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ACTIVITY OF ITALIAN GLAM INSTITUTIONS IN PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND SUPPORTING PEOPLE FROM THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

The subject of the article is the activities of the Italian GLAM sector institutions in the field of promoting inclusiveness and openness to the problems of people from the LGBTQ+ community. The main goal is to present selected initiatives undertaken to support non-heteronormative people and to present Italian galleries, museums, libraries, and archives as institutions playing an important role in promoting diversity. A multiple case study method was used to review the activities undertaken within the most important institutions conducting information and cultural activities in selected regions of Italy. As a result of the analysis, it was noted that activities related to promoting diversity in the Italian GLAM

sector institutions in relation to people from the LGBTQ+ community are more often undertaken in the northern and central parts of Italy, while in the southern regions of the country such activities are carried out incidentally or only on the occasion of the celebration of Pride Month. The research revealed the existence of a large number of documentation centres whose main objective is to take care of preserving the legacy of the LGBTQ+ community, to carry out activities promoting inclusiveness in Italian society, and to engage in dialogue with representatives of cities and local communities. The activities of Italian GLAM institutions that go beyond the catalogue of typical information services require a deeper analysis. Libraries, archives, museums, and art galleries have the opportunity to play an important role in promoting appropriate attitudes, also taking an active part in the fight against prejudice, especially towards non-heteronormative people. This is of particular importance in Italy – a country with strong Catholic traditions, which is also the cultural cradle of Europe.

KEYWORDS: galleries, libraries, archives, museums, Italy, LGBTQ+, LGBTQ+ community, inclusivity

INTRODUCTION

In 2022, on the occasion of Pride Month, Ipsos conducted a survey in 30 countries of the world participated by 22,500 individuals aged 16 to 74. According to the study, in Italy 9% of the population declare their membership in the LGBTQ+ community. 61% of the respondents were in favour of same-sex marriages, while children's adoption by same-sex couples was supported by 64% of the surveyed. In all the countries that the survey covered, on average, 47% of the respondents claimed they had a relative, friend, or colleague in their environment who were a Lesbian, Gay, bisexual, or transgender. In every country surveyed a definite increase in the number of LGBTQ+ community members has been observed among the youngest respondents belonging to the Z generation (by as many as 18% versus 2023). Geographically, it is Spain, Brazil, and

the Netherlands that are the countries with the biggest number of individuals identifying themselves as LGBTQ+. In turn, Poland, Japan, and Peru are the countries where this index is the lowest. In harmony with the international average, in Italy also 9% of the respondents define themselves as LGBTQ+.¹

It was only in 2016 that Italy adopted the Act on Civil Partnerships for same-sex individuals, this as a result of the endeavours of the Centre-left coalition government of the Democratic Party.² Furthermore, the law preventing discrimination of the LGBTQ+ community applies on Italy's whole territory; additionally, there are legal regulations valid for respective regions. What dominates, however, are social attitudes reflecting traditional Catholic values related to human sexuality and gender roles, versus a lower support for such compared to other countries of Western Europe, while a religious worldview is serving as the grounds for the moves of the current government in this respect. Importantly, Italy adopted the 'National LGBT+ Strategy for 2022-2025', which shows a certain progress in involving the country in the struggle against discrimination at schools, universities, and other public places.³ Nonetheless, the change in the political landscape and the growth of the importance of the right-wing parties have caused that the debate on the equality of rights stands no chance of being conducted at the moment. Following the coming to power of Giorgia Meloni's government composed of the Brothers of Italy, the League, and Forza Italia, a debate started on depriving LGBTQ+ individuals of some civil rights, these followed by definite actions aiming at reaching this goal. Let us bear in mind that Italy does not recognize same-sex marriages; neither are same-sex couples authorized to enjoy parental rights, such as adoption or in vitro

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- 1 *Pride Month 2023: in Italia il 9% delle persone si identifica come LGBTQ+* [online:] <https://www.ipsos.com/it-it/pride-month-2023-italia-comunita-lgbt>, [Accessed March 26, 2025].
 - 2 C. Miller, 'LGBT Rights In Italy', in: *Queer in the World* [online:] <https://queerintheworld.com/lgbt-rights-in-italy> [Accessed April 30, 2025].
 - 3 Ibidem.

fertilization. In March 2023, a Senate commission voted against the government's support for the European Commission's proposal on an EU Directive to ensure a cross-border recognition of same-sex parents. In January that year, the Minister of Interior ordered all the prefects to annul the transcriptions of all births identifying two Gay or two Lesbian parents, pointing to the ruling of the Supreme Court of December 2022 arguing that such couples should comply with a definite adoption procedure.⁴ As a result, on 13 March 2023, the Milan administration, where previously same-sex parents' children had been registered, having received a clear instruction from the central government, and in order to avoid the limitations in the national law, stopped issuing birth certificates. Consequently, children with no registered birth are deprived of the right to inheritance, healthcare, and maintenance, or can even be regarded as orphans, which might lead to presenting them eligible for court-ordered adoptions.⁵ An analogical situation happened in Padua.⁶ In July 2023, the lower house of the Parliament adopted the bill which considers surrogacy abroad a crime; currently this procedure, already illegal in Italy, is punishable with a jail term of up to two years and a fine of up to 1 million EURs. This applies to both hetero- and homosexual couples.⁷ The actions taken by the Italian authorities did not go unnoticed in the EU. In April 2023, the European Parliament adopted the amendment submitted by the Green Party to the resolution on the general decriminalization of homosexuality. In the adopted text we read as follows: [the European Parliament] 'Is worried about the current global anti-rights, anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ rhetoric movements, which are

4 *Human Rights Watch, World Report 2024: Italy events of 2023* [online:] <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/italy> [Accessed April 30, 2025].

5 'Il Comune di Milano interrompe le registrazioni dei figli di coppie omogenitoriali', in: *Sky TG24* [online:] <https://tg24.sky.it/cronaca/2023/03/13/milano-interrompe-registrazioni-figli-coppie-omogenitoriali> [Accessed April 30, 2025].

6 B. L. Nadeau, J. Guy, 'Italy starts removing lesbian mothers' names from children's birth certificates', in: *CNN World* [online:] <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/07/21/europe/italy-lesbian-couples-birth-certificates-scli-intl/index.html> [Accessed April 30, 2025].

7 Ibidem.

fuelled by some political and religious leaders around the world, including within the EU; [it] believes that these movements dramatically hinder efforts to achieve the universal decriminalisation of homosexuality and transgender identity, as they legitimise the rhetoric that claims LGBTIQ people are an ideology rather than human beings; [it] strongly condemns the spread of such rhetoric by some influential political leaders and governments in the EU, such as in Hungary, Poland and Italy'.⁸ Furthermore, it must be remembered that in March 2025, Italy's Constitutional Court ruled that singles, including LGBTQ+ ones, can adopt foreign minors, thus lifting a 40-years' ban limiting adoption to married couples alone. The Court ruled the 1983 Act as unconstitutional claiming that exclusion of single individuals might undermine minors' right to a stable family environment. The requirements for foreign adoption for heterosexual couples remain the same.⁹ In April 2025, Italy's Supreme Court ruled that in Italian IDs the terms 'father' and 'mother' should be immediately replaced with *genitori* (parents) regardless of the gender. The Court ruled that the use of 'father' and 'mother' discriminates children of the same-sex couples, since it does not reflect the diversity of contemporary family structures. This ruling is regarded as a substantial step towards promoting equality and inclusiveness judging that family identity should not be limited with the traditional gender roles. It ensures that all the families, regardless of their composition, are equally represented in official documents.¹⁰

- 8 'Tutti i provvedimenti anti LGBT del governo Meloni', in: *RollingStone.it* [online:] <https://www.rollingstone.it/politica/diritti/tutti-i-provvedimenti-anti-lgbt-del-governo-meloni/753414> [Accessed April 30, 2025]. English fragment at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0120_EN.html [Accessed May 16, 2025].
- 9 N. Willson, 'Top Italy court holds adoption law excluding single parents unconstitutional', in: *JURISTnews* [online:] <https://www.jurist.org/news/2025/03/top-italy-court-holds-adoption-law-excluding-single-parents-unconstitutional> [Accessed April 30, 2025].
- 10 S. Alliva, «Genitore 1 e genitore 2». *Due sentenze della Cassazione smontano l'eterna fake news della destra* W: Domani [online:] <https://www.editorialedomani.it/fatti/genitori-padre-madre-carta-identita-cassazione-rete-lenford-famiglie-arcobaleno-coppie-omogenitoriali-lgbt-v2302rpz> [Accessed April 30, 2025].

