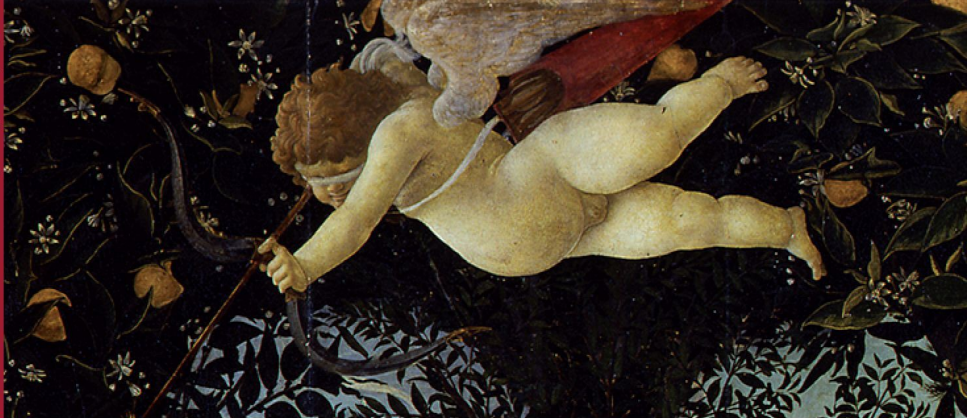




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A RESTORATION THAT REVEALS SURPRISES

The triptych by Nicolas Froment recovers its sparkling colors after the restoration intervention funded by the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery

Thanks to the support of the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery it was possible to restore one of the most important artworks of the Uffizi Gallery's 15-century foreign painting collection, the triptych depicting the Rising of Lazarus signed by the French painter Nicolas Froment and dated 1461. In spite of its being a landmark in reconstructing the artistic path of this master - the favorite of René of Anjou and mostly active in the south of France, where an impressive altarpiece remains in Aix-en-Provence cathedral – the work at the Uffizi is still relatively unknown to the public and will hopefully be exhibited soon again with the progressing works on the new exhibition spaces.

In view of this, the restoration of the triptych was deemed opportune since the pictorial surface was obscured by dirt and by an uneven varnish, besides showing small swelling areas. Some altered retouching were also visible, made in a non-documented restoration probably in the first decades of the 20th century; on that occasion the panels were detached from the original frame, that was then modified and painted over in black.

The work is made with the method of oil painting on oak panels. The natural movement of the wood and the abundance of binder in the paint film caused the formation of a fine craquelure pattern by shrinkage, that in the previous restoration had been masked with retouching and varnishing meant to uniform the paint layer, altering however the chromatic perception.

The restoration intervention, carried out by the highly skilled restorers Lucia and Andrea Dori, was challenging but extremely satisfactory and revealing surprises. Cleaning brought out the original sparkling colors and exquisite tonal shifts. The minute naturalism, the attention to detail characteristic of transalpine painting strikingly emerges in the depiction of clothes, physiognomies, animals, minuscule details discernible only through a closer look, such as the small background figures like the lady and knight playing chess.

Much different effects can be seen in the wing panels where monochrome prevails in the portraits of the patron Francesco Coppini and his dignitaries, with bluish shading in the panel depicting the Virgin and Child, due to the use of indigo;



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in this way the sacred image looks like a marble sculpture, typical of the decoration of outer wings, as the comparison with the Portinari triptych by Hugo van der Goes suggests. The diagnostic analyses carried out by Gianluca Poldi on the pigments and technique revealed the existence of a refined underlying preparatory drawing with some changes during the composition.

Surprises also came from the disassembly of the frame, proving that the splendid openwork, framing the top of the three panels like flamboyant architecture, are totally original. The side wings partly preserve the dark blue original frame, decorated with motifs resembling jewels, and on the back the original inscription with the painter's name and the date is still legible.

An abridgment of the article "Un restauro rivelatore di sorprese" by Daniela Parenti - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 65, April 2016.



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THE SPIRIT OF WOOD

Quattrocento painted wooden sculptures are at the heart of a suggestive exhibition at the Uffizi. The all-encompassing naturalism of sculptors who painted as well as carving.

