



## FRIENDS *of* FLORENCE

### *Fall 2019 Newsletter*

Dear Friends of Florence,

Welcome to autumn as we look ahead to the charms and delights of the fall/winter season. Since our spring newsletter, we have more updates to share with you. It is your generous support that enables us to keep our wonderful team of conservators busy, as you will see below, as they work to restore and revivify Renaissance masterpieces.

We have more projects completed, in process, and on the horizon in Florence and beyond—including examples on view at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and the Ellis Island National Museum of Immigration in New York City this fall.

As a tribute to our work together over twenty-one years, Simonetta Brandolini d'Adda—our dynamic co-founder and president—was deeply honored to receive the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic (*Cavaliere Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana*)—the Italian equivalent of a knighthood. Again, this was a direct result of your generosity as we celebrate our accomplishments to date and look to the future together!

## NEWS

Friends of Florence's spring program, "**The Mature Michelangelo: Artist and Architect**," took place May 31–June 6, 2019, in Florence and Rome. Our wonderful group was led by the brilliant art historians William Wallace, the Barbara Murphy Bryant Distinguished Professor of Art History at Washington University in St. Louis, and Ross King who enthusiastically shared their deep knowledge of the artist, his life and times, and his legacy. With a marvelous itinerary they developed with Simonetta and the diligent Friends of Florence team, the group enjoyed an exploration of Michelangelo's years as an established artist, designer, and architect.



Spring 2019 Program: The Mature Michelangelo: Artist and Architect. William Wallace (L) and Ross King (R) holding copies of their books on sale at the Medici Chapel shop.



Spring 2019 Program: The Mature Michelangelo: Artist and Architect. Study Room of the Uffizi Drawing & Print Department that was restored by Friends of Florence. Photograph by Maria Teresa Baldeschi Balleani

The group toured museums, private collections, places of worship, public spaces, libraries, and villas and enjoyed unprecedented behind-the-scenes access with gracious hosts. They visited several projects funded by the Foundation including Michelangelo's *Pietà* in the Opera del Duomo Cathedral Museum and the exquisite Chapel of the Crucifix in the Basilica of San Miniato al Monte, among others. They also saw the restoration-in-progress (now completed) of Pio Fedi's *Freedom of Poetry* in the Opera di Santa Croce, more details of which are below.



Left to right: Cristina Giacchi, Vice Mayor of Florence; Cristina Giacchi; Dr. Laura Lega, Prefect of Florence; Simonetta Brandolini d'Adda, President of the Friends of Florence Foundation; Dr. Andrea Pessina, Superintendent of Fine Arts for Florence, Prato and Pistoia. Photography by Umberto Visentini

Simonetta was awarded the **Order of Merit of the Italian Republic** on June 2. The ceremony was held in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi in Florence, and the award was presented by Dr. Andrea Pessina, Soprintendente Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la Città Metropolitana di Firenze e le province di Pistoia e Prato.

The order is awarded for “merit acquired by the nation in the fields of literature, the arts, economics, public service, and social, philanthropic, and humanitarian activities and for long and conspicuous service in civilian and military careers.”

***Putto with a Dolphin, a newly restored statue by Andrea del Verrocchio, is featured in Verrocchio: Painter of Sculptor of Renaissance Florence on view at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. through January 12, 2020.*** Verrocchio's influential practice as an artist, goldsmith, and architect led him to develop a studio renowned for training artists including Leonardo da Vinci. The statue, commissioned by Lorenzo the Magnificent for the Medici family villa at Careggi, was later moved to Palazzo Vecchio where it will be returned after the exhibition. We thank our donors Board member R. James Morton and his wife Ellen for their major gift for this project.

For our Spring Program next year from June 15 to June 22, Ross King will lead the program in Normandy and Paris **“Claude Monet: A Lifetime of Impressions.”**



Andrea del Verrocchio. *Putto with a Dolphin* after restoration, 1470–c. 1475.

