

A Pope and His Cousins

— The Portrait of Leo X and Its Most Hidden Meanings

Much has been written on the *Portrait of Leo X* in the past, and most recently, for the exhibit on “Raffaello (1520-1483)” organized by the Scuderie del Quirinale and the Uffizi Galleries. There is not enough space here to enter into a thorough description of the painting’s richness of narrative detail or an in-depth discussion of the complexity of its content. Better then to focus on certain details useful in unveiling its most hidden meanings.

In his famous commentary, Vasari (1550, 1568) concentrates exclusively on the naturalism of the image and the diligence of its execution. He thus lingers on the material and tactile aspects of the velvets, the damasks, the linings, the gold, the silks, the illuminated manuscript (the *Biblia Hamilton* now in Berlin), and the finely carved silver bell with its gold decorations, not forgetting to comment on the reflections of light in the pommel of the seat. But in fact, Raffaello intended to go far beyond the threshold of an admittedly stupefying naturalism. Those details were meant to encapsulate salient personal traits of the Pope, the second son of Lorenzo il Magnifico, baptized Giovanni de’ Medici



Raffaello, *The Portrait of Leo X*, on display at exhibit at the Scuderie del Quirinale, Rome.

and elected to the papacy in 1513: his refined and humanist culture, his taste for the antique, his love of luxury, and his will to reconcile all of the above with the renewal of the Church. Then again, Leo X, hailed as a great peacemaker after the tumultuous reign of Julius II, escaped a conspiracy organized against him by Cardinal Petrucci in the spring of 1517. But by 1518, just one year after the conclusion of the Fifth Lateran Council, he had already deluded the expectations of those awaiting universal peace by sending his nephew Lorenzo de’ Medici, a figure intimately tied to the creation of this painting, to

the bloody war of Urbino in 1517.

In fact, as soon as the triple portrait was finished in September 1518, it was sent to Florence to celebrate Lorenzo’s marriage to Maddelena de la Tour d’Auvergne, a relative of Francis I of France. A strange wedding gift, one might say. But not really, considering how the Pope conveys through the painting his reliance on the support of his two cardinal cousins, Giulio de’ Medici, the future Pope Clement VII, and Luigi de’ Rossi, who Leo himself had appointed cardinal. While the wedding gift intended to reaffirm his closeness to his nephew, Lorenzo, who had

not followed an ecclesiastic vocation but rather entered into the Pope’s political strategy of marital alliances.

Investigations undertaken during the recent restoration confirm that the preparatory drawings of the figure of Leo X differ from those of the cardinals, even though all were completed before the background. Perhaps at the outset, the portrait was intended to be the charismatic image of the Pope alone. Subsequently transformed into the representation of familial politics, it

Marzia Faietti
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nonetheless continued to be an eloquent expression of the refined culture and religious sentiment of Leo X, unveiling as well his fear of a possible rupture within Christianity following the revolt of Luther. In this sense, the cross-reading of the first page of the Gospel of John and the last page of the Gospel of Luke, on which the manuscript opens, alludes to the necessity of building

through indulgences a church as grand as the temple of Jerusalem (the new Saint Peter's whose architect from 1514 was Raffaello himself).

Thus within the portrait, the celebration of papal power – where politics and religion inextricably combine – converges with the representation of the underlying dynamics of private, familial relations and diplomatic strategies (the alliance with

France that de' Rossi faithfully supported). Raffaello knew how to mix and balance the private and dynastic-familial spheres with the celebration of the perfect union between spiritual and temporal power without neglecting the attentive portrayal of the individual and psychological makeup of the various personages. And it is precisely through the psychological depth apparent in the three fig-

ures, in the suspended atmosphere of the scene and the unquiet gaze of Cardinal de' Rossi, looking directly at us, that we perceive the fragility of this historical moment destined to vanish even the most carefully pondered strategies. Raffaello, in 1518, fully understood the frailty of the Roman Church in face of the times to come. ■

Marzia Faietti

Art Detectives

■ Active in Rome since 1969, the Cultural Heritage Protection Unit of the Carabinieri is renowned worldwide for its excellence

The Uffizi Galleries is showcasing a display of *Painted Pages* recovered by the Carabinieri Protection of Cultural Heritage Unit

(Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale - TPC), an initiative for which I would like to thank Director Eike Schmidt, his collaborator



The first important challenge for the TPC: *La Muta* by Raffaello, stolen in 1975 from the Ducal Palace of Urbino and recovered the following year.



