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|--------------------|--|
| <b>January 28</b>  | <b><i>The World of Isabella d'Este, Marchesa of Mantua:</i><br/>A Conversation with Deanna Shemek</b>                                      |
| <b>February 4</b>  | <b><i>Alfonsina Orsini de' Medici and Her Roman Tomb:</i><br/>A Conversation with Sheryl Reiss</b>   |
| <b>February 11</b> | <b><i>Eleonora di Toledo and the Invention of the Medici Court in Florence:</i><br/>A Conversation with Bruce Edelstein</b>                |
| <b>February 25</b> | <b><i>Black Africans in Italian Renaissance Art:</i><br/>A Conversation with Jonathan Nelson</b>   |
| <b>March 4</b>     | <b><i>Artemisia UpClose: A Conversation with Linda Falcone</i></b>   |
| <b>March 18</b>    | <b><i>"The Correspondence of the Medici Women,"</i><br/>A Conversation with Lisa Kaborycha</b>   |
| <b>April 1</b>     | <b><i>Rosalba Carriera: How The "White Rose" of Venice became<br/>the "first painter in Europe,"</i> A Conversation with Angela Oberer</b> |
| <b>April 15</b>    | <b><i>The Medici Gardens of Tuscany: A Conversation with Ross King</i></b>   |
| <b>May 13</b>      | <b><i>Three Florentine Churches and their Plays in Renaissance Florence:</i><br/>A Conversation with Nerida Newbiggin</b>                  |
| <b>May 27</b>      | <b><i>Self-Portraits of Women Artists at the Uffizi:</i><br/>A Conversation with Giovanna Giusti Galardi</b>                               |
| <b>June 3</b>      | <b><i>Lavinia Fontana: A Woman of Firsts: A Conversation with Aoife Brady</i></b>  |

**January 28**

***The World of Isabella d'Este, Marchesa of Mantua:***

**Conversation with Prof. Deanna Shemek, University of California, Irvine**

Isabella d'Este (1474-1539), daughter of the Este dukes of Ferrara and wife of Francesco Gonzaga of Mantua, to the "Renaissance was an important music musician. She planned oversaw a perfume and fashion design, creating a Europe were eager to politics, government, and three—but it is chiefly for that history remembers woman to assemble a



made history as a feminine counterpart man." In addition to governing, she patron and herself an accomplished gardens and raised animals. She cosmetic pharmacy, and excelled in signature style that other women in imitate. She was keenly interested in social life—and had evident gifts for all her activities as a patron and a collector Isabella d'Este. She was the first full-blown personal *studiolo*.

While her role as a made her truly lasting place in the and coherence of her of a special place in

female patron was not unique, what extraordinary and garnered for her a history of art were the scope, richness, acquisitions, and her meticulous design which to display them. In this talk, we

will embark via virtual reality into the *studiolo* of Isabella d'Este. These two rooms are regarded as among the most spectacular instances of self-fashioning in the Italian Renaissance, the outward expression of one remarkable individual's artistic, cultural, and philosophical values.



Deanna Shemek is Professor of Italian and European Studies at the University of California, Irvine. She is author of *Ladies Errant: Wayward Women and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (1998) and *In Continuous Expectation: Isabella d'Este's Reign of Letters* (2021). Her collaborative editing includes *Phaethon's Children: The Este Court and its Culture in Early Modern Ferrara* (2005) and *Writing Relations: American Scholars in Italian Archives* (2008). Her translation of the

*Selected Letters of Isabella d'Este* (2017) won the 2018 prize from the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women for best translation of a woman's work. She co-directs *IDEA: Isabella d'Este Archive*, an online project for the study of the Italian Renaissance, in collaboration with the State Archives of Mantua. [www.isabelladestearchive.org](http://www.isabelladestearchive.org)