In terms of the recognition of the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals Italy remains at the lower part of ILGA-Europe' Rainbow Map. The percentage of recognized rights stands there at merely 25.41%, this putting Italy at the 35th place among the 49 countries monitored. The research has demonstrated that non-heteronormative individuals continue to suffer violence due to sexual orientation, motivated by hatred and discrimination. Astonishingly, despite this an increased number of individuals freely manifesting their sexual orientation, identity, and gender expression has been observed.¹¹ Since the groundbreaking events in Stonewall in 1969 the struggle for the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals has been undertaken at many places worldwide including also countries particularly negative about the LGBTQ+ community. Non-heteronormative individuals have also been constantly struggling/fighting for the recognition of the their rights in Italy, this really challenging in a society with such deeply-rooted Catholic values. Furthermore, there are merely few organizations nationwide aiming at promoting civil rights, providing support to the LGBTQ+ community, and at combating discrimination. Among them there are, e.g.: Arcigay, Agedo, Famiglie Arcobaleno, Arco, and Lenford Network. Not only do they implement various projects meant to promote diversity and inclusiveness, but they are also eager to cooperate with cultural institutions while initiating changes in the attitudes to the LGBTQ+ community. The goal being for GLAM institutions to be more sensitive to the needs of the non-heteronormative public, thus exposing them to become more visible.¹²

The Authors of the present paper have decided to focus on the activity of Italian cultural institutions with respect to the LGBTQ+ community to show how to promote inclusiveness and diversity, while respecting all the segments of the public. Using the multiple case study method they have pointed out the most prominent

11 *LGBTQIA+. Rapporto sullo Stato dei Diritti in Italia* [online:] <https://www.rapporto-diritti.it/lgbtqi> [Accessed March 26, 2025].

12 *Il Terzo settore nel Pride: una mappa di associazioni Lgbtqia+ italiane* [online:] <https://www.vita.it/il-terzo-settore-nel-pride-la-mappa-delle-associazioni-lgbtqia-italiane> [Accessed March 26, 2025].

examples of inclusive projects undertaken by the GLAM sector institutions whose solutions may serve as an inspiration for other organisations, also from outside the Italic Peninsula.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Galleries, libraries, archives, and museums are essential for preserving and promoting cultural diversity, which makes them vital spaces for supporting inclusivity and undertaking inclusive activities, in particular with respect to marginalized groups, such as LGBTQ+ individuals. Among many institutions it is public libraries that stand out as the main centres for disseminating information and preserving culture, taking a unique position in the process of supporting non-heteronormative individuals.¹³

Topics related to LGBTQ+ and the GLAM sector are present in academic studies. Historically, museums were institutions which (dedicated to Muses) served as peculiar temples for contemplating art works, though already in Roman times they transformed into institutions undertaking a philosophical discourse, similarly as libraries or academies existing at the time. In Europe it was only around the 18th century that cultural institutions were transformed from exclusive into egalitarian ones, open to the public. And only then did they begin to operate more broadly in the social context: they started telling the history of places and people with whom they coexisted. Moreover, they began fulfilling an educational role: each of the GLAM institutions in its own way; on the grounds of local conditionings and regulations, they began establishing a socio-philosophical discourse: museums, galleries, archives, and libraries amass and share works, documents, and artefacts which are the expression of memory, also based on what is supposed to be memorized.¹⁴ By the same token, it is as if

13 J. Vincent, 'Why do we need to bother? Public library services for LGBTQI people', *Library Trends* 2015, vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 285-298.

14 R. Sullivan, 'Evaluating the Ethics and Consciences of Museums', in: *Reinventing the Museum: The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift*, a cura di G. Anderson, Lanham 2012, pp. 257-258.

their duty to show what is being erased, unaccepted, yet exists, and has been a part of the social history of mankind. In the case of archives and libraries it is also access to personal histories and information, and if owing to political and social conditionings this access is not properly secured, we have to do with discrimination and exclusion.¹⁵ Paweł Leszkowicz also emphasizes that activities aimed at including queer documentation in institutional collections should be based on the efforts to 'retain a separate identity and space in a bigger archival or academic institution', and not their 'disappearance' in the institution's collection.¹⁶ Moreover, he observes that the documentation of the queer movement and history, particularly in homophobic regions and those of conservative roots and worldview, most frequently occurs outside conventional institutions, and is generally conducted by grassroot cultural networks and micronarratives. This being so, e.g., owing to political pressures on the institutions almost exclusively financed by the state.¹⁷

By offering safe and friendly spaces, in which one can discover one's identity and feel fully accepted, libraries play a pivotal role in shaping appropriate attitudes among the remaining community members, also contributing to overcoming prejudices against and stereotypes about LGBTQ+ individuals.¹⁸ Importantly, informative institutions have been gradually more frequently treated as the so-called third place, serving social integration and promotion of various types of activities. Not only do they impact the well-being of their users, but they also actively support and protect those who

15 *Libraries Respond: Services to LGBTQIA+ People* [online:] <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity/librariesrespond/Services-LGBTQ> [Accessed April 30, 2025].

16 P. Leszkowicz, *Contemporary Art and Alternative Queer Archival Strategies in Central and Eastern Europe* [online:] https://www.academia.edu/64514701/Contemporary_Art_and_Alternative_Queer_Archival_Strategies_in_Central_and_Eastern_Europe [Accessed April 30, 2025], p. 2.

17 *Ibidem*, p. 2.

18 *Idem*, *LGBT People and the UK Cultural Sector: The Response of Libraries, Museums, Archives and Heritage since 1950*, London 2017.

are in need of protection.¹⁹ Such support does not solely cover contact with qualified educators and specialists, but first and foremost amassing differentiated collections reflecting a wide range of human experiences. Galleries, libraries, archives, and museums cannot be only places which merely collect, keep, study, consume, and educate on the topic of art and culture or lend books: they are also spaces in which people establish contact with other individuals, in which projects gain prominence and shape, and they are also called to promote inclusion and awareness, to encourage dialogue, and to create and maintain meaningful relationships.²⁰

In Italy, despite a vibrant landscape of queer cultural projects, the research in this respect has been relatively scarce, with several cases which are greatly worth pointing out. Sara Dinotola has conducted research into LGBTQ+ collections in ten Italian library systems, revealing an unequal development of the collections and lack of developed policies in this respect. Prejudices, both personal and social, may have been contributing to negligence in gathering and sharing these materials, which often bears a stigma of a hidden censorship. In order to prevent this, the author suggests that libraries should actively engage in more inclusive policies when it comes to purchasing and acquiring the queer collection, identifying prejudices, and consolidating cooperation with publishers, schools, and cultural institutions.²¹ Extending the research with more published literature and a study's wider geographical range could positively affect collecting strategies ensuring that libraries comply with the role of inclusive, democratic, and diverse spaces.

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- 19 R. Chan, 'Diversity and inclusion: Impacts on psychological wellbeing among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities'. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2022, no. 13.
 - 20 D. Floegel, A. N. Gibson, J. S. Bossaller, 'Values, risks, and power influencing librarians' decisions to host drag queen storytime', *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 2020, vol. 57, no. 1. [online:] Accessible at the World Wide Web: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1098&context=slis_facpub [Accessed March 28, 2025].
 - 21 S. Dinotola, 'Biasdelle collezioni e data analysis: un modello per lo studio comparato delle raccolte LGBTQ+', *AIB Studi* 2022, vol. 62(1), pp. 97.

The IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto²² declares that ‘freedom, prosperity, and the development of society and individuals are fundamental human values’, and points to the key role libraries play in ensuring the right to education, participation in knowledge, and involvement in cultural life of the community to everyone ‘regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, language, social status, and any other characteristic’. However, despite these ambitious goals one must not ignore the fact that Western librarianship and its classification systems, such as the Dewey Decimal Classification used in Italy, reflects mainly white, male, Christian, and heteronormative outlook, shaping the availability of library collections along its lines.

Furthermore, Valentina Sonzini emphasizes the challenge that libraries face when sharing materials for and on the LGBTQ+ community; she also points to the fact that both fiction and poetry, as well as magazines connected with queer topics continue to be limited among the acquired library materials. When stressing the diversity of materials accumulated in the queer community documentation centres, these established as grassroot projects filling in the gap created in the access to socio-cultural resources, V. Sonzini remarks how the LGBTQ+ movement has developed the skill in amassing and managing its own memory. The process has been progressing through its integration with the existing institutionalized networks or is developing based on alternative archival solutions.²³

Importantly, museums of various character have for long been amassing collections and artefacts which have an obvious relevance to the history, as well as social and cultural life of queer individuals. However, those are often deprived of this context, or the

22 IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 2022 (pp. 1-2) [online:] Accessible at the World Wide Web: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385149> [Accessed March 28, 2025].

23 V. Sonzini, ‘Altrovi queer. Biblioteche e centri di documentazione del movimento LGBTQ+’, *Clionet per un senso del tempo e dei luoghi* 2024 vol. 8, [online:] Accessible at the World Wide Web: <https://rivista.clionet.it/vol8/altrovi-queer-biblioteche-e-centri-di-documentazione-del-movimento-lgbtq> [Accessed March 28, 2025].

latter is hidden from the public, which is a form of self-censorship of collections for fear of offending the feelings of a hypothetical public.²⁴ As emphasized by Nicole Moolhuijsen, museums, libraries, and archives must not evade the mission of educating or forming social attitudes in this respect, particularly in the countries like Italy where violence and lack of understanding of the questions of equality and diversity in society and among politicians has been on the rise.²⁵ At the same time, however, despite the historical reasons cultural institutions seem to be more flexible and less limited than schools. Nonetheless, N. Moolhuijsen admits that during social protests which were the consequence of rejecting the anti-discrimination bill (so-called DDL Zan), partially also affecting the LGBTQ+ community (including e.g., self-determination as for gender identity and anti-violence regulations), museums, archives, libraries, but also universities decided in their majority to remain silent. At the same time the scholar admits that although their voice in this respect would not have altered the voting, it would have signified an institutional support to many individuals, which would be of high social value.²⁶

GLAM SECTOR INSTITUTIONS' ACTIVITIES: SELECTED EXAMPLES

This part of the paper presents examples of the activities undertaken by the Italian GLAM sector institutions with LGBTQ+ individuals in mind. The grounds for the below presentation has been found in the review of literature and in the information provided by Italy's cultural institutions and organizations struggling for the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals in respective regions of Italy.

24 J. Tyburczy, *Sex Museums: The Politics and Performance of Display*, Chicago 2016, pp. 26-28 and pp. 199-200.

25 N. Moolhuijsen, 'In Italia c'è un museo che indaga la diversità di genere: la Fondazione Querini Stampalia a Venezia', in: *Che Fare* [online:] Accessible at the World Wide Web: <https://www.che-fare.com/articoli/genere-identita-museo-fondazione-querini-stampalia-venezia> [Accessed March 28, 2025].

26 Ibidem.

LIBRARIES

The biggest number of activities addressed to LGBTQ+ community members are performed by public libraries. The presented examples of inclusive projects stem mainly from the study of written records. In order to present a more detailed image of the engagement of libraries in this respect the paper's Authors decided to extend the area of search and use libraries' online services, reports, and their blogs, as well as their websites in social media.

'Plaid for Pride' is a fund-raising project launched in early 2025, meant to open an antidiscrimination centre at Polo Giovani B55 in Vicenza. This is a continuation of the 'Viva Vittoria' Project from 2022 when a giant blanket of knitted or crocheted squares made by volunteers was spread at the feet of the Basilica Palladiana. The purpose was to highlight violence against women and to raise funds for the struggle for their rights. On this occasion the organisers: the 'Come un immaginario' Association in cooperation with the Vicenza Municipality, the Bertoliana Civic Library, and the Arci Vicenza and Centro servizi per il volontariato organizations decided to focus on raising the awareness of the city residents of the challenges the LGBTQ+ community faces. The Bertoliana Civic Library is committed to supporting projects aimed at promoting mutual respect, solidarity, and social participation. It has opened all its branches to holding meetings aimed at creating respective elements of this year's installation. Each of them offers wool, knitting needles and crochet hooks for sale, as well as practical information. The main goal is to create 1,000 coloured squares which will form a large rainbow flag for the Pride Month celebrations. The event will be additionally accompanied by fragments of Cathy La Torre's story *Nessuna causa è persa: dietro ogni diritto c'è una battaglia* read by Luisa Livatino. The publication speaks of abiding by civil and social rights in Italy and of actions aimed at integration, particularly of migrants and LGBTQ+ individuals. The author also draws attention to transgender individuals who are challenged by the lack of understanding and the continuously growing social hostility. This is confirmed by the interviews conducted with

these individuals before, in the course of, and following the gender confirmation. The book also gives information on the life of individuals who seem invisible to the privileged social groups. They are, among others, a person with Down syndrome who would like to become independent; a blind woman who would like to become a judge; a nun who struggles for the recognition of women's authority in the Church; or a Sicilian woman fighting against gender stereotypes. In her book, C. La Torre tackles the issue of homo-, bi-, and transphobia, giving examples of hate crimes committed. Furthermore, she observes a greater indifference in this respect not only on part of ordinary citizens, but also representatives of the authorities.²⁷

Another example comes from Turin from 2022. Turin public libraries interconnected within a municipal network together with the Servizio Civile Universale, Servizio LGBTQ+ della Città di Torino, and the Biblioteca e Centro documentazione Maurice GLBTQ launched activities meant to support LGBTQ+ individuals through preparing a list of readings about LGBTQ+-related topics meant to inspire reflection on and interest in the issues faced by non-heteronormative individuals. The list of the recommended books included e.g.: *Le teorie queer. Un'introduzione* by Lorenzo Bernini, *Mondo queer* by Pier Maria Bocchi, *Ragazza, donna, altro* by Bernardine Evaristo, *Heartstopper* by Alice Oseman, or *Da sola* by Percy Bertolini. In harmony with the recommendation presented in the IFLA-UNESCO Manifesto from 2022, 'the public library is a living force for education, culture, inclusion, and information, as an essential agent for sustainable development and welfare of all individuals' 'regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, social status, and any other characteristic'. The staff of the Turin libraries adopted the principle that collection amassing should take into account also so-

27 „Plaid for pride”, al via lunedì 24 febbraio in biblioteca gli incontri che porteranno alla grande installazione tessile in piazza dei Signori/Comunicati/Novità/Homepage – Città di Vicenza [online:] Accessible at the World Wide Web: <https://www.comune.vicenza.it/Novita/Comunicati/Plaid-for-pride-al-via-lunedì-24-febbraio-in-biblioteca-gli-incontri-che-porteranno-alla-grande-installazione-tessile-in-piazza-dei-Signori> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

cial changes, and is to be conducted ‘a posteriori’, namely to reflect needs of all the users, not merely the privileged ones.²⁸