Fighting clandestine excavations in Iraq, where the Carabinieri have been active since 2003.

Simona Pasquinucci, and Sonia Chiodo, curator of the exhibit. I consider it really good news, not because of my role as commander of the investigative unit being honored, but because these admirable pearls of art – that warranted Oderisi da Gubbio a mention in Dante's Purgatory – deserve wider public attention.

Paintings that embellish manuscripts and ancient texts have accompanied the path of civilization. As I wrote in my introduction to the exhibition catalog: "Between an ornament-

ed initial and a figure, universal history has been written; the *minium* that gives its name to the objects on display is the color red of creative energy in continuous movement".

Of equal importance is the exhibit's recognition of the operative role of my collaborators. At the time of its foundation in Piazza S. Ignazio in Rome in 1969, the Command numbered seventeen Carabinieri. Today, it counts three hundred spread across the entire peninsula – islands included – who have re-

Painted Pages Tell the Tale

Italy was a farming civilization for centuries and, from Constantine to the Popes, the center of Catholicism. These conditions gave rise to a hundred thousand cult sanctuaries, many in the urban countryside and in isolated localities. The abandonment of rural life put all of this to risk and innumerable thefts called for targeted countermeasures. The exhibit "Stories of Painted Pages", on display in the Sala delle Nicchie (Hall of Niches) in Palazzo Pitti, showcases the investigations of the TPC with a selection of Choir Books returned to convents, archives and museums in Umbria and Tuscany. The acknowledgment of these restitutions on a local level is the Uffizi's way of endorsing TPC's fundamental role in the worldwide protection of art. R.R.



Antiphony with *Saint Stephen and Episodes of His Life*, tempera and gold on parchment, circa 1330-1340. Crociani Civic Museum and Art Gallery, Montepulciano (Siena, Italy).



TPC and religious art: a masterpiece of Trecento goldsmithing, the famous Processional Cross returned to the village of Trequanda (Siena, Italy) in 2009.

covered nearly three million artworks, created a database of lost works that currently serves as a universal reference point, activated investigations and legal proceedings in the four corners of the world that have made it more difficult for museums and international auction houses to accept artifacts of uncertified provenance on the art market.

The Italian method for the protection of cultural heritage enjoys worldwide recognition. Based on Article 9 of the Constitution, the model is deployed through the central and peripheral channels of the Ministry of Fine Arts and Cultural Activities (Mibact), the Carabinieri, and other organizations, such as the Committee for the Recovery

and Restitution of Cultural Patrimony.

We also set the precedent for UNESCO which, a year after the foundation of the TPC, invited all country members to adopt a similar organizational structure. We export “Cultural Peacemakers” to areas devastated by conflicts and natural calamities and offer consultation, train-

ing, assistance, and aid wherever needed. After all, no less should be expected from the ‘Bel Paese’ (Beautiful Country), the age-old repository of archeological treasures and monuments of every age, the historical destination along the *Grand Tour* that inspired the ecstasy of Stendhal, the genius of Goethe, and the canvases of Turner, among others.

In an apartment overlooking Palazzo Pitti, right here in Florence, Dostoyevsky worked on the completion of “The Idiot”, rightfully considered one of his greatest masterpieces. He was immersed in the splendor of a grand living space open to the sky, willed by the Medici and furnished by artists of the caliber of Brunelleschi, Donatello, and Michelangelo. In a similar setting, it is not by chance then that, in the pages of his novel bestowed on posterity in 1869, the great writer had Prince Myškin, pose the timeless question: “Will beauty save the world?” ■

*Gen. B. Roberto Riccardi,
Commander Protection
of Cultural Heritage Unit*



The cataloging of artifacts in the vault in via Anicia in Rome, the seat of TPC operations.

