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An Updated Uffizi Is Unveiled

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Botticelli's "Spring," at the newly renovated Uffizi Gallery in Florence.
Alberto Pizzoli/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

FLORENCE — If awards were given out among Italy's art-rich museums, the [Uffizi Gallery](#) here would certainly vie for the greatest-hits prize, with such an abundant collection of Renaissance artworks that visitors often bypass seminal paintings in their rush to gawk at people pleasers like Botticelli's "[Spring](#)" or "[Birth of Venus](#)."

That is expected to change with a reorganization of several rooms allocated to Early Renaissance art that opened on Monday. The new layout drastically modifies how the

museum's sizable collection of Botticelli paintings and works by Pollaiuolo, Hugo van der Goes, Rogier van der Weyden and Domenico Ghirlandaio are exhibited, giving all the works sufficient space to shine.

“It will be a better flow, for sure,” said Eike Schmidt, the Uffizi's director, scrutinizing the room where Botticelli's “Spring” — now set back in a low niche — dominates the entire wall of a once-huge hall that has been subdivided into smaller, better-lighted rooms.



The “Portinari Triptych,” right, by the Flemish artist Hugo van der Goes, in one of the reopened halls. Maurizio Degli Innocenti/European Pressphoto Agency

Officials hope the reorganization will dissipate congestion in front of Botticelli's heaviest hitters and offer a better view — and understanding — of individual artworks. Botticelli's that jostled for attention in the old exhibition space — which hadn't been modified since 1978 — have now been hung widely apart. “The idea is to give emphasis to every single one of the 38 works in these galleries, and not concentrate everything on the few fetishized, iconic super-masterpieces,” Mr. Schmidt said.

For example, two Botticelli “Annunciations,” painted 20 years apart, are now on display facing each other. “People who see this will automatically want to see that, and compare them, and ask, what is the same, what's different,” he said.

The reordering of the rooms is part of a multiyear renovation that will more than double exhibition space while addressing pressing issues created by mass tourism. The Italian

government has allocated 58 million euros (about \$63.8 million) to complete the refurbishing, but the museum also depends on private donors for additional funding. Friends of Florence, a nonprofit American organization, raised some \$900,000 in just six weeks to help pay for the renovation of the Botticelli rooms.



"Madonna of the Pomegranate" (1487), another Botticelli.
Alberto Pizzoli/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

The association decided to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the flooding that devastated Florence and Venice in 1966, and chose to focus on these rooms in the Uffizi "that contained such iconic artworks," said Countess Simonetta Brandolini d'Adda, a co-founder with her sister of [Friends of Florence](#).

Last year, [the Uffizi](#) had nearly two million visitors, according to Ministry of Culture statistics. This poses many challenges to a 500-year-old building, said Daniela Parenti, the curator of medieval and Early Renaissance painting.

The new installation in theory will assist in managing crowds, Ms. Parenti said, "but we'll have to see what happens."

When you have thousands of visitors lining up for hours each day to enter one of the world's most renowned museums, she added, "it's no longer a problem of Botticelli."