



Issue no. 14-December 2012

THE 2012 NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN

In these last few months a lot has been said and written about culture and cultural heritage, a lively debate arisen over a neglected, forgotten emergency for our Country: the lack of public funding that seems to stifle new ideas and projects to revive our cultural field.

But in spite of this gloomy picture, the continuing economic crisis and cuts affecting cultural budgets, the “Amici degli Uffizi” association has held true to its mission for nearly twenty years. The unfailing faithfulness of its many members and private supporters of the Gallery has formed a tight bond that in all these past years has never failed to actively and affectionately support, financially and ethically, the many projects submitted by the Superintendence.

A synergy between the public and private sectors that in our opinion should become a *modus operandi*, with the private sector playing a strong active role in a virtuous collaboration not limited to mere financial funding, but meant to share responsibility in common intents and projects to bring to fruition, in complete accord with the Polo Museale curators.

Therefore we could not miss our appointment with the Never-Before-Seen exhibition, our tenth edition titled “Alchemy and the Arts. The Apothecarium of the Uffizi: from Laboratory to Room of Wonders”. It is an original, curious overview of recipes, objects and prodigies exploring the passion of the Medici for artifices, not only artistic, between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is a Christmas gift to the town, Florentines, tourists and visitors alike, that the Gallery and the Amici offer with the support of the Ente Cassa di Risparmio, to renew the commitment to our mission and to the projects under way. First and foremost the conservation intervention on Leonardo’s masterpiece *The Adoration of the Magi* by the top-level restorers of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, after the diagnostic studies again supported by the Amici. Then the complete refurbishment of Room no. 35 of the New Uffizi, including the restoration of the *Sleeping Ariadne*, together with the American Friends. Two further new rooms – no. 33 e no. 34 - will follow in 2013.



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This year the Amici – as recipients of a bequest – have also perfected the donation in memory of the artist Almina Dovati Fusi to the Department of Prints and Drawings of the Uffizi. Further projects were accomplished, such as the organization of other major exhibitions, the restoration of another two ancient statues thanks to the American Friends, the relaunch of our website and the support to the reopening of the website of the Superintendence.

Looking to the future with confidence, perseverance and hope, we all join together to wish a peaceful and better new year.

Maria Vittoria Colonna Rimbotti

President Amici degli Uffizi and Friends of the Uffizi Gallery



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A NEW HALL FOR MICHELANGELO AND HIS FRIENDS

Standing out among masterpieces by the practitioners of the maniera moderna, now in spacious new quarters that invite lingering over, is the ancient marble sculpture of Ariadne/Cleopatra which, according to Vasari, steered the course of art.

For years now, I have expressed my belief that in the Uffizi of the future one requisite should be predominant: the presence of quiet intervals, pauses, repose between one work and the next. Only through quiet contemplation of a painting can one fully appreciate and understand its poetics. This is the approach that inspired the design of the new red rooms opened last June, dedicated to the maniera moderna, and now of this new spacious room - also painted red - reserved for Michelangelo and his friends.

In the new hall the *Tondo Doni* is right in the middle of the long wall facing the entrance, flanked only by two other paintings, both by Francesco Granacci who was one of his aforementioned friends. The side walls feature works by the Florentine masters who gave birth to two influential artistic schools; on the left is the “School of San Marco”, with works by Fra Bartolomeo and Mariotto Albertinelli, on the right is the “School of the Annunziata”, with Andrea del Sarto and his “companion” Franciabigio. Finally on the entrance wall are two pictures attributed to Alonso Berruguete, the Spanish artist who came to Italy at the beginning of the 16th century and became a friend of Michelangelo and of Granacci.

Pivotal to this assembly of masterpieces, right in the middle of the room, is the monumental *Ariadne* (otherwise known as *Cleopatra*), which Vasari praised as one the Hellenistic sculptures so fascinating as to affect the course of artistic expression, starting the so-called *maniera moderna*.

An abridgement of the article “Una nuova sala per Michelangelo e i suoi Amici” by Antonio Natali -Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 55, December 2012.



