



imagines

The Magazine of the Uffizi Galleries

 LE GALLERIE
DEGLI UFFIZI

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imagines

The Magazine of the Uffizi Galleries

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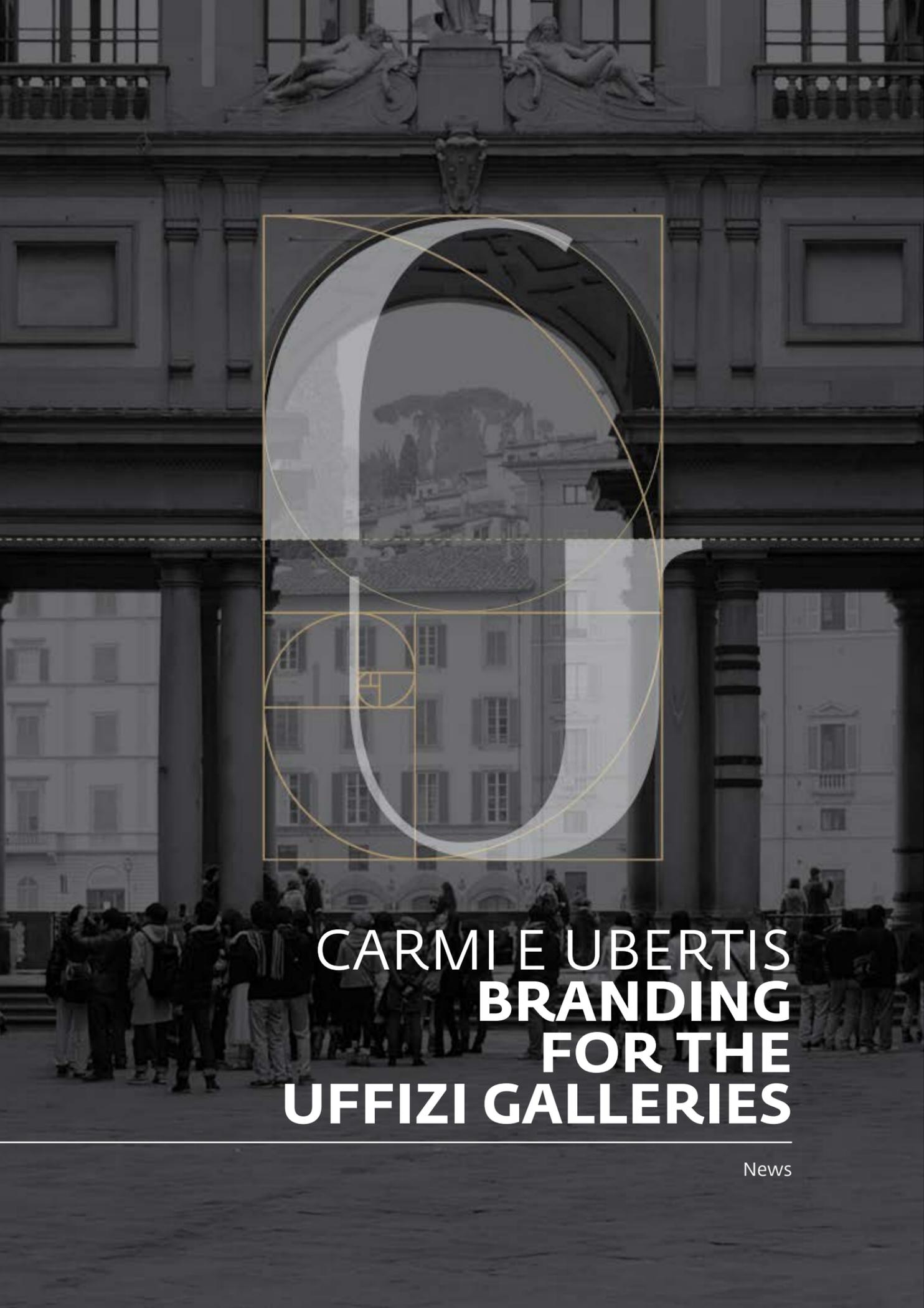
EIKE SCHMIDT A NEW DIGITAL SEASON

GLAUX. Notes from the Director

The new website opens a brand new season for the Uffizi Galleries: a new stage in which the public can finally enter into direct contact with the institution (which includes the Vasari Complex, Pitti Palace, and Boboli Gardens), created as an independent structure in 2014. This has also been an opportunity to create a new website that could be adapted to the requirements of current standards and regulations. In this way, not only have we made searches easier, but we have also complied with the rules governing transparency for administrative activities.

First of all, it was necessary to stamp out and ensure the closure of a whole plethora of false websites making use of the previously unprotected “Uffizi” domain. There were many of them, mainly set up to sell overpriced tickets. Some, unfortunately, are still online because they were set up outside Italy and taking them down requires time and lengthy lawsuits. In the meantime, however, the impact of information that comes directly from us will have its own decisive effect.

We have tried to create digital architecture with a functional nature that asserts itself and is as thorough as possible. Every website is a plastic entity that of course, will always need tweaks and improvements, but certainly the result achieved does cover a vast range of options and it broadly satisfies the curiosity of visitors. The art works are all traceable, because the databases built up over the last two decades are still available for consultation by scholars in their own dedicated website section. Nonetheless, considering that the general public and web surfers have different and varied types of interests, we have started a new section on the works, complete with all technical information, plus a short explanatory text: a comment that, using accessible language and without too much technical jargon, will help and inspire visitors, updating them on the most recent studies. This is a “higher” form of dissemination: the process is still *in fieri*, but our aim (an ambitious one, since it is a matter of thousands of data sheets) is to include all the Galleries’ collections, inserting every work on display by next year. We have also created a brand (protected by copyright) that will be the universally recognised trademark of the Uffizi Galleries in the future. We have, of course, a G and U, woven together and set on backgrounds of different colours according to the relative sections, and these act as an additional guide. We are using gold for the Gallery of the Statues and Paintings, and for the whole Vasari Complex; red for Pitti Palace, and green for the Boboli Gardens. What we know as a “brand” actually dates back to the identifying symbols that humankind has always used, since ancient times, just as “marketing”, which is so disliked by a certain group of intellectuals, is no more than the disciplinary development of ancient rhetoric. The application of new communications strategies to the activity of State museums such as the Uffizi Galleries, using the latest means, is sacrosanct. This is not only to define and defend their identity and aims, but also to remind us that their collections were tied to Florence in 1737 by the last descendant of the Medici family, Anna Maria Luisa, also for “Public use and to attract the curiosity of Visitors”.



CARMIE UBERTIS BRANDING FOR THE UFFIZI GALLERIES

News

A white sheet of paper. It always begins this way, by asking yourself how and when, but there's a question that's more important, more pressing, more oppressive. It's a fundamental one: you ask yourself 'why'? It doesn't matter whether it's an unusual job, a service, if it's for a friend, or of extraordinary importance. It's always about a new project: you have to bring something into being out of nothing. And you wonder 'why'. Why produce a new identity for the Uffizi Galleries? Why?

The answers are many, so you gather your curiosity, you put your head down beginning to collect knowledge. You interview those who work there every day, you ask trick questions to figure out what doesn't work and where you can intervene. You engage all possible actors: of course you want to know what Director Schmidt thinks, but also the guardian has his say. There is the Digital Communications Department's staff, and there's also the world of the Web who wants to be heard. There's Ermanno the doorman, and there is the taxi driver who brought you there and carries within himself his Florentine spirit. It's not easy to interpret numbers, words, Google Analytics data, feelings, sentiments. But you have to do it because when you will finally sketch something on that white sheet, what you'll create, you will create for them - because you, the designer, are just a tool. Munari said it first: a good design is not the one meant to be exhibited in museums, but the one you find in the neighbourhood market - there you can find products that really affect reality! Ethical, formative, democratic, and above all, fair.

It's not easy to understand what it means to have three museum complexes interlocked in such a way: they are an extraordinary chest of thoughts, images, nature, memories, stories, but their contents are independent of each other. Why give them an identity? And then, how much should they be unified? Or should they be visually independent when communicated? How do you draw the line between the Uffizi and the Uffizi Galleries? And how can you foresee their development?

What should be carefully ruled and what should not? Codes, formats, colours, alignments? You know very well that communication design today means being responsive, resilient, iconic, synthetic, pertinent: they're all things you must consider before picking up that white sheet of paper.