**February 4**

**Alfonsina Orsini de' Medici and Her Roman Tomb:**

**A Conversation with Prof. Sheryl E. Reiss, University of Chicago**



On February 13, 1520, Filippo Strozzi the Younger, Depositor General of the Apostolic Camera, wrote to a friend with news of the funeral of his mother-in-law, Alfonsina Orsini de' Medici (1472-1520). Strozzi jested, "Alfonsina Orsini, whose death no one and whose life everyone mourned, and whose burial is most pleasant and salubrious to mankind." Another observer, Bartolomeo Masi, noted in his diary that she died "with little good grace because she cared about nothing but accumulating money." There is abundant evidence that Alfonsina Orsini was loathed by many male contemporaries, although there are complex motivations for their vilification of this formidable woman. She is familiar to historians of early 16<sup>th</sup>-century Florence and Rome as a powerful figure in Medicean politics and she was a significant patron of art and architecture. In this conversation with scholar Sheryl Reiss,

we will consider her activities as a patron of painting, the decorative arts, and ephemera; her collecting of antiquities; and, especially, her patronage of architecture; and then examine and contextualize Alfonsina's polychrome marble floor tomb in the Roman church of Santa Maria del Popolo. Extraordinary for an early Cinquecento monument, her tomb employs perspectival illusion to suggest an open grave or burial chamber beneath the pavement of the nave.

Sheryl E. Reiss received her PhD from Princeton University in 1992 and has lived in Chicago since 2018, where she is a Scholar-in-Residence at the Newberry Library and teaches at the Graham School of the University of Chicago. Previously, she has taught at Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, Cornell University, the University of California Riverside, the University of Southern California, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Dr. Reiss is a specialist in Italian Renaissance art and architecture with particular interest in the history of patronage. She is also interested in women and gender; archaism in early modern art; exchanges between Italy and Northern Europe; and funerary art. She is the recipient of



grants and fellowships from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Renaissance Society of America, the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art (CASVA), and the Newberry Library. She has published widely on Italian art and art patronage of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, focusing particularly on the patronage of members of the Medici family, and on Raphael and Michelangelo. She has co-edited two books: *Beyond Isabella: Secular Women Patrons of Art in Renaissance Italy* (2001, with David Wilkins) and *The Pontificate of Clement VII: History, Politics, Culture* (2005, with Kenneth Gouwens). She is currently preparing a book, *The Making of a Medici Maecenas: Giulio de' Medici (Pope Clement VII) as Patron of Art*; and, with Yvonne Elet and Linda Wolk-Simon, co-editing a collection of essays titled *Reconsidering Raphael*.

**February 11**

**Eleonora di Toledo and the Invention of the Medici Court in Florence:  
A Conversation with Prof. Bruce Edelstein, NYU Florence**



In celebration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Eleonora di Toledo, the Uffizi Galleries has organized an exhibition in celebration of her life and artistic patronage. The exhibition contains over 100 artworks related to seven themes: Eleonora's childhood in Naples and the formation of her taste; her triumphal entry into Florence as the bride of Cosimo I de' Medici in 1539; her role in the establishment of the seat of the court in the Palazzo Vecchio; her role as mother of eleven children; her patronage of gardens; her role in transforming fashion in Florence; and her legacy. Exhibition curator, Bruce Edelstein, will offer us a lively introduction to the exhibition.

Dr. Edelstein, who has taught at NYU's Florence campus since 1999, will discuss the fascinating life of this Renaissance woman. As a patron of the arts, Eleonora's most important project was the creation of the Boboli Gardens, following her family's acquisition in 1550 of the palace and adjacent grounds belonging to the descendants of Luca Pitti. Until her death in December 1562, this garden project was primarily the domain of Eleonora, although it has largely been treated in the literature as her husband's. Dr. Edelstein will share some of the findings in his forthcoming book on the Boboli Gardens, which focuses on the patronage of this Spanish princess rather than that of her Medici husband.

Bruce Edelstein, who received his PhD from Harvard's Department of Fine Arts, is Coordinator for Graduate Programs and Advanced Research at NYU Florence. Among his honors, he has been a visiting scholar at the Max-Planck Institute, Florence; was a Fellow at the Villa I Tatti; and in 2014, was named Honorary Member of the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno, Florence. He has published widely on subjects including Eleonora di Toledo's biography, iconography, and artistic patronage; studies on 16<sup>th</sup> century Medici gardens; and essays on works by Medici court painters and sculptors such as Bronzino, Cellini, Pontormo, and Tribolo. He co-curated the exhibition *Miraculous Encounters: Pontormo from Drawing to Painting* seen at the Palazzo Pitti, the Morgan Library & Museum in New York, and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles (2018-2019). His book, *Eleonora di Toledo and the Creation of the Boboli Gardens*, will be published in 2022 by the Uffizi.