Through careful analysis and application of state-of-the-art technologies, materials, and protocols, we regularly make discoveries that enrich our understanding of art history, architecture, and the Western canon. In this issue, we highlight three major projects that exemplify our work realized thanks to our Friends.

In May, we completed the restoration of *The Annunciation by Fra Angelico*, the centerpiece of the exhibition *Fra Angelico and the Rise of the Florentine Renaissance* on view May 28–September 15, 2019—part of the celebration of the bicentenary of the Museo del Prado, Madrid. The project was funded through a partnership between Friends of Florence and American Friends of the Prado Museum. We thank Noreen Buckfire, Angela LoRe, Board member Boniface Zaino with his wife Alison, and an anonymous donor for their support of this important project.



Fra Angelico. *Annunciation and Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden* before restoration.



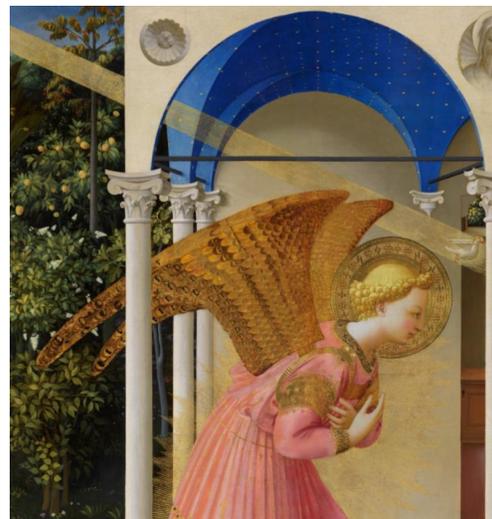
Fra Angelico. *Annunciation and Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden* after restoration.

*The Annunciation* was painted by Fra Angelico (c. 1395–1455) in the mid-1420s and is considered the first Florentine altarpiece in the Renaissance style.

The painstaking restoration process, conducted by Almudena Sánchez Martín at the Prado Museum Restoration Workshop, stabilized the work and removed layers of dirt, pollution, and over-painting from historic interventions that obscured the surface and the artist's original composition. The result was the recovery of the rich, vivid colors (including lapis lazuli, red lacquer, gold, and green malachite) and the intense light that imbues the scene. The great artist's technique and fine brushwork are also now more visible.



Fra Angelico. *Annunciation and Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden*. Detail of the Angel and the vault before restoration.



Fra Angelico. *Annunciation and Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden*. Detail of the Angel and the vault after restoration.

Other Florentine works included in the exhibition were restored in Italy thanks to support from Friends of Florence and American Friends of the Prado Museum. These include *Virgin and Child* by Michele da Firenze currently housed in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello; Donatello's terracotta *Virgin and Child* owned by the Museo di Palazzo Pretorio; and Gherardo Starnina's *Trinity* from the Chiaramonte Bordonaro collection.



Detail of Saint Roch by Bartolomeo della Gatta during restoration.

**Bartolomeo della Gatta's 15<sup>th</sup>-century panel painting of Saint Roch** was returned to the Museo Horne in Florence in July following a complex restoration process. The restoration by Valeria Cocchetti and Daniele Ciappi, under the supervision of the Soprintendenza di Firenze, was made possible thanks to donations by Donna Curry, Mary Mochary, and Donato Massaro through our Foundation.

Before the restoration, the painting had been thought to be one the artist and historian Giorgio Vasari described positively in his "Life of Don Bartolomeo della Gatta, Abbot of S. Clemente" as having been painted in 1485–86 for the Servite church of San Pier Piccolo in Arezzo. But there was no definitive proof it was the one Vasari noted. Bartolomeo (1445–1502) had returned to Arezzo shortly before then, enriched by the experience of working in the Sistine Chapel.

