



I TATTI

THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY CENTER
FOR ITALIAN RENAISSANCE STUDIES

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VILLA TARTARO

Investing in the future of the Harvard Center

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20/21 VILLA I TATTI APPOINTEES

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Visiting Professors

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Research Associates

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a MESSAGE *from the* DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Over the course of sixty years, under the stewardship of eight directors, and through the support of many dedicated friends, I Tatti has grown into the center it is today. Since the first small group of Fellows arrived in 1961 the Harvard Center in Florence has transformed into a dynamic international hub with an **outward-looking philosophy**, dedicated to our mission of advancing Renaissance Studies and facilitating ground-breaking research.

Our community now comprises well over fifty appointees each year and our physical infrastructure is evolving in order to accommodate this growth. This expansion will culminate over the coming years in the transformation of a neighbouring property, Villa Tartaro, into a state-of-the-art new home for our rare book library, fototeca, and archives, in addition to new office space (page 12). Work on Villa Tartaro has already begun, and as we celebrate our **sixtieth anniversary** this year, we also eagerly look to the coming decades and what this wonderful space will mean for I Tatti and the future of the field.

As our center has grown physically, so too has our outlook broadened. In recent years, we have striven to create and promote cross-disciplinary collaboration while transcending traditional geographical and temporal boundaries and **embracing research on dialogues between Italy and other cultures**. This standpoint is evident in all of our endeavours. Our Fellowship program, for example, now features an exciting array of opportunities for scholars working on the links between Renaissance Italy and other geographies: from our most recent fellowships, generously sponsored by the Getty Foundation and designed for scholars from African nations working on dialogue between the African continent and the Mediterranean world during the early modern period, to our Fellowship with the German Historical Institute in Rome for post-doctoral scholars working on cultural exchanges within the African continent during the period

c. 1250-1750, to our joint fellowship with Dumbarton Oaks, which focuses on interactions between Italy and territories of the East Christian world, as described by John Lansdowne on page 19. Our publications, too, are **pushing boundaries**. Kate Lowe, who recently stepped down from her multi-year stewardship of our history monograph series *I Tatti Studies in Italian Renaissance History*, explains on page 6 that the “immensely creative outward-facing underlying ethos” of the Italian Renaissance itself has inspired the choice of titles in the series.

Not only does I Tatti welcome an array of talented scholars from a wide variety of backgrounds and disciplines, we are also committed to supporting scholars at all stages of their academic journeys. As 2020/21 *David and Julie Tobey Fellow* Micaela Antonucci writes on page 4, I Tatti is one of few institutions to **support the research of mid-career scholars**, who so often struggle with dwindling resources and a lack of opportunities as they progress through their careers.

All of the work we do is made possible by those who have generously contributed over these last sixty years. Our recently appointed Council Chair, Guillaume Malle, is the second generation of his family to support I Tatti, and as a scholar himself he is particularly passionate about providing for our current and future appointees (page 8). If I Tatti’s supporters of the next sixty years are as steadfast and generous as those who have helped our center take shape over the last six decades, then I have no doubt that the future will be a bright one indeed for our unique institution.

Alina Payne
Paul E. Geier Director, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies
Alexander P. Misheff Professor of History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University



▲ Alina Payne with the 2021/2022 Academic Community, September 2021

in SEARCH of DISCOVERY

A mid-career scholar reflects on her time at I Tatti and on how the opportunity of a fellowship allowed her precious time to focus on a historian's "detective work".

Micaela Antonucci was the 2020 / 2021 David and Julie Tobey Fellow at I Tatti. She is Associate Professor of History of Architecture at the Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna and her work explores both Italian Renaissance architecture, with special concern for Rome and the work of Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, and topics of contemporary architecture.

It is commonly believed that history deals with the past, but it would be more correct to say that it tries to give meaning to fragments that survive from the past. When I am asked what historians do, I reply that they are like detectives, looking for evidence in the traces of the past and for ways to compose them into a coherent story. This is a dynamic process, which temporarily crystallizes in scholarly findings, with the awareness that in the future alternative points of view may yield to yet newer interpretations.

I have always loved the research part of my work: looking for clues in objects, archives and libraries and – like a good detective – I seek to fit them together in my search for knowledge. Unfortunately, for a mid-career scholar like me, the time for study and research has become increasingly difficult to find.

Teaching, service, examinations, degree and doctoral theses take up more and more of my time, thus supplanting my research. Above all, it has become increasingly difficult to plan and follow broader avenues of research on an ongoing basis, much less attending international conferences and collaborating with scholars from all over the world.

Usually, fellowships are offered to graduates and young scholars, in order to give a boost to their careers; but it is equally important to offer these opportunities to mid-career scholars, because as one progresses through the academic ranks, it often happens that the time and resources for research decrease correspondingly. I Tatti is one of the few international research centers which supports both young and mid-career scholars, a notable aspect of this renowned institution.

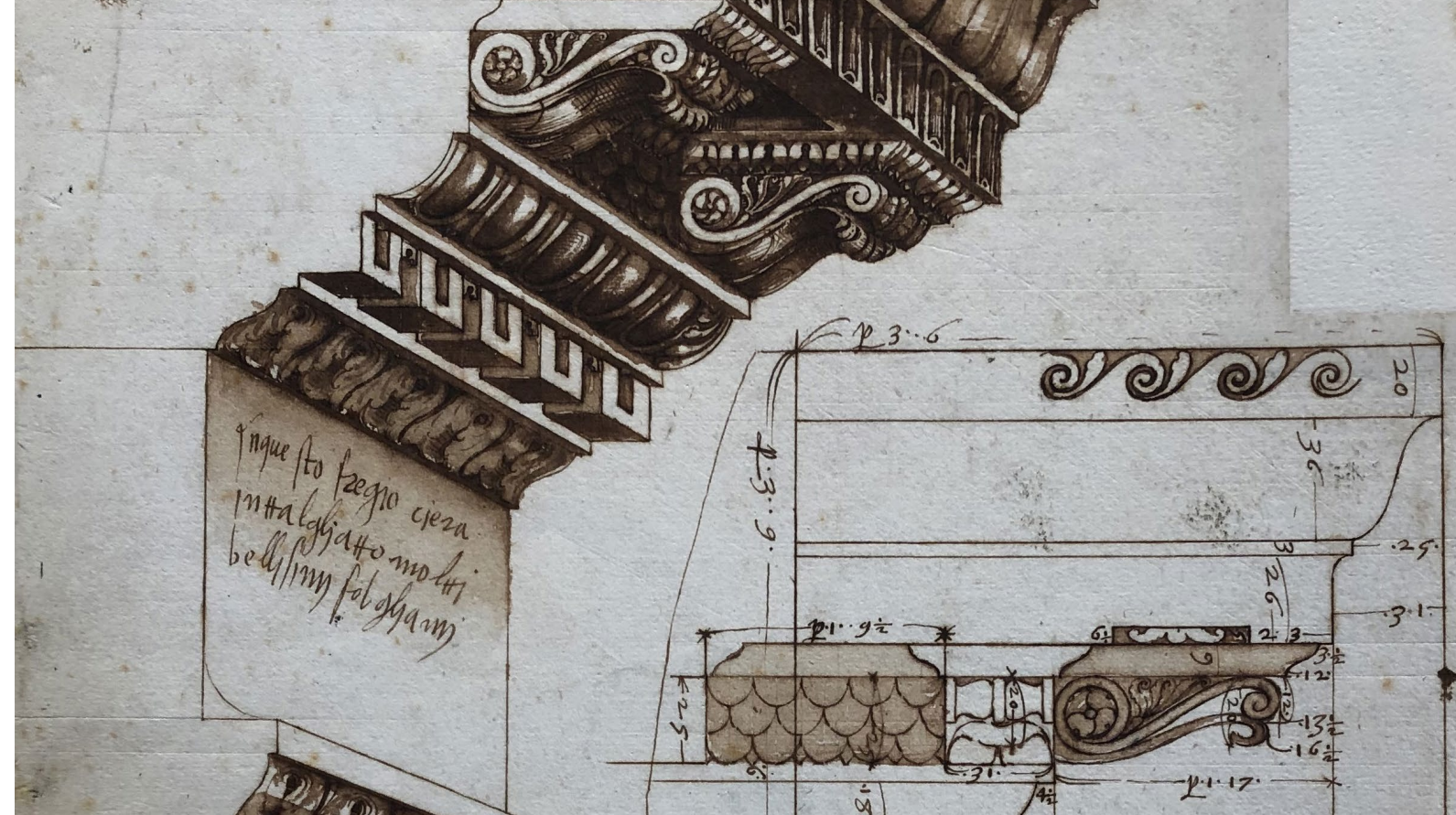
For me, the fellowship at I Tatti was doubly precious: first,