As for spreading good practices Rome’s libraries are not left behind. In 2023, in order to celebrate the *Giornata internazionale contro l’omo-lesbo-bi-transfobia* the ‘BiblioRainbow’ card was issued; it was on sale at every library joined in the municipal system. The project was implemented in harmony with the Municipality, which permitted the card holder not only to use library services, but also to benefit from other privileges, e.g., lower admission fees to museums, galleries, theatres, etc. The project was promoted in library branches, where different activities were organized in order to support integration, dialogue, and struggle against all forms of prejudice. Among the projects let us mention mounting topic-dedicated spaces, listing reading proposals dedicated to LGBTQ+, holding meetings with authors. Furthermore, the form for new library users was updated by adding a column where in the section dedicated to gender three options are available: male, female, other.²⁹

Regular attempts at raising awareness of the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals are also undertaken by the Mozzi-Borgetti public library in Macerata. For example, in 2013, Macerata’s librarians together with the staff of the Osservatorio di Genere held a series of meetings with authors of books related to LGBTQ+ questions. The event titled ‘LGBT Readings’ was a part of a more extensive project ‘Lost in Library’; among other invited guests there was e.g., Fabio Coribisiero, professor at the University of Naples Federico II, author of the paper ‘Comunità omosessuali. Le scienze sociali sulla popolazione LGBT’; Margherita Graglia, a psychologist and sexologist, author of the book *Omofobia. Strumenti di analisi e di intervento*; and the lawyer Francesco Bilotto, responsible for the LGBT series published by Mimesis Edizioni. The meetings were also participated by Municipality representatives, e.g., Councillor Stefania Mon-

28 *Prospettive Queer. Biblioteche Civiche Torinesi* [online:] <https://bct.comune.torino.it/lgbtq-gli-approfondimenti/prospettive-queer> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

29 *BiblioRainbow* [online:] <https://www.bibliotechediroma.it/opac/news/bibliorainbow/32802> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

teverde and Deputy Mayor Federica Curzi who emphasized how much the City Council is engaged in solving the problems of non-heteronormative individuals. These meetings allowed a review of the most important social, psychological, legal, and even political aspects of the LGBTQ+-related issues.³⁰

One of the Italian cities most socially engaged is Milan. Every year, several weeks before Pride Month, the city together with its libraries prepares a number of events meant to draw the public's attention to the questions related to gender identity and diversity. For example, in 2022, at many spots across the city special display cases were mounted showing works tackling the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals. At the same time, the milano.biblioteche.it portal posted on its website bibliographical lists containing titles of comics, novels, essays, and DVDs related to the LGBTQ+ community targeting all age segments. Furthermore, on the days preceding the very Pride Parade libraries became a venue for meetings and debates on rights and integration. As part of the Pride Month celebrations the Vigentina Library in cooperation with the Calvairate Library and the Agedo (Associazione Genitori di Omosessuali) organized a session with the show of the film *Amoredimmielo* followed by a debate how to handle a coming out of someone who is close to us. A meeting was also organized by the Oglio Library in cooperation with the Casa della Memoria. It was dedicated to a collective reading of *Ragazzi di vita* by Pier Paolo Pasolini prompting a debate on censoring fragments of texts tackling 'awkward topics'. Another meeting was organized at the Sicilia Library where the book *L'eterosessualità unpensata. Quanto Insegnano le minori* by Barbara Mapelli was presented; it deals with the research into sexual minorities. One of the last events was a meeting at the Cas dei Diritti where Cristina Obber presented her book *L'altra parte di me* in which the author speaks of Lesbian love between young girls. The

30 *Fuori dal „caffè pieno di imbecilli”, in biblioteca, le Letture LGBT* [online:] <https://www.osservatoriodigenere.com/progetti/in-cantiere/106-dicono-di-noi/355-fuori-dal-caffe-pieno-di-imbecilli-in-biblioteca-le-letture-lgbt.html> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

protagonist of the story is 16-year-old Francesca overwhelmed by the feeling of alienation due to her identity. An accidental conversation on Facebook starts a new acquaintance in which the desire proves stronger than the fear of other people's judgement. The author argues that not all the girls wait for Prince Charming. Some await Princess Charming. The event was participated by e.g., Age-do and Daniele Camiciotti, who presented a theatre show based on the author's text targeting primary school students. Among the many initiatives mounted in the course of celebrating the diversity month there was also a special podcast *Pionieri delle unioni civili* shared on the online radio of the Milan Commune.³¹

Another example can be seen in the Mediateca Project founded in Cagliari in 2022 by ARC as an institution meant to amass and share resources on LGBTQ+ topics. The organization which initiated the project was founded the same year to promote the rights of Lesbians, Gays, bisexual, transexual, queer, intersexual, asexual individuals, as well as representatives of other minorities. ARC's self-definition describes it as a democratic, pacifist, ecological, anti-racist, transfeministic, antitotalitarian, antifascist, libertarian, and opposing neoliberalism organization. Its members regularly organize various kinds of events: demonstrations, film festivals, book presentations, photo contests, etc. The library ARC founded boasts a rich collection of new publications and classical works of literature. Their book collection was created thanks to direct acquisitions and voluntary donations. In 2017, the collection of the multimedia library was transferred to the Municipal Library Centre in Cagliari, to be subsequently incorporated into the National Library System as LGBT and Queer ARC Media Library. The catalogue is available online as part of the BiblioSar archive.³²

31 *Mediateca. ARC OdV* [online:] <https://www.associazionearc.eu/mediateca>, [Accessed March 17, 2025].

32 *Diritti. Letture, incontri e un podcast dedicato: le iniziative del Comune in occasione del Pride* [online:] <https://www.comune.milano.it/-/diritti.-letture-incontri-e-un-podcast-dedicato-le-iniziativa-del-comune-in-occasione-del-pride> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

A well-known means combining cultural and social activities for anti-discriminatory and pro-democratic goals are the projects implemented as part of the Living Library. They are launched worldwide, and they aim at taming ‘otherness’, overcoming stereotypes, and showing various perspectives and life experiences. The books in the Living Library are various people (serving as books), often from social groups threatened with stigmatization and exclusion, while the event is conducted in the format of lending them, but also as a meeting, conversation, exchange of views in a safe and neutral atmosphere. Living Library stems from a psychological contact hypothesis assuming that the experience of a meeting with a representative of a stereotyped community (most commonly negatively) may lead to a change of perspective and a more positive perception of whole social groups.³³ Such was the motivation behind the event held on 4 July 2017 in the Piedmont region. In a small town of Bra the local Council for Youth Policy together with the Bra County and the following associations: GrandaQueer Cuneo, Agedo Cuneo, and Agedo Alba held a meeting of the Living Library; the main goal was to raise residents’ awareness of homosexuality and its various aspects. The event certainly ranked among unusual ones, since all of it was dedicated to the issues of the rainbow community. Among the living books the attendees could meet a homosexual boy, a Lesbian, as well as parents and friends from the LGBTQ+ community.³⁴

MUSEUMS AND ART GALLERIES

LGBTQ+-related topics in the Italian GLAM sector institutions are also tackled through participation in artistic events. Let us give here the example of the project launched by the Museo internazionale e biblioteca della musica, a branch of the City Museum in

33 P. Fischer-Kotowski, ‘Porozmawiajmy o różnorodności. Żywa biblioteka’: *Podręcznik dobrych praktyk* [online:] Warszawa 2008 <https://tandis.odihr.pl/bitstream/20.500.12389/21324/1/07204pol.pdf>, p. 11 [Accessed March 17, 2025].