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Severely damaged by troops quartered in the building in 1859, the painting remained in the monastery until the next year. Hastily repaired and placed on the market, it was purchased by Herbert Horne in 1909 despite the flaws. The painting underwent conservation in 1928 and 1963. However, the extensive repainting and inappropriate work on the wooden support led several scholars to reject the theory that it was the painting Vasari mentioned. Now, thanks to the careful reconstruction of documentary evidence, the acquisition of a series of historic photographs of the previous restorations, and because the work is again legible, scholars are confident that it is indeed the painting Vasari had admired.



Detail of Saint Roch by Bartolomeo della Gatta during restoration.



Detail of Saint Roch by Bartolomeo della Gatta after restoration.

*Saint Roch* is a gabled panel painting depicting the almost life-sized saint in the foreground. Over the centuries, the painting had suffered damages due to historical events and intrinsic problems related to the artist's technique. For example, shifting of the wooden support caused the surface paint to flake.

Restoration began last year with removing the metal crosspiece and adding a system of three crosspieces with resilient joints that can withstand and support the natural shifts in the wood. This also brought the panel back to its correct and natural curvature. Surface cleaning improved the appearance and legibility of the entire image.



Reverse side of Saint Roch by Bartolomeo della Gatta after restoration.

While some restorations focus on revealing or detecting “hidden” aspects of the artwork, this project was aimed at achieving the best outcomes possible so the painting may be studied and appreciated further.

The Opera di Santa Croce and the Foundation collaborated with the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio to restore *Freedom of Poetry*, Pio Fedi's (1816–1892) stunning monument to Giovanni Battista Niccolini (1782–1861), a poet, playwright, and statesman during Italy's unification (or *Risorgimento*). Completed in August 2019, the project is part of celebrations honoring the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Consulate in Florence and diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Tuscany—an independent state when the consulate opened. Paola Rosa conducted the restoration with Emanuela Peiretti.



Pio Fedi, *The Freedom of Poetry*, 1883. Before restoration.



Pio Fedi, *The Freedom of Poetry*, 1883. After restoration.

A resin copy of the monument made at Kent State University, in Ohio, using high-definition 3D scanning techniques, will be featured in *Sisters in Liberty*, an exhibition presented in collaboration with the Opera of Santa Croce at the Ellis Island National Museum of Immigration in New York Harbor, on view October 18, 2019–April 26, 2020.

Fedi's marble monument is a classically inspired allegorical figure. In her upraised hand, she holds a broken chain and, in the other, a laurel wreath and lyre. She wears a radiate crown with nine rays and beneath her foot is another fragment of the chain. There are similarities between it, unveiled in 1883, and *Liberty Enlightening the World* (better known as the *Statue of Liberty*) created by French sculptor Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi between 1877 and 1886. The resemblances—the pose, upraised arm, crown, drapery of their robes, and their symbolic meanings—have long been the subject of critical and scholarly debate. Bartholdi traveled through Italy in 1875 and 1876 and may have visited Fedi's atelier in Florence and seen preliminary drawings and maquettes of the work.

Fedi's statue had only been quickly cleaned and the lower part patinated after the 1966 flood that devastated Florence. Now, the thick, compact layer of dust that prevented a proper analysis has been removed and the surface restored to the artist's intended patina.

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## THANK YOU AND GRAZIE

We appreciate the opportunity to share some of our current projects with you, each emblematic of the exceptional breadth of Florentine art and architecture that enriches us all. They also eloquently represent the great work of our partners and the conservators who undertake in-depth research and complex protocols required and meticulously document the process to advance scholarship and serve the field of cultural heritage preservation. If your travels take you to Florence, New York City, or Washington, we hope you will stop in to see some of the outcomes of our work together.

We invite you to [join us](#). By supporting our projects and participating in our programs, you help ensure these remarkable treasures will be conserved properly and safeguarded

now and for future generations.

Saluti!

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*By becoming patrons of the arts, our donors inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations and help to preserve Florence's extraordinary cultural legacy.*

