



Paestum

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A Breath of Fresh Air at PAESTUM

When *Gabriel Zuchtriegel* arrived as the new director of the ancient ruins of *Paestum*, the most famous German associated with the three massive Greek temples to date was the German Romantic writer *John Wolfgang von Goethe*. The young museum director was appointed in late 2015 as part of a controversial government initiative to bring new energy to the administration of Italy's museums.



Gabriel Zuchtriegel

appointed to finally organize the massive crowds at the *Uffizi* in Florence. But many of Italy's journalists agree that Zuchtriegel, an archaeologist who previously taught in the nearby region of *Basilicata*, is the most successful of the 20 appointees.

Like the German Romantic writer Goethe did in 1784 while on the "Grand Tour" of ruins in Southern Italy, most tourists that visit Paestum today do so in tandem with a tour of the more famous *Pompeii*, which is 45 miles away. Then, the three massive temples which sat on marshy land, dense with brush and mosquitoes, had just been

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The international press has written about James Bradbourne from Great Britain who was appointed to the *Pinacoteca Brera* in *Milan* and Eike Schmidt (also German) who was



Helen Farrell

Florence With A City Insider

Undoubtedly, Florence is full of treasures. While art may be the first type of Florentine riches that come to mind, Florence is also a foodie city. *Dream of Italy* spoke to **Helen Farrell**, an in-the-know Florentine if there ever was one. Why? Well, it is her job.

Farrell is editor-in-chief of *The Florentine* (www.theflorentine.net), the wonderful English news magazine for Florence lovers. Epicurious and bilingual (English by birth, Italian by osmosis), Farrell also serves as the publication's restaurant reviewer. Forever curious and passionate about winemaking, she is also a freelance contributor to international wine magazine *Decanter*, *Newsweek International* and German magazine *Der Feinschmacker*.

Dream of Italy: What most surprised you when you first moved to Florence?

Helen Farrell: The smell, an earthy exotic stench that hits your nostrils as soon as you arrive in Florence. I was a young 22-year-old who had never really been to Italy, apart from one night in *Venice* and a botched attempt to find a youth hostel in *Bologna* (my friend and I slept outside the station) while interrailing around Europe during university.

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Paestum sits a mile from the coast.

I first came to Florence in July, a month in which the city is not exactly at its most aromatic. The summer stink struck me profoundly, something that I no longer notice and to this day I still haven't figured out exactly where it comes from. It could be the *River Arno*, the age-old drains or simply centuries of intense habitation.

DOI: *How has Florence (and even Italy) changed in the years that you have lived there?*

HF: Florence is very much a cosmopolitan city now. It has always had that inexplicable allure, but now the city boasts a contemporary vibe with art-of-the-moment, like Jeff Koons and Jan Fabre, installed in the piazzas, blending past with present.



Pontassieve

Plus, trendy bars and restaurants are forever opening up in the *Oltrarno*. Try *MAD Souls & Spirits* (Borgo San Frediano, 36R; 39-339-7818710) for award-winning mixology or *Il Santino* (www.ilsantobevitore.com) for fine wine. The other day I was strolling along *Via Santo Spirito* and *Borgo San Frediano*, and I suddenly realized that the neighborhood felt more like Berlin than the Florence I first encountered 15 years ago.

DOI: *Many foreigners have a romantic view of being an expat in Florence, but is Florence a difficult place (versus other places in Italy) to assimilate? There's a stereotype that Florentines stick to themselves.*

HF: I work in Florence and through my work I am very much integrated into life here. For years, I failed to make friends with Florentines, but in all honesty that might have been more

me than them. Yes, there is this stereotype that Florentines tend to be closed-minded and they are in many ways, protesting against change to their city and a desire to maintain the status quo. But if you spend time cultivating a relationship with the locals, a Florentine's friendship is the most loyal you'll ever encounter. Plus, they have a truly wicked sense of humor.



