

The Revenge of Armida

■ The Friends gift the Uffizi a painting by Cecco Bravo acquired on the antique art market

In the XVI canto of *Jerusalem Delivered*, Armida is abandoned by Rinaldo and as revenge the powerful sorceress summons a swarm of devils to an infernal assembly. The poem continues: "Black clouds the skies with horrid darkness fill/ And pale for dread became the eclipsed sun/The whirlwind blustered big on every hill/And hell to roar under her feet begun". Cecco Bravo masterfully condenses in his representation not only Tasso's account of the witches' sabbath, but above all the complex psychology of Armida: her sensuality, her indomitable character, the desperation of her abandonment, the panacea of the terrible - and useless - revenge on her lover.

The theme of sorcery, as well as the style and tenebrous atmosphere of the painting well reflects the cultural and



artistic milieu of Florence during the reign of Ferdinando II de' Medici, when intellectual circles and artistic leanings bore lively interest in necromancy. The Neapolitan painter Salvator Rosa, with his *Magherie* created during his decade long sojourn in Florence between 1640 and 1650, well represents this trend from a less morose and more

Francesco Montelatici, known as Cecco Bravo (Florence, 1601 - Innsbruck, 1661), *Armida*.

transcendental and philosophical perspective.

In his depiction, Cecco Bravo draws on sources that go well beyond immediate contingency: his wild reptile devils recall the *Medusa* by Caravaggio while the beautiful Armida somehow echoes in her pose the *Witch* in the famous print by Dürer. The highly contrasted chiaroscuro and the patchy density of the painterly surface with large extensions of saturated brown highlighting the contours of Armida's veils and body as well as the monsters' eyes and scales like flaming hot coals, were almost unthinkable in Florence before the arrival of Vittoria

della Rovere with her rich legacy of Venetian art, above all, Titian. Cecco Bravo seems nonetheless more attentive to the last stages of the Venetian artist's career and works like the *Punishing of Marsyas*, where solid color breaks down at the contours in a play of light and shadow that becomes the essence of the image, tempting the viewer to touch the serpents' slimy skin to put an end to their malefic contortions. Although curtailed along its left edge where once the monsters' extended limbs and Armida's magic wand were visible, Cecco Bravo nevertheless manages to magnify Armida's magic, seemingly invading the realm of the observer who is drawn into the scene to become almost a part of it. The spell worked well on the generous donors of the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery who, alerted by Maria Vittoria Rimbotti, ensued with lightning speed the purchase of the work and indeed obtained it on the vigil of Cecco Bravo's birthday, November 15. With compliments, maestro! ■

Eike D. Schmidt

End of year Gift

Seasons Greetings

Dear *Amici* and dear *Friends*, the year has ended with a big surprise and the proud awareness that once again we have succeeded in securing an important work for our Gallery. Thanks to the generous donation of the *Friends* following an animated sale by auction, we succeeded in adding to the Uffizi collection a seventeenth century work by the intriguing artist known as "Cecco Bravo" (baptized Francesco Montelatici). Florence boasts various testaments of his artistry, for example, in the cloister of San Marco, at the Santissima Annunziata, in the library of Casa Buonarroti, in Palazzo Pitti. The painting donated by the *Friends* to the Gallery of Statues and Paintings is entitled "Armida", as director Eike Schmidt has well illustrated in this journal issue.

During the course of the year, other initiatives in favor of the Gallery have not been lacking and with pleasure we recall the most outstanding: the conclusion of the complex and tasking restoration of the celebrated masterpiece by Leonardo, the *Adoration of the Magi*; the restoration of the tapestry

Harpooned Whale in the River Adour and the commencement of restoration on another tapestry illustrating the *Mock Attack on an Enchanted Island* (both made possible by the generous support of the *Friends*). We also financed the upgrading of the security system of the aerial corridor linking Palazzo Vecchio and the Uffizi, and finally, organized a second General Assembly of the *Amici dei Musei e delle Gallerie* at the museum of Villa Borghese in Rome last spring. The first Assembly held in September 2016 proved to be a very fruitful one in pinpointing numerous opportunities for patronage and identifying main priorities.

But no doubt, the acquisition of the painting by Cecco Bravo on the antique market stands as a particularly positive and festive end of the year celebration, truly a very special 'Seasons Greetings' for the city, for all of the *Amici* and *Friends* and for the members of the Board thanks to whose generous efforts 2018 will surely begin in the best possible way...