Then there's time - but I'm not talking about the time that separates you from the deadline (and thank goodness for deadlines, because if they didn't exist, your professional passion would never allow you to finish a job and projects would go on indefinitely). No, I'm talking about the time that lives inside Boboli Gardens, in the halls of Pitti Palace and along the Uffizi corridors. The time that's forever preserved, the one you find in paintings, in the very pigments, the one carved into statues as deep as a burin's mark, in the lights, in the shadows. The time of the people who linger for a moment, who look in the eyes of Botticelli's Venus, or meet Piero's cross-eyed stare. The time of someone who



Gli **Uffizi**

Palazzo **Pitti**

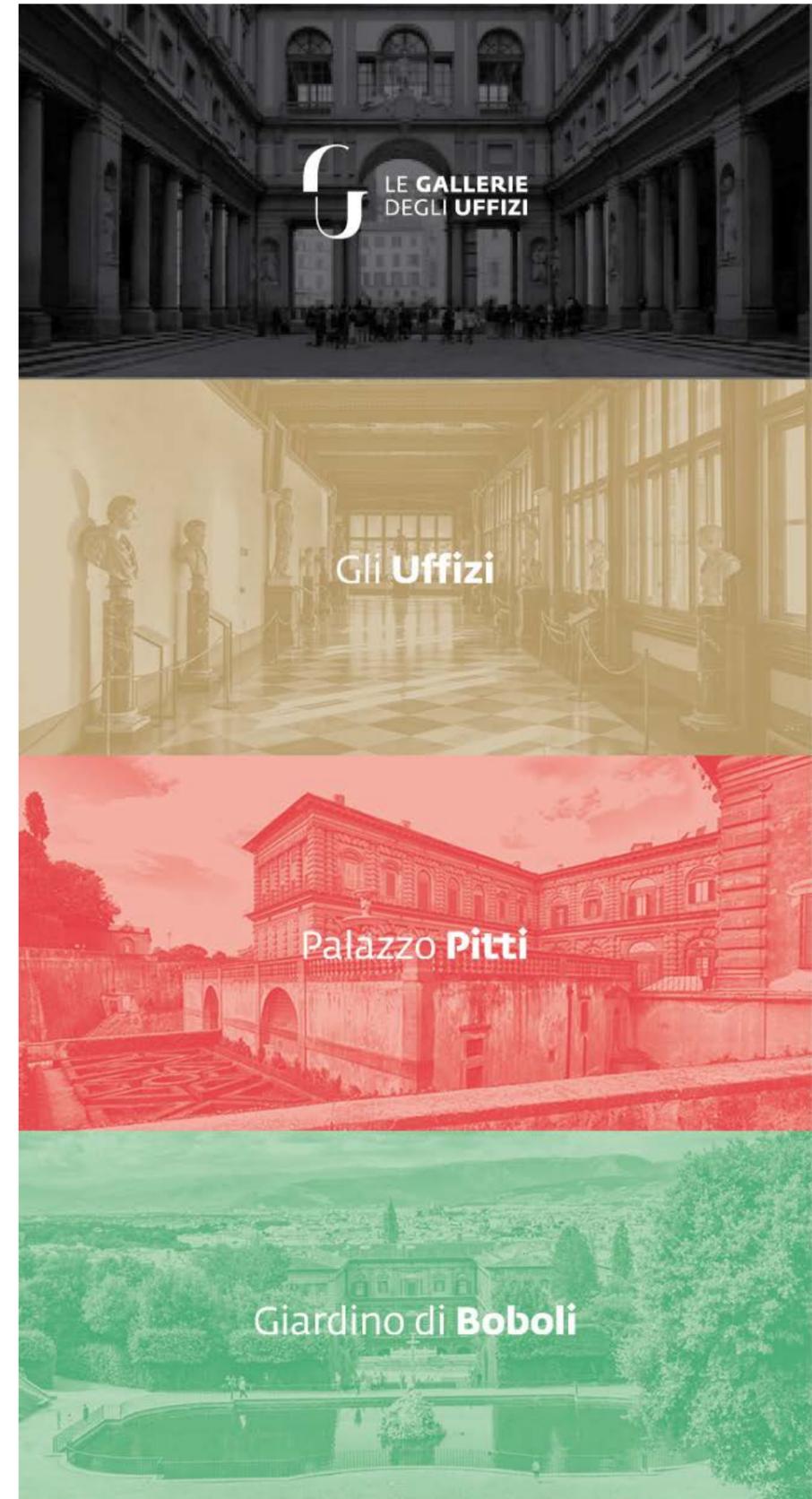
Giardino di **Boboli**

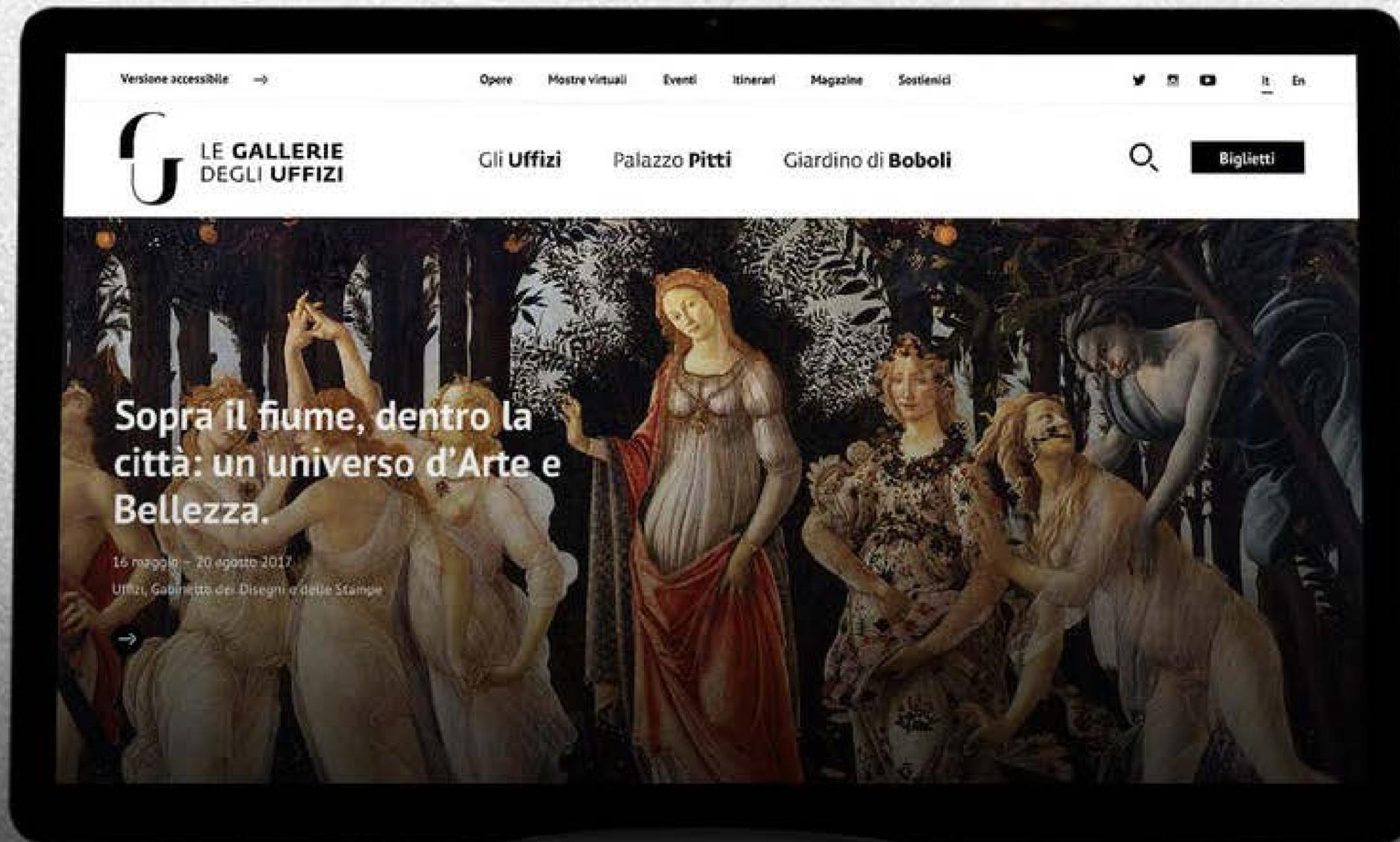
knows those masterpieces because they studied the books, or the time of those people who share the surprise and amazement of a giggling kid sprawled on the ground with a paper sheet in front of them. What I'm talking about is the time without time, the time of harmony, of the golden section, of lapis lazuli, of Lorena green. It's a special kind of time you have to deal with, because what you'll give birth to on that white sheet of paper will have to be just as timeless, or at least try and counteract the ephemeral we live in every day.

