



# Medici Women: Portraits of Power, Love, and Betrayal in the Court of Duke Cosimo I

*Gabrielle Langdon*

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The ducal court of Cosimo I de' Medici in sixteenth-century Florence was one of absolutist, rule-bound order. Portraiture especially served the dynastic pretensions of the absolutist ruler, Duke Cosimo and his consort, Eleonora di Toledo, and was part of a Herculean programme of propaganda to establish legitimacy and prestige for the new sixteenth-century Florentine court.

In this engaging and original study, Gabrielle Langdon analyses selected portraits of women by Jacopo Pontormo, Agnolo Bronzino, Alessandro Allori, and other masters. She defines their function as works of art, as dynastic declarations, and as encoded documents of court culture and propaganda, illuminating Cosimo's conscious fashioning of his court portraiture in imitation of the great courts of Europe. Langdon explores the use of portraiture as a vehicle to express Medici political policy, such as with Cosimo's Hapsburg and Papal alliances in his bid to be made Grand Duke with hegemony over rival Italian princes.

Stories from archives, letters, diaries, chronicles, and secret ambassadorial briefs, open up a world of fascinating, personalities, personal triumphs, human frailty, rumour, intrigue, and appalling tragedies. Lavishly illustrated, *Medici Women: Portraits of Power, Love and Betrayal in the Court of Duke Cosimo I* is an indispensable work for anyone with a passion for Italian renaissance history, art, and court culture.

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