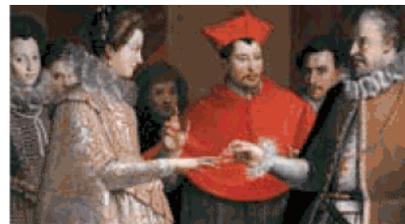




# CATERINA E MARIA DE' MEDICI: DONNE AL POTERE

FIRENZE CELEBRA IL MITO DI DUE REGINE DI FRANCIA

FIRENZE PALAZZO STROZZI  
24 OTTOBRE 2008 – 8 FEBBRAIO 2009



Press communiqué n. 1, 22 October 2008

On 30 June 1559, the young Florentine bride of the French King Henri II suddenly found herself a widow. In the failing light, her dashing and headstrong 40-year-old husband was killed in a friendly joust by the young captain of his Scottish guard whose lance accidentally pierced the king's eye through his metal visor. In a tragedy said to have been foretold by Nostradamus, Caterina de' Medici lost a husband and was surrounded by enemies, the Dukes of Guise and Montmorency, each vying for power over her frail 15-year-old son Francis II, the new King of France. As her own childhood had been shaped by intrigues and assassination attempts, Caterina knew how important it was to keep and exercise power.

*Women in Power* tells the story of one of the ways in which the two Medici Queens of France used powerful images to legitimise their claims to rule over warring families and factions at a time when women in power were rare. The exhibition brings to Florence fifteen monumental tapestries portraying *The Story of Artemisia* dedicated to Caterina de' Medici (1519-89) in the 1560s and completed in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century by Maria de' Medici (1573-1642), herself widowed by the brutal assassination of her husband Henri IV, as illustrations of the education of the ideal prince, her son the future Louis XIII.

The tapestries, of different sizes but each close to five metres in height, became separated until 2005 when the seven tapestries owned by Mobilier National of Paris were joined by the eight acquired by Chevalier Atelier. Restored to celebrate the Royal Manufactures of France, these magnificent works come to Florence, the native city of their patrons, for the first time.

To justify her claim to rule as Regent for her three sons who in turn became kings of France, Caterina appropriated the stories of two very different Artemisias from antiquity. The first was the warrior queen Artemisia of Halicarnassus in Asia Minor, an ally of the Persian King Xerxes when he invaded Greece, who commanded five ships at the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC. The second Artemisia was the widow of King Mausolus who reigned from 352 to 350 BC after the death of her husband. She was renowned for her extraordinary grief and was said to have mixed his ashes in her daily drink. She became celebrated as the builder of the Mausoleum in Halicarnassus, the great monument dedicated to her husband's memory which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. She also successfully defended her city from rebellious ships sent from Rhodes which had been conquered by Mausolus. By weaving the two stories together, Caterina projected herself as both the grieving widow and the powerful ruler.

Tapestry weaving is a technique going back to ancient Egypt. In medieval times, tapestries were one of the most important forms of artistic expression which proclaimed the owner's wealth, power and status. They made rooms both more colourful and warmer by insulating stone walls and they could be taken down, rolled up and moved easily from place to place. The Artemisia tapestries in this exhibition are superb examples of the skill and dedication of the artisans in the royal tapestry workshops in Paris (later to become les Gobelins), who laboured for years following the designs of some of the most gifted artists of the time, translating them into miracles of gold, silver and coloured thread. The drawings by Antoine Caron (c.1521-99) and Henry Lerambert (1550-1609) that were the basis for the cartoons used for weaving will also be on show.

Further sections of the exhibition expand on the themes depicted by the tapestries as well as studying in depth the characters of the two Medici queens through portraits and works of art loaned from various museums to illustrate the extraordinary refinement that characterised their lives and their patronage.

Caterina favoured the French poets of the Pléiade (a group of seven French writers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, led by Pierre de Ronsard) while Maria gave numerous commissions to Rubens and other major artists.

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DE' MEDICI:  
DONNE AL POTERE**  
FIRENZE CELEBRA IL MITO DI DUE REGINE DI FRANCIA  
FIRENZE PALAZZO STROZZI  
24 OTTOBRE 2008 – 8 FEBBRAIO 2009



Press communiqué n. 2, 22 October 2008

**Fact Sheet**

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**Exhibition curated by**

Clarice Innocenti

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Daily 9– 20 / Thursady 9 – 23

Visitors are admitted up to one hour before closing time

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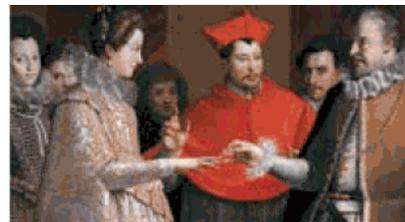
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The section exploring the life of Artemisia, as depicted in the tapestries, will present a number of contemporary portraits of the two Medici queens. Few parallel episodes can be found in contemporary painting which, for dramatic effect, tended to focus on Artemisia's suicide near the Mausoleum, while the tapestry scenes were designed to immortalise her political prowess, concentrating on battle scenes or military manoeuvres, in order to exult both Artemisia and the two queens of France. Houel's poem completely ignores Artemisia's tragic end and closes with the siege of Rhodes, again highlighting the political and military virtues of the reigning queen. When the tapestries were woven forty years later in honour of Maria they even included episodes which were not part of the original epic to further enhance this aspect of her character. Therefore, the painting section, rather than offering a comparison with the tapestry episodes, brings Artemisia's story to its ideal conclusion and reconnects it to the literary sources through which it is universally known.

