THE SPRINGTIME OF THE RENAISSANCE
SCULPTURE AND THE ARTS IN FLORENCE 1400-60

Florence, Palazzo Strozzi
23 March-18 August 2013
This exhibition sets out to illustrate the birth of the Renaissance in Florence by focusing in particular on masterpieces of sculpture, the first of the major arts to embody the new style. Following the rediscovery of Classical art with Nicola Pisano, Arnolfo di Cambio and their successors in the 13th and 14th centuries, and the assimilation of the expressive richness of Gothic, Lorenzo Ghiberti and Filippo Brunelleschi each produced a panel depicting the Sacrifice of Isaac. These, together with a model for the dome of the cathedral, marked the birth of the Renaissance.

The great Humanists, – men like Coluccio Salutati, Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini – in their written works, used the Florentine Republic’s political achievements, its economic power and its social harmony to spread the myth of the city as the heir to Republican Rome and as a model for other Italian city states.

The monumental public sculpture of Donatello, Ghiberti and Nanni di Banco for the cathedral and for Orsanmichele not only illustrates this cultural “revolution” but was also to have a profound influence on painting. Other Classical themes (ranging from the equestrian monument to the Humanist tomb, the playful theme of mischievous little “spirits” and the portrait bust) were assimilated and transformed in the new language of sculpture, reflecting both the spiritual and intellectual climate prevalent in the city and the creative fervour it engendered.

The curators: Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi, Marc Bormand

Look out for the following features in the exhibition!

Special labels for families and children. Throughout the exhibition there are special labels that invite families to explore the sense of touch.

The Sculptor’s Satchel. You will see families using the special ‘suitcase’, full of activities for all ages. Ask to borrow one at the Info Point on the first floor and explore the world of the early Renaissance together!

The drawing kit. Sketch your way through the exhibition for a unique vision of the art and objects. Ask to borrow a drawing kit – for free – at the Info Point on the first floor, to be used and returned at the end of your visit.

The Book mark. Explore links between the art and literature of the time! Look for the special symbol and find the corresponding book in the Reading Room!

The Reading Room. The Reading Room invites visitors to take a break to relax and think about their experience. It takes the form of a studiolo – a Renaissance collector’s study, and in it you will find real bronze statues that you can touch for yourself!

The Cast Court. Here visitors can explore accurate plaster casts of sculptural masterpieces with their hands, feeling the contours as the Renaissance artists made them.

“Ask me”. Staff with special “Ask me” buttons can help you understand more about the exhibition in your own language – ask them if there is something you want to know.

All panel and label texts can be found online at www.palazzostrozzi.org and are available in Italian, French, English, Russian and Chinese.
The new sculptural style of the Renaissance is rooted in the work of Nicola Pisano, who drew his inspiration from sarcophagi and Classical finds subsequently placed in the Camposanto in Pisa, and on which further generations of Tuscan artists were also to base their work. Here the *Talento Crater*, formerly standing outside Pisa cathedral, is set alongside sculpture by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano, Arnolfo di Cambio, Tino di Camaino and their successors who worked on the construction site of Santa Reparata, the cathedral of Florence later rechristened Santa Maria del Fiore. The more strictly “Classical” and monumental style inspired by the sculpture of Nicola and Arnolfo (and adopted in painting also by Giotto) sits alongside a Gothic vein introduced by the work of Giovanni Pisano and by French examples in circulation. French sculpture played a significant role, which can still be detected in the work of such great Early Renaissance sculptors as Jacopo della Quercia and Francesco di Valdambrino, from Siena. Both men took part in the competition for the second set of doors for the Baptistry in Florence in 1401.

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**CLASSICAL ROMAN ART**

*Crater with Bacchic Scene (Talento Crater)*

1st century AD  
marble (the base is a later restoration)  
Pisa, Opera della Primaziale Pisana

This *crater*, a Classical piece that incited enormous admiration and interest as early as the 13th century, was a source of inspiration for many artists including Nicola Pisano. Placed outside Pisa cathedral in 1303, it was thought to be the vase in which people placed the coins (or *talents*) which they owed the city in customs duty in the Roman era. Thus it evoked both Pisa’s former greatness and its role as a focal point for the collection of Classical works in Tuscany.

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**WORKSHOP OF NICOLA PISANO**

*Virtue (Faith?)*

1260–70 (?)  
marble  
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Sculptures, donated by a group of friends of the Louvre, 1909

Pisan antiquities played a crucial role in the development of the art of Nicola Pisano, the first modern exponent of the Classical legacy and a «precursor» of the Renaissance. Similar figures are frequently found on Romanesque pulpits in Tuscany, but the movement of the drapery and the plasticity of the face hark back to the art of ancient Rome.
ARNOLFO DI CAMBIO (？)
Colle Val d’Elsa c. 1240-c.1310
Three Acolytes with Thurible, Incense Boat and Ampulla
c. 1267
marble
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

This group was one of the supports for the tomb of Dominic Guzman, who died in Bologna in 1221 and was canonised in 1234. Known as the Arca di San Domenico, it was made by Nicola Pisano and his assistants, including a young Arnolfo di Cambio, between 1264 and 1267. The three “acolytes” (or altar boys) stand back to back to form a pillar supporting the Arca, or sarcophagus proper – a motif reflecting a compositional structure inspired by Classical sculpture.

GIOTTO DI BONDONE
Vespignano o Florence c. 1266
- Florence 1337
Grieving Madonna
c. 1335
detached fresco
Florence, Museo dell’Opera di Santa Croce

The sense of space and the forms of Giotto’s later work – at once both monumental and compact – reveal the artist’s interest in contemporary sculptors, and in Tino di Camaino in particular. Giotto’s later “sculptural” style was to remain a benchmark for the artists of subsequent generations, having a profound influence also on the future masters of painting, starting with Masaccio.

