

Where are the Women? Female kin in 16<sup>th</sup>-Century Medici and Farnese narrative cycles.

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For a family bent on gaining status, having a Pope in the family was tantamount to winning the lottery. This vehicle enabled many early modern families to rise to the ranks of nobility and royalty, almost impossible otherwise. The Medici had two almost consecutive popes: Leo X (1513-21) and Clement VII (1523-34), followed by the Farnese Pope Paul III (1534-49). Because the papacy was a life appointment, papal kin sought to solidify any gains they made during an actual papacy. Scoring appointments and wealth were obvious strategies, as were dynastic marriages.

Historicizing a family's deeds provided another avenue and the Medici and Farnese commissioned extensive narrative cycles in their domestic properties to chronicle their achievements. While calling attention to their popes, these ensembles feature battles, honors, and patronage of civic monuments, *inter alia*. Regarding European politics, both families' ultimate rise depended upon connections with the hereditary rulers, the Valois and Habsburgs: both the Medici and Farnese cycles highlight these encounters.

Female kin played a role in Medici and Farnese strategies. Although most were just marriage material, some women quite actively promoted family interests. Their visibility in monumental palace decoration, however, is limited. This paper examines the depiction of Medici and Farnese women in complexes like the Quartiere di Leo X in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, and the Sala dei Fasti Farnesi in the Villa at Caprarola, raising questions about which women put in appearances and in which scenarios.