



FRIENDS OF THE  
**UFFIZI**  
GALLERY

**NEWS**



Issue no. 23 - December 2015

## CHALLENGES OLD AND NEW

Our association was founded in defiance of the violent destruction of the Via dei Georgofili bombing. Twenty-two years have now passed since that initial collective reaction of civic pride and compensation, and over the years the kinship and solidarity between the Amici degli Uffizi and the Gallery's executives has grown ever stronger. A unity matured in the last eight years also thanks to the presence and the essential, precious encouragement of director Antonio Natali.

With him the Amici degli Uffizi's patronage has become bold, to say the least: each and every restoration, exhibition, renovation, donation and intervention within the museum has always been a path of knowledge and enrichment, of shared visions and affections, a continuous challenge for new projects for the betterment of the museum.

Natali involved us in the most arduous undertakings for a patron: from the past seemingly hopeless restorations of the *Madonna della Gatta* by Federico Barocci and of the *Adoration of the Shepherds* by Gerrit van Honthorst -reduced even today to a mere flash of light on the canvas – to the current restoration of the masterpiece *Adoration of the Magi* by Leonardo, we continue our mission to support the museum with unwavering determination, without any vanity nor expecting honors or returns, true to our vocation to support the artistic heritage of our museum.

I could make a long list of accomplishments, a series of happy occasions and achievements attained by the profitable cooperation with our friend Natali. I prefer instead to remember our brief meetings stolen to the work routine to discuss projects and exhibit ideas; our trip to the United States in 2006 when our strong core of Florentine members was supplemented by the branch "Friends of the Uffizi Gallery", that has since been gathering resources among generous American donors: our long discussions that have always resulted in a positive outcome, further acquisitions and enrichment of the artistic wealth of our museum.

To Antonio go my gratitude, the grateful affection of all "Amici" and thousand thanks for this extraordinary adventure of mutual growth, happy to learn that – as we read in Eike Schmidt's address – he will continue to remain an active presence in the museum.



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With a view to a future inspired by the same enthusiasm and the same constructive approach, special wishes go now to director Eike Schmidt, the new managerial figure of the “Gallerie degli Uffizi” which combine the Uffizi, Pitti and Boboli. The Medici heritage of art and beauty is thus reunited, and the international professionalism of Eike Schmidt invites us to renew efforts, interaction and creativity in this new undertaking. An ambitious task that the “Amici”, with their long proven experience of patronage, wish to embrace with renewed fellowship and willingness. To them all, to the “Friends of the Uffizi Gallery”, to all board members, warmest wishes for the coming Christmas and for a peaceful 2016.

Maria Vittoria Colonna Rimbotti

*President Amici degli Uffizi and Friends of the Uffizi Gallery*



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## **A NEW ADVENTURE**

*Projects and hopes for the new structure of the Uffizi Gallery, now part of a multifarious organization that also embodies the Pitti Palace museums and the Boboli Gardens.*

In the coming years we will be starting a new adventure in which I hope the Amici degli Uffizi will continue to support "their" Gallery (which is also everybody's gallery) with the same perseverance and incredible energy spent so far.

I hope this will be the first of many articles that I will write for your newsletter. I would like to start a sort of conversation with you, thus in the next months I will be expecting questions to get inspiration for the treatment of topics of interest for you and of importance for the existence of your cultural association.

Therefore, I would like to begin by clarifying what the Uffizi are today. What the Ministry reform has created is a new, diverse organism with an extended kinship with the Pitti museums and the Boboli Gardens, different from the individual museum that you (that we) have grown to know and love in the past. My primary objective is that of managing this new reality like a sensible householder. My function is similar to the role Cristina Acidini used to cover. With this I would like to reassure you all about the position of Antonio Natali. There will not be any changes, Antonio will stay at the Uffizi with the same level of employment. Specifically, he has chosen to act as exhibit coordinator, therefore his projects will continue to benefit from the support of the Amici degli Uffizi, which I hope will be just as supportive of the many other projects that will arise in the future.

As for myself and my own projects and vision for the museum, it needs clarifying that it will be a long-term activity that will require time to manifest itself in its entirety. Circumstances might occur that will require waiting times or that will not have an immediately clear import; I might even have to take decisions regarded as unpopular. However, all this will be aimed to guarantee the well being of the works of art and the perfect functionality of the museum. I am here above all to pursue this goal.