34 *Biblioteca vivente sul tema dell'omosessualità*. [online:] <https://www.turismoinbra.it/biblioteca-vivente-sul-tema-dellomosessualita> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

Bologna. As part of the PerAspera Festival, on 23 September 2023, the organization held a Queer Art Walk inspired by the artistic format of the Queer Art Chat, successfully organized by New York's Museum of Modern Art. It was Flavia Monceri, professor of political philosophy at the University of Molise, who acted as the *spiritus movens* of the event; when giving the tour of the artefacts amassed in the rooms of the 16th-century Palazzo Sanguinetti, serving as the seat of the Museo internazionale e biblioteca della musica, she introduced an eccentric perspective, strange, and queer (the latter reflecting the genuine meaning of the word). In Monceri's intention the effect of such an attitude was the shift in the public's perception through the introduction of a colourful queer perspective serving to link paintings, musical instruments, printed volumes, opera libretti, and manuscripts amassed within the Museum's space.³⁵ Importantly, the event was a result of the LBGTQIA+ cooperation agreement with the Municipality of Bologna.³⁶

The International Museum Day on 18 May 2020 was organized with the theme 'Museums for Equality: Diversity and Inclusion'. The action was initiated by the International Council for Museums (below: ICOM), involving country branches, also ICOM Italia. The goal was to create common space meant to both celebrate diversity of perspectives formed by museum communities and staff, and to promote tools serving to identify and overcome partiality in exhibits and the stories they tell. Also Italian museums became involved. The activity of respective organisations and points of view of various centres were collected in a publication put together by the Commission for Museum Accessibility (Commissione Accessibilità Museale).³⁷ The over-200-page document amassed views on in-

35 *perAspera festival. Queer Art Walk* [online:] <https://www.museibologna.it/musica/schede/peraspera-festival-queer-art-walk-1159> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

36 *Comune di Bologna* [online:] <https://www.comune.bologna.it/servizi-informazioni/patto-collaborazione-lgbtqia> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

37 *Quaderno no 1 commissione Accessibilità Museale, ICOM Italia, Giornata Internazionale dei Musei – 18 Maggio 2020 DEI MUSEI – Musei per l'uguaglianza diversità e inclusion. Conversazione su Musei, Accessibilità, Inclusione ed equità nei tempi del COVID-19* [online:] <https://www.icom-italia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/QuAM-numero1-DEF.pdf> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

clusion of various museums, with a particular focus on people with disabilities, senior citizens, as well as sick and neurodivergent individuals. The need to cover LGBTQ+-related themes and perspective was pointed to only by one of the authors who look at museums from the perspective of excluded individuals. Maria Cristina Vanini emphasized the fact that museums should speak on behalf of various excluded groups, in particular taking into account such themes as: homosexuality, homophobia, new feminism, femicide, poverty, immigration, new slavery forms, new geographical areas, warfare, or physical and mental discomfort caused by pandemic's social isolation. The scholar admitted that these topics were present among museum artefacts and collections, however, more emphasis should be put on them telling the stories they enchant, since museums are people, relations, and ideas, and not walls and objects collected within them.³⁸

The examples of galleries advocating the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community in culture cover the UltraQueer - Espressioni Artistiche Metagender Exhibition held at the Palazzo Merulana (run by the Fondazione Elena e Claudio Cerasi and CoopCulture) on 10 June–3 July 2022. The Exhibition was organized under the auspices of the TWM Factory in cooperation with the Circolo di Cultura Omosessuale Mario Mieli, Roma Pride e Medicina Inclusiva.³⁹ The project was to investigate and express queer identity through the artistic language, promoting freedom of expression of one's own gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as to include and stimulate creativity among artists who come from the LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, the goal was to widely involve divergent communities in museum and artistic activities which are meant to go beyond the context of the traditional academic debate on mu-

38 M. C. Vannini, 'Advocacy for all: fare rete, dare accesso, costruire un nuovo futuro', in: *Quaderno no 1 commissione Accesibilità Museale, ICOM Italia, Giornata Internazionale dei Musei...*, op. cit. [online:] <https://www.icom-italia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/QuAM-numero1-DEF.pdf> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

39 *UltraQueer - Espressioni Artistiche Metagender* [online:] <https://www.palazzomerulana.it/events/ultraqueer-espressioni-artistiche-metagender> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

seology. The Exhibition expressed the grounds of the queer movement: in the artistic dimension it questioned the oppressiveness of the heteronormative patriarchal binary system also observed in art. The Exhibition included multidisciplinary works of artists who came from the LGBTQ+ community. There were also efforts made to refer to the heritage of the homosexual liberation movement in Rome. The event was accompanied by surveys on self-reflection connected with identity and the increased awareness of homotransphobic discrimination.⁴⁰



FIG. 1. Photo called Beth (2020) in the *Ri-scatti. On Sex-workers' Streets* Exhibition at the Padiglione di Arte Contemporanea in Milan.

Source: S. Briatore, *Distretto X: Milano e la museologia sociale*, Milan 2024, p. 76.

Furthermore, it is worth taking a closer look at the projects boosting the LGBTQ+ community by Milan museums. In May 2023, on the occasion of the photo exhibition dedicated to the visual artist

40 Ibidem.

Zanele Muholi⁴¹ the Museo delle Culture di Milano (MUDEC) held a conference titled: Teens Queer Voice. They were two-day workshops for teenagers aged 15-18 reflecting on the topics tackled by the artist's works: racism and violence against the queer body.⁴²

Milan was also the place where the 10th *District: Pluralistic Views on Gender Identity* Project curated by Samuele Briatore was implemented. The project was created in the Commune in cooperation with the Cultural Heritage and Activity School Foundation⁴³ in which five museums were involved (Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Milano, Casa Boschi di Stefano, Museo di Storia Naturale, Padiglione di Arte Contemporanea, Civico Planetario Ulrico Hoepli housed in the Milan district of Porta Venezia), and so were over 20 organizations associated with the LGBTQ+ movement, four university centres, commercial organisations, and 3 other cultural organizations (Porta Venezia Public Library, Il Lazzaretto cultural centre, and the Elfo Puccini Theatre).⁴⁴ The main purpose of the display (Fig.1) was the inclusion of the local LGBTQ+ community in creating new interpretations of gender identity and sexual orientation in the five abovementioned Milan museums. Through comparisons and storytelling narratives which proposed new and subjective perspectives on some works present in the museum collections were created.

Although seemingly very traditionalistic and conservative, Italy boasts two projects supporting and exposing the LGBTQ+ community not exclusively during Pride Month: they have actually included a non-heterosexual narrative in the mainstream dis-

41 MUDEC, Muholi. *A visual activist* [online:] <https://www.mudec.it/muholi-a-visu-al-activist> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

42 N. Moolhuijsen, *Le istituzioni culturali italiane per i diritti LGBTQ+* [online:] <https://www.agenziacult.it/letture-lente/politiche-per-la-cultura/le-istituzioni-culturali-italiane-per-i-diritti-lgbtq> [Accessed: March 18, 2025].

43 S. Briatore, 'Musei e Intersezionalità. Nuove sfide culturali e la riflessione italiana di Distretto X: Sguardi Plurali sui Musei', *AG-About Gender: International Journal of Gender Studies*, 2022, vol. 11 (22), pp. 38-39.

44 Ibidem, pp. 41-42.

course. These are two permanent exhibitions offered to the public by two Italian museums: Venice's Querini Stampalia⁴⁵ and the Natural History and Archaeology Museum in Montebelluna,⁴⁶ close to Treviso. Although the display presented in the first was initiated during Pride Month, it has stayed there as a permanent exhibition. This move was inspired by the activities for the LGBTQ+ community undertaken by British museums: the British Museum and the National Trust. In the case of the Venetian Querini Stampalia, it was not the presented artefacts that had been changed, but the interpretative format. Museums often own works or collections evidently associated with the queer community, or more broadly with sexuality. However, they either prefer to leave this relation unnoticed or hide it, frequently in order not to hurt the feelings of a hypothetical public. In this particular case the narrative was restructured. In the mythological room information on 17th- and 18th-century Venice was presented; at the time the city was perceived as dissipated, debauched, and actually morally rotten. The main corruption symbols of the time were prostitutes, atheists, blasphemers, gamblers, and same-sex lovers. In line with such a perception of the city the exhibits displayed in this room were attached labels which instead of imposing on the public interpretations in harmony with art canons, tell them how questions related to gender and sexuality were presented in Venetian culture of the 17th and 18th centuries and also in classical myths which became inspiration for other artists. Such an attitude makes today's visitor realize the fact that the sphere of love and sex has been an important part of the European civilization.⁴⁷ Interestingly, the wording used in the descriptions does not involve inclusive phrases attributed to the LGBTQ+ community. Instead, it uses historical phrases. Thus, the labels speak of the love of people

45 *La Fondazione Querini Stampalia* [online:] <https://www.querinistampalia.org/it> [Accessed March 18, 2025].