**February 25**

**Black Africans in Italian Renaissance Art:**

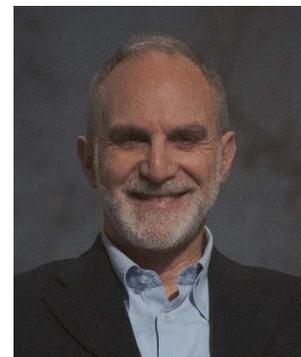
**A Conversation with Prof. Jonathan Nelson, Syracuse University in Florence**



How many people have noticed and reflected on the two Black men in Botticelli's Sistine Chapel fresco depicting the Youth of Moses? Until they were discussed in an obscure journal by a specialist on Ethiopia, art historians nearly always overlooked these prominent figures. On the altar wall of the same chapel, Black figures also appear in Michelangelo's Last Judgement. Black Africans appear regularly in Italian Renaissance paintings, but until quite recently, they remained largely unexamined by scholars. Several recent studies focus on paintings and sculptures showing Black people as servants, thus reflecting the

presence of African slaves in Italy. Many works, however, including those by Botticelli and Michelangelo, also depict and even celebrate Christian Africans. The strategies used by artists to depict Black figures can provide keys to better understanding specific works and the society that produced them.

Jonathan Nelson is a Teaching Professor at Syracuse University, Florence; Research Associate at the Kennedy School of Harvard University; and co-editor of the "Elements in Renaissance" series of Cambridge University Press. A specialist on Filippino Lippi, the subject of a 2022 monograph, he recently wrote a major article on Ethiopian Christians in the paintings of Filippino and his contemporaries. He was the lead speaker and advisor on the December 2022 documentary on [SkyTV, "The Black Italian Renaissance"](#). Professor Nelson has also written volumes dedicated to Michelangelo, Leonardo, Botticelli, Sister Plautilla Nelli, and Robert Mapplethorpe. His forthcoming book, co-authored with Economist Richard Zeckhauser, explores Risks in Renaissance Art: Production, Purchase, and Reception (Cambridge University Press, 2023)



**March 4**

**Artemisia Up Close: A Conversation with Linda Falcone**



Casa Buonarroti, the Florentine museum dedicated to the memory of Michelangelo, has embarked on the restoration of Artemisia Gentileschi's *Allegory of Inclination* (1616), one of the first paintings the artist created during her 7-year sojourn in Florence. Project Coordinator Linda Falcone discusses the painting for which Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1653) was paid three times what her fellow painters earned for their own works on the gallery ceiling. Artemisia's painting, produced the same year as her acceptance to Europe's first drawing Academy, depicts an allegorical figure, 'the inclination to produce art.' It was originally painted nude, only to be censored in the 1680s with the addition of carefully-positioned drapery and veils. This conservation project, dubbed '[Artemisia UpClose](#)', and co-funded by the British nonprofit Calliope Arts and British philanthropist Christian Levett, will use modern diagnostic and imaging technologies to digitally discover what the painting looked like as Artemisia created it. *Inclination* represents Artemisia's debut into Florentine society, and it continues to spark discussion today about Artemisia's so-called "Florentine identity," her painterly techniques, and the life of a censored painting, which is soon to be revealed via contemporary restoration technology.

Linda Falcone is creator, presenter, and managing editor of the magazine and livestream series *Restoration Conversations*, and a consultant for [Calliope Arts](#). In that role, she is Project Coordinator of the *Artemisia UpClose* project. She was a founding director of the organization [Advancing Women](#)

[Artists](#), and served in that role from its founding in 2009 until its closure in 2021. Linda is the co-author of several books with Jane Fortune that spotlighted the quest to uncover lost art by women from the Renaissance and beyond, two of which were featured in PBS documentaries. Linda's books include, *Italians Dance* and *I'm a Wallflower* and *If They Are Roses: The Italian Way with Words*. Linda's first novel, *Moving Days*, was published in 2014. Linda has appeared in several TV art documentaries including the BBC's *The Story of Women and Art*, Feltrinelli TV's *Monuments Women*, and *When the World Answered: Women Artists and the 1966 Flood* (2015), a PBS production based on a book she co-authored. More recently, in 2021, she was artistic consultant for the television program *Renaissance Women Restored*, on the conservation of Plautilla Nelli's *Last Supper*, which was seen on American Public Television.