TINO DI CAMAINO
Siena 1280 circa-Naples 1337 circa
Virtue (Faith)
c. 1322–4
marble
Florence, Museo dell’Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore

Probably produced towards the end of the period the artist spent in Florence, having worked in Siena until 1321 and moving to Naples after 1324, this sculpture may originally have stood over the east door of the Baptistry. Tino shows a particular interest in Giotto’s work – in terms both of his figures’ plasticity and of his natural approach to description – as shown by the contrast between the softness of the veil and the tight rendering of the head.

ANDREA PISANO
Andrea di Ugolino; Pontedera
c. 1290-Orvieto 1348/1349
Sculpture (Phidias)
c. 1334–9
marble
Florence, Museo dell’Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore

This panel once adorned the outside of the bell tower designed by Giotto to stand beside the cathedral. The decorative cycle portrays man’s ability to dominate the material world through his manual labour and his intellectual capacity assisted by faith. Giotto translated this theme into an iconographic programme partly executed by his “very good friend” Andrea Pisano, who drew his inspiration from Roman funerary reliefs showing artisans at work.
**GIOVANNI PISANO**  
Pisa c. 1248 circa-Siena ante 1319

**Madonna and Child**  
c. 1270  
marble  
Empoli, Museo della Collegiata di Sant’Andrea

This composition is based on the “clypeate” image, an image contained in a circular frame, which Giovanni – whose father had set him to studying Classical art – had seen on the late Roman sarcophagi in the Camposanto cemetery in Pisa. The artist reinterprets the figurative vocabulary of the Classical era with the expressiveness of Gothic sculpture, accentuating plasticity and relief and portraying the bond of affection between the mother and her child, setting a crucial precedent for Florentine sculpture of the Early Renaissance.

**Justice**  
1312–3  
marble  
Genoa, Galleria Nazionale della Liguria a Palazzo Spinola

This figure was part of the tomb of Marguerite of Brabant – wife of Emperor Henry VII of Luxembourg – which Giovanni Pisano carved for the church of San Francesco di Castelletto in Genoa. In this now dismantled monument, the broad range of sources that forged the artist’s cultural background came together. Justice embodying his taste for the Gothic style which spread to Italy through ivory sculpture, particularly of French origin (but which Giovanni may also have discovered in the course of a hypothetical stay in Paris).

**SCULPTOR FROM PICARDY**  
**Madonna and Child**  
last third of the 13th century  
wood, traces of polychromy  
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Scultures, Donated by the heirs of L. Mellerio (head of the Christ Child)

Similar statuettes produced in Paris and northern France in the 13th century were widely imitated thereafter, spreading throughout Christendom. This work reveals the tension between the two expressive forms of French Gothic sculpture: the precious nature of figures carved in ivory which could be held in the hand and inspected at close quarters, and the monumentality of sculpture in stone which was intended to be viewed from a distance and with greater detachment.

**PARISIAN SCULPTOR**  
**Madonna and Child**  
(Timbal Madonna)  
c. 1260–70  
ivory with traces of polychromy, modern clasp and crown  
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Objets d’art

Thanks to the ease with which they could be moved, ivory statuettes of this kind were among the most important vehicles for the spread of new iconography and of the most sophisticated French Gothic style in Italy. This group, focusing on the tender bond between a mother and her child, is remarkable for the figures’ elegance and the floral motifs adorning Christ’s robe. It appears to be the prototype for Giovanni Pisano’s ivory Madonna now in the Museo dell’Opera Primaziale in Pisa.
Reparata, a martyr from Caesarea in Palestine, was an object of special devotion in Florence and the city's first cathedral was dedicated to her, keeping its original name until the 14th century when it was rededicated to Santa Maria del Fiore. This sculpture, which merges Classical monumentality with Gothic elegance, must have had pride of place in the old cathedral and stood at quite a height, as suggested by the unfinished top of the head and the way the face looks down towards the ground.

The statues of St. Stephen and St. Lawrence (opposite), which lost their heads when Arnolfo’s façade for Florence cathedral was dismantled, were completed with ancient heads considered to be in keeping with the two saints’ classicising feel. The Angel beside St. Stephen holds the stone of the saint’s martyrdom in one hand and closes his cloak with the other; the cloak’s sinuous folds revealing the sculptor’s Gothic taste.
PIERO DI GIOVANNI
TEDESCO
mentioned between 1386 and 1402
Angel
1390–6
marble
Frankfurt am Main, Liebieghaus
Skulpturensammlung

St. Lawrence
1390–4
marble
Paris, Musée du Louvre,
département des Sculptures

Piero di Giovanni, who may have come from working on the cathedral in Milan and who was nicknamed “Teutonicus”, received numerous commissions for the sculpture on the façade of Florence cathedral, in particular for four large statues of sainted martyrs flanked by eight adoring angels. This pair of figures and the pair opposite effectively conjure up the now lost decoration of Arnolfo’s façade. The heads of both St. Lawrence and St. Stephen were replaced with Classical Roman heads in the 19th century.

FRANCESCO DI
VALDAMBRINO
Siena c. 1375-1435
St. Stephen
1409
poplar wood, carved, painted and gilded
Empoli, Museo della Collegiata di Sant’Andrea

In 1401 Francesco di Valdambrino – along with Jacopo della Quercia, Niccolò di Piero Lamberti, Simone da Colle and Niccolò di Luca Spinelli, as well as Brunelleschi and Ghiberti – was one of the competitors in the competition for the second Baptistry door. In his St. Stephen, whose restoration especially for this exhibition has revealed the statue’s sumptuous polychromy, Valdambrino reveals his interest in the new Renaissance monumentality while still clinging to the grace and melancholy typical of the Sienese late Gothic style.