The Galleria degli Uffizi has loaned two paintings by Jacopo Chimenti called l'Empoli (1551-1640) depicting the marriages of Caterina to Henri II in 1553 and of Maria to Henri IV in 1600, as well as portraits of Caterina by Santi de Tito (1536-1603) and Maria by Frans Pourbus the Younger (1569-1622) and a 17<sup>th</sup> century cameo with portraits of Maria and Henri from the Musée du Louvre are amongst the important loans from French museums.

Several curious pieces in the exhibition include a letter with one of Maria's drawings, a small canvas that portrays her at an outdoor banquet with her husband Henri IV, a 17<sup>th</sup> century terracotta dish depicting Henri and his family, and a precious jewellery collection. Other treasures include a rock crystal, silver-gilt and enamel casket, 1532, and a rock crystal and enamelled gold Diane de Poitiers cup, named after Henri II's mistress, from the Museo degli Argenti in Florence.

This exhibition also provides an exceptional opportunity to bring the myth of Artemisia into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Just as Caterina de' Medici 'rewrote' the myth of the two Artemisias, fusing them into a single potent symbol of her right to rule, the myth of Artemisia will again be rewritten, this time by Italy's leading artist of graphic novels, Giuseppe Palumbo. The graphic novel *Eternal Artemisia* will be published to coincide with the exhibition, and Palumbo and his students from Florence's renowned school for graphic novels will be hosting regular workshops throughout the show.

Not only does every exhibition at the Palazzo Strozzi have bilingual labels throughout, it has special labels for families and children. For this exhibition one of Italy's leading children's authors, Roberto Piumini, has developed two discovery trails for children and families, one in verse and the other a play in which families can act out the scenes in the tapestries. Also available is a 'suitcase' packed with costumes and activities that allows families to take a trip back to the time of the Medici court.

Other events to accompany the exhibition include children's performances by choreographer Virgilio Sieni, early music concerts *At the Court of the Medici*, poetry readings, in translation and in the original French, of Ronsard and other luminaries of the Pléiade, *Fashion at the Medici Court* during Pitti Uomo in January and special evenings featuring the Italian cuisine introduced by Caterina to the French court – along with the three-pronged fork. The exhibition *Women in Power: Caterina and Maria de' Medici* is as contemporary as it is historical, bringing the Medici Queens of France back to life.

For further information and images, please contact:

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Press communiqué n. 3, 22 October 2008

## List of the works

### Caterina, Maria and Artemisia: three regents Room I

Italian School *Portrait of Caterina de' Medici*

c. 1600–10 ca., oil on canvas; Firenze, Galleria degli Uffizi (not in the catalogue)

Santi di Tito (Borgo San Sepolcro 1536–Florence 1603)

*Portrait of Maria de' Medici*

c. 1601, oil on canvas; Firenze, Galleria Palatina

1. Jacopo di Chimenti da Empoli (Florence 1551–1640)

*Wedding of Caterina de' Medici and Henry of Valois*

1600, oil on canvas; Firenze, Galleria degli Uffizi

2. Jacopo di Chimenti da Empoli (Florence 1551–1640)

*Wedding by proxy of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV of France, represented by Grand Duke Ferdinando I de' Medici*

1600, oil on canvas; Firenze, Galleria degli Uffizi

3. Brussels Manufactory cartoon attributed to Lucas de Heere (Ghent 1534–84) after a drawing by Antoine Caron *Tournament at Bayonne*

c. 1575–81, wool, silk, silver, gilded silver; Firenze, Galleria degli Uffizi, Deposito Arazzi

### Room II

4. Santi di Tito (Borgo San Sepolcro 1536–Florence 1603) *Portrait of Caterina de' Medici*

1585–6, oil on panel; Firenze, Galleria degli Uffizi

5. Valerio Belli (Vicenza c. 1468–1546) *Medici casket*

1530–2, engraved rock crystal backed with silver leaf, gilded silver and enamel; Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti

6. Gasparo Miseroni (Milan 1518–73) *Cup of Diane de Poitiers*

c. 1550, rock crystal, enamelled gold mounting; Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti

7. François Clouet (Tours c. 1515–Paris 1572) and workshop

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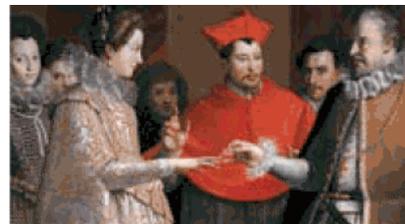
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*Portraits of Henry II of Valois and Caterina de' Medici*  
after 1559, watercolour on parchment; Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, Depositi

8. *Talisman of Caterina de' Medici*  
France, 16th century (?), bronze; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France

9. *Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, called Cagnino, Lord of Bozzolo, to his cousin Federico II Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua*  
1533 October 30, Marseille, letter on paper with seal attached; Mantua, Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Archivio Gonzaga

10. Giovanni Desiderio Bernardi (Castelbolognese 1494?–Faenza 1553) *Plate with Noah's Ark*  
first half of the 16th century, rock crystal, gilded silver base mounting and rim; Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti

11. Giovanni Lionardo Henner (active in Florence 1617–41) after Frans Pourbus the Younger  
*Portrait of Maria de' Medici, Queen of France*  
1628, oil on canvas; Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, Depositi

12. *Maria de' Medici to her sister Eleonora Gonzaga, Duchess of Mantua*  
1586 May 8, Florence, letter on paper with seal attached; Mantua, Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Archivio Gonzaga

13. *Cameo with Henry IV and Maria de' Medici*  
France, beginning of the 17th century, shell cameo, silver frame; Paris, Musée du Louvre

14. 17th-century French artist *Luncheon of Henry IV with Queen Maria de' Medici and Family*  
c. 1610–2, oil on canvas; Nantes, Musée des Beaux-Arts

15. *Henry IV and His Family* after an engraving by Léonard Gaultier after a painting by François Quesnel the Elder, France, after 1602, glazed terracotta; Écouen, Musée national de la Renaissance

16. *Casket*  
Venice (?), c. 1600, lacquered wood, gilded silver, gilded copper, rock crystal; Private collection

17. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by an artist from the school of Primaticcio  
*Queen Artemisia with the Council (The Deputies)*  
1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier national

17a. *Lion's head* from a Greco-Roman original?  
Plaster; Florence, Istituto Statale d'Arte

18. Bernard Rantwyck (Nijmegen, doc. in Rome in 1596) *The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: The Mausoleum of Halicarnassus; The Pyramids of Egypt; The Statue of Zeus at Olympia; The Colossus of Rhodes; The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus; The Walls of Babylon; The Colosseum*

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c. 1611, oil on panel; Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Depositi delle Gallerie Fiorentine

## The Tapestry Gallery Room III

19. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Henri Lerambert  
*Soldiers on Foot (Soldiers Mounting Guard)*

1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier national

19a. *Roman steelyard weight* from a 1st century A.D. original in bronze  
Plaster, Florence, Istituto Statale d'Arte

20. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Antoine Caron  
*Exercise in the Assault and Defence of a Bastion*

1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier National

20a. *Horse's head* modelled on a 2nd/1st century B.C. , original in bronze in the Museo Archeologico,  
Florence

21. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Antoine Caron  
*The Riding Lesson*

1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier National

21a. *Head of the "Farnese" Hercules* copy of 4th century B.C. work by Lysippus  
Plaster; Florence, Istituto Statale d'Arte

22. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Henri Lerambert  
*A Captain on Horseback*

1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier National

## Room IV

23. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Henri Lerambert  
*Children on Horseback and Soldiers*

1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier National

24. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Antoine Caron  
*The Fencing Lesson*

1st decade of the 17th century. wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier National

24a. *"Barberini" Hera* modelled on a 5th century B.C. original

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# CATERINA E MARIA DE' MEDICI: DONNE AL POTERE

FIRENZE CELEBRA IL MITO DI DUE REGINE DI FRANCIA

FIRENZE PALAZZO STROZZI  
24 OTTOBRE 2008 – 8 FEBBRAIO 2009



plaster; Florence, Istituto Statale d'Arte

25. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Henri Lerambert

*Soldiers with Vases and a Litter*

1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier National

25a. *Roman vase with storks* modelled on a Roman original

plaster, Florence, Istituto Statale d'Arte

26. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory *Trumpeters on Foot*

1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier National

27. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Antoine Caron

*The Manoeuvres of the Armies*

1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier National

27a. *"Little Devil"* copy of a work by Giambologna, formerly on the corner of via dei Vecchietti and via Strozzi, plaster, Florence, Istituto Statale d'Arte

28. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Antoine Caron

*The Two Statues* (right side)

1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier National

28a. *Bust of Menelaus* modelled on a 3rd century B.C. original

Plaster, Florence, Istituto Statale d'Arte

## Room VI

29. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Antoine Caron

*The Two Statues* (left side)

1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier National

30. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Antoine Caron

*The Queen Distributing the Booty*

1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold ; Paris, Mobilier National

30a. *Oval shield depicting "Paradise Lost"*

Plaster, Florence, Istituto Statale d'Arte

31. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Antoine Caron

*The Colossus of Rhodes* (The Queen's Entry into the Harbour of Rhodes)

1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier National

31a. *Mask of Alexander* from the Quirinale *Colossus*, 3rd century B.C.

Plaster, Florence, Istituto Statale d'Arte

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32. Faubourg Saint-Marcel Manufactory after a drawing by Henri Lerebert  
*Soldiers Carrying Trophies*  
1st decade of the 17th century, wool, silk, silver, gold; Paris, Mobilier National

32a. *Cicero's Cuirass*  
Plaster, Florence, Istituto Statale d'Arte

## Restoring Artemisia to Legend Room VII

33. Francesco Curradi (Florence 1570–1661) *Artemisia Drinks Mausolus' Ashes*  
1623–5, oil on canvas; Florence, Villa Medicea della Petraia

34. Domenico Fetti (Florence/Rome 1591/2–Venice 1623) *Artemisia*  
c. 1613, oil on canvas; Poughkeepsie, N.Y., Vassar College, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center,  
Gift of Alessandra Manning Dolnier, class of 1982, Kurt A. Dolnier, class of 1981, and The Robert Lee  
Manning and Bertina Suida Manning Charitable Trust in honor of Pamela Askew, Professor Emeritus of Art

