A NEW FACE-LIFT

After the summer pause we have enthusiastically resumed our activity, further encouraged by the keen interest and appreciation the many guests and members lavished on the achievements of our Association during the events marking the 20th anniversary of its founding. The special issue of our Giornale published on July 9 – the birthday of the Amici degli Uffizi in 1993 – had different layout and pagination, standing out as a particular edition. However, considering everyone’s delighted surprise and favorable reception of the novelty, we decided to maintain the new format, which is also easier to leaf through and assemble. Also our website has been completely redesigned and updated, and with these restyled means of communication we set about continuing our activities with our usual unreserved enthusiasm.

Maria Vittoria Colonna Rimbotti

President Amici degli Uffizi and Friends of the Uffizi Gallery
WHERE MICHELANGELO STUDIED

The new room, called “Evocazione del giardino di San Marco” [Evocation of the San Marco Garden] will host antique marble pieces as a tribute to the remarkable open-air school essential in the great sculptor’s training.

The garden of San Marco was, in Vasari’s words, “adorned with good antique figures in marble”, filled at great expense by Lorenzo the Magnificent with the most incredible collection of ancient marbles, and entrusted to Bertoldo di Giovanni for the artistic education and practice of promising young sculptors. Michelangelo was one of this small group of students and he began the classical sculpture studies that had such a decisive influence on his early artworks.

Taking into account the importance of this “classical season” in Michelangelo’s artistic growth, the room (which precedes that hosting the Tondo Doni) could not fail to evoke this garden, a real creative sanctuary in Renaissance Florence. We do not know for sure which works could be found in the garden, so we decided on a selection of marble sculptures for the room to echo the feel of a site containing precious antique objects. The new Room 34 will house sarcophagi depicting the Labors of Hercules or mythological scenes, a sculpture of Cupid with bow and arrow, satyr heads, a sleeping Cupid, and some Roman marble works. The “Evocation of the San Marco Garden”, as the room will be called, is the brainchild of Antonio Natali with contributions from the Director of Florence’s National Archaeological Museum, Giuseppina Carlotta Cianferoni, who ensured the Uffizi was given the works needed to complete this museum space.

The generosity of the Amici degli Uffizi meant it was possible to collect enough funds to finish the difficult restoration. Once again, the association has given tangible proof of the two decades of attention dedicated to the museum’s collection of ancient statuary, and has made a significant contribution to restoring marble artworks to the key role they have played for centuries in the Uffizi.

An abridgement of the article “Dove studio' Michelangelo” by Fabrizio Paolucci -Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 57, August 2013.
A CENTURY OF SELF-PORTRAITS

A first selection of prestigious 20th-century paintings are shown in the final section of the famous Vasari Corridor. Over 130 self-portraits of Italian and foreign artists are testimony to the range of styles that left their mark on the art of the last century.

More than 130 self-portraits by 20th-century Italian and international artists leave the Uffizi depository, where they have spent varying periods of time, to go on display in the final section of the Vasari Corridor, replacing the historical portraits seen there since 1973.

The selection was made jointly with Director Antonio Natali and Rendel Simonti, and includes works by Conti, Brunelleschi, Bueno, Carrà, Campigli, Vedova, Ligabue, Pistoletto, as well as Böcklin, Liebermann, Chaplin, Opsomer, Beuys, Siqueiros, Bishop, Raushenberg, Lassnig, and Albright.

The final section of this new part of the corridor now hosts a selection of the most recent acquisitions (including Kusama, Paladino, Clemente, Mapplethorpe, La Rocca, Holzer, Woodmann, Paolini), some of which are self-portrait sculptures by Brolis, Marini, Venturi, Ceroli, Mitoraj, and Fabre. Selections are limited by the fact that there is only enough room to show a few of the many works available, but we hope it will soon be possible to extend the historical self-portrait collection from the Lungarno Archibusieri. In this way we can rescue many other worthy 19th and 20th-century Italian and international “faces” from storage.

An abridgement of the article “Un secolo di autoritratti” by Giovanna Giusti-Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 57, August 2013.
THE PLEASURE OF CONTEMPLATION

After the installation of 16th-century masterpieces in the Gallery’s first-floor rooms, visitors are offered a well-spaced display for a more enjoyable experience.

On June 25, 2013, work was completed on the west-side rooms of the Gallery’s first floor. The move of the 16th-century paintings began a year ago with the new display of the Florentine “modern manner” and of Raphael, continued with the inauguration of the two rooms dedicated to painters active in Rome, and to Correggio, and now with the new rooms dedicated to Giorgione and Sebastiano del Piombo, Titian and, lastly, the Lombard painters. The well-spaced distribution of works, all set against the red background of the main wall to evoke a 16th-century atmosphere, will help make this a more enjoyable experience for visitors.

The room dedicated to painters who worked in Rome gathers together pieces from the Tribune, like Raphael’s Young Saint John, Salviati’s Christ Carrying the Cross, and Daniele da Volterra’s The Massacre of the Innocents, and from Corridor 33, like Salviati’s Adoration of the Shepherds. The Correggio paintings, coming from Room 23 where they were shown with works by Mantegna, Sodoma, Luini, find here a new unity and include Lorenzo Leonbruno’s small Sleeping Nymph. Giorgione separates from Giovanni Bellini to mark the start of the new Venetian Mannerism, along with Sebastiano del Piombo and hit Portrait of a Woman. Titian leaves Room 28, that he shared with Palma il Vecchio, with three paintings (the portraits of the dukes Della Rovere and the Venus) enhanced by a very spacious wall.

At the end the Lombard painters include Lotto and his poignant oils, Moroni’s intense portraits, and Savoldo’s fine Transfiguration, heralding Caravaggio’s paintings that we find inaugurating the art of the new century in the east corridor, after Verone.