JACOPO DELLA QUERCIA
Siena 1347-c. 1438
St. Ansanus
1410
wood (formerly painted)
Lucca, Church of Santi Simone e Giuda.
On temporary loan to the Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi

Jacopo della Quercia, one of the competitors in the competition held by the Arte di Calimala guild in 1401, produced this figure for Lucca. It is typical of the dawn of the Renaissance, the elegance of international Gothic going hand in hand with the novel idea, borrowed from Classical art, of imparting a natural form to the human body. The slight Gothic sway merges in this St. Ansanus with the humanisation of sculpture, which was originally further highlighted by the statue’s polychromy.
The panels depicting the Sacrifice of Isaac submitted by Lorenzo Ghiberti and Filippo Brunelleschi for a competition in 1401 to win the commission for the second set of doors for the Baptistery are a milestone in the history of art. While still imbued with the spirit of International Gothic, the two panels show that both young artists, who were to play leading roles in the Early Renaissance, were familiar with the masterpieces of Classical sculpture. Brunelleschi was inspired by the famous Boy with Thorn and Ghiberti by the Torso of a Centaur. The two panels sit side by side with the Wooden Model of the Dome (produced by Brunelleschi in his role as architect rather than sculptor) which encapsulates the new vision of space and history that originated in Florence. Around the cathedral – “towering above the skies, vast enough to cover the entire Tuscan population with its shadow”, as Leon Battista Alberti put it – a new mode of expression was being developed which transformed Florence into the cradle of the artistic Rebirth.

Even though Brunelleschi failed to win the commission, this panel, which was his entry for the competition of 1401, was returned to him rather than recast for use on the new door (the fate that met the all the other losing entries). While the composition, broken down into the various episodes in the story, is reminiscent of a medieval stage set, the experimental search for a new spatial dimension in which to set the action, coupled with specific references to Classical works (in particular, the Boy with Thorn), in fact inaugurate the Renaissance.

Ghiberti’s first work, this panel (cast in a single piece, while Brunelleschi’s panel consists of four parts welded to a base) won him the commission for the north door of the Baptistery. The artist harmonises tradition with innovation in a single space, displaying a late Gothic elegance and narrative fluidity that transcends the drama of the event while adopting forms based on Classical sculpture (particularly in his rendering of Isaac’s torso).
CLASSICAL ROMAN ART

*Boy with Thorn*
1st century BC
Italic marble
Modena, Galleria Estense

This sculpture is one of the finest Classical replicas based on a probable late Hellenistic original. The most famous version of the Roman era, the *Boy with Thorn* from the Capitoline (Rome, Musei Capitolini), was one of the rare Classical bronzes to remain on view for centuries without interruption amid the ruins of the city, becoming a model and a source of inspiration for artists. The servant on the left of Brunelleschi’s panel replicates its pose and its gestures, albeit in modern garb.

CLASSICAL ROMAN ART

*Torso of a Centaur*
1st century AD
rosso antico marble
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund

This work bears a close affinity with the *Gaddi Torso* now in the Uffizi, which probably belonged to Ghiberti’s descendants, and was one of the most famous and monumental Classical versions of the figure of a Centaur with his hands bound behind his back that was so popular both in Roman times and in the Renaissance. Its direct influence is easy to identify in the design for Isaac’s strongly curving torso in Ghiberti’s panel.

FILIPPO BRUNELLESCHI

Florence 1377-1446

*Wooden Model of the Dome of Florence Cathedral*
c. 1420–40
wood
Florence, Museo dell’Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore

Construction of the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore – still the most distinctive feature of the city’s skyline – began in 1420 to a design by Brunelleschi with a revolutionary self-supporting method that included no buttressing. The dome was solemnly consecrated in 1436 in a shape more or less resembling this model, which was probably made under the master’s supervision to illustrate his overall project for the monument.
The flowering of the Renaissance in Florence owed a great deal to the social, economic and political climate of the early 15th century. The triumphs of the Republic were matched by the population’s growing pride in the city. Florence’s libertas, the heir to the freedom of Republican Rome, offered itself as a model to other Italian city states, while its inhabitants appeared to embody Cicero’s ideal of the “good citizen”. The writings of the great Humanist chancellors Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni paint a picture of the development of civic Humanism and the construction of the myth of Florence as a new Rome and a new Athens, albeit in a strongly Christian vein. Public sculpture interpreted this celebration of the city with statues of hero-saints and prophets for the cathedral, but above all, it was the large-scale figure sculpture commissioned by the Arti, or guilds, for their niches at Orsanmichele and the statues for the bell-tower of Santa Maria del Fiore that marked the rediscovery of Classical models while reflecting updated ideals and a quest for innovation in both expression and execution.

Coluccio Salutati, chancellor of the Florentine Republic from 1375 until his death in 1406 and a resolute champion of florentina libertas, was one of the leading lights of humanist culture, holding aloft the beacon lit by Petrarch. Standing on a low pedestal holding an open book and with other tomes at his feet, he is represented by a fully-fledged statue, in the red robes reserved for figures of distinction.

A humanist and historian, Bruni was an authoritative chancellor of the Florentine Republic from 1427 until his death in 1444. The illuminator portrays Bruni here in Dante’s robes holding a book with golden rays, against the backdrop of Florence (easily recognisable from the cathedral dome), alluding to his commitment to publicising Dante’s work and to glorifying the city.
POGGIO BRACCIOLINI
Terranuova 1380-Florence 1459
History of Florence from the Foundation of the City to the Year 1455
parchment manuscript
WORKSHOP OF PIERO DI JACOPO DEL MASSAIO
Iconographical Map of Florence
c. 1470
Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, fol. 4v

The codex shows a „bird’s eye“ view of Florence similar to others attributed to Piero del Massaio. Omitting the details of the city’s less interesting fabric, it depicts Florence inside its walls and focuses on what the artist felt were its most important buildings, which stand out against a coloured background. Poggio Bracciolini was a chancellor of the Florentine Republic like Bruni and he wrote a History of Florence, but he was also a great humanist, philologist and collector of ancient texts and works.

POGGIO BRACCIOLINI
Terranuova 1380-Florence 1459
De varietate fortunae
parchment manuscript
FRANCESCO D’ANTONIO DEL CHIERICO
(Florence 1433–84)
Portrait of Poggio Bracciolini
c. 1470
Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, fol. 2r

Poggio Bracciolini, a leading member of Cosimo de’ Medici the Elder’s circle, unearthed several very rare Classical manuscripts in Swiss, German and French monastic libraries, his exceptional discoveries contributing to his fame. His narrative vein and ethical and philosophical musings are to be found in dialogue form in such works as the De varietate fortunae, which focuses on the clash between fortune and virtue.

