

Never Seen Before

■ Thanks to new rooms in the Uffizi, over one hundred new paintings have been put on display. This purposeful layout encourages thoughtful viewing and induces dialogue among the masterworks

veiling different colors one over the other. Perhaps one of the most suggestive views is that of the *Madonna with the Long Neck* by Parmigianino: a masterwork of mannerist painting, now on display in a position that puts the painting at the center of an enthralling perspective. The work is in fact enclosed within a highly technological climatized case, a protective structure that is hardly noticeable, generously

The Uffizi is growing. The fourteen new rooms just opened on the second floor, together with the fourteen rooms inaugurated in 2018, offer a new layout and include paintings never seen before. Added to these renovated rooms, exquisitely designed by architect Antonio Godoli, are many others that were previously closed or used as museum deposits, thus multiplying the number of square meters of surface and wall space. Works are no longer displayed in a paratactic way along the length of the corridor, but dialogue one with the other in rooms and corridors of various sizes. In these spaces, intersecting visual directives are created, stimulating comparisons and correspondences that lead the viewer to instinctively assimilate the figurative data and style of each artist.

Naturally, the new acquisitions, discussed in the preceding issues of this Journal, are also on display, (the two by Daniele da Volterra: the *Madonna and Child, Young Saint John and Saint Barbara*, and *Elijah in the Desert*; the canvas by Bartolomeo Passerotti with *Homer's Riddle*). Works, previously in the deposits or crowded into inadequate spaces or otherwise unhappily positioned, can also be admired with greater ease. A case in point is the sublime *Death of Adonis* by Sebastiano del Piombo – an



The *Madonna with the Long Neck* (1534-1540) by Francesco Mazzola called Parmigianino, in the climatized case financed by the Friends of the Uffizi.

enormous canvas painting displayed, up until a few years ago, with insufficient lighting at an impossible height in the “Hall of the Inscriptions”. It now occupies an entire wall in a much lower position, giving the viewer the impression of entering the scene itself and the possibility of admiring every last detail. The *Madonna of the Harpies* by Andrea del Sarto has been placed on a stone altar that reenacts its original function and can now be observed from the correct

distance in a room entirely dedicated to the artist.

With this new layout, the grandeur and ground breaking value of the Florentine School stands in comparison to what was happening in the rest of Italy. Two rooms are dedicated to the bizarre and culturally refined School of Ferrara, one in the guise of a “Studiolo” filled with small format paintings that shine like precious jewels on the vibrant and velvety dark grey walls, an effect obtained by

financed by the Friends of the Uffizi. Thanks to this systemization, the viewer can almost touch the painterly surface, illuminated in a way that exalts its silvery, supernatural luminosity. These new rooms – together with other renovations in various areas of the Gallery undertaken during the most recent lockdown – have changed the

Eike D. Schmidt
(continued on page 2)

nature of the Uffizi, transforming it into a 'slow' museum to be visited without haste. In just over two years, the number of works on display has increased by more than a hundred. Therefore, any attempt to admire all of the masterpieces during the

course of a single hurried visit is highly discouraged simply because the masterworks on display are too many. Slow viewing stimulates a desire to stay longer, to discover the many surrounding works that constitute the connective tissue of the

enormously vast panorama of art in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque. Some colleagues have noted that the Uffizi is becoming a bit like the Louvre. You enter knowing beforehand that you will visit only one section of the museum, be-

cause it is physically impossible to see it all. And that section, visited with calm and without the need to finish a set itinerary, will remain in your heart. ■

Eike D. Schmidt



Ancient Reliefs in the "Corridor of the Marbles".

■ *The carefully studied interrelations between space and paintings, the airy, severe architecture, natural light and views of the city contribute to making the visit to the west wing of the Uffizi a dynamic experience*

The fourteen new exposition spaces on the 'piano nobile' of the central core of the west wing of the Uffizi have never been used as a museum space, but for a few temporary exhibits, until now. The new permanent expositional layout, open to the public since last spring, is a continuation of the project, based on museographic criteria conceived and designed by Eike Schmidt, completed two years ago for the southern section of the same west wing, dedicated to paintings from Florence, the regions of Veneto, Marches, and

Emilia, as well as Flanders and France, dating to the second half of the Cinquecento.

