked as a produce broker, commission merchant and produce dealer for farms in the Santa Clara Valley. In 1892 he married Clorinda 'Clara' Cuneo (1866-1949), daughter of a real estate magnate.

Opposite: San Francisco Earthquake of 1906: Ruins in vicinity of Post and Grant Avenue; right; Jimmy Stewart in a closing scene from the film classic '*It's a Wonderful Life*', reputed to be based on the Giannini story; below left: a Bank of America bond note; below right: Amadeo Giannini.

At the age of 31 he sold his interest to his employees and retired to administer his father-in-law's estate. He then became a director of the Columbus Savings and Loan Company, in which his father-in-law had an interest. From there he spotted a gap in the banking market and went into banking to provide for the increasing immigrant population.

In 1904 Amadeo founded Bank of Italy. On 18 April 1906 the San Francisco Earthquake, which struck at five o'clock in the morning, killed 3,000 people. 30,000 buildings were destroyed. Giannini saved his bank. He took his money by fruit cart to his home outside the city. He saved people's money and later helped rebuild the city. He lent money and did not ask for any interest.

After the 1929 crash Bank of America is born

Bank of Italy couldn't open outside California, in order to protect Wall Street. Giannini opened the holding 'Transamerica' to operate nationally. Women were allowed to be account holders. The Bank was growing but the 1929 crash intervened. The Bank of Italy was not particularly hit by the crash because it consisted of small savings and it was not allowed to speculate. However, after the crash it could not pay interest to account holders. The Bank of Italy was rebranded Bank of America in 1930.

Building the American dream

Below are some of the projects that Giannini financed in his lifetime and some other interesting facts about his colourful life and accomplishments:

The Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, an ambitious project at that time cost $430 million adjusted for inflation. Strauss was the engineer.

The birth of the Hollywood film industry was an opportunity for Giannini to lend money. In 1937, during the Great Depression, he lent £1.7 million to Walt Disney for the production of Snow White. Among others, he funded Charlie Chaplin. Popcorn machines were bought for cinemas.

He shared the American Dream with Frank Capra's 'It's a Wonderful Life', which was inspired by Giannini's own life.

After WWII his last project included the closing of the finance gap for the Giannini, Hoffman, Marshall Plan.

> He went into banking to provide for the increasing immigrant population

When he died in 1949 he had less than $5,000 in his personal bank account. His son Mario Giannini (1894-1952) took over the bank and his daughter, Claire Giannini Hoffman (1905-1997) took her father's seat on the bank's board of directors. Giannini is buried at Holy Cross Cemetry in Colma, California.

Finally, our speakers told us about their new documentary entitled: *AP Giannini – Bank to the Future* for which they are looking for investors, co-producers, distributers and cultural partners. They have the script for a feature length period drama. They have had lots of support from the African American Community.

After a lively series of questions, Susan Kikoler thanked the presenters on behalf of the Society for such a fascinating and interesting story.

Linda Northern is a former editor of Rivista.

When art sold its soul to upholstery

Art and design in 1960s Italy

Eugenio Bosco looks at how art and design became intertwined. A talk by Flavia Frigeri

"For us, art in Milan had sold its soul to upholstery. No one cared about art… even though none of the designers' lights would ever reach the spiritual intensity of a single neon by Flavin."

Thus the art critic Tommaso Trini summed up the perceived rivalry between post-war Italian art and contemporary industrial design.

This quote also inspired the title of this fascinating and enlightening lecture which highlighted the work of well-known industrial designers such as Ettore Sottsass and Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, which was considered alongside that of contemporary artists and references to film makers and musicians.

The art historian, curator and lecturer Dr Flavia Frigeri quickly transported us from the library of an 18th century house in Mayfair – where she was speaking – to Italy in the 1960s, Milan in particular but well beyond that, Venice, Rome, Turin, New York.

The design/art axis

Dr Frigeri noted how the 1960s in Italy were a remarkable period in which design merged with art. Art wanted to be more popular and design wanted to be more like art. The economic 'miracle' of the 1958-63 period brought a rapid modernisation, increased personal consumption and a sense of 'effervescence', with Italian style coming to the fore as a symbol of the 'boom' and the idea of 'Made in Italy' taking shape.

To set the historic scene Dr. Frigeri showed us an interesting video from the Istituto Luce, which provided a powerful reminder of the exuberance of that period with scores of the iconic Fiat 500, images of eager consumers ready

Opposite: Ettore Sottass' *Maquette spatiale (The Magical Object)* (1946); 1970 Fiat 500 at the 2011 Washington DC Auto Show; Ettore Sottass' 1968 Valentine portable typewriter; top right: Flavia Figeri; above right: 'Kaleidoscope Tunnel' at the 1964 Milan Art Biennale

to buy shiny domestic appliances and flooding city centres, all underlined by the original evocative soundtrack. For a couple of minutes we were totally absorbed by that experience and the feeling of that era.

These were also the years of American influence – particularly Pop Art and its idea of making the ordinary worthy of representation – from Marilyn Monroe to Campbell's soup, both universally recognisable images. This was a real shift. At the 1964 Venice Art Biennale the pop artist Robert Rauschenberg won the prize for his painting in the US pavilion. That same year – at the Milan Triennale – dedicated to the theme of leisure and curated by Umberto Eco and Vittorio Gregotti, the kaleidoscope tunnel offered visitors an immersive experience, with visitors becoming part of the experience. It demonstrated a clear connection with the work of the well-known designers Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni.

The immersive experience

To further illustrate her points, Dr Frigeri also reminded us of Lucio Fontana's work as designer, his cooperation with the architect Osvaldo Borsani and his 1949 very elaborate decoration of the ceiling of the apartment in Via del Gesù 21 in Milan. This was a ceiling, but at the same time an artwork with a specific role and function. Around the same time, Fontana also made – at the trendy Galleria del Naviglio – a seminal artwork, one of the very first art installations.

This is a key concept in contemporary art, as contemporary art is frequently about inviting the viewer into an immersive experience. All very familiar to us but in 1949 this approach was new. Fontana is of course best known for his 'cuts' that with his garish industrial colours and large production runs showed how paintings might compete with the wide dissemination of industrially-designed objects. Fontana also designed jewels and clothes. He embraced the concept of industrial designers entering the artistic field.

Another powerful example was the work of Pino Pascali (associated with Roman Pop Art and the Scuola di Piazza del Popolo and his series of sculptures in the 60s called 'fake sculptures' – a hole inside and made with canvas and light materials) and his fake bamboos. This has a connection with the sleek foldable lamps designed by Bruno Munari, an artist, designer, writer and thinker of that period.

Art and design intersect

Ettore Sottsass' 1968 Valentine portable typewriter for Olivetti also marked an important moment. It wasn't commercially successful but this revolutionary design and concept had a deep influence. The Japanese commercial we were shown added vivid evidence of what this typewriter/piece of design/art object represented: intersection of art and design, a vision for the young.

With Michelangelo Pistoletto's mirror paintings (sheets of polished inox steel with applied photographic reproductions) viewers become part of the painting. But his work for Armando Testa (a graphic designer and founder of one of Italy's best known advertising agencies) and the Ideal Standard showroom in Milan showed the connection between art, design and advertising.

The lecture also raised interesting questions about where to draw the line between design and art. Does one use the pieces that are created or are they to be treated as an untouchable work much like a painting? The debate on this continued to rage amongst members after the talk.

Eugenio Bosco is the co-vice chairman of the British Italian Society.

The rise and rise

The boom in private museums in Italy and elsewhere

Susan Kikoler reviews a talk by Georgina Adam

In her talk to members of the BIS, to explore the contemporary interaction between Art and Finance, Georgina Adam looked at Italy and its recent boom in privately funded Art Foundations. What would motivate someone to set up their own institution? What could be its benefits and its pitfalls?

Worldwide, South Korea boasts the greatest number of private museums. Italy is in fifth position, and in Europe, second only to Germany. In many respects finding this phenomenon in Italy is hardly surprising. Italy is famous for its love of art. Italians are surrounded by history and culture with a long tradition of patronage and art collecting going back to the Medici era. Certain countries such as Dubai have no such heritage. Moreover, Italian interest in art tends to be wide-ranging, embracing both Old Masters and modern art, which is not necessarily the case with collectors in, for example, the United States.

Private Foundations as brands

In the past people of means would make bequests to public institutions. Now, increasingly, they set up their own Foundations. Many leaders in global fashion, including Miuccia Prada and Francois-Henri Pinault, have embraced this possibility. There is a logic. The fashion industry is already connected with culture, producing works of art in the form of clothing.

A hard-headed business element is also involved. Luxury goods are already collectable with similar rules and marketing techniques for both fashion and art. However, whereas the catwalk provides the fashion industry with publicity only at certain moments in the year when new collections are unveiled, a private Foundation puts one's name in the public eye all year round. Thus, the Vuitton Museum in Paris becomes a superb branding exercise.

In Italy, showcasing private collections of contemporary art has proved especially attractive, since the Italian government, with a multitude of archaeological sites to safeguard, provides no funding for the modern sector.

At one point in the 1980s only Castello di Rivoli in Turin showed contemporary art. Then in 1995 Patrizia Sandretto created La Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, taking up the challenge to work with artists, to create an outreach programme with the local area and, especially, to establish a children's educational programme (the last receiving some state funding). This was followed in 2006 and 2009 by the inauguration in Venice of Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana, two museums of contemporary art belonging to the Pinault Collection. MAXXI, Italy's national Museum of 21st Century Art, wasn't established in Rome until 2009.

principgillistock

Opposite: Interior of the national museum of the XXI Century Arts (MAXXI) in Rome.

Frank Auerbach / Zabludowitz Collection

Above: Eli and Edythe Broad established The Broad contemporary art museum in Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, to house an extensive private contemporary art collection; right: The Louis Vuitton Foundation building in Paris, designed by architect Frank Gehry

Tati Campelo/Istock

The advantages for Foundation founders

Private institutions provide many advantages for the founder who thus keeps control over the whole collection with less risk of it being split up after the benefactor's death. Exhibits can be bought and sold according to the owner's wish without recourse to a committee or to public accountability. However this, in turn, may create difficulties in keeping a contemorary collection fresh.

Social standing is doubtless enhanced and for many business people, frequently from a non-rich, non-collecting background, it provides the opportunity to be a philanthropist, to give back to a city, an artist or a family and leave their own name as a legacy. Andrew Carnegie and Paul Mellon are examples.

Inevitably, self-aggrandisement cannot be ruled out nor the suspicion that, in certain cases, shining a spotlight on one's own collection could be a successful ploy to enhance its value.

Foundations come in all shapes and sizes. Some are external sculpture parks. In Shanghai one museum is situated at the base of a shopping mall and is designed to enhance the 'dwelling time' of the visiting shoppers.

> 'the fashion industry is connected with culture'

In Moscow, billionaire Leonid Mikhelson created the immense GES-2, bigger than Tate Modern, out of a converted power station near the Kremlin. In London, Swiss-Greek shipping magnate Alex Petalas holds two exhibitions a year at The Perimeter in a renovated Bloomsbury mews house.

And possible disadvantages

A Foundation owner may wish to showcase a specific artist and work with particular dealers who may wish to give privileged access to the artist's creations. However, people of immense wealth are potentially in a position to outbid public institutions and thus price them out of the market, or to manipulate the market on behalf of artists in whom they have heavily invested. A real problem arises at the founder's death when the heirs may not want to continue paying the costs of the curators and conservation. Can the original vision be sustained if the heirs do not share the same vision?

