

OPEN | 7.05. -12.10.2026 | Exhibition Space at Palazzo Buontalenti

TITLE: OPEN

SUBTITLE: The EUI opens a new exhibition space to the city, where art and research meet

DATE: **PREVIEW - 7 May 2026 (20:00 – 24:00) - Upon invitation**

DURATION: from 7 May to 12 October 2026 – Mondays and Saturdays PM (summer closure)

LOCATION: Palazzo Buontalenti - Via Cavour 53/57, Florence Italy

CURATION: Sergio Risaliti and Stefania Rispoli

The [European University Institute](#) welcomed its first 70 researchers in 1976. Over the past five decades, it has grown into a thriving community shaping Europe's future through bold, interdisciplinary research, teaching, and public engagement. This anniversary offers a pivotal moment to celebrate the people and ideas that have established the EUI as a pillar of European scholarship and dialogue. While honouring its history and achievements, the Institute looks ahead to lay new foundations for the future of the social sciences and humanities, enhancing their capacity to create public value. Presenting its long-term vision and new strategy, the EUI actively strengthens its role as a bridge between European academia and the cultural fabric of Florence, its youth, and civil society.

In this spirit, the exhibition [OPEN](#) establishes a new paradigm of civic engagement. Reactivating the historic premises of [Palazzo Buontalenti](#) - formerly the Medici "Foundry" - it transforms them into an unprecedented laboratory for experimentation. The project creates a vibrant nexus between academic inquiry and artistic practice, offering novel readings of contemporaneity, epistemological horizons, and future visions.

The project's conceptual core resides at the intersection of works by selected artists and the research of historian and EUI Alumna [Johanna Gautier-Morin](#), *Measuring the Invisible Economy*. The shared intent is to render observable and questionable those processes, practices, and forms of value that classical economics has historically marginalized - the "blind spots" of accounting systems - yet which remain the essential, uncounted foundations of our collective existence.

Unfolding through the Palace's interior and exterior spaces, the exhibition stimulates crucial reflection on key concepts:

- **Gleaning:** Recovering the marginal, the residual, and the discarded not merely as waste, but as vital cognitive and material resources.
- **Exhaustion:** Analysing the physical, biological, and environmental limits characterizing current systems of production and social reproduction.
- **Irreversible:** Acknowledging processes of no return—extractive, temporal, and damaging—that permanently scar social and ecological fabrics.
- **Mutation:** Exploring dynamics of adaptation and the generation of new forms of coexistence, organisation, and relationship in a transforming world.

[OPEN](#) stems from a structured dialogue with the research of [Johanna Gautier-Morin](#), configuring itself as an experimental, transdisciplinary curatorial apparatus. The aim is to activate a hybrid methodology bridging academic research, artistic process, knowledge transmission, and public engagement. Conceived as an open, evolving laboratory, [OPEN](#) hosts a plurality of artists whose works resonate with economic research, amplifying its implications and imaginaries. Artistic practices thus act as a critical and speculative echo, expanding and problematising the initial theoretical data. Furthermore, the selection of international and local artists seeks to lay the groundwork for a community of research and artistic production, oriented towards fostering new relationships, languages, and shared fields of inquiry.

SHORT TEXT

OPEN unveils a new exhibition space to the city of Florence within Palazzo Buontalenti, hosting an unprecedented inaugural evening and exhibition where science and imagination unite. By placing the works of diverse contemporary artists - [Riccardo Previdi](#), [Leone Contini](#), [Berlinde De Bruyckere](#), [Agnieszka Polska](#), [Eglé Budvytyté](#), and [Elena Mazzi](#)—in dialogue with the research of EUI alumna [Johanna Gautier-Morin](#), the exhibition explores economic life in its productive, reproductive, and destructive forms. The journey inhabits the entire complex: from the garden, featuring Previdi's luminous sign, Contini's botanical practices, and the sound work by Gautier-Morin and [Pierre Chastel](#), to the interior rooms, where the fragile bodies of De Bruyckere, the speculative narratives of Polska and Budvytyté, and the co-creation piazza by Mazzi engage in dialogue. The experience is further enriched in the central courtyard by 'Sound Gardens' featuring music by [Andrea Portera](#) and a monumental visual mapping on the Buontalenti façades by [Vincenzo Capalbo](#) - realised with the technological support of [Roopu](#) and [Glauk Sound](#). Guided by MUS.E, EUI and FAI volunteers together with Academy students, the immersive environment projects a narrative where crisis awareness transmutes into civic energy.

The exhibition remains open until 12 October 2026, with free public access

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THE EXHIBITION ITINERARY

The San Marco / Michelangelo Garden

A site historically imbued with *making* and contemplation, the garden hosts a light installation by [Riccardo Previdi](#) and a site-specific intervention by Tuscan artist [Leone Contini](#). In close dialogue with the latter, and welcoming the public as a narrative threshold, an unpublished sound piece by [Johanna Gautier-Morin](#) - co-created with composer Pierre Chastel - giving voice to the historical premises and research underlying her studies as traces of an open, living and present archive.

The practice of [Riccardo Previdi](#) investigates the mechanisms through which knowledge, technology, and power shape our perception of reality. Employing a hybrid vocabulary of sculpture, installation, drawing, and pseudo-scientific apparatuses, the artist constructs visual systems evoking educational models, archives, and control structures, often imbued with an ironic, ambiguous tone. Challenging the authority of institutionalised knowledge and the boundary between truth and fiction, his work invites the viewer to question the learning processes and narratives governing the contemporary world. His luminous installation OPEN, on loan from MUSEION Bolzano, stands in the Garden of Michelangelo as a graphic sign, symbolizing the opening of Palazzo Buontalenti and the Institute to the city.