35. Cesare Dandini (Florence 1596–1657) *Artemisia*  
c. 1650, oil on canvas; Florence, Galleria Corsini

36. 17th-century Tuscan artist *Artemisia*  
c. 1650–60, oil on canvas; 79.4 x 66.7 cm; New Haven, Conn., Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Walter  
L. Ehrich, Ph.B. 1899, and Harold L. Ehrich, B.A. 1902, in memory of their father, Louis R. Ehrich, B.A.  
1869

37. Bernardino Mei (Siena 1612–Rome 1676) *Artemisia About to Drink the Ashes of Her Husband Mausolus  
Mixed with Water*  
c. 1653–4, oil on canvas; Siena, Monte dei Paschi di Siena

38. Giovan Gioseffo Dal Sole (Bologna 1654–1719) *Artemisia Receives the Ashes of Her Husband Mausolus*  
c. 1690–5, oil on canvas; Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Corsini

39. Francesco Cairo (Milan 1607–65) *Artemisia*  
c. 1640–5, oil on canvas; Pavia, Musei Civici, Pinacoteca Malaspina

40. Girolamo Forabosco (Venice 1605–Padua 1679) *Suicide of Sophonisba (or Artemisia Drinks the Ashes of  
Her Husband Mausolus)*  
c. 1660, oil on canvas; Cesena, Pinacoteca Comunale

41. Hans Domes *Boat-shaped vase*  
lapis lazuli and enamelled gold; Florence, Museo degli Argenti

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42. Massimiliano Soldani Benzi (Montevarchi 1656-1740) *Marble Urn with cherub handles embracing swan*  
Tournai marble, silver gilt and bronze; Florence, Galleria Palatina

43. Paul Huebner *Aquamanile and Tray*  
c. 1580-1590, silver gilt; Florence, Museo degli Argenti

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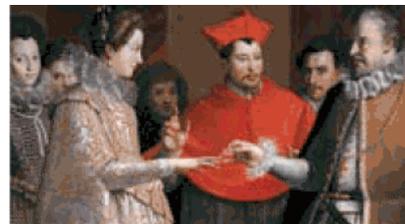
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Press communiqué n. 4, 22 October 2008

## The Age of Caterina de' Medici

- 1519 Two years after Martin Luther published his theses, sending a shockwave through Christian Europe and sparking the Protestant Reformation and the Wars of Religion, the city of Florence saw the birth (on 13 April) of Caterina de' Medici, daughter to Lorenzo II de' Medici, duke of Urbino, and Madeleine de La Tour d'Auvergne. Italian and French blood ran in her veins. Lorenzo the Magnificent was her great-grandmother and Pope Leo X was her great-uncle.
- 1533 Young Caterina was wed to Henri of France; both were mere children of 14. The bride was heiress to the wealthiest family in Europe, while the groom (the future Henri II), was the second son of King François I, a sovereign whose love of Italy was legendary. Henri was as gloomy and reserved as his father was jovial and approachable, though both managed to find solace in the arms of the same favorite, the lovely Diane de Poitiers, Caterina's rival right up to the Henri II's death.
- 1534 The rebellion against the papacy spread to England. Henry VIII (who was later to be excommunicated) gave his blessing to the break with Rome and decreed the birth of the Anglican Church. In France, the repression of grassroots demonstrations against the Mass turned into a bloodbath.
- 1535 François, the dauphin of France, died and Henri became heir to the throne. For Caterina this was a largely unexpected fate.
- 1536 Calvin published the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in Geneva. A new way of understanding and experiencing spirituality gained currency in reaction to the excesses of the Catholic Church, the sale of indulgences and clerical ignorance. Several important French families (Condé, Bourbon) converted to Calvinism, becoming known as Huguenots from the German *Eidgenossen* (confederates, associates, likeminded thinkers).
- 1540 The edict of Fontainebleau triggered the struggle against heresy. The clash between Protestants and Catholics radicalized, each side outdoing the other in cruelty -- including Calvin himself.
- 1544 Caterina bore her first son, the future François II. Elisabeth, the future queen of Spain, was born two years later.

