

The Arts Society Oxford Study Day

Bankrolling the Renaissance: A History of the Medici Family

January 29th 10am to 3pm
Rewley House 1 Wellington Square OX1 2AJ

Lecturer: Douglas Skeggs

The Medici were in many ways an unattractive family. Ruthless in pursuit of profit for their Florentine bank, they were greedy for success, merciless to those who opposed their ambition and vicious in their own internal squabbles. And yet without them we wouldn't have Botticelli's "Birth of Venus", the Fra Angelico frescoes in San Marco, Donatello's "David" or the Michelangelo sculptures in the Medici chapel. The Platonic Academy wouldn't have been founded and the doors for the Baptistry would never have been cast.

This Study Day, composed of three talks, looks into the turbulent history of this extraordinary family and their impact on Renaissance art and beyond.



1: God's Bankers

Under the guidance of Cosimo Medici, the family became the unofficial rulers of Florence and leading patrons of the arts. This aroused fierce jealousies, which boiled over in the attempted assassination of Cosimo's grandson Lorenzo.

2: Popes and Patrons

With Florence gripped by the apocalyptic preaching of Savonarola, the Medici were exiled from Florence. But they re-emerged triumphantly as Popes in Rome. Here their decadent and eccentric rule led to the Sack of Rome and ultimately opened the door to Luther's Reformation of the Church.

3: From Riches to Royalty

Although the Medici were a spent force in Italy, an ingenious marriage had put Catherine de Medici on the throne of France, to be followed, shortly afterwards, by Marie de Medici. This last talk looks at the impact these two formidable queens had on the shape of French history.

Douglas Skeggs has given over 7000 lectures to universities, colleges and art societies. He was the director of 'The New Academy of Art Studies' for three years and is presently a regular lecturer at 'The Study Centre', Christie's course 'The History of Art Studies' and other London courses.

Members may recall a popular Study Day that Douglas presented in 2016: The Art of Venice: the Lion of the Sea.