because I could “take a break” and stay in Florence for several months to carry out research that I had been long planning; secondly, because I was able to meet scholars from all over the world in a wonderful and stimulating context.

My research project at I Tatti focused on the numerous drawings attributed to architect Antonio da Sangallo the Younger (1484-1546) and his circle, investigating them not simply as artifacts but as clues for analyzing Antonio's design and construction processes, in order to reveal aspects of the creative, technical and economic mechanisms that made his business the hegemonic model of Roman building history during and beyond the Renaissance.

The extraordinary body of Sangallo's drawings at the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi in Florence was vital for my research. These drawings have been the subject of several significant studies, and many were recently



reproduced in critical editions or digitized and made freely accessible on web platforms. Yet, many of their features such as watermarks, different inks and pencil markings, handwriting and drawing styles, scale keys, filing and labelling systems, verso of the drawings, carvings and grids, are clearly visible only through direct examination. Thus, during the period I was at I Tatti, one of my main research activities was working on the drawings of Antonio da Sangallo and his circle preserved in the GDSU.

When I started my Fellowship in September, the COVID-19 pandemic that has swept Italy and the globe since Spring 2020 was in a quieter phase, after a long lockdown. Due to the safety protocols to contain the spread of the virus, the GDSU was accessible only twice a week; but, since in November the pandemic began to worsen again, restrictions came into force gradually and it was closed to the public.

By good fortune, while the GDSU and almost all the other archives and libraries in Florence remained closed, I Tatti remained open to the current fellows, even in the exceptional circumstances such as those precipitated by the pandemic. This was possible thanks to the rigid safety protocols on site and to the hard work and dedication of the Director and the staff. I was able to continue my work, making good use not only of the ample holdings in the Berenson Library but also worldwide, thanks to the exceptional Harvard resources

available online, chiefly HathiTrust and Scan and Deliver.

The restrictions did not allow me to have the pre-pandemic experience at I Tatti, one dependent on sociability and collaboration, on hosting in-person workshops and conferences. External scholars and visitors still were not allowed; seminars were held virtually; the lunches could no longer be held in the dining room (but it was very pleasant to have lunch either outside on the garden terraces or in the *Limonaia*).

Yet, this “forced isolation” had a positive side: among us Fellows and Visiting Professors a community with solid ties was born. This sense of community, combined with the ability to conduct research despite the restrictions, was a key part of my experience at I Tatti. Discussions with other Fellows and Visiting Professors during lunch or while having coffee in the newly renovated Granaio gave me new insights into my research.

During the Fellowship and since, I have been working towards publication of a book about the organization of the Sangallo studio based on my analysis of drawings, documents and testimonies – even if the time I can devote to this work has once again reduced. I really miss the days in Florence and at I Tatti – one of the world's richest intellectual crossroads and a wonderful place to be when you are in search of discovery.

at the **FOREFRONT** of **CHANGE:**

the I Tatti Monograph Series

Kate Lowe is Professor Emerita of Renaissance History and Culture at Queen Mary University of London and Associate Fellow at the Warburg Institute. She was the academic editor of the history monograph series I Tatti Studies in Italian Renaissance History between 2012 and 2020. She is Francesco de Dombrowski Visiting Professor at I Tatti during fall 2021.

Publishing this series of monographs on Italian Renaissance history between the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries is one of the myriad ways in which Harvard and I Tatti support the study of the Italian Renaissance in the English-speaking and English-reading world. When there was a possibility of becoming the commissioning editor of this series in 2012, I leapt at it, cognisant that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help shape the field by giving wings to the works of brilliant and deserving scholars of whatever career stage. Ed Muir was the brains behind the series and the first commissioning editor from 2007, and I have been followed into the post by Nick Terpstra. It is the only book series focusing on Italian Renaissance history outside Italy, although other university presses in the Anglophone world also publish relevant books. As I understood it, the purpose of the series was to keep Italian Renaissance history in the public eye at a time when a panoply of other histories were perceived to be becoming much more fashionable – and the way I decided to try to achieve this was by setting the academic standards as high as they possibly could be, thereby showcasing the scholarly excellence, worth and enormous potential of the subject. Having the resources both of I Tatti and Harvard University Press behind the enterprise made this task pleasing as well as possible, and ensured that the price of the books was kept reasonable.

The list of prizes that the books have been awarded reflects the success of this approach. For three years in a four-year span between 2017 and 2020, the main American prize for a book in Italian history of any period went to a book in the series. In 2020 two of the books in the series scooped first and second in the Renaissance Society of America's Phyllis Goodhart Gordan Book Prize for the best book in Renaissance studies, in front of all other books on, for example, Renaissance English literature, or Iberian Renaissance history, or French Renaissance philosophy. Neither of these things had ever happened before. Equally striking was the fact that other titles in the series won prizes outside the US, gaining recognition in the Middle East, Europe and Canada too. I am hopeful that the latest five titles, all published in 2021 so out too recently to have yet been chosen for prizes, will be just as successful.

