*Paper prepared for the*

*6th Euroacademia International Conference*

*Europe Inside-Out: Europe and Europeaness Exposed to Plural Observers*

*Nice, 20 – 21 May 2016*

*This paper is a draft*

*Please do not cite or circulate*

# The Threads of a Life well lived: Beyond the Portrait


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## Abstract

This paper investigates the history, cultural memory, art and identity of Eleonora di Toledo (1522-1562), a Spanish noblewoman and the first Duchess of Florence in Renaissance Italy. It explores how Eleonora is presented beyond the visual culture of Bronzino's radiant portraiture and beyond the scope of pictorial and historical narratives, seeking the other story of women's lives and how they are expressed. It is through the interrogation of her world of fashion, textiles, fabrics and trade that she is socially staged; a self-expression of her personal identity.

This performing identity is examined in the habitus of the person, with particular reference to appearance, to constitution as related to health, well-being and disease, and to her attitude and approach to the apothecary's cabinet, comparing the letters of the Medici Court Doctor, Andrea Pasquali with Bronzino's portraiture. This research interrogates textile as the principle decorative medium in how fabrics were woven, dyed, printed and stitched to give varying textures, and the threads woven to create a life lived through performance and the mediums of language, fashion and culture to create specific cultural memory.

Research processes are discussed, including interviews of contemporary Florentine aristocracy, whose gifts of personal fashion mementoes for Eleonora, reflect an intermingling of the past with the contemporary. This is considered within the context of the devising, writing and performing of this woman's life, in the theatrical performance of 'A Gift for Eleonora', a cultural health intervention for public engagement. This was performed in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Basilica di Santa Croce, in the Cappella dei Pazzi, Florence, Italy on May 13-15, 2015 and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bath, UK, at the Roman Baths on March 3, 2016 as part of the Bath Literature Festival.



## Keywords

European Renaissance Art; Eleonora di Toledo; Portraiture; Identity; Site-Specific Performance;


## Draft Paper

Agnolo Bronzino's portrait of 'Eleonora of Toledo with her son Giovanni', c. 1545, might be viewed as an agent or instrument to express and embody the propaganda of Cosimo I de' Medici's status to other European rulers of the time, merging together art and history in the making of European identity. Bronzino (1503-1572) was a leading portraitist of the Italian Mannerist style, whose radiant portraiture of Eleonora di Toledo affirms a dynasty, which reigned in a declaration of its own cultural identity, and which attempted to include itself within the wider international political context of Europe. This portrait depicts an aristocratic woman with alabaster skin, who appears aloof and detached, and of a mother with her son. She is dressed in a fabric of black velvet and gold brocade, which encases her body, wearing the jewellery of pearls and a pendant at her neck as indicators of perfection, wealth and esteem. Bronzino's skill is to capture in oil paint both the light of textures from the fabric and the creation of a lighter lapis lazuli blue halo around her head.

Gabrielle Langdon cites how Elizabeth Cropper describes a Renaissance portrait of womanly beauty as being about "womanly perfection responding to the viewer's expectations of canons created in this climate."[i] With reference to the idealisation of Eleonora's face in Bronzino's portrait, Langdon discusses "Bronzino's hallucinatory, neo-Petrarchan perfectionism", which evolves from a tradition of "emotive rhetorical allusions to promote a woman's beauty, goodness and elevation above the mundane", and which, "were always enjoined with an implicit invitation to venerate her chaste image from afar and to defer to her power." Langdon argues that, "Bronzino's allusiveness weaves into his official *Eleonora* messages of Medicean dynasty", describing Eleonora as, "a womanly paragon of beauty expressed in metaphors of jewels and ivory, of radiance, iconic elevation and *lontananza*" and concludes, "Even as Eleonora is presented to Cosimo as a remote 'Laura' of visionary, otherworldly perfection, she becomes the figurehead Tuscan *patrona* for this culturally ambitious court." [ii]

Eleonora di Toledo's financial and cultural independence enabled her to enjoy the pleasure of personal art patronage, although it is likely that it was underlined by Medicean interests. In this way, the state portraits that Eleonora commissioned present her as a beautiful, healthy, fertile woman and mother of male heirs, which was part of a pattern of patronage, as well as Medici court power representation. Designed and based on Medici cultural and political agendas, Eleonora was aware of the need to disseminate an ideal image, modelling herself as both a symbol of her role as public consort and as an exemplar for other women. Therefore, replica gifts of Bronzino's portrait of 'Eleonora of Toledo with her son Giovanni', were sent by Cosimo I de' Medici to potential rulers who might make alliances, were conceived as part of a strategic plan and mechanism towards the success of a contemporary politics of power: that of

Cosimo de' Medici's dynastic succession via the brokerage of marriage of their children and subsequent relationships with other European rulers.

