

Press Release

Presenting the Restored Altarpiece *Madonna del Rosario* by Plautilla Nelli

Chiesa dei SS. Giuseppe e Lucia, Piazza del Municipio, Montaione

In Celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Birth of Florence's Beloved Female Artist



Ph. Claudio Giusti

Montaione, Italy – A significant cultural moment took place on **December 14, 2024**, when the restored *Madonna del Rosario* by **Plautilla Nelli** (1524-1588), one of Florence's first known female artists, was unveiled at the Chiesa dei SS. Giuseppe e Lucia in Montaione. This event dedicated to the memory of Jane Fortune marked the culmination of a thorough effort to study, restore and protect this important Renaissance painting, showcasing the talent and legacy of Plautilla.

Born in 1524, Plautilla Nelli was a Dominican nun at the Florentine Convent of Santa Caterina da Siena, Florence, a largely self-taught artist who gained popularity for her emotionally resonant religious works. *Madonna del Rosario*, one of her most beautiful pieces, demonstrates her mastery in conveying devotional subjects with vivid detail and emotive expression. Although Plautilla's art was celebrated and collected by her contemporaries, it was not until the 2000's that her accomplishments as a Renaissance painter and workshop administrator began to receive widespread recognition from modern viewers.

Fausta Navarro, historian and curator of the 2017 Plautilla Nelli exhibition at the Uffizi Gallery discovered the Montaione altarpiece while doing research in 2016. She was the first person to attribute it to Plautilla. **Catherine Turrill-Lupi**, historian and Professor Emerita at California State University, Sacramento, has studied this painting and other paintings by Plautilla and her 'Bottega' that also have come to light recently.

Under the guidance of **Anna Floridia**, with the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio for the metropolitan city of Florence and the provinces of Pistoia and Prato, a team of experts used a full range of careful diagnostics, analysis, and preservation techniques to uncover the original vibrancy and details of the painting. The restoration process was led by Florentine restorer **Rossella Lari**. The CNR National Institute of Optics provided crucial technical support for the diagnostic phase.

Special recognition goes to the sponsors who made this restoration possible:

Main Sponsor: Tenuta di Castelfalfi S.p.A.

Other Sponsors: Banca Cambiano 1884 S.p.A., Bi.Bru s.r.l and Jane Adams of Artemisia Gold CIC.

We also thank Marina Calamai, De'Bardi Restaurant and Enoteca and Alessandro Bini s.r.l. as Sponsors of activities to promote the restoration.

Plautilla's *Madonna del Rosario* is installed in the Church of San Giuseppe and Santa Lucia, Montaione, which was built in 1562 for a group of local women determined to create a sanctuary of faith. Remarkably, the altarpiece remains in its original frame, which has also been carefully restored as part of this project.

For the **Mayor of Montaione Paolo Pomponi**, “the restoration of the *Madonna of the Rosary* attributed to Plautilla Nelli represents the crowning achievement of an intervention to safeguard and enhance one of the most precious jewels of Montaione's cultural heritage, strongly desired by the Municipal Administration. Made possible thanks to the economic contribution of some local sponsors, whom we sincerely thank for helping us to realize a project that was initially thought to be too difficult to accomplish.” “We are even more proud,” the mayor reiterates, “because this project involves a work of art located in the church of Saints Joseph and Lucy (known to the locals as ‘church of the nuns’), a place that has always been very dear to the citizens and that today, after this careful restoration, sees it return to its original splendor”.

The unveiling ceremony was followed by a short presentation about the restoration process and a guided examination of the painting, offering attendees the opportunity to learn more about Plautilla’s artistry, the historical significance of the painting, and the meticulous efforts that went into its recent restoration. A presentation that represents not only the restoration of a resplendent work of art but also a celebration of the unsung female artists of the Renaissance. Plautilla Nelli’s achievements, and those of other female artists in Florence, continue to inspire today, thanks to the dedication efforts of scholars, restorers, and philanthropists working together to save and highlight their forgotten contributions.

For more information or media inquiries, please contact:

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Event Details:

Date: December 14, 2024

Time: 10:30 AM

Location: Chiesa dei SS. Giuseppe e Lucia, Piazza del Municipio, Montaione

About Plautilla Nelli - Plautilla Nelli (1524–1588) was a Dominican nun and one of the first known female painters in Florence during the Renaissance. Her works, which include *Madonna del Rosario*, are celebrated for their devotional intensity and technical brilliance. More of her works can be found in Florence (Museum of San Marco, Museum of the Cenacolo di Andrea del Sarto, Uffizi Gallery, Museum of Palazzo Vecchio), Fiesole, Siena, Perugia, Assisi, Utrecht and USA. Her most important accomplishment is her masterpiece

Last Supper that was restored by Rossella Lari and unveiled in 2019, a project funded by Jane Fortune and Advancing Women Artists. The painting is now at the Museum of Santa Maria Novella, Florence. Plautilla's legacy as a pioneering female artist in a male-dominated field is only now being recognized, thanks to the restoration of her works and scholarly efforts to highlight her contribution to Renaissance art.

About Artemisia Gold CIC – Artemisia Gold is a UK-based not-for-profit working globally, dedicated to reviving the love and appreciation for art through education, restoration, and immersive experiences. Founder Jane Adams, who worked with Jane Fortune and the Advancing Women Artists Foundation (closed after Fortune's passing in 2018) strives to continue her quest. The mission is simple but powerful: to rediscover, research, and restore overlooked masterpieces, with a special focus on female artists throughout history. Offering unique opportunities for students, professionals, and art lovers to explore European art from the 1200s onward. Our work not only saves important, neglected artworks but also elevates the voices of forgotten female artists who deserve recognition. We collaborate with leading institutions, museums, churches, and scholars and form global partnerships to ensure our restoration projects are world-class and impactful. Artemisia Gold also fosters a thriving international community of students, scholars, and professionals by providing access to lectures, workshops, and events that enhance their understanding of art history and restoration. We're committed to nurturing the next generation of art historians and restorers through hands-on opportunities.

2024, in celebration of Plautilla Nelli's 500th Birthday Anniversary, Artemisia Gold is honoured to have participated in two restoration projects of paintings by Plautilla Nelli, including the beautiful Montaiione altarpiece and a small panel painting of *The Madonna and Child with Saint Dominic, Saint Catherine and Sant'Agnes*. Artemisia Gold also hosted events and lectures in Florence at the Museum of Santa Maria Novella, Museum of San Marco, Biennale, Palazzo Corsini, Palazzo Tornabuoni as well as a special invitation to host a symposium at the Long Room Hub, Trinity College Dublin.

2025 will see ongoing initiatives surrounding Plautilla Nelli and the presentation of a new publication about Artemisia Gentileschi and two of her most loved works: *Mother and Child* and *Santa Cecilia* at the Spada Gallery in Rome.



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