Il Santino

I actually live in a town called *Pontassieve*, the hometown of Prime Minister *Matteo Renzi*. It's 20 minutes from Florence by train and I have local friends, thanks to my husband's circle of chums and thanks also to the fact that I play tennis at the town's club. When you share a genuine passion, it will always overcome barriers and boundaries.

DOI: *Many of our readers dream of moving to Florence or spending extended time there. What advice would you have and what specific resources would you recommend in addition to The Florentine?*

HF: You have to have a plan. Italy's economy is not exactly booming and finding employment here is very, very hard, regardless of your nationality. Moving here is never going to be like that dream holiday you had at that *agriturismo* in

the heart of *Chianti Classico*.

But if you're prepared to compromise and run the gauntlet of unforeseen mishaps and the never-ending story of Italian bureaucracy, life in Italy repays you in the most eclectic and unexpected ways. I'm editor-in-chief of the English magazine in Florence called *The Florentine*, a job that requires organization and creativity in varying doses.

Such is life in Tuscany: you never know what the day will bring, despite your best laid plans. *The Florentine* offers a bit of everything to people who love this city, people who live here all year round or who have been once and dream of returning, or people who have never been but dream of seeing this sublimely beautiful seat of the arts. Events, culture, classifieds, interviews, expat life and language, the Florence experience: in print, online and via social media. We feed that dream.

I often see myself as a cupid, shooting little Cupola-shaped arrows into the ether and observing the swoon worthy! In addition to *The Florentine*, Florence has some uber-bloggers (check out *Girl in Florence*, *ArtTrav* and *Curious Appetite*, plus many others). If you love literature and Italy, treat yourself to a copy of our beautifully illustrated bilingual literary magazine, *TheFLR*, *The Florentine Literary Review*, which we launched last year!

DOI: *What is one of your favorite articles that you have published in The Florentine and why?*

HF: A difficult question! Recently we had the honor to run an article by *The*



Michelangelo's *David* was moved

New York Times writer Sam Anderson. Sam had come to Florence to research what ended up being a cover story on *David's* weak ankles and our editors provided him with on-the-ground support.

For *The Florentine* he penned a piece "behind the scenes", all the things he couldn't fit into his NYT article, such as a carriage driver feeding a horse with a banana in *Piazza della Signoria* and how the former director of the *Accademia* doesn't regard *David* as the epitome of sculptural beauty. Then there was the time we published the news about the guy who was so moved by the *Birth of Venus* that he stripped off in the Uffizi. Our website traffic doubled!

DOI: *What is something different you recommend for travelers who have been to Florence previously?*

HF: Visit the libraries (*Marucelliana, Nazionale Centrale, Riccardiana, Laurenziana*). Florence is as much a literary city as it is an artistic one. Hire a car and visit a winery — one of the smaller ones, like *Malenchini* (www.malenchini.it) or *Tenuta San Vito* (www.san-vito.com) in the hills around Florence — and talk to the winemakers. Their passion and sacrifice is humbling: a bona fide life lesson. Check out the recently reopened *Museo degli Innocenti* (www.istitutodegliinnocenti.it) and *Museo dell'Opera del Duomo* (www.operaduomo.firenze.it).



Biblioteca Riccardiana



Biblioteca Laurenziana

Walk out of the center and stroll around the neighborhoods: *Le Cure, Campo di Marte* and *Gavinana*. That's where you'll find Florentines going about their daily lives. *Le Cure* is at the edge of Florence's borders before you head out of the city and up into the fresh air of Fiesole — it has a great morning market that's open every day except for Sunday.

Campo di Marte is a popular residential area, home to Fiorentina football club stadium (have an *aperitivo* at *Caffè Dogali*, Viale Malta, 5R), while *Gavinana* is as authentic a Florentine neighborhood as it gets, with some superb bakeries *Bottega di Pasticceria* (Lungarno Francesco Ferrucci, 9CR) is as beautiful as its cakes are delicious) and some of the city's most attractive real estate.

DOI: *Do you feel like Florence is overrun with students?*

HF: It's not that the city is overrun with just students; the city is overrun in general. Hypertourism is fast becoming a problem that necessitates exceptional management by the

authorities. In many ways, Florence has become too popular for its own good.