Eleonora di Toledo, was born in 1522 and died in 1562. She was a remarkable woman, who married into the Medici dynasty, and was the first Duchess of Florence in Renaissance Italy. I researched, devised and wrote the performance text, taking Agnolo Bronzino's portrait of 'Eleonora of Toledo with her son Giovanni', c.1545, located in the Galleria degli Uffizi; the funeral dress of Eleonora, restored over 12 years and housed in the Galleria del Costume in the Palazzo Pitti; the site-specificity of Filippo Brunelleschi's design and plan of the Cappella dei Pazzi, a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture in the Basilica of Santa Croce; and the Early Renaissance form of a madrigal of voices as the starting points for experimentation. Originally conceived as an art installation to be created and performed as one of six installations in magnificent cultural heritage sites within the City of Florence in 2015, it was selected by an international juried panel to investigate themes of Body, Dress and Costume with an invitation to create it in Eleonora di Toledo's private apartments in the Palazzo Vecchio with the potential to perform it in Eleanora's Private Chapel. One of my initial research visits was to view this site and I envisaged myself as Eleonora, sitting there weaving, and I found the paintings, history and heritage of that Chapel simply extraordinary.

Eleonora was educated in Spain until 1534 and then at Naples as part of the Spanish enclave. She was immersed in "Spanish visual and linguistic aristocratic culture in the seventeen years before she married Cosimo, and her persistence with Spanish linguistic practice after her marriage"[iii] suggests that her mother introduced an early childhood routine of daily contemplative prayer and devotional practices, which were based on Spanish devotional texts belonging to her father, Don Pedro de Toledo's collections. Robert Gaston believes that Bronzino painted an image of Don Pedro in 'The Crossing of the Red Sea' fresco in Eleonora's Chapel, "the kneeling man wears a Spanish garment, the *sayo*, with leather reinforcement across the shoulders, and soft leather boots: both items of clothing recorded at Don Pedro's death in the inventory of his personal belongings."[iv]

It is known that once Eleonora left Naples in 1539 Don Pedro was "tortured by her absence, daily pestering Cosimo's agent Musefilo for news of her fragile health, for letters from her, and offering urgent medical advice for her illnesses."[v] Gaston suggests that Eleonora might have gazed at her father 'kneeling before Moses'[vi] in the Chapel daily, arguing that Don Pedro encouraged the Spanish-speaking Jesuits to approach Eleonora for patronage once his daughter resided in Tuscany. When Don Pedro died in 1553 in the arms of both his daughter and his second wife, Eleonora gave birth the same night to her daughter, Anna, "Eleonora's grief at the loss of her beloved father must have been traumatic",[vii] so that the Don Pedro portrait in Bronzino's fresco in the Chapel, "gained a fresh poignancy for Eleonora in the nine years that remained to her after her father's death."[viii]

However, for various reasons, the site of Eleonora's Chapel in the Palazzo Vecchio became too difficult to manage in terms of public engagement and performance, and I was then invited to look at the architect Brunelleschi's amazing sacred geometry space of the Cappella dei Pazzi. As another religious building, this site and space could not have been more contrasting to Eleonora's Private Chapel in the Palazzo Vecchio, and whose history dictated that building works continued after Brunelleschi's death. The Pazzi family was also linked to an organized conspiracy against the Medici family and so the space had other resonances. This cultural heritage site is a space based on the circle and the square, divided by the clarity of plaster walls, pilasters in grey stone and the magnificent decorations of glazed terracotta by Luca della Robbia. From the origins of 'A Gift for Eleonora', I explore and consider the processes of research, practice as research and the process of creation and making, from the first performance in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence, Italy in May 2015 to the second iteration of the work in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Roman Baths, as part of the Bath Literature Festival, UK in March 2016.