Creating one's own Foundation requires immense wealth although in the USA there are some tax breaks for non-profit making Foundations. The initial investment for such a museum may reach at least 250 million dollars – before any art is acquired. In Los Angeles, real estate tycoon Eli Broad and his wife, Edythe, spent 140 million dollars on the edifice for The Broad, to house their art collection, and gave a further 200 million dollars endowment to safeguard its future.

Inevitably such donations are open to criticism as being a useful tax dodge which can lead to the impoverishment of public institutions. It could also potentially lead to the appropriation of art history if founders wish to change the public's perception of an artist in whom they have heavily invested, and to a homogenisation of taste, since these institutes require the services of advisors who may need to tick the required boxes.

Finally, there is the 'here today gone tomorrow' risk, best demonstrated by the fate of the Marciano Art Foundation in Los Angeles. Set up by brothers Maurice and Paul Marciano (of GUESS clothing) to house their art collection, it opened in May 2017 only to close permanently in November 2019.

Susan Kikoler is a cultural historian with a focus on Sicily. She is Honorary Director of the British Italian Society.

Georgina Adam's book *The Rise and Rise of the Private Art Museum* is available to purchase from various online booksellers.

The Many Meanings of Mina

Charles de Chassiron Memorial Lecture

Beatrice and Peter Crossley report on a talk by Dr Rachel Haworth, featuring Susanna Paisio, singer-songwriter and actress

For the Charles de Chassiron Memorial Lecture in June, Rachel and Susanna entertained us with words, videos and music recalling the incredibly popular Italian singer Mina. Mina is to Italians as Shirley Bassey, Vera Lynn and Adele all rolled into one are to British audiences.

In Italy everyone knows Mina and agrees with the words of her song that she was 'Brava brava brava'! Mina remains the most popular and enduring female superstar in post-war Italy.

Mina is the stage name of Anna Maria Mazzini with the nickname ' la Tigre di Cremona'.

Mina had many lives, many faces and achieved the miracle of topping the Italian charts since she 'retired' in 1978.

Italy's diva

All this began when she was just 18 years old and her friends challenged her to sing at a beach venue called 'La Bussola', the place to be for anyone who was anyone during a hot Italian summer. That night Mina got on stage and started singing as if she had never done anything else in her life. Singing in night clubs, she became one of the young singers who sang rock and roll and were known as 'The Screamers' or the 'Urlatori'. Young and tall with a powerful voice she soon became the idol of the new Italian generation who wanted to grab the future rather than dwell on past sorrows. Recordings, then TV performances, followed in 'Il Musichiere' and 'Canzonissima' that were the most popular TV shows. She became so famous that in 1960 she was invited to the Italian Music Festival in Sanremo. The festival was trying to attract a younger audience and Mina represented progress and the future. She sang two songs. She didn't win, but a new star was born. Italy had found its diva. This was a time when she achieved her greatest hits: *Il Cielo in Una Stanza* (the biggest hit of 1960), *Una Zebra a Pois*, *Tintarella di Luna* and so on. She went to Sanremo again in 1961 with *Le Mille Bolle Blu*, but the song and her performance were too unconventional for the traditional music festival: Mina did not win again and swore never to go back to Sanremo. She did not need Sanremo. *Mille Bolle Blu* topped the charts and she became an international star. She went on tour in Spain, Japan and Venezuela and she started singing in French and German. She became the most popular and best paid singer in Europe.

In Italy she now became a regular presence on TV. Performing in the programme 'Studio Uno' she was the epitome of the ideal Italian woman: fashionable, but proper; so different from the long-legged German twins, the Kessler sisters.

Public domain: wikipedia/commons/e/ed/Mina_Mazzini_1959.jpg

commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mina_Mazzini_1960s3.jpg

Many lives and many faces: Opposite: Mina on stage circa 1970s; relaxing after a performance on the beach (1959), informal portrait (1960s).

In 1963 the mirror cracked. Mina is pregnant. Her partner Corrado Pani is a married man! He was separated from his wife but divorce was illegal.

Our Italian icon was now a sinner and instead of hiding from the public in shame she went around flaunting her belly.

Nine months later Massimiliano is born and Mina is back on the magazine covers and to the special place she held in Italians' hearts. Now she was a mother and was going to be a good mother!

She started recording and achieving hits again in Italy and abroad. She was so popular that after one year of exile she was back on TV first as a guest and then as host. In 'Studio Uno' and 'Sabato Sera' shows she chose the guests, sang duets and the most famous Italian artists and intellectuals started writing songs for her: *Sono Qui Per Te* by the film director Lina Wertmüller and *Se Telefonando* by the journalist Maurizio Costanzo with a score by Ennio Morricone to name only two.

In 1968 she decided to sing a song *La Canzone di Marinella* by an obscure Italian poet and songwriter Fabrizio De André. It seemed that Mina transformed everything she touched into gold. Italy had discovered its own Bob Dylan in the shy and talented Fabrizio.

From 1965 to 1970 Mina became the face of the pasta brand Barilla. Everyone loved pasta and everyone loved Mina, a match made in heaven.

She kept on being the sole host of the most popular Italian TV shows including 'Canzonissima' and Teatro 10. She grew in confidence, and kept experimenting with her image. She was the first to wear a mini skirt on TV. She dyed her hair blond, removed her eyebrows and wore the latest creations of the best Italian designers. She was sophisticated, and became the Italian superwoman.

And then in 1978 she bid farewell to the stage. She was never seen in public after that. She has never given any interviews. She lives in Lugano with her second husband.

Yet she has never stopped recording. In the 1970s she created her own record company and her son Massimiliano Pani is her music producer and her communicator with the outside world.

She is THE VOICE

She is now purely a voice. In Italy she is THE VOICE against which all others are compared.

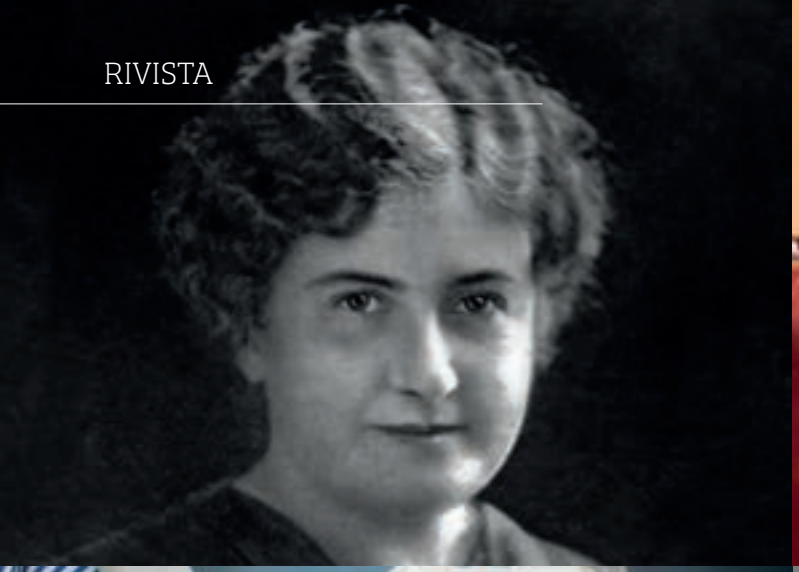
In 2018 she returned to the Italian Music Festival as a hologram! So appropriate for a woman who has always been almost superhuman.

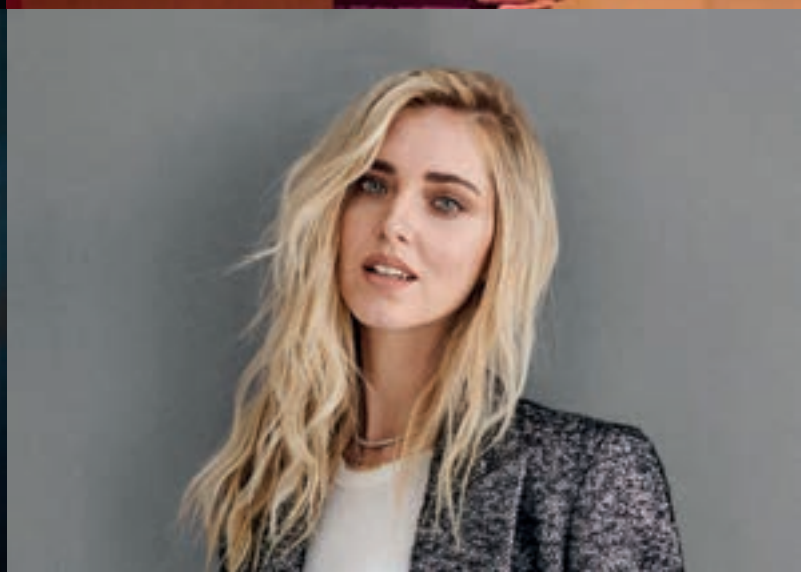
Mina has survived cultural changes, personal sorrows (the deaths of her brother and her first husband) and the tyranny of time. Her star still shines bright.

Everyone knows Mina in Italy. It is high time the UK discovers her. May this book by Rachel Haworth start a Mina revolution!

Peter and Maria Beatrice Crossley

Beatrice and Peter Crossley are longtime fans of the fabulous Mina. Beatrice is a neurologist and Peter is a retired entrepreneur. They often collaborate on articles for the BIS, for which we are very grateful!





Brilliant women

Four inspiring Italians of yesterday and today

A talk by Chiara Pasqualetti Johnson

Philippa Leslie zoomed it

One of the Society's last 'zoom' meetings for the year took place on 4 September, when journalist Chiara Pasqualetti Johnson presented the stories of four Italian women who, each in her way, contributed to the wellbeing of society. All exceptional, they had nothing in common – not age, not areas of interest, not their lives. But their contributions changed things. For two of them, the 'things' were educational and medical advancements; for one, the adventure of being a female scientist in space; the most recent demonstrated success in a new technology.

Perhaps the most famous is Maria Montessori (1870-1952), whose name is a byword for innovative education for children and whose school curriculum is today taught in 60,000 schools worldwide. Her revolutionary inspiration grew out of Maria Montessori's studies in pedagogy. Born in Rome in 1870, she wanted to study medicine, but as a woman was denied university entry. She turned to a powerful sponsor, Pope Leo XIII, who granted her permission and she became one of Italy's first female doctors. Her ideals were about equality – that girls would be able to choose to study maths and science and boys learn home skills such as cooking, knitting and cleaning. She believed children should be encouraged in their creativity and individuality and to do things for themselves – all ideals that became the foundation of the Montessori method. She set out her plans in her first school, opened in Rome in 1907. Word spread and she gained many supporters, national and international. Mussolini helped her develop her work in Italy, but complications arose when it became apparent that he wanted to use her schools as a vehicle to train young fascists. So she closed them. Montessori was nominated for the Nobel Peace prize three times – in 1949, 1950 and 1951, and although she never won, her education principles became, and remain, active around the world.

Rita Montalcini (1909-2012) was a renowned neurologist. At the age of three,

Opposite page top left: Maria Montessori; top right: Rita Montalcini; bottom left: Samantha Cristoforetti; bottom right: Chiara Ferragni.

