

June 23-28, 2026

Florence

*How to Be A Renaissance Woman,*  
with author and scholar Jill Burke & Paola Vojnovic

You're invited to join author and history professor Jill Burke and me in Florence next year, as we bring to life her book, **How to be a Renaissance Woman**. It serves as an alternative history of the Renaissance—as seen through the emerging literature of beauty tips—focusing on the actresses, authors, and courtesans who rebelled against the misogyny of their era. The five-day program will be rich with visits to museums, archives, and one of the oldest gardens in Florence, and we will explore some of the many fascinating women who were such an important part of the Renaissance. Our program will include a workshop where we'll make our own beauty products using Renaissance recipes, exploring Caterina Sforza's collection of alchemical, medicinal, and cosmetic recipes that she documented in her manuscript, *Experimenti*.

Here is an excerpt from the [New York Times](#):

*There are plenty of noblewomen in these pages — their stories are usually the best documented — but Burke tries to talk about women of many kinds: domestic help, peasants, widows, courtesans, and all manner of sex workers. (The names mentioned also function as a great source for anyone in your life looking for a memorable and uncommon baby moniker. Consider Tullia, Lucrezia, Moderata, Isotta!)*



*Whatever the subject, the expectations are familiar: Women were held to unreasonable standards. “Women’s bodies,” Burke writes, “are presented as forever-unfinished projects, to be constantly improved and worked upon.” She quotes a tract from 1598 that reads, “If one sees a poor woman who has six pennies to her name, four of them are on her face.”*

*A woman of that era had no choice but to think about her appearance. “Looking good,” as the author puts it, “was important for women in a world where the legal rights and earning power of men meant that influence was often gained through manipulation, where beauty could raise*

*your special status.” This was one area of their lives where they had, if not freedom, at least some agency.*

**I AM INTERESTED IN THIS TOUR!**