

Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary were completed, the paintings surround the niche with the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The paintings were commissioned to famous painters from Bologna: *Jesus among the Doctors* is a work by Lavinia, as well as *The coronation of the Virgin*. She was called to Rome to work there and she stayed there until her death, in 1614. In 1665 the funeral of young Elisabetta Sirani was held in this basilica, she had died two months and a half before but she was buried only after long investigations.



Sirani Elisabetta - An Allegory of Virtue (detail)

Elisabetta received a strict education from her father, the painter Giovanni Andrea, who prohibited her from leaving Bologna, maybe in order to get help in painting when he fell ill with arthritis. Elisabetta, an artist of rare sensitivity, surrounded herself with many female students who will continue the profession. She suddenly died after two days of excruciating agony and rumours started to circulate regarding a possible poisoning. She was buried together with Guido Reni in the Rosary Chapel.

7. Santa Caterina De' Vigri

Corpus Domini – via Tagliapietre 21, Bologna

The saint from Bologna died in 1463 and while she was concluding her earthly life, she started the miraculous life that led her to become patron saint of Bologna. She grew up in the luxury and comfort of the Este court in Ferrara, and when she was very young she decided to join the Corpus Domini convent of Ferrara that she left only to go to the Corpus Domini convent of Bologna in 1456. She was a woman with a deep faith and a gifted artist in the art of miniature and copying. Still today, six centuries from her death, her perfectly preserved body is taken care of by the Poor Clare nuns of the cloister and is venerated by the numerous worshippers of the saint. Despite investigations, science could not explain the phenomenon of this extraordinary preservation. The bombings of the World War II, which inflicted serious damage on this sanctuary, could not do anything against Catherine, the Saint of Bologna.

8. Gentile Budrioli

Fortified gateway of via Portanova, Bologna

Gentile Budrioli, born in a respectable family and married to the notary Cimieri, was one of the most promising students of Scipione Manfredi, a famous Professor of Astrology of the University of Bologna, and learned the secrets of herbs from the Franciscan friar Silvestro. She went down in history as *Great Witch*. She was admired and esteemed by everyone: the members of the most renowned families of the city turned to her for medications and she became friends with Ginevra Sforza, wife of the lord of the city Giovanni II Bentivoglio, who chose her as a counsellor. She was the victim of envy and, after horrible torture, she was burnt at the

stake in 1498. The fortified gateway (“torresotto”) is still there. According to the story, Ginevra hid here, while Gentile was burnt in Piazza San Domenico.

9. Properzia de' Rossi

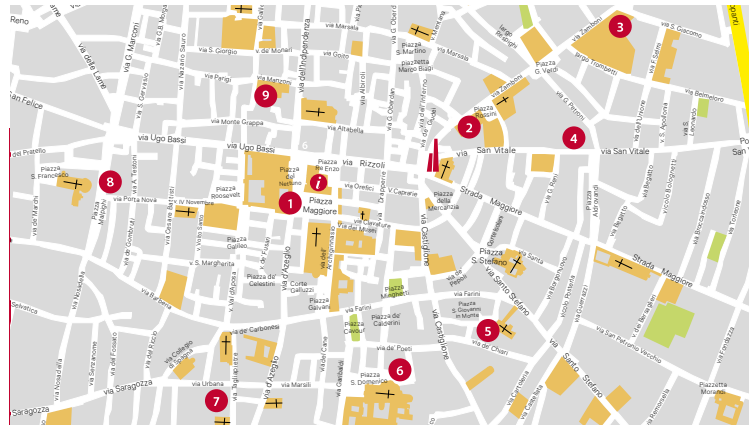
Medieval Museum – via Manzoni 4, Bologna



Bologna was the city where the first female sculptor of history, Properzia de' Rossi, worked and lived, in the early sixteenth century. She was a brilliant and untameable person and passed with ease from one activity to the other, from carving marble blocks to decorating peach stones. Even Vasari, who did not always have kind words for the artists from Bologna, was fascinated by the personality of the “female sculptor” and described her life praising her and expressing his admiration. The beautiful capitals of Palazzo Bolognini in via Santo Stefano are allegedly one of the remaining works of the famous pioneer woman artist, and also the San Petronio Basilica hides, in its small internal museum, a bas-relief by her. A small and extraordinary masterpiece is preserved in the Medieval Museum: the coat of arms of the Grassi family, in the filigree frame there are 11 stones with images of Apostles and female saints. Properzia had to get herself noticed in a male world; there were very few female painters, but no woman had ever become a sculptor, before her. She died without getting the chance to meet Pope Clement VII, who was in Bologna for the coronation of Charles V and wanted to meet her to admire the hands that had created so many masterpieces.

www.museibologna.it/arteantica

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Lavinia Fontana Portrait of Cozzadini Family (detail)

Women in the shade of the Two Towers

The lives of many women are interwoven with the history of the city. All of their lives are linked by a common thread: passion. Passion for art, for knowledge, for fame, for a man, for justice or freedom. Here are some of their stories.