My interdisciplinary research builds on previous publications of the performing lives of women, having written two books of that name and the series 'Stand-ups and Strumpets' for BBC Radio 4. This research incorporates themes of identity, motherhood and 'being', whilst investigating Renaissance history, fashions and textiles of the sixteenth-century and the notion of trade in textile materials across Europe. The devised performance, 'A Gift for Eleonora', focuses on and interrogates Eleonora's world of fashion, textiles and trade, her attitude to health and wellbeing, through a contemporary lens of what is important today, in order to be happy, healthy and to live well. My passion is for the cultural value of the arts for health and well-being, for a cultural encounter that affords a positive health experience for the individual and cultural health interventions for public engagement.

## Early Research

Early research took me to The National Gallery, London, to antecedents of what Eleonora might have worn and how this might link to the contemporary. Part of my early research process was to interview contemporary Florentine aristocracy and elite[ix], which involved asking my guests to bring a gift for Eleonora, a fashion memento that was particularly special to them and linked to the cultural heritage, history and life of Eleonora di Toledo.

Cristina Aschengreen Piacenti, the previous Director of Galleria del Costume di Palazzo Pitti, brought her own book as a gift for Eleonora, speaking to me about the restoration of Eleonora's burial dress, and how the Medici tombs had been opened up three times. How in 1983, a wooden box of clothes revealed stockings from the sixteenth-century, "as though it was a modern stocking", and she insisted that the box and its clothes be transferred for conservation to the

laboratory at the Galleria del Costume, a project which took over ten years to complete. I had read about Eleonora's burial attire, "the first group of garments to be examined, researched, documented, conserved and displayed"[x], before I met Cristina, which "consisted of clothing worn in life and not in mint condition' and how 'the cinching in at the waist of the satin give one the impression that the duchess was, in fact, much smaller than the original size of her clothes."[xi] Cristina told me that seams were let out, depending on whether Eleonora had lost weight or was pregnant.

Mary Westerman Bulgarella argues that "a much more real sense of her life and death can be gained through an attentive examination of a primary source that was, in a way, a direct expression of Eleonora herself – the personal attire in which she was laid to rest."[xii] It was Janet Arnold, who completed the detailed pattern of Eleonora's dress, including "a drawing that gives a visualization of the shape of the dress when worn."[xiii] Cristina's successor at the Galleria del Costume achieved funding for air-treated cabinets to display the Medici costumes, and it was here that I saw Eleonora di Toledo's satin bodice from the gown in which she was buried. I was made aware of the fragments of her red velvet bodice, or 'bodies' as they were known, which were fastened at the front with hooks and eyes. I imbibed the discovery of the red silk stockings and silk garters worn by Eleonora, which were probably crimson, but on display, are discoloured.

As a fashion memento of Cristina's research and the conservation of the Medici clothes, she wore a coat to the interview with a patch over a tear, like Garzia's discovered garment had revealed (the reported favourite son of Eleonora), and a pearl necklace, whose story reflected both Eleonora's love of pearls and Cristina's own memories of her husband buying her organic pearls in India. In Bronzino's portraits of Eleonora, she often wears pearls and a pendant at the neck. In my research, I came across Alessandro Allori's portrait of 'Eleonora di Toledo' c. 1572, which portrays her favourite costume of a co-ordinated petticoat and overgown, her style hallmark: "Her official style was an image which the Duchess carefully constructed over the years, and to which she remained strictly faithful, with modifications and alterations over time that were effectively of little significance."[xiv] Landini records examples and evidence of garments, "red satin brocaded with gold wefts" in February 1545 or "magnificent white patterned velvet with gold and silver weft loops of the petticoat" in October 1560.[xv]

Cristina told me that Eleonora did not own Bronzino's portrait dress, as it was a "state portrait". Landini describes the precious fabric of the official portrait as "a brocaded velvet covered in gold weft loops of different lengths", as a "textile masterpiece: a fabric that only a handful of craftsmen were capable of producing", stating that this fabric may have been chosen with the Duke's desire in mind "to make his voice heard within international politics."[xvi] Cristina informed me, "It was a wonderful experience to live with these pieces over ten years. We felt a lot of compassion." She revealed how Eleonora's heart was broken with the deaths of the children, and how she was undressed in a hurry, "nobody caring; they simply couldn't care less."