The original *Casa dei Bambini* in San Lorenzo, Rome, in 1907

it is said, she decided she would never marry but would devote her life to science. She was born into a Jewish family in Turin in 1909, and challenged her traditional father to attend university, enrolling in the University of Turin Medical Faculty. But then the Fascist regime barred her from working at the University and she and her family fled to Florence, surviving the war by hiding under assumed identities. During that time, Rita worked in a small laboratory which she had set up in the family's apartment. At the end of the war, her work was recognised and led to a fellowship for a semester at Washington University, Illinois, which turned into a productive period there, lasting 26 years. She explored her theory that mankind begins from a single cell but with time becomes an organism of dozens of different tissues. This led her to isolate the NGF (nerve growth factor – the protein which causes cell growth due to stimulated nerve tissue). In 1986 she and her colleague Stanley Cohen won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, for the discoveries of NGF and EGF (epidermal growth factor, a key component of the cell growth and regeneration process).

Rita was a strong feminist, fought for equal rights for female researchers and with her twin sister established a Foundation to support African women to become scientists.

A great interest was clothes – she often designed her own, but chose couturier Roberto Capucci for important occasions such as the Nobel Prize ceremony. She observed: "The body does whatever it wants. I am not my body; I am my mind." She worked until aged a hundred.

Samantha Cristoforetti is the first Italian woman astronaut. Born in Milan in 1977, she grew up in a tiny village in the Italian Alps. Maybe this closeness to the sky and the stars inspired her to dream of exploring space, suggests Pasqualetti. After taking two university degrees, qualifying as a pilot for aircraft from helicopters to jets, and adding German, French, English, and Russian to her Italian, in 2009 she became a European Space Agency astronaut. Her first space mission was to the International Space Station in 2014, when she spent two hundred days in space and in this year of 2022 has been in space again, from 27 April to now (September). On this mission, she has been in constant contact with the world through social media. Mother of two Samantha manages the work/life balance and declares "For me there's no difference between males and females. The only difference is between those who are competent and those who are not."

> "between males and females ... the only difference is between those who are competent and those who are not"

Most recent in the selection of influential women is Chiara Ferragni, considered one of the world's most famous bloggers and a fashion influencer who promotes brands on channels such as Instagram and TikTok. She is so successful that Harvard Business School has included her as a case study. Forbes magazine sees her as demonstrating how to use social media to forge a new blend between communication and business.

Chiara grew up in Cremona and started a blog at the age of twenty, 'The Blonde Salad', an online journal of daily images of her personal style. At twenty-six she had millions of followers and had become a brand ambassador for a number of international retail brands. Now thirty-five and a mother of two, she has her own brand of clothing and jewellery, twenty-seven million followers on Instagram, and a company valued at around forty million dollars. Socially committed, she donated to the building of a hospital during the pandemic and was awarded the Ambrogino d'Oro, Milan's most distinguished prize. She makes films about her life and works, has a television show, still promotes brands, has taken a stand on feminism. In her own words: "I think it's time for social responsibility, to be a little less about parties and to fight for the causes in which we believe."

Chiara noted that their life choices span four historical periods, four professions and four very different ways of being a woman in Italy. Their struggles to follow their dreams, their successes, have inspired many Italian women.

Chiara Pasqualetti Johnson is an Italian journalist who writes about travel, art, and lifestyle for several magazines. She writes and works in Milan. Recently published: 'The most influential women of our time,' dedicated to the great women of the nineteenth century; upcoming: 'Girls Rule' – a new way of being a woman in Italy today.

Lorenzo Da Ponte Library

A literary adventure across the Atlantic

A Talk by Professor Luigi Ballerini at the University Women's Club, London, 17 October 2022

Professor Ballerini, introduced by Richard Northern (Chairman, British Italian Society), is a veritable polymath: poet, essayist, translator, editor, curator of exhibitions of Contemporary Italian Art, and *Emeritus* Professor of Modern and Contemporary Italian Literature at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). At this singular cultural event Professor Ballerini appeared in his persona of the creator of the *Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library*.

Professor Ballerini engaged the audience with an illuminating passage through his journey from Milanese origins *via* London, Bologna, New York and Los Angeles. In expectation that her son might be attracted to banking or commerce, the young Luigi Ballerini was dispatched by his widowed seamstress mother to London in 1959, where he was struck by the severe effects of the Second War World in which his own father, a tailor, had died in combat against the Germans in Cephalonia. He observed how the characteristics of Italian *emigranti* in London changed. He encountered the work of the Italian lexicographer, poet, writer and translator Giovanni (John) Florio (1552–1625), who had been appointed as a Groom of the Privy Chamber and reader in Italian to Queen Anne of Denmark, the wife of King James I. In addition to connections with William Shakespeare, one of Florio's great achievements was his dictionary, *Queen Anna's New World of Words, or Dictionarie of the Italian and English tongues* [London 1611], containing 74,000 definitions: double that in its predecessor by William Thomas [1550]. Whilst in London, Luigi Ballerini acquired an "*afflictive disease*" – the obsession to be a publisher. Awareness of Niccolò (Ugo) Foscolo (1778-1827), the Venetian writer, revolutionary and poet, and his death as a political *emigrante* in semi-suburban Turnham Green, initiated Luigi Ballerini's first publishing project: the Out Of London Press. This early endeavour produced 25 titles before falling victim to lack of finance.

Further to his later substantial academic successes, Professor Ballerini realised his publishing ambition through a happenstance meeting with an Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Italian Cultural Institute in Los Angeles. With initial financial support of the Italian Government, the *Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library* was born as a not-for-profit imprint of the Agincourt Press at the University of Toronto. Intriguingly, the Library took its title from the infamously badly-behaved Italian librettist of 28 operas, Lorenzo Da Ponte (born 1749, Ceneda/Conegliano, died 1838, New York), on account of his position as the first professor of Italian literature at Columbia College.

Building cultural bridges between Italian and English speaking people

Professor Ballerini's fundamental aim was to deploy the inherent meaning and social relevance of Italian literature drawn from diverse epochs, authors and subjects to build cultural bridges between Italian and English speaking people on both sides of the Atlantic. Translators were initially Professor Ballerini's own students, but latterly paid teams have been employed. Editors are usually senior academics.

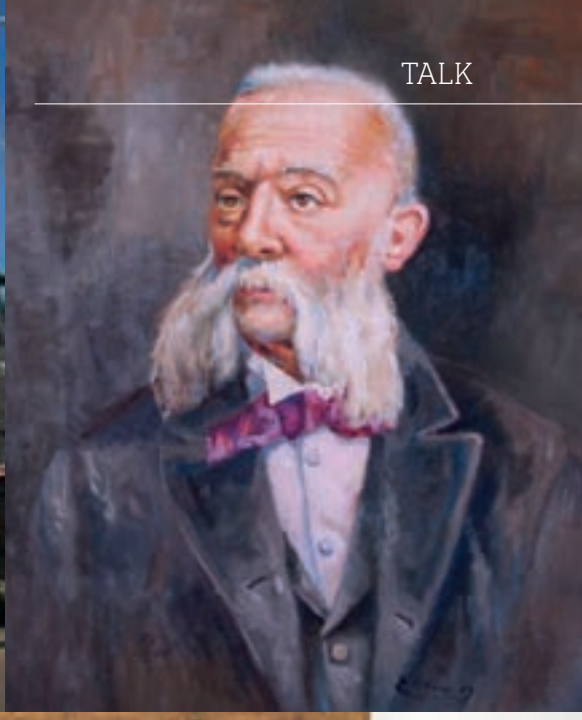
Professor Ballerini aptly highlighted the words of a 16th century shoemaker as recited on the back cover of books published by the *Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library*:

"*We have no empire, such as did the Romans, so powerful that subject cities spontaneously sought to emulate their rulers' speech … Nonetheless it can clearly be seen how, in our present times, many diverse people of intelligence and refinement, outside Italy no less than within Italy, devote much effort and study to learning and speaking our language for no other reason than love.*"

– Giovan Batista Gelli,
'*Ragionamento sulla lingua*', 1551

The first title to be published was *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well* by Pellegrino Artusi, [2003]. Connections between home cooking, love and language will be unsurprising to the Italophile. Professor Ballerini's authority in the field of gastronomy is well recognised through contributions to *Gastronomica* magazine, *Il Gambero Rosso* television

Lorenzo DaPonte; unknown artist



Luigi Ballerini gallery

Opposite: Monument to Cesare Beccaria (1837) in the Palazzo Brera, Milan; above: the Lorenzo da Ponte library; Pellegrino Artusi, author of *La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiare bene;* right: Professor Ballerini in conversation with revered Turin painter Marco Gastini

programme, and as Editor of the *Cum Grano Salis* series of books on Historical Gastronomy. Remarkably, when Artusi's tome *La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiare bene* appeared in 1891, it was the first book of domestic cooking to be published in Italian. Notwithstanding his origins in a wealthy mercantile family in Romagna, later moved to Florence, Artusi included many regional recipes. Although Artusi could not find a publisher for the first edition, which he funded himself, by the date of the first run of the 14th Edition [1910], a total of 52,000 copies had been printed and sold. Artusi's book has been translated into English, Spanish, French, Dutch, German, Portuguese and Polish. Pertinent to one of Professor Ballerini's aims, Artusi noted *salsa balsamella* as the Italian forerunner of the French *béchamel* sauce.

Members of the Society were further delighted by the presence of Signor Berardo Paradiso, introduced by Professor Ballerini as the industrialist by whose philanthropy the *Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library* is supported. Signor Paradiso described himself as a manufacturer of rivets, modestly belying his Presidency of the Italian American Committee on Education. Signor Paradiso has deployed his energy to promote the Italian language amongst fellow Americans of both Italian descent and other origins by channelling the synergy between his entrepreneurial spirit and Italian culture throughout education. The link across five centuries between Giovan Battista Gelli, the shoemaker, and Berardo Paradiso, the engineer and manufacturer of rivets, is truly redolent of the love and capacity for meaningful inter-societal communication of *La Più Bella Lingua del Mondo*.

The breadth of Italian literature printed by the Da Ponte Library

At the time of writing, there are 38 titles in print, [www.dapontelibrary.com], including philosophy, politics, economics, history, and juridical matters. Illustrating the breadth of Italian literature relevant to his project's cultural aims, Professor Ballerini cited *On Crimes and Punishments and Other Writings*, [1764], by the Milanese criminologist, jurist and philosopher Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794); *Journey to Italy*, [1775], a French view of 18th Century Italy from the infamous reprobate Marquis de Sade (1740-1814); and, *Those Who From Afar Look Like Flies. An Anthology of Italian Poetry from Pasolini to the Present. 1956-1975*, [2016].

As to the future, Professor Ballerini and his co-editor Professor Massimo Ciavolella (Professor of Italian Studies at UCLA) have charted a road map aiming at a minimum of 100 titles.

Frequently it requires the intervention of a genie to release the full genius bottled in a particular material: what Lorenzo Da Ponte was to the genius of Mozart, Professor Ballerini, together with his colleagues and supporters will have been to the *bellisimo genio* of *La Più Bella Lingua del Mondo* through the medium of the *Lorenzo Da Ponte Italian Library*.

Jonathan Punt

Jonathan Punt is a former Consultant and University Senior Lecturer in Paediatric Neurosurgery. Retired Barrister at Law.

