

Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme



**Christiansen, Keith, and Carlo Falciani, eds. The Medici:
Portraits and Politics 1512–1570**

Jacqueline Marie Musacchio

Volume 44, Number 3, Summer 2021

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1085842ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i3.38015>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Musacchio, J. (2021). Review of [Christiansen, Keith, and Carlo Falciani, eds. The Medici: Portraits and Politics 1512–1570]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 44(3), 265–267. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i3.38015>

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2022

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

In the second chapter (“Nota al testo”), Bertolio accurately describes, following codicological, archival, and philological rules, the twelve extant manuscripts that contain the text, about which no incunabula or *cinquecentine* are known. The *stemma codicum* shows how the codices, none entirely autographed, can be grouped into two categories: those belonging to the Quattrocento, all related, and two later copies belonging to the mid-seventeenth century. Bertolio speculates that Brunni intervened personally in the Florentine codex Riccardiano 1030, adding “Bertum Senensem” in the white space left by the copyist for the inscription, and the word “finis.”

For every manuscript, Bertolio notes additions and emendations, comparisons and oversights—including the inks used. His considerable scholarly and bibliographical work is an excellent example of philological rigour and of professional accuracy that should be taken as a model not only by those who publish critical editions but by all who publish texts.

ELENA BRIZIO

Georgetown University Villa Le Balze

<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i3.38014>

Christiansen, Keith, and Carlo Falciani, eds.

The Medici: Portraits and Politics 1512–1570.

New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021. Pp. 328 + 212 ill. ISBN 9781588397300 (hardcover) US\$65.

This exhibition catalogue, for the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s *The Medici: Portraits and Politics 1512–1570*, is edited by curators Keith Christiansen and Carlo Falciani; it marks the last exhibition of Christiansen’s long career at the institution before his retirement. Prompted by the Metropolitan’s 2017 acquisition of Francesco Salviati’s portrait of the Florentine physician, intellectual, and politician Carlo Rimbotti (no. 45), the exhibition, and therefore its catalogue, encompasses portraiture across different media in the pivotal decades between the return of the Medici family from exile to their elevation as grand dukes of Tuscany. The looming figure of Cosimo I de’Medici (1519–74) and his shrewd use of the arts to promote himself, his family, and his state, and quite often all three at once, provide the structure for a comprehensive

reexamination of the wide variety of portraits, and their different meanings, during this period.

An important aspect of Cosimo's rule, but one that is rarely so clearly defined as in this catalogue, is the way that the visual arts and literature were intertwined in sixteenth-century Florence. While Cosimo's role in the 1563 founding of the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno, a project spearheaded by his artistic impresario Giorgio Vasari, is well known, his similar role in the 1541 founding of the Accademia Fiorentina, essentially its literary equivalent, does not receive as much attention. However, as this catalogue thoroughly demonstrates, both academies were key to cultural advancements in the city, and to Medici power; indeed, there was significant overlap in membership, too, something emphasized here by several of the artists and sitters, as well as by the inclusion of manuscripts of Bronzino's poetry (nos. 52, 53) and even the many portraits that include books and manuscripts. The two introductory essays, by Falciani and Elizabeth Cropper, establish this interrelationship and its impact on developments in portraiture, while the remainder of the catalogue is composed of six thematic sections with shorter framing essays and related catalogue entries. The first section, with another essay by Falciani, examines the tense period of 1512–32, as Florence shifted somewhat uneasily between republic and duchy. This is followed by a section on the Medici popes with an essay by Linda Wolk-Simon, a section on Cosimo and his dynastic goals with an essay by Elizabeth Pilliod, the place of Dante and Petrarch with an essay by Julia Siemon, Cosimo's art and politics with essays by Sefy Hendler and Antonella Fenech Kroke, and a final section on the work of Bronzino and Salviati with a third essay by Falciani.

The ninety-two catalogue entries encompass not only paintings but also a wide variety of sculpture, works on paper, and a stunning red velvet *sottana* or petticoat probably worn by Eleonora di Toledo. Most, of course, are portraits, and the sitters range from Cosimo and his family to his courtiers and even his court jester, Braccio di Bartolo, better and ironically known as Morgante (no. 54), as well as other identified and in some cases unidentified men and women who participated to some degree in Florentine culture, whether they aligned themselves with the increasingly autocratic Medici or, in the case of Bindo Altoviti (nos. 90, 91, and 92), not. The many paintings, busts, medals, and reliefs of Cosimo—wearing armour, classicizing garb, rich Renaissance costume, or really nothing at all, as in the provocative portrait as Orpheus

by Bronzino (no. 64)—are especially interesting as a way to chart not only his public appearance, or the way he wanted to appear, but also the way his contemporaries understood him as the epitome of Florence under his rule. Similarly, the carefully constructed façade of jewelry and clothing evident in Bronzino's two painted portraits of Eleonora (nos. 26, 28) reveal more about her role as mother to a dynasty than about her private life.

Portraits like these by Bronzino, represented here by twenty-seven paintings, have always, and with good reason, loomed large in any examination of art under the Medici; the Metropolitan's own as-yet-unidentified young man with a book is another excellent example of this type (no. 41). But Pontormo and Salviati, with nine and eleven paintings respectively, are equally fascinating in this context, particularly those portraits by Salviati in the last section of the catalogue, marked by their lavish textiles, elaborately posed hands, and engaging attributes. Although many portraits from this era are notable for their slick veneer and mask-like features, they are also enormously compelling and repay close looking.

The catalogue is beautifully designed with more than two hundred colour reproductions of both exhibited objects and comparanda. Merely turning the pages—which, unfortunately, is all many of us can do given the challenges of travelling to New York in a pandemic—provides a vivid sense of Florence under the Medici, and the essays and entries are intellectually intriguing for art historians while still accessible for students and the larger interested public.

JACQUELINE MARIE MUSACCHIO

Wellesley College

<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i3.38015>

Cleland, Katharine.

Irregular Unions: Clandestine Marriage in Early Modern English Literature.

Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021. Pp. 196. ISBN 978-1-5017-5347-3 (paperback) \$19.95.

The process of marriage formation was the focus of scrutiny in late medieval and early modern Europe. Ostensibly, marriage needed only the consent of the married couple, allowing couples to choose marriage partners without