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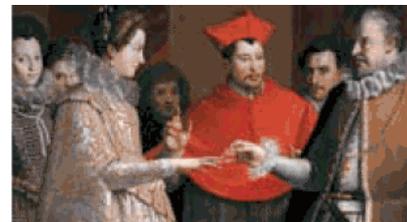
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- 1545 The Council of Trent was called. It was to last, with one or two breaks, until 1563, sanctioning the absolute incompatibility between Catholic dogma and Protestant doctrine, and setting in motion the Counter Reformation. In France, bloody repression and carnage were the order of the day.
- 1547 Henry VIII died in London; François I died in Paris. Henri II was crowned king, and Caterina became queen of France. A few months later Claude, the future duchess of Lorraine, was born.
- 1551 Charles-Maximilien, the future Charles IX, was born. The following year saw the birth of Alexandre-Édouard, the future Henri III, while Marguerite, a future queen of Navarre and of France (la *Reine Margot*), was born a year later. In 1555, Hercule, the future François d'Alençon, later d'Anjou, was born. He was to be Caterina and Henri II's last child.
- 1558 The French dauphin married Mary Stuart, heir to the throne of Scotland.
- 1559 Following a disastrous defeat, France's long war against Spain and England finally came to an end with the peace treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis. Henri II was forced to give up his Italian possessions, and the peace was sealed with the marriages of Elizabeth of France to Philip II of Spain, and of Marguerite to Emmanuel Philibert, duke of Savoy. Henri II was fatally injured in a jousting accident and died on 10 July. François II inherited the kingdom and Mary Stuart was his queen.
- 1560 François II died and the throne of France went to his brother Charles IX, but Charles was only 10 years old and Caterina was appointed regent. She was to dominate the scene for the next three decades. Her sons, who succeeded each other on the throne, bowed to her authority and followed her advice. She dreamed of pacifying France, but she was to face fully eight Wars of Religion.
- 1562 The edict of Saint Germain allowed people to worship according to the Protestant rite outside cities. The carnage continued throughout France, however, and the first of the Wars of Religion broke out.
- 1563 Charles IX came of age, at 13. He had a lung ailment and was an altogether strange young man, suffering from hallucinations, depression and hysteria.
- 1564 The peace of Amboise authorized the Huguenot rite in cities with a Protestant majority and a precarious truce in the carnage came into force. For over two years Caterina and Charles IX traveled around the country introducing both the new law and the new sovereign, but this royal *tour de France* was a flop. The Catholics and the Huguenots went back to slaughtering one another, the Huguenots even plotting to kidnap the king and his mother. The plot failed, however, and years of tough military setbacks ensued for the Protestant armies.
- 1572 Henri de Bourbon, king of Navarre and the future Henri IV, married Marguerite of France (but it was to be a childless marriage and he repudiated her in 1599 for Maria de' Medici).

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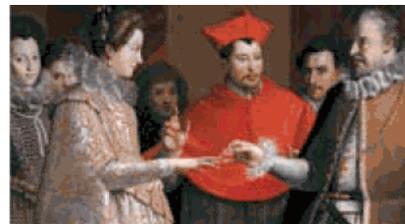
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This wedding between a Catholic princess and a Protestant prince, on which Caterina had insisted, fueled people's hopes of peace; but a few days later, on 24 August, Henri de Guise's Catholics initiated the slaughter of Huguenots that history remembers as the 'Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre'. Even Henri of Navarre, in the Louvre palace, only saved his skin thanks to Caterina's intervention. Pope Gregory XIII sang a *Te Deum* in Rome in thanksgiving.

- 1574 Charles IX died and his place was taken by his brother, Henri III, who was the king of Poland at the time. Erudite and polished, and later devout to the point of fanaticism, he was to be the last sovereign of the House of Valois. He married Louise de Vaudémont but died by an assassin's hand, heirless, on 1 August 1589. His 15-year reign was marked by a sequence of wars and massacres.
- 1588 Spain attempted to invade Elizabeth I's England, but a storm in the English Channel destroyed the Invincible Armada .
- 1589 Caterina de' Medici died, crippled by illness and a lifetime of tribulation. She managed to retain the throne for her sons, but not to save the dynasty from extinction. Above all, she failed in her attempt to reconcile the different religious factions in France. She has been charged with horrendous crimes, but history has begun to reassess her character and record today.
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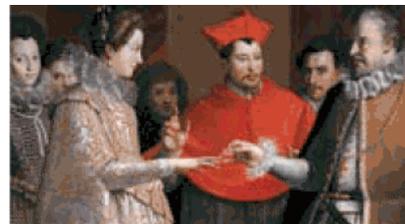
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## The Age of Maria de' Medici

- 1575 Maria de' Medici was born in Florence on 26 April, the daughter of Francesco I, grand duke of Tuscany, and of Johanna of Austria.
- 1589 Henri III, king of France, was killed on 1 August and the Valois dynasty came to an end. Henri IV of Navarre, a Protestant convert to Catholicism, took the throne, allegedly uttering the famous phrase: "*Paris vaut bien une messe*" ("Paris is well worth a Mass").
- 1598 The Edict of Nantes (13 April) allowed freedom of worship and brought about an unstable truce in the Wars of Religion between Catholics and Protestants.
- 1599 The childless marriage between Henri IV and Marguerite de Valois, Caterina de' Medici's daughter, was annulled.
- 1600 Henri IV and Maria de' Medici were married by proxy in Florence on 5 October. Medici diplomacy paid a huge price for this major success. The marriage contract provided for Ferdinando I to pay the French treasury the astronomical sum of 600,000 écus.
- 1601 The new queen of France gave birth to a boy, the future Louis XIII. The following year saw the birth of Elisabeth, the future queen of Spain. Between 1607 and 1609 Maria was to give birth to another three children, two of whom survived: Gaston, the future duke of Anjou and later of Orléans, and Henrietta Maria, Charles I of England's future queen.
- 1610 Henri IV was assassinated by a fanatic on 14 May, but Louis XIII was only 9 years old and so Maria was appointed regent. She pursued a different foreign policy from that of her late husband, favoring Spain and Catholicism, but she was forced to look powerlessly on as the Protestant princes rose up in rebellion.
- 1613 Maria sponsored the social and political rise of Tuscan adventurer and newly appointed Marshal of France Concino Concini, who was the husband of her influential lady-in-waiting Leonora Dori.
- 1614 At 13, Louis XIII came of age and acquired full sovereignty, but in reality it was his mother who continued to hold the reins of power.