But Florentines are resilient: I am confident that together we can all find a way of welcoming quality tourism without impacting upon the city's liveability. Indeed, there's a project launching this summer that strives to address the issue of improving the tourism offering throughout the city, from conference facilities to B&Bs, top hotels to restaurants.

DOI: *Our readers love culinary experiences. What are a handful of your favorites in Florence that might not be commonly known?*

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Florence



Helen tasting wine

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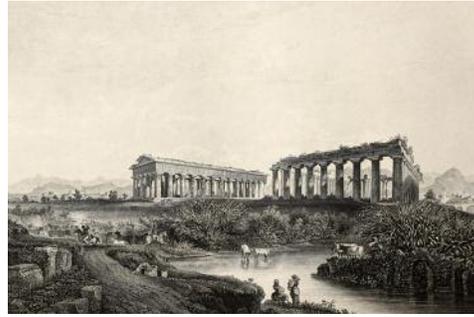
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to the *Accademia* in 1873.

“discovered” by international tourists. The locals had always known about them and grazed their buffalos (naturally immune to malaria) around the foundations of Greek and Roman buildings.



The city once called *Poseidonia*, dedicated to the god of the sea, was a Greek colony established in 600 BCE. The temples were built from local stone and then covered in white limestone and painted to look like those on the Greek mainland. The city was renamed Paestum under Roman rule and the temple complex was enhanced with private houses.

The rich city began to decline in the early Middle Ages and was completely abandoned in the 8th and 9th centuries when pirates from North Africa began to raid the coastline.

People fled to the mountains and established walled villages that are dotted throughout what is now the Cilento National Park. Many Italian-Americans today whose roots are in the provinces of *Salerno* are their descendants.



Grand Tour writers and artists fell in love with Paestum in the 18th century and *Mussolini* famously loved Paestum and had the swampy land drained to make it more accessible. In September 1943, Allied troops set up camp on the temples after coming ashore on the Paestum beach and chasing the Nazis northward toward Salerno and Naples.

Modern Paestum

Today tour buses en route from Pompeii cruise by buffalo mozzarella

farms before dropping tourists off in front of the archaeological park where they can wander between the temple complex and the museum, which displays treasures excavated from the ancient city.

Sometimes licensed tour guides wait near the entrance and can be paid in cash to give a tour, but there hasn't been a regular schedule or any easy way to understand the ruins other than

to wander and ruminate like Goethe did in the 18th century. It can be fun to wander alone in the basin of an ancient swimming pool filled with grass and wildflowers, to dig mosaic tiles from the ground with the toe of your sneaker or scout the holes in the ground where cisterns from Roman houses were once placed.

But in sleepy Paestum, confused visitors often spend more time in the *Bar Museo* (which is famous throughout Italy for its exquisite *gelato*) than in the museum that displays the extraordinary artifacts excavated there.

PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO

DI PAE STU M



With little historical context or information available in other languages, the temple complex can be a hard place to understand.

A Fresh Approach

Enter Zuchtriegel who is animating the site for visitors in Paestum and online. Because museum

directors tend to stay in their ivory towers, Zuchtriegel's casual nature is a welcome surprise. He posted selfies with the director of the archaeological museum at Reggio Calabria on a recent visit and shots from a snowy hike to see medieval ruins with the new mayor of *Capaccio-Paestum*. When the first route for the disabled was created on the temple complex, the museum posted a photo of Zuchtriegel sitting in a wheelchair with a furrowed brow as

he tested the route out for himself.

A much-needed website was one of his first successes, which came with a new logo that highlights the “Tomb of the Diver,” the

most famous work displayed at Paestum, discovered in 1968, which shows a young man making a graceful, Olympic dive into the underworld. Though it may seem a small accomplishment, the prior website had little more than the opening hours of the museum.