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At the same time, I will continue at a steady pace our exhibition program, fundamental for scholarly advancement, and I will make myself a paladin of other forms of cultural exchange, such as the much appreciated recent symposium on polychromies in ancient sculptures supported by your association.

There are problems that need to be solved, and this is probably the essential part of the job I have been appointed to. Top priorities will be safety and anti-terrorism measures, as well as the reduction of the long lines to enter the museum by diversifying the visiting routes and modifying the flow of visitors –if necessary by temporarily re-routing them towards Pitti. We are all well aware that the Uffizi suffer from excessive tourism pressure in high season, which jeopardize the artworks and the ambiance.

I see in this an opportunity to counter the shame of ticket scalping, but also a positive way of teaching to tourists how to “live Florence.”

I would like for visitors also coming from far away countries and different cultures to get to know our art and beauties. Could we have in future also Chinese, Brazilian, Russian “Friends of the Uffizi”, besides our unparalleled and most active American Friends? I hope so; but in order to convince them, we will have to make their visit an unforgettable, once-in-a-lifetime experience, creating with them a special bond.

As far as I can, I try to understand the mentality of different countries by speaking their languages and studying their culture, but I fear that in the next years I will not have much spare time to learn other non-European languages, as I wished to do. What instead I intend to do now might not be spectacular, but will certainly be important for those coming from abroad who might not have a chance to visit Florence a second time: that is, avoid to inflict hours and hours’ queuing to someone maybe coming from Beijing and maybe staying in Florence for one day only. Even that one visitor could become a “Friend of the Uffizi”, actually he or she has already become one by choosing to travel all the way to visit the Gallery. And he or she has the sacred right to enjoy, without preliminary sufferings, Michelangelo, Titian and Caravaggio, the ancient marbles and the incomparable views of the town and the Arno as seen from the windows of the Gallery.

Eike D. Schmidt

*Director Uffizi Gallery*



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## **FLORENCE: FLOWER, MYTHS AND IMAGES**

*Throughout the city's history, the floral motif has always played an important role in its politics, economy, and religion, while the Roman name Florentia augured prosperity.*

Florence's flower-based presentation of itself to the world has been consistent over its bimillenary history, expressed in images, myths, and rites that have made it deserve its title of "City of the Flower" by antonomasia. Firenze derives from *Fiorenza*, which in turn comes from the Latin *Florentia*, the name given to the Roman colony by Augustus veterans settled in 59 AD. Many legends around its foundation explained the ancient name. The festival *Floralia* in honor of the goddess Flora, the Roman praetor Fiorino, or an expanse of iris. What is certain is that its name was an augury of prosperity.

The coat of arms of Florence, consisting of a lily, open and with prominent stamens, figured in red on a white background since 1267, is a stylized image of the iris (*Iris germanica*). The Florentine lily circulated in Europe for centuries, thanks to the circulation of the gold florin, with the city's patron, Saint John the Baptist, on the reverse. Beginning in 1252, the florin was the first stable international currency, which constituted a significant factor in the city's growth.

The lily also played an exceptional role in Florentine sacred art: it is this symbol of purity that the Archangel Gabriel offers to the Virgin Mary in the *Annunciazione*, announcing her the conception of the Son of God.

Both names, *Fiorenza*, and then *Firenze*, were both employed for a considerable period of time. Nor did usage abandon the noble and gracious Flora, ancient goddess of flowers, for she personifies the flourishing city in Botticelli's *Primavera*. Florence still preserves today places and traditions dedicated to flowers: the Iris Garden, the Rose Garden, the annual Flower Display, and the Camellia Show, among others, provide lively testimony to a symbol-laden identity that is still deeply felt and very much alive.

*An abridgment of the article "Firenze: fiori, miti e immagini" by Cristina Acidini  
- Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 64, December 2015.*



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## LEONARDO IN THE SALA DEL PILASTRO

Over the last few months, the Nuovi Uffizi construction has moved to one of the most prominent exhibition areas, the Florentine Renaissance halls. Following the closing last July of the Pollaiuolo and Botticelli rooms, works have extended, since September, to the Filippo Lippi and Leonardo da Vinci halls. Public access to the most important works, however, has been preserved, Leonardo's paintings having been installed in the Sala del Pilastro, one of the Galleria's most spacious and striking new spaces. Custom-designed exhibit cases were built, with climate control and internal lighting, which ensure maximum visibility. Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi* is naturally not displayed here, being still under restoration in the Opificio delle Pietre Dure workshop.