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- 1615 Maria began work on the Palais de Luxembourg in Paris. On 25 November she celebrated the (fleeting) success of her foreign policy with twin marriages. Her daughter Elisabeth married the Infante of Spain, the future Philip IV, while Louis XIII married the Infanta Anna, later to become Anne of Austria.
- 1616 Concini, in the meantime, was appointed to head the government, but the following year he fell victim to a conspiracy orchestrated by the king himself. Concini was arrested and executed on the spot.
- 1617 The long-smoldering clash between Louis XIII and his mother, who refused to resign herself to giving up power, inevitably came to a head, triggering a prolonged interlude of conspiracy and plotting.
- 1618 The king finally deprived Maria of all power and exiled her to Blois. She appointed the noble Richelieu to the post of leader of her Council, thus launching the future cardinal and statesman's career.
- 1619 A new war, later to become known as the '30 Years War', broke out in Europe. Originally a confessional clash, the conflict soon turned into a struggle for hegemony in the Old World, pitting the coalition led by France against the coalition led by the German Empire and Spain.
- 1620 With her escape from Blois, Maria sparked the first of several wars against her son. The following year there was another clash which only ended with the Treaty of Angers, signed on 10 August.
- 1621 Philip III of Spain died and was succeeded by his son Philip IV.
- 1622 Maria commissioned Rubens to illustrate her life story. The painter was to create 24 splendid masterpieces which are now in the Louvre, in Paris.
- 1623 Richelieu was appointed cardinal and became a member of State Council.
- 1625 May 11<sup>th</sup> Charles I of England married Henrietta Maria of France by proxy. A Protestant kingdom was given a Catholic queen, Maria's daughter.
- 1627 English troops landed in France to succor the Protestants under siege in La Rochelle. The city surrendered the following year.
- 1629 The peace of Alès (or Edict of Nîmes) put an end to the Wars of Religion but not to the clash between Maria and Louis XIII. Having shifted his loyalty from the former regent to the king, Richelieu was appointed prime minister.
- 1630 Maria was imprisoned in Compiègne by order of the king, but she managed to escape and fled to the Low Countries which were under Spanish rule at the time.

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# CATERINA E MARIA DE' MEDICI: DONNE AL POTERE

FIRENZE CELEBRA IL MITO DI DUE REGINE DI FRANCIA

FIRENZE PALAZZO STROZZI  
24 OTTOBRE 2008 – 8 FEBBRAIO 2009



- 1635 France declared war on Spain.
- 1638 Maria was forced to leave Brussels for Holland. On 5 September Anne of Austria gave birth to a son: at long last the throne of France had a dauphin, who was to become Louis XIV. Two months later, in dire financial straits, Maria was forced to leave Holland, seeking asylum with her daughter Henrietta Maria in London.
- 1641 The House of Commons asked Maria to leave England, so she moved to Germany.
- 1642 Maria died in Cologne on 3 July, at the age of 67. Richelieu died on 4 December, and Louis XIII died on 14 May the following year. The age of the Sun King, of the centralized state and of absolutism -- "L'État c'est moi" -- was born.
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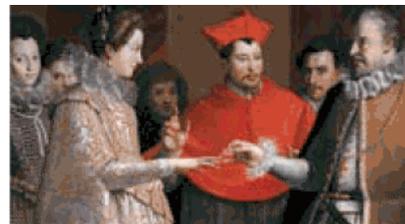
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Press communiqué n. 6, 22 October 2008

## Tapestry-makers: Artists or Craftsmen?

The Bièvre is a brook that crosses Paris and empties into the Seine in the Faubourg St. Marcel, by the Gare d'Austerlitz. The Gobelins family, artisans specializing in the manufacture of scarlet dye, moved to the area from Rheims in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, initially giving their name to a mill on the Bièvre, then to the neighborhood as a whole, and finally to the celebrated tapestry manufacture.

The Artemisia series, around which the Palazzo Strozzi exhibition entitled *Women in Power: Caterina and Maria de Medici. The Return to Florence of Two Queens* is built, actually belong to the pre-Gobelins era. In the early years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century King Henri IV entrusted a manufacture in the Faubourg St. Marcel to two skilled Flemish tapestry weavers named François de La Planche and Marc de Comans. Here and in similar manufactures the work was initially based on 16<sup>th</sup> century models, or on models more recent but still mannerist in flavor (the *Stories of Artemisia*, of *Coriolanus* and of *Diana*, for example). The turning point came with Rubens' cartoons for the *Story of Constantine* and, after 1627, with such baroque models as the dynamic and glowing work of Simon Vouet, or the classical themes of Michel Corneille and Laurent de la Hyre, both painters of the Attic school, starting to be transposed onto tapestry.

In this period known as the "pre-Gobelins era", manufactures operated under the strict supervision of the crown, in the person of the superintendent of the Batiments du Roi who was responsible for choosing subject matter, painters and raw materials. This led to the creation of a typically French form of workshop funded and controlled by the state, unlike the private enterprises that flourished in Flanders. A crucial step in the process that was to lead to the establishment of the Gobelins manufacture was Superintendent Nicholas Fouquet's decision to open a workshop in Maincy, to provide wall hangings for the nearby château of Vaux-le-Vicomte. When Maincy was closed down in 1661, the crown took over both its looms and its artisans and brought them to Paris, where it set them up on the premises formerly belonging to the Gobelins.