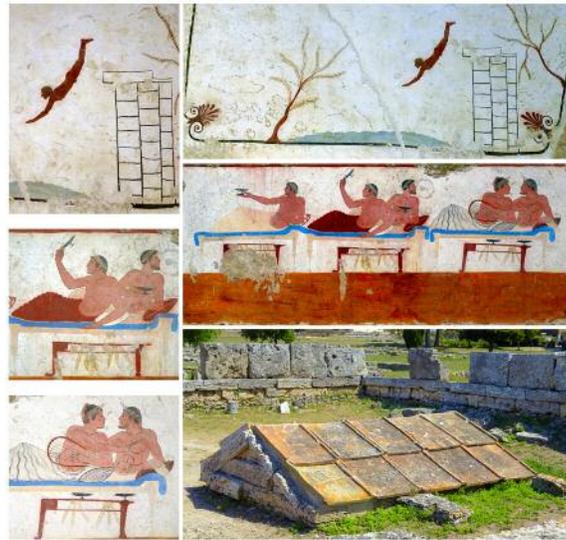
Now English-speaking visitors can read about the history of Paestum, see upcoming events and purchase tickets, including a combined ticket with nearby *Velia*, once home to the *Eleatic School of Greek Philosophers*.

62 acres of *Paestum* have been

Then a dizzying array of programming has been added that fuses the needs of tourists, scholars and locals. Summer concerts have traditionally been held on the temple grounds, but Zuchtriegel has now added reenactments of gladiator battles to bring to life the Roman period and engage families on summer weekends. Hours have been extended according to the season so visitors can now watch the sun set over the temples.

During the early winter a contemporary artist created a light installation on the temples that served as a reference to the colors that would have once adorned the temple facades. Then for Valentine's day, a special evening tour of the museum was created for couples, focusing on depictions of love and fertility. Paestum's local wedding banquet industry may soon be supported by the availability of wedding ceremonies at the temples.

But most exciting for the past and future of Paestum is that new



Tomb of the Diver

excavations have begun, paid for by private sponsorships. The first was paid for by *Antonio Amato*, a Salerno-based pasta company, whose 40,000 euro were used to reveal a private dwelling from the earliest Greek era of the city. The dig was broadcast live on Facebook complete with Zuchtriegel interviewing the lead archaeologist as the discovery was being made. For residents of Paestum and the small towns throughout the Cilento, these

discoveries are especially meaningful as they illuminate the lives of their ancient ancestors.

This summer has a full schedule of theater and dance programs on the temple grounds and tours by appointment of the vaults called "Storeroom Fridays." These exclusive tours are being offered by appointment in Italian or English as an opportunity to see the treasures, many newly excavated, which are not on view to the general public.

Museum attendance is already up 27% in Paestum and is expected to continue to rise in 2017. Though

many events will only be listed a few weeks in advance and offered in Italian, you can always watch what Zuchtriegel is doing next just by keeping your eyes on Facebook @parcoarcheologicopaestum

—Danielle Oteri

Danielle Oteri is an art historian whose grandmother used to play at Paestum as a child with ancient pottery shards she found in the grass. She leads tours of Campania for Feast On History. For more information, visit www.feastonhistory.com

The Details

Paestum Archaeological Site and National Archaeological Museum

Via Magna Graecia, 919
Paestum
(39) 0828 811023
www.museopaestum.beniculturali.it
Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
(Last ticket sold at 6:50 p.m.)
Museum closes at 1:40 p.m. on first and third Monday of each month, though the temples remain open.
Extended hours during the summer.
After sunset, visitors must stay on the lighted pathway on the temple complex.

Where to Eat

Bar Museo

Via Magna Graecia, 913
Open daily, 8 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Bar Museo is famous in this area for its homemade *gelato*. Families famously drive long distances just to eat there. Their affogato (gelato doused with a shot of espresso) is extraordinary. It's directly next to the museum and the perfect place to enjoy a panoramic view of the temples.