The architectural historian and critic, Claudia Conforti (*Giornale dell'Arte*, August 2019), referencing Antonio Paolucci's inaugural presentation at the time, already noted that "two levels" existed in that new museographic layout: an exposition based on the careful analysis of the stylistic and iconographic relations between artists and works, and the spacious restraint of the interior architecture. The same holds true for the sector most recently opened, where the evident relations between the space and the paintings have been carefully calibrated as can be seen, for example, in the first group of rooms that find their *topoi* in the Hall of the Pilaster and the room exhibiting the *Venus* by Titian - the latter renovated with the generous support of our American Friends of the Uffizi. In general, you might say that the pre-existing space determined the arrangement of the works of

art that, consequently, are conditioned but, we believe, not limited by it. The presence of the windows and the decision to allow the passage of natural light, in all of its modulations, increase the multifaceted richness of the viewing, without mentioning the unexpected vistas over the city they afford. From the room of Dosso Dossi, for example, there

is the remarkable view of an elegant facade of a fifteenth century palace that Vasari annexed to the Uffizi a century later.

The exhibition rooms, which vary one from the other and are articulated and connected in different ways, contribute to the "gestalt", that is, the dynamic experience of the visit. The visitor's course is enriched by con-

The New Rooms



The New Rooms of Rosso Fiorentino (above, at the center, the *Enthroned Madonna and Child with Four Saints* also known as the *Spedalingo Altarpiece*) and of Pontormo (below, on the right in the middle *Madonna and Child with Young Saint John*).





From the left, *Elijah in the Desert* and *Madonna and Child, Young Saint John and Saint Barbara* by Daniele da Volterra.

tinually renewed and constantly changing perspectives and arrivals, allowing for the discovery and recognition of the objects on exhibit from novel points of view. In this sense, those who have had the opportunity to visit these rooms will well remember the series of reliefs along the corridor of ancient marbles, sequenced in punctuated order like metopes, the telescopic perspectives created in the new setting – once again a donation of the Friends of the Uffizi – in the room of Parmigianino that converge on the *Madonna with the Long Neck*, or the *Madonna* by Bugiardini and the *Courtesan* by

Palma il Vecchio, seen through a narrow eyelet in a wall at the far end of a long visual axis that runs through several rooms up to the opening on the Arno River.

Instead of a project in which spaces are predetermined and prefigured, based on theories and solutions of various nature, all as valid as they are debatable, random and, above all, dated stylistically to the time of their realization, visitors can now appreciate the evident traces and structures of an illustrious past into which the modern functions of a museum have been introduced. The exposition walls do not coincide with the archi-



A view of the room with the *Visitation* by Mariotto Albertinelli at the center.

tectonic walls that are, in effect, covered by large colored panels placed in strict and logical relation to the works. Nonetheless, every possible point of contact between the architecture and the museographic space has been maintained, assuring through a congruous critical approach that the architectural space is not isolated from, but rather aligned with the museum into which it has been transformed.

The panels are a chromatic statement – be it the seventeenth century red for Caravaggio (in the opposite east wing), or the silken green of

Titian, or the dark grey of the Mannerists, and the Lorraine green of the ancient marbles – that functions as a mediating force, establishing essential connections between the architecture and the works on display. At the same time, the paneling represents actuality and certainly not the original placement of works of art (with the exception of the historical gallery) in these spaces, which for centuries had various uses, mainly as archives, but also as laboratories, opifici (stone manufactories), and living quarters. ■

Antonio Godoli



The “Room of Sebastiano del Piombo and the Impact of Michelangelo in Rome”; in the background the “Room of Daniele da Volterra and Francesco Salviati”.

“You Grand Cosimo Guide the Lion...”