Choosing outstanding titles to publish was helped by the nature of Italian Renaissance history. Far from being afflicted by a concern with 'less and less', even if the topics could on occasion in the past have suffered from *campanilismo*, the subject has always incorporated an immensely creative outward-facing underlying ethos. The Italian Renaissance was so important and so critical precisely because it was constituted of a heterogeneous mix of elements from former periods and from across the contemporary Italian peninsula,

from neighbouring countries and areas and, at least by the end of the fifteenth century, by additional elements from around the globe. In turn, it exported some of its salient features to other countries. It embraced diversity, and it was at the forefront of change. As a consequence, its history is capacious, roomy enough to deal with changes in which type of history is considered fashionable – and the books in this series are certainly fashionable, some of them even controversially so. Books on Arabic sciences and philosophy, women's involvement in scientific culture, female healers, the cultural life of artisans, the earliest German printer in Florence, a Jewish goldsmith, jostle with ones on abortion and priests' domestic partnerships. Some topics never go out of fashion, like humanists, contestation of papal power, war and state-building or state-dismantling. My last two titles both address Renaissance Italy and global issues, one via the Medici and another via the Jesuits. The range is phenomenal. These books in their turn inform and buttress the teaching of Italian Renaissance history in universities across the world.

Writing Italian Renaissance history is also aided by the generations of distinguished historians who have gone before. There is a fabulous genealogy of Italian Renaissance historians – an international body already in the nineteenth century – strong and deep in its engagement, flagging another major point: Italian Renaissance history is important for everyone, not only for Italians. It forms a part of world

heritage – and this is evident in the mixed nationalities of the authors in the series under my stewardship, who come from America, Australia, Canada, Germany, Israel, Italy and Sweden.

The range is phenomenal. These books in their turn inform and buttress the teaching of Italian Renaissance history in universities across the world.

It isn't only fashion that changes. Everything turns, which is another bonus, even if it involves more effort, as change can be intellectually fruitful. During my time as commissioning editor, there have been three Harvard University Press editors in charge of the series (Ian Stevenson, Andrew Kinney and Emily Silk), two directors of I Tatti (Lino Pertile and Alina Payne), one assistant director for academic programs and publications followed by one assistant to the director for publications and conferences at I Tatti (Jonathan Nelson and Thomas Gruber), let alone the legions of people working behind the scenes at HUP on artwork or marketing, or those doing the outsourced copyediting for Westchester Publishing Services, or those doing the typesetting in India and printing in the US, whose names I do not even know. Alongside the authors themselves, and the writers of the readers' reports (who remain anonymous), a flotilla of all these people, named and unnamed, have collectively been involved in the production of these wonderful contributions to scholarship.



- ◀ Some recent volumes of the history series featuring the new cover design
- ▲ A scholar reading I Tatti Studies in Italian Renaissance History volumes in the New Library

HUMMING *with* INTELLECTUAL ENERGY

On 1 July 2021, Guillaume Malle became the new Chair of the I Tatti Council. He reflects here on his positive experiences during a recent visit to Florence.

In June 2021 and after months of pandemic isolation, it was a pleasure to travel to Italy and spend a few days at I Tatti at the invitation of Director Alina Payne. In the fall of 2020, Alina had had the good idea to allow Council members and other supporters to connect by Zoom and listen in remotely to the Fellows' presentations of their research projects. Now, meeting with these same Fellows in person at the very end of the academic year, it was wonderful to hear them talk about how much progress they had been able to make in the meantime thanks to the resources made available to them and the possibility of exchange with their fellow scholars.

And these exchanges were certainly evident: From the very first day of my trip, I was able to see that the tables in the Limonaia where the Fellows enjoyed lunch were soon occupied and humming with the lively intellectual exchanges which are so central to I Tatti. In all of the conversations I enjoyed with appointees during my visit, the dialogue with



their peers was consistently mentioned as having contributed to the deepening of their research.

Some of the Fellows found the time to chat to me about the details of their projects and all were fascinating and representative of I Tatti's broad outlook. Having worked in



banking for many years, I particularly enjoyed hearing Jean-François Malle Fellow Giorgio Lizzul talk about his project on the ways in which issues of finance became an important topic for historians in Renaissance Italy.

During my stay, I noticed how several recently-introduced initiatives are contributing greatly to the energy and atmosphere of creative research at I Tatti. Firstly, I Tatti has recently introduced several new programs, including one for Artists-in-Residence. I was fortunate that Jim Phalen, a representational painter appointed one of the 2021 Spring Artists-in-Residence, was still present while I visited. It really was a pleasure to see how Jim's presence and viewpoint brought new energy to the community, as it was to see how he himself has been inspired by I Tatti in producing wonderful paintings.

Secondly, this visit made clear to me how broad the research interests promoted by I Tatti have become. For example, in recent years we have been hearing about the importance of supporting the increasing number of scholars working in the Digital Humanities, and during my visit I was able to see exactly how I Tatti has committed to supporting these scholars. Ludovica Galeazzo, Digital Humanities Research Associate, introduced me to the wonderful new Digital Humanities research lab and took the time to tell me about her own project involving the mapping of the islands of the Venetian Lagoon from the 15th century to the present. I was fascinated by the computer project she has developed which allows the islands to change size and form as she moves the cursor along the timeline. Recent initiatives truly are contributing to strengthen the community, and have

transformed I Tatti into an innovative think-tank for the Humanities.

Finally, the campus has expanded considerably since my last visit several years ago, and it continues to expand in order to accommodate the ever-growing community of scholars. For several years, the I Tatti Council has been aware of the various renovation projects taking place under Alina Payne's directorship and now, having been able to tour these sites and see the changes with my own eyes, the logic of Alina's vision is all the more evident.

From the Roberta Pellegrino Cortile, to the Villa Linda (used to accommodate visiting scholars and to host workshops and musical recitals for the community), to the recently-acquired Tartaro property: each new project harmoniously surrounds the grounds of the original villa. Although each site serves a very different function, all greatly benefit the community and each has been designed to keep the community together and to facilitate scholarly exchange and discussion. This expansion of the I Tatti campus could not be in better hands than with Alina, who, as a trained architect, is as comfortable wearing a hard hat as she is presenting at a lectern!

After seeing first-hand the immense progress and energy that pervades I Tatti, I am more committed than ever to its support. As newly appointed Chair of the Council I am delighted to lead a group of like-minded individuals who know, as I do, that every donation we make helps to keep I Tatti at the cutting edge of scholarship and helps to keep this exchange of ideas alive.



AFTERNOON HOUSE CONCERTS

A new concert series sparks a dialogue between the music of the Renaissance and the present.

