

13<sup>rd</sup> APRIL  
21<sup>st</sup> MAY  
2019

ENG

# Omaggio a Caterina



Palazzo  
Medici  
Riccardi

# Omaggio a Caterina de' Medici

## 13<sup>rd</sup> APRIL – 21<sup>st</sup> MAY 2019

### Palazzo Medici Riccardi Museum



The exhibition is organized under the auspices of  
the **Committee for the celebrations of the 500<sup>th</sup>**  
anniversary of the birth of Cosimo and Caterina de' Medici

#### **Promoted by**

Città Metropolitana di Firenze

#### **Conception**

Carlo Francini

#### **Organisation and coordination**

MUS.E

Roberta Masucci

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#### **Project of the exhibition**

Tratto di Luigi Cupellini & c. sas

#### **Visual design**

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Gallerie degli Uffizi

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**The Medici: a family of eminent and ambitious figures, who grew among alliances and internal and external conflicts for territorial control. The triumph and the exile; the transition from the margins to the center of power. This year we celebrate two of the Medici, who one became a prince and the other a queen: Cosimo and Caterina.**

Caterina de' Medici, the future wife of Henry II and then Queen of France, was born on 13 April 1519 in the family palace in Via Larga in Florence. A few months later, on 12 June of the same year, Cosimo de' Medici was born in the Villa del Trebbio in Mugello: he became Duke of Florence at just the age of 17 and later Grand Duke of Tuscany. Both are key figures in the cultural and political history of Florence: Cosimo is accredited with understanding the importance of art, he used it as an incomparable "instrumentum regni"; Caterina, an ambitious and lively woman, voiced her opinions in different sectors. For this reason, in 2019 - 500 years after their birth - the Municipality of Florence, together with a committee composed of 22 city institutions and with the organizational support of the MUS.E, has decided to host a programme to commemorate them and to celebrate their lives and achievements. The Organizing Committee – besides the Municipal Administration – represents and brings together all the Bodies, Institutions and Associations in Florence that are committed to creating a shared and coordinated programme. More than 50 exhibitions, conferences, lectures, concerts, guided tours, in-depth meetings, tastings, and "time travel", are organized to visualize the parallel lives of Cosimo and Caterina, which cross many times thanks to the odd intertwining of history and the balance of politics. Therefore, the year 2019 celebrates the extraordinary lives of the two Medici who have taken their fame as well as their cultural, political and economic influence far beyond the borders of Italy.



# Palazzo Medici at the time of Caterina

by Carlo Francini

**C**aterina rarely visited the rooms of Palazzo Medici but the family residence did not reflect the glorious splendors of Cosimo the Elder, Piero the Gouty and Lorenzo the Magnificent.

Only thanks to the will of her cousin, Giulio de' Medici, her mentor since 1522, cardinal and then pope by the name of Clemente VII - the palace restored, in part, its magnificence. Giulio de' Medici - son of Giuliano, the murdered brother of Lorenzo the Magnificent - became Governor of Florence in 1519 and took up residence in the family residence. To secure the palace he asked Michelangelo Buonarroti, already involved in the projects of the façade and in the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo, to close the corner loggia with the "kneeling" windows - the brilliant invention that became the archetype of the Renaissance window. Thus, the loggia became a new space in the palace, the "earthly room". In the years following 1521, it was admirably decorated by Giovanni da Udine - a Friulian

painter trained in Raphael's studio - with subjects linked to the Medici family and to its achievements, but which were unfortunately lost in 1584. The cardinal commissioned Giovan Francesco Rustici to make a bronze statue of Mercury, that would be positioned at the top of a fountain left in the garden ever since the expulsion of the family in 1494; moreover, he had a copy of the *Laocoön* that Bandinelli had made for the Pope in the Belvedere Courtyard, transported from Rome, which is viewable today in the Uffizi Gallery. In the first courtyard, where the *Judith* of Donatello stood tall before the Sack of 1494, the cardinal also asked Bandinelli to create the *Orfeo that tames Cerbero*, still present in the courtyard after various vicissitudes.

In doing so, Giulio de' Medici, who also had the task of recovering the goods looted from the family in 1494, sanctions and ratifies the official separation from Donatello's *David* and *Judith*, housed in Palazzo Vecchio and later destined to take on the role as reassuring mediators of the Republican loyalty of the Medici family.