CLASSICAL ROMAN ART
Dionysus Taurus
2nd century AD, copy of a late 4th century BCE original (head); 2nd century AD (bust)
Greek marble
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

The head (the torso is also Classical but not relevant here) may have entered Cosimo the Elder’s collection from that of Poggio Bracciolini. Aware that literature was not the only crucial element in rediscovering the past, Poggio also sought out Classical remains, even commissioning the learned Franciscan friar Francesco da Pistoia, who was bound for Chios, to procure marble statuary there. The friar brought home three pieces, possibly including this head of Dionysos.
LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI
Genoa 1404-Rome 1472
Self-portrait
C. 1435
Bronze
Washington, National Gallery of Art,
Samuel H. Kress Collection

This plaque is a milestone in portraiture. The austere and noble profile is
reminiscent of Roman portraits of the
Republican era, while the oval recalls
a Classical cameo. The winged eye is
Alberti's own design, a humanist reference
to the all-seeing eye of God, to the
primacy of sight for the human intellect
and possibly also to Egyptian hieroglyphs.

DONATELLO
Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi, Florence
C. 1386-1466
Young Prophet
C. 1406
Marble
Florence, Museo dell’Opera
di Santa Maria del Fiore

Intended for one of the major sculptural
creations of the early 15th century (the
Porta della Mandorla on the cathedral’s
north side), this statuette is thought to
be one of the young Donatello’s first
independent works. While the figure
itself is already classicising and firm, the
sharp folds of the drapery, typical of
International Gothic, reveal the influence
of Ghiberti, with whom Donatello worked
from 1404 to 1407 as an assistant in the
early stages of the north Baptistry door.

NANNI DI BANCO (?)
Florence recorded between
1405 and 1421
Hercules
C. 1405–8
Marble
Florence, Museo dell’Opera
di Santa Maria del Fiore

The decision to adorn the Porta della
Mandorla’s arch with acanthus shoots
populated with mythological divinities
and angelic figures parallels the Classical
references in the panels produced for the
competition in 1401. While Hercules’
presence can be explained in terms
of his ethical and political significance
in Florentine civic iconography, the
underlying theme remains the marriage
of the Classical and Christian worlds, of
which Nanni di Banco was one of the first
and greatest exponents.

NANNI DI BANCO (?)
Florence recorded between
1405 and 1421
Young Prophet
C. 1406
Marble
Florence, Museo dell’Opera
di Santa Maria del Fiore

Nanni di Banco seems on the point of
transcending the Gothic tradition with
the solidity of his structure and the
plasticity of his drapery. His date of birth
is unknown but he must have been older
than Donatello, so he may have begun a
dialogue with Brunelleschi and Classical
art before him. His early death in 1421
dimmed his reputation, and Leon Battista
Alberti fails to list him among the great
artists in his De pictura, written in 1435 and
translated into Italian the following year.
CLASICAL ROMAN ART
Sarcophagus with Triumph of Dionysus and Winged Victories

Vasari tells us that in order to draw this sarcophagus after hearing Donatello sing its praises, Brunelleschi walked all the way from Florence to Cortona "just as he was, with his cloak, hood and clogs, without telling a soul where he was bound". Known to all the artists of the day, it was one of Lorenzo Ghiberti's models for the angelic figures on the Shrine of Saints Protus, Hyacinth, and Nemesius, which are based on the winged Victories supporting the round, shield-shaped image on the sarcophagus lid.

LORENZO Ghiberti
Florence 1378 or 1381-1455
Shrine of Saints Protus, Hyacinth, and Nemesius
1425–8
bronze with minimal traces of red enamel
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

Ambrogio Traversari, the extremely learned prior of the Camaldolese monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Florence, urged his patron and friend Cosimo de' Medici to commission a shrine for the relics of the martyrs Protus, Hyacinth, and Nemesius. Ghiberti tells us in his Commentari that he made the "chest" to hold the bones, which was placed in the church in 1428. The decoration is based on Classical models known at the time.

Step from the Shrine of Saints Protus, Hyacinth, and Nemesius
1428
marble
Florence, former convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli, Associazione Nazionale fra Mutilati ed Invalidi di Guerra, Sezione di Firenze

Two steps, thought to have been lost but recently rediscovered, were part of the Shrine's marble base, with their original inscriptions in elegant Roman capitals. One, now effaced, described the relics in the Shrine; the other, displayed here for the first time since its rediscovery, records the Medicis' role in the commission and the exact date of the work.

MICHELOZZO
Michelozzo di Bartolomeo Michelozzi; Florence 1396-1472
Two Adoring Angels
1427–38
marble
London, Victoria and Albert Museum

The two angels and inscription were part of the Tomb of Bartolomeo Aragazzi (Montepulciano c. 1385–1429), a papal secretary, scholar and poet who commissioned it from Michelozzo two years before dying of the plague. The intricate iconography and austere classical form of the tomb, which was dismantled in the 17th century, captures the complex relationship between humanist ideals and the Christian faith.
WORKSHOP OF MICHELOZZO

Inscription on the Funerary Monument of Bartolomeo Aragazzi 1429–38

gilt bronze
Montepulciano, Episcopal Palace

The extant part of the inscription shows the esteem in which Aragazzi was held: “To the most learned Bartolomeo, lover of the fatherland, protector of the public weal, adviser in all decisions to our sovereign Pontiff Martin V, who prematurely departed this life, posterity dedicates this monument as to a benefactor”. The Roman capitals likely take their inspiration from Carolingian and Romanesque inscriptions based on Classical precedents.