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ALCHEMY AND THE ARTS

This year's I Mai Visti (never seen before) exhibit, the annual appointment organised by the Amici degli Uffizi and the Galleria, showcases paintings, sculptures, etchings, codices, manuscripts, ancient medicinal remedies and illustrated texts to examine aspects of the passion of the Medici for alchemy between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Cosimo I was the first to set up a foundry in the Palazzo Vecchio, and his interest in alchemy finds vivid testimony in manuscripts written by some of his courtiers. Under his son Francesco I the workshop was transferred to the Casino di San Marco, where artists, artisans, distillers, and alchemists could experiment not only with medical secrets, but also with porcelain recipes, the fusion of rock crystal and the making of glass and majolica.

In 1586 Francesco I, whose strong passion for alchemy was recounted by bewildered visitors of the time, and famously depicted in his Studiolo, had the foundry transferred in the Uffizi where it stayed for two hundred years, near the very room where the Tondo Doni has hung for decades.

Alchemy is the theme of this year's edition of the *I mai visti* series organised by the Amici degli Uffizi in the Sala delle Reali Poste. The exhibit boasts alchemical manuscripts cherished by Cosimo and Francesco I, a porcelain portrait of the latter made with a recipe concocted in his own laboratories, and a precious printed text by Leonhard Thurneysser a doctor, wizard, astrologer and "charlatan" who conducted, for Cardinal Ferdinand, a famous experiment in which he transmuted an iron horse-shoe nail into gold.

In the 17th century the Uffizi laboratory was famous for its medicinal preparations, an activity that continued beyond the mid-18th century; the Grand Duke gifted its remedies, in precious ivory boxes, to nobles and sovereigns all over Europe, the Middle East, and even the Americas.



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The exhibit features one such rare box of remedies, now preserved in the Museo Storico Nazionale dell'Arte Sanitaria in Rome, as well as some of the natural rarities that used to decorated the foundry, that was a true *Camera delle Meraviglie*, or Cabinet of Curiosities: stuffed animals from the Museo di Storia Naturale of the Università di Firenze, and even the sarcophagus of one of the mummies that were to be found in the foundry, discovered in the storage rooms of the Archaeological Museum of Florence.

An abridgement of the article “L’Alchimia e le Arti” by Valentina Conticelli – Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 55, December 2012.



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NEWS FROM THE GDSU

The collection has been notably enhanced by drawings and prints of remarkable quality, the result of a generous bequest from the Dovati Fusi family and the ever-attentive efforts of the Amici. The works include those of Giovanni Mauro Della Rovere, Antonio Canova, and Gaetano Gandolfi, as well as Novecento prints.

Thanks to a generous bequest in memory of the late artist Almina Dovati Fusi and to the solicitous activities of the Associazione Amici degli Uffizi, the collections of the Department of Prints and Drawings have gained important drawings from the first half of the Seicento, the early Ottocento, and the Novecento. Among the most important: a sheet attributed to Giovanni Mauro Della Rovere (Milan, ca.1575-1640), which will expand the artists representative of Lombardy; a study by Antonio Canova (Possagno 1757-Venice 1822), thus expanding the Uffizi's collection of his autograph drawings; and three works by Gaetano Gandolfi (San Matteo della Decima 1734-Bologna 1802), a Portrait of a Child and two Male Nudes..

The careful attention to prints of the Florentine school between the Ottocento and Novecento is proved by the acquisition of a group of works by Emilio Mazzone Zarini (Florence 1869-1949). The 137 etchings and 12 drawings document his oeuvre quite effectively, revealing his talents as an interpreter of central Italian landscapes (particularly of Tuscany, Lazio, and Umbria) but also as a sensitive portraitist, in particular of female figures.

An abridgement of the article "Novita' dal GDSU" by Marzia Faietti – Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 55, December 2012.



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NEW UFFIZI: THREE HALLS OPENED

Work has finished on the spaces dedicated to the early Cinquecento artists, and to Vasari and his collaborators, with the walls painted red identifying the maniera moderna century.