Most Illustrious and Most Excellent

■ *The Andito degli Angiolini in Palazzo Pitti will soon host a monographic exhibit on Giovanna Garzoni, a refined miniaturist and “renowned painter”*

Highlighting feminine genius, two of the world’s greatest cultural capitals are celebrating almost simultaneously two women artists who have long been unjustifiably undervalued. The London National Gallery will showcase Artemisia Gentileschi and, in Florence, the Palazzo Pitti will hold the first monographic exhibition ever dedicated to Giovanna Garzoni. Both women were active in the seventeenth century and, though different in temperament and expressive force, likened to one another for their distinctive personalities that contrasted the gendered stereotypes of women of their time. Artemisia and Giovanna are today considered feminist icons (especially the former) for having conducted their lives with independence and



Carlo Maratti, *Portrait of Giovanna Garzoni*, circa 1665, oil on canvas. Ascoli Piceno, Civic Picture Gallery.

creative determination. These two women artists, creators of their own destinies, seem also

to have shared a friendship and travels between one commission and another across

Italy and Europe. We can imagine them together in a carriage stacked with chests, boxes of colors and paintbrushes on their *Grand Tour* to the court of Charles I of England in 1637, and then again in Paris....

But let’s return to Florence where Giovanna Garzoni lived between 1642 and 1651. The Uffizi Galleries have chosen this highly skilled calligrapher, refined miniaturist, “renowned painter”, musician, and singer as one of the protagonists in a series of initiatives dedicated to the rediscovery of lesser-known artists. However, due to the Coronavirus emergency, the inauguration and opening to the public of “*The ‘Greatness of the Universe’ in the Art of Giovanna Garzoni*”, curated by Sheila Barker and ready for view in Palazzo Pitti, has been postponed.

While hoping very soon to be able to admire her works in person and penetrate the soul of this multi-talented artist, we can meanwhile share reflections on portraits of the artist. In particular, Carlo Maratti depicts her at a mature age: a nun-like figure, austere and not very beautiful, but gifted



Giovanna Garzoni, *Little Dog with Biscuits and a Chinese Cup*, circa 1648, tempera on parchment. Florence, Uffizi Galleries, Palazzo Pitti, Palatine Gallery.



Giovanna Garzoni, *Chinese Plate with Artichokes, a Rose and Strawberries*, circa 1655-1662, tempera on parchment. Florence, Uffizi Galleries, Palazzo Pitti, Palatine Gallery.

Giuseppe Bezzuoli *at the Uffizi*

■ A monographic exhibit rediscovers one of the foremost painters of the early Nineteenth Century

In the summer of 2018, the director of the Uffizi Galleries, Eike Schmidt, purchased Giuseppe Bezzuoli's *Eve Tempted by the Serpent*. This was a first step towards the reawakening of interest in this major protagonist of Italian art of the first half of the nineteenth-century through a grand monographic exhibit. Unfortunately, circumstances related to the Covid-19 pandemic have forced the Galleries to postpone the event to a date still to be determined.

The first objective, pursued during the exhibit's preliminary stages of research and design, was to represent the artist in all of his complexity by gathering together a large selection of his works, many thought to have been dispersed on the art market. Concurrently, the study of documentary resources, in part conserved by his heirs and in part within the public archives, proved fundamental to the systematic reconstruction of his personality and artistic career. This allowed for a broader critical analysis of Bezzuoli, formerly limited to the genre of history painting, and stimulated a



Giuseppe Bezzuoli, *Love Triumphs over Force*, circa 1843, private collection, Florence.

widening perspective that lead to further investigation of other salient areas of his production as well as the international relations he entertained from early in his career.

With these goals in mind, the exhibit will be divided into chronological and thematic sections that open with a series of

works by the main protagonists of European Neo-classicism. These were artists tied to Bezzuoli's formative years and ac-

tive in Florence during the early XIX century in the phase of transition between the Lorraine Grand Duchy and the brief pa-



Giuseppe Bezzuoli, *Lorenzino de' Medici Stabbed to Death in Piazza San Giovanni and Paolo in Venice*, 1840, Civic Museum, Pistoia.