46 *Museo Di Storia Naturale E Archeologia* [online:] <https://www.museomontebelluna.it> [Accessed March 18, 2025].

47 N. Moolhuijsen, *In Italia c'è un museo...*, op. cit.

of the same sex, sodomy, or transvestism. The consultants of the exhibition often emphasized its socio-educational character, as well as the message which allows to relate history to the present, though the latter task is mainly assigned to the public. The Venetian museum's project showed merely a fragment of the libertine history of the city, dedicated a much more extensive project titled *Venezia Libertina*.⁴⁸ The latter display showed 18th-century Venice as the city of sexual freedom, however, the main goal of the Museum was not to create a queer institution, or even mount such a display, but to offer visitors other impressions than those one can experience during a traditional viewing of works in any other display room (Fig. 2). What is more, such an open approach of the Querini Stampalia to the topic of queerness and sexuality yielded one more event: a 'rainbow' tour of the Museum alla Queerini: non conformismo sessuale fra storia e attualità held on 5 May 2023.⁴⁹ The guided tour of the Museum, similarly as the permanent exhibition, was to emphasise the expression of sexuality in historical Venice based on the exhibits amassed by the Foundation, but also to show the dialogue between history of art and the contemporary social debate. The following individuals were involved in the tour: Manuel Meneghel, a tourist guide and founder of the *Venezia Libertina* Project; the scholar Nicole Moolhuijsen; Angela Munari, a librarian and historian at the Querini Stampalia Foundation; as well as the scholar Tommaso Scaramella. The guides began the tour with the overview of the history of the Querini Stampalia family, presentation of the house (Casa Museum), and spoke about Venice of the time, while tackling a wide range of topics (e.g., patriarchal family structure, role of women, sodomy). The visitors remained only on the second floor of the Museum where some of the rooms provided a context permitting to go deeper into the issues mentioned. The crown-

48 *Venezia Libertina* [online:] <https://venezialibertina.com> [Accessed March 18, 2025].

49 *Queerini* [online:] <https://www.querinistampalia.org/it/mostre-eventi/queerini-tour-queer-al-museo> [Accessed March 18, 2025].

ing of the activities of the Querini Stampalia Foundation aimed at inclusion was the launch of the online course ‘Musei e trasformazioni sociali. Processi, pratiche e sfide per organizzazioni in ascolto’ in 2023.⁵⁰

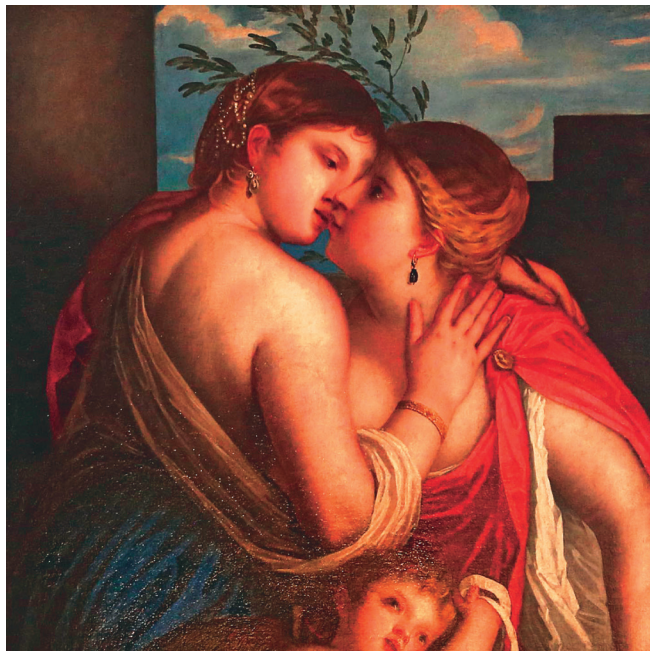


FIG. 2. One of the exhibits at the Exhibition: painting *Justice and Peace* by Alessandro Varotari, Padovanino (1630–1635). Querini Stampalia Museum, Venice.

Source: S. Briatore, *Distretto X: Milano e la museologia sociale*, Milan 2024, p. 76.

The training composed of three modules targeted specialists in museology and art (conservators, curators, mediators), designers of cultural activities, communication experts, students, teachers of all ranks, artists and activists. The project’s goal was to seek the answer to the question what diversity is (in culture, gender, sexual orientation, physicality, fitness, etc.) and what challenges it

50 Authors’ translation from Italian: *Museums and Social Transformations. Processes, Practices, and Challenges Faced by Listening Organizations*.

poses to museums in view of representation and interpretation. This was to serve reflection on the means in which museums can reflect changes occurring in society through research, updating of cultural heritage, and through education. The first module of the course was dedicated to museums analysed in the context of colonial history perceived as the phenomenon of contemporary migrations; the second module, in turn, dealt with queerness (it was called: 'Fluid Museums. Interpretation of Gender and Sexual Diversity through Cultural Heritage'). The third part of the training focused on designing museum accessibility strategies. In the context of the theme studied in the present paper, it is the second module that looks particularly interesting. The trainers focused on the reflection on the museum's potential in terms of diversity and fluidity of gender, sexuality, emotionality, and relations, also in view of sociological, anthropological, and postcolonial studies, as well as intersectional museology. It was decided that a debate should be started on the realm of children's literature in order to overcome stereotypes related to gender in various age groups, thus to tackle the question of museum learning and the relations between museums and schools. Respective training sections in the discussed module included understanding and discussing museums' queerness, as well as that of museum objects, inclusive language, the Venezia Libertina Project, stereotypes, and their deconstruction in literature, as well as the queer heritage and memory. Importantly, the training was widely supported by Italian cultural institutions: the Egyptian Museum in Turin, Art Humanities Research Council - Midlands 4 Cities, ICOM Italia - Coordinamento regionale Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trentino-Alto Adige e Veneto, MAB Veneto, ABCittà, We Exhibit, Scosse, and Venezia Libertina, mentioned earlier on several occasions.⁵¹

Interestingly, the activities undertaken by the Querini Stampai Foundation had their continuation. On 13 December 2023, at

51 Ibidem.

a kick-off meeting of ICOM Italy's working groups⁵² the activity of new Working Group No. 133: for gender and LGBTQ+ rights was presented. Its mission is to:

... support cultural institutions and individuals cooperating with them in order to promote research, disseminate, and advocate gender, sexuality, and queer-perceived differences, where queer is to go beyond the binary-perspective.⁵³

The group was created in order to support Italian museums in coping with the challenges of the present day. In 2024, the Working Group planned to put together bibliography, organize trainings, and online events of informative and educational character, as well as to establish partnerships with institutions, networks, and also domestic and international research units. For 2025, apart from the continuation of operational activities from 2024, plans include mounting an event of an educational and promotional character, as well as a creation of a map of good practices in the country.

As already mentioned, it is worth taking a closer look at the operation of the Natural History and Archaeology Museum in Montebelluna. In November 2022, the Museum launched the Futuro Agenda 2030 Exhibition forming an innovative display and educational space dealing with circular economy; its goal was to stimulate dialogue, make comparisons, and also experiment with the issues fitting Agenda 2030. What we find particularly relevant to the topic discussed in the present paper is Goal 5 of Agenda 2030 which concerns gender equality, and aims at strengthening the position of women and girls.⁵⁴ This part of the Exhibition was titled 'Partita

52 *COM Italia, Kick-off meeting: i Gruppi di Lavoro di ICOM Italia* [online:] <https://www.icom-italia.org/kick-off-meeting-i-gruppi-di-lavoro-di-icom-italia> [Accessed March 18, 2025].