In an interview with Principessa Giorgiana Corsini, whose family is linked to the Italian Renaissance in a number of ways, we discussed the culture of the Corsini gardens and the creation of the Palazzo Corsini. Her gifts included two beautifully crafted leather pairs of her mother's shoes: "It is part of our culture", and we discussed the pearls that she was wearing – Chinese and bought in a Charity Auction, "very ordinary", and which she would only ever wear in the morning. The Marchesi Titziana Frescobaldi brought particular artifacts from her childhood home of opera glasses and a fan in a glass case, contributing fascinating narratives of her Florentine family, who can trace their wine-making activities to before the Italian Renaissance, involving thirty generations in producing Tuscan wines, "We cannot understand the future if we have no understanding of the past."

Fausto Calderai, the international furniture scholar and art consultant, spoke of Eleonora's wedding chest of pearls, and whose interests include the decorative arts and the role of furniture in sixteenth-century interiors. He brought several gifts for Eleonora, including his silk scarf from Sienna, which he takes everywhere with him, and a Vivienne Westwood hat that looks like a crown and sits on a marble bust in his hallway. The international jewellery designer, Angela Caputi's gift for Eleonora was a piece of contemporary resin jewellery, "not for sale", and inspired by the Baptistry. She spoke of the sculptural quality of the necklaces that she designs and makes, inviting me to visit one of her workshops in Florence with the costume, where she made me a gift of necklace and earrings, which I wear in the performance of 'A Gift for Eleonora'.

## How and what inspired me, to write this performance?

It was the discovery for me of Eleonora's body, having been exhumed and analysed by a team of forensic anthropologists, which could substantiate Eleonora's state of health (The Medici Project, 2004). [xvii]This enabled a great deal of knowledge about her life and times to be brought to the surface about her, particularly her health and well-being and her relationship to fashion and garments. I researched Eleonora's life from the many perspectives of her cultural world of Bronzino's portraiture, the poetry of Tullia d'Aragona, the madrigals of various composers; the apothecary's cabinet and the use of medicinal plants. Beyond the portrait and the scope of pictorial narratives, there was evidence too, in the Guardaroba notebooks of the language of appearances with examples of small changes in terms of fabrics, range of colours, innovation of decorations and how they were applied. I became particularly interested in the letters written by the Medici Court Doctors, specifically, Dr Andrea Pasquali, who in a private letter of 1545 to Pier Francesco Riccio, described Eleonora's illness and treatment, and how she required clove oil and cinnamon, the wood of life (oliodi gherophani, canella confetta, legno).

I then became immersed in the imaginative leap from the use of portraiture as a document for a period, in original historical documents and the scientific research from this paleopathological and historico-medical study to creating a life lived through performance, and the enchanting associations between language, fashion and culture; the mediums where literature goes. I became fascinated by this woman, and saw how 'her-story', as opposed to the 'his-tory' of Cosimo I of Medici, was very much expressed as being about the number of children that she conceived, giving birth to eleven, eight of whom survived; of her beauty, her piety and her fecundity. I think that she was intelligent, a sharp business woman, a gambler who loved playing poker, a person who liked being outside in the Tuscan countryside enjoying hunting, fishing and having fun, whilst also loving the intricacies of weaving, and the processes of 'fashioning' a garment. For me, her complexity is revealed in the concept that all weaving is about mathematics, patterns and geometrics, which interested her whether she was playing poker, trading in grain or choosing 'rete' or 'retino' for a mesh network fashion accessory for clothing.

## Costume

Bronzino's portrait, 'Eleonora of Toledo with her son Giovanni' is the archetypal representation of the first Duchess of Florence in Renaissance Italy. Eleonora's dress "represents the manifesto of the Florentine style: the richness of the fabric – the pride of the city manufacturers – and the elegant life of the tailoring."[xviii] Bronzino's portrait of "elegant Renaissance femininity"[xix] does not lend itself to an image of the Duchess loving power as both manager of the Tuscan estates, and performing a leading role at State or Public ceremonies at Cosimo's side, "the concept and practice of a public role for women was a lesson which Eleonora clearly brought with her from her Neapolitan period, given the specific importance of the women of Aragon and their constant presence in the life of the court."[xx]

This icon codifies an ideal female image, with the pomegranate motif on her dress, referencing her role as a mother, and the suggestion of the Duchess as a proud, strong-willed woman with a detached disposition. Eleonora's pose is of the ideal woman of the Renaissance and the portrait is an advert for the Florentine silk industry; her clothing made from rich textiles reserved for official occasions, decorated with jewels, beads and blackwork embroidery. However, historical letters from the Medici secretaries convey a loving wife, who shared Cosimo's passion for hunting and gambling.