This huge tapestry manufacture became part of the *Manufacture Royale des Meubles de la Couronne* which Colbert organized for Louis XIV in 1667. The resulting Gobelins Manufacture, as it became known, was tasked with producing luxury *objets d'art* and wall hangings for the nobility. After financial concerns caused it to shut down a first time, it reopened in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century to produce tapestries for royal use only. Its activity was frozen for a second time by the Revolution of 1789, but the Bourbons started it up again during the Restoration, even adding a workshop for the manufacture of carpets. A fire partly destroyed the building during the troubles under the Comune in 1871, but it was rebuilt in 1914. Today the Gobelins Manufacture is run by the government-owned *Mobilier national*. It houses a museum and workshops where it still turns out tapestries for the adornment of public buildings.

Tapestry weaving is a noble art form, yet one whose deepest roots lie in the craftsman's world. The medieval English word for tapestry was *arras*, undoubtedly a reference to the northern French city of Arras where the most celebrated medieval tapestries were manufactured. Technically an *arras*, or tapestry, is a

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textile woven on a loom using wool, cotton, linen or silk (and metal thread). The process is known as weft-faced weaving because all of the warp yarns are hidden in the completed work. It is usually monumental in size with extremely detailed imagery.

The preparatory *cartoon* is a full-scale drawing generally made by an artist of repute, but the end result depends on the tapestry-maker's skill in translating that drawing onto his medium.

People have been weaving tapestries in the Mediterranean area, in Japan and in pre-Columbian America from time immemorial. The oldest examples go back to Ancient Egypt and late Hellenic Greece. Designed to be hung on large walls for decorative and/or narrative display, tapestries also performed a useful insulating function in the large halls and chambers of the time. Their success may also be partially explained by their portability from one residence to the next. A fresco stayed put, while a tapestry could simply be rolled up and loaded onto a cart.

Tapestry weaving in Europe goes back to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century in Germany and Switzerland, and then in France and the Low Countries. The Renaissance marked the high point of this art form, particularly in Flanders and in France. Some of the world's greatest painters produced cartoons for tapestries: Raphael, Rubens, Goya, and more recently Picasso, Matisse and Mirò. Tapestries take so long to manufacture, however, that the cost soon became prohibitive. The bankruptcy of many noble families even caused the Gobelins manufacture to shut down for a while. With the start of the industrial revolution and rising labor costs in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, tapestries started to go out of fashion. The mob put them to the torch in the French Revolution, both to recover the gold thread used in weaving them and to destroy a symbol of the hated aristocracy.

The crisis also forced many Italian tapestry manufactures to close down, and only a government subsidy allowed the papal tapestry workshop in Rome, the *Fabbrica pontificia di San Michele a Ripa*, to hold out until 1910. Today the art of tapestry weaving survives in a tiny niche market and in workshops devoted to the restoration of historic tapestries, an area in which the *Opificio delle Pietre Dure* in Florence excels.

In technical terms, tapestries are one of the clearest examples of how a few basic moves of the loom can perpetuate visual and emotional warmth down the centuries. The process is based on the weaving of threads that are perpendicular to one another. The vertical thread is known as the warp, while the horizontal thread is called the weft. The warp threads are divided into two groups called even and uneven threads. Each of the two groups is raised in turn by a high-warp or low-warp loom, according to whether the warping is set vertically or horizontally. The weft is interlaced into the space formed by the uneven and even threads rising in rapid succession, and the buildup of the wefts is what produces the finished fabric.

A feature peculiar to tapestries is the thickness of the yarn used: the warp is thick while the weft is extremely fine. This unique process ensures that the wefts cover the warp completely, giving a tapestry its typical ribbed finish.

The wefts are added to the tapestry by color zone in accordance with the indications on the cartoon, to which the weavers adhered very strictly. At the same time, their skill and experience in the choice of

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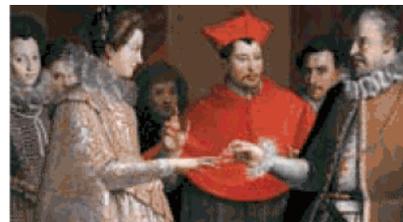
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materials would impart added value to the original artist's work. They would commonly choose not only wool and silk but also gold and silver thread. The thickness of the yarn employed (the *thread count*) dictates the delicacy of the tapestry, with the use of fine yarn resulting in an altogether more precious work because the thinner the yarn used, the more accurate and effective the rendering of even the most complex cartoon.

The richness of the colors used also adds considerable aesthetic value to a tapestry. The art of dyeing, on whose quality and richness a tapestry's success might well depend, developed in parallel with the art of weaving. The dyer's art demands familiarity with the way the substances used to impart color react, and whether or not those substances are suitable for dyeing whole bundles of yarn. Indigo, woad, madder and many other colors of vegetable origin were used for centuries, as were colors extracted from animals (cochineal) and minerals. The colors are in many cases still (almost) as bright today as they were when the tapestries were first woven, helping to foster continued interest in the very special art form of tapestry weaving.