Now, perhaps, after you looked for the answers, that sheet of white paper will be a little less enigmatic, you'll have less 'whys' in your head. You can share ideas, you can bring concepts to the table, you can find out what others already know – for starters, they can help you by suggesting how to reduce errors, and you can listen both to your inner voice and the voices that come from the outside. You can check what others have done before, and look for good practices to interpret. You can try, you can go over the evidence again, step by step refining your proposals. But you can't forget the legal aspects, the deposits, the possible protections. Now you can finally propose something. You may have to start over again, because what you're trying to create hasn't come into being yet: as long as it's not here, it's as if didn't exist at all. But now you know why you're doing it, how it's done, where it should be used, by whom and with what rules. You've tested it, and now it's ready to make its debut. And starting from tomorrow, the Uffizi Galleries will have a new visual identity. It still needs to grow, become known, develop. But now it's here!

And you did it: you Alessandro, you Elio, you Teresa, you Gianluca, you Paolo, you Silvia, you Daniele, you Barbara, you Gian Maria, ...

The new visual identity of the Uffizi Galleries! Who knows where this will lead.





THE UFFIZI GALLERIES: A NEW, USER-FRIENDLY WEBSITE

MATTEO
PAPADOPOULOS
Cantiere Creativo

News

By placing humans at the center, mirroring the founding principle of historic humanism, the development and design of the website focused on the user as the central element of the browsing experience. We wanted to develop a tool that would prove useful to anyone wishing to discover the treasures of the Uffizi Galleries, avoiding the temptation of creating a website that merely served as a self-aggrandizing showcase.

Here at LeanPanda, a Florence-based web agency specializing in visual design and web development, we have worked closely with the Communications Department and Director Schmidt as a cohesive team. We conducted usability workshops and adopted flexible development approaches to help us to choose the features we wanted to develop each day, leading us to this first version of the website.

I remember my first meeting with Director Schmidt very clearly. We wanted to understand his general vision for the Uffizi Galleries project, which would obviously affect the development of the new website, and when discussing the task of transforming a museum of such national and international importance I remember his enthusiasm to simply “get things right”. I was particularly struck by two things: first, his wish to create a modern, clear and clean website inspired by the simplified geometry of the Florentine Renaissance and the two-tone style of the artist Vasari. Secondly, it was his desire to recreate, in terms of content and approach, the depth of cultural modernity which so many people have worked to develop throughout the history of this place.

By placing humans at the center, mirroring the founding principle of historic humanism, the development and design of the website focused on the user as the central element of the browsing experience. We wanted to develop a tool that would prove useful to anyone wishing to discover the treasures of the Uffizi Galleries, avoiding the temptation of creating a website that merely served as a self-aggrandizing showcase.

The apparent simplicity of the site has been achieved through a careful study of computer architecture and visitor usability, while the chosen design opens up numerous doors for the future evolution of the publishing platform. The CMS (Content Management System) has been designed and built *ad hoc* to help adapt the content to families, users with disabilities, schools and academics, working transversally with the museums, collections, works, programs, events and this magazine. The static sections we are accustomed to have gone, making room for dynamic structures which evolve and develop day after day.

The virtual exhibitions are a practical example of this dynamic approach: they are aimed at a vast audience of academics, enthusiasts, the mildly interested or passing tourists, each with very different levels of interest and knowledge. Consequently, the exhibitions are put together by scientific curators, trained museum assistants and experts, rather than by the marketing department which obviously needs to promote the image and events of the various museums. The virtual exhibitions are one of the ways in which we can explain and point out hidden details in some of the great works, as well as drawing attention to works which are less well-known but no less lacking in significance or beauty. These works are spread out over a museum complex that extends across three buildings and countless collections, and one of the key goals of the website is to help visitors to get their bearings and to rightfully restore visibility to the Pitti Palace and the Boboli Gardens, marvelous wonders that deserve to be discovered the world over.

As part of the Museum Digital Transformation conference, we had the opportunity to meet the marketing and communications managers from leading institutes such as the British Museum, the Rijksmuseum and the New York Metropolitan Museum, sharing our experiences and opinions on the important role the Internet plays in this sector. We were struck by the huge amount of investment that these institutes devote to creativity and innovation, with the aim of reaching an ever greater audience. For a museum of the caliber of the Uffizi Galleries, a positive comparison with these international museums is a key objective that cannot be achieved with any single action or in too short a time frame. It is a process that requires the laying of solid technological and cultural foundations, embracing the changes which are already developing on a global level. In this first version of the new site, we have combined all the ingredients of an important media-focused revolution: a new brand, a design created by the Carmi e Ubertis foundation which offers a clear break from the old format, a solid, latest-generation technological structure, and the direct involvement of those with the necessary skills to truly express this internationally important heritage.

As an agency with a strong emphasis on ethics and quality, we were unable to ignore the severe criticisms directed by the media at the general website standard of Florence’s museums. We have worked hard to show yet again that it is possible to “get things right”, even if the road is long, winding and fraught with obstacles.

For us, born and bred with a sense of Florentine pride, it has been a great honor to be able to contribute to the history of this city.



**STEFFI ROETTGEN
THE KING OF SPAIN'S
GRANDCHILDREN:
ANTON RAPHAEL MENGES
AND FLORENCE**

News

THE NICHES ROOM OF PITTI PALACE HOSTS AN EXHIBITION DEDICATED TO ANTON RAPHAEL MENGES AND HIS RELATIONSHIPS WITH FLORENCE. PAINTED BY MENGES IN FLORENCE AND TODAY PRESERVED IN THE PRADO MUSEUM, THE THREE PORTRAITS OF THE CHILDREN OF PIETRO LEOPOLDO OF HABSBURG-LORRAINE AND MARIA LUISA OF BOURBON ARE SHOWN ALONGSIDE THE PORTRAIT OF FERDINAND AND MARIA ANNA RECENTLY ACQUIRED BY THE UFFIZI GALLERIES.

AROUND THIS CENTRAL GROUP ARE OTHER PORTRAITS OF THE HABSBURG-LORRAINE FAMILY BY OTHER PAINTERS ONE OF WHOM, JOHAN ZOFFANY, PARTICULARLY STANDS OUT. THE SELF-PORTRAITS OF BOTH THESE ARTISTS FROM THE UFFIZI COLLECTION ARE ALSO PRESENT. THE EXHIBITION ALSO INCLUDES TWO LETTERS FROM MENGES AND A MANUSCRIPT DEDICATED TO CORREGGIO AND TO HIS WORKS, WRITTEN BY THE PAINTER DURING HIS STAY IN FLORENCE.

Entitled *The King of Spain's Grandchildren. Anton Raphael Menges at Pitti Palace*, the exhibition is on display in the Niches Room of the Palatine Gallery, which, with its neo-classical decoration, provides a perfect setting for it. It is focused on the dynastic portraits of the Grand Dukes of the Habsburg-Lorraine family, grouping together works which not only illustrate an important aspect of the cultural and social context of the age of Peter Leopold, but are also a vivid testimony to the cosmopolitan climate that made Florence an effective centre of Enlightened Absolutism, and not only in Italy. Protagonist of the exhibition, Anton Raphael Menges is indeed one of the leading figure of the artistic reforms that were carried out in those years both in Rome and in Madrid driven by the Enlightenment, promoting a new view of Classical and Renaissance art and also renewing the principles of artistic education in a systematic sense. Even if the reason for his stay in Florence was rather conventional – being a court painter he had the duty of creating the portraits of the grand ducal family for his patron, the King of Spain – the exhibition is also dedicated to Menges's essential contribution to the artistic changes in Florence that have been largely neglected by critics until now.

The cornerstone of the exhibition is the *Double portrait of Archduke Ferdinand and Archduchess Maria Anna of Habsburg-Lorraine* as children, whose recent acquisition gave rise to the initiative for this exhibition (Fig. 1). Discovered and identified as a work of Menges by Stefano Grandesso of the Carlo Virgilio Gallery in Rome [1] who for decades has devoted himself to re-assessing periods and contexts outside usual antiquarian collections, the painting has found its worthy and rightful home in the Palatine Gallery where portraits of the children of Peter Leopold and Maria Luisa of Bourbon were missing up to now. They themselves are both present in the exhibition with individual portraits associated to the idea of contrasting concepts that provides almost the guiding theme for the works on display. The portrait of Pietro Leopoldo - sober and elegant, but also conscious of



1
Anton Raphael Menges,
*Double portrait of the Archdukes Ferdinand
and Maria Anna of Habsburg-Lorraine*,
Pitti Palace, Palatine Gallery



2
Anton Raphael Mengs,
*Double portrait of the Archdukes Ferdinand
and Maria Anna of Habsburg-Lorraine,*
Pitti Palace, Palatine Gallery
(before restoration)

his role as sovereign – painted by Mengs during his stay in Florence is contrasted with the happy, lively picture of his future wife, painted by Lorenzo Tiepolo in Madrid in the context of a set of paintings representing the Bourbon heirs.