Several years ago, Alina Payne asked me to work with her to design a new program in musical performance at I Tatti: a series of concerts that would spark a dialogue between the music of the Renaissance and the present. Shortly thereafter, I Tatti inaugurated its Artist in Residence program, and another possibility came into focus. The new concert series might emerge out of intensive, short-term residencies, pairing experienced performers and composers working together for the first time. In June 2019, when the Visiting Professor, Philippe Canguilhem, presented a program of baroque trio sonatas at the newly renovated Villa Linda, we also realized that I Tatti already had a home for this new program. The Villa Linda's beautiful seminar room, guest rooms, and surroundings created an ideal environment for musicians to engage in intensive rehearsal in a tranquil environment and to present their work in intimate House Concerts for the I Tatti community. **In fashioning these residencies, we wished to convene artists performing at the highest level who were eager to try something new and benefit from I Tatti's scholarly resources.**



Two musical residencies took place at I Tatti during October 2021. The astonishing baritone, Benjamin Appl, asked us to pair him with Thomas Dunford, a virtuoso lutenist who works regularly with the finest early modern music ensembles in Europe and the United States. Thomas is also well known for collaborating with great singers of all sorts, from the acclaimed countertenor, Lestyn Davies to the venerable jazz master, Bobby McFerrin. Dunford and Appl met for the first time at I Tatti and developed a program to test the effects of combining the instrumental sonorities of sixteenth century English lute songs with the vocal sounds of nineteenth-century German *lieder*. The results were both ravishing and provocative. The shifts in scale, articulation, and resonance that occurred when the instrumental sounds of the English lute song were uncannily combined with the vocal qualities of the German *lied* seemed like clues for a new history of song—one that exposed a deep seam linking the tradition of the minstrel to the romantic era *lied*.

The Appl/Dunford residency at I Tatti was followed immediately by another musical visit with an entirely different character: a collaboration between the virtuoso Israeli violinist, Nurit Stark, and the German experimental composer, Carola Bauckholt. Rather than reconfiguring music of the past, Nurit and Carola's project was a response to the environment of historical inquiry itself. Upon arrival at I Tatti, they immediately fell in love with the Bernard Berenson Library and quickly designed a musical homage: a site-specific piece to be performed in the nave of the New Library. This involved dividing the audience into small groups (conforming to I Tatti's careful Covid protocols!), with each group seated in a niche containing a book from the library's collection—one that the two musicians had found especially evocative. Each niche also contained a tiny audio speaker that quietly projected environmental sounds recorded during the musicians' stay at I Tatti. Carola also composed simple *études* for the violin, one for each of the books contained in the individual niches. In performance, Nurit moved from station to station, playing the *étude* inspired by the particular book within. For me, this evoked an angelic visit to a solitary scholar at work, something

like Caravaggio's *St. Jerome*. The program concluded with an electrifying performance of one of the most virtuosic works of the violin literature, Béla Bartók's 1944 *Sonata for Solo Violin*—a piece composed for Yehudi Menuhin, one of Bernard Berenson's closest musical companions and a frequent visitor to I Tatti during the 1950s.

Partly by plan but also due to the exigencies of scheduling during the time of the pandemic, these two brief musical residencies came at a propitious moment—in mid-fall, after Fellows' initial presentations of their projects, when their new work had been launched and the community had begun to take shape. The time seemed ripe to draw on the energies of musical performance. Moreover, in staging our first Afternoon House Concerts we learned many things: We learned that the Villa Linda's seminar room is an excellent acoustical space for intimate performances, both vocal and instrumental. **We learned that house concerts staged just for the I Tatti community would generate great enthusiasm—that they enriched the community, strengthened the bonds within it, and offered a brief break from the nitty gritty of academic work.** At the same time, we learned that this moment of respite, when it was offered

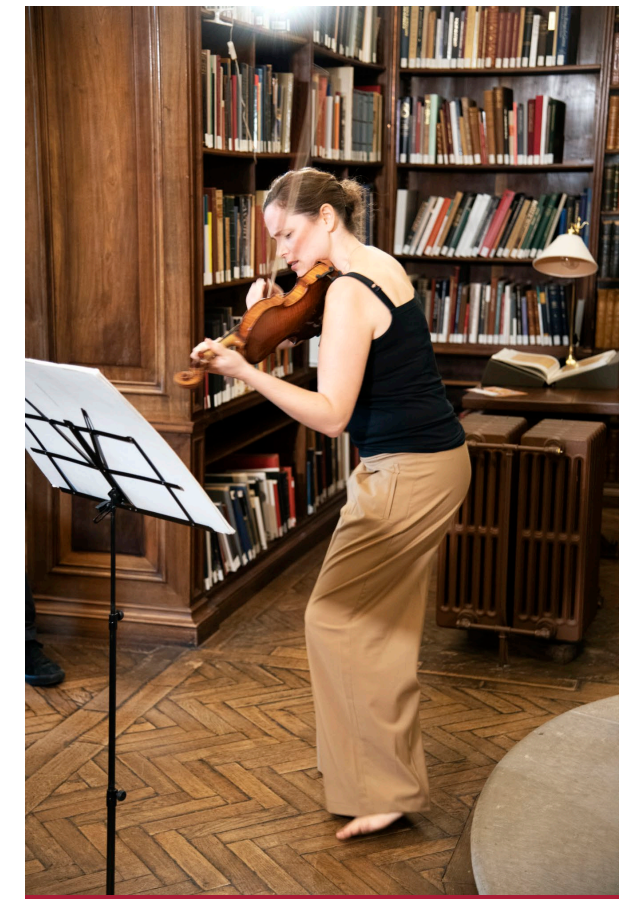
by especially gifted and inquisitive musicians, might provoke creative thinking for scholars as well as artists. Crossing historical boundaries and challenging conventional musical practices by intent, the premise of the new House Concerts resonates strongly with the mission of I Tatti's Wallace Fellowship—to explore the historiography and impact of the Italian Renaissance in the modern era.

The conversation during Q&A at the close of each House Concert spilled into the even more informal receptions that followed. And it has continued at lunches, teas, and other informal gatherings of the community. We hope that the conversations sparked by our first I Tatti House Concerts will animate the community throughout the academic year and that this program in musical performance will enrich the I Tatti community long into the future.

Martin Brody is Catherine Mills Davis Professor of Music (Emeritus) at Wellesley College. He served as the Andrew Heiskell Arts Director at the American Academy in Rome from 2007-10 and as Fromm Resident in Musical Composition at the Academy in 2001. He is Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Visiting Professor at I Tatti during fall 2021.



▲ Baritone Benjamin Appl and lutenist Thomas Dunford at I Tatti
► Violinist Nurit Stark performing in the Berenson Library
◄ Martin Brody at I Tatti, September 2021



VILLA TARTARO: *a* WINDOW *to* THE FUTURE

A wonderful new space will enable I Tatti to sustain its remarkable growth.

No doubt Bernard Berenson himself would be amazed at how I Tatti – The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies has grown since he bequeathed the estate to his alma mater Harvard over sixty years ago. At present our Center welcomes well over fifty appointees each year, with that figure set to increase even further with the introduction of exciting new Fellowship opportunities. Our collections have grown exponentially too, and provide an invaluable point of reference to the many scholars who pass through the doors of the Berenson Library. This expansion—while extremely good news for the field—does mean that we now struggle to adequately accommodate our Fellows, Visiting Professors, and staff; and also means that a significant part of the Library’s rich collections of books and periodicals, photographs and digital images, manuscripts and recordings are either difficult to access or remain in storage. In fact, it has been known for several years that a new space must be found if I Tatti is to sustain its remarkable growth.