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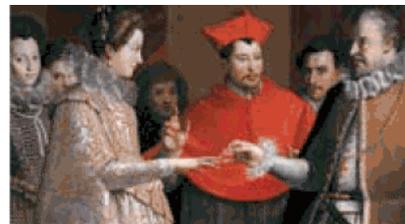
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Press communiqué n. 7, 22 October 2008

## Something for Kids

*Art can be fun at the Women in Power exhibition. There are riddles to solve, prizes to win, rhyming verse, a stage set complete with costumes for dressing up and acting, and even a weaving workshop -- endless things to do for everyone from toddler to granddad!*

**Florence** - After the exhibitions on Cézanne, China and Impressionism, we at Palazzo Strozzi have gotten into the habit of organizing things for kids, so we've done it again with the *Women in Power: Caterina and Maria de Medici* exhibition, cooking something up for the whole family.

Learning means fun and fun means learning here at Palazzo Strozzi. Everything, from the exhibition itself to the workshops, and even the books, speak the dual language of art and fun thanks to the input of famous children's author **Roberto Piumini**, who used to devise children's programs for Italian national broadcaster RAI and who was worked with fully 65 Italian publishers, something of a record, from 1978 to the present day.

The activities devised for our young visitors are all based on Piumini's scripts, starting with the captions describing the **Artemisia** tapestries. These rather special captions, in rhyming verse, set kids a riddle to solve based on the scene depicted in each tapestry. And grownups can join in too, if they feel the urge!

Then at the end of the tour, kids and grownups alike get a chance to write their own piece of rhyming verse on the show and enter it in the **Artemisia's Thread competition**. The best entry wins a trip to Paris for three, to visit the famous **Gobelins** and **Savonnerie** manufactures where the Artemisia tapestries were woven in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Entries can be submitted up to 31 January (Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Piazza Strozzi, 50123 Firenze; info [www.palazzostrozzi.org](http://www.palazzostrozzi.org)).

The exhibition also offers kids a fully equipped stage set where they can dress up and act out episodes from the tapestries using Piumini's scripts. The scripts can be found in the **Queen's Carpetbag** (to book, call the ticket office on 055-2645155), a special kit that the organizers are offering visitors free of charge for the duration of their visit. Crowns, helmets, shields and other objects in the carpetbag will help aspiring actors to really get into the part.

The carpetbag, specially designed in fabric by **Wanny di Filippo** (Il Bisonte), also contains a real keepsake: a *pomander* or nosegay in a ball containing exclusive perfumes specially created for the exhibition by master perfumer **Lorenzo Villoresi**.

All of Piumini's rhyming verses and theater scripts can be found in a book entitled **L'occhio indovino. Caterina e Maria de' Medici: le trame del potere** (published by Mandragora, 96 pages -

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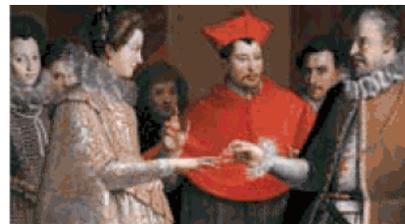
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on sale in the exhibition bookshop at €8.00 and in bookshops everywhere at €10.00). An English translation by Professor **Konrad Eisenbichler** of Toronto University is also available.

And that's not the end of the surprises. Room VIII in the exhibition houses a special **Loom** on which visitors can try their hand at weaving and make their contribution to the creation of a collective work of art. A number small looms in the room can also be used to weave souvenir bracelets and gadgets which can then be taken home as keepsakes. And the *Ente Cassa di Risparmio* is also kindly sponsoring Sunday workshops in the room, where kids can use multicolored paper to learn how to weave a tapestry (to book, call 055.2469600).

All of these activities are run by the *L'immaginario* cultural association, coordinated by **Ludovica Sebregondi**.

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Press communiqué n. 8, 22 October 2008

## Passport to the Medici

*A promotional brochure, with themed itineraries tying in with the exhibition and the chance to benefit from free admission, is available for the Caterina and Maria exhibition too!*

**Florence** - It is called a *Passport* and it is a free publication that the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi is offering visitors to the *Women in Power: Caterina e Maria de' Medici* exhibition.

This kind of promotional brochure looking like a passport has already been tried and tested at previous exhibitions in the Palazzo Strozzi. There was the Passport to Fashion for *ControModa*, the Passport to China for *China: at the Court of the Emperors* and the Passport to Impressionism for *Impressionism: Painting Light*. The brochure illustrates all the initiatives being promoted by the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi and other leading cultural players in the city, including a number of museums run by the local authority and by the national museum superintendency. The brochure is also available from their ticket offices.

The most innovative aspect of this *Passport* compared to other publications of the kind lies in the fact that if a visitor gets it stamped at least 5 times, he or she can earn a free ticket to the exhibition. How does it work? Anyone visiting one of the museums involved in the initiative, taking part in one of the collateral events tying in with the current exhibition, or making a purchase in one of the shops listed in the Passport, must get the passport stamped on each occasion. Then, when they show their Passport with 5 stamps on it at the ticket office, they will be given **one free ticket** to the *Women in Power: Caterina and Maria de' Medici* exhibition.

Once the exhibition devoted to the Medici queens is over, *Passport* will be published again to mark the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi's next exhibition. The full set of brochures can also be used as a handy guide providing a series of themed itineraries to the art treasures of Florence and Tuscany -- a magnificent keepsake for visitors to cherish as a memory of their time in the cradle of the Renaissance.

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