It was down to the extraordinary dedication and visionary thinking of those responsible at the Uffizi Galleries to make an acquisition that not only enriches their conspicuous iconographic collections, but it also marks a turning-point in the perception of dynastic portraits that have been underestimated for decades, thus accelerating the further break-up of the few dynastic galleries still maintained by aristocratic houses, often being sold off without anyone knowing where they came from or who they portrayed. The large number of portraits uprooted in this way, that have gone around the market without the hope of being able to attribute or identify them, is explained by this phenomenon which effectively means a loss of social history and cultural contexts. The portrait of the archduke and archduchess was saved from this fate because it landed in the hands of expert antique dealers who realised its excellent pedigree. So the mechanism was set in motion to give a secure future to this painting which had first to be divested of the marks of the centuries that had darkened its appearance. Only then did they discover that it had not been finished, a circumstance that makes it today more attractive than it would have been in the last century when it was retouched (Fig. 2).

Last year an exhibition held in New York dedicated to the unfinished work received great acclaim [2]. The pictures displayed there also included a portrait by Mengs, in which

3
Luca della Robbia,
Putto, Ospedale degli Innocenti



the face was missing while all the rest was painted. In spite of this, or perhaps because of this abnormality, the portrait found an appropriate location and if we ask ourselves why, the answer is rather mundane – because a painting done with the virtuosity and exuberance typical of Mengs’s official portraits in his role as court painter, but without a face – the *raison d’être* of any portrait – has something exotic about it that makes it interesting and attractive. In the case of the painting at the Palatine Gallery, we have the opposite situation: the faces are created with great care and attention while the clothes, the hands and the setting remain as a rough outline. Examined in the catalogue but unfortunately not included in the exhibition, the preparatory drawings for the faces document the precision and the virtuosity of the portraitist in capturing the character and childish expression. Moreover, there are no sources or information about the provenance and the original destination of the painting, which must have come out of the painter’s studio before his death in 1779 because it is missing in the inventory of goods bequeathed. One hypothesis about the commissioning of this portrait dating back to the same period as the Madrid portrait derives from a double portrait of the older archduchess and archduke – Maria Theresa and Francis, attributable to Anton von Maron – which has always been in the Viennese collections and therefore can be linked to their paternal grandmother, Empress Maria Theresa, who was untiring in her work of documenting the dynastic family fortunes. The two paintings are connected by their dimensions, which differ only slightly, and the showy chromatic relationship in the children’s clothes, green and pink respectively, inverted so as to make one suppose that they must be a couple. It is therefore reasonable to claim that Mengs’s portrait was originally destined for Vienna but that it remained unfinished because of the many tasks to which the painter had to devote himself after his stay in Florence.

It is a fact that the legacy of the Florentine seventeenth-century art – and especially that of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty – does not enjoy the same attention and admiration

today as it did in previous eras, and this is also explained by the poor visibility of this heritage in the current structure of the city and its collections. Perhaps few visitors today, therefore, realize that the arrangement of the Uffizi as a public museum goes right back to Peter Leopold who aimed to adapt the collections to the needs of the cultured European audience of the times. The interventions carried out by the Grand Duke of Habsburg-Lorraine also laid down the roots for a re-evaluation of the Florentine Renaissance, which contributed so much in the Risorgimento period and will make Florence the preferred destination of scholars and historians specialized in artistic periods preceding Giorgio Vasari. The adaptation of the architectural layout of the city centre and its monuments to the image that was associated to promoting the city's artistic expansion from the fourteenth to mid-sixteenth centuries was one of the side-effects of this revival that wiped out or at least covered up a large part of the aspect the city had assumed during the 17th and 18th centuries. The consequence of this was that Pitti Palace stands out even more as the symbol of absolute power of the monarch and of his pomp and magnificence, concealing behind a Renaissance façade a wealth and splendour that – in Tuscany at least – is without equal, both because of its imposing size and its complex historical and artistic phases.

The portrait of the archduke and archduchess fits perfectly into this context having been executed in one of the many interiors of the Palace that housed Pietro Leopoldo's large family in the South wing, as well as the historic collections. The quarters belonging to the archduke and archduchess and their tutors, nannies, nursemaids and servants were located on the second floor, and from the layout we understand that the majority of the rooms where the male descendants lived looked out from the façade while the female quarters faced onto the internal courtyard and the garden [3]. The gilded chair upholstered in red velvet on which little Ferdinand is leaning probably belonged to the furniture in the apartments of the archduke and archduchess, as several similar pieces are still preserved today in the Palace's Wardrobe.

While working on the grand ducal portraits, of which four are included in the exhibition, the painter also lodged in the Palace and we know that he was there when he worked on the portrait of Archduke Francis [4], future Holy Roman Emperor, displayed in the exhibition alongside Johan Zoffany's portrait depicting him at the age of six. The pairing brings out the difference between the various concepts of monarchic power: the concept of sovereign majesty appropriate to Spanish conventions is in strong contrast with the idea of sovereign power assumed in Florence in keeping with the modern upbringing of the heir to the imperial throne.

The difference between the two versions of the double portrait of Ferdinand and Maria Anna is equally evident. In contrast to the Prado's version, which is not just larger but more ceremonial too, the painting at the Palatine Gallery shows a natural grace and freshness that makes us forget the two posing children who – already conscious



4
Anton Raphael Mengs,
Self-portrait, Uffizi Galleries

of their own behaviour – are presented as a young couple about to come out but who are not yet aware of the role awaiting them in the outside world. The naturalness of their childish faces and Ferdinand's attitude with his arm outstretched allude to a very famous work in Florence, Luca della Robbia's babies in swaddling clothes in the medallions of the Loggia degli Innocenti (1487). Here we find arms stretched out, chubby faces, fine, wavy hair and that trusting, but at the same time rather uncertain expression (fig. 3) that the young Ferdinand also conveys with his head inclined towards

his little sister as he holds a black hat in his hand. The similarity with the babies in swaddling clothes suggests that the painter has benefited from looking at these works which were part of the outdoor museum that Florence offered a careful observer such as Mengs was. Apart from his gifts as a portraitist and his interest in the ancient statuary in the Florentine collections, he was also open to new artistic directions, actively taking part in the rediscovery of the Florentine fifteenth-century art, an aspect that is examined in depth in the exhibition catalogue [5].

The exhibition also offers a highly enlightening combination of Mengs's famous, and often copied, self-portrait with the drawing folder (Fig. 4) with Johan Zoffany's self-portrait with lemons and his little dog (Fig. 5), both in the collection of self-portraits at the Uffizi, now undergoing reorganization. While Mengs's self-portrait, given to the Gallery's staff in 1773 and arranged by him personally and intentionally below the self-portrait by Raphael, expresses his ambitions as a re-inventor of painting, Zoffany's self-portrait (Fig. 4), appearing in the Florentine collections only since 1909, conveys an entirely opposite message. The lemons and the dog are talking symbols of the false friendship we find in the sixteenth-century literature, but in addition, and especially, in the eighteenth-century English painting, to which Zoffany certainly refers, the little dog means faithfulness to nature. The style followed by the painter is therefore that of naturalism while Mengs refers to drawing and academic tradition. However, the fact that both these painters of German origin, who had probably already met in Rome after 1750, took such different paths not only in painting but also in life is worthy of comment. When Mengs went to Spain in 1761, Zoffany arrived in London at the same time, gradually adapting to the rather sterile English taste compared with the Roman-style academic tradition.

The last work on display is a small unpublished painting which is the model for the panel with the *Lamentation of Christ* commissioned from Mengs by Carlo Rinuccini; this remained unfinished because of the painter's death. The large chiaroscuro cartoon created to perfection in pencil could be seen in Florence until well into the 19th century in the Rinuccini art collection. The model gives documentary evidence of the colour in this painting which was to be the pendant for a *Holy Family* by Raphael.

NOTES

[1] *Quadreria 2015. Documents d'art et d'histoire*, G. Porzio, Galleria Carlo Virgilio & C (eds.), published for Paris Tableau, Paris, Palais Brongniart, 11-15 November 2015, pages 57-59.

[2] *Ritratto di Doña Mariana de Silva y Sarmiento, Duquesa de Huescar*, in: *Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible*, K. Baum, A. Bayer, S. Wagstaff (eds.), New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016, no. 68.



5
Johan Zoffany, *Self-portrait*, Uffizi Galleries

[3] D. Toccafondi, *I Lorena in Toscana: potere e rappresentazione. Scene da una dinastia (The Habsburg-Lorraine Family in Tuscany: Power and Representation. Scenes from a Dynasty)*, in *I Nipoti del Re di Spagna. Anton Raphael Mengs a Palazzo Pitti (The King of Spain's Grandchildren: Anton Raphael Mengs at Pitti Palace)*, curated by M. Ceriana and S. Roettgen, exhibition catalogue, Livorno, 2017, Figures 4-5, pages 66-67.