Giuseppe Bezzuoli (1784-1855). A Master Painter of the Romantic Era

Curated by Vanessa Gavioli, Elena Marconi, Ettore Spalletti

Uffizi Galleries, Aula Magliabechiana
Sala Detti and Sala del Camino

Dates to be announced once the museum reopens



Giuseppe Bezzuoli, *Portrait of Elisabetta Ricasoli* (mother of Bettino Ricasoli), 1825, Ricasoli Family Collection. The work was recently restored in preparation for the exhibit.

renthsis of the Napoleonic government. Following this requisite introduction, the exhibit will enter into the core of Bezzuoli's production, recounting his evolution towards a romantic sensibility and his capacity to vary among the most diverse artistic genres. These will be illustrated in the subsequent sections of the exhibit respectively dedicated to history painting, literary themes, landscapes, portraits, decorative cycles, religious art, and a copious assembly of his graphics. Of particular interest is the reconstruction of the cultural *milieu* surrounding the artist that fostered his full participation in the dominant contemporary issues under debate, disseminated by the artistic-literary *Gabinetto* (Literary Association) of Giovan Battista Viesseux and the intellectual circle of his collaborators who contributed to the periodical he founded, "Antologia".

Bezzuoli's innate intellectual curiosity – confirmed by his biographers and evident examining his papers and drawing notebooks – induced him to surpass the limits of his profession as a painter to cultivate wider interests in the fields of theater,

historical novels, and literature. Naturally inclined towards these disciplines, he drew liberally from them, enriching his pictorial language with constantly original and current themes taken from the various repertoires of tragedy, melodrama, and historical prose. Other aspects explored in the exhibition regard Bezzuoli's activity as a teacher



Giuseppe Bezzuoli, *The Repudiation of Hagar*, 1844. Uffizi Galleries, Palazzo Pitti, Gallery of Modern Art. The work was purchased by the Uffizi Galleries in 2019.

at the Florentine Academy of Fine Arts, his devotion to past masters, and his profession as a connoisseur and antique dealer. Once again, these activities are complementary to his painting and are fundamental to a deeper understanding of his artistic personality.

During the recent restoration campaign undertaken in preparation for the exhibit, works such as the portraits of Elisabetta Ricasoli and Luigi de Cambray Digny have confirmed the artist's extraordinary technical ability and executive competence. These were skills inspired by Renaissance and seventeenth-century old masters

whom Bezzuoli much admired and assiduously copied in many of his surviving drawings.

Bezzuoli's modernity will be the focus of the exhibit's final section. It centers on his abandonment of the language of Romanticism in favor of new formal solutions: from the incipient realism underway in Tuscany, practiced at the time by the young pupils of the Academy, to the aestheticism he embraced, albeit episodically, in several surprising masterpieces of his maturity, such as *Love Triumphs over Force*. ■

Vanessa Gavioli, Elena Marconi
Ettore Spalletti



Giuseppe Bezzuoli, *Eve Tempted by the Serpent*, 1853, Uffizi Galleries, Palazzo Pitti, Gallery of Modern Art. The work was purchased by the Uffizi Galleries in 2018.



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Life at the Uffizi

■ DANTE DAY

In commemoration of the 'Great Poet', last March 25 – the day scholars identify as the start of the voyage to the afterworld in the Divine Comedy – the Uffizi celebrated the first "Dantedì", showcasing the purchase of the important painting "Francesca da Rimini in Dante's Inferno" (1810). The work is by Nicola



Nicola Monti, *Francesca da Rimini in Dante's Inferno* (1810).

Monti, a prolific and versatile Tuscan painter held to be a foremost proponent of proto-romantic painting. Because of the current health emergency, the museum has logically been closed, however, an introductory essay and related initiatives (for example, a thematic exhibit and a tour of the medieval 'Inferno' chambers of the Uffizi) are now posted on line. In fact, www.uffizi.it features several virtual presentations dedicated to Dante and a selection of eleven works from the Galleries' collections narrating the history of Dante's popularity in the history of art. The Uffizi Facebook page, www.facebook.com/uffizigalleries, also offers a tour of the medieval underground of the Uffizi, a virtual journey through the excavations of the ancient building that takes visitors back to the early

Trecento, a time when Dante Alighieri was a member of the Council of the People that met in those very same chambers.

■ "IMAGINES" ON LINE

The Uffizi magazine "Imagines", now available for consultation on line at <https://www.uffizi.it/pagine/archivio-dei-numeri-di-imagines>, has re-



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