Maria Vittoria Colonna Rimbotti

The Glory of Sant'Andrea Corsini

■ The Uffizi has acquired an important painting by Luca Giordano, a study for the dome of the Corsini Chapel in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence

“Luca Giordano Neapolitan renowned painter as can be seen in the beautiful and highly celebrated decoration of the dome”: thus the artist from Naples is cited in a *Giornale di Ricordanze* (Journal of Memories) one year after the completion of the decoration and frescoes of the dome of the Corsini Chapel in Carmine, a project concluded in eight months, signed and dated 1682 beneath the grand allegorical figures that occupy the four pendentives of the dome. The Uffizi Galleries have acquired the preparatory ‘bozzetto’ of the celebrated dome that represents the central scene of Saint Andrew Corsini welcomed to the heavens by the Holy Trinity, entitled *The Glory of Sant'Andrea Corsini*.

The painting, still on the original canvas and with an ancient frame decorated with the emblems of the Corsini coat of arms, was put on exhibit at the Biennial Antique Fair in Florence in 2015 by the Roman gallery Antonacci-Lapicciarella: the purchase proposal advanced by the former director of the Uffizi Antonio Natali was subsequently accepted by his successor Eike Schmidt and the work, the focus of a recent exhibit (*Gli Uffizi e il territorio*, directed by A. Griffo and M.M. Simari), entered the Galleries' collections, securing this historically and qualitatively relevant document for posterity.

Located opposite the Brancacci Chapel, an incunabulum of Florentine Quattrocento painting, the Corsini chapel may be considered the major



Luca Giordano, preparatory study for the *Glory of Sant'Andrea Corsini*, Gallery of Statues and Paintings of the Uffizi.

baroque ecclesiastical creation of the Florentine late Seicento: a rare complex for the variety of materials employed and for the polyphonic harmony attained by the artists working there. The successful outcome of the initiative proved determining in the definite affirmation of the family and for the progression of the local artistic milieu towards

Roman innovation. And shortly thereafter, it opened the way for the commission on the part of Francesco Riccardi of the decoration of the library and the better-known Gallery of his palace.

Undertaken by the cousins Bartolomeo and Neri Corsini in honor of their ancestor Andrea, the Carmelite bishop of Fiesole canonized in 1629 whose body

had been brought to Carmine with elaborate celebrations on October 24, 1683, the Corsini Chapel can be considered a *unicum* for the quality and homogeneity of its decorative elements. Designed by Pier Francesco Silvani, the chapel decoration was carried out by the sculptors Carlo Marcellini and Giovan Battista Foggini along with numerous

stucco masters, decorators and marble stonecutters. Foggini is the author of the three marble altarpieces, the *Apotheosis of Sant'Andrea Corsini* in the center (above the sarcophagus of the saint), and on the sides the *Appearance of Sant'Andrea during the Battle of Anghiari* (on the right) and the *Miracle of the Mass of Sant'Andrea* (on the left).

With perspicacious intuition on the part of the Corsini, the fresco decoration of the dome and the pendentives was instead commissioned to Giordano, a 'foreign' painter who was in effect already well known in Florence from the time of his stop-over there on his way to Venice between 1664 and 1665. In just a few months as the guest of the

brothers Andrea and Lorenzo Del Rosso, a family from the *Oltrarno* quarter of the city that mediated his presence there, the painter designed and executed (thus his nickname 'Luca fa presto', Speedy Luca) the dome painting representing: *Sant'Andrea Corsini presented by the Virgin welcomed to heavenly glory by the most Holy Trinity*. In his creation, the initial configuration arranged in rising concentric rings is continuously contrasted by groups of unaligned figures that ascend or descend with correlated expressions and gestures, following a crowded and dynamic compositional manner new to Florentines.

At the beginning stages of the project, contemporary sources

make mention of the precious 'models' or 'macchie (sketches)' or 'reflections' that Giordano was preparing in view of the final execution, that is, his preparatory studies (not to be confused with paintings *d'après* or 'memories' to which the term 'macchia' is often applied).

The 'macchia' in question, now part of the Uffizi collections, is the first idea, the closest to what is painted on the dome's surface, despite few variations and corrections. Giordano's studies were already much sought after by connoisseurs and collectors and three of the preparatory studies for the dome remained in the Corsini collection within the palace of Parione. The three 'macchie' were on exhibit

at the Academy of Design at the Santissima Annunziata in 1705 and were still listed in the inventory of the Corsini Gallery compiled in 1880 by Ulderigo Medici. But after the death of Prince Tommaso, in 1919, one of them was separated from the others for hereditary reasons and its existence disregarded by scholars. Today the precious painting has returned to its place in the artistic history of Florence, testimony of one of the most outstanding manifestations of the Baroque, an immediate synthesis in rapid but accurate and legible execution of the principal scene of the dome in the Corsini Chapel by Luca Giordano. ■

Novella Barbolani di Montauto



Luca Giordano, *Glory of Sant'Andrea Corsini*, 1682, dome of the Corsini Chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence.