Leconfield Lecture 2022

A visual history of Britain:

the role of the National Portrait Gallery, its reopening and its Italian links

A talk by Dr Nicholas Cullinan

In mid November, members and friends of the British Italian Society gathered at the Italian Cultural Institute, Belgrave Square, London, for the Society's annual Leconfield Lecture. Institute Director, Katia Pizzi, warmly welcomed the Society, noting its good works in promoting Italian culture in Britain. Chairman Richard Northern thanked Dr Pizzi for the Institute's kind hospitality and briefly described the background to the named lecture, which was established in honour of Hugh Wyndham, Lord Leconfield, who was BIS Chairman for twelve years. Inaugurated by Sir Ashley Clarke, former Ambassador to Italy, the lectures are always presented by a speaker of distinction. This led to his introduction of the evening's distinguished speaker, Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery.

Dr Cullinan, in post since 2015, described his recent and demanding task – the organisation of the refurbishment of the National Portrait Gallery, which holds the most extensive collection of portraits in the world. The Gallery was founded in 1856 with the aim of presenting a visual history of Britain through the portraits of the men and women who made and are making British history and culture.

Italian architectural influences

The architecture of the building, which dates from 1896, shows an influence of the decorative elements of the façade of Santo Spirito in Bologna, in its eighteen roundel sculptures in Portland stone. They were commissioned by George Scharf and all are accurate portraits from the Collection, including Anthony van Dyck, Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Carlyle.

The north façade is influenced by the Palazzo Medici Riccardi in Florence in the proportions and articulation of the registers of the windows.

"What is unique in this Gallery is that the number one criterion is the sitter! Ideally, portraits were painted from life." Dr Cullinan gave an early example of inspiring people – the Collection's portrait of Shakespeare, painted c.1600-1610, which is the first known image of him, and the model for so many later visual renderings. He then discussed the contributions of two very influential Directors. The first was George Scharf (1857-1895)[1], who began to form the collection, a life's work of almost forty years. He was a very good draughtsman and travelled

1 *George Scharf, the Gallery's first Secretary, remained in office for almost forty years. In the early years he carried out almost all of the activities of the Gallery single-handed, from authenticating portraits and writing notes on the acquisitions to acting as guide and keeping the accounts. He recorded the portraits offered to the Gallery as annotated sketches in pocket books, and these are still a valuable source of information.*

Italian Connections: Opposite page: Interior courtyard of the Palazzo Medici Riccardi in Florence; above left: Nine year old Marie José (Queen of Italy) in 1915, by Rita Martin; above centre: Marie José (Queen of Italy), Elisabeth of Bavaria (Queen of Belgium), Leopold III (King of the Belgians), Prince Edward, Duke of Windsor (King Edward VIII), Prince Charles of Belgium and King Albert I of Belgium in 1923; above: artist's impression of the new National Portrait Gallery entrance; right: Portrait of Gertrude Elizabeth (*née* Blood), Lady Colin Campbell in 1894, by Giovanni Boldini

around country houses, sketching their paintings – an invaluable record still used as a reference point. A later Director, Sir Roy Strong (1967-73), appointed at the age of 32, energetic and daring, took a dramatic new approach to the curating of exhibitions. His first major exhibition in the late sixties was 'The Winter Queen' to which he gave a dramatic, theatrical presentation, following it up with the Cecil Beaton exhibition, the first photographic exhibition ever mounted. Both were highly successful. He also accepted work from living artists and his innovative approach changed how people viewed museums. Dr Cullinan reflected on the uniqueness of the Gallery as a family album of Britain, a Collection that is both unique and quirky: "We are there to represent Britain past and present." A recent exhibition was '36 Prominent Black Britons'.

The Gallery today: a rinascimento

To undertake the much needed refurbishment, the Gallery had to close its doors in 2020 and will reopen in 2023, after two and a half years of work. The plans have concentrated on bringing light into the interior and opening up spaces. There are three new doors at the entrance, modelled on the Baptistry doors in Florence. The ground floor has been opened up, the whole east wing is now available, all the closed windows have been opened and the building has been reanimated.

> Dr Cullinan reflected on the uniqueness of the Gallery as a family album of Britain, a Collection that is both unique and quirky

Meantime, the Gallery has mounted exhibitions in other spaces – including in Cromwell Place, London, in Newcastle and Nottingham, and internationally at the Morgan Library, New York (the Hockney exhibition) and travelling exhibitions in Taiwan, the US and other countries. There is a Bloomsbury Group exhibition at the Palazzo Altemps, Rome, from October 2022 until February 2023. A current project 'Coming Home' sees the Gallery sending portraits of well known individuals to places they are closely associated with. "It's not about the Gallery, but about the person."

New to the revamped Gallery will be a focus on photographs, of which the Gallery has one of the best collections in the world; a section concentrating on miniatures; and a general focus on sitters rather than on artists, with a balance between female and male sitters. For clear coordination, all presentations will be chronological. And for sustainability, all the walls are fabric covered.

Building up the collection continues, and there is a team of curators to acquire works.

The National Portrait Gallery is funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (29%), 71% is via fundraising. The refurbishment has been on time and on budget (£35m) and not tax payer funded.

Dr Cullinan, in summarising these exciting plans to his enthralled audience, emphasised that the Gallery aims always to reflect the audience it serves.

Philippa Leslie

Philippa Leslie, Rivista editor, was inspired by the reorganisation of the Gallery and how it will delight audiences

Fifty summers in Syracuse

"We Siracusani like to dream, to imagine..."

Susan Kikoler sees many changes in her beloved second home

My fiftieth summer in Syracuse, I return to find yet another political crisis. Nothing new there. People are exasperated with their choice of candidates. No-one is happy to see Draghi go. An unenthusiastic *We've tried everyone else – all useless, so why not try Meloni?* – a common refrain. Others were in despair at the prospect. Similarly, with rising prices biting, I saw little enthusiasm for the war in Ukraine especially as Lukoil, the Russian oil and gas giant, now owns the vast petro-chemical plant at Priolo, and 10,000 local jobs are at risk.

In Syracuse most people go maskless and religious processions have returned, but Covid still haunts. FFP2 masks are mandatory on public transport and for shop assistants (since revoked). In the villages, however, there is often real fear, and some friends are hesitant to socialise. Banks still operate by appointment only – impossible to get as it's holiday time too. Luckily one of my beach companions is an *impiegato.* One phone call and everything is organised. The right contact! That too hasn't changed.

The beach, however, reveals differences. Syracuse is now multi-ethnic. Pedlars come from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Senegal, Nigeria. Many have settled here with their families or intermarried with Sicilians. Progress has been made. On July 16, after the Covid hiatus, Gay Pride returned, and a small but exuberant crowd danced its way down Corso Gelone – such a contrast to the hidden misery of gay life there years ago. Tattoo parlours are booming and Harry Potter spectacles the fashion.

Syracuse has expanded in these years as have waistlines. Sushi is popular. However, there are two realities here: Syracuse and Ortigia. The latter, the historic centre, fifty years ago was ignored and decaying, Piazza Duomo a mere car park. Now it's rediscovered, spruced up – a Brand. *I'm holidaying in Ortigia!* Tourists wander indecorously in swimming trunks and flip-flops around the baroque palaces, B&B balconies strewn with towels, while the *Ortigiani dello scoglio,* with their local crafts and shops, have all been removed to the ugly outskirts of Mazzarona, leaving restaurant tables and chairs to populate the medieval lanes.

Recently added glamour

Summer 2022 had added glamour. Madonna, after celebrating her birthday at Noto and Marzamemi, visited Syracuse to see Caravaggio's *Santa Lucia* in the Borgata and briefly to tour Ortigia. Dolce and Gabbana, having once hired the nineteenth century theatre in Via Roma to launch a new perfume (leaving a pair of superb Murano glass chandeliers as recompense), returned to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their Alta Moda Collection in front of the Cathedral and Archbishop's Palace – cordoned off to mere mortals while Sharon Stone, Mariah Carey and Helen Mirren were flown in. To my amusement Kukua Beach, part of *my* Lido Sayonara, was chosen for the after-show dinner – blue and yellow décor, fairy lights along the cliff, fireworks over the sea. I trust no-one noticed the streamers of garbage that festoon the country roads leading up to the bay (municipality and province being unable to agree responsibility for cleaning them up) – *the bus stop by the garbage tip*, once one specific place, is now generic.

The tortuous redevelopment of the port now brings in cruise ships at least twice a week but, as ever, the locals complain of the crowds and the lack of financial benefit and greet each attempt to exploit the town's resources with fastidious outrage.

Although recycling incentives include a 100-euro council tax discount for those who collect a certain quantity of paper, glass or plastic, recycling measures create more confusion than success. There are new cycle lanes, rental bikes, and electric cars are exempt from parking charges, but little changes.

Local transport remains an odyssey, timing and occasionally route, dependent on the mood of the driver (further details available on request). Bus tickets remain an optional extra, this summer available only at the railway station. I foolishly go and buy a wad of twenty. The bus ticket machines don't work. The drivers aren't interested. I wear out three tickets presenting them each morning and then

All photos: istock

Above: The Fountain of Diana; right: a picturesque street in Ortigia Old Town

give up. The ticket inspectors (once my friends) all retired, and AST can't afford new ones. As for the old, bone-shaking buses, with their air conditioning vents open (if working at all) pneumonia seems a greater risk than Covid.

Positive change takes time. This year a new free shuttle bus, designed to encourage visitors to park and ride, transformed my nightly journey into Ortigia. The tortuous redevelopment of the port now brings in cruise ships at least twice a week but, as ever, the locals complain of the crowds and the lack of financial benefit and greet each attempt to exploit the town's resources with fastidious outrage. A proposal to allow concerts by Claudio Baglioni and Fiorella Mannoia in the Greek Theatre, after the annual two-month season of classical Greek plays, was contested as an affront to culture! But I remember fifty years back Ray Charles performing there, and the Greek plays were held only every other year. *Siracusa, la provincia Babba!* The ingenuous province, always outmanoeuvred by the Catanesi. Plato said they were only interested in food. How little has changed!

Fifty years on and so many memories! Roundabouts in Syracuse now bear names commemorating local characters. I knew them all!

I pop into the little music and newspaper shop in Ortigia for a CD. The owner, an older gentleman, loves jazz and is something of a philosopher. He and a friend are discussing the plans for developing the area around the railway station. *40 years they've been talking about it. It'll take another 40 years at least!* They agree.

I buy my CD. *You see,* the owner addresses me, *some people like to plan, to achieve, we Siracusani like to dream, to imagine. We want time to consider and savour.* Oh, for a tape recorder to capture his delicate dissection of *Siracusanità* delivered as ever with exquisite courtesy. Eventually I need to leave. Bidding farewell I ask his name.

He tells me. Then, to my utter surprise, adds *But I know who* ***you*** *are. I think you were my English teacher many years ago in a little private school off Corso Gelone. Of course, I've forgotten all my English now but you I remember.*

Susan Kikoler spends as much time as possible in her beguiling Sicily.

Putting money on the Italians

British Cars and Italian Designers

by Cameron Slater

Britain after the Second World War is a pretty miserable place; the country's bankrupt and everything's rationed. Industry is reorganising from producing tanks, guns and planes to producing steel, houses, furniture and cars – everything that would make life bearable again.

