



FRIENDS OF THE
UFFIZI
GALLERY

NEWS



Issue no. 25 – August 2016

A GREAT HUMANIST

It is hard to summarize in a few lines the figure of Antonio Natali, his importance in the panorama of the history of modern art and the high civic value of his work.

A great connoisseur, Natali has brought back from obscurity works of art such as Rosso Fiorentino's tabernacle at Marignolle (published in 1992), found new readings and decisive interpretations for works of art we thought everything had already been said about (*Michelangelo. Inside and outside the Uffizi* is just one of the most recent additions to an immense bibliography that counts several hundreds entries), always combining a re-reading of literary, philosophical, and theological texts, with a philological acumen that fears no challenge, even when it becomes uncomfortable by overturning paradigms ingrained in historiography. In addition to his favorite 16th Century – and I only mention Andrea del Sarto and Pontorno among the many artists he has devoted himself to – Natali's interests extend to the Counter-Reformation, contemporary art, and classical antiquity, with a complete and deep insight into the culture of the various historical periods, when figurative art becomes part of a beautifully woven fabric of different hints and stimuli, often completely unusual. First as a curator and then as director of the Uffizi, he has organized unforgettable exhibitions, such as the glorious *Officina della Maniera. Varietà e fierezza nell'arte fiorentina del Cinquecento fra le due repubbliche* (1994), when the greats of early sixteenth-century Florence - Raphael and Michelangelo - were placed within the most unexpected historical, interpretative and visual context of overwhelmingly intellectual power. And he is already working on other exhibitions, which will certainly yield as much joy and pleasure.

I would like to linger once again on Antonio Natali's commitment as museologist: his work did not consist only in the opening of entire new sections of the Uffizi, where visitors now stroll without realizing the powerful thinking and selective process existing behind each hanging picture, each sculpture, each tinted wall or visual perspective. His scholarly approach does not refrain from going countercurrent, experimenting innovative solutions "outside the box", the consequences of which – and hopefully the imitations – will be appreciated in the long term: during his time at the Uffizi, Natali has opened up the Gallery to the city and to Italy, thanks to an approach that promotes and makes accessible the deposits of the museum through the temporary exhibitions *I mai visti* (Never Seen Before), but even more so by devising the wonderful series of the *Città degli Uffizi*, with choice exhibits created for remote or unfavorable situations, or with a strong political and social impact.



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As a humanist, he has understood the necessity to show nuclei of important artworks in eccentric or distant sites, where they would not only interact with the environment, but also reach a group of new viewers, generating surprise and stimulating research. As a humanist, he has been capable of taking sides and having his say through the voice of paintings, as in the exhibition *La luce vince l'ombra* (The Light Wins over the Shadow) at Casal di Principe: there, Caravaggio's masterpieces from the Uffizi represented the victory of justice in the house seized from a mafioso.

I now take up the baton from Antonio, to run with equal enthusiasm in the direction he indicated, hoping to obtain the same results for the Uffizi, for our Country, and for Italian culture.

Eike Schmidt
Director Uffizi Gallery



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OUR *GIORNALE* REDOUBLES

For years, our American Friends have been following with passion the activities of the Gallery, wishing to be kept informed in real time on any news. That is why three times a year they receive all the information presented in our *Giornale* through a Newsletter with translated abstracts of the main articles published.

Now, our Friends would like something more than a few summaries; therefore, starting from the December issue, as special Christmas gift of this year marking their tenth anniversary, the *Giornale* will be duplicated with an online version fully translated by mother-tongue professionals.

It is a very challenging initiative for our Association, but surely interesting and important for the growth of our Friends, that we will never stop thanking for the great devotion to our museum.

Maria Vittoria Rimbotti

President Amici degli Uffizi and Friends of the Uffizi Gallery



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A SEA OF DIALOGUE

An exhibit on the isle of Lampedusa conveys the Mediterranean as an age-old locus of encounter and exchange of ideas and culture. The displayed works have travelled here from Florence, as well as from many cities in Italy, from Tunisia and Los Angeles.

On 3 June, the island of Lampedusa was the venue for the initial exhibit of the project *Verso il Museo della Fiducia e del Dialogo per il Mediterraneo* (Towards the Museum of Trust and Dialogue for the Mediterranean) and the Museo Archeologico delle Pelagie (Archaeological Museum of the Pelagian Islands).

The exhibit, which includes Caravaggio's *Sleeping Eros* of the Galleria Palatina, a *Phoenician Goddess* from the Bardo Museum in Tunis, the *Head of Hades* of the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, as well as other works held in the Fondazione Musei Civici of Venice, in Bologna, Reggio Emilia, Palermo, and as far as Agrigento, eloquently conveys the magical place that is the Mediterranean, where diverse cultures and languages have been encountering each other for centuries; here, as if in some exotic spice market, in a kaleidoscope of lively colours and sounds, in a whirlwind of intriguing fragrances, we behold an ocular witness to a complex, multi-faceted dialogue, to an uninterrupted exchange that century after century has encouraged genius and the intercourse of ideas.

An abridgment of the article "Il mare del dialogo" by Marta Onali - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 66, August 2016.



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THE COMIC ON EXHIBIT

Cocky, melancholic, cunning faces, those buffoni, villani e giocatori of the Medici court, immortalised in some thirty paintings preserved in storage, acquaint us with an aspect of daily reality dear to the Grand Dukes.

The wealth of art works kept in storage must be utilised in the most appropriate fashion, restudying them, restoring them and making them known by putting them on view on a rotating basis.