Centuries of Fashion

■ *The Costume Gallery of Palazzo Pitti has become a Museum. Rare historical garments, but also theatrical costumes, accessories, preparatory studies and creations of the greatest contemporary fashion designers*

The Costume Gallery has changed its name, becoming more appropriately the Museum of Fashion and Costume (a designation I felt was long overdue but only now has found proper consensus).

The change in terminology seems to me to be the most apropos among those made most recently in renewal of the Uffizi and Pitti museums, precisely because the Costume Gallery is first and foremost a museum of the history of fashion. It is also endowed with other interesting collections, the most prominent being the Umberto Tirelli bequest and its nucleus of theater costumes. The historical collection does prevail, however, both numerically and in prestige. Suffice it to mention the garments of Cosimo I de' Medici, Eleonora of Toledo and their son don Garzia that have been permanently on exhibit in the museum since their restoration. Besides the prestige of their owners, they are among the very rare examples of XVI century costumes still in existence.

In truth, the name change has brought no major transformations to the museum; running a museum like ours requires a plethora of skilled workers, from textile restorers to tailors, given its dynamic nature in continuous metamorphosis, dissimilar to most museums with more static exhibitions. In effect, entire collections of garments on display

have been replaced in the past by a selection of articles from within the deposits at two-year intervals. At the same time, a series of 'temporary' shows, lasting two to three months, have been on exhibit in the Ballroom of the Palazzina della Meridiana - at the heart of the museum.

Each 'selection' from the deposits determines the character of the biennial exposition and is chosen with great attention to norms of conservation and the will to render public the museum's patrimony, consisting of almost 11,000 pieces of ancient and modern

history of fashion, such as the complete archives, save the financial registers, of Donna Simonetta di Cesarò, as well as a portion of the Ferdinando Sarmi archive and Cesare Guidi's collection of garment figurines from the '60s and '70s.

The collection has been and continues to be in constant expansion thanks to a continuing stream of donations and noteworthy state acquisitions such as the important collection of buttons or the group of very remarkable garments once belonging to the fashion journal-

sits is almost complete; its inauguration with that of the new selection - the thirteenth since the institution's foundation in 1983 - is planned for December 18.

But now let's look at the Museum of Fashion and Costume today. On October 22, the exhibit *The Ephemeral Museum of Fashion* closed. A concept of Olivier Saillard, former director of the Palais Galliera, Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris, promoted by Pitti Immagine and by Centro di Firenze per la moda italiana (Florence Center for Italian



Gualtiero Nativi, *Laceration*, oil on canvas, 1959.

clothing and accessories dating from the XVIII century to today. The museum's archive is also rich in material; for example, it contains the preparatory drawings of Thayaht and Ram for the first TuTa and fabric decorations in addition to important documents on the

Mila Schön, *Evening Dress*, silk cady and pearl beads, Fall-Winter Collection 1966-1967.

ist and collector Anna Piaggi. Fortunately, the restoration of a new wing of the depo-





Exhibit *The Ephemeral Museum of Fashion*, Museum of Fashion and Costume, June 14– October 22, 2017.

Fashion), the showing was really more an installation than an exhibit centered around fashion, offering multiple cues for reflection on everything that affords a sense of the passage of time, of decadence and of attempts to halt its course, for example, by locking up works in the glass cases of a museum. Saillard writes: “What is ordinary and natural, incessantly correct, is contradicted by the laws of fashion that find their basis exclusively in variation”.

Preparing the exhibit proved to be a very positive collaboration between two similar institutions: the Florentine museum exhibiting mainly historical pieces and the Palais Galliera, which selected prevalently contemporary works. A more or less happenchance incursion into the palace’s attics inspired the furnishing of the exposition spaces that Saillard filled with frames, furniture, clothes racks, accentuating the sense of the ephemeral to the utmost.

After the exhibit closed, the museum staff immediately took in hand the new selection, choosing clothes and accessories from the deposits, controlling their state of conservation, arranging them on the various manikins and then dressing

them for exposition. The selection entitled *Traces. Artful dialogues* involves the Museum of Fashion and Costume and the Galleria dell’Arte Moderna in Palazzo Pitti. This is not the first time I have had the pleasure of working with the generous staff of the Galleria who



Yohji Yamamoto, *Woman’s Dress*, in pied-de-poule wool and chiffon, Fall-Winter Collection, 2003-2004.

have accompanied clothing exhibits with paintings and sculptures in accord with the textiles



Italian dressmaker, *Evening Dress*, silk organza and sequins, once owned by Lady Franca Florio, 1930 ca.

on display. But up to now the paintings and the sculptures were simply furnishings; this time around in every room their impact will be palpable as they enter into dialogue with the garments sharing reciprocal formal and conceptual affinities.