As time passed and the economy recovered, the car-buying public wanted something more glamorous than the *Triumph Mayflower* or the *Standard Vanguard* or any of the current Austin *'Counties'* saloons. Some manufacturers got things right; Jaguars were very successful, but expensive. At the other end of the scale, Alex Issigonis's *Morris Minor* appeared in 1948 and sold 1.7 million units by 1971. In 1954, at the British Motor Corporation (BMC), talented designer Gerald Palmer's *MG Magnette* showed early Italian influence from Vittorio Jano's *Lancia Aurelia B10 Berlina*. The times were, indeed, a-changing and the industry had to change with them.

Arrivano gli Italiani!

Giovanni Michelotti was the first Italian car designer to impact British car manufacturers. His *Standard Vignale Vanguard* of 1958 replaced the previous bulbous *Vanguard Phase III*. Michelotti had established his own design studio in 1949 and was working as a freelance designer for Carrozzeria Vignale. His success with the *Vignale Vanguard* encouraged Standard Triumph to engage him as a freelance head of design. Subsequently, he created the entire range of Triumph cars from the late 1950's to the mid 1970's. The *Triumph Herald, Vitesse, Spitfire, GT6, 2000* and *1300 Saloons, TR4/5, Stag* and finally, in 1973, the *Dolomite Sprint* were all Michelotti designs. His beautiful 1958 *Triumph Italia 2000* was not a commercial success but its name demonstrated Michelotti's importance to the company.

In 1959 Battista "Pinin" Farina dramatically changed the design of BMC cars. He introduced Italian styling to the entire range of BMC's family saloons, except Issigonis's *Morris Minor* and *Mini.* The core models were the *Austin Cambridge* and *Morris Oxford* ; Wolseley, Riley and MG versions had minor variations. These cars were popularly known as 'The Farina Saloons' and were very successful, although MG traditionalists hated the MG version, regarding it as a tarted-up Austin – which, of course, it actually was!

So Michelotti and Pinin Farina transformed the look and feel of British cars. In the decade of the 'Swinging Sixties', design, style, and culture dominated the zeitgeist. Austerity was a thing of the past. In Italy, Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*

Main photo: 1958 Triumph Italia; above: 1966 Gordon Keeble; top right: 1954 MG Magnette ZA; below right: 1961 Aston Martin DB4 Zagato

(1960) dramatised the new social and cultural landscape and you could say that Michelotti and Farina brought 'la dolce vita' to the British motorist.

But Italian designers did not dominate the entire industry. In 1961, Malcolm Sayer's design for the divine *Jaguar E-type* astonished the world. Even Enzo Ferrari thought it was "La macchina la piu bella nel mondo".

Despite Enzo's enthusiasm for Sayer's masterpiece, Italian designers continued to influence British and European car production. Even Issigonis's world-beating *Mini* was given an Italian makeover by Innocenti of Milan. Designed by Nuccio Bertone for the European market, the car offered different levels of style and engineering from the original BMC version.

Why, then, did Italian automotive designers have such an influence on British manufacturers? The great modern Italian designer, Lorenzo Ramaciotti, suggests this: "In the fifties when all the rest of Europe was doing cars that looked like the thirties, Italian designers had already moved to a more modern shape." (*Top Gear Magazine*, April 2015)

And they did it again in 1967 when Carrozzeria Pininfarina revealed the *BMC 1800 Berlina Aerodinamica Prototype*. This was the brainchild of a young designer, Leonardo Fioravanti, who had joined Pininfarina in 1964. His futuristic shape transformed Issigonis's *BMC 1800* – aka *The Landcrab* – which was a medium-sized family saloon. No one could accuse it of being beautiful; it was just plain ugly.

Fioravanti's extraordinary design changed the concept of the family saloon from the traditional three-box shape to a sleek aerodynamic two-box shape that determined car design for the next decade and beyond.

But the British were not impressed. In 1968 BMC became British Leyland which was slow to realise that the shape of the family car had changed forever. Not until the *Rover SD1* in 1976 did Fioravanti's design finally make a real impression on British manufacturers.

Of the other volume manufacturers, Ford and Vauxhall's styling influences came from the USA. However, Ford of Europe bought Carrozzeria Ghia in 1970 and Carrozzeria Vignale in 1972. The Ghia badge appeared on Ford's prestige cars such as the *Granada Ghia* but in 2010 the Ghia name was dropped and, since 2014, Ford has used the Vignale name for their prestige models.

The Rootes Group's styling also came from America. Its only Italian adventure was the *Sunbeam Venezia,* designed by Carrozzeria Touring and launched in Venice in 1963. It was not a success and ceased production in 1964.

Among the specialist manufacturers, Aston Martin's beautiful *DB4*, was styled by Carrozzeria Touring and built on their *Superleggera* principle which fitted aluminium panels onto a space-frame chassis.

Other designers created stylish bodies on the *DB4*; Ercole Spada at Zagato of Milan produced his amazing *Aston Martin DB4 GT*, one of the world's great sports cars. In 1986, came the *V8 Vantage Zagato*, designed by Giuseppe Mittino. There was then a Zagato version of the *DB7* in 2002 and a Zagato convertible on the *DB9* chassis in 2013.

Jensen Motors also went Italian in 1966 with their *Jensen Interceptor*. Carrozzeria Touring designed it, Vignale built the bodies and the *Interceptor* was a highly successful car. Even Rolls Royce flirted with Italian design; their controversial *Camargue* of 1975 was designed by Paolo Martin at Pininfarina.

Finally, there's Giorgetto Giugiaro, named Car Designer of the Century in 1999. In Britain, he designed the *De Lorean, Gordon Keeble* and *Lotus Esprit*. He worked with Mazda, BMW and styled Volkswagen's world-beating *Golf*. He also designed cameras for Nikon, watches for Seiko, motorcycles for Ducati, guns for Beretta and even the Lungomare at Porto Santo Stefano in Tuscany.

Today, the Italian influence continues and it's all a far cry from austerity Britain when Italian designers first gave British cars the style and glamour that the motor industry lacked and the British motorist craved.

But who will design the cars of the future? The electric cars, the hydrogen cars or cars powered by something we haven't discovered yet? It's anyone's guess, but putting money on the Italians might be as safe a bet as any.

Cameron Slater is a retired TV Executive and Management Consultant and is obsessed by classic cars. He owns an Alfa Romeo and a Lancia.

Go Bananas!

Influencing the environmental impact of consumables: an Italian business has revamped its processes

Luca Aragone

Can consumers influence the environmental impact of the products they consume without changing their purchasing habits?

In this globalised world where we can buy an object in Singapore and have it shipped in a few short days to Florence or London, it is not surprising to find that fruit from another hemisphere can be found in one's local supermarket and then on our tables very quickly. This happens with bananas, a fruit which is consumed in every season.

On closer inspection, behind that single fruit there is a significant history, which brings together agriculture, logistics and technical skills.

The banana that we have just put in the supermarket trolley and that we will enjoy at the end of a meal represents a synthesis of these capabilities – in fact, it comes to Europe from Latin America and Africa, and because of its origin, has its own characteristics, both in taste and environmental impact.

The custom of eating bananas is relatively recent – it developed a market niche in the 1930s and became established in countries with overseas interests, to then become a staple fruit – in some cases exceeding the consumption of seasonal native local fruit. This has been the case for years now in the period of summer fruit in Italy.

What choices can we make for an informed consumption of bananas? Let's start with the production and how to select organically grown bananas, or at least bananas grown with agricultural criteria, that guarantee a low impact on nature: we can assess the websites of the companies that market bananas and choose those that, in addition, put their environmental credentials on the business – managing the entire supply chain from production to marketing. The leading companies are proud to provide information on the environmental impact of their operations, and publicise that their choices are based on considerations of the impact of their practices on the environment.

Opposite page: Terry//iStock; this page: Compagnie Fruitière

Opposite page: Loose fruit and vegetables outside the Mauro Tratta Grocery in Florence, Italy; this page: Compagnie Fruitière has been a family business since 1938 and is a leading fruit producer in the Africa-Caribbean-Pacific region; producing, transporting, ripening and marketing 750,000 tonnes of bananas in Europe and throughout the world.

From the production, the bananas are picked green and moved by truck to the ports of embarkation, arriving in Europe by ship. [A curiosity, the banana does not grow on a tree but is in fact a herb.]

Bananas arriving in Europe from Africa, having not a very long distance to travel – less than half the time of those arriving in Europe from Latin America – generate a reduced environmental impact and a lower CO_2 production and maintain better characteristics of freshness and taste.

When the bananas arrive in port they are moved to ripening and distribution centres where, with an industrial process that uses humidity and temperature, they are ripened thanks to ethylene, which is a ripening hormone of many plant species (that's why if you have bananas too green you can put them with two apples to accelerate ripening; but it is not advisable to use apples and bananas that are already yellow).

The last stage of the bananas-to-your-table is delivery to the logistics platforms of supermarkets or wholesale markets, from where they will make a final move to the shops where you buy them.

Why loose bananas help the environment

At this stage we can affect the environmental impact by choosing to buy only loose bananas, that is, those not packed in plastic-covered trays with labels. This type of packaging often has costs similar to the goods they contain (!). It takes up space by multiplying the volumes to be transported two and a half times the storage space, with the consequent increase in the number of trucks in circulation and the pollution they produce and then, with consumption, of packaging materials that after a day will be discarded.

If we consider that the weekly consumption of bananas in Italy is 500,000 cases weighing around 20 kilos each, imagine the impact of 500 trucks crossing the peninsula from Monday to Friday to deliver to the ripening centres, and then the more than 3,000 trucks that transport the ripened fruit onto supermarket platforms.

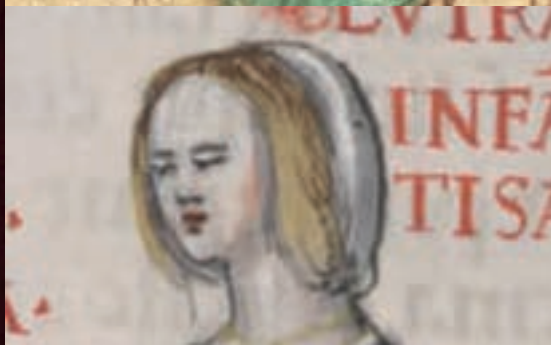
Changing processes for pollution reduction

This is why even a sector that is not considered to have the greatest effect for environmental impact wishes to provide operational modes that respond to sustainability logic. The procedure starts with the change in the maturation process, by saving energy with the use of low concentration ethylene and lower temperatures, and using less impacting and more performing packaging in the volume / weight relationship, to shipping as many goods as possible packed into small spaces, thus reducing the circulation of vehicles mostly fuelled by diesel.

Consumers must play their part

It is clear that all this can be put into practice only if Italian consumers are able to understand and share a virtuous path that in this short article I wanted to describe for those who understand that even the consumer in his small way can make a difference in terms of environmental impact. This example of the importation of bananas using techniques to protect the environment is largely applicable to all agricultural products and helps us to reflect on a conscious and realistic consumption model, not radical but intelligent, far from militant utopias but attentive to costs and to the environment.

Luca Aragone is committed to practices which reduce environmental impact. Based in Genoa, he is Direttore Generale – Consigliere Delegato at Compagnie Fruitière Italia.



