Shona Kelly Wray, beloved mother, wife, friend, sister, daughter, cousin, niece, and colleague died suddenly May 6 in Florence, Italy. She is survived by her husband Randy Wray and her two children, Shane and Alina, and by her sister Maggi and her parents James and Celia. She was born in 1963 and grew up in Berkeley CA. She went to high school at Berkeley High School, she earned her Bachelors Degree from University of California, Davis, and her Ph.D. from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Throughout her adult life she spent many years in Italy studying medieval history, specializing in family relations during the period of the Black Death. She was an Associate Professor of History at the University of Missouri at Kansas City and this year was in Florence, Italy as a Fellow at the Harvard University Villa I Tatti. In addition to the I Tatti fellowship, she was a recipient of the Rome Prize and spent the 2002-2003 academic year at the American Academy of Rome. She was the author of two books and many papers on Italian medieval history. The cause of death was a massive brain aneurysm at her home in Florence.

From: In memoriam: Shona Kelly Wray, The Medieval Review 12.06.22, by Roisin Cossar

“...In her work Shona argued that Bolognese citizens fulfilled their responsibilities to each other and expected that social ties would remain strong even during the worst moments of the epidemic. I think this view mirrors Shona’s own humane perspective on the world. Shona was always particularly empathic to those around her, and when she turned her attention to her historical subjects she saw them as complete human beings with rich emotional lives and the ability to support one another in challenging times. This sense of kinship with the people of the past, coupled with her close reading of the source material, gave her arguments a particularly strong foundation...”

Shona’s Website

We have set up a website where people can post memories of, and read about, Shona:

http://shonakellywray.squarespace.com

In Memoriam

1963 - 2012

Shona at the grave of Bettina d’Andrea at San Antonio di Padova.
Some memories of Shona from her colleagues and friends around the world

We all loved spending time with Shona at I Tatti. She was happy, witty, and sensible; she was generous, friendly, and funny. In Italian you sum up the combination of these traits with one word: “solare”, sunny - and that's exactly how you felt about her. She was clearly very happy about life in Florence, enthusiastic about her research and always eager to hear about colleagues’ work, ready to discuss theoretical takes and archival findings. I felt very profoundly that she was the ideal colleague.

Shona was a brilliant scholar-teacher, beloved by her colleagues and students. A student of medieval and Renaissance Italy, medieval feminist scholarship, medical history, and more, Shona was one of the brightest lights of her generation.

In the very deep sorrow that I feel at her sudden death, there is some measure of solace in knowing that her last year in Florence was so rich. She was always so at home in Italy. It is comforting to know that she was doing what she loved, and being recognized for her ground-breaking scholarship; her last year had been very full and rewarding indeed.

Shona was a brilliant scholar and a valued mentor and friend. She inspired me with her own research on women and inheritance and helped me navigate a number of firsts in my career. When I think of Shona, I remember her laugh most of all. We all will miss her so.

At the I Tatti Shona showed herself to possess another remarkable set of qualities beyond the scholarly – qualities that are as important in an I Tatti Fellow as the ability to bring to completion any academic project. Bernard Berenson wanted this to be a place of peace and tranquility, a place where scholars could exchange ideas and share the excitement of research and intellectual discovery. This is what Shona showed herself ready to do every day here.

It was pretty clear to me from the start that Shona and I were going to be friends. She had this way of making instantly clear that she wanted to spend more time with you. I was very lucky to spend lots of time with her here in Florence.

Shona was my great friend, my work partner, and a source of support and love to my family, too. We’d been spending the year in Florence, at the Villa I Tatti, working on projects that intersected in several ways. Over the years of our friendship, we talked about the possibility of coming here, but neither of us ever managed we’d actually manage it, let alone in the same year.

From the start at I Tatti Shona was affectionate and welcoming. In all our conversations I admired the energy and warmth she radiated. I know the generous warmth she offered from our first to our last encounter will always remain with me.

Berkeley City Club, August 4th 2012. 2pm - 4pm

Program

Welcome: Nicholas Holt
Randy Wray
Maggi Kelly
Amber Reiss-Holt
Leslye Alexander
Jane Emley
Ashley Maher
Randolf Langenbach
Martha Tepepa
Roisin Cossar
Slideshow about Shona
James Kelly

Reception: Please join us to share memories of Shona, with refreshments in the garden