**March 18**    **“The Correspondence of the Medici Women:”**  
**A Conversation with Dr. Lisa Kaborycha**



After centuries of focusing almost exclusively on the male members of the Medici dynasty, in recent years historians have become increasingly interested in the Medici women and the roles they played in one of the most glittering eras of history—the Florentine Renaissance. In this talk, Dr. Kaborycha will explore those women’s influence on the politics, culture, and especially the arts in Italy, from the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, through their letters and correspondence. In the process, we will also consider letter-writing as practiced by Renaissance Italian women in general, asking the question: “Were the Medici women unusual, or could many other women read and write as well?”

Dr. Kaborycha will discuss women’s literacy during this period—how they learned to write, who they wrote to, and, most important, what they wrote about. She will read letters written by Medici women and others, as they made their voices heard on issues both large and small,

sometimes with startling intimacy.

Born in New York City and raised in California, Lisa Kaborycha holds a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley in Medieval and Early Modern European History. She was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship with the Medici Archive Project, and Harvard’s Villa I Tatti Fellowship in Italian Renaissance Studies. She is the author of *A Corresponding Renaissance: Letters Written by Italian Women, 1375-1650* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) and *A Short History of Renaissance Italy* (Upper Saddle River, N.J. : Prentice Hall, 2011), currently being issued in a second edition by Taylor & Francis, which is also publishing a new book entitled *Voices from the Italian Renaissance: A Sourcebook*. Kaborycha lives in Florence and teaches courses in Italian Renaissance History and History of Art at various American university programs in Tuscany and regularly lectures in the History of Art at the British Institute in Florence.



**April 1**

**How The "White Rose" of Venice became the "first painter in Europe,"  
and More on Rosalba Carriera: A Conversation with Dr. Angela Oberer**



The Venetian-born artist Rosalba Carriera (1675-1757), whose 350<sup>th</sup> birthday we celebrate this year, was immensely famous during her lifetime. The daughter of a clerk and a lace maker, Carriera began her career painting miniatures—mostly portraits and allegorical subjects. Such works quickly established her reputation within the Italian artistic establishment and gained her acceptance into Rome’s Accademia di San Luca in 1704. Carriera is best known for her innovative approach to pastels, which had previously been used for informal drawings and preparatory sketches. She is credited with popularizing their use as a medium for serious portraiture. Everywhere, hymns were sung in praise of her skill and her personality, often in lofty and impassioned language: ‘*Not without due cause is Signora Rosalba valued as an ornament of Italy, and Europe’s*

*foremost female artist.’ ‘She fills Europe with her works,’ ‘Rosalba is one of the brightest lights in painting that your Italy has ever given us,’ ‘The glory of her sex,’ ‘The most talented female artist of our century.’*

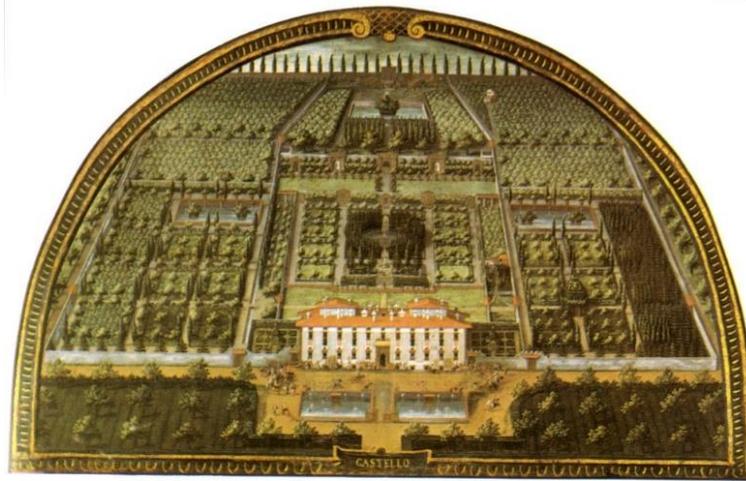
Dr. Angela Oberer will explore the various aspects that allowed Rosalba Carriera to create such a successful career. How did she organize her own workshop and run her business? Which external and internal factors helped her achieve success? How did she manage not only to enter the official art scene of Venetian painters, which was so male-dominated, but to surpass most of them in terms of her success? Finally, what do her self-portraits reveal to us today in terms of autobiographical and professional turning points? Dr. Oberer received her PhD from the Technische