The artistic research of [Leone Contini](#) develops as a 'situated' anthropological and relational practice, centred on the encounter between cultures, languages, and marginal knowledge systems. Exploring themes of migration, oral tradition, botany, and non-hegemonic wisdom, the artist challenges cultural hierarchies and identity boundaries. His work operates as an open, dialogical process where art becomes a space for listening and translation. His contribution focuses on the Garden of Michelangelo's green area with a *site-specific* project highlighting how crops and food act as archives of memory, capable of narrating human displacement, agricultural expertise and oral traditions often excluded from official narratives, and how new life can regenerate from the rubble. Through gathering, exchange, cultivation, and participatory activation, Contini questions the logics of ownership, classification, and control over the living, valorising informal and shared forms of knowledge.

The Interiors of Palazzo Buontalenti

In the former "Procuratoria" of Palazzo Buontalenti, the journey weaves through works by [Berlinde De Bruyckere](#), [Eglé Budvytyté](#) and [Agnieszka Polska](#). Specifically, the first rooms will be structured around an unprecedented dialogue between the artistic practice of [Elena Mazzi](#) and the intellectual work of [Johanna Gautier-Morin](#), reconfiguring the space as a 'piazza' for exchange and co-creation.

In the library/archive and the former courtroom several sculptures will be presented by [Berlinde De Bruyckere](#), characterised by a poignant inquiry into vulnerability and human fragility. Often rendered in wax, wood, textiles, and organic materials, her works depict bodies that are fragmented, twisted, or in

metamorphosis—suspended between life and death, pain and beauty. Investigating universal themes of suffering, memory, identity, and corporeality, the artist transforms matter into a potent emotional vessel. Her sculptures manifest presences that are simultaneously disquieting and poetic, generating empathy and inviting deep reflection on the transience of the human condition. A sense of sublime precariousness pervades her oeuvre, rendering the sculptures moving, uncanny, and profoundly relevant, inducing an experience of intimate introspection in the observer.

The practice of [Elena Mazzi](#) is founded on a *research-based* approach intertwining art, historical investigation, and socio-political analysis. She explores the relationships between territories, communities, and power structures, shedding light on often invisible dynamics linked to ecology, post-colonialism, extractive economies, and collective memory construction. Through installation, video, performance, and participatory frameworks, Mazzi employs art as a critical, dialogical tool capable of raising awareness and redefining the role of institutions and shared knowledge. For [OPEN](#), in the Palace's first rooms, *Elena Mazzi* presents a series of works related to her ongoing research (since 2018) on the Polar Silk Road, leading a workshop with *Johanna Gautier-Morin* that will feed into the exhibition. Her installation functions as a “*piazza*” within the gallery space, hosting workshops and encounters with the EUI academic community and the citizenry throughout the opening months.

The intellectual work of [Johanna Gautier-Morin](#) becomes matter and presence here, taking shape through the staging of archives. These recount historical attempts to imagine alternative metrics for the domestic and informal economy, and to rethink processes of environmental reconstruction and transformation, challenging the boundaries of what is counted as 'productive'.

The research of [Eglė Budvytytė](#) - representing Lithuania at the next Venice Biennale - focuses on the body as a political, sensory, and collective space, investigating relationships between subjectivity, environment, and social norms. In her gaze, bodies are never autonomous entities but matter in decomposition, mixture, and regeneration, dialoguing with broader processes of collapse and rebirth. The exhibition features one of her videos: filmed performances staging slow, suspended choreographic movements. Often realised in public spaces or natural landscapes, these bodies act in non-functional, vulnerable, and interdependent ways. Combining minimal gestures, poetic texts, and dilated temporalities, Budvytytė constructs narratives escaping linearity and imposed productivity, proposing alternative forms of presence, care, and resistance. Her videos thus become immersive devices inviting the viewer to rethink the relationship between the individual and collective, human and non-human, disrupting dominant models of behaviour, control, and visibility.

The artistic research of [Agnieszka Polska](#) develops primarily through video and animation, combining archival imagery, digital drawing, and textual or vocal narration. Her works investigate the mechanisms of history, memory, and ideology, questioning the authority of images and the construction of the past. Through a suspended, often uncanny atmosphere, Polska utilises video as a critical and imaginative space to reveal tensions between emotion, power, and representation. In Palazzo Buontalenti, the artist presents *The Book of Flowers*, a sci-fi video narrative created with AI, revolving around the origins of the relationship between humans, gender, and flowers. Through a calm, hypnotic tale, the work questions how images convey political and moral content, exposing the fragile boundary between aesthetics and manipulation.

The Buontalenti Courtyard

The central courtyard of Palazzo Buontalenti serves as a vital hub of the exhibition experience, transforming into an immersive space dedicated to collective memory and future vision. Here, the building's historic façades become a living canvas through a video-art work created by visual artist [Vincenzo Capalbo](#): monumental projections fuse keywords and inspirational materials—portraits, scores, maps—emerging directly from the beating heart of the EUI community through a dedicated survey. This visual narrative is enveloped and amplified by an unprecedented Sound Garden diffusing the Hymn to Peace by [Maestro Andrea Portera](#), creating a total environment for reflection.

This complex sensory experience has been made possible through the invaluable technical collaboration of [Glauk Sound](#) for sound systems and [Roopu](#) for immersive event technologies, key partners whose support was essential in bringing the exhibition's artistic vision to life. Completing the experience, the joint presence of young volunteers from the EUI community and [FAI](#) and students from the [Florence Academy of Fine Arts](#) will guide visitors into the atmosphere of the evening, facilitating their immersion into the exhibition journey and the [OPEN](#) show through a dynamic, intergenerational dialogue.