1. Piazza Maggiore



Piazza Maggiore
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Piazza Maggiore was the place where, in the High Middle Ages, Bettisia Gozzadini, Novella d'Andrea and Margherita Legnani used to walk, they all came from important families and shared the passion for culture. They gave their famous lessons to university students, having to face problems for that: young Bettisia, who graduated in Law in 1236, dressed as a man for many years; Novella held her lectures covered with a veil and Margherita used to teach leaning out of a window. Due to their high level of education they had to cope with an environment that was purely a male environment and that stayed that way for long.

2. Ginevra Sforza

San Giacomo Maggiore – piazza Rossini, Bologna

A fresco of the Bentivoglio Chapel portrays all the members of the noble family under the protection of the Virgin Mary on the throne: Giovanni II, lord of the city, his wife Ginevra Sforza and their numerous children. Ginevra, daughter of the lord of Pesaro, came to Bologna in 1454 to marry Sante Bentivoglio, lord of the city, when she was only 12. When he died, Ginevra married Giovanni II Bentivoglio, who was her own age. Their marriage was not a marriage of convenience but a real bond. Not only did they have sixteen children, but they also worked together to strengthen



Chappella Bentivoglio
Especially the daughters of Ginevra Sforza

and increase the power of the family. They lived far from each other in the last years of their life. In 1506 Pope Julius II expelled the Bentivoglio from Bologna and officially reconquered the city. Differently from her husband, Ginevra never gave up hope and also for this reason she was considered a conspirator, the instigator of horrible murders and a mean person, as the chroniclers of the period depicted her. She died in 1507, abandoned by everyone, and excommunicated, and her body was thrown into a mass grave. Her beautiful palace was destroyed by popular acclaim, in the place where now lies the Municipal Theatre of the city.

3. Anna Morandi Manzolini

Museum of Palazzo Poggi – via Zamboni 33, Bologna

Born in Bologna in 1714, Anna Morandi studied sculpture and drawing and in this environment she met her husband Giovanni Manzolini, anatomist and wax modeller.

When he started to suffer from depression Anna took his place, helping him dissect cadavers and reproduce the anatomical parts in wax. Later, when her husband was diagnosed with tuberculosis, she obtained the permission to teach in his stead. In 1755 the Senate of Bologna appointed her wax modeller at the Anatomy Department of the University. She refused the numerous invitations from prestigious European institutes and academies (from the Royal Society of London to the Court of Catherine II, in Saint Petersburg), because she did not want to leave Bologna, but the cases with her anatomical waxes were sent all over Europe. The museums of Palazzo Poggi still show her great skills. In the bust in which she portrayed herself she holds a brain in her hand: she realized the central role of the brain for the functioning of the human body and the importance of the nervous system for the transmission of impulses to muscles.

www.museopalazzopoggi.unibo.it



4. Cornelia Rossi Martinetti

Saints Vitale and Agricola – via S. Vitale 50, Bologna

During the years of Napoleon's government, the houses next to the Church of the Saints Vitale and Agricola became the palace of the museum of many artists: Cornelia Rossi Martinetti. She was a beautiful and most of all a well-educated woman and she conquered the hearts of personalities such as Ugo Foscolo, who will eulogise her as *Polyhymnia* in "Le Grazie" (The Graces), Canova, who will call her affectionately *dark-haired Venus*, Leopardi, Rossini, Chateaubriand, Stendhal and even Ludwig II, the king of Bavaria. Her young husband, the architect Battista Martinetti, turned those places into a romantic residence: the old cloisters of the monastery became the private gardens of the family, whereas the old crypt, now restored to its original state, was transformed into a cave with stalactites and stalagmites, giving an eclectic and fanciful appearance to the place,

in line with the fashion of the time. She had an intense and exciting life, so much that "when she was young she inspired quite strong feelings in Napoleon", as Louise Colet wrote. Born in Lugo di Romagna in 1781, in her early twenties she was already famous for her cultural gatherings, held in via San Vitale. The *Armonioso speco* [literally: "harmonious cave"] mentioned by Foscolo in "Le Grazie" is a reference to the cave that was built for her here.

5. Blessed Elena Duglioli

San Giovanni in Monte – piazza San Giovanni in Monte 3, Bologna

Here is preserved the grave of Blessed Elena Duglioli (1472-1520). *The Ecstasy of St. Cecilia* by Raphael was made for her, now it is kept in the National Gallery of Bologna (Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna), and a



Raffaello. The Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia

copy is to be found in the chapel of the church. She was mild-mannered and obedient, she loved to be alone and to devote her time to good deeds. The only place where she used to go was the Church of San Giovanni in Monte. Even though she probably would have preferred to become a nun, she accepted to get married, according to her mother's will, with a man who was much older than her. She lived her marriage in complete chastity, drawing inspiration from Saint Cecilia, and devoting herself to charity. In 1828 she was proclaimed Blessed.

6. Lavinia Fontana and Elisabetta Sirani

San Domenico – piazza San Domenico, Bologna

Lavinia Fontana, daughter of the famous painter Prospero, allegedly set as a condition before her marriage that she could continue to paint. Her husband, the painter Gian Paolo Zappi, even accepted to help her paint the clothes of the characters portrayed by her. Some of her works are displayed in different churches of the city and in the Davia Bargellini Museum. In 1601, inside the Basilica of San Domenico, the