



THE FAMILY IN QUESTION
THE BORGIAS

WEDNESDAY 18 JANUARY OR TUESDAY 28 FEBRUARY

The Borgias are synonymous with a kind of Renaissance Mafia, accused of many crimes, including adultery, incest, simony, theft, bribery, and murder (especially by arsenic poisoning). But there is more to them than gruesome violence. They came from Valencia, were subject to suspicions they were Jewish, but quickly became prominent in ecclesiastical and political affairs in Rome in the 15th and 16th centuries, producing two popes: Alfonso de Borja, who ruled as Pope Callixtus III, 1455–1458, and Rodrigo Lanzol Borgia, who ruled as Pope Alexander VI, 1492–1503. They made enemies of the Medici, the Sforza, and the Dominican friar Savonarola, among others. After the death of Alexander VI, the Borgia apartments were sealed off, and it was not until 1889 that they were opened up and rediscovered as masterpieces of the Renaissance, decorated by the brilliant and underestimated Pinturicchio. Lucrezia Borgia, daughter of Alexander VI, who married three times and gave birth to eight children, was one of the greatest lovers of the Renaissance, whose remarkable love letters to Francesco Gonzaga survive. Were the Borgias as criminal as their reputation suggests, or were they the victims of xenophobia?

Unless otherwise stated, lecture study days start and end at the Art Workers Guild, Bloomsbury. Please join us for coffee at 10.30 (optional), the first lecture at 11, a light lunch with wine at 1pm, and a concluding lecture and discussion ending at 3.30 pm.

£85 INSCAPE members, £95 non-members. First time participants are welcome at no cost.