*An abridgment of the article "Leonardo nella Sala del pilastro" by Daniela Parenti - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 64, December 2015.*



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## MAESTROS OF THE QUATTROCENTO

*The halls dedicated to the Tuscan artists of the late 15<sup>th</sup> century are now completed thanks to the contribution of the Ferragamo company, with many superb works out of the storerooms.*

The Uffizi Gallery restructuring, which is continuing apace with the Nuovi Uffizi advancing works, reached a point, in September, when the halls of late Tuscan Quattrocento could be reopened. Located in the first section of the third corridor and characterized by the green paint selected to represent exhibition spaces dedicated to 15<sup>th</sup>-century art, only a few years ago these halls displayed Cinquecento paintings; they were designed and completed with substantial financial support from the Ferragamo company, thanks to the fiscal benefits enjoyed by donors by virtue of a recently passed new law, known as Art Bonus. These halls, number 25 to 32, now house many works that were previously located in the crowded rooms of Filippo Lippi, Botticelli, and Leonardo da Vinci, where they were often easily overlooked by the public, whose attention was drawn to other, more famous masterpieces. Their installation in these new spaces now restores the works of Lorenzo di Credi, Perugino, and Signorelli to the visibility they deserve.

The exhibited works open with two Florentine masters of the second half of the Quattrocento, Alesso Baldovinetti and Domenico Ghirlandaio; the latter's *Adoration of the Magi*, commissioned by the Tornabuoni family in 1487, occupies the space that only a few months ago belonged to Michelangelo's *Tondo Doni*. Hall 26, on the other hand, is comprised almost entirely of works previously held in the storerooms and undeservedly denied permanent display; they testify to the venerable and influential tradition of Florence workshops. The hall is named after Cosimo Rosselli, who directed a celebrated *bottega* that was the crucible of maestros of the calibre of Piero di Cosimo and Fra' Bartolomeo.

Hall 27 focuses on the superlative late Quattrocento master, Pietro Vannucci, known as Perugino, or, in the words of Giorgio Vasari, *pittore divino*.



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Filippino Lippi and Piero di Cosimo, two imaginative late Quattrocento artists, find their home in hall 28, where pride of place is enjoyed by superb altarpieces such as the *Adoration of the Magi* that Lippi executed for the church of San Donato a Scopeto, replacing Leonardo's unfinished *Adoration*, and to the *Incarnation of Jesus* that Piero di Cosimo painted for the basilica of the Santissima Annunziata.

Hall 29 centres on Lorenzo di Credi, whose *Venus* comes from the Medici Villa of Cafaggiolo, while Luca Signorelli adorns halls 31 and 32, with two tondi now returning on display, his monumental *Holy Family* and the *Madonna with Child*, commissioned by the Medici. Considerations about visitors flows led to the exclusion from these late Quattrocento spaces of the works by Leonardo da Vinci, temporarily on display in hall 79 in order to facilitate construction works of the Nuovi Uffizi, but to be returned, according to the final project, to hall 15, dedicated to the *bottega* of Verrocchio.

The newly renovated halls thus close the Renaissance period and introduce the *maniera moderna*, concluding a chronological and cultural route all the way from the paintings of the Duecento in the first hall up to Michelangelo in hall 35.

*An abridgment of the article "Protagonisti del Quattrocento" by Daniela Parenti - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 64, December 2015*





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## PAINTER OF “WONDROUS AND BIZARRE” ANIMALS

*In Vasari's words a tribute to Piero di Cosimo's talent and imagination in depicting animals. From the giraffe to the pelican, from the rabbit to bees, portraits testify to Piero's accurate naturalistic observation.*

The exhibit *Piero di Cosimo (1462 -1522). Eccentric Painter between the Renaissance and Mannerism*, which ended last September at the Uffizi Gallery, prompted a well-deserved look at that artist's talented depiction of animals. As early as just a few decades after Piero di Cosimo's death, Giorgio Vasari focused his attention on this talent, remarking on the presence in the Grand Ducal Guardaroba of “... a book of wondrous and bizarre animals drawn with incredible studiousness and unbelievable patience” made by the artist for Cosimo Bartoli who donated it to Cosimo I. Piero di Cosimo conceived the book, in all likelihood, in accordance with the artistic tenets already followed, for example, by Paolo Uccello and Benozzo Gozzoli.