Italy's forgotten queens

How the most powerful women in Europe were ignored

by Jacqueline Alio

For five years during the twelfth century she ruled a multiethnic, multicultural society of over two million in a powerful kingdom consisting of the Italian peninsula south of Rome, and Sicily, the island for which the realm was named. For a time, beginning in 1166, at barely thirty years old, she was the most powerful woman in Europe, and one of just a few females of her era to govern a large population of Muslims. Yet Margaret of Navarre, the widow of King William I of Sicily, mother of William II, and mother-in-law of Joanna Plantagenet of England, is ignored in most books dedicated to European, and even Italian, queens. Her story, and the path to its discovery, makes for an object lesson in the academic research required to write about the lesser known women of Italy's eclectic Middle Ages.

Queens, Bishops, Poets, Cooks

Thanks to the efforts of serious scholars, something of substance is being published about these royal women, with those in the Kingdom of Sicily during its Norman-Swabian age, until 1266, finally getting the attention they deserve. When it was published in 2017, Margaret's story was the first dedicated biography of her, not only in English but in any language. Details such as a letter written to her by Thomas Becket, thanking the queen for granting asylum to his nephews in Palermo during the archbishop's infamous troubles with Henry II, were widely known. Even so, information like the year reported by modern historians for the queen's birth in northern Spain was simply inaccurate, and very few of her decrees had been published in English.

She is not alone. Her distant cousin, Elvira of Castile, was crowned the first queen consort of Sicily, as the wife of Roger II, in 1130. In the next century Joanna's niece, Isabella of England, a daughter of King John, wed Frederick II, one of the greatest rulers of his age. Until recently, Frederick's mother, Constance of Sicily, was the only queen of Sicily's Norman-Swabian period to garner much attention, especially from detractors such as Dante. In 1850, however, an Englishwoman, Mary Everett Green, wrote about Joanna and Isabella, and a biography of Constance was written in English by an American in 2001.

Here we must necessarily embrace a bit of revisionism, for much of what was said in Italy about Constance and others, though rarely by their contemporaries, was biased beyond belief. Following Italian unification, southern queens were largely forgotten. This transcended royalty. The Sicilian language, for example, was the first Italian vernacular to give us a substantial body of poetry and prose, beginning early in the thirteenth century, that could be understood by ordinary people. Dante himself had praised this Sicilian School, but after 1861 the public use of languages like Sicilian and Neapolitan was officially discouraged.

Today, the study of medieval royalty is interdisciplinary. It even encompasses such things as cuisine. We know that spaghetti and a form of lasagne were served at the Sicilian court.

Opposite page left: Portrait of Marguerite of Navarre circa 1527, attributed to Jean Clouet; top right: Constance I of Sicily from *Liber ad honorem Augusti* by Peter of Eboli (1196); bottom right: Elvira of Castile, Queen of Sicily, circa 1130.

jiduha/stock

Cathedral of Monreale, Sicily, Italy

Queenly patrons

The social role of medieval women is recognised more today than it was during the last century. The cathedral and cloister at Monreale, overlooking Palermo, were erected beginning in 1173 by William II with much work overseen by Margaret, his mother, over the next decade until her death. Here was not only royal patronage but reginal matronage.

Monreale Abbey is one of the world's largest, most spectacular examples of multicultural art, a syncretic symphony of Norman, Arab and Byzantine with a touch of Provençal. In the church is Italy's largest display of Byzantine mosaics. The apse exterior bears geometric designs in Fatimid style. In the cloister, which boasts a distinctive Arab fountain, the figure of the mermaid Melusina carved into a capital recalls the legendary ancestry of Joanna, consort of William II, through her mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Yes, there were queens of Sicily and England descended from mermaids.

Wives and mothers

Current scholarship distinguishes between the popular 'political' biographies of queens, compared to the 'social' study of queenship. The lack of a foundational compendium of biographies of Sicily's first queens meant that this author had to write it, at nearly 750 pages, before completing a companion volume on Sicilian queenship.

There were isolated instances of queens leading knights into battle, but queenship studies tend to focus on the 'implicit' role of queens as wives and mothers. Queens were often 'the power behind the throne' when, as widows, they were regents for young sons. As we see in Margaret's case, queens were sometimes the patronesses of monasteries.

While finding such facts often means inferring more detail than what has been recorded on the written page, contemporary documentary sources are essential.

Discovery

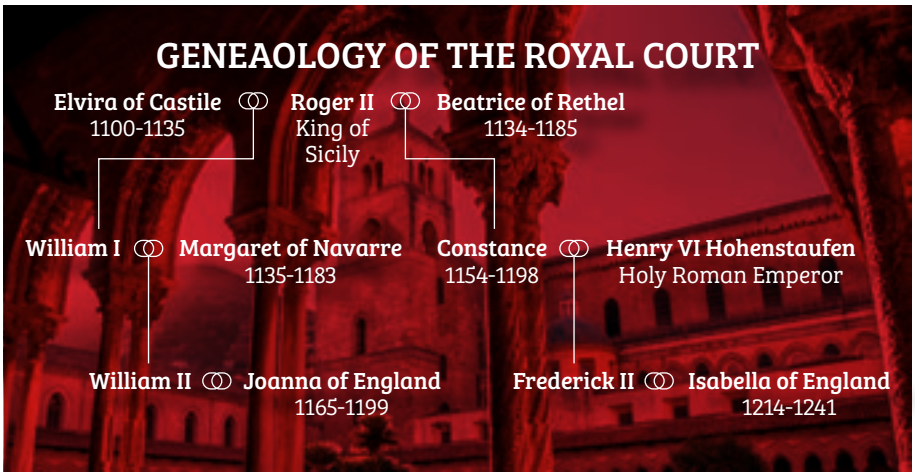
The chief 'primary' records consulted in this kind of research are contemporaneous chronicles, which are chronological accounts of events in narrative form, complemented by charters, which are usually royal or ecclesiastical decrees. Most of these, such as the chronicle of Hugh Falcandus in Margaret's time, have been transcribed, published in their original Latin, Greek or Arabic.

Given the diverse European origins of most of the queens of Sicily, and the real-world context necessary for us to attain an understanding of their lives, travel to their natal countries is usually required. Margaret was born in a town called La Guardia before her family ruled from Pamplona, where she was raised speaking several languages, including that of the Basques.

Many historians focus on Italy out of a largely academic curiosity about 'foreign' people and places. Then there are those of us motivated by a personal interest that touches the soul, our own roots entwining the very foundations of the former Kingdom of Sicily, where our ancestors were the subjects of queens like Elvira, Margaret, Constance and Isabella.

Among the Italians passionately writing about the Middle Ages of southern Italy, those of us who speak English as our mother tongue are still comparatively few. This is relevant because many publishers in Anglophone countries remain somewhat reluctant to commission translations from the Italian for works such as royal biographies. Yet there is no true substitute for an intimate, first-person knowledge of the people, the place and the culture about which one writes. The former Kingdom of Sicily is endlessly complex in both its written history and the tangible vestiges of that history. Religious and folk traditions, art, architecture, language and cuisine, and even the people themselves, are nothing less than an amalgam of the past, almost a mirror of history.

It's the responsibility of the historian to convey a collective memory that shapes our heritage. Viva la Regina!



Jacueline Alio is the author of ten books that focus on Sicily, ranging from queenly biographies to English translations of medieval chronicles. A popular lecturer, she organises historical tours of Sicily and especially Palermo, where she resides.

An Ambassador's recollection

Queen Elizabeth's State Visit to Italy, 16-19 October 2000

State Visits are intended to display at the highest level mutual respect and, if possible, friendship between countries. Although in the capital city they largely follow a well-established pattern, there is scope for differences of priority or misunderstandings as well as limited novelty. As the host nation is in charge, getting the arrangements right can pose a challenge for any embassy, though yielding a mighty boost if they go well. Atmosphere is all – in the preparations as well as on the day.

The third of 'La Regina's' four State Visits to Italy took place in mid-October 2000 on my watch as ambassador. That was all too soon after my arrival in July, by which time official Rome was closing down for the summer, with few practical preparations in place. Frustratingly little more could be done before early September, when the Palace 'recce team' was due.

By luck my appointment to Italy was decided shortly after I had established a committee to steer FCO advice on and planning for State Visits. So I could begin to make an input early on. I was invited to the small luncheon which The Queen gave for President Ciampi, when he came to meet her privately before playing host to her. I also sometimes attended on The Queen at credentials ceremonies at Buckingham Palace. The private moments with her before and between receiving the new ambassadors allowed some brief, unscripted exchanges about the impending Visit.

The mood in Rome was indeed very welcoming: the centre-left government of Giuliano Amato had worked well with Tony Blair's team, and the Queen's previous visits had left good memories. The Italian head of protocol in charge was both charming and efficient – on his first state visit. Several of the more formal events could be shortened, and there was no lack of people eager to meet The Queen and Prince Philip.

Careful planning, down to the smallest detail

All the events, however familiar, required careful planning down to the smallest detail. Italians have a genius for making last-minute arrangements. But, even if we knew that they would come through in grand style on the day, the lack of firm plans to 'walk through' with the Buckingham Palace recce party was brought into vivid focus by the total collapse of our transport plan: the drivers simply got lost. Our delightful visitors from the Palace were very understanding but could hardly just look the other way. More happily, when they inspected the catering capacity at the Villa Wolkonsky (the embassy Residence) they correctly concluded that the Palace staff, including a chef, needed to take over the kitchen for the dinner at which the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh were to receive President Ciampi.

The Royal Party arrived on the Monday afternoon, and the only engagements were in the magnificent Renaissance Quirinale Palace (where the President resides and the Royal Party stayed): the initial exchange of gifts with President Ciampi and his State banquet for 170 – a splendid, lively and briskly-staged evening.

The second full day began with the Queen and Prince Philip calling, as on

Main photo: Villa Wolkonsky; Ambassador John Shepherd

e55eruv/istock

John Shepherd

previous visits, on the Pope in the Vatican – always an event of great interest for the press but, of course, outside my bailiwick – and a short stop at the English College. In the afternoon the Queen showed visible pleasure watching (not for the first time) the mounted display by the Carabinieri in Piazza di Siena, before visiting the British School at Rome and holding a reception mainly for British guests in the unusual setting of the nearby National Gallery of Modern Art. The day ended with her dinner at the Villa Wolkonsky for President and Signora Ciampi – one of the few elements in the programme where the ambassador becomes visibly involved, as for the rest The Royal Party is escorted by the hosts.

The Villa Wolkonsky can do a dinner for 100, and we included in the guest-list as many as we could of the important Italians in business, sport and the arts who had not been included in the State Banquet – for example Alberto Lina (a leading industrialist), Peppino Fumagalli, Guido Barilla, Wanda Ferragamo, Vittorio Colao, Gianfranco Zola, Fiona May (Olympic athlete), Roland Paoletti, and the widow of the painter Annigoni. On the third day wreaths were laid on the way to a reception at the City Hall (the Campidoglio) and a tour of recently discovered Roman remains under it with a splendid view over the Forum, which Mayor Rutelli explained to the Queen in faultless English. She then very graciously came to the Embassy's Chancery, new to her, to meet and, in personal chats, thank all the Embassy staff for their work. The Government's lunch for 100 at Villa Madama closed the Rome part of the visit.