Regrettably, the selection will be put on exhibit without protective glass cases. In effect, the elegant and still functional older glass cases were dismantled for the Saillard exhibit and it will be some time before newer acclimatized ones will replace them. For this reason, restorers have been instructed to carry out monthly inspections on the state of conservation of the articles on exhibit and to return those showing signs of deterioration to the deposits.

The impossibility of placing the articles in glass cases conditioned the choice of items such that only modern and contemporary clothing in a good

state of conservation will be on exhibit. But despite the risk, there are some positive sides to this absence of protection. It affords the viewer the opportunity to admire masterpieces by contemporary stylists-artists without glass or Plexiglas barriers: the weaves of Ferré come to mind as do the sparkles of Coveri’s sequins, together with the confetti of light by the painter Marussig, as well as all of the other painters and sculptors who will see their works, used not as mere backdrops, but in the role of protagonists along with the garments flanking them.

The selection is divided into sections according to graphic, volumetric and luminous associations. The co-directors of the exhibit are Dr. Simonella Condemi and Dr. Caterina Chiarelli. The catalogue will be an on-line publication only. ■

Caterina Chiarelli

Eyes on the City

■ *The aerial corridor over via della Ninna has been temporarily reopened to the public by reservation only*

Not only a simple passage, a walkway, a link but eyes, windows and a view of the Loggia of Orcagna from the novel perspectives designed by Giorgio Vasari who created as he destroyed. The aerial corridor over via della Ninna - the ancient via della Dogana separating Palazzo Vecchio and the Galleria degli Uffizi - has been tentatively reopened to the public until January 14, 2018, thanks also to the upgrading of the security system sponsored by the Amici degli Uffizi.

The suspended passageway has served many purposes in the past: from a simple, private walkway connecting Medicean residences to a closed and forgotten chamber and finally offices for the functionaries of the Superintendence. Some may remember how in the 1970s it was hurriedly furnished as a tea room: Queen Elisabeth II during her visit to Florence took a pause there over a cup of

tea in the company of Maria Fossi Todorov, art historian and founder of the didactic department of the Uffizi. Certainly, the Queen must have admired the view from those windows. Now, this charming covered bridge, once accessible to princes and illustrious personages only on exception, is open to visitors as part of the new global ticket (approved by the City of Florence and the Ministry of Culture) that allows the direct passage from Palazzo Vecchio to the Gallery of Statues and Paintings of the Uffizi.

The aerial passageway between the two buildings is the first part of the celebrated 'Vasari's Corridor' that continues through the Gallery and across the Arno River over Ponte Vecchio to reach Palazzo Pitti, created by the brilliant artist and architect Giorgio Vasari for Cosimo I de' Medici as part of the celebrations of the marriage of his son Francesco to Giovanna d'Austria.

But attention: 'Vasari's Corridor' is still closed for restructuring and reorganization and, as the Director of the Uffizi Eike Schmidt has announced, the entire 'Passageway of the Prince' is scheduled to be reopened as early as June of next year. Let's be happy for now with this first section of the passageway that Vasari completed in 1565, a decade after he had begun the renovation



The aerial corridor over via della Ninna and, below, the section of the "Vasari's Corridor" above Ponte Vecchio.

of Palazzo Vecchio in 1555, preserving the medieval structure of Arnolfo di Cambio, but transforming the interior of the building with frescoes and decorations. Following the renovation of the Hall of the Cinquecento, Vasari intervened drastically dismantling the Romanesque church of San Pier Scheraggio to create the Gallery or the *fabbrica de' magistrati* (the office of the Magistrates), confiscating and demolishing many homes to make room for the Piazzale degli Uffizi and finally, creating his *corridor* to Palazzo Pitti.

As Vasari writes in his *Lives*: "... I have never built anything more difficult and dangerous than the loggia (Verone) and the very grand edifice of the magistrates (Uffizi) that turns along the Arno River, as its foundations are in the

river while it stands suspended almost in the air. But it was necessary...to place above it as we did the grand corridor that crosses the river from the ducal palace to the palace and garden of Pitti. The said corridor was completed in five months under my orders and design even though it is a creation that one would think could not be finished in less than five years". An operation unimaginable today that then joined Cosimo I's two poles of power, the seat of the Republican government of the Old Palace (thus named Palazzo Vecchio) and the residence at Pitti.