Universität, Berlin, working on the subject of Renaissance Venetian art and the fresco cycle in Monte Oliveto Maggiore. She has lived in Florence for twenty years, teaching art history at various American college programs including Georgetown University, Florence, AIFS, CEA, CET which is associated with Vanderbilt University, and others. A She has written and lectured extensively on the work of Rosalba Carriera. Among her publications: *The Life and Work of Rosalba Carriera (1673-1757) Queen of Pastel*, Amsterdam University Press · 2020; *Rosalba Carriera e le sue sorelle*, Maura Pagliai Editore, 2014; and *Der Freskenzyklus Signorellis und Sodomas im grossen Kreuzgang von Monte Oliveto Maggiore*, Akademischer Verlag, München, 2008. Her latest book [Rosalba Carriera](#) is published by Lund Humphries.

**April 15th**

**The Medici Gardens of Tuscany: A Conversation with Ross King**



The Florentine Renaissance was characterized by a rediscovery of the buildings, statues, and texts of the Ancient Romans, as well as by a reconfiguration of visual space through such things as proportion and linear perspective. If they were crucial to architecture and painting, these developments likewise had a dramatic impact on the philosophy, design, and function of the garden in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Florence. Ross King will talk with us about the extraordinary Tuscan gardens of the Medici family, in which they merged a beautiful landscape with philosophy and art.

[Ross King](#)'s books include *The Bookseller of Florence*, *Brunelleschi's Dome*, *Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling*, *The Judgment of Paris*, *Leonardo and The Last Supper*, and *Mad Enchantment: Claude Monet and the Painting of the Water Lilies*. He has also published two novels (*Domino* and *Ex-Libris*), a biography of Niccolò Machiavelli, and a collection of Leonardo da Vinci's fables, jokes, and riddles. He is currently working on a "short" history of Italy. Among many other honors, Ross King serves on the Council of Academic Advisors for Friends of Florence, and lectures widely on a range of art subjects. He lives with his wife Melanie in Oxfordshire, England.



May 13

**Three Florentine Churches and Their Plays in Renaissance Florence:  
A Conversation with Prof. Nerida Newbigin, University of Sydney**



Playful pleasure or devout piety? Why did Florentines invest so much effort in the performance of *sacre rappresentazioni*, their dramatizations of the life of Christ and the saints, the history of Man's Salvation from the Creation to the Last Judgement, Old and New Testament stories, and miracles of the Virgin? Australian scholar of Italian Studies, Nerida Newbigin, will take us on a virtual visit to three Florentine churches – The Chiesa di San Felice, Santa Maria del Carmine, and Santo Spirito – and invite us to imagine how they became the scene of Florentine ecclesiastical plays: the Annunciation, the Ascension, and Pentecost. Dr. Newbigin will introduce us to the lay confraternities that built the machinery and acted in the plays, and to the rich record of texts, account books, and iconography that we can use to visualize and experience the plays.

Nerida Newbigin is Emeritus Professor of Italian Studies at the University of Sydney and now divides her time between Sydney and Florence. She taught Italian Language and Literature at the University of Sydney from 1970 until her retirement in 2008 and is now a full-time research scholar. She is the author of *Feste d'Oltrarno: Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (Olschki, 1996); *Acting on Faith: The Confraternity of the Gonfalone in Renaissance Rome*, with Barbara Wisch (Saint Joseph's University Press, 2013); *Making a Play for God: The Sacre Rappresentazioni of Renaissance Florence* (Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2021); and with Kathleen Olive she prepared the edition of the *Codice Rustici* (Olschki, 2015), as well as numerous essays, editions and translations.