The Queen's first visit to Milan

The main novelty came at the end: the Queen's first visit to Milan, the heart of Italy's economy. There, the Consul-General, the late Charles de Chassiron, worked tirelessly with the Mayor and Prefect (monitored with suspicion by the authorities in Rome, with whom I had to intervene a few times) and delivered a lively programme which played well with press and public as well as the business community. A short concert at La Scala with an invited audience followed by a lively chat with Maestro Riccardo Muti, a visit to the European Institute of Design (while Prince Philip went to a telecommunications exhibition and on to the Agusta-Westland helicopter factory), a City Hall reception for Tutto Milano followed by a widely-reported walk-about with lots of school-children present in the square outside, and a brief look at Leonardo's Last Supper were all crammed into less than 24 hours. As during the whole visit, the sun shone – normal in Rome, less so in Milan. The centre-piece was a lunch for the business community at the Prefecture, at which the Queen gave a speech on economic and trade matters – a first, we believed – which was hugely appreciated by her audience and well covered in the press.

Much of the press coverage was in gossip column mode, though its tone was anything but hostile. A Times leader headed 'Windsor Soup' reflected chatter about what would be on menus in the light of reports of HM's dietary no-go dishes. The collapse of a royal clothes hanging frame being unloaded from the aircraft hold at Ciampino in front of the waiting photographers was eagerly seized upon – but apparently did no damage to the royal attire. Much was made of what The Queen would be or was wearing, especially when she called on the Pope. During the build-up, parts of the Italian press described what members of the aristocracy claimed they were getting their couturiers to make for them to wear at the State banquet: the publicity helped them to cover up the embarrassing fact (which we knew) that most of them would not be invited.

Goodwill and Berlusconi

For this ambassador, the Visit had two particular benefits in addition to the general aura of goodwill. On my arrival ministers and other senior figures sought me out to find out whether and how they could be involved in the visit; thus sparing me the need to set up courtesy calls. Secondly, it fortuitously gave me the opportunity to forge a relationship with Berlusconi, widely and correctly assumed to be about to win back office in the election the following spring. He mishandled his disqualification from getting invited to the state banquet (because he held no senior position in Parliament) in such a way that he also could not attend the Queen's dinner the next evening. Charles de Chassiron and I worked out how to insert him into the VIP line-up at the City reception. Berlusconi's gratitude translated into friendly direct access to him and his closest colleagues throughout my tenure, allowing us to build a curiously effective political relationship between him and Prime Minister Blair, also re-elected in May 2001 – a direct consequence of the State Visit, albeit accidental. An ambassador couldn't ask for a better start.

John Shepherd KCVO CMG

Aquileia:

a paradise and a dream for archeologists

Foundation President, Antonio Zanard Landi, on its importance and beauty

Ambassador Antonio Zanardi Landi in his role as President of the Aquileia Foundation (2015-2020) encouraged and promoted interest in the UNESCO Heritage site. It has been a position he has relished, as the Foundation helped to renew interest, and funding, in this marvellous paleo-christian archeological site. Here he responds to questions about the region and his role in publicising Aquileia.

Why is Aquileia so special, culturally and architecturally?

In order to respond to the question two answers are needed:

The first one is that Aquileia was a very important and large Roman city, with probably more than 100,000 inhabitants, but now it is a small town of 3,000. That means that the relics of the old town are mostly covered by fields and grass and not by houses. It is therefore much easier to conduct archeological excavations, which are today so difficult in Rome and other cities where important Roman artifacts have been built over.

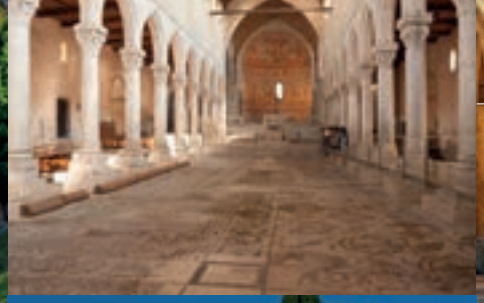
Aquileia is a paradise and a dream for archeologists.

The second answer is that Aquileia was built at a crossroads where a number of different civilizations were getting in touch and sometimes merging: Rome, the 'Barbarians' coming from East, the German populations from the North and, even more significant, all those coming from across the Mediterranean. A profound mark has been left in Aquileia by contacts with North Africa and the Middle East. Even Christianity arrived at first in Aquileia from Alexandria and not from Rome! The merging of all these different influxes gave unique characteristics and flavour to the region: a Roman outpost, now in Northern Italy, strongly connected with the Germanic world and the Balkans, but interacting closely and very positively with North Africa and the Middle East.

How did you get involved with the recent works to restore it? Was it a function of your Presidency of the Aquileia Foundation, 2015-2020?

I was still diplomatic advisor to the President of the Italian Republic when the President of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region offered me the position of being in charge of the Aquileia Foundation, which needed to establish new relations with neighbouring countries, and I gladly accepted. The task was incredibly interesting and challenging and I've got more and more involved in the Foundation's activities. Apart from continuing with the archeological excavations (we had agreements with five universities and every summer they were, and they still are, organising archeological campaigns which, also in recent years, have made very important discoveries).






The Aquileia site in and around the Basilica di Santa Maria Assunta; above: the magnificent 'Jonah' mosaic.

What were the steps followed to save this important monument and how were you able to influence the outcome?

We focussed on raising public awareness of the unique importance of the Aquileia site and on significantly increasing the number of visitors. In order to achieve that, we organised a number of exhibitions which showcased the links between our site and other civilisations, countries and cities with whom Aquileia was trading goods, art and ideas: Tunisia, Syria, the Balkans and so on. We also had a great exhibition at the Ara Pacis in Rome, which the Italian President visited, to celebrate the 2,200 years from the date of the foundation of Aquileia. Results were really encouraging, as visitors to the Archeological Museum trebled, and the Basilica now attracts some 350,000 visitors a year.

How many years did the work take?

The work started many years before my arrival, and deeply committed and gifted archeologists, historians and museum directors have been spending a good part of their lives working in, and for, Aquileia.

How delicate and painstaking did the excavations need to be to preserve what was already there, for example, the mosaics?

Well, the utmost care has obviously to be devoted to archeological relics and to mosaics in particular. I found it very interesting to see how archeologists were using both spade and very soft brushes to clean what was coming out of the ground.

The real problem with mosaics is to decide what to do with them after a discovery. Many years ago they often used to detach them from the ground and take them to museums. Nowadays that is perceived as rather a violent action, which de-contextualises the work of art. Therefore we tend to protect them with glass or build a shelter for them: it's a very tricky business, as you don't want to change the landscape of the countryside. A lot of thinking and planning is involved, but I'm glad to say that Aquileia has gained a great deal of public recognition for making the best possible choices and creating the most beautiful buildings covering and protecting roman mosaics.

Do you have a favourite one?

Yes! The cycle dedicated to the Story of Jonah and the sea monster! It's simply great and we had a wonderful book published about it.

Who funded the restoration?

The Aquileia Foundation receives a yearly, and rather substantial, contribution from the government of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, and more recently also from the European Union and from private donors. The Italian Ministry for Culture entirely supports the Archeological Museum.

What interesting discoveries did the restorers find?

Difficult to say, as Aquileia is a permanent discovery! I would simply quote a very little thing: Aquileia was well connected with the Baltic region and in the museum a great number of amber jewels are kept. Not the Silk Road, but the Amber Road started from the Baltic Sea and arrived at the Mediterranean through Aquileia.

And it's good to note that the site is open to visitors, although works continue, which is excellent.

Antonio Zanardi Landi's diplomatic postings include as Ambassador of Italy to the Holy See, to the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan, and as diplomatic advisor to the President of Italy. He is currently Ambassador of the Sovereign Order of Malta to the Holy See

For information on opening hours of the individual areas of the site consult the website of the Archaeological Museum of Aquileia. Admission is free: **museoarcheologicoaquileia.beniculturali.it**

The bookseller of Florence:

Vespasiano da Bisticci and the manuscripts that illuminated the Renaissance

by Ross King

Diana Darlington reviews a captivating recent biography

Ross King's latest book about the Italian Renaissance follows on from *Brunelleschi's Dome, Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling* and *Leonardo and The Last Supper.* This one is about a lesser known character, Vespasiano da Bisticci, a Florentine bookseller and commissioner of manuscript books for the great and the good (and sometimes the bad) throughout Italy during the fifteenth century.

Vespasiano was born circa 1422. His father, who worked in the wool trade, died when Vespasiano was only six, leaving his family pressed by creditors and owing a large sum of money to the Medici. At eleven, young Vespasiano left school and obtained employment in the bookshop of Michele Guarducci, in Via dei Librai, the Street of the Booksellers. In those times, booksellers, Cartolai, not only sold paper and parchment, but produced and sold manuscripts, acting as binders, stationers, illustrators and publishers. Books could be bought or borrowed to be copied by an independent scribe. With the high number of literate citizens in Florence, it was a thriving and important trade. Ancient Greek and Roman texts were being rediscovered and copies and translations were increasingly in demand.

This then was the atmosphere in which the young Vespasiano began to work. He was eventually to become known as *'Rei de li librari del mondo'* – King of the world's booksellers. He probably started by learning the craft of bookbinding but soon engaged with customers, including Niccolo Niccoli (described as the most learned man in Florence), in his late sixties when he began to take an interest in the young bookseller. Niccoli was a friend of Brunelleschi, Donatello and Ghiberti and was "a glutton for books". He was patron of Leonardo Bruni, a Florentine scholar who translated ancient Greek texts into Latin, becoming the best-selling author of the fifteenth century.

King explains how the manuscripts were produced, from the sourcing and preparation of the hides for the parchment, the employment of professional scribes, to decorators, gilders and binders.

In 1434, Cosimo de' Medici returned to Florence from exile and it is likely that Niccoli introduced Vespasiano to him. Niccoli died in 1437. His large library was originally destined for Santa Croce but fate intervened and Cosimo ensured that it ended up in his own project, San Marco. King tells how Cosimo, seeking absolution

Florence, by Francesco Rosselli, ca.1495; opposite: Bisticci from the *Commentario della vita di messer Giannozzo Manetti*

for what could be deemed his dubious business practices, rebuilt the convent of San Marco, employing Fra Angelico to fresco the walls. Following its consecration in 1443, Cosimo turned his attention to creating a library, with Niccoli's library as the basis. Gaps in Niccoli's collection of manuscripts were identified and, at the age of 23, Vespasiano was engaged by Cosimo to help fill them. The Medici connection was to continue as Vespasiano supplied books to Cosimo's sons, Piero and Giovanni, and later to Lorenzo the Magnificent.

In 1439, the delegation from Byzantium arrived for the Council of Florence with the Council of the Church headed by the Emperor, John VIII Palaeologus (his hat caused quite a sensation with its long prow-like brim, copied by Piero della Francesca in his *Flagellation*) and included Greek scholars bringing their manuscripts.

Vespasiano's employer, Michele Guarducci, died in 1452. Vespasiano had been made a partner some years earlier, thanks to his connections with Cosimo, Pope Nicholas V and other scholars. In 1453 he was approached by Basilios Bessarion, a world-renowned scholar who had been part of the visiting delegation to the Council of Florence. Bessarion decided to build the greatest library of Greek texts in the world. Vespasiano was the man to ensure he achieved this aim.