# *The marriage of Caterina to Henry II of France*

by Roberta Masucci



**T**hroughout modern history, the celebration of marriages has always provided families with the opportunity to create or strengthen relationships based on political or economic interest.



Jacopo Chimenti known as the Empoli, *The marriage of Caterina to Henry II of France*  
Oil on canvas, 1600  
The Uffizi Gallery

Even in the history of the Medici, since their rise in the 15th century, the marriage tool has allowed

them to seal important agreements with those that at the time were considered the main European powers, particularly with France. It is with marriages like that of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV of Bourbon in 1600, that Jacopo Chimenti, known as the Empoli, was commissioned to depict the most prestigious wedding between the House of Medici and the French sovereigns.

The commission involved the construction of two oil paintings depicting the marriage of Caterina and Henry II of Valois and that of Maria and Henry IV of Bourbon, to be exhibited on the occasion of the great wedding banquet organized for Maria's wedding in the Hall of the Five Hundred, located inside the Ducal Palace (today Palazzo Vecchio) which, after serving as palace for the republican power of the city in 1540, became the home of the Medici family.

According to the story of Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger in the "Description of the Very Happy Wedding", the room was richly adorned for the occasion: on the south side of the Hall a "very noble canopy of gold and white cloths embroidered with flowers", realized by Bernardo Buontalenti, held the paintings – made by

the Empoli – on both sides. They depicted the way "in which the old and the new weddings of the two queens of France from the House of Medici were displayed", in order to celebrate the ties between the

→ | (details)  
Jacopo Chimenti known as  
the Empoli, *The marriage of  
Caterina to Henry II of France*  
↓ Oil on canvas, 1600  
— The Uffizi Gallery



Medici and the royal families of France. In the painting depicting the wedding ceremony between Caterina and Henry II, the Empoli focuses on the moment of the exchanging of rings. The young bride, richly dressed in a brocade dress and adorned with pearls according to the 16th century fashion, gives her right hand to the future groom, her face pointed downwards in a sign of humility. Henry, who at the time was also just 14 years old, walks towards the young girl, concentrated on uttering the nuptial promise, looking at the celebrant, Pope Clemente VII of the Medici. Behind the young prince is his father, King Francis I of France, with the glance turned away from the scene, almost an external witness to the event. In the same way, behind Caterina an elderly lady in dark clothing looks past the participants with her eyes. In her features we can perhaps recognize Maria Salviati, Caterina's aunt and mother of Cosimo I, who accompanied the girl on the long journey to Marseilles in 1533. Certainly, this kind of representation represented an important testimony of family history, so much so that about 30 years later Maria herself asked for copies of the paintings



to be exhibited at the Palais du Luxembourg, in memory of the glories of the Medici's House. After the wedding banquet, the location of the paintings remains unclear; in fact, only the painting depicting Caterina's wedding became part of the grand-ducal collections, while the other one was considered lost for a long time. Fortunately, since 2006 it is possible to admire both paintings in the Uffizi Gallery.



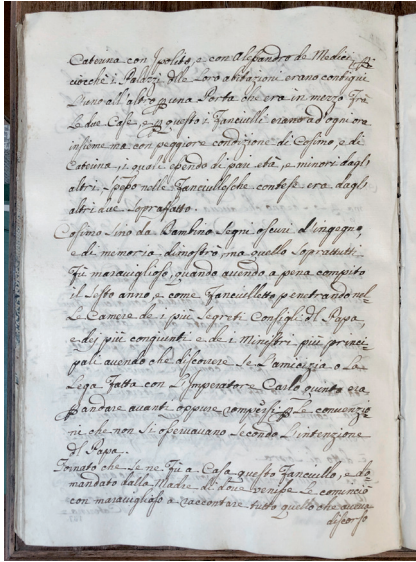
# Caterina through the writings of the Moreniana Library

by Angela Di Iorio

**T**he variety of documents that forms the core of the Moreniana Library was established in the 18th century starting with the collections of the Canon Domenico Moreni, an enthusiastic bibliophile who dedicated his life to the “Historical Annotated Bibliography of Tuscany”.

