

IN SEARCH OF ELEGANCE – ITALY

Lake Como, Milan, Florence and Siena

*Monday, April 8th
to Wednesday, April 17th, 2002*

On this program, we explore the creation of icons, both contemporary and of the past, through the medium of Italy's unique art, furniture and fashion. We will stay at some of the country's most beautiful hotels such as the princely sixteenth century estate, **Villa d'Este** on Lake Como. **The Carlton Hotel Baglioni** in Milan, and **The Grand Hotel** in Florence, a nineteenth century palace overlooking the River Arno; and visit some of Italy's more impressive, and exclusive treasures. Our journey coincides with Europe's most important and stylish furniture fair, the **Salone Internazionale del Mobile** in Milan. This is a period when Milan becomes a city of exuberance and panache, and we will share in the season's events where an international set gathers to see the work of cutting edge fashion designers, contemporary artists, and talented Italian furniture makers.

Our program begins in the Renaissance period, as we explore the forces that shaped the Milanese sensibility, and examine its differences from the Florentine and Sianese aesthetic through visits to private collections such as that of the **Etro** family in Milan; the Private Apartment of **Duchessa di Lorena** in **Palazzo Pitti** in



Florence; and the private collection of **Palazzo Pannocchieschi d' Elci** in Siena. Esteemed scholars such as **Dr Chiara Buss**, curator of the **Antonio Ratti Foundation** and independent art historian, will lecture on the **Sforza** family and the **Medici** family. We will visit magnificent art works created under the patronage of the Sforza family in Lombardy and the Medici family in Tuscany, concentrating on their roles as versions of 'secular idolatry,' in which artists blended their personal aesthetic judgments with their more mercenary, courtly responsibilities to create works that emphasized the pomp and grandeur of these noble families. Through their own exquisite skill and through the majesty they illustrated, these artists partook of a humanistic movement in which the glory of man - as opposed to that of God - came to dominate iconography. In studying these works, we will gain insight into the contemporary version of this enterprise, an alchemy in which a devoted artist - or a clever PR agent - can turn a simple man or woman into a celebrated star.

We then move forward to more modern times, and study Italy's fashion and design revolution after the Second World War. It was no isolated movement, of course, but part of a larger redefinition of social values, the second profound statement of the century in which this country of monuments sought to throw off the shackles of the past in the name of artistic statement. The first revolution had come with the Futurist painters in 1914, who, fascinated with the insurrectionary potential of the Cubists, had sought to redefine art, and with it, the class system. The second revolution came after the Second World War, with the movement of an agrarian population into the cities. Italy produced a new kind of fashion, a fashion elegant yet practical, far removed from the runways of Paris. Introducing this fashion to American buyers in 1951 set a multi million-dollar industry in motion, which within twenty years made Milan the international capital of style. A new aristocracy was born, whose palaces rivaled those of the old aristocracy.

Our program starts in **Lake Como**, visiting some of the aristocratic estates of the eighteenth century. In Milan, our study on fashion and furniture will be focused on events at the **Salone Internazionale del Mobile**, and visits to private interiors and collections. In **Florence**, we are entertained by old aristocratic families, and in the **Hills of Tuscany** we see the work of prominent interior designers. Our blending of the old and new is deliberate; we hope to show how traditional taste, color, iconography and symbolism have endured throughout the centuries to define the present. We will also examine how cities like Milan, with its celebration of the new and its worship of fashion with all its ephemeral glories, contrasts with centers like Tuscany, which has remained loyal to its Renaissance heritage.

This program is restricted to fifteen persons. As our groups are small, and as we work with members of society who do not receive visitors on a commercial basis, we request that participants fully commit to activities out of courtesy to our hosts. This is particularly relevant on this program when – and how keenly we feel it! – the lure of shopping is so seductive.

Monday, April 8th

Arrival to Milan. Bus transfer to Villa d'Este at Lake Como. Villa d' Este, built in 1568 by the architect Pellegrino Tibaldi, was originally the private residence for Cardinal Tolomeo Gallio and sits in ten acres of private parks and gardens. We take an afternoon cruise on the lake. Before dinner, a fashion show introduces us to select avant-garde designers based in Milan.