[4] S. Roettgen, "Non mi scorderò mai delle belle cose di Firenze". Anton Raphael Mengs e Firenze ("I will never forget the beautiful things in Florence", Anton Raphael Mengs and Florence), in *Op. cit.*, page 22.

[5] *Ibidem*, pages 28-32.



FEDERICO BERTI
NEWS ABOUT
A PAINTING
AT THE UFFIZI:
THE QUEEN
OF ARMENIA
BY MARIO BALASSI

Insights

Archival research and meticulous stylistic studies have led to the complete reinterpretation of a painting of the Uffizi Galleries. Previously believed to be a portrait of a member of the Medici family by the hand of late sixteenth-century painter Jacopo Ligozzi, the work has now been identified as a fictional representation of the “Queen of Armenia”, realized almost a century later by artist Mario Balassi.

Studies of the archives and a careful stylistic examination have recently led the author of this article to propose a complete critical review of an intriguing painting of the Florentine Galleries now preserved at the Gallery of the Statues and Paintings of the Uffizi. This short essay article outlines the key arguments which have been extensively analysed elsewhere [1].

The work in question is a portrait on wood (64x48 cm.), coming from the Medici Villa of Poggio a Caiano (inv. no. 64) and featuring an enigmatic and captivating princess.

The young woman, depicted in a head and shoulders portrait with long loose hair against a dark background and wearing an exquisite courtly gown (fig. 1, Mario Balassi, *Queen of Armenia*, Florence, Gallery of the Statues and Paintings of the Uffizi), has long been the subject of intense critical analysis in recent decades, beginning in the 1920s when Alinari published a photograph of the painting captioned as Caterina de' Medici (1519-1589), the famous Queen of France. Over the years and until the present day, academics who have studied the painting have suggested various alternative identities, without ever reaching a satisfying conclusion and with considerable differences in terms of time and place: a Mantua princess, Margherita Gonzaga (1591-1632); another French Queen, Maria de' Medici (1575-1642); Camilla Martelli, second wife of Cosimo I (1545-1590); and finally Cosimo I's daughter Virginia de' Medici (1568-1615). It should be noted that the identification of the latter two women has a much more precise justification, namely the splendid golden chain that adorns the breast of the young woman and which records show belonged to both women [2].

Naturally, some critics still had their doubts, linked not only to the obvious physiognomy (even if Florentine paintings in the sixteenth century could hardly be considered 'photographic') but also the unusual hairstyle which seemed somewhat inappropriate for a Medici princess, and the strange and decidedly unconventional headgear. The outfit was sometimes interpreted as a Carnival costume or perhaps an extravagance of the fanciful nature of whichever princess the portrait was attributed to, but it was nonetheless so unique that it was defined as an “imaginative creation, or rather one which does not correspond to any fashion of the time” [3].

In fact, documents traced by the author finally clarified that the painting of the mysterious young woman was not a *portrait* of a true princess, much less so a lady of the Medici house, but rather an imagined creation. Working back through the inventory notes held in the Florentine State Archive, until 1812 the references to the painting described always the portrait generically as “Princess, lavishly dressed”. Although in the previous centuries



1
Mario Balassi,
Queen of Armenia,
Gallery of the Statues
and Paintings of the Uffizi

the painting no longer appeared in Lorenzo de' Medici's Villa, a research carried out in an annexed building finally led to the discovery of the following inventory note, dated 31 May 1781: "A painting on wood measuring h. 1 fm., w. 2 fm. 18 [soldi] = painting, head and shoulders portrait of the Queen of Armenia with loose hair, Crown, and plume on the head, yellow-coloured ornament, and gold thread no. 2524" [4].

The precise description, supported by the eighteenth-century inventory number still visible on the back of the painting (fig. 2, Mario Balassi, *Queen of Armenia*, Florence, Gallery of the Statues and Paintings of the Uffizi, reverse side) led somewhat surprisingly to the identification of the young woman as a "Queen of Armenia", in fact an imaginary figure.

Yet this did not explain the precise description of the elaborate Medici necklace, which as mentioned above is precisely documented as belonging to Camilla Martelli before being passed on to her daughter Virginia. The answer could be found in the detailed and unusual commission. To create the gown, whose splendour was intended to express a generic regality and oriental origin, the artist, who we now know executed the painting not in the sixteenth century but around 1660, drew inspiration from another late sixteenth-century portrait featuring a dress, which would in fact have been somewhat dated at that time, worn by one of the two Medici women, Camilla or Virginia, along with the same precious necklace. The creation can be attributed to Alessandro Allori who painted various versions of it; the

2
Mario Balassi,
Queen of Armenia,
Gallery of the Statues
and Paintings of the Uffizi
(back)



version most likely to have been imitated by Balassi is the one which appeared recently on the antiques market [5] (fig. 3 Alessandro Allori, *Portrait of Camilla Martelli or Virginia de' Medici*, London, Sotheby's). Having copied the dress, liberally embellished with imaginative lace trimming and frills, the artist completely invented the face and headgear that had already alerted the most perceptive critics.

In fact, in the upper part of the picture there are certain stylistic elements that offer clear indications as to the artist who painted it. Since the 1990s, the painting was thought to be the work of Jacopo Ligozzi and was usually dated somewhere in the 1580s [6]. Indeed, certain exquisite aspects of the work could be attributed to the Veronese artist who arrived in Florence in the previous decade; in any case the work appeared to originate from that era because of the decidedly sixteenth-century gown, the method of painting onto wood and, not least, the archaistic style.

However, as further stylistic analyses revealed, the artist was in fact the notable seventeenth-century painter Mario Balassi (1604-1667), a former student of Ligozzi who also worked in the workshops of Matteo Rosselli and del Passignano [7]. Balassi spent a long period of his youth in Rome with the Barberini family, before working in Florence for members of the Medici family such as Don Lorenzo and Cardinal Carlo. He was not above reproducing ancient works, as Filippo Baldinucci explains: "[Balassi] had truly extensive practice in learning



3
Alessandro Allori,
*Portrait of Camilla Martelli
or Virginia de' Medici*,
London, Sotheby's

the masters' manners [and] imitating them all too well". The biographer also makes reference to one of his works "replicated in the manner of a skilled ancient artist" which, believed by experts to be an original, would have earned him "up to two hundred ecus. However, it was enough for Balassi to have the pleasure of fooling the art professors and so he admitted the truth and withdrew the painting" [8].

The work's provenance from the Florentine Galleries is clear from the reappearance of an unusual painting on wood executed by Balassi in 1660, the *Madonna and Child*, now in the Haukohl collection in Houston (fig. 4, Mario Balassi, "Madonna and Child", Houston (Texas), Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl collection); equally refined and realized with the same unique technique on wood, it represents the Virgin's face featuring the same idealized beauty of the Queen of Armenia, and of many other saints and heroines painted by his hand.

The painting at the Gallery of the Statues and Paintings of the Uffizi can be dated with reasonable certainty to around the same time as the *Madonna* in the United States; dated to 1661 and with unknown location, the sensational *Portrait of Vittoria della Rovere* was also produced in the same period [9]. This was the artist's most extreme period, characterized by archaism and an affected elegance: a period of great originality which eluded critics for a long time but was noted by biographer Baldinucci, who recalled how Balassi "as he advanced in age, began to develop a new style and new ideas of colour".

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Mario Balassi,
Madonna and Child,
Houston (Texas),
Sir Mark Fehrs Haukohl collection



NOTES

[1] F. Berti, *Da 'ritratto mediceo' di Jacopo Ligozzi a Regina d'Armenia di Mario Balassi. Un caso storico-artistico tra fortuna critica, indagini documentarie e osservazioni 'morelliane'*, in "Valori Tattili", 7, 2016, pages 30-49; cf. also F. Berti, *Mario Balassi 1604 - 1667. Catalogo completo dei dipinti e dei disegni*, Florence, 2015. For further reference, see these two articles.

[2] The discovery of the document containing this precise description was noted in the description of the work by C. Contu and L. Goldenberg Stoppato in *I gioielli dei Medici, dal vero e in ritratto*, catalogue of the exhibition (Florence, 2003-2004), curated by M. Sframeli, Livorno, 2003, page 72, no. 14.

[3] R. Orsi Landini in *I volti del potere. La ritrattistica di corte nella Firenze granducale*, catalogue of the exhibition (Florence, 2002) curated by C. Caneva, Florence 2002, no. 6, page 36.

[4] Florentine State Archive, *Imperiale e Reale Corte*, 4947, page 530.