At present and prior to the final reopening, the visit to the first section of the aerial passageway requires observance of strict safety measures. ■

Mara Amorevoli

For information and reservations

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“Attack on an Island”



The tapestry *Mock attack on an Enchanted Island at Fontainebleau*, before restoration.

■ The beginning of a new conservation treatment on another tapestry from the series of the “Festivities at the Court of the Valois”

Thanks to the generosity of the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery a new restoration campaign has begun on a tapestry representing the *Mock attack on an Enchanted Island at Fontainebleau* (Inv. Tapestries no. 473) from the magnificent se-

ries of the *Festivities at the Court of the Valois*. The fabric woven in Bruxelles by a still unidentified manufactory between 1575 and 1582 was designed by Antoine Caron.

In the right foreground of the scene stand the full-length figures of Henry III of Valois and his wife Luisa of Lorena-Vaudémont. With a gesture of his hand, Henry III invites the spectator to observe one of the extraordinary spectacles held at the castle of Fontainebleau. Seven ships with sol-

diers aboard, dressed in varied costumes, act out a siege on a group of savages, perhaps Native Americans donning feathered headdresses, trapped on the small island. Along the banks of the lake a procession of ladies and knights watch the fictive battle. This is the only tapestry in the series that does not portray Caterina, the Queen mother.

The restoration of the tapestry, brought to the laboratory at the beginning of August, will be complete by next spring. The first steps in the process included an accurate and meticulous documentation achieved through diagrams and photographs (circa 1500 images), the vacuuming of the entire cloth and testing for color fastness.

The latter confirmed that this tapestry – like the others already restored – the *Harpooned Whale in the River Adour* (Inv. Tapestries no. 493) and the *Royal Departure from the Castle of Anet* (Inv. Tapestries no. 3) – is also made with original silk yarns dyed red, orange, brown and black that have a low resistance to water.

As in the previous tapestry restorations, a complex cleaning process devised in collaboration with Isetta Tosini from the Opificio delle Pietre Dure was carried out in sectors on a low-pressure table using *cyclododecane* to control the bleeding of instable colors and a particular *chelating solution* to remove oxidation on metal threads. The examination of the original dyes was entrusted once again to Ilaria Degano from the Department of Chemistry and Industrial Chemistry of the University of Pisa.

The tapestry is being restored in the conservation laboratory of New York University by a group of four conservators from the ‘Restauro Tessile di Beyer e Perrone Da Zara’ company who are generously hosted in Villa La Pietra. Now that the cleaning process is successfully concluded, the intricate treatment of the degraded areas will allow us once again to appreciate the vivacious colors of the tapestry, as is already evident in the details before and after cleaning. ■

Costanza Perrone Da Zara



A portion of the tapestry before and after cleaning.



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Life at the Uffizi

■ MASTERPIECES FROM JAPAN

The previously announced exhibit, "The Japanese Renaissance. Nature in Screen Paintings from the XVI to the XVII centuries" (see the Journal of the Uffizi, August 2017 issue), has met with wide public and critical acclaim. The first substitution of works on display has already taken place and the items will change once more – for the third time – after December 5 for the duration of the exhibit scheduled to end on January 7. Thus, a vast repertory of masterpieces of Japanese painting on screens and sliding doors have been available to the public: works coming from Buddhist temples and national museums, municipalities and private homes in Japan; masterpieces on paper and silk so very delicate they can only be displayed on rare occasions and for limited intervals making the rotation of works an essential factor in conservation. The great names on exhibit in the latest group of works

are those from the Kanō School, Hasegawa, Sesshu, Sotatsu, who represent the Renaissance and splendor of Japanese art: paintings of flowers and birds in the four seasons and landscapes in black ink closely tied to the Chinese tradition (kanga); alongside are similar themes but with increasing affinities to design, brilliant colors and simplified gilded backgrounds typical of native Japanese painting (*yamatōe*).

This is the first exhibit of its type in Europe: held in the Magliabechiana Hall of the Uffizi, under the direction of Rossella Menegazzo, professor from the University of Milan and editor of the Giunti catalog, with the collaboration of the curators of the department of painting of the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan, Asaka Hiroshi, Watada Minoru, Tsutsui Tadahito. The exhibition has been organized by the Gallerie degli Uffizi in collaboration with the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan with the support of the Japanese Embassy in Italy. ■



Detail of the painted screen *Pines on the Beach*, mid-XV century (Muromachi period).

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