Around this time, Vespasiano also began sourcing books for Pope Nicholas V for the Vatican library. By the time of Nicholas' death in 1455, according to Vespasiano the Vatican library numbered five thousand books. Nicholas' successor, Calixtus III did not share his love of learning but Enea Silvio Piccolomini, elected as Pius II in 1458, did and continued to build up the library with Vespasiano's help.

Another important client was King Alfonso of Aragon and Naples, who was determined to make his court a leading centre of humanistic learning. Searching for a new translation of Livy, Alfonso was to pay Vespasiano 160 florins for three Livy manuscripts. Vespasiano capitalised on his royal Neapolitan connections and began exporting books to Naples.

But the world was changing. In 1465, two German clerics, Arnold Pannartz and Konrad Sweynheym arrived at the Benedictine Monastery of Santa Scholastica at Subiaco, bringing a new form of printing press using moveable type. Their first production was a Latin Grammar, of which unsurprisingly, considering its use by schoolboys, no copies survive. Their second was Cicero's *De Oratore*, of which 17 copies survive. Clearly aimed at humanist scholars, rather than the church, this was exactly Vespasiano's market. The new form of printing soon spread, to Rome, Foligno and Venice, but Florence was slow to adopt it.

Bessarion decided to build the greatest library of Greek texts in the world. Vespasiano was the man to ensure he achieved this aim.

A press was eventually established in Florence by Nicholas of Breslau, quickly followed by a pair of friars based in the Dominican convent of San Jacopo di Ripoli, close to Porta al Prato. One, Fra Domenico, was clearly a man of business and soon the press was thriving. The secluded nuns learned to change from production of manuscripts in their scriptorium to type setting.

But demand for beautifully produced manuscripts continued. In the mid 1460s, Vespasiano was commissioned to supply what he described as the "finest library since antiquity". Federico da Montefeltro, ruler of Urbino and warrior for hire, was also a scholar and man of taste. Money no object, Vespasiano, on behalf of Federico, had access to the catalogues of all the great libraries of Italy and even that of Oxford University and kept thirty or forty scribes busy copying manuscripts.

The late 1460s saw several of Vespasiano's best clients engaged in a war to unseat the Medici, with Federico supporting the Medici against Colleoni of Venice for the Florentine rebels. Vespasiano had to tread a delicate path, as other clients, the Sforza, the d'Este and Ferrante, King of Naples, were involved.

Vespasiano retired aged 58 in 1480, believing that scholarship was in decline and the march of printing was taking effect, as more printers set up in Florence. He never embraced the new technology,

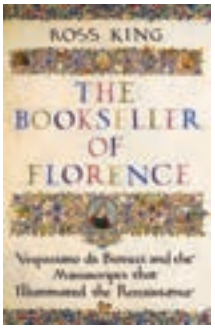
finding it inferior and its products not worthy of gracing libraries such as that of Federico da Montefeltro, spending his retirement compiling biographies of illustrious men.

The expulsion of the Medici in 1494 and the rise of Savanarola with his increasing use of the printing press to churn out his speeches and sermons, were clearly against all that Vespasiano had stood for. Pope Alexander VI's Bull of Excommunication of Savanarola was printed in Florence in 1497.

Vespasiano died in July 1498 and was buried in Santa Croce. His shop is now a pizzeria and many of those great libraries no longer exist. However, many of Vespasiano's beautiful manuscripts now grace the world's finest libraries.

Kings, princes, dukes, popes, cardinals, humanists and scholars and many more pass through the pages of Ross King's book as they had passed through Vespasiano's life. This is much more than a biography of a fifteenth century Florentine bookseller. It is a wonderful book, scholarly, enlightening and entertaining in equal measure.

Diana Darlington is a former Vice Chair of the British Italian Society



The Bookseller of Florence. Vespasiano da Bisticci and the Manuscripts that Illuminated the Renaissance. pp.481 (Chatto & Windus, London 2021).

Edda Mussolini:

The Most Dangerous Woman in Europe

Richard Northern reviews a new book by Caroline Moorehead

In her latest book, Caroline Moorehead, a Trustee of the Society, has returned to the theme of fascist Italy during the 1930s and 1940s. Much has been written about this period by historians, novelists and biographers, including by Caroline herself in her Resistance Quartet. But *Edda Mussolini: the Most Dangerous Woman in Europe* offers a new perspective. It tells the story through the eyes of a prominent witness to, and at times key participant in, some of the critical decisions and events of the Second World War, who was very close to Mussolini himself.

Edda Mussolini was Benito Mussolini's favourite daughter. She was a complicated but fascinating character, uneducated but clever and clear-headed, awkward but flamboyant, fragile and listless but bold, determined and loyal. Mussolini claimed that he could bend the Italians to his will, but never Edda. As a child, she had earned the nickname la Cavallina Matta (the wild pony). Hitler called her the most German of the Italians.

During her early childhood, Edda endured poverty and cruelty, with her father largely absent. Later, however, Edda was pampered and spoilt by her father. In her early 20s she came to be seen as Italy's First Lady, since her mother had little taste for, and took no part in, public life. At the age of 19 she married Galeazzo Ciano, an Italian diplomat, who later became Italy's youngest Foreign Minister. In 1930, Ciano was posted to Shanghai as Italian Consul General, where the couple were to represent modern fascist Italy to the outside world. Edda became an effective if unconventional diplomatic hostess, though she was no stranger to scandal. Her husband, like her father, proved a compulsive womaniser. Perhaps for this reason, Edda took to gambling and hard drinking, and was rumoured to have had affairs herself. When Edda and Ciano returned to Italy, they became the most glamorous and celebrated couple in the elegant and decadent social circles of fascist Rome.

Public domain: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edda_Mussolini#/media/File:Edda_Mussolini_Ciano.jpg

Although Edda never occupied a position of power, she wielded great influence. Caroline describes how she proved decisive at key moments, for example in persuading her father and her husband to enter into an alliance with Nazi Germany, as war loomed, when both were hesitant. Her father sent her as a trusted diplomatic envoy to Britain and Germany. In 1943, however, her fortunes changed dramatically. Ciano, keen to seek an accommodation with the Allies, joined a group of members of the Gran Consiglio who voted for Mussolini to be removed and detained. The *Duce* never forgave him. After Mussolini's rescue by the Germans and his installation as leader of the Salo' Republic, he had Ciano tried and executed. Edda had pleaded in vain for her husband's life. By the end of the war, Edda found herself, aged 34, living in hiding in Switzerland with three small children. Her husband and her father had both been killed; and she had no idea whether her mother and siblings were alive or dead. The main narrative of the book effectively concludes in 1945.

Caroline summarises the rest of Edda's life in a brief Afterword. Her life was full of paradoxes: she had a love affair with a Sicilian communist on the island of Lipari immediately after the war. Edda then became a recluse and took no further part in politics or public life. Nonetheless, she, and her family, continued to serve as nostalgic symbols for fascist sympathisers in Italy, until her death in 1995. Her children never recovered from their wartime experiences. One of her sons called his memoir *When Grandpa Had Daddy Shot.*

> Edda and Ciano... became the most glamorous and celebrated couple in the elegant and decadent social circles of fascist Rome

As in her Resistance Quartet, Caroline has written an account based on thorough and detailed research, which comprehensively covers the rise and fall of fascism in Italy against the sweep of world events, but which also tells the compelling personal stories of key individuals involved in a vivid narrative. Although she shows empathy for Edda, Caroline leaves the reader to form their own conclusions about the significance and value of her role and her legacy. There is an ominous reference at the end of the book to the continued appeal of memories of Edda and her father to far right sympathisers in Italy. In the light of Giorgia Meloni's election as Prime Minister at the end of 2022, this gripping but tragic tale may prove timely.

Edda Mussolini: The Most Dangerous Woman in Europe is available from most good booksellers. ISBN: 9781784743239 Hardcover 432pp. RRP £20

Private view

Emilio Vedova's Solo Exhibition "Documenta 7"

Richard Northern was at the Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery for an exhibition of paintings by Emilio Vedova

Ely House in Dover Street, Mayfair, built in 1772 by Sir Robert Taylor and considered one of London's finest 18th century mansions, was the former home of the Bishops of Ely. It was the venue for a private viewing in March of an exhibition of Emilio Vedova paintings hosted by one of the world's leading private modern art galleries, Thaddeus Ropac.

Silvia Davoli, Associate Director of Thaddeus Ropac, gave members of BIS and the Club di Londra a helpful introduction to the artist and his work and a guided tour of the exhibition - the first ever solo exhibition of Vedova paintings in the UK – accompanied by drinks and canapes. Vedova (1919-2006) was a self-taught artist, who spent most of his life in Venice. Heavily influenced in his early development by the works of Tintoretto in his home city, Vedova later became a leading exponent of abstract expressionist painting. His canvases, full of wild, almost violent, brush strokes and smears of colourful paint represent a fusion of politics and art. Active in the Italian Resistance during the Second World War, he aimed to convey his socialist political beliefs through art. Vedova was chosen regularly to exhibit at the Venice Bienniale, and was awarded a Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Biennale in 1997.

This exhibition reunited the five monumental canvases from Vedova's landmark *documenta 7* exhibition (1982) in one room, together with a selection of other works from the period in other rooms. The spacious gallery was a perfect setting for these stunning works. Few of us were left unmoved by the impact of the vibrant canvases and the elegance of the setting. We are grateful to our Director of Cultural Programmes, Silvia Badiali, for arranging this exceptional and stimulating evening.

Blood and Power

The Rise and Fall of Italian Fascism

a talk by John Foot

Tuesday 15 May 2023

Time: 7:00 pm

University Women's Club / 2 Audley Square / London W1K 1DB

Price member: £15; Price guest: £20

Italy invented fascism in 1919. In 1922 the March on Rome led to the first fascist government in history. These were events of global importance, which would affect the lives of millions. This talk will look at the history of Italian fascism through the stories of individual, ordinary and extraordinary people, with an emphasis on the violence of the black-shirts and its role in the rise of Mussolini to power.

John Foot is Professor of Modern Italian History at the University of Bristol. He is the author of numerous books on Italian history and culture, including *Calcio: A History of Italian Football* (2006); *Italy's Divided Memory* (2009); *The Man Who Closed the Asylums*; *Franco Basaglia and the Revolution in Mental Health Care* (2015); and *The Archipelago: Italy since 1945* (2018). His book *Blood and Power: The Rise of Fall of Italian Fascism* was published by Bloomsbury and by Laterza in Italian as *Gli anni neri: Ascesa e caduta del fascismo* in 2022.

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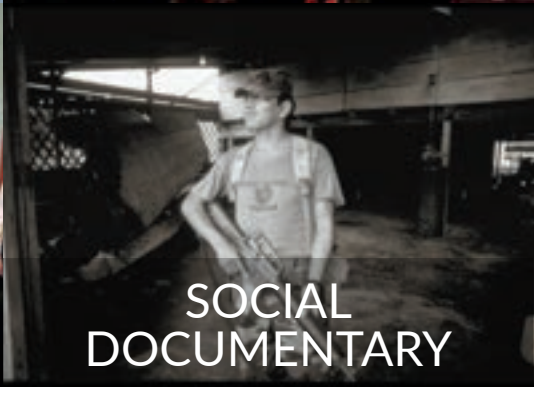

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