Spacious hall no. 35 on the second floor of the Galleria will exhibit the artistic premises of Florence's mannerist period, while Vasari's paintings will be shown in hall no. 62 on the first floor, along with works by Alessandro Allori. Their regular home is the corridor of the latter half of the Cinquecento dedicated to small-sized works (for example, *Vulcan's Forge* by Vasari's and *Venus and Cupid* by Allori) and the storage areas (such as Vasari's monumental *Portrait of Duke Alessandro de' Medici in armour*).

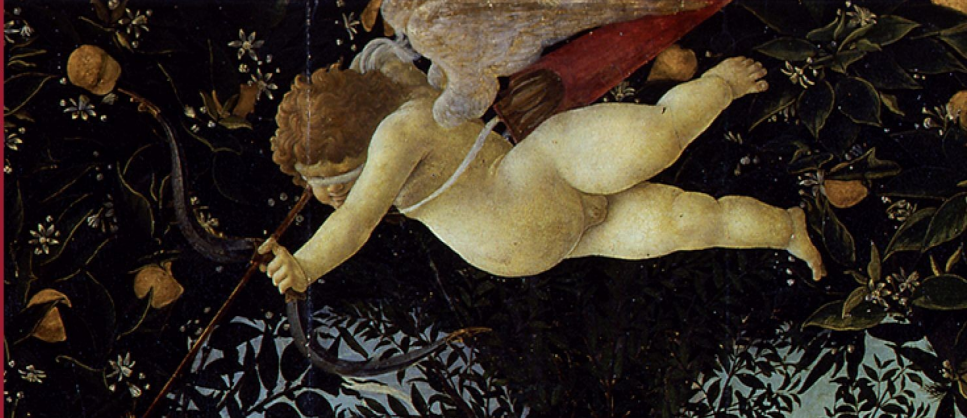
Hall no.63 will host numerous paintings by late Cinquecento artists who worked with Giorgio Vasari on the ambitious project of decorating Palazzo Vecchio (Naldini, Poppi, Macchietti, Cavalori, Zucchi), in addition to a group of artists who re-set the course of pictorial art in the Counter-Reformation era, following the lead of Santi di Tito. On the pastel-hued walls, with the vaulted ceilings probably frescoed between 1791 and 1816, some red panels which will serve to harmonise this installation with the nearby halls, in order to elucidate the development of painting in the Cinquecento.

An abridgement of the article "Nuovi Uffizi: inaugurate tre sale" by Francesca De Luca – Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 55, December 2012.



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NEW ARRIVAL AT THE GALLERIA

An Annunciation by Alessandro Rosi adds another high-quality work to the Department of Seicento Art.

This year, a prestigious acquisition allowed the Dipartimento dell'Arte del Seicento degli Uffizi to recognise a connoisseur of fine talents, Alessandro Marabottini. A few months before his recent death, this art expert convincingly identified Alessandro Rosi (Florence 1627-1697) as the author of this outstanding *Annunciazione*. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities acquired it for the Gallery, where it now enhances the collection of the Florentine School.

An abridgement of the article "Nuovo arrivo in Galleria" by Francesca De Luca – Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 55, December 2012.

LIFE AT THE UFFIZI

Giorgio Rossi self-portrait

The Collection of Self-Portraits now includes a terracotta, dating to before 1938, bearing the likeness of Giorgio Rossi (San Piero a Sieve, 1892-Florence, 1963). This sculptor, painter, designer, and poet, inspired by the likes of Donatello and Desiderio, created an elegant corpus evoking the classics. This work, donated by his niece Flora, adds further lustre to the group of sculptural self-portraits, which was recently enhanced with those of Belgian artists Berlinde de Bruyckere and Jan Fabre.



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Award-winning self-portraits

The Amici will be pleased to learn that the catalogue of the 2010 Never-Seen-before exhibit *Autoritratte: Self-portraits of Lady artists of inspired and most dexterous ingenuity*, supported as usual by the Amici degli Uffizi, was awarded first prize *ex aequo* by the XIII Premio di Scrittura Femminile 'Il Paese delle donne' in the Arts category. The mission of the competition is to promote works and studies by women authors who communicate the "female universe." The award ceremony was held on 1 December in the headquarters of the Casa delle Donne in Rome.