Through an exhibition that opened 21 March, the public will enjoy for the first time a privileged opportunity to gain an understanding of the activity in *Quattrocento* Florence of artists, renowned for their works in marble and bronze, who also sculpted painted wood statues. Donatello and Brunelleschi approached the subject of the suffering body of Christ on the cross, imbuing it with a strong naturalism as in their outstanding crucifixes in Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella. These artists presumably painted, besides carving, their sculptures, because applying color constituted an essential element in achieving the thorough naturalism that they were striving for in their works. In 15th-century Florence sculptors also crafted statues of the Madonna, of saints' bodies tormented by or free from pain, portrait busts, statues at the centre of mixed-media polyptychs, and statues as part of liturgical furniture.

Unlike Donatello and Brunelleschi, other sculptors, turned to painters when it came to painting their works. Neri di Bicci, who had a flourishing workshop in Florence, was one of the most requested painters, especially for busts by Desiderio da Settignano and crucifixes by Benedetto da Maiano.

Mary Magdalene, on the strength of the one executed by Donatello, which is preserved today in the Museo dell'Opera of the Duomo, was a favourite subject for sculptors, as shown by the striking *Magdalene* by Desiderio da Settignano in the church of Santa Trinita, and that by Francesco da Sangallo in the Diocesan Museum of Santo Stefano al Ponte.

The exhibition also documents how in the last quarter of the *Quattrocento* some influential family-run workshops, responding to the demands of the art market, specialised in the production of monumental crucifixes for churches and also intended for private or monastic devotions. Outstanding in the exhibition for their high quality are the Crucifix by Giuliano da Sangallo from the church of the Santissima Annunziata in Firenze; the one from the Museo Civico of San Gimignano by Benedetto da Maiano, painted by Cosimo Rosselli, and the one from the Convento di San Marco by Baccio da Montelupo, famously owned by Savonarola.



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The *Doni Tondo*, which forms part of the exhibition, represents one of the most famous instances of collaboration between an artist, Michelangelo, and one of the finest practitioners of the Florentine art of wood intaglio, Francesco del Tasso, who crafted the frame with grotesque decorations, fanciful floral clusters and human busts, almost certainly after a drawing by Michelangelo.

Mixed polyptychs, which consisted of large altars with a wooden statue in the middle and painted side panels, constituted another example of close collaboration between painters and sculptors.

The exhibition also includes painted wooden sculptures by “foreign” artist present in Florence at the time. A 1457 document attests to the presence of the mysterious sculptor Giovanni Teutonico, an itinerant artist who crafted some works in the city, including the Crucifix, in the exhibition, from the church of Sant’Jacopo Soprarno.

The show closes with the *St. Rocco* from the Santissima Annunziata by the much appreciated German sculptor Veit Stoss, a piece that Vasari signaled out as “a miracle in wood (...) without any color blanket.” The 16th-century classicizing canons represented by Vasari, ruled that wooden sculptures should only display their natural material, without being covered by polychromy.

An abridgment of the article "Anima lignea" by Alfredo Bellandi - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 65, April 2016.



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***POLYCHROMY IN ANCIENT SCULPTURE: SOON-TO-BE PUBLISHED
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS***

From 4 to 6 November last year, at San Pier Scheraggio, the Uffizi staged the VII International Round Table on Polychromy in Ancient Sculpture and Architecture. Over 50 speakers, from throughout Europe and the United States, exchanged findings in one of archaeology's most innovative areas of research in recent years, still relatively unknown to the wider public.

For years the Uffizi's Department of Classical Antiquities has been conducting a systematic research program aimed at restoring – albeit virtually through documental reconstruction - the original polychromatic ornamentation of the multitude of marble statues adorning the three corridors of the Galleria. The results of these efforts, and of many similar campaigns being carried out across the globe, will be made available to the worldwide research community thanks to the generosity of the Amici degli Uffizi, that not only sponsored the conference, but with great far-sightedness and sensitivity are also going to fund the publication of the proceedings, once again inscribing the name of the Association in the ideal rolls of patrons of the Gallery of ancient statues.