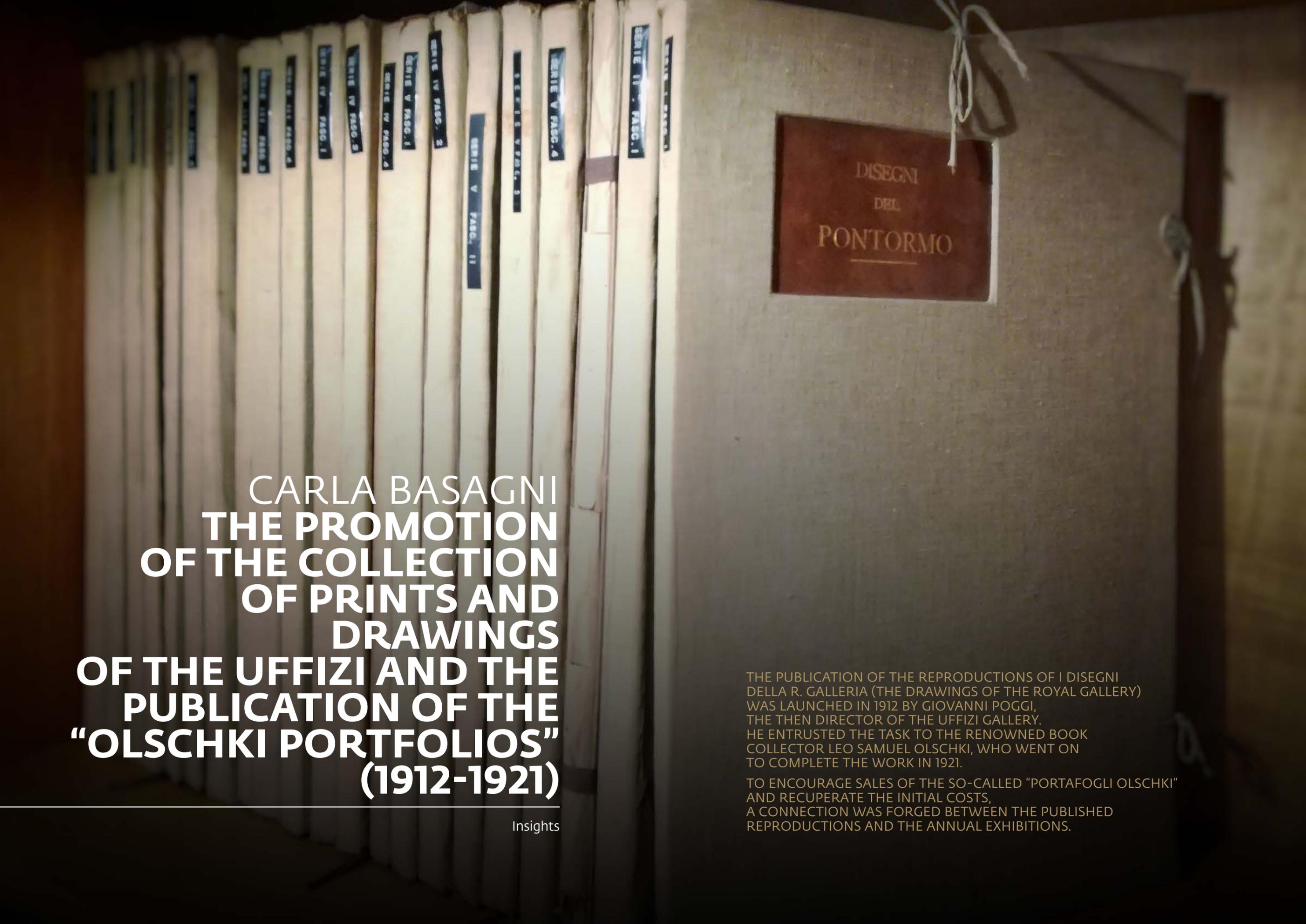
[5] Sotheby's, London, 5 July 2007, no. 182.

[6] See L. Conigliello in *Jacopo Ligozzi, "pittore universalissimo"*, catalogue of the exhibition (Florence, 2014) curated by A. Cecchi, L. Conigliello, M. Faietti, Livorno 2014, no. 43, pages 126-127.

[7] For more information on this painter, see F. Berti, *Mario Balassi 1604 - 1667. Catalogo completo dei dipinti e dei disegni*, Florence, 2015.

[8] F. Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua (1681-1728)*, consulted edition curated by F. Ranalli, Florence 1845-1847, 5 vol., IV, 1846, page 591.

[9] Previously part of the Koelliker collection in Milan, the painting was transferred to London by Sotheby's on 4 December 2008, no. 178.



CARLA BASAGNI
**THE PROMOTION
OF THE COLLECTION
OF PRINTS AND
DRAWINGS
OF THE UFFIZI AND THE
PUBLICATION OF THE
“OLSCHKI PORTFOLIOS”
(1912-1921)**

Insights

THE PUBLICATION OF THE REPRODUCTIONS OF I DISEGNI DELLA R. GALLERIA (THE DRAWINGS OF THE ROYAL GALLERY) WAS LAUNCHED IN 1912 BY GIOVANNI POGGI, THE THEN DIRECTOR OF THE UFFIZI GALLERY. HE ENTRUSTED THE TASK TO THE RENOWNED BOOK COLLECTOR LEO SAMUEL OLSCHKI, WHO WENT ON TO COMPLETE THE WORK IN 1921.

TO ENCOURAGE SALES OF THE SO-CALLED “PORTAFOGLI OLSCHKI” AND RECUPERATE THE INITIAL COSTS, A CONNECTION WAS FORGED BETWEEN THE PUBLISHED REPRODUCTIONS AND THE ANNUAL EXHIBITIONS.

The publication of the reproductions of *I Disegni della R. Galleria* (The Drawings of the Royal Gallery) was launched in 1912 by Giovanni Poggi, the then Director of the Uffizi Gallery. He entrusted the task to the renowned book collector Leo Samuel Olschki, who went on to complete the work in 1921. To encourage sales of the so-called “Portafogli Olschki” and recuperate the initial costs, a connection was forged between the published reproductions and the annual exhibitions.

In 1909 the Department of Prints and Drawings of the Uffizi Gallery organized its first temporary exhibition on the engravings of Francesco Bartolozzi [1], an eighteenth-century Florentine artist who worked in England and won the favor of the English public. This brought a definitive end to the lengthy season of permanent exhibitions [2] of prints and drawings which had lined the halls of the Gallery since 1854, and marked the start of a new period characterized by increased awareness of the Gallery's collection of graphics, promoted by the temporary exhibitions curated annually by the Department of Prints and Drawings.

The new exhibitions were temporary so as to preserve the delicate works of art from the damage caused by permanent light exposure, [3] and were accompanied by small and concise catalogs, without illustrations, which provided only the list of the exhibited works. The curators behind these exhibitions were Pasquale Nerino Ferri, conservator of the prints and drawings collection of the Uffizi and already well-known for his part in publishing the first catalogs [4] of these special collections, and his collaborator, Filippo Di Pietro [5]. The journalist Aldo Sorani, a frequent visitor to the Uffizi, offers us a first-hand account of these events:

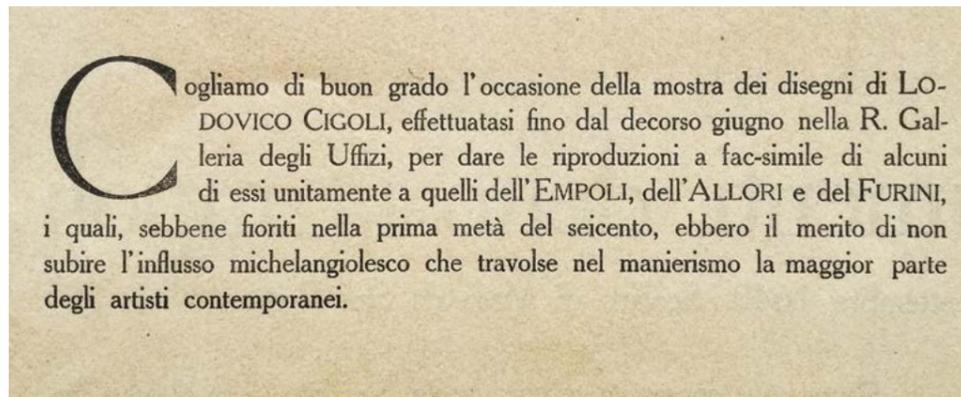
“The Uffizi Gallery ...began a series of individual exhibitions ... In such a way, an exhibition of drawings by Andrea del Sarto and Jacopo da Pontormo, another of drawings by Baroccio and one of drawings by Cigoli were displayed to both academics and the public. All of these displays were carefully commissioned and illustrated by the Director and Secretary of the Department of Prints and Drawings of the Uffizi, P. N. Ferri and F. Di Pietro, and were true revelations.” [6]

In 1912, the Director of the Uffizi, Giovanni Poggi, decided to promote these special collections through a great editorial project, which he entrusted to the publisher Leo Samuel Olschki, the founder of the eponymous Florentine publishing house and who was already well-known at the time for his literary and erudite interests [7]: The publication of the reproductions of *I Disegni della R. Galleria* [8] (The Drawings of the Royal Gallery).