PAGNO DI LAPO PORTIGIANI

Fiesole c.1408-post 1469, and

MICHELOZZO (?) Michelozzo di Bartolomeo Michelozzi; Florence 1396-1472

Altar Frontal 1449–52
marble, traces of gilding
Florence, Musei Civici Fiorentini - Museo Stefano Bardini

This altar frontal from the altar of the Tempietto shrine in the church of the Annunziata, commissioned by Piero de’ Medici to house the most venerated image in Florence, bears further eloquent testimony to the fusion between Christianity and the Classical world in the Early Renaissance. The extraordinary classicising sarcophagus bears the three-headed symbol of the Trinity in its centre, echoing the debate at the Council of Florence in 1439.

LORENZO GHIBERTI

Florence 1378 or 1381-1455

St. Matthew 1419–22
bronze, silver and traces of gilding
Florence, Chiesa e Museo di Orsanmichele

For its tabernacle in Orsanmichele, the Arte del Cambio wanted the figure of its patron, St. Matthew, to be in bronze like the St. John the Baptist Ghiberti made for the Arte di Calimala tabernacle between 1413 and 1416. The commission went to the same artist but he imparted a more thoroughly Renaissance feel to his St. Matthew, giving him the eloquent pose of a Roman orator and harking back to the Classical world not only in the statue’s form but also in his technique (the silver eyes, for example).

LORENZO MONACO

Piero di Giovanni; Florence c. 1370-1425

Reliquary with a Saint in a Niche c. 1400–10

Lyons, Musée des Beaux-Arts

An exquisitely Gothic painter and illuminator who also became an expert in painting on glass, Piero di Giovanni joined the Camaldolese monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli in 1390 and has been known as Lorenzo Monaco ever since. The niche is reflected in a miniaturised form in some of the tabernacles of late Gothic taste in Orsanmichele, and the figure of the saint inside it seems to foreshadow the effect of the large statues of Donatello, Nanni di Banco and Ghiberti.
DONATELLO
Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi;
Florence c. 1386-1466
St. Louis of Toulouse
1422–5
gilt bronze (statue); silver, gilt bronze,
enamels and rock crystals (tiara)
Florence, Museo dell’Opera di Santa
Croce, Patrimonio del Fondo Edifici di
Culto - Ministero dell’Interno

The Parte Guelfa commissioned Donatello
to make a gilt bronze figure of its patron
St. Louis for its tabernacle in Orsanmichele
in competition with Ghiberti’s St. Matthew.
The statue, which was moved to Santa
Croce before 1460, was restored for this
exhibition. Its revolutionary conception,
a “shell” with no body – the drapery was
made in several pieces, separately gilded
and then assembled around an internal
supporting structure – is a work of
immense expressive force and a symbol of
Donatello’s experimental genius.

LORENZO Ghiberti
Florence 1378 or 1381-1455
Study for a statue of St. Stephen
in a Niche
c. 1400–10
tempera on canvas prepared with a thin
layer of plaster; gold highlights applied
with a brush; architecture traced with
stylus and ruler then drawn over with pen
and brown ink; purple ground overlaid
with dark blue
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département
des Arts Graphiques

This drawing may be the design for
the Arte della Lana’s first tabernacle in
Orsanmichele and for the figure of St.
Stephen. The classicising niche echoes
those Ghiberti designed for St. Matthew
and for the Tabernacle of the Linaioli.

FLORENTINE GOLDSMITH
Reliquary Casket
1446
gilt copper and champlevé enamel
New York, The Metropolitan Museum
of Art, Rogers Fund

This casket is an early example of the
impact the new figurative culture had on
the applied arts. The complex structure
of the Gothic reliquary was simplified
into restrained, classical forms and this
sophisticated example of the goldsmith’s
art has a classicising monumentality that is
now thoroughly Renaissance in spirit.
DONATELLO
Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; Florence c. 1386-1466, and
NANNI DI BARTOLO
Florence recorded between 1419 and 1451
Abraham and Isaac
1421
marble
Florence, Museo dell’Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore

Along with the cathedral and Orsanmichele, the bell tower was the other major laboratory for Florentine sculpture in the early 15th century. Figures of Prophets were commissioned, particularly from Donatello, for its niches which stood at a considerable height. The group – the first Renaissance example of two figures carved in the round from a single block – was designed by Donatello, while his assistant Nanni di Bartolo is known to have been involved in its execution.

CLASSICAL ROMAN ART
Pseudo-Seneca
1st century BC
bronze, pâte de verre
Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale

A merciless realism and a search for exasperated pathos suggest that the original of the so-called Pseudo-Seneca was produced in Alexandria in the late 3rd or early 2nd century BC. This, the most powerful of over forty known copies, was as yet unknown in the early 15th century but similar heads were known in Lazio and Tuscany, with their effective rendering of skin and their extraordinarily piercing gaze achieved by using glass paste for the eyes.

DONATELLO
Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; Florence c. 1386-1466
Head of a Prophet
1440
bronze
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

The realism of this Head does not seem designed to produce a portrait so much as to impart credibility to the psychological dimension of a deeply spiritual figure. Donatello, whose contemporaries already recorded his expertise in the field of “old curios”, must have been familiar with Classical bronze portraits such as the so-called Pseudo-Seneca, with their strong expressive connotation.

DONATELLO
Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; Florence c. 1386-1466
Reliquary Bust of St. Rossore
1424–7
cast bronze, chased, gilt and silver-plated
Pisa, Museo Nazionale di San Matteo

In his St. Rossore, Donatello brought the Classical reliquary bust into line with Early Renaissance stylistic tenets, portraying the saintly warrior’s features in a manner at once naturalistic and idealised. The bust, a cast produced in five parts and gilded, recalls his St. Louis of Toulouse notably by virtue of the detailed workmanship in the cloak.
“SPIRITS” BOTH SACRED AND PROFANE

“Spirits” are one of the themes that best illustrate the dissemination of Classical art in Renaissance iconography and, at the same time, the transition from paganism to Christianity in its significance. Renaissance “spirits”, childlike figures based on the Cupid figurines of Classical Rome, are the naked winged putti that were to become one of the most recognisable features of the new style on the major monuments of early 15th century Florentine sculpture. Easily identifiable with the angels of Christian tradition, these putti first appeared on tombs early in the century. They went on to play a leading role in important sculptural compositions thanks primarily to the work of Donatello, becoming one of his favourite themes, and gradually spread, in his wake, to other arts in the first half of the century.