Barbatelli (1548-1612), called Poccetti, included in his *History of the Innocents* painted in 1610, on the walls of the refectory of the Hospital of the Innocents in Florence. Although the latter is a work of higher quality, it serves as a useful comparison in evaluating the mural painting in the Uffizi, which is further compromised by its state of conservation. Nonetheless, stylistic analysis confirms that the Uffizi fresco can be ascribed, if not to the hand of the master himself, to the *entourage* of

Two seventeenth century Medicean frescoes discovered during the restoration campaign of the west wing of the Uffizi

The fresco depicting a full length portrait of Cosimo II de' Medici (1590-1621), discovered, along with a half-length portrait of his father, Ferdinando I (1549-1609), during the restoration and recovery of some chambers in the west wing of the Uffizi, is an interesting acquisition in the field of Florentine mural painting of the early Seicento.

Our interest is particularly drawn to the image of Cosimo II, given it is one of the first official portraits of the very young sovereign. His peculiar physiognomy is well represented with his thick, dark, curly hair and prominent nose, as he stands with his right hand resting on a table where the Grand Ducal crown has been placed and his left on the hilt of his sword.

The presence on his black garment and on the chain around his neck of the Cross of the Order of Saint Stephen, which he joined in February 1609, constitutes a useful *terminus ante-quem* for dating the image. The fresco is surrounded by a grand architectural framework in the style of Buontalenti, decorated with monochrome female busts and volutes, surmounted by a second Grand Ducal crown. The two allegories of Florence



Cosimo II de' Medici, fresco attributed to the circle of Bernardino Barbatelli called Poccetti, first decade of the XVII century, Uffizi Galleries.

and Siena serve as incarnations of Cosimo's power. They are recognizable for the presence respectively of the Marzocco (Lion) and the She-wolf and flank a plaque inscribed with encomiastic verses alluding to the virtues of impartiality and rectitude of the new sovereign, (*"Tu gran Cosmo il leon guidi e la lupa/affreni con giustizia e gran pietade"* (You Grand Cosimo guide the lion and the she-wolf/you tame with justice and great compassion)). The coat of arms seen at the base of the frame is of particular interest. It represents a rampant feline, silver in color on a blue field crossed by a red banner that

corresponds to the crest of the Niccolini, a powerful Florentine family closely tied to the Medici from the time of Cosimo I. Its presence may, in fact, be related to the title of Gentleman of the Chamber that, in 1610, Cosimo himself granted to Filippo Niccolini, who had been summoned from Rome due to his very bad relations with his father, Giovanni, Florentine ambassador to the papal city. The execution of the fresco would seem to be near in date, as it portrays the Grand Duke at no more than twenty years of age. A very close comparison can be found in the portrait of Cosimo that Bernardo

this prolific Florentine painter at the apex of his artistic parabola when he was employed together with his collaborators in various projects for the Grand Ducal court. Poccetti, active for the Medici as a designer of cartoons for tapestries and for hard stone mosaics, had just received the commission for the decoration of a number of rooms in Palazzo Pitti, including the Sala di Bona, completed in time for the marriage of Cosimo II and Maria Maddalena of Austria, celebrated with elaborate festivities in October and November of 1608. ■

Silvia Benassai

In the name of Napoleon

■ On the Island of Elba, an exhibit promoted by the “Uffizi Diffusi” project, commemorates the bicentenary of the death of Bonaparte

The homage to Bonaparte, commemorating the bicentenary of his death on May 5, 1821, is an initiative of the ‘Uffizi Diffusi’ (Diffused Uffizi) project and the focus of a fruitful collaboration between the Uffizi and the City of Portoferraio. The Uffizi Galleries have also dedicated a *Hypervision* to Napoleon on the institution’s website.