In 1835, after Moreni's death, the heirs attempted to sell his library and four years later it was purchased by Pietro Bigazzi. However, already in 1868, the collection risked being lost because of the precarious economic conditions in which this scholar lived. For this reason, it was bought by Giuseppe Palagi, Secretary of the Province at the time, who was aware of the importance of enhancing the Tuscan culture. Over the following years, other ancient books were added to the original collection. They came from the suppression of the convents, the disposal from famous libraries, and from the generous contributions of provincial deputies – which included

the important legacy of Emilio Frullani and the fund of Palagi, which became part of the collection in 1882. Overall, beyond the excellent collection of incunabula, the Library houses an impressive corpus of manuscripts, constituting a valuable research site for scholars, students and enthusiasts of the History of Tuscany. In celebration of the 500th anniversary of the birth of Caterina Maria Romula daughter of Lorenzo de' Medici, known as Caterina de' Medici (1519 - 1589), the Moreniana Library exhibits three printed pamphlets as part of miscellanea and a manuscript taken from Palagi's fund relating to the history of the Medici family. Two of the miscellanea are funeral orations written in the occasion of Caterina's death: one by Agostino Bucci in 1589 and the other by Giovanni Rondinelli in 1588; a third one is a eulogy to the “great Caterina de' Medici Queen of France, mother of the King” written by Matteo Zampini in 1586. Reading these texts can shed a different light on Caterina, dissimilar than the popular tradition that for centuries has outlined the



### Genealogy of Medici Dynasty

Paper manuscript,  
bound in half scroll of 191 papers  
18<sup>th</sup> Century  
Coll. Palagi 125



queen as a bloodthirsty monster. The main features of Caterina's personality, which are difficult to outline with precision, are highlighted as symbols of piety, prudence and value. The troubling Italian politics of the 16th century are reflected in her childhood plights. Her life and endeavours are closely linked to those of her illustrious ancestors such as Cosimo the Elder, defined as "father of the homeland, and so many others", such as her nephew Lorenzo, praised for his "excessive caution", the popes Leone and Clemente, the Duke Lorenzo II de' Medici, the "worthy father of this woman" and finally her mother Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne.

From all of them "the Queen treats the kindness of blood and the principles of her admirable virtue" and the political ability that is equally praised "was moderator of the actions, and of the governments of some powerful princes".

A more markedly historical approach is represented in the Palagi's manuscript no.125, where a genealogy of Medici Dynasty can be found. This is a second-level source as an 18th century compilation based on sources preceding a paper manuscript, bound in half scroll of 191 papers, accompanied by indexes of the personalities and a family tree of the Medici family drawn in red and black ink.

# Caterina de' Medici Biography

**Caterina de' Medici was born on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1519 in Florence, in the palace on Via Larga (now Palazzo Medici Riccardi) born to Lorenzo II de' Medici, Duke of Urbino and Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne.**

After a few weeks she loses her parents, remaining the sole heir to the House of Medici and is taken to Rome at the behest of her great-uncle Leo X. In 1525 she returns to Florence, but due to political unrest and the raging plague, she is transferred to the Benedictine monastery of Murate.

After the restoration of the Medici power, Clemente VII summons the orphan to Rome, and promises her hand in marriage to the Duke Henry of Orléans, second son of King Francis I. In France the young duchess plays a subordinate role until 1536, when after the death of Francis, Caterina and Henry become heirs to the throne. After almost a decade of marriage, in 1544 Caterina gives birth to her first son: Francis II, who is followed by nine more over the span of 12 years. Three of her children



Santi di Tito  
*Portrait of Caterina de' Medici*  
Oil on canvas, 1585-1586  
The Uffizi Gallery

would become kings of France: Francis II, Charles IX, Henry III, a fact which made Caterina earn the title of “the Queen Mother”.

In 1559, after the death of Henry II, Caterina becomes the Regent of the kingdom and assumes a crucial role alongside the heirs to the throne. She dies on 5 January 1589 in the Castle of Blois and is laid to rest in the Basilica of Saint-Denis, next to Henry II, in the tomb of Valois.





François Clouet  
*Portrait of Enrico II Valois  
King of France and Caterina  
de' Medici*  
Watercolour scroll 1559 ca.  
*The Uffizi Gallery*