Happily, the recent purchase of a neighbouring property known as *Tartaro* will allow us to address these issues.

Located on a parcel of land contiguous to I Tatti, the Tartaro property is only a very short walk through an olive grove from the main villa. In fact, the two properties were once both pieces of a larger property called the *Vincigliata*, from which the street passing by I Tatti’s main gate takes its name. At the heart of the Tartaro property is a large building set high on a hill known as Villa Tartaro. Visible from the exterior is the 19th century portion of the Villa, which has been built around the core of a beautiful medieval tower dating from circa 1100. A generous bequest several years ago meant that we were in a position to purchase the property when it came on the market, and we are now planning a twofold expansion

of Villa Tartaro that will create more space for both the Library’s Special Collections, and our appointees and staff.

Already, plans for the transformation of this building are taking shape. Our ambitious blueprint envisions a state-of-the-art building with a purpose-built, climate-controlled space for our archive of documents and photographs, a Rare Book room worthy of our important collection, office space for staff, and a spacious and airy Reading Room. By moving the Special Collections to this purpose-built facility, we also create more space for Fellows and Visiting Professors within the main Villa.

Work to secure the foundations of Villa Tartaro has already taken place and the project will proceed in phases over the next few years, always with minimum disruption to the academic community in residence. The small farmhouse on the same property will become additional apartments for appointees, allowing us to house even more members of our community close to I Tatti and its resources. In uniting the two properties and their surrounding green spaces, we are also honoring Berenson’s vision that the landscape should “promote a feeling of free space and of distance” where Fellows can find tranquility and inspiration while living as members of a dynamic academic community.

The I Tatti community has responded enthusiastically to news of this expansion—the most significant building project in our Center’s sixty-year history. When complete, Villa Tartaro will be a cutting-edge building for the 21st century, equipped to sustain future generations of talented scholars and ensuring that I Tatti remains at the forefront of Italian Renaissance Studies for decades to come.

For more information, or to make a donation,
please contact us at tartarofund@itatti.harvard.edu



RETRACING *the* FOOTSTEPS *of* HENRY JAMES

2020/2021 Wallace Fellow Meghan Freeman enjoyed the “here and now of Florence” while researching Henry James’s early writings about Italian art and culture.

Florence is the one thing I mean to talk about when I reach home. Talk alone can deal with it—talk as light & delicate & many-shaded as its own inestimable genius... But in truth no mere account of Florence—no catalogue of her treasures or eulogy of her charms—can bring you to a knowledge of her benignant influence. It isn’t this that or the other things; her pictures, her streets or her hills—it’s the lovely genius of the place.

– Henry James, Jr. to Henry James, Sr., January 14, 1870

In 1869, years before he would publish the novels that would earn him the moniker The Master, the American author Henry James, Jr. left his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts to embark on a year-long tour of Europe. He quickly lost his heart to Italy, most of all to Florence, which he described as the very “pearl of cities—cheerful, compact, complete.” This past January, roughly a century and a half later, I left on a similar journey, albeit by airplane rather than by boat, and soon Florence would come to hold a similar place in my affections, thanks to the experiences I would be fortunate enough to enjoy as a Term Fellow at Villa I Tatti.

I came to I Tatti this past spring on the Wallace Fellowship, which is awarded to scholars whose research focuses on the reception of the Italian Renaissance in the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries. My own project examined how Henry James’s early writings about Italian Renaissance art and culture reflected the aspirations and anxieties of nineteenth-century Americans abroad. Intent on immersing myself in the milieu of my subject, I brought with me some of the equipage of the Victorian tourist—a nineteenth-century Murray’s Hand-Book and (I must confess) a pair of antique opera-glasses, neither of which proved a great help upon my arrival, as I entered Florence only to go into a two-week mandatory quarantine. However, it was during this early period of confinement to my apartment in the Oltrarno that



I was given my first lesson in the commitment of I Tatti to its community of scholars. With half of the spring cohort either in quarantine in Florence or in lockdown abroad, the Center’s Director and staff came up with the inventive solution of an orientation that was both in-person in the Limonaia and virtual through Zoom, allowing us to all come together on that first day as a group, unified in a common purpose though far apart in space and time-zones.

Indeed, in the months that followed, the administration and staff worked tirelessly to make I Tatti an oasis of safety and stability amidst the turbulence of the pandemic, which allowed the Fellows and Visiting Professors to avail themselves of the myriad opportunities the Center provides for conducting exciting academic research, having stimulating intellectual conversations, and engaging in scholarly collaboration. Travel restrictions and the prolonged closure of museums, libraries, and archives prevented many of us from pursuing the original research itineraries we had planned, but with the resources available at the Biblioteca Berenson and through the Harvard University Library, I found more relevant material and support than I could have hoped for, often without leaving my carrel. A typical day at I Tatti this spring might have found me consulting a scholarly article or archival image that I requested through interlibrary loan or leafing through a Victorian gallery guide that once

belonged to Bernard Berenson or searching a folder of photographs in the Fototeca for nineteenth-century images of an artwork James saw on his tour. And when temporary relief from these pleasurable labors was necessary, caffeine and company were only a few steps away in the downstairs lounge of the newly-renovated Granaio building.

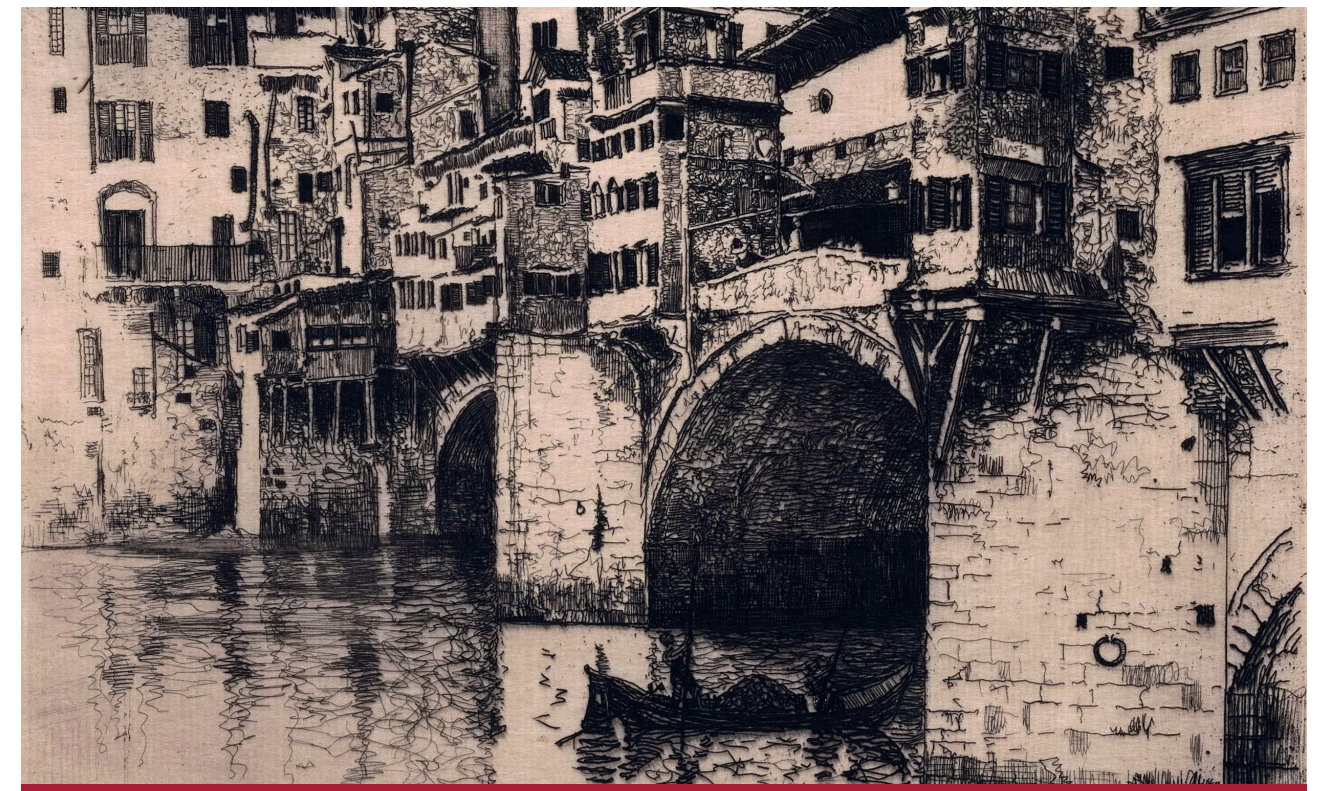
Intent on immersing myself in the milieu of my subject, I brought with me some of the equipage of the Victorian tourist—a nineteenth-century Murray’s Hand-Book and (I must confess) a pair of antique opera-glasses