Eleonora's business acumen was revealed in her personally organizing and supervising the family's expenditure for clothing. It was a traditional female occupation to sew and embroider with the Duchess's love of fabrics and fashion exemplified in the work of Francesca di Donato, who "wove for Eleonora in the grand-ducal workshops alongside other highly specialized craftsmen", the Nurse, Cassandra, "entrusted with the lining of a zimarra for the Duchess," as "she possessed the skill of 'cutting', whilst Lisabetta, an embroiderer received remnants of gold and silver thread…and mounted on reels, so that she could proceed with several jobs at a time"'.[xxi] Eleonora employed ten gold and silver weavers continually to work on her apparel.

I investigated how silk fabrics and papers were dyed, printed and stitched to give varying textures; how fabrics were torn and applied, with gold rubbed over them and then stitched. I became fascinated by Florentine Textile production with the examples of buratto, rete and retino. My research was fired by the wonderful 'Fashions & Gardens' Exhibition at the Garden Museum in Lambeth, London, demonstrating that the sixteenth century was the age of cloth, that "textile was the principle decorative medium'"and that "your most expensive possession would probably be found on your back." I learnt that "much contemporary ornament aimed to render hard surfaces as if they were embroideries, weaves and damasks."[xxii]

The interdisciplinary research of Fashion & Textiles, Nature and Costume cross over and through Eleonora and Cosimo's personal interest in medicinal plants, and how realistic flowers begin to appear on clothing, such as, Cornflowers, Borage and Pansies, "all worked in silks and spangled with silver thread".[xxiii] The first printed Herbals include Diocorides 'Materia Medica' and the images of early botanical artists served the needs of embroiderers to be both decorative and to make patterns. It was a case of learn your herbal as well as embroider it. Medicines in the Medici household came out of the hedge and garden, producing pastes, ointments, liniments and jellies. An example might be Borage, the blue flowers to cheer you up, to increase breast milk, helping reduce fevers, stimulate blood circulation, with the crushed, fresh leaves being used as a compress for tired and swollen legs. There is a detailed reference to an illness that Cosimo I suffered in 1549, where a range of medicines from Florence were requested to treat him, consisting of "chicken distillate" (distillato di pollo), which included borage and plantago.[xxiv]

In the 'Health and Beauty' section of the Renaissance Galleries at the Victoria & Albert Museum, there are a number of medicines stored in ceramic jars. Health and appearance were linked to spiritual well-being. I looked at various examples of Drug Jars with a particular interest to Eleonora's specific health conditions, for example, Bread Crust Plaster – a poultice made from bread crust, quinces and other ingredients used as a treatment for vomiting, 1530-1550; infusions from Maidenhair Fern for breathing difficulties, 1550 and Poppy syrup, prescribed for insomnia, 1530-1550. The plants on Eleonora's clothing advertised her beauty and expertise, a new court dress being an event with gold and silver thread patterns silhouetting nature and silk-designers becoming the makers of fashion. Eleonora's costume was an outward expression of her patronage, expertise, learning and engagement with horticulture.

## Significance of the contemporary

In my earliest collaboration and discussion with professional costume designer, Tim Heywood, we spoke of the possibility of using these fashion mementoes from the research interviews with contemporary Florentines and aristocrats, as an inspiration for printing on fabric. We considered how layers of gauze and colour might reflect Eleonora through both the mediums of myself, as deviser-performer, and the lens of the Florentines revealed in the layers of their contributions, feeding both the creation of the costume and the performance. I wanted to explore the potential theatricality of the costume, and Tim's research ideas explored the notion of a costume cut in a sixteenth-century pattern and prints, which was not historically accurate, taking Janet Arnold's pattern of Eleonora's burial dress as a starting point for experimentation around this idea.[xxv] Sharing numerous images from my research, we discussed a twisted skirt, the notion of couture; portraits of Eleonora dressed in petticoat and zimarra, an overgown; a sophisticated shape, whether to have a floor length gown or a cutaway to reveal layers. We spoke of how both Fashion, Theatre and Performance are ephemeral, of iconic garments with an emotional connection, of the legacy and history of fashion accessories and clothing, "a tangible set of memories linked to a piece of costume."