DONATELLO
Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; Florence c. 1386-1466
Two Spiritelli (Spirits) from the cathedral Choir Loft (Cantoria) 1439
bronze with traces of gilding, marble bases not originally part of the sculptures
Paris, Institut de France, Musée Jacquemart-André

These two candle-bearing putti, originally part of Luca della Robbia’s Cantoria, or choir loft, in Florence Cathedral and long attributed to Luca but today assigned by most scholars to Donatello, are called “spiritelli” by Vasari. Restoration has now shown that they must have originally been gilded to reflect candlelight onto the choristers.

CLASSICAL ROMAN ART
Two Reliefs with Putti (from the Thrones of Saturn) first half of the 1st century CE marble
Venice, Museo Archeologico Nazionale

The motifs of putti and of an empty throne – a symbol of the deity (Saturn or Jupiter) or of the prince associated with the deity – belong to a Hellenistic iconographical tradition later adopted by imperial Rome. These two reliefs (along with similar reliefs in other museums), identified as „Thrones of Saturn” in Classical literature, were one of the most important and best-known sources of inspiration for Renaissance art.
CLASSICAL ROMAN ART

Sarcophagus with Erotes as Charioteers
160 CE
marble
Pisa, Opera della Primaziale Pisana

This sarcophagus, made for the burial of a child, has lost its lid. The front shows a race between chariots driven by winged putti, a very popular theme in Roman funerary art on account of its association with the unending, circular course of time. Putti were one of the first Classical themes to inspire Renaissance artists, including not only sculptors but also painters and illuminators.

MASO DI BARTOLOMEO
Capannole Valdambra 1406
-Ragusa di Dalmazia 1456
Casket of the Holy Girdle
1446–8
gilt copper, ivory, wood
Prato, Museo dell’Opera del Duomo

This casket was commissioned from Maso di Bartolomeo, Donatello’s pupil and assistant, to hold the precious relic of the Virgin’s Holy Girdle housed in Prato cathedral. The combination of “spirits” of Classical origin with classicising architecture is based on Donatello’s Cantoria in Florence cathedral, which Maso transposed to this celebrated Renaissance masterpiece of the goldsmith’s art.

LUCA DELLA ROBBIA
Florence 1399/1400-1482
Arms of Podestà Amico di Donato della Torre
1431–2
marble, partly painted
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

In this work, done in the same period as his cathedral Cantoria, Luca della Robbia introduces Classical elements into heraldry, a genre still closely bound to the Gothic tradition of chivalry. The Classical inspiration can be seen in the letters of the inscription and in an overall solemnity of tone. The “variety of mood” expressed by the two “spirits” bearing the coat of arms – one witty and jovial, the other shy and sulky – is typical of Luca’s art.

ANDREA DEL CASTAGNO
Andrea di Bartolo; Castagno ante 1419-Florence 1457
Putto with a Garland
1448–9
detached fresco
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

This putto comes from a cycle of Illustrious Men and Women frescoed by Andrea del Castagno in the Villa Carducci in Legnaia, just outside Florence. The garland-bearing putti (a typically Classical motif) were arranged in a frieze along the walls of the room, above the main figures. Despite the Classical precedent, Andrea imparts a notably lively, three-dimensional feel to the figure, giving observers the illusion they are looking at a real child.
CIRCLE OF MICHELOZZO

Putto Urinating

C. 1445
Marble
99 x 32 x 24 cm
Paris, Institut de France, Musée Jacquemart-André

Restoration specifically commissioned for this exhibition has revealed the presence of an internal conduit ending in a hole at the tip of the boy’s penis, confirming the sculpture was designed as a fountain. Of the several variants on the putto theme, the putto «peeing» was fairly popular in Florence, as we know from a number of versions possibly based on a now lost original by Donatello.

DONATELLO

Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; Florence c. 1386-1466, and

MICHELOZZO

Michelozzo di Bartolomeo Michelozzi; Florence 1396-1472

Capital

1433
Bronze with extensive traces of gilding
Prato, Museo dell’Opera del Duomo

A product of the partnership between Donatello and Michelozzo (1427–1435), this capital supported Prato cathedral’s outdoor pulpit, carved by Donatello with a frieze of dancing putti. The three putti on the front are attributed to Michelozzo, an expert in the art of casting, while the overall composition seems to be the work of Donatello, who freely revisits numerous Classical motifs such as the putto peeping out above and the playfully winking figures devoid of any devotional connotation.

CLASSICAL ROMAN ART

Putto with a Goose

Mid-1st century AD
Greek, island marble?
Vatican City, Musei Vaticani

This statuette of Hellenistic origin, familiar also through several Roman replicas (two of which are in the Uffizi), was known and appreciated in the Renaissance. An echo of its popularity in the early 15th century can be detected in the figure of the Christ Child in Masaccio’s Sant’Anna Metterza (Uffizi) and in several sculptures from Donatello’s circle.