Launched in 2012-'13 with the exhibit *Il Mito, il Sacro, il Ritratto* (The Myth, the Sacred, the Portrait), and continued in 2015 with *Ritratti di paesi, mari e città* (Portraits of Towns, Seas, and Cities), this year's exhibition of works from storage addresses the theme of *Buffoni, villani e giocatori* (Jesters, Peasants and Players). The subject came to the fore almost spontaneously, in the course of the regular monitoring of the state of conservation of the works in the various storage areas of the Galleria Palatina, when curious faces and inquisitive gazes all but demanded attention, requesting to be viewed and hoping to tell their own story; bold, melancholic, cunning, resigned, or threatening, these were all faces that deserved thoughtful consideration. Among them were peasants in festive moments or gathered around a brazier of roasting chestnuts; hunters true or in costume; and professional or just-for-the-moment jesters—the latter all dressed elegantly, and well-paid, their profession evidently much in demand by the courts. As we addressed our attention to these images, trying to re-trace their historical context and their role within it, we realized that these were participants in a world that was perhaps marginal to that of political and dynastic history, “high history,” but one, on the other hand, that was an essential part of daily life at court, and, more generally, of the broader society of the time.

This crowd of odd individuals embodies a dimension that is fundamental to human social intercourse, namely that of laughter, entertainment, practical tricks, theatrical inventions, games of all kinds, and the mimicking of the real life from which they were largely excluded. And it is precisely thanks to the need of those in power to behold this reality that we can, once again, gaze upon these characters in the Palazzo Pitti exhibit, *Buffoni, villani e giocatori alla corte dei Medici*.

An abridgment of the article "Il comico in mostra" by Matteo Ceriana - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 66, August 2016.



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COLOR PREVAILS OVER LINE

The Gallerie degli Uffizi's Department of Prints and Drawings will be the venue, in October, of an exhibit of Venetian drawings from both the Ashmolean Museum and the Uffizi, which will underscore the division between the Florentine cultural preference for drawing and the Venetian predilection for color, a division first advanced by Giorgio Vasari.

The contrast between *color*, privileged by the Venetians, and the *line* of the Tuscan artists, came to a head theoretically in the Cinquecento, in particular through the writings of Giorgio Vasari. In his *Life of Titian*, in the 1568 La Giuntina edition, he states that many “Venetian” painters, such as Giorgione, Palma, Pordenone, and others, “who did not see Rome nor other works displaying sublime perfection” had to perforce hide “under a blanket of color their inability to draw.”

The divide between the Florentine culture of *drawing* and the Venetian world of *color* became even more obvious from the mid-Cinquecento on. The definition of drawing, understood as *lineamentum*, hewed closely to the linearity of architecture, which was finally considered the third daughter, together with painting and sculpture, of the father Drawing.

The exhibit, which will be installed in late September in the Department of Prints and Drawings, is being held in collaboration with the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford; it brings together selected drawings from the two collections. Presenting the most significant works of Carpaccio, Giovanni Bellini, Tiziano, Veronese, Tintoretto, Canaletto, Francesco Guardi, and Tiepolo, these drawings demonstrate how the artists of the Venetian world were successful in establishing a long-distance dialogue with the art centers of central Italy, in particular Florence, even though they continued to maintain the sovereignty of Color over Line.

An abridgment of the article "La rivincita del Colore sulla Linea" by Marzia Faietti - Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 66, August 2016.



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AN AUSTERE COUNTENANCE

One of the most significant lacunae within the Uffizi's portraits collection had been the great Tuscan master Ardengo Soffici. That absence has now been finally remedied, thanks to the generosity of Adriana Galletti, wife of Soffici's second-born son, artist Sergio Soffici, who has gifted a self-portrait of her father-in-law to the Gallerie.

A multi-talented protagonist on the 20th-century European cultural scene, at once painter, critic, poet, and essayist, Soffici was a product of the dynamic cultural world in Paris at the beginning of the century, where he was a creative participant in the most significant late 19th-century modern movements and colleague of those who created a renaissance in the world of Western art, both literary and figurative. On the occasion of the formal entrance of the painting into the collection, this coming autumn, the Gallerie degli Uffizi will mount an exhibit dedicated to Soffici; in addition to other works, it will include two more self-portraits, painted in his youth.

*An abridgment of the article "Un volto austero" by Orazio Lovino -
Il Giornale degli Uffizi no. 66, August 2016.*



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LIFE AT THE UFFIZI

Sculptures in 3D

The Gallerie degli Uffizi and the University of Indiana in the U.S. have signed a ground-breaking agreement for the 3D digitalisation of the entire collection of ancient Roman and Greek artworks in stone in the collections of the Uffizi, Palazzo Pitti, and the Boboli Gardens. The collaboration project will result in the creation of 3D models (available online by 2020 for study and preservation purposes,), focusing on the approx. 1,260 sculptures and works in stone spanning the 2nd century BC to the 4th century AD.

“Uffizi Live”

Right up to 27 September, thanks to the extension of the Uffizi Gallery public hours, visitors will have the opportunity, every Tuesday from 7.00 to 10.00pm, of applying their entrance ticket to attending performances of “Uffizi Live”, a wide-ranging programme of theatrical presentations. Uffizi visitors will thus be able not only to admire the Gallery’s artworks but also to enjoy the most classic repertoires and expressive styles of a range of performance arts as well as the most cutting-edge contemporary expressions.

Italy-Russia Agreement

Cultural relations between Italy and Russia have been strengthened by an important collaboration agreement between the Gallerie degli Uffizi and the Pushkin Museum in Moscow. The accord provides for the establishment of a joint working group between the two museums aimed at improving dialogue and mutual understanding between these two institutions and the cultures that each represents, by sharing expertise and future planning strategies.

Preservation services

The Gallerie degli Uffizi now comprises the Historical Archives, the Photographic Department, the Documentation Centre, and the Catalogue Department--all services crucial to the development, utilisation, and protection of the vast artistic wealth preserved in the Florentine museums.