



FRIENDS OF THE
UFFIZI
GALLERY

NEWS



Issue no. 22 - August 2015

AN ALLIANCE AND A REBIRTH

The Amici degli Uffizi at Casal di Principe: a reaching out of the Gallery and an emotional occasion to remember the reasons for the existence of the association.

It is not easy to forget the warm and misty-eyed small crowd that welcomed the arrival at Casal di Principe of the precious load from the Uffizi Gallery: eight paintings by Caravaggesque artists that will stay on show to testify an alliance and symbolize a rebirth.

Rarely have I felt such strong emotions during an event organized by our Florentine museum. This was about the remembrance of a mournful occurrence, a mingling of lights and shadows, of fear and strength, but capable of defeating evil. As President of the Amici degli Uffizi, this project that ideally links Florence – the new Athens – to the land of fires, takes me back to the birth of our association, established in 1993 in the aftermath of the bomb explosion in via dei Georgofili and its devastating effects.

From the rubble and ravages of that tragedy there arose solidarity and hope, a spontaneous aggregation of volunteers and contributions that made it possible for the Amici to collect funds to financially support significant restorations, to defeat through reconstruction the destruction of Mafia barbarity. Then we all huddled together around our Gallery and now, after more than twenty years, our loyalties and affections are still strong and meaningful.

This is why I relieve this occasion with the same emotions of a rebirth. Wishing that the fires will become light, that the beauty of art and its appreciation will heal the wounds inflicted to the land of Casal di Principe.

Maria Vittoria Rimbotti

President Amici degli Uffizi and Friends of the Uffizi Gallery



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VIRTUOSIC WOVEN THREADS

*Restorations of the Valois Tapestries continue thanks to the support
from the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery*

The 2012 exhibit curated by Giovanna Giusti, which displayed 17 tapestries of the Galleria degli Uffizi, included also four pieces from the Valois series (1575-1582) celebrating Catherine de Medici's court festivals at Fontainebleau, Bayonne, and the Tuileries between 1564 and 1573. These magnificent hangings, eight pieces in all, eloquently convey, with the most precious threads and the highly-sophisticated weaves reminding the luxurious fabrics of the period, the opulence and elegance of the festive celebrations at one of Europe's most powerful courts.

Although France boasted a prestigious tapestry-weaving tradition of its own, this series was created in Brussels, a city famed for the splendour of its works, so much so that they were known as "tapis d'or" for their profusion of gold and silver metal threads.

Captivated by the beauty of this courtly magnificence, suspended between historical accuracy and storytelling, Maria Vittoria Rimbotti proposed to the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery, the American organization she presides over, to continue the restoration of the "Valois Festivals" series, begun in 2002 with the brilliant recovery of the *Tournament of the Knights of Great Britain and Ireland at Bayonne*, carried out by Carla Molin Pradel with her staff of specialists of the Opera Laboratori Fiorentini.

On that occasion, the restorers performed a very detailed and invaluable scrutiny of the conditions of all the pieces of the series, which had suffered significant damage during the 21st century in the seventy years they were hung on the wall facing the Galleria's corridor windows.



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The Florence-based Restauro Tessile laboratory was commissioned with the complete aesthetic restoration of the imposing *Royal Progress*, while the conservation work on two smaller but no-less-striking scenes, *Festivals for the Polish Ambassadors* and *Masquerade with Elephant under Attack*, will be performed by the Open Care workshop in Milan.

An abridgment of the article "Intrecci virtuosi" by Francesca de Luca - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 63, August 2015.



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A RARE "SACRIFICE"

*A gift from the Amici degli Uffizi: an exceptional-quality painting
by Dutch painter Paulus Bor.*

In the section for 17th and 18th century foreign painters, Utrecht artists share their space with their fellows from the city of Haarlem. The latest gift of the Amici degli Uffizi, *A Scene of Sacrifice* by Paulus Bor, has contributed to enrich the fragmentary but evocative mosaic of the splendours of these artistic centres.

A quite unusual artist, inasmuch as he painted for his own pleasure rather than for profit, Bor visited Italy, where he was an eager participant in the life of the Northern artists in Rome. Together with friends such as landscape painter Cornelis Poelenburgh, he played a leading role in the "Schilderbent", the society of Dutch and Flemish painters who gathered together for libations and Bacchic rituals, a theme that appears frequently in the works of Honthorst and Gerrit van Bronchorst, among others.

On the contrary Paulus Bor's paintings convey a passionate understanding and deep respect for classical culture: the striking silvery tone of the "Sacrifice" is dreamily evocative of a perfect, timeless world.

An abridgment of the article "Un Sacrificio raro" by Francesca de Luca - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 63, August 2015.



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HORIZONS OF THE RENAISSANCE

On the occasion of Expo Milano 2015, the three sections of an Antonello da Messina triptych, owned by the Uffizi and by the Region of Lombardy, have been unprecedentedly reunited, and, thanks to a unique agreement, the reassembled masterpiece will be on display at the Uffizi over the next 15 years

In 1996, the Italian state purchased Antonello's *Madonna with Child and St. John the Baptist*, in fulfilment of a condition imposed in the will of Ugo Bardini, who died in 1965. He had specifically stated that the proceeds from the sale of the massive inheritance left by his father Stefano, a renowned antiquarian, be used for the purchase of an important art work for the Uffizi Gallery. Thanks to that bequest, the Uffizi acquired a work by Antonello da Messina, or rather, a partial work, since the Uffizi's two panels, *Virgin Enthroned with Child* and *St. John the Evangelist*, are sections of a triptych which originally also included the *St. Benedict*, owned by the Region of Lombardy and held in the Castello Sforzesco in Milan.