La Dispensa di San Salvatore '88

Strada Statale, 18
(39) 0828 1998888

Open daily, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

This casual spot for lunch serves produce grown on the organic vineyard *San Salvatore*. Though the restaurant is not exclusively vegetarian, this is heaven for veggie lovers. They also make wonderful pastries that highlight cream made with buffalo milk and fresh fruit. San Salvatore's organic wines are available by the glass or bottle.

Food

Via Provinciale, 13
(39) 0828 1990285
www.borgolapietraia.com
Open daily, 7 to 11 p.m.
Food is an elegant restaurant in the

mountains just above the temples that puts a modern spin on traditional *Cilento* recipes. It's on the property of *agriturismo Borgo La Pietraia*, which is designed to look like a medieval village that the 8th-century refugees from Paestum built, with bright colorful accents to honor Paestum's ancient splendor.

For even more information on planning a trip to Paestum, read the article *Paestum: A Must-Visit in Campania* by Sharon Sanders in the July/August 2010 issue of *Dream of Italy*.

excavated; 234 acres have not.

Cibrèò to Cibblèò: The Fabio

Florence has always been a food-centric town. Classic old school trattorias, new vegan hipster restaurants, tripe-sandwich stands and never-ending cafes fill the city. The menus are often the same almost everywhere, not because of tourism, but rather because Florentines, when they go out, always want the same traditional dishes, the ever-present two-pound T-bone steak, roast pork and tons of fried foods.

Hidden, off-the-beaten tourist track is one of my all-time favorite restaurants, the rather non-traditional restaurant, *Cibrèò*, opened in 1979 by *Fabio Picchi* and a group of his friends. Located in front of the *San Ambrogio Market*, which inspires the seasonal menu variations at the restaurant, the surrounding neighborhood is still really for locals.

The menu at *Cibrèò* hasn't changed since it opened and I never tire of dining there. Most people don't know that Florentines traditionally do not eat much pasta. You won't find pasta on the menu, nor *bistecca alla fiorentina*. This is home cooking taken up a notch. Almost all of the dishes are precooked as they take a long time to make, like your grandmother's kitchen on a Sunday, if you are Italian. This is the restaurant where I take chefs — Italian and foreign alike — to experience the true flavors of the Florentine kitchen.

Your server will start you off with a glass of *Prosecco* as you peruse the menu and order. Your table will fill up with a huge assortment of small plates to be shared while waiting for your first course. One of my favorites is a

cold tomato spread that tastes like the essence of summer. Try it on the incredible rolls, baked right there.



Fabio Picchi

First course choices are usually intensely flavored soups, such as a yellow bell pepper soup garnished with tiny croutons and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and a generous garnish of freshly grated parmesan cheese on the side. The summer menu might feature rich *ricotta* flan or a meaty *ragu* in winter. The spicy fish soup is another favorite. Chili pepper is more common than black pepper in the Florentine kitchen.

Main courses are simple ricotta-and-veal meatballs or a roasted pigeon served with candied mustard fruit. Although Florentines are not big fish eaters, Fabio has a passion for the Tuscan coast and he has a relationship with the fishermen off the island of Elba. He prepares the freshly caught fish in such a simple way to show off the maximum freshness. Save room for dessert. As an ex-pastry chef, I am picky about desserts and once I tasted their cheesecake and flourless chocolate cake on the menu, I never wanted anything else.

Trattoria, Café, Food Theater

Always curious, always reaching for something new, Fabio has grown *Cibrèò* into various new venues. The first to open was the less expensive *trattoria*, nicknamed *Cibrèino*, and known as “the poor dining room” or *la sala di poveri*, as it was basically the backside of the kitchen. The food was

the same, just a smaller choice of menu items, no wine list and a few communal tables.

Over time, the kitchen needed more room and the dining room was moved over to a new location on *Via dei Macci*. The staff has a secret passageway to bring the food from the kitchen and now there are more tables.

Across the street from the main restaurant is the café. This is where most of the locals go to dine. It functions as a breakfast spot with coffee and pastries or small sandwiches for breakfast and snacks. Lunch and dinner, as well as cocktails, are also served here. This is more like a French bistro with limited tables — and a few outdoor tables, perfect for people watching.