53 *COM Italia, Kick-off meeting: i Gruppi di Lavoro di ICOM Italia, 13 dicembre 2023* [online:] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOk75mfAJn0> [Accessed March 18, 2025].

54 'Cel 5. Równość płci. Osiągnąć równość płci oraz wzmocnić pozycję kobiet i dziewcząt', in; *SDG Potrafi Wiedzy* [online:] <https://www.gov.pl/web/sdg-portal-wiedzy/cel-5-rownosc-plci> [Accessed: March 25, 2025].

di genere' (which can be translated as 'Adjusting Gender'). The Museum's website characterized it with the following words:

Adjusting Gender. Archaeological gender indicators are juxtaposed with the Museum's zoological collections and queer culture, which permits a reflection on the concepts of biological and cultural gender, with a particular focus on stereotypes and civil rights.⁵⁵

Originally, the part of the exhibition dedicated to goal 5 was not sizeable, limited to the presentation of a patriarchal family exemplified by a Roman burial in which female remains dominated. This provoked tackling historical, social, and cultural gender differences. Additionally, a display case was included; it showed animals which triggered the issue of gender as seen from the biological perspective. The exhibition concluded with an interactive part in which visitors could place a plug in the container showing a non-binary species' vision which best reflected their identity. As a result of complaints of the parents of the schoolchildren visiting the Exhibition, in the act of self-censorship, the controversial part of the display was covered with screens. Finally, however, the Museum curators decided to alter the display, at the same time extending it. In this form the Exhibition discussed Goal 5 of Agenda 2030 in detail, tackling the issues of gender equality, gender stereotypes, gender, and socio-cultural gender. The subsequent part of the display spoke about diversity represented by different animal species. Following this, it was proposed to pass to diversity in humans' biological gender.⁵⁶ Archaeological and natural history exhibits were combined with a narrative about the present (see Fig. 3).

55 Authors' own translation based on: *Mostra Futuro Agenda 2030* [online:] <https://www.museomontebelluna.it/esplora-museo/2030-2> [Accessed March 25, 2025].

56 Z. Longhi, *Narrazioni LGBTQIA+ nei musei: sei casi studio per un'analisi in prospettiva queer* [online:] <https://unitesi.unive.it/retrieve/335b5214-5d42-493f-90db-b44da543f60e/872323-1286896.pdf>, pp. 61-64 [Accessed March 17, 2025].



FIG. 3. Fragment of the Futuro Agenda 2030 Exhibition dedicated to gender at the Natural History and Archaeology Museum in Montebelluna.

Source: *Mostra Futuro Agenda 2030* [online:] <https://www.museomontebelluna.it/esplora-museo/2030-2>.

The Museum also presented an artistic installation as a corner imitating a child's bedroom: Pink and Blue Project (Fig. 4). This is a reference to the present day, while also initiating a debate on gender stereotypes. The Korean artist Jeong Mee photographed rooms of boys and girls crammed with either pink or blue objects, showing how people perceive their gender through a binary distinction between what is masculine and feminine.⁵⁷

57 *Fra scienza e archeologia, al Museo di Montebelluna si parla di sessualità e tematiche di genere* [online] [Accessed April 29, 2025]. Accessible at the World Wide Web: <https://www.italiachecambia.org/2023/04/museo-montebelluna-sessualita>.



Figure 4. Pink and Blue Project by J. Mee presented as part of the Futuro Agenda 2030 at the Natural History and Archaeology Museum in Montebelluna.

Source: *Fra scienza e archeologia, al Museo di Montebelluna si parla di sessualità e tematiche di genere* [online:] <https://www.italiachecambia.org/2023/04/museo-montebelluna-sessualita>.

ARCHIVES

Italy is one of the few European countries in which the cooperation between organizations fighting for non-heteronormative individuals and those whose main goal is to protect the LGBTQ+ community's heritage has been successful. Below, examples of two types of such institutions are presented: independent archives founded by NGOs and the ones which operate as larger documentation centres, combining the functions of archives, libraries, and multimedia spaces amassing multimedia collections, the latter including specimens of oral history and documentaries.

The Luki Massa Archive in Bologna amasses the legacy of the Lesbian activist prematurely dead in 2016, encompassing the documentation she collected in 1976–2015. The collection contains e.g.: 63 envelopes with paper documents, 107 posters, 98 videos, and 114 photo albums. The Archive is particularly interesting owing to the history of the Italian Lesbian movement, and also due to the representation of Lesbian and trans-gender individuals in

Italian filmmaking. Luki Massa was a director, photographer, and instigator of three important film festivals of nationwide impact: *Immaginaria*, *Some Prefer Cake*, and *Divergenti*. Massa actively contributed to establishing various Lesbian teams, groups, and projects (e.g., *Tiaso*, *Lei lesbica*, *Prima settimana lesbica*, *Immaginaria*, *Fuoricampo Lesbian Group*). Over 25 years she collected documentation related to the history and life of Lesbians in Italy and worldwide for a documentary that was never released. Massa also authored many short films featuring Lesbian topics, and promoted Lesbian cinema in Italy. The Archive has been divided into three basic sections: Political Activism (section 1); Artistic and Cultural Activism (section 2); and Personal Documents (section 3). These are complemented with additional sections: section 4 – Periodicals; section 5 – Posters; section 6 – Photographs, and section 7: audiovisual materials.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, the *Movimento Identità Trans* (MIT) is one of the most prominent and oldest Bologna's organizations of the Italian LGBTQ+ movement, responsible for implementing the *Archivist*-Archivi Storia Trans* Project cofinanced by UNAR (National Office Against Racial Discrimination). The goal is to amass, digitize, and create an archival database on historical documentation related to the LGBTQ+ community. As emphasized by the Archive's originators, the history of the transsexual movement is of key relevance to the process of reconstructing the past, being able to read the present, and foresee the future. This, however, proves challenging, since the documents are too dispersed. The main goal of the *Archivist* Project*'s authors is to carry out identification, organization, prevention, and promotion. MIT's collection currently boasts rich documentation of the history of the political and cultural activity of transgender individuals as of the 1970s till the present. The collection includes e.g.: literary texts and non-fiction, photographs,

58 *Archivio Luki Massa (1976–2015)* [online:] http://associazionelukimassa.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Archivio_LukiMassa_inventario_gennaio_2024.pdf [Accessed March 17, 2025].

leaflets, flyers, newspaper clippings, meeting minutes, posters, audiovisual materials, and other unpublished documents.⁵⁹

The Centro di Documentazione Cassero (CDOC) in Bologna was established in 1982 as a social archive whose goal is to keep documents produced by people, groups, and organizations fighting for civil rights of LGBTQ+ individuals. Open 30 hours a week, the Centre serves as a library, video library, and an archive featuring a consultation room and equipment for playing audiovisual materials. There are also computer stations permitting access to online catalogues and places adjusted to the needs of individuals with disabilities. The access to the library and library consultations are possible after a prior booking. The library offers interlibrary loans and services of delivering documents to other libraries in Italy. If a given item is available in other Bologna libraries, there is a special form available permitting to have the item dispatched directly to the user's address. This is how materials are delivered to individuals with a mobility problem. CDOC boasts: over 20,000 books, 10,000 audiovisual materials, a collection of 500 Italian and foreign magazines since 1960 till today, a photo archive, as well as a collection of over 5,000 political and social posters.⁶⁰