To this end, Giovanni Poggi formed a committee of experts [9] comprising the conservator of prints and drawings Pasquale Nerino Ferri, Ferri's collaborator Filippo di Pietro, Count Carlo Gamba [10], the honorary inspector of the Florentine Galleries Charles Loe- ser [11], and other illustrious names such as Corrada Ricci [12] and the art historians Gusta-



1
Facsimile of the drawing by L. Cigoli,
Seated Female Figure,
Serie II, fasc. I, Olschki Portfolio



2
Incipit, Serie II, fasc. I, Olschki Portfolio

vo Frizzoni, Matteo Marangoni and Odoardo H. Giglioli [13], who were tasked with choosing the designs which would best illustrate the collection of the Uffizi.

The work was organized in five series, with twenty portfolios each featuring 25 reproductions of drawings in the same dimensions as the originals, preceded by a short critical introduction. The photographic reproductions were created using the most cutting-edge techniques at the time [14], with the aim of creating copies which could replace the originals in exhibitions both in Italy and abroad [15].

The editor financed the project by a subscription system by which, when the publication was announced, subscribers would sign up to pay in installments in exchange for receiving each volume upon its release [16]. Yet even despite this, the undertaking was still very demanding on the publishing house [17]. After the publication of the first series, Pasquale Nerino Ferri came up with the idea of linking the publishing initiative with the temporary exhibitions at the Uffizi. In fact, in the first volume of the second series, dedicated to Ludovico Cigoli, Ferri wrote:

"It is with great pleasure that we seize this occasion of the exhibition of drawings by Lodovico Cigoli, opened last June in the Royal Gallery of the Uffizi, to release this publication featuring reproductions of some of these works". [18]

The time was ripe to spread the news of the publication, not least because the publishing house was in dire straits, as Leo Samuel Olschki frankly explained in his letter to the Director of the Gallery:

"I am very pleased and proud to have undertaken such an immense publication at my own risk and peril, and from which I have thus far derived great moral sati-

sfaction, yet I am still a long way from any material reward as the advertising, propaganda and administrative costs are such as to not yet be recovered". [19]

In July 1914 Olschki notified Poggi via the bookkeeper Bompani that the "financial profit from the second series" was "considerably lower than that of the first, given the notable reduction in subscribers", and asked explicitly "if you and your esteemed collaborators of the Committee" might have some "means of helping us to distribute the work, with the effective means at your disposal" [20]. The temporary exhibitions likely seemed the most effective means of pursuing this goal: in 1914, the exhibition on *Jacopo Callot and Stefano della Bella*, curated by Pasquale Nerino Ferri and Filippo Di Pietro [21], and the display of *Venetian School Drawings*, curated by Carlo Gamba [22], accompanied the release of two corresponding portfolios [23]; this occurred again in 1915 to mark the *Exhibition of the drawings of Florentine artists of the seventeenth century* curated by Odoardo Hilyer Giglioli (1870-1963) [24].

The impressive opus of reproductions of the drawings of the Uffizi continued during the First World War, carried forward with the characteristic literary passion of editor Leo Samuel Olschki and the tenacity and determination of Giovanni Poggi, who never ceased to encourage the work of the collaborators of each portfolio.

The publication of the reproductions only came to an end in 1921 with the volume edited by Filippo Di Pietro [25]. This was announced by Odoardo H. Giglioli in his article *The Drawings of the Royal Gallery of the Uffizi (I disegni della R. Galleria degli Uffizi)*, which editor Olschki also released in English to ensure a wider readership [26].

Leo Samuel Olschki gave Giovanni Poggi the credit for having brought the publications to fruition, despite the many challenges, and said he was proud to have produced it. His words are worthy of note:

"My dear and most illustrious Sig[nor] Comm[endator] Giovanni Poggi, now that my great publication of the Drawings of the R. Gallery of the Uffizi is happily complete, allow me to bestow upon you my most sincere thanks for your careful work and services dedicated to the completion of this work which is a credit to you and your collaborators, to those who wish to express gratitude in my name, and our country, Italy, where for over seven lustrum I have carried out my work as a publisher. I believe that no other country can boast a work similar to this devised by us and directed by you [...] We must rejoice in the knowledge that this work already performs a great service for artistic culture through the exhibitions which various museums in Italy and abroad are organizing in turn with the drawings from each portfolio. For my part, I consider this publication to be the greatest and most important ever to have been produced by my publishing house, and if I feel pride, I owe it in large part to you for your wise counsel." [27]

NOTES

[1] P. N. Ferri, F. Di Pietro (edited by), *Catalogo della mostra di stampe incise da Francesco Bartolozzi, Firenze dicembre 1909, Gabinetto dei disegni e delle stampe nella R. Galleria degli Uffizi*, Florence, Giuntina, 1909. Also on the subject, see also A. M. Petrioli Tofani, *Pasquale Nerino Ferri, primo direttore del Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi* in *Gli Uffizi: quattro secoli di una galleria*, records from the international convention of academics, (Florence, 1982), edited by P. Barocchi and G. Ragionieri, Florence, Olschki, 1983, vol. II, pages 421-442; and M. Fileti Mazza, *Storia di una collezione: i disegni e le stampe degli Uffizi dal periodo napoleonico al primo conflitto mondiale*, Florence, Olschki, 2014, page 120.

[2] Cf. *Ivi*, cit., pages. 44-120; on this subject see also A. M. Petrioli Tofani, *Pasquale Nerino Ferri, primo direttore ...*, cit. and A. Forlani Tempesti, *Introduction*, in *I grandi disegni italiani degli Uffizi di Firenze*, Milan, Silvana Editoriale d'Arte, 1972, pages 7-74.

[3] P. N. Ferri, F. Di Pietro, *Catalogo della mostra di stampe ...* cit., page 5.

[4] P. N. Ferri (edited by), *Catalogo delle stampe e disegni esposti al pubblico nella R. Galleria degli Uffizi*, Florence, with text from Arte della Stampa, 1881; Idem (edited by), *Indice geografico-analitico dei disegni di architettura civile e militare esistenti nella R. Galleria degli Uffizi in Firenze*, Rome, at leading bookstores, 1885 ("Indici e cataloghi 3"); Idem (edited by), *Catalogo riassuntivo della raccolta di disegni antichi e moderni posseduta dalla R. Galleria degli Uffizi di Firenze*, Rome, at leading bookstores, 1890-[1897] ("Indici e cataloghi 12").

[5] Cf. V. Scuderi, *Dizionario biografico dei soprintendenti storici dell'arte (1904-1974)*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2007, pages 227-228 which, moreover, dates the first records back to 1922 when Filippo Di Pietro officially entered his roles in the Fine Arts Department of the Uffizi Gallery.

[6] A. Sorani, *I disegni degli Uffizi* in *Il secolo XX: illustrated monthly magazine*, a.XII, no. 11, 1913, page 978.

[7] C. Tagliaferri, Olschki: un secolo di editoria, 1886-1986, vol. 1, La Libreria antiquaria editrice Leo S. Olschki (1886-1945), Florence, Olschki, 1986.

[8] *I disegni della R. Galleria degli Uffizi*, Florence, Olschki, 1912-1921, 20 voll., *in folio*.

[9] The following has recently been written regarding the above-mentioned publication: M. Faietti, *Dalla Firenze di Luigi Lanzi alla Bologna di Francesco Malaguzzi Valeri: vicissitudini e fortune del disegno bolognese nel Settecento*, in *Crocevia e capitale della migrazione artistica: forestieri a Bologna e bolognesi nel mondo (sec. XVIII)*, records from the international convention of academics (Bologna, 2012), edited by S. Frommel, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2013, pages 387-388.

[10] As regards Count Gamba, cf. R. Todros, *L'occhio del conoscitore. Vita e opere del Conte Carlo Gamba*, in *Il figurino di Modo. La donazione Carlo Gamba alla Biblioteca Marucelliana*, Rome, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato 1989, pages 7-35. Cf. also M. Masini, *Il Fondo Carlo Gamba alla Biblioteca degli Uffizi* in "Biblioteche oggi", vol. XXXII, no. 10, December 2014, pages 53-55 and Eadem, *Archivi in Biblioteca. Le carte di Filippo Rossi e del Conte Carlo Gamba*, Tricase (Lecce), Youcanprint, 2015.