After the historical defeat on the field of Leipzig and the subsequent treaty of Fontainebleau, the Emperor, who had marked the destiny of all of Europe, was subjected to the powers of other nations and assigned the rule of the Principate of the Island of Elba. The ten months of his permanence there, from May 1814 to March 1, 1815, left its mark on the island in a manner that is still perceptible today. This felicitous season is now evoked in the small but noteworthy exhibit centered on Napoleon and his closest relatives, open to the public from July 9 to October 10 in Portoferraio’s Pinacoteca Foresiana, located within the De Laugier Cultural Center.

The exhibit begins with a triad of official portraits in marble of the Emperor, his wife and new Empress, Marie-Louise of Austria, and his younger brother Jerome, appointed King of Westphalia at the age

of twenty-three. All three are faithful reproductions of the official models commissioned by Napoleon to the French sculptor François-Joseph Bosio in approximately 1810. These images, highly idealized and inspired by Roman imperial portraiture, were made from gypsum moulds taken from prototypes by Chaudet and Bosio. They inspired numerous replicas, of different sizes, quality and material, executed by the workshops of Carrara, above all, under the auspices of the Princess of Lucca, Elisa Baciocchi, who wished to encourage the cult of the imperial couple and their family members among her subjects.

Dominating the large canvas by Jean-Baptiste Wicar is the elegant figure of Louis Bonaparte, the sovereign’s favorite brother, whose visage is characterized by youthful daring, accentuated by his disheveled hair. He is dressed in the white and vermilion uniform of the Dragoons of Holland, the territory over which he ruled before its annexation to France. It was precisely one of Louis’ sons, the only member of the Bonaparte family to follow in the footsteps of his uncle, who proclaimed himself Emperor of France in 1852 with the title of Napoleon III. Highlighting this



Portrait of Napoleon, porcelain plaque with bronze and gilt wood frame, Sèvres Manufactory, 1811. Inscription on the right “Manu[act]ure Imp[éri]ale de Sèvres Georget d’après Gérard 1810”. Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Museum of Porcelain (Photo Arrigo Coppitz for Sillabe).

series of royal effigies is another image of Napoleon I, painted in 1810, on porcelain from the Sèvres Manufactory by the decorator Jean Georget, pupil of Jacques-Louis David. The porcelain plaque of notable size, created with the virtuoso technique of a miniaturist, represents the Emperor at the height of his power, dressed in the sumptuous array of his coronation, following the official iconography dictated by the famous portrait by François Gérard, as specified in the inscription. The same image was also copied by Carlo Morelli, this time on canvas, in the grand portrait painting now part of the Portoferraio Communal Collections, also on exhibit.

Napoleon’s domination of Tuscany is further represented by the figure of Elisa Baciocchi, the sovereign’s younger sister.

Married against Napoleon’s will to the obscure Corsican officer, Félix Baciocchi, she was appointed in 1805 Princess of Lucca and Piombino. There, she ably restored the small principate to economic prosperity thanks to the creation of the Banca Elisiana. In 1809, she received the title of Grand Duchess of Tuscany. The last work on display in the exhibition is a magnificent portrait of her by Giuseppe Bezzuoli painted in the crucial year of 1814; Elisa appears melancholic and thoughtful, alongside her daughter Elisa Napoleona, against the backdrop of a crepuscular Florence, almost a premonition of the imminent end of her brief reign and the fortune of Napoleon. ■

Alessandra Griffio
Elena Marconi

*“In the Name of Napoleon
The ‘Uffizi Diffusi’ on the Island of Elba”*

Curated by: Alessandra Griffio and Elena Marconi

Portoferraio, Pinacoteca Foresiana,
De Laugier Cultural Center

Until October 10

Uffizi for All

■ The many digital formats created by the Uffizi Galleries to keep the museums “open” even during the lockdown. Boccaccio, Dante, but also Uffizi on the Plate, Painted tales, and ideas for the young



Federico Zuccari, illustration of *The Gates of Hell*, GDSU, visible in the virtual exhibit *To Rebehold the Stars*.