Tuesday, April 9th

Following a morning lecture with Jessica Deutsch on *'The Italian Sensibility'*, we visit Villa Perego for visit with Contessa Laura Perego di Cremnago and her family and private tour of the house and its interior. Built at the end of the eighteenth century on the foundation of a nobleman's hunting house, the villa was the creation of Giovanni Perego, Abbot of the Basilica di San Nazzaro and member of an important family. The Italianate gardens have rigorous parterres and plantings which include a park of magnolias and Lebanese cedars. Inside the house are several collections of antiques and an aristocratic Renaissance chapel. The villa allows us to see how the aristocracy of Lombardy lived in the eighteenth century. We lunch privately with the family at the villa. In the afternoon we visit the Antonio Ratti Foundation, which houses almost 3000 pieces of textiles as well as sample textile fragments, which have profoundly influenced entire seasons of Italian fashion collections. Our studies are led by Dr Chiara Buss. We dine locally in Lake Como.

Wednesday, April 10th

To Milan for three nights

Our three-night stay in the fashion capital of the world is at The Carlton Hotel Baglioni situated in the heart of the fashion district. We will be guided by the top fashion journalist Donatella Sartorio, who will walk us through the show-rooms of the past twenty years, and onto the runways of today in her lecture *'An Overview of the Italian Fashion Scene'*. We visit the Salone

Internazionale del Mobile to see how fashion and design in Italy have evolved to speak a new language. Here we will see how interior decoration and design collections are integrated into an entire environment. We dine at the home of Etro, one of Italy's leading designers and collectors of fine art. A visit to a private collection allows us to explore the influence of the Futurist painters on Italian thought and culture.

Our visit to Milan also includes entrée to a private collection of fans spanning four centuries and including more than 500 pieces, a startling collection known for one of the most unusual examples of seventeenth century artisanship, as well as fine examples from the Art Nouveau period.

Saturday, April 13th

To Florence for four nights

Traveling first class by train to Florence, we stay in the palatial Grand Hotel. There is an undeniable link between Florence's ancient noble families with their lavish lifestyles, and the work of Florence's most famous twentieth century designers - Pucci in fashion and Salvatore Ferragamo in shoes. Palaces with marble floors, bedrooms draped with rich velvets, gilded furniture and fine Venetian glass are still the predominant forms of decoration in Florence today. The Florentine fashions worn by the Medici women were not merely elegant garments, but fine examples of the sophisticated artistry of the Florentine weavers. This venerated legacy of Florentine craftsmanship survives today and is embedded in the city's modern devotion to hand-hammered jewelry, hand-woven damasks and brocades, hand-embroidered linen, Florentine braids, cording, fringes and tassels, to lacquered furniture, floral wrought-iron chandeliers decorated with glass fruits from Murano and Scagliola. We will visit a number of private workshops which supply the finest dealers on an international scale as well as antique dealers. In the Tuscan hills near Pisa we visit a magnificent private home. In Florence, we visit the Private Apartment of Duchessa Di Lorena at The Pitti Palace, seldom open to the public, and left untouched since her death. We dine at Palazzo Antinori, built in the fifteenth century, still the private residence of this powerful Florentine family. In Siena we visit Contessa Pannocchieschi d'Elci, who is from a Sienese noble family that trace their roots back to the thirteenth century and whose collection of antiques, porcelain, tapestries and paintings shows impeccable taste. Her dinner table, for example, is a rare display of glass, crystal, and fine silver set upon hand-woven

lace. We dine with her in true aristocratic style with an eight-course meal of the finest Tuscan cuisine. *We allow one afternoon for shopping in Florence, aside from visits to workshops.*

Wednesday, April 17th

Travel to Milan for return flights from Malpensa Airport.

Registration

The fee for the program is \$11,000 per person double occupancy with a \$2000 single supplement. This includes round trip business class airfare to and from New York, nine nights luxurious accommodation, meals, entrée to private collections and to places not generally open to the public, expert scholars, entrée to the Salone Internazionale del Mobile, meals at the homes of famous designers and aristocratic Italian families, extensive scholarly reading material prepared by Arts to Life, luxury ground transportation and first class tickets. Arts to Life reserves the right to make changes to the schedule.

Registration must be accompanied by a deposit of \$3,000. Half of the remaining balance is due on November 5th, 2001 and the balance of payment is due on January 5th, 2002. After January 5th, 2002, no cancellations will be accepted and no refunds will be made unless the space can be filled. Any cancellation before the cancellation date will be subject to a processing fee of \$250 per person. We advise all persons to take out travel insurance and can provide information upon request. Should any speaker or host withdraw we will endeavor to make a suitable replacement. Arts to Life does not act as a travel agent and any additional reservations at hotels, changes to scheduled airline, or extensions of holiday, are to be made by the participants individually. For more information, please contact Arts to Life on 646-792-2340.