Dame Vivienne Westwood had been an inspiration for several of my interviewees, particularly for Fausto Calderai, whose Westwood cufflinks displayed both a Renaissance and Versace look to them. For me, the dress - the costume - was about the visual, spectacle, movement and contemporary innovation. Heywood wanted to create a structural, sculptural costume in linear space, linking back to the Renaissance, to big shapes of architecture, to styling, Westwood, Thierry Mugler, and Charles James. Heywood spoke of 'Cartridge' pleating in relation to the Renaissance, a technique, which would suggest cartridge pleated sections on the coat and asymmetric cuffs, which unbutton to reveal a hanging sleeve. I wanted to convey Eleonora's love of fabrics, so Heywood created a coat of different fabrics, but tonally the same. When I showed Heywood my research photographs of the Cappella dei Pazzi, he wanted to take the colours of Teal, Madonna Blue and Pearl Grey to make the coat with orange or pink "zippy colours". The lined hanging sleeves would reveal "bits of colour" and the asymmetric stiff skirt of coloured patchwork would reveal the contemporary corset of contouring through zips with "slashes of colour", when opened, and soft crepe trousers in a 1930s style. He wanted to reflect "a gift of life, of the multifaceted power of colour." Up to the 1550s, only classic colours were employed, but, "in later years the chromatic range came to be enhanced with new shades: aquamarine, wallflower…, sky blue and flax flower blue."[xxvi]

I showed him some photographs of experimentations with my hairdresser, Elaine Diniro, and we came up with the idea of a punk look. Much later, when I was devising in rehearsal and in collaboration with Chris White, she suggested that we have as many props as needed within my costume, so hidden pockets became necessary, all adding to the idea of reveal and discovery. Heywood's costume design drawings were discussed with costume maker, Alison Lane and myself: a shaped corset "but not a killer", palazzo wide fitted pants, "Katharine Hepburn…full and seems like a dress…a skirt that sits over the top of it, panels in different shot silks…how the unbuttoning links to a draping Renaissance sleeve and the exposition of an inner sleeve in shot silk…" We talked of the audience's challenge of listening to me, yet seeing something different, the balance of the Renaissance and the Contemporary. We experimented with a 'punky', yet rich look of jewelled silks in colours of inky blues, bottle green - jewel tones. How Vivienne Westwood uses a richness of tones, "dark tones are classier" and using black that has different textures, as a base, which "gives you freedom". Heywood said that: "When we first see you, we think it is one garment" and that I would be seen from all angles promenading in the space. In the Cappella dei Pazzi, the costume is the theatre; a visual fascination that becomes dominant in the Chapel.

In the Roman Baths, the costume roots Eleonora in the Renaissance and the contemporary whilst moving through both Classical and Victorian architecture. The costume claims the space, creating a new scenography of site, exciting curious enquiry into body structure and architecture. The Roman Baths became a new starting point for experimentation in how to contextualize and re-devise 'A Gift for Eleonora' from this site-specific space as a second non-theatre, cultural heritage site that is both a sacred and healing space in the UK. The provocation to research and to re-devise this second iteration of the performance was Sulis, the Celtic Goddess of Healing and Sacred Waters, and Minerva, who was the Roman Goddess of Wisdom. The creation of the hybrid, Sulis Minerva, demonstrates the Romans' adaptation of Britain's Celtic traditions to establish their own dominance. The Romans appropriated the sacred waters and native Celtic deity, exampled in the Gorgon Head in the Roman Baths, which illustrates the Celtic and Roman influences. Originally, the Celts believed that the hot spring, with its rich mineral properties, was the work of the deity Sul, the Celtic Goddess associated with medicine, fertility and healing. The waters of Aquae Sulis sets it apart from other Roman Baths, where one could worship Sulis Minerva in the adjoining Temple, and it is the healing qualities of the mineral rich waters that enhanced the sacred qualities of the site.