An abridgement of the article “Il piacere di contemplare” by Francesca de Luca -Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 57, August 2013.
“SECCO SUARDO” REDISCOVERED

Moroni’s work is back on display after careful restoration financed by designer Stefano Ricci. The painting was purchased by Grand Prince Ferdinando. The artist went against the current with this standing figure.

Since last June the Portrait of the Knight Pietro Secco Suardo, signed and dated 1563 by Bergamo painter Giovanni Battista Moroni, leaps out in Room 88, dedicated to 16th-century Lombard painters. The canvas, which is almost two meters in height, was acquired by Grand Prince Ferdinando. It has now been restored thanks to funding from designer Stefano Ricci, and has been moved to its new location. The restoration brought to light the icy tones typical of Moroni’s painting, which were hidden under the layer of varnish added during the 1906 restoration, and which had deteriorated.

The knight was Bergamo’s ambassador to Venice and in the portrait he points to the brazier, inscribed with the words of Christ who asks if, after casting fire on the earth, he could but wish that it burns: “ET QUID VOLO/NISI UT ARDEAT?” (Luke, 12:49). The flame is the emblem of the Suardo family that derive their name from the root “ardere”. Moroni’s choice for this full-length figure is counter-current considering his own predilection at the time for half-length portraits.

An abridgement of the article “Secco Suardo” ritrovato” by Marica Guccini -Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 57, August 2013.
IL NANO MORGANTE TORN A CASA

In the cinquecento as today, many dignitaries fill the Uffizi. Even among those illustrious princes, nano Morgante singles out in almost every aspect. The marvelous painting by Agnolo Bronzino depicting Cosimo I de' Medici favorite was in 2010 finally restored to its past glory by the Opificio delle pietre dure. Director Antonio Natali’s decision to place it in the middle of the room 35 surrounded by many portraits of the Medici, does justice to Morgante that regains the court he so devoutly entertained.

Born as Braccio di Bartolo and satirically named after Luigi Pulci’s giant Il Morgante, the dwarf is documented in the service of Cosimo from the 1540’s onwards. Both abused by some court members and defined by the duke as his “most beloved servant”, Morgante was a well-known figure in Cosimo’s entourage. His double portrait by Bronzino is documented in the ducal collection as early as 1553, its terminus ante quem. In his life of Bronzino (1568) Giorgio Vasari noted the painter portrayed the dwarf con quella stravaganza di membre mostruose and concluded that la qual pittura in quel genere è bella e maravigliosa.

The painting the Uffizi holds is indeed an unicum in more than one aspect. First it reveals a naturalistic yet highly refined aspect of Bronzino’s oeuvre, better known for his noble portraits. It is also a sophisticated testimony of one of the duke’s favorite passe-temps: bird hunting. Among other, Morgante was an uccellatore using his civetta. Ducal correspondence from 1544 details this practice in the gardens of Villa di Castello. The letter states that il Nano havendo teso i panioni a quelli bossi del l Burbino di fuora, et havendo messo il appresso la sua civetta ha preso sei o otto uccellini con piacer’ di sua Excellenza ma molto maggior delli Signori Don Francesco et Dona Maria (ASF, MDP, 1171, ins. 3, p. 147).

This account permits a better understanding of the painting: on the front Morgante is seen with his bird attached, preparing to the hunt. A second bird, most likely a ghiandaia flies on their side. On the verso he holds his loot, a few dead birds, while the civetta that attracted the prey rests on his shoulder.

In my research, conducted for the Bronzino exhibition and further developed in my book La Guerre des Arts (L’Erma di Bretschneider, 2013), I insisted on another aspect of this painting, its clever reference to the competition between the arts. As the recto/verso format permits the artist to create an enhanced illusion of a free standing figure, the Morgante is closely associated with the Paragone...
debate asking which art ranks first, painting or sculpture. Bronzino created a work that demonstrates the ability of the painter to equal the tri-dimensional qualities of the sculpture, or even to surpass them. Moreover, by showing Morgante as an uccellatore Bronzino depicted two moments, before and after the bird hunt. He thus added a crucial element to his work permitting him to surpass the art of sculpture: the passing of time. He painted not only two points of view, but also two distinctive moments, still magnificently visible to Cosimo and Eleonora (hanging in front of Morgante) and every other curious visitor to the Uffizi.

An abridgement of the article “Il nano Morgante torna a casa” by Sefy Hendler -Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 57, August 2013.

Sefy Hendler is a senior lecturer in the Art History department of the Faculty of the arts in the Tel Aviv University. He obtained his PhD. in 2009 from the Université de Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne). He specializes in the Paragone between painting and sculpture in Italy, from the end of the Quattrocento to the Seicento.
LIFE AT THE UFFIZI

BARNI’S ANIMULE
In commemorating the 20th anniversary of the massacre of Via dei Georgofili, the Uffizi Gallery turned to artist Roberto Barni for a lasting memorial of the tragedy. The Friends of Florence Association gifted the Gallery with a sculpture by Roberto Barni, entitled I Passi d’oro [The Golden Strides] made of bronze covered in golden leaf. Placed on a blade of bronze high up on the wall of Vasarian complex facing Via dei Georgofili, it depicts the walking figure of a man with attached five “animule” [little souls]), a haunting reminder expression of the five victims of the attack.

VILLA DI CASTELLO PARK WINS AWARD
The gardens of the Medici Villa di Castello, where skilled gardeners still grow some of the flowering plant species depicted by Botticelli in his Primavera, was voted by the committee of the “Premio Nazionale di Parchi e Giardini, 11th edition” as the most beautiful park in Italy for 2013 (public parks category).
As well as this prestigious award, we might also mention that villa Medici of La Petraia has recently become a UNESCO World Heritage Site.