[11] Cf. *Charles Loeser Association* [online resource consulted in September 2017]: www.associazionecharlesloeser.it/index_it.htm.

[12] Corrado Ricci was the Director of the Florentine Galleries from 1903 to 1906, after which he became Director General of Antiques and Fine Arts, cf. M.L. Strocchi, *(La Compagnia della Ninna. Corrado Ricci a Firenze, 1903-1906*, Florence, Giunti, 2005; cf. also S. Sicoli, *Corrado Ricci*, in *Dizionario biografico dei soprintendenti storici dell'arte (1904-1974)*, Bononia University Press, 2007, pages 510-527.

[13] Cf. Tagliaferri, *Olschki: un secolo di editoria ...*, cit., page 183 and cf. also O. H. Giglioli, *I disegni della R. Galleria degli Uffizi*, Florence, Olschki, 1922, which gives a general overview of the publications on pages 36-37.

[14] The reproductions were made by the Istituto Micrografico Toscano in "color collotype, by the process of selecting different color negatives" (cf. *Ivi*, cit., page 3).

[15] The text of the letter is published in full at the end of this article. AGU (Uffizi Galleries Archives), *Archivio Giovanni Poggi, Serie I, Carteggio, n. 14, 240*: L. S. Olschki to G. Poggi, typewritten letter, 4 November 1921 (the analytical inventory of the Poggi archive was published by S. Lombardi, *L'archivio di Giovanni Poggi (1880-1961) Soprintendente alle Gallerie fiorentine*, Florence, Polistampa 2011).

[16] Cf. Tagliaferri, *Olschki: un secolo di editoria ...*, cit. page 113.

[17] Cf. *Ivi*, pages 183-184.

[18] *I disegni della R. Galleria degli Uffizi ...*, cit., Series II, file I: *Cigoli, L'Empoli, Cr. Allori, Fr. Furini*, [text by] P. N. Ferri, 1913.

[19] AGU, *Archivio Giovanni Poggi ...*, cit., 231: L. S. Olschki to G. Poggi, "from Villa Olschki, Saltino (Vallombrosa), 10 August '14".

[20] AGU, *Archivio Giovanni Poggi ...*, cit., 230: A. Bompani to G. Poggi, 6 July 1914. The impressive work was also presented to the educated public by W. Bombe, *I disegni della Galleria degli Uffizi*, "La Bibliofilia", a. XVII, Florence, Olschki, 1915, pages 83-97.

[21] P. N. Ferri, F. Di Pietro (edited by), *Mostra dei disegni e incisioni di Jacopo Callot, di Stefano Della Bella e della loro scuola nel Gabinetto dei Disegni della R. Galleria degli Uffizi, dal gennaio*

all'aprile 1914, Bergamo, Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1914.

[22] P. N. Ferri, C. Gamba, C. Loeser (edited by), *Mostra di disegni e stampe di scuola veneziana dei secoli XV e XVI nel Gabinetto dei disegni della R. Galleria degli Uffizi dal maggio al dicembre 1914*, Bergamo, Istituto italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1914. Note in particular the handwritten postscript on page 6 of the GABINETTO DISEGNI E STAMPE UFFIZI document, Biblioteca, Rari Misc/Ferri/1914/2, inventory 9216: "N. B. Were the numbers underlined in red reproduced in the first volume of series III of the Uffizi Drawings with text by C[on]te Gamba?", which clearly refers to *I disegni della R. Galleria degli Uffizi ...*, cit., Series III, file I, *Scuola veneziana* [text by] C. Gamba 1914.

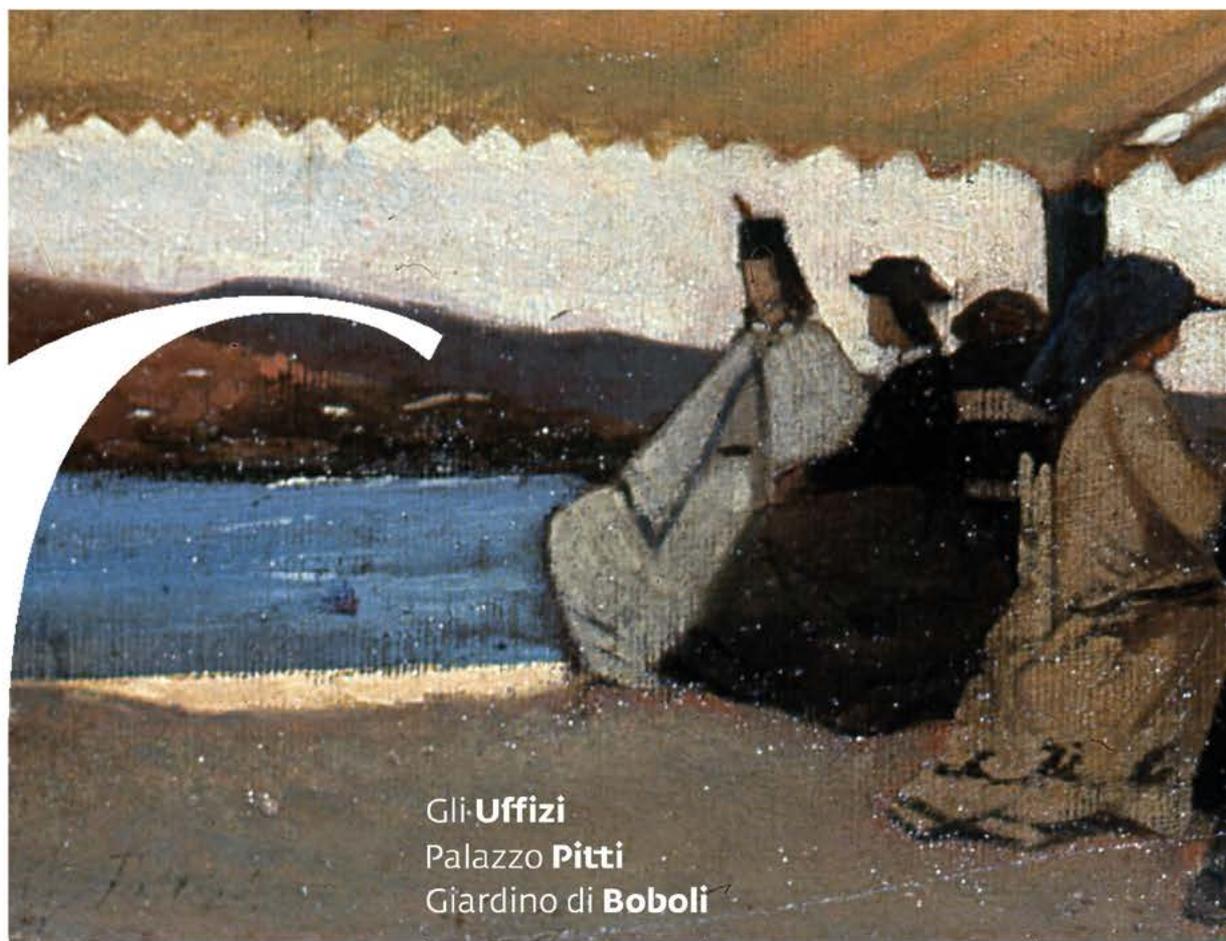
[23] *I disegni della R. Galleria degli Uffizi ...*, cit.: *J. Callot and Stefano della Bella* [text by] F. Di Pietro, 1914 and cf. *Ivi*, cit., Series III, file I: *Scuola veneziana* [text by] C. Gamba 1914.

[24] Cf. P. N. Ferri, O. H. Giglioli (edited by), *Catalogo della mostra di disegni di pittori fiorentini del secolo XVII nel Gabinetto dei Disegni della R. Galleria degli Uffizi dal gennaio al maggio 1915*, Bergamo, Istituto italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1915 and cf. *I disegni della R. Galleria degli Uffizi ...*, cit, Series III, file IV: *Pittori fiorentini del sec. 17*, [text by] O. H. Giglioli, 1915.

[25] *I disegni della R. Galleria degli Uffizi ...*, cit, Series V, file IV: *Disegni ornamentali* [text by] F. Di Pietro, 1921.

[26] O. H. Giglioli, *I disegni della R. Galleria degli Uffizi ...*,cit. (published in English as: *The Drawings of the Royal Gallery of the Uffizi in Florence*).

[27] AGU, *Archivio Giovanni Poggi, Serie I, Carteggio, n. 14, 240*: L. S. Olschki to G. Poggi, "Florence, 4 Nov. '21".



Gli **Uffizi**
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