Another example of an organization documenting the LGBTQ+ legacy in Italy is the Archivio e biblioteca - Arcigay Orlando in Brescia. Founded in 1994, the Orlando Association combined two informal groups: 'Men at Work' and 'La gallina esplosa'. The name echoes the title of one of the novels by Virginia Wolf. In 1996, Orlando joined the Arcigay Association, which allowed to establish contacts with other domestic and international LGBTQ+ organizations. The increase in the number of members and the desire to establish contacts with local institutions led to the formalizing of the group's format, which finally adopted the name it bears today. The organization's main goal is the fight against discrimination

59 *ArchiviST** – *Archivi Storia Trans* – MIT – *Movimento Identità Trans* [online:] <http://mit-italia.it/progetti/archivist> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

60 *Centro documentazione* – *Cassero* [online:] <https://cassero.it/centro-documentazione> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

and support in organizing events meant to make residents aware of the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. The Archive is the Association's cultural legacy covering over 2,000 titles, including books, magazines, VHS tapes, and DVDs amassed over the period of 25 years of the activity. Its resources have been systematically growing thanks to the donations by Arcigay Orlando members and individuals using its collection.⁶¹

The Centro di Documentazione in Florence is a centre bringing together at one place a library, video library, magazine reading room, and an archive. It collects and shares with the public over 3,500 LGBTQ+-related items in several languages, these encompassing some dozens of Italian and foreign magazines, films, posters, social life documents, and magazine articles since the 1980s up to now. The Centre accepts donations of LGBTQ+-related materials from anyone who wishes to enrich its collection.⁶² It operates under the auspices of the Azione Gay e Lesbica (AGL), a voluntary organization whose activism has been focused since 1989 on the equality and rights of non-heteronormative individuals. The Association has been regularly publishing training materials, and has been cooperating with the European Commission as well as with the authorities of the Florence Commune and Province in the fight against homophobia, particularly in schools. Over the last years, AGL has also organized a number of events meant to raise awareness of gender-related issues and to fight against male violence against women. Furthermore, it runs a film club and monthly Lesbian marathons.⁶³ In Florence there is also another archive: the Centro di Documentazione (DOC) run by the Ireos Comunità Queer Autogestita. The Centre collects, conserves, and disseminates documentation legacy of the queer community. It is run by

61 *Chi siamo. Arcigay Orlando Brescia* [online:] <https://arcigaybrescia.it/chi-siamo> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

62 *Centro di Documentazione. Azione Gay e Lesbica* [online:] <http://www.azionegayelesbica.it/iniziativa/home/centro-di-documentazione> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

63 *Chi siamo. Azione Gay e Lesbica. Onlus Firenze* [online:] <http://www.azionegayelesbica.it/chi-siamo> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

volunteers, and the access to the collection is possible after a prior arrangement. All the collection except for magazines and documents of social life can be borrowed.⁶⁴

The BiArchivio is the first Italian archive dedicated to bisexuality, pansexuality, and non-monosexuality. It was created in Modena in 2020 at the home archive of the bisexual activist Tommaso Mori following a series of video interviews with Italian bi+ activists, and after acquiring documents related to bisexuality in Italy in the course of the COVID pandemic in 2020. Furthermore, the BiArchivio released one of the most important publications dedicated to bisexual activism: *Bisessuali Ritrovata – Attivismo bisessuale tra Bologna, Firenze e Milano negli anni '90*. The volume was supplemented with videos with the testimony of bi+ individuals amassed in the Centro Documentazione Flavia Madaschi (Cassero LGBTQIA+ Center di Bologna) to celebrate the Month of LGBTQ+ History in Italy in 2024.⁶⁵

‘Oberon’ is an institution combining the functions of a library, media library, and an archive. Founded in Verona in order to disseminate information on the LGBTQ+ community, it amasses the collection and makes it available to the public; the collection boasts some extremely rare books which can be only be viewed on the premises. All the remaining materials at ‘Oberon’ can be borrowed provided users register giving their personal data. The institution operates thanks to donations from its members, although the library also purchases items. Since 2006 ‘Oberon’ has been running the Cinema Blog posting information on the latest events and films shown by the film club. Furthermore, in Verona the only film festival dedicated to LGBTQ+-related topics called ‘Queer Visions’ is organized.⁶⁶

64 Centro documentazione. *Ireos Centro servizi comunità queer firenze* [online:] <https://www.ireos.org/centro-documentazione> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

65 BiArchivio: *il primo archivio bisessuale italiano* [online:] <https://www.biarchivio.it> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

66 *Cultura e Cinema – Pianeta Milk Arcigay Verona – Lgbt*Center* [online:] <https://www.pianetamilk.it/cultura-cinema> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

The Roberto Saverio Tersigni Centro di Documentazione ‘Omphalos’ founded in Perugia on 28 May 1997 includes a library, media library, archive, and a collection of social life documents. The Centre’s collection boasts e.g.: books, magazines, graduation theses, films, articles from domestic and international press, as well as documents related to the history of the Omphalos Association and the Perugia and national LGBTQ+ movement. The Documentation Centre focuses on preserving and disseminating the memory and culture of the LGBTQ+ movement. In 2017, celebrating the 25 years of the Association, the Centre was extended and modernized. Currently, the library’s online catalogue is available, while the remaining archival material is systematically inventoried and organized.⁶⁷

Another organization documenting the heritage of the Italian LGBTQ+ community is the Centro di documentazione LGBT in the southern town of Caserta. It is one of the few institutions operating in this part of the country meant to inform and archive. Not only does it amass LGBTQ+ related materials, but it also offers various projects meant to include all those threatened with social marginalization to non-heteronormative individuals. The institution additionally provides counselling and healthcare, as well as legal counselling free of charge.⁶⁸ Being a part of the Centre, the library collects mainly donations, these including e.g.: books, magazines, films, and oral history recordings. It also accepts essays, novels, fairy tales, pictures as well as films on DVDs and Blu-ray discs dedicated to the LGBTQ+ community.⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

The conducted analysis allowed the conclusion that all types of the Italian GLAM institutions conduct activities targeting the LG-

67 *Centro di Documentazione – Omphalos LGBTI+* [online:] <https://omphalospg.it/centro-di-documentazione> [Accessed March 17, 2025].

68 *Centro LGBTI+ di Caserta* [online:] <https://caserta.centro.lgbt> [Accessed March 20, 2025].

69 *Biblioteca Centro di documentazione LGBT. Rain Arcigay Caserta* [online:] <https://caserta.arcigay.it/biblioteca> [Accessed March 20, 2025].

BTQ+ community; however, these actions are ephemeral and incoherent. The lack of coherent strategies and plans for running such projects can be seen, and so can their limited character. Furthermore, certain projects bearing self-censorship features have been identified; it has also been noted that the projects concentrate around Pride Month, and are based on the cooperation with LG-BTQ+ organizations. Moreover, it must be observed that the examples of various solutions applied by the GLAM sector institutions are located predominantly (with one exception only) in northern and central Italy, the fragment of the country perceived as more progressive. This is consistent with the observations of Sara Dinotola who analysed the presence of LGBTQ+-related connections in ten large Italian cities. Her analysis and the research interviews conducted with librarians confirm the presence of queer literature in library collections in northern and central Italy, while they are scarce in libraries in southern Italy (Bari, Catania) or totally absent (Naples, Palermo).⁷⁰ It has been confirmed with certainty that the organizations running various types of GLAM institutions undertake actions aimed at a greater inclusiveness of various social groups, however, it has to be concluded that the queer community has not been included as a user group in sufficiently representative numbers. Meanwhile, any even minor activity undertaken with excluded groups in mind bestows the desired visibility on them; such activities give them reference in the historical, cultural, and social perspectives, at the same time yielding an educational value, and reducing a stereotypical perception of and prejudices against LGBTQ+ individuals in society. Undeniably, this should be the mission of the contemporary GLAM sector institutions, particularly in the cultural cradle of Europe that Italy is. Therefore, it is all the more important for permanent exhibitions to be mounted, to include queer literature in book collections, and to educate GLAM sector representatives in the manner we have discussed in the present paper.

70 S. Dinotola, 'Biasdelle collezioni e data analysis...', op. cit.

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