SCULPTOR CLOSE TO DONATELLO

Spirit

C. 1432
Gilt bronze
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Mrs. Samuel Reed Gift, Rogers Fund, by exchange, and Louis V. Bell Fund

This gilded figure of a winged boy, assigned putatively to Donatello, may have been intended for a fountain in the garden of Cosimo de’ Medici’s “old house”, his home before he moved to the new Palazzo in Via Larga in 1458. Inspired by Pliny’s descriptions of similar hydraulic “devices” in ancient times, it originally spouted water into a now lost object in its left hand. Its winged feet have frequently caused it to be identified with Mercury.
THE REBIRTH OF THE CONDOTTIERI

Monumental equestrian statues are one of the spectacular Classical themes tackled by Florentine artists of the early Renaissance – although not in Florence itself, where the republican ideal was at odds with such an aristocratic art form. To find examples of the genre we need to look outside the city, to Padua where Donatello’s Monument to Gattamelata, set in the midst of a public area just like its Classical forebears, was the first such monument of the modern era. Donatello’s Carafa Protome, the sole surviving element of a Monument to Alfonso V of Aragon, testifies both to the revival of the use of bronze to celebrate military virtue and to the importance of Classical models. The most famous monument of the Classical world – the statue of Marcus Aurelius which stood in the Campus Lateranensis in Rome at the time— is echoed in Filarete’s small bronze, marking the birth of this new Renaissance genre and offering the first example of the popularity of a category exalting the activity of man and highlighting the value of the individual in history. The precedent in Florence is the Monument to Sir John Hawkwood, which Paolo Uccello painted in the cathedral in 1436 (shown here in reproduction).
DONATELLO
Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; Florence c. 1386-1466, attributed
Model for the Head of Gattamelata
c. 1447
painted plaster
Padua, Museo di Scienze Archeologiche e d’Arte dell’Università degli Studi di Padova

Donatello’s Monument to Gattamelata, produced in Padua between 1447 and 1453, was the first bronze equestrian statue of the modern era. The statue combines a wealth of Classical references with an attempt to provide an ideal reconstruction of Erasmo da Narni’s features evoking his prowess as a warrior. This plaster cast, specially restored for the exhibition, is almost identical to the bronze original in both its pose and its facial features.

BENOZZO GOZZOLI
Florence c. 1420/1422-Pistoia 1497, attributed
Study, from the Group of Castor and Pollux
c. 1447–9
silverpoint drawing in grey-black ink, white lead highlights applied with a brush on prepared blue paper
London, The British Museum

This drawing is an interpretation of the Castor and Pollux group on the Quirinal hill, a 2nd century work based on a 5th century BC Greek original. Considered one of the wonders of Rome, in the mid-15th century it was attributed to Phidias and Praxiteles. The drawing is of uncertain attribution but here it is assigned to the circle of Fra Angelico, who worked in Rome from 1447 to 1449 in the company of his pupil Benozzo Gozzoli—a trip that allowed them to build on their knowledge of Classical works, as betokened by this drawing.

FILARETE
Antonio di Pietro Averlino; Florence c. 1400-Rome 1469
Marcus Aurelius
c. 1440–5
bronze, traces of enamel and gilding
Dresden, SkulpturenSammlung, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen

The statue of Marcus Aurelius was the primary Classical model for Renaissance equestrian sculpture. Averlino, whose passion for things Classical prompted him to choose the Greek pseudonym Filarete (“lover of virtue”), produced the first modern, scaled-down reproduction of the statue. The bronze bears a signature, a dedication to Piero de’ Medici and the date of the gift (1465) in humanist capitals on its base. The sculptor made it during his sojourn in Rome while working on a bronze door for St. Peter’s.

NORTH ITALIAN ARTIST
Study of the Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius
before 1477
watercoloured brown ink applied with a pen, and white lead on prepared paper (or pink-tinted paper)
Milan, Castello Sforzesco, Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni

This drawing seems to have been made from life before 1477, when the base of the Marcus Aurelius—one of the symbols of imperial Rome—was renovated by order of Pope Sixtus IV. While the artist’s identity is uncertain, the drawing is unquestionably by the hand of a northerner.
SCULPTURE IN PAINT

Just as sculptors often used colour to increase their work’s expressiveness, many of the greatest Florentine painters, taking their cue from the Classical gravitas and plastic solidity of Masaccio’s art, strove to achieve a heroic, almost “statuesque” tone in their depiction of the human figure, aiming to recreate an illusion of the three-dimensional aspect of contemporary sculpture. Large statues illustrating the importance of polychromy in 15th century sculpture stand alongside paintings which endeavour to impart a statuesque dimension to the painted figure, producing results which often achieve an impressive resemblance despite the difference in medium. Andrea del Castagno’s series of Famous Men and Women forges a rapport between sculpture and painting which harks back to written descriptions of Classical statues, while at the same time playing in a highly sophisticated manner on the ambiguity of the human form painted in space.

MASACCIO
Tommaso di ser Giovanni Cassai; San Giovanni Valdarno 1401-Rome 1428
St. Paul
1426
tempera and gold leaf on wood
Pisa, Museo Nazionale di San Matteo

This panel is the only fragment still in Pisa of Masaccio’s polyptych for the chapel of Ser Giuliano di Colino degli Scarsi in the Carmine church. Completed between February and December 1426, it was dismembered in the late 16th century. Masaccio sought inspiration for the figure of St. Paul in the sculpture of Donatello (who was in Pisa at the time), echoing his plasticity, use of chiaroscuro and heroic tone, major innovations in early 15th century Florence.

FILIPPO LIPPI
Florence c. 1406-Spoleto 1469
Madonna of Humility with Six Angels and Saints Anne, Angelus of Sicily and Albert of Trapani (Trivulzio Madonna)
c. 1430–2
tempera on wood, transferred to canvas
Milan, Raccolte d’Arte Antica, Pinacoteca del Castello Sforzesco

The restoration specially commissioned for the exhibition shows that the blue background of the painting (whose pointed shape is not original) was lower, thus accentuating the plasticity of the figures which emulate Donatello’s “flattened” relief style. The panel, a crucial work in reconstructing Fra Filippo’s early career, probably comes from the Florentine church of the Carmine where he lived as a friar from 1421 to 1432 and where he met Masaccio.
PAOLO UCCELLO  
Paolo di Dono; Pratovecchio  
or Florence 1397—Florence 1475  
Jacopone da Todi  
c. 1433–4  
detached fresco  
Prato, Museo dell’Opera del Duomo  

This fresco from Prato cathedral points to a renewal of interest in the medieval mystic Jacopone da Todi after his bones were discovered in Todi in 1433, but it may also reflect Prato provost Niccolò Milanesi’s affinity with the spirituality of the Franciscan Observants and echo St. Bernardino of Siena’s preaching in the city. Paolo Uccello frescoed a simulated masonry niche containing a strongly foreshortened figure reminiscent of some of Ghiberti’s work, such as the St. Matthew in Orsanmichele.