Now, thanks to the agreement between the Uffizi and the Region of Lombardy, for the next 15 years the Uffizi will be home to the three Antonello panels, and at the same time Vincenzo Foppa's *Madonna with Child* will be on display in Milan's Castello Sforzesco over the same duration.

As part of the Expo and to underscore the cultural value of this exchange, a small exhibit has been installed at the Bagatti Valsecchi Museum that brings together both the triptych and Foppa's panel.

An abridgment of the article "Orizzonti del Rinascimento" by Antonio Natali - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 63, August 2015.



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PRIMA INTER PARES

The history and extraordinary collections of the Biblioteca degli Uffizi, the library founded in 1790 that has become a nonpareil trove of documentation for art historians

Within Vasari's impressive museum complex lies the documentation donjon of the Medici-Lorraine-Savoy-Republican-secular-cum-religious collection activities that constitute the wealth of the Florentine and Tuscan state museums. Facing the monumental 18th-century exit staircase of the Galleria degli Uffizi, the Biblioteca reflected over time the various denominations and developments of the Galleria, incarnations that were successively protean over the centuries, but guarantors of the continuity of a library collection that is itself the embodiment of the intimate, highly-focused, and uninterrupted connection with one of the richest and most-visited art collections in the world.

Established as an autonomous entity by Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo around 1790, the library has been situated, beginning in December 1, 1998 in the space that initially was the Teatro di Baldracca and later, under the care of Giovan Battista Foggini, the Biblioteca Magliabechiana, which collected and opened to the public in 1743 the extraordinary collection of Antonio Magliabechi. And the true heart of the Biblioteca degli Uffizi is precisely the imposing space that is the Salone Magliabechiano, which over the years has echoed with the voices of Florence's intellectual elite that gathered here, and has witnessed, for almost two hundred years, the most illustrious Italian and foreign researchers, the highest representatives of the Republic of Letters, as they meditated, read, transcribed, and copied.

Boasting today some 87,000 documents, the Biblioteca is a rich resource for the history and life of the Galleria degli Uffizi and of the other State libraries in Florence, and it represents an art repository offering art historians a rich, multi-faceted documentation often unique and irreplaceable.



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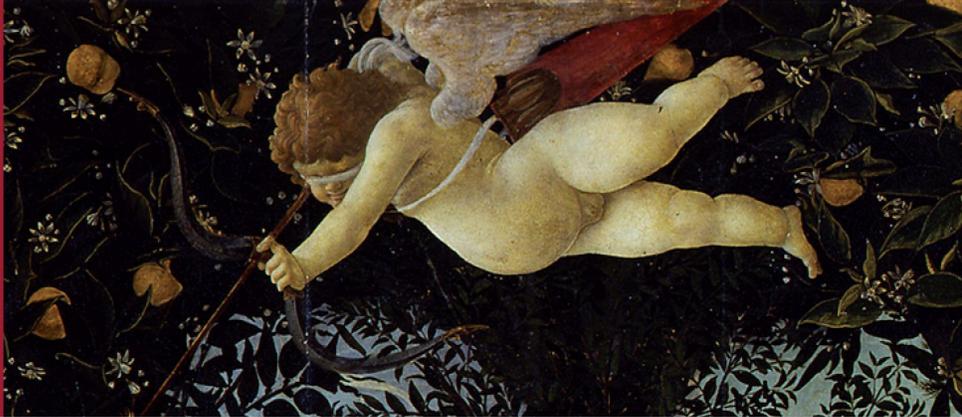
Since 1993, the Biblioteca has been a founding member of IRIS, a body that organises into a single collective electronic catalogue the libraries of seven Florence-based institutions that boast an artistic-historical or humanistic mission: Villa I Tatti, the Nederlands Interuniversitair Kunsthistorisch Instituut, the Fondazione di Studi di Storia dell'arte “Roberto Longhi”, the Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, the Biblioteca Leonardiana, and, of course, the Biblioteca degli Uffizi (www.iris-firenze.org).

An abridgment of the article "Prima inter pares" by Claudio Di Benedetto - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 63, August 2015.



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LIFE AT THE UFFIZI

UNDER CONSTRUCTION: THE "NUOVI UFFIZI" THE BOTTICELLI HALL

July 14, 2014 saw the closure of perhaps the most-visited hall in the Uffizi, which since 1978 has served as home to the works of Sandro Botticelli and the great triptych of Hugo van der Goes. Restructuring had become necessary to advance the “Nuovi Uffizi” project, which entails a re-organisation of the space in order to house a completely renovated exhibit of Botticelli’s paintings.

Over the course of construction work, scheduled to conclude in spring 2016, Botticelli’s best-known masterpieces --including *Spring* and *Birth of Venus*--, as well as Hugo van der Goes’ imposing Portinari triptych, will be on display in hall 41, located in the third corridor, which had previously housed the works of Rubens but has been closed for some years.

In addition to the Botticelli hall, the Nuovi Uffizi construction is addressing hall 9, with its works by Pollaiuolo, which will likewise remain closed until spring 2016.

An abridgment of the article " Cantiere Nuovi Uffizi: la sala di Botticelli" by Daniela Parenti - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 63, August 2015.



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