## Conclusion

Our continuum will be the 2 new site-specific spaces that we are currently discussing for later in 2016, where the response to site for one will explore European art and identity, through the cultural heritage site-specific space of an original manor house, built upon and developed further in 1552. Using six selected spaces within the house, the third iteration of 'A Gift for Eleonora', will be re-devised and re-created in the context of what Eleonora di Toledo might have brought to the Grand Tour of Italy in the eighteenth-century. From the Renaissance of Tintoretto, through Roman

and the Classical world of Diana, to the contemporary artworks of the digital portrait, the ceramic installation and the sculpture, challenging the demarcation of art and science. The fourth iteration to be re-devised and re-created is in a site-specific space that has been a ballroom, a late nineteenth-century theatre and a textile conservation studio.

In a 'Blog' this year[xxvii], I wrote about how "Eleonora di Toledo was a fiercely independent Renaissance woman, a true European, who straddled the courts and countries of Italy and Spain linking England through her great-grand-daughter, Henrietta Maria of France, wife of Charles I. Eleonora's first son, Francesco I, married Johanna of Austria, whose parents were Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor and Anna of Bohemia and Hungary. Eleonora's story reveals the politics of her time, the importance of trade and European partnerships. As a shrewd agricultural investor and business woman, who traded in grain and shipped to Europe, can she have traded without a political agreement?"Beyond Bronzino's portrait of 'Eleonora of Toledo with her son Giovanni', are the layers of art and history, which have contributed to the creation of the European identity of Eleonora di Toledo, exemplified in the threads of gold and silver silk and the textile masterpiece of a life well lived.

4979 paper  290 abstract; 200 word bio

## Bio-note

Alison Oddey is Professor of Visual Culture & Contemporary Performance at the University of Derby, UK, Senior Research Fellow & Reader in Arts & Health at Nottingham Trent University, UK and Visiting Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence, Italy. Her interdisciplinary research crosses over, in and through visual culture, arts, health & well-being, contemporary performance, fashion, renaissance history and nature, and is concerned with cultural health interventions, the cultural value of the arts for health, happiness and wellbeing, and landscape health-care interventions for public engagement, embracing art and science. Her current research and practice includes the performance, 'A Gift for Eleonora'; the interactive art installation, 'The New Apothecary's Cabinet II', and the exhibition, 'Celebrate the Feet: Indicators of our Health and Lifestyle', both at the Royal Derby Hospital, where Alison is Artist-in-Residence for 2016-17. Alison has an established international research record evidenced by seven published books, work in the public domain as a presenter for BBC Radio 4 and Royal National Theatre's Platform Events: her latest podcast is available at: https://soundcloud.com/#nationaltheatre. She is Co-Editor of the international Journal, *Scene*, and Associate Editor of *The International Journal of Health, Wellness and Society*. She is a Holistic Health Practitioner.

Endnotes

[i] Gabrielle Langdon, "A 'Laura' for Cosimo: Bronzino's *Eleonora di Toledo with her Son Giovanni*," in *The Cultural World of Eleonora di Toledo*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004), 46.
[ii] Langdon, "A 'Laura' for Cosimo," 62.

[iii] Robert W. Gaston, "Eleonora di Toledo's Chapel: Lineage, Salvation and the War Against the Turks," in *The Cultural World of Eleonora di Toledo*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004), 158.
[iv] Gaston, "Eleonora di Toledo's Chapel," 172.
[v] Ibid, 173.
[vi] Ibid, 174
[vii] Ibid, 175
[viii] Ibid.
[ix] Filmed Interviews were conducted at the Villa Favard, Florence, March 2015, and edited footage was used for the trailer of 'A Gift for Eleonora' in May, 2015.
[x] Mary Westerman Bulgarella, "The Burial Attire of Eleonora di Toledo," in *The Cultural World of Eleonora di Toledo*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004), 208.
[xi] Bulgarella, "The Burial Attire of Eleonora di Toledo," 217.
[xii] Ibid, 223.
[xiii] Ibid, 216.
[xiv] Roberta Orsi Landini and Bruna Niccoli,  *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580* (Firenze: Pagliai Polistampa, 2005), 23.
[xv] Landini and Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze*, 25..
[xvi] Ibid.
[xvii] The aim of 'The Medici Project' was to reconstruct the habits, diseases and causes of death of the Medici Family.
[xviii] Landini and Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze*, 14.

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[xxi] Ibid, 19.
[xxii] Nicola Shulman, *Fashion & Gardens* (London: Garden Museum, 2014), 9.
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