An abridgment of the article "Policromia sulla scultura antica: presto pubblicati gli atti del Convegno" by F. Paolucci - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 65, April 2016.



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GAZES INTO THE 20TH CENTURY

The Department of Drawings and Prints will exhibit a selection of early 20th-century works of art, all acquired through donation or purchase, representing portraits and human figures in the historical context between the two wars.

Thirty-seven works between drawing and prints of the first thirty years of the 20th Century, mostly unknown to the public, are the significant selection of acquisitions come to the Department of Drawings and Prints since 2014.

The selection is representative of the complexity of the 20th Century first decades and shows figures and faces, portraits--and in some cases self-portraits--that have been rendered with striking psychological introspection, gazes predicting the upcoming dramatic events, spanning the different art styles of realism, avant-garde and local figurative tradition. Among the selected artists are Anders Zorn, Giannino Marchig, Emilio Mazzoni Zarini, Giovanni Costetti, as well as Anselmo Bucci, Ram and Thayaht, Giuseppe Lunardi, Pietro Bugiani, Kurt Craemer, Primo Conti, Mario Romoli, Giuseppe Lanza del Vasto, Alberto Giacometti, and Marino Marini.

The common theme is the re-affirmation of the individual in the context of a modernity that is constantly redefining the relationship between the individual and the collective, observed in those crucial years through the artists' representation of the body--and in particular the human face—capable of capturing the process of identity formation.

An abridgment of the article "Sguardi sul Novecento" by Marzia Faietti e Giorgio Marini - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 65, April 2016.



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THE IMPERTURBABLE FIXITY OF ANDY WARHOL

The portraits of Andy Warhol shot by Aurelio Amendola are the subject of an exhibition at the Uffizi; the photos were taken in two different sessions ten years apart. One dramatic black-and-white shot and a colour one will be donated to the Gallery.

Andy Warhol, who was a true poet, lived through a period shaken by contradictions. His works betray disgust with an era of exaggerated consumerism. And it is precisely this state of mind that seems to emanate from Warhol's portrait photos that Aurelio Amendola took in two different sessions, each ten years apart.

The imperturbable fixity of his face reminds the serial icons he painted and emanates a hidden pain of living. Even in the photo featuring him as he brings the telephone handset to his ear with a half-open mouth, Warhol's face remains motionless; behind him a mirror reflects the blurry image of Amendola while taking the photo. Besides the donated black and white portrait of great emotional impact - for the stark contrast between light and shadow playing on the artist's impassive expression of acceptance of his deadly disease - this color photo will also hopefully remain at the Florentine Gallery, as a memory of the semblance of both artists, the protagonist and the photographer.

An abridgment of the article "La fissita' imperturbabile di Andy Warhol" by Antonio Natali - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 65, April 2016.



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LIFE AT THE UFFIZI

Technology at the GDS

Mid-February of this year marked the conclusion of construction of the new study room of the Gallerie degli Uffizi's Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, or Department of Drawings and Prints (GDS). The ever-growing collection needed a more spacious area for study, as well as cutting-edge technology so that study of documents could be conducted under ideal conditions of space, light, and safety. And so, after two years' work--during which time departmental work was never interrupted--the GDS can now boast a new study hall, complete with library and photo archive, which will open its doors to scholars within June.

Homage to Cesare Fasola

Last February 4th, the former church of San Pier Scheraggio at the Uffizi was the venue for a day of study about the commitment of Cesare Fasola to the Galleries of Florence and to the artistic patrimony of the Jewish community. Cultured yet reserved, Fasola exhibited tremendous courage throughout the entire Second World War; he was an unsung hero of the Resistance movement and in safeguarding the works of art of the Uffizi Gallery. The event was held as part of the celebrations for the "2016 Memorial Day".

Baby Pit Stop

In order to further improve the museum accessibility to visitors, prompted also by proposals of UNICEF, the Gallerie degli Uffizi have introduced a series of new services to encourage the visit to the galleries by families with very young children. The *caffetteria*, on the second floor, now boasts a Baby Pit Stop, an area reserved for mothers who need a place to nurse or bottle-feed their infants. It is enclosed for privacy, right at the edge of the coffee shop, and is available during the entire opening hours of the museum.



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