Uffizi on the Plate? But, what does that mean? It is one of the many digital formats invented and produced by the Uffizi Galleries during the months of lockdown when, more than once, the physical doors of our museums were forced to close. When the pandemic exploded in March 2020, we put our faith in the thaumaturgic powers of storytelling, inspired by Boccaccio who had found comfort in literature during the fourteenth century plague. In much the same way, we began 2021 in the name of Dante, celebrating the seventh centenary of his death with an exhibit of profound significance, as the title exemplifies: *To Rebehold the Stars*.

This message of hope is the main theme of the Hypervision, an on-line exhibit that has been posted on our website www.uffizi.it

since last January. For the first time and without limitations, a remarkable virtual display, subdivided in 3 distinct sections like the Canticles of the Divine Comedy, allows the general public to consult, in high definition, the extraordinary collection of 88 drawings by Federico Zuccari illustrating Dante's poem. And not only: thanks to the partnership with Rai Accessibility, the virtual itinerary has been made extremely accessible through audio-descriptions created for each of the drawings on exhibit.

The main objective we set for ourselves during the pandemic, and continue to pursue day by day, is to make the Galleries a place open to all, for all.

The digital production, between the portal and the social account, attempts to satisfy everyone's tastes. Our online visi-

tors can find virtual exhibits like the one on Dante as well as other contents of high scientific quality. Among these are the scholarly essays in the magazine and the conference series with numerous guest specialists that can be viewed live in streaming or accessed on the website on the exclusively dedicated pages.

Synchronized but separate social channels focus on illustrating our collections and our cultural activities to the wider public without distinction of language, age, sex and culture. Everyone can find a plate to match their tastes! There are formats dedicated to the masterpieces of the Galleries, accessible in Italian, English, Spanish, French (and even in Latin and Ancient Greek!) along with #raccontidipinti (painted tales), brief excursions in which art and literature go hand in hand, and videos in sign language. Then, more lighthearted formats, like #uffizidamangiare (Uffizi on the Plate), highly praised in two extensive articles by the prestigious Anglo-Saxon periodical *Apollo*, are designed to attract the curiosity of the public and to stimulate new reflections on our collections. The digital immersion is not intended, however, to be an end in itself but constantly oriented, when possible, towards an actual visit to the museum in physical presence.

Even the very young can find their place among the features expressly dedicated to them on the TikTok channel and beyond. The enthusiasm expressed in the comments of our followers, the exponential growth in the traffic on our digital channels, and, in particular, the more than encouraging numbers of visitors, with the presence of many youngsters and children, in these first few months after the actual opening of the museum and the Boboli Gardens, seem to confirm the success of these initiatives.

What can we say? That all virtual roads lead to the Uffizi Galleries. ■

Francesca Sborgi



Cover-page of the #uffizidamangiare (Uffizi on the Plate) format.

A Precious Testimony

■ The Uffizi's recent acquisition of the sketch of "The Witch of Endor" by Giuseppe Sabatelli. An exemplary episode of nineteenth century American art collecting

In 1841, Numa Pompilio Tanzini wrote in the "Giornale del Commercio" (Journal of Commerce) that "the gentleman from South Carolina" (Meredith Calhoun), during his stay in Florence, showed a particular interest in the works of Giuseppe Sabatelli from whom he bought as many as three paintings: *Torquato Tasso Reading 'Jerusalem Delivered' at the Court of the Este*, a lost *Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi* and, lastly, *The Witch of Endor Evokes the Ghost of Samuel before Saul*, of which the sketch, recently acquired by the Uffizi Galleries, is a unique and precious testimony.

We know that Meredith Calhoun was a rich landowner, resident of Alabama, who sojourned in Florence between the end of the 1830s and the early 1840s, and that his art collection also contained works by Lorenzo Bartolini and Luigi Pampaloni, along with numerous copies of paintings from the Uffizi Gallery. After his death, his collection changed hands a number of times, and was transferred to Huntsville in Texas, then Chicago, where it was put on display for an admiring public, and, finally, Los Angeles, where it most probably was divided and dispersed.

Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, in the funerary eulogy he composed for Giuseppe Sabatelli, who died prematurely at the age of only thirty, associated the artist's name with that of Calhoun, mentioning the latter precisely for his role as patron of *Saulle*, confirming that artists gained fame and prestige through the appreciation of collectors overseas. He added: "If Alfieri had been a painter,

In the Old Testament version of the story, Saul turns to the Lord and the prophets for counsel on what action to take against the Philistines, before the battle of Gilboa. Not receiving any answer, he decides to consult the sorceress of Endor, committing a grave sacrilege in preferring the powers of a medium to the divine oracle. However, the evocation does not aid Saul because Samuel's soul predicts his future replace-

mercio" 24 November 1841). Effectively, the painting is an important example of the taste for the sublime, typical of Romanticism, skillfully expressed by Sabatelli. Despite his introverted character, little inclined towards flaunting his fame, the painter reached international success early in his career, thanks to important expositions, such as the Exhibition of Italian Art at the American Academy of New York, occasions that were



Giuseppe Sabatelli (Florence 1813-Florence 1843), sketch for *The Witch of Endor Evokes the Ghost of Samuel before Saul*, 1841, Uffizi Galleries.

he would not have known how to paint it differently". In reality, Giuseppe Sabatelli kept strictly to the biblical text (*1Sam. 28,8 ff.*) in his rendition, probably following the advice of Father Tanzini, a member of the religious order of the Scolopi (Pious Schools), to whom he subsequently gifted the preparatory sketch. *The Witch of Endor*, in fact, plays no part in the second act of Vittorio Alfieri's drama *Saul*, where instead Samuel appears to Saul in a dream, rips the crown from his head and poses it on that of David.

ment by David, causing the King great anguish. Tanzini in his review of the work immediately draws attention to the dramatic portrayal of the scene: "what a terrible, mysterious scene the magic brush of the young painter has created on canvas! The Bible is the muse of the sublime: but there is need of a profoundly poetic soul to interpret through the artist's sleight of hand the words dictated by Jehovah" (N. P. Tanzini, *La Maga d'Endor, quadro del prof. Giuseppe Sabatelli di commissione del sig. Meredith Cholune Americano*, "Giornale del Com-

fundamental in fostering the knowledge and diffusion of contemporary Italian art among wealthy collectors from across the ocean.

The recent acquisition of the Uffizi Galleries thus enriches the State collections with a work by a painter highly admired by his contemporaries. At the same time, it proffers a precious testimony for the history of the artistic relations between Florence and the United States during the course of the XIX century. ■

Elena Marconi



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Life at the Uffizi

■ TREES IN VERSE

Thirty works by the artist Giuseppe Penone are on display in the exhibit entitled *Alberi in versi (Trees in Verse)*, to be seen on the first (Sala Detti and Sala del Camino) and the second floor of the Galleries until October 3. These include drawings, photographs, engravings, sculptures, and installations, expressions of fifty years of the artist's activity,

and the Carrara marble structure, water flows once again from the Boboli Fountain of the 'Scimmie' (Monkeys), spurting from the hand of the putto surmounting it and the mouth of one of the monkeys that give the fountain its name.

Created in 1830, it is an assembly of various materials dating to various ages. In particular, the three monkeys are by the hand of the sculp-



Giuseppe Penone, installations: *Breathing the Shadow* (2000) on the walls; *Breath of Leaves* (1979) at the center.

alluding to the theme of "the tree, whose life is from its top", a metaphor of Paradise in the words of Cacciaguada in the Divine Comedy. The exposition is in fact part of the Dantesque celebrations underway in 2021.

■ THE MONKEY FOUNTAIN FLOWS ONCE AGAIN

After a year-long restoration of the hydraulic works

tor from Vicenza, Camillo Mariani (Vicenza, 1567 – Rome, 1611), who created them for the Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria II della Rovere. Fountains are one of the fundamental elements in the identity of the Boboli Gardens, as Director Eike Schmidt underscores; reviving their suggestive powers and restoring their 'voices' are of the utmost importance.



The Monkey Fountain, Boboli Gardens.



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