## May 27 Self-Portraits of Women Artists at the Uffizi: A Conversation with Dr. Giovanna Giusti Galardi



The Uffizi has a unique collection of 1,700 self-portraits; it was started in 1664 by Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici and expanded by subsequent Medici rulers and directors of the gallery, but among these there are only 100 by women artists. These include Lavinia Fontana, Sofonisba Anguissola, and Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, but also lesser-known female artists who have recently been rediscovered, such as Mary Hathfield Cosway. A number of extraordinary contemporary artists are now also represented in the famous collection of self-portraits at the Uffizi. Professor Giusti Galardi has conducted extensive art historical research in the art collection and archives of the Uffizi and her scavenging of the gallery's abundant artistic and textual holdings has facilitated a rich understanding of the social, political, and historical contexts in which the visual art was produced.

Dr. Giovanna Giusti Galardi, born in Pisa, served as art historian and curator at the Uffizi Gallery from 1978 to 2014; since 2005, she was director of the Departments of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Art, 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Contemporary Art, Tapestries, Catalogue, and Documentation of the Uffizi Collections. Her academic background and studies in literature, art, and archives have guided her interests in studying the museum's extensive collections. She has curated many exhibitions with contemporary artists and created and directed the expansion of 20<sup>th</sup> Century self-portraits in the Uffizi's Vasari Corridor (2013). She has acquired more than thirty self-portraits by Italian and foreign female artists for the Uffizi (from 2010 to 2014). Following her retirement in 2014, she was the curator, together with Riccardo Spinelli, of the exhibition *Sweet Triumphs and Fine Bends: Sugar Sculptures and Napkins for the Florentine Marriage of Maria de Medici* (Florence, Galleria Palatina of Pitti Palace, 2015). She was the winner of the first prize of "Books to Taste" (Salon du livre, Turin) with: *Sweets at Court: Paintings and More*, 2001, and of the first prize of "The Country of Women" (Casa Internazionale delle Donne, Rome) with her exhibition catalogue *Autoritratte* (Women Artists Self-Portraits), 2010. Since 2019, she has held the position of Academic of Honor, Accademia delle Arti del Disegno.



**June 3**

**Lavinia Fontana, A Woman of Firsts: A Conversation with Dr. Aoife Brady**



Born in Bologna in 1552, Lavinia Fontana is widely considered to have been the first female artist to achieve commercial success beyond the confines of a court or a convent. She maintained an active career, while also taking on the role of wife and mother. She was the first woman recorded as having her own workshop, and was thought to have been the first woman to paint public altarpieces and female nudes. Coinciding with a major exhibition celebrating Lavinia Fontana at the National Gallery of Ireland (6 May – 27 August 2023), this lecture will explore the artist’s extraordinary life through a selection of her most esteemed works.

Aoife Brady, who received her PhD in Art History from Trinity College, Dublin, wrote her thesis on “The Painting Techniques and Workshop Practices of Guido Reni.” She serves as Curator of Italian and Spanish Art at the National Gallery of Ireland, and is a specialist in Bolognese painting. Prior to her current position, she held curatorial roles with The National Gallery, London, and the Paintings Department of The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Dr. Brady’s primary research interests relate to the study of painting techniques, materials, and artists’ studio practices, with focus on 17<sup>th</sup>-century Italy and Spain. Her recent curatorial projects have included an exhibition of work by Valencian painter Joaquín Sorolla entitled *Sorolla: Spanish Master of Light* in partnership with the National Gallery, London, and an in-focus exhibition of Bartolomé Esteban Murillo’s series of paintings depicting the parable of the Prodigal Son, a collaboration with the Museo del Prado, Madrid, and the Meadows Museum, Dallas. Dr. Brady is currently working on a large-scale exhibition examining the work of Lavinia Fontana, scheduled to open in Dublin in May of 2023, and she will discuss some of her research around that project.