Not happy with just three venues, Fabio created a private club, *Teatro del Sale*, housed in a large, old storeroom where he has an open kitchen where diners can watch while they eat. You



Ristorante



Trattoria

The *Ponte Vecchio* was the only bri

Picchi Empire

will need a membership (7€ if you are not a resident in Florence or 15€ for locals) to access the club

The Teatro as you may imagine is also a theater. Fabio's wife, actress *Maria Cassi*, performs here and also is the artistic director. The space opens for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Food is served buffet-style on a serving table, where you help yourself, taking small tastes of the various dishes of the day. Leave room for the specials!

While you are dining, you will hear the chefs yell from the kitchen when the specials of the day are ready. Go to the kitchen window and they will pass you a small tasting plate. This happens several times during the meal. At breakfast, they will be making hot *focaccia* with *mortadella* as one of the specials. Lunch time usually includes spit-roasted meats. In the evening, the buffet is interrupted to create the theater space for the show after dinner. Quickly they break down the buffet table and rearrange the tables and chairs for you to enjoy the show.

Asian-Inspired Ciblèo

Fabio has just opened a new dining space called Ciblèo. Back in the '80s Fabio was asked to open a restaurant in Japan. The deal was, when the woman in Japan could grow Tuscany's kale, *cavolo nero*, Fabio would open the restaurant. He received the letter and went to Japan and had the restaurant until the Japanese woman died, about six years later.



Picchi at Ciblèo

His Florence restaurants have always had young apprentices from Asia. This tiny 20-seat restaurant lets Fabio have fun, and with a young Japanese chef, and a young Korean chef

he has blended the various cultures.

Using the best Tuscan ingredients, such as the ancient grain flour *Verna*, meats from *Casentino* and artisanal products from Japan, Fabio has created an inspired menu.

The soft-opening tasting menu featured small plates: Chinese-style ravioli, black garlic, tuna, pork, ham, smoked artisanal soy sauce,



Chefs at Ciblèo

mini steamed buns and dumplings. We enjoyed a chicken curry from

China on a rare rice as the final main course. Our palate cleanser at the end of the meal was a small shot of *sambuca* with a slice of frozen persimmon. Fusion at its best. For regular diners, there

are now two menus to choose from, including a more expensive one featuring a special main course, which could be a Japanese Udon dish or Korean guinea fowl.

The Future

If you would like to meet Fabio, even before you visit Florence, check out his videos on YouTube @*picchifabio*. Fabio is a volcano of ideas and has two more projects in the works as he has recently taken over a new space on the other side of the market in an old farmer's cooperative. Stay tuned...

—Judy Witts Francini

Judy Witts Francini has lived in Tuscany since 1984. She's the author of Secrets From My Tuscan Kitchen and the Taste Chianti app. Judy runs custom culinary tours in Chianti and Sicily. For more information, visit www.divinacucina.com

1€ = \$1.08 at press time

THE DETAILS

Cibrèo

Restaurant:

Via del Verrocchio, 8r
Florence
(39) 055 2341100
www.cibreo.com

Open Tuesday to Sunday for lunch and dinner. Must have reservations. About 90€ per person.

Trattoria:

Via de' Macci, 122r
Open Tuesday to Sunday for lunch and dinner. No reservations. About 35€ per person.

Cafè:

Via del Verrocchio, 5r
(39) 055 2345853
Open daily, from 8 a.m. to 1 a.m.

Teatro del Sale:

Via dei Macci, 111r
(39) 055 2001492
www.teatrodelsale.com
Open for lunch and dinner, Tuesday to Saturday. Open for lunch on Sunday. Must have reservations for dinner show at 9:30 p.m. Breakfast is 10€, lunch is 17€ and dinner is 35€.

Ciblèo:

Via del Verrocchio, 2r
(39) 055 2477881
Open for dinner, Tuesday to Saturday. Must have reservations.



Ciblèo tasting menu

idge in Florence to survive WWII.