Though the pandemic necessitated certain changes to the form of many of the social rituals that gave structure and purpose to our months at I Tatti—coffee now came from pods, lunch was eaten *al fresco*—these superficial alterations only threw into greater relief the value in the rituals themselves. Scholarship is often represented as a solitary activity, but, in truth, most of us become scholars because we are eager to enter into ongoing conversations on topics about which we are passionate. These conversations bloomed at Villa I Tatti this spring, perhaps even more than they otherwise would have, because of our temporarily restricted horizons. Discussions at the weekly seminars were no less lively for the necessary negotiation of computer screens and face masks, and, as the weather grew warmer, the beautiful outdoor spaces at the villa witnessed many a spirited exchange on a variety of subjects related to the Renaissance—from the

composition of paint pigments to the travel agendas of religious pilgrims.

I can only speak for myself, but the great gift of the term for me was the chance that it offered to concentrate on the “here and now” of being at Villa I Tatti and in Florence. Accepting the boundedness of pandemic life, I committed myself to getting the most out of every experience open to me. When the museums James visited were closed, the winding streets up into the hills of Florence on which he rambled were not, and so I walked them, deliberately retracing his steps. And when it was deemed safe for galleries and churches to again open their doors to visitors, I was able to visit them with a renewed sense of gratitude at their richness. Now, though, I was armed not just with my Victorian guidebook but also with new knowledge about Renaissance artworks, spaces, and culture graciously shared by new friends, more than a few of whom took me up on my offer to look at the beauty of Florence through my nineteenth-century opera glasses.

Meghan Freeman was Wallace Fellow at I Tatti in Spring 2021. She is Associate Professor in the Department of English at Manhattanville College, specializing in nineteenth-century British and American literature and culture. She holds a Ph.D. in English from Cornell University and a BA in English from Williams College.

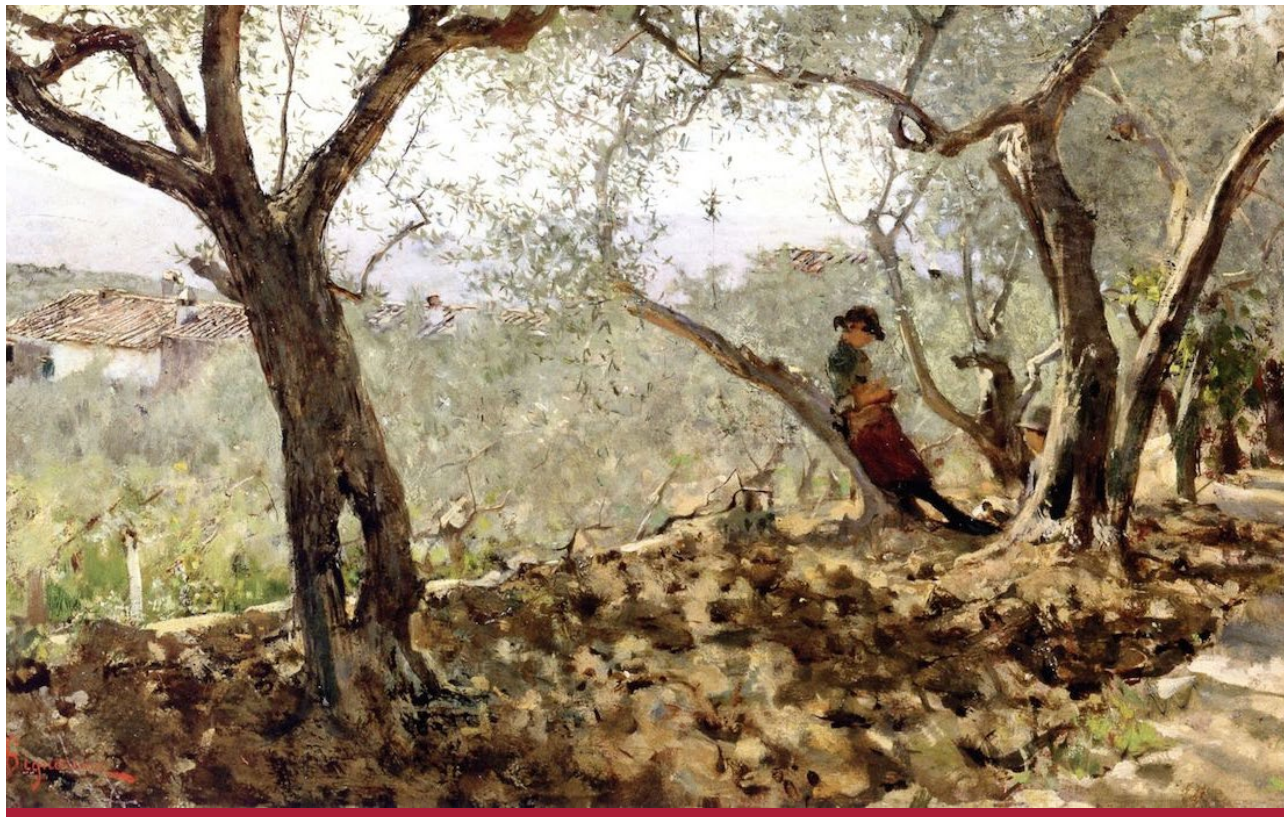


◀ Meghan Freeman at I Tatti

▲ Joseph Pennell, *On the Arno, Florence (detail)*, 1883, Boston Public Library

ARTISTS *in* RESIDENCE: *a* NEW PROGRAM *at* I TATTI

I Tatti has initiated the I Tatti Artist in Residence Program in the spirit of Berenson's vision of I Tatti as a space for the study of cultural history "founded on direct and loving contact with the work of art," and in recognition of the indispensable role of contemporary artists in celebrating and challenging our understanding of the past.