His most beautiful animal paintings currently extant - not in the Uffizi, however - certainly include the giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) in his *Vulcan and Aeolus* in the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, the pelican in *Death of a Nymph* in the National Gallery in London, and the cow at the centre of *The Forest Fire* in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. Worth-mentioning are also the bees swarming around a honeycomb in *Discovery of Honey* at the Worcester Art Museum; the rabbit and pigeons in *Venus, Cupid, and Mars*, in Berlin's Gemäldegalerie; and the birds of prey depicted in *The Forest Fire*.

A zoologist might well be disappointed, however, by many of Piero's other animal depictions, for instance the camel and birds in *Madonna and Child with the Young John the Baptist and an Angel* in the Museo de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, in *St. John the Baptist on Patmos* in the National Gallery in Prague, and in *Prometheus Stealing Fire from Heaven* in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Strasbourg, in addition to the monkey - which might be a cat, or even something else...- in *Visitation with St. Nicolas and St. Anthony Abbot* in the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC.



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The puzzle remains, then, concerning the high reputation of Piero's depiction of animals, which lasted decades after his death. It is quite probable that the hopeful, although currently impossible, recovery of his lost *Libro degli animali* would offer a new opportunity for the evaluation of this Florentine master's oeuvre.

*An abridgment of the article "Pittore di animali bellissimi e bizzarri" by Marco Masseti - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 64, December 2015.*



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## LIFE AT THE UFFIZI

### **Round table sponsored by the Amici**

San Pier Scheraggio was the venue, on 4-6 November, for the VII International Round Table on Polychromy in Ancient Sculpture and Architecture, made possible by a generous contribution from the Amici degli Uffizi. First organized following the *Colours of White* exhibit, the cultural event is held annually in rotation in the major European museums – so far, among others, in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, the Liebieghaus in Frankfurt, the British Museum, the Acropolis Museum in Athens. The gatherings afford an opportunity for professionals in the field of archaeological research to tackle the problem relating to the use of pigments applied to stone.

### **The recomposed triptych of Antonello da Messina**

Following the exhibit at the Museo di Palazzo Bagatti Valsecchi in Milan, the Gallery's hall 20 now shows the recomposed triptych of Antonello da Messina, comprising the *Madonna with Child* and *St. John the Evangelist* of the Uffizi and the *St. Benedict* that, thanks to an agreement between MiBACT, the Region of Lombardy, and the city of Milan, will remain at the Uffizi for 15 years. In exchange, Brescian artist Vincenzo Foppa's *Madonna with Child and an Angel* will be exhibited for the same period of time in the Sforza Castle Pinacoteca in Milan.

### **Posthumous work by Luciano Berti**

Volume 31 of the book series *Gli Uffizi. Studi e Ricerche* has been published by Centro Di with the title *Botticelli. Approccio nel nuovo millennio*, an inedited work by Luciano Berti, the former Uffizi Director who died in 2010.

### **Pignatelli donation**

Luca Pignatelli's self-portrait, *Mithridates, King of Pontus*, was ceremoniously donated to the Uffizi Gallery at the official opening of the *Migranti* exhibit. The show, which includes the self-portrait as well as eight other paintings on wood, is installed in the Sala del Camino, next to the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe in the Uffizi. The exhibit catalogue is curated by Antonio Natali and Carlo Arturo Quintavalle.



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### **The Uffizi in 3D**

A true journey into the heart of the Renaissance, designed by Sky, in collaboration with Sky Arte HD, Nexo Digital, and Magnitudo Film and produced under the aegis of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism and the city of Florence, with the sponsorship of Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze. The project brings Florence and the Uffizi to life in a multi-dimensional and multi-sensory experience through the most representative views and artworks of the Florentine Renaissance.

### **The City of Hercules**

This year, the Galleria's traditional Christmas exhibit will be dedicated to Hercules, the hero par excellence. Titled *The City of Hercules. Mythology and Politics*, it will be open from 20 December through 31 January 2016. Curated by Wolfger Bulst and Francesca de Luca, it traces the privileged relationship of Hercules with Florence, from ancient hero to icon of civic identity, and finally emblem of the Medicean power.