HF: Always my favorite thing to talk about: food! My preferred restaurant is always *Il Santo Bevitore*, (www.ilsantobevitore.com) a modern take on traditional Tuscan food. For contemporary creative cuisine, try *Essenziale* (www.essenziale.me) by *Simone Cipriani*. Best dish in Florence: the chicken fried in butter at *Trattoria Sostanza* (Via del Porcellana, 25R; 39-055-212691). Best wine bar: *Le Volpi e L'Uva* (www.levolpieluva.com) — get a glass of wine lovingly sourced by the owners and the sausage and truffle toast. Heaven!



Essenziale

DOI: *What is a good way for expats or longer-term visitors to meet people in Florence?*

HF: Check out *The Florentine's* regular community events. We hold regular The Florentine Wine Club chats and this month we're co-hosting a Mexican for Moms lunch with Firenze Moms4Moms, a local group. Head to the British Institute in Florence, for their ever interesting talks in the historic Harold Acton Library; the BI is celebrating its centenary this year.

Or attend events put on by New York University or Syracuse University: our vibrant international schools offer cultural events galore! Follow Creative People in Florence and join one of their immensely popular *aperitivi* events. Plus, there's St. James Church and St. Mark's Church, both English-speaking and both welcoming to all.

DOI: *Florence of course is the world's greatest art city. What is new on the art scene?*

HF: Last year, the Italian state appointed new "super managers" to manage the *Uffizi*, *Accademia* and

Bargello museums, much maligned in the press. My opinion is that all three directors are pushing the envelope to professionalize the city's galleries.

Eike Schmidt at the Uffizi is pushing for longer opening hours, more room openings and more art on display

instead of languishing in the archives. This spring, the Uffizi is turning the spotlight on women's art through a much-awaited exhibition and this will be reinforced shortly by the US non-profit *Advancing Women Artists Foundation*, which is launching a mega crowdfunding campaign to restore the first ever *Last Supper* by a nun-artist, *Suor Plautilla Nelli*, putting it on show in the *Santa Maria Novella* complex. (See the blog post on www.dreamofitaly.com)

Street art has really taken flight in Florence thanks to *Clet*, *Exit Enter* and *Blub*, among others, all of whom work within the urban fabric, adding thoughtful and provocative creative flourishes to the city surroundings.

As I mentioned, we have internationally renowned contemporary artists installing their artworks in *Piazza Signoria*, *Piazza Santa Maria Novella*, *Piazzale Michelangelo* and up at *Forte Belvedere*, which sparks debate and discussion among locals and tourists. And *Palazzo Strozzi* is the trailblazer in

this, always brilliant and ahead of the rest. *Ai Weiwei* recently installed life rafts on the Renaissance windows of the exhibition centre's façade as political statement and part of his show inside.



Palazzo Strozzi



Easter Scoppio

DOI: *What is your favorite festival to attend in Florence?*

HF: The Easter Sunday *Scoppio del Carro* is a delight, when the bishop sets light to an explosive dove that runs along a wire from the High Altar in the *Duomo* hitting the ancient cart outside. It's fireworks galore in the middle of the day. But what I'd really recommend is coming to Florence off season, in the winter months when the crowds are fewer and you can enjoy the city more.

DOI: *When you want to get away from Florence for a day or a weekend, where do you go?*

HF: In Tuscany, I love the *Val d'Orcia* with its lunar landscapes, outstanding food and wine. My favorite town is *San Quirico d'Orcia*, a gem of a place (it's where I'd love to retire!), staying at *Palazzo del Capitano* (www.palazzodelcapitano.com), a spa hotel, and eating very well at *La Trattoria Toscana al Vecchio Forno* (Via della Piazzola, 8; 39-0577-897380). Nearby *Montalcino* is a must for its *Brunello* wine of course: stop by the immense wine resort *Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco* (www.rosewoodhotels.com) or *Castello Banfi* (www.castellobanfi.com) whose Italian-American founders we have to thank for Brunello's popularity around the world today.

1€ = \$1.08 at press time

Florence is home to 1/3 of the world's art.