Being an artist in residence makes urgent the desire for a unique and creative response to a new environment. The limited time to adjust and be productive forces you to look in new ways at everything, where even the most mundane daily experiences can hold the promise of generating a new perspective. One of the values of being dropped into a new place is how the felt, sensory, physical change of a new place elicits the most fundamental questions, i.e., why do I do what I do? What is critical to my work? Or what is imperative to my process? There is the urge to start from

scratch, shedding off assumptions and habits to get to the heart of the work. It is a valuable mental space to work in, if not overwhelming.

My own process is a combination of using found materials and spontaneity when creating interior set-ups to be photographed. It is actually helpful for me to be a bit fuzzy on the details of what I want it to look like at the beginning, allowing for serendipity to radically transform my focus. Having too specific a goal can prevent finding the fresh

perspective that I seek. I trick myself when I start to create my set-ups, attempting the most awkward arrangements, knowing unsuccessful beginnings, as frustrating as they are, force more radical moves. Ideas progress in unpredictable directions as I engage in a "try and see" process. To trust in my experience, and to be persistent is critical.

Domes, architectural decorations, visible structures and ceiling paintings in Italy are extraordinary. While at I Tatti, I began to think in new ways about point of view, incorporating a different line of sight into the work. Our Molino di Sotto apartment had ceilings that gave a sense of openness and generated a glowing atmosphere of elegance and light. Consequently, I made a series of still lifes looking up using the ceiling as a backdrop. This required attaching my subjects, against gravity to a vertical wall, and laying the camera on the floor with the lens aimed up. Objects detaching and falling to the floor created a playful sense of urgency to try to capture what I wanted quickly to avoid the falling vegetables. The wall surface was delicate in the newly refurbished pristine apartment, and I couldn't use anything that would be more permanent in securing my

objects or it would damage the paint. I resorted to strings and painter's tape, knowing how inadequate they would be against the weight of the things I wanted in the photograph. Splat! The sound of a beautiful, variegated, fresh, head of a leafy form of radicchio on the terracotta tile was frustrating but also quite funny. The fragility and precariousness were far more interesting to me, compared to the associations of the objects used.

Perhaps the most compelling discovery made was in the work created outside in I Tatti's garden. I had been thinking of using the garden in some way since I visited I Tatti in February of 2020 but was intimidated by its perfection and scale. My creative process up to now had been to work in relatively neutral, interior white walled spaces. Building in a space so visually replete like the formal garden was a completely new challenge. In time, I observed how birds, sounds, movement, lines of sight or imperfections enliven the garden experience. As a result, my strategy was to create lighthearted, fleeting, imaginative daydream-like happenings. I wanted to share a sense of play and movement in an otherwise beautiful, but quite still and formal



◀ Telemaco Signorini, *Fra gli ulivi a Settignano*, 1885, private collection
▲ Ellen Garvens, "Primavera", 2021

environment. Interacting with other fellows I learned about games and events orchestrated in Renaissance gardens. Knowing that history retroactively added a depth to the way I thought about my actions in the gardens. Garden hedges, planted to create narrow pathways between them had been created in Renaissance gardens to allow for a game using nets to catch birds. It was surprising how my video work mimicked parts of this history that had been completely unknown to me, i.e., the use of the hedges as a structure to entice playful, floating interactions. The first video I created in the garden, before knowing this history, I called “Escape.” The video and its title are now intertwined with the urge I now feel to retroactively liberate the birds caught.

What is the value of creating Contemporary Art at the Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies? How valuable would it be to the other fellows and the institution to have artists working alongside the other researchers? These questions were especially pertinent because of the unprecedented position of being one of the first two Artists in Residence at this renowned research institution. (The other artist was Jim Phalen a talented realist painter from Seattle.) We together were a test case for how this initiative might work. It turns out many of the fellow researchers, in spite of being in radically different fields, engaged sensitively with the work. We held several open studio events which resulted in in-depth conversations about process, materials, and the content of the work. Their generous, articulate interpretations were exciting and profound. It is not often that I get the chance to engage with art and architectural



historians, philosophers, historians, literary scholars, etc., about the nature of the work and the perceptual insights they have about it. We in turn, became ultimately in greater touch with the fundamental positions of the work. This experience made palpable what is critical to the work and why we do what we do. And I hope in some small way sharing our work and process reciprocated equally valuable insights.

Ellen Garvens is Professor of Art at the University of Washington in Seattle. She received an MFA from the University of New Mexico. Fellowships include a Fulbright-Hayes Scholarship, National Endowment for the Arts Individual Grant, and an Artist Trust/Washington State Grant. She was Artist in Residence at I Tatti during Spring 2021



a NEW UNION *of* EAST *and* WEST: *the* I Tatti / Dumbarton Oaks Joint Fellowship

A recently-established joint fellowship supports projects that deal with the cultures of the wider East Christian world.



I Tatti is happy to announce a new joint fellowship with Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection to identify exchanges and interactions linking Renaissance Italy with Byzantium and, more broadly, the cultures of the wider East Christian world. A Harvard research institute, similar to I Tatti in its mission and autonomous status within the larger University, Dumbarton Oaks (DO) is housed at the historic estate of the same name in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, DC. Borne from the fortune of Robert and Mildred Bliss, who gifted both the property and their important collection of artworks to Harvard in 1940, Dumbarton Oaks is dedicated to advanced research in three specific subject fields: Byzantine Studies, Pre-Columbian Studies, and Landscape Architecture. The I Tatti/Dumbarton Oaks Joint Fellowship taps into the first of these three specialties, exploring cross-cultural contacts between Western and Eastern Christianity through the study of art, archaeology, architecture, history, literature, material

culture, music, philosophy, religion, and/or science. Fellows will spend six months (July to December) in Florence and six months (January to June) in DC.

“East Christian” is a broad collective ethnic and religious label used to describe the cultural and ritual traditions of, among others, the autocephalous Eastern Orthodox, Eastern Catholic, Assyrian, and Oriental Orthodox Churches. Essentializing by design, the term is taken by medieval and modern sources to distinguish from Western (Latin or Catholic) Christendom, i.e. the territories of the Roman rite, where Latin was the liturgical language and where spiritual authority lay with the pope. In borrowing from this period terminology and its parameters, **the I Tatti/Dumbarton Oaks Joint Fellowship welcomes investigation into a geographical and chronological framework that stretches far beyond the administrative scope of the Byzantine Empire**, encompassing the late medieval and early

modern Mediterranean basin as well as Egypt, East Africa, the Near East (including the Holy Land), the Caucasus, the Balkans, Russia, India's Malabar Coast, and the many frontier "contact zones" connecting Eastern Christianity with the Latin West.

The territorial expanse outlined above aligns roughly with Bernard Berenson's notion of "the ancient Oecumene." This was an area "not going farther East than the Euphrates and not farther South than Egypt and the great desert of North Africa"—as described in his oft-cited letter concerning the future of I Tatti, addressed to the President and Corporation of Harvard University on August 18, 1956. *Oecumene* comes from the Greek *oikoumenē*: the inhabited or "known" world. Both inclusive and exclusionary, the *oecumene* in its original usage referred to all lands known to or inhabited by the ancient Greeks—but nothing beyond that ethnocentric scope. In Late Antiquity, Christian theologians and political leaders adopted *oecumene* to describe Christian lands, or the territorial scope of the Church. But beyond just geography, the new *oecumene* also conveyed the Church's condition: divided sharply between East and West and further divided into smaller autonomous or semi-autonomous church-rites, broken down along ethnolinguistic and burgeoning national lines. In response to this divided reality emerged the concept of *oecumenical union*: the idea of all separate churches worldwide united as one in a single cohesive ecclesiological body.



Florence and its environs play an important role in the history of the oecumenical movement. Indeed, the city served as host to the last major effort to make the global union of churches a reality: the Oecumenical Council transferred (perhaps at the behest of Cosimo de' Medici) from Ferrara in 1438 and convened in Florence between 1439 and 1445. The largest and most geographically and culturally diverse convocation of Christian peoples in the Middle Ages, the Council sought to unify the sub-divided Church factions in Rome, Constantinople, Moscow, Alexandria, Armenia, Georgia, Ethiopia, and Syria under one aegis by stressing

"unity in faith, diversity in ritual expression." The Council brought to Florence hundreds of foreign emissaries, political leaders, and intellectuals from all corners of the Christian *oecumene*, including notable figures like the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaiologos; Isidore, the Metropolitan of Kiev; the philosophers and theologians Nicholas of Cusa, George of Trebizond, and George Gemistus Pletho; Cardinal Bessarion, the Latin Patriarch of Constantinople; and four delegates sent by the Ethiopian Emperor Zara Yaqob.

While the Council ultimately failed to achieve lasting union among the Western and Eastern Churches, its cultural repercussions were long-lasting. Art created during and in the immediate aftermath of the Council showcases the diverse ritual traditions of the participants, the prejudices and stereotypes shared among them, and the Council's impact in shaping conceptualizations of otherness—especially from the perspective of viewers in Italy and the Latin West. This phenomenon can be gleaned from the fashion, literature, and public theatre of the period; as well as in the works of Florentine artists active at the time, particularly Pisanello, Filarete, Fra Angelico, and Benozzo Gozzoli. Benozzo's famous fresco cycle in the Cappella dei Magi at Palazzo Medici Riccardi is a grand allegory of the Oecumenical Council, where the three Magi—"wise men from the East"—lead a cavalcade of exotic animals and costumed Council participants from Christian nations worldwide through a Holy Land strongly redolent of a Tuscan countryside. Coincidentally, it was this exact

sacred landscape represented in Benozzo's frescoes that turn-of-the-century figures like Berenson, John Temple Leader, and Cecil Pinsent vowed to reproduce in the hills around I Tatti one sees today.

I believe it was this more expanded yet still confined manifestation of globality that **Berenson, in his 1956 letter, encouraged future fellows to explore**, no doubt inspired by his own travels eastward—to Greece, the Levant, and twice to Constantinople (as it was then called). He ordered, often by commission, hundreds of photographs of sites in the

Balkans, Turkey, Greek islands, and elsewhere (including large collections from Arthur Kingsley Porter, Professor of Architecture at Harvard; and the French art historian of Byzantium, Gabriel Millet). **In total, the Biblioteca Berenson possesses nearly four thousand catalogued photographs pertaining to art and architecture of the Byzantine / East Christian world.** Objects from this collection were recently shown in an exhibition organized by I Tatti's Photograph Archivist, Spyros Koulouris (and remains the subject of his ongoing research).

There can be no doubt then that Byzantium was on Berenson's mind—at one point leading his wife, Mary Berenson, to claim her husband was "obsessed"! (I have not seen the letter myself.) One cannot help but wonder whether the bookended double-B in Berenson's *stemma* might in part have been inspired by the bookended double-B in imperial Byzantine coats-of-arms: *Basileus Basileōn*: [King of Kings]. Indeed, B.B.'s begrudging respect for Byzantine art is made clear in a February 12, 1931 conversation with the Italian journalist Umberto Morra: "I am increasingly convinced that Byzantium is at the root of all the art which has evolved in our western world, up to and including Lorenzo Monaco."

Surprisingly, however, this enthusiasm is rarely reflected in the Berenson Art Collection, save two works: a pair of sheets from an illuminated Gospel from Armenia, and 49 x 32.8 x 1 cm egg tempera panel-painting of the *Madonna and Child*, which returned to I Tatti in Spring 2021 after a recent round of conservation. Derived from the Orthodox icon-type of the Virgin *Galaktotrophousa* and attributed loosely to the mid-fourteenth-century Adriatic School, the panel shows a painter combining the composition and spatial recession common to his

own period with the palette, line, expressiveness, and ornamental technique of a thirteenth-century maniera greca predecessor. It's as if, in this panel, Berenson found an Italian painter rediscovering his long-lost Greek prototype. For the rest of the collection—at least up to Lorenzo Monaco—the Byzantine "influence" was already dyed in the wool.

Berenson knew well of Dumbarton Oaks and followed closely—and perhaps with just a twinge of envy—the process of the Robert and Mildred Bliss bequest. After all, it had long been his plan to gift his estate and collection to Harvard. One can understand that he might have been somewhat miffed that in taking the same course of action—and with their considerably deeper pockets ensuring considerably smoother negotiations—the Blisses beat him to the punch. **Nonetheless, Berenson saw both DO and I Tatti as likeminded enterprises; indeed, he refers to them as "sister institutions" in a letter of May 9, 1946 to the financier and museum director Paul J. Sachs.** This was after the University's receipt of Dumbarton Oaks yet well before Berenson's own gift—I Tatti—had been accepted and its future as a Harvard research center was made firm.

The I Tatti/Dumbarton Oaks Joint Fellowship continues in this optimistic legacy. This is a union of East and West of which the founder of I Tatti would surely approve.

John Lansdowne joined I Tatti as Post-Doctoral Fellow & Assistant to the Director for Academic Programs in 2021. He is an art historian of the medieval and early modern periods, with a focus on Italy and the East Christian world.

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- *Cover Image:*
Balthasar (sometimes identified as the Byzantine emperor John VIII Palaiologos).
Detail from *Journey of the Magi*, the 1459-1461 fresco cycle by Benozzo Gozzoli
in the Cappella dei Magi at Palazzo Medici Riccardi in Florence