ANDREA DEL CASTAGNO  
Andrea di Bartolo; Castagno  
ant 1419—Florence 1457  
Giovanni Boccaccio  
Filippo Scolari, known as Pippo Spano  
Queen Tomyris  
Giovanni Boccaccio  
Cumaean Sybil  
1448–9  
detached frescoes  
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi  

These frescoes were part of a cycle of Illustrious Men and Women which Andrea del Castagno was commissioned to paint in the loggia of a villa purchased by Filippo Carducci, by now well over seventy. The walls held three Florentine mercenary captains (Pippo Spano, Farinata degli Uberti and Niccolò Acciaiuoli), three virtuous women (the Cumaean Sybil, Esther and Tomyris) and three Florentine poets (Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio). On display here we see Pippo Spano fighting the Turks on Emperor Sigismund’s behalf, the Cumaean Sybil assimilated to the Old Testament prophets; Queen Tomyris who, to avenge her son’s death, led the Massagetae into a battle that cost Cyrus the Great his life; and Giovanni Boccaccio, a leading light in the rediscovery of Classical literature. The artist places his figures, almost as though they were “painted sculpture”, in an illusionistic architectural setting of a Classical flavour with niches adorned with thistle (cardo) flowers alluding to his patron’s family name. The figures were surmounted by a frieze which included the Putto with a Garland on display in a previous room.
DONATELLO
Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; Florence c. 1386-1466
**Madonna and Child**
c. 1410–2
painted terracotta
Pontorme, Church of San Martino

Formerly attributed to Brunelleschi but now considered to be an early work of Donatello, the group is a very early example of the Renaissance rediscovery of terracotta as a sculptural medium, echoing Classical practice. These images were so popular thanks to their use of a relatively cheap raw material and to the allure of their finished colours that almost all Early Renaissance sculptors devoted some of their energy to modelling in clay.

NANNI DI BARTOLO
Florence recorded between 1419 and 1451
**Madonna and Child**
c. 1420–3
painted terracotta
Florence, Convent of Ognissanti, Museo del Cenacolo del Ghirlandaio

Donatello’s pupil and assistant Nanni di Bartolo, known as il Rosso, played a crucial role in the spread of the new technique and vocabulary of terracotta sculpture in the Veneto. The exchanges between sculpture and painting in the early 15th century went both ways, with statuary influencing the plasticity of painting and sculptors resorting to the use of colour, although in this latter case the influence is less visible because many 15th century statues have lost their original colours.

**St. Anthony the Abbot**
c. 1420–3
painted terracotta
Borgo a Mozzano, Church of San Jacopo

The exhibition allows a direct comparison between the *Madonna* and *St. Anthony the Abbot*, two contemporary terracotta statues by Nanni di Bartolo in what was his preferred medium. Made for Borgo a Mozzano, along the Via Francigena, *St. Anthony the Abbot* shows how the new figurative vocabulary of the Renaissance also spread to a humbler class of patron through works in clay, which were less costly due to the economical raw material used.
FLORENTINE ARTIST
AND GIULIANO AMADEI
Florence recorded 1446–Lucca 1496

Penitent St. Jerome
C. 1454
Painted terracotta
Florence, Venerabile Confraternita
di San Girolamo e San Francesco Poverino

The discovery of hitherto only partly
known documents inside the statue
during restoration has confirmed that
it was painted by Camaldolese painter
and illuminator Giuliano Amadei on 7
September 1454 for the Compagnia di
Santa Maria della Pietà, known as the
Buca di San Girolamo, headquartered
opposite the church of the Annunziata.
What we still don't know is the name of
the sculptor, though the most significant
echo may be found in a saint frescoed by
Andrea del Castagno for the Annunziata,
displayed here for direct comparison with
the Crucifix of San Lorenzo by Pollaiolo.

ANDREA DEL CASTAGNO
Andrea di Bartolo; Castagno
ante 1419–Florence 1457
Apparition of the Trinity to Saints
Jerome, Paula and Eustochium
1454
detached fresco
Florence, Basilica of the Santissima
Annunziata, Patrimonio del Fondo Edifici
di Culto - Ministero dell’Interno

A merchant named Girolamo Corboli
commissioned this fresco from Andrea del
Castagno, who probably made a start on it
in the latter half of 1454 while he was
also working on a terracotta St. Jerome,
which resembles a three-dimensional
version of the painted figure's sculptural
form. The subject's rarity has to do with
the hermit order of the Girolamini and the
confraternity known as the Buca di San
Girolamo.
HISTORY
“IN PERSPECTIVE”

The great revolution in perspective accomplished in the Early Renaissance with the help of the liberal and mechanical arts in the wake of Filippo Brunelleschi’s crucial experimentation did not only affect the sphere of painting; it also had a major impact on sculpture. Donatello’s predella showing St. George and the Dragon allows us to compare the stiacciato – or flattened relief – technique in which he applied the principle of linear perspective to sculpture as a way of drawing the composition together and of suggesting spatial depth, with some of the most emblematic paintings in the early depiction of perspective and with a number of drawings by Paolo Uccello which echo and develop motifs from Brunelleschi’s wooden inlay work. A selection of famous reliefs show how sculptors assimilated and translated into sculpture the new laws governing the construction of space in accordance with the principle of perspectiva artificialis, or the science of representation, helping to perfect it and on occasion even heralding future developments.

CLASSICAL ROMAN ART

View
late 1st century AD
detached fresco
Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale

This view, discovered in Herculaneum, opens out like a window onto a complex architectural panorama reproduced with a variety of different vanishing points. The space is thus depicted according to the empirical perspective in use in Classical times and right up to Brunelleschi’s discovery of geometrical or linear perspective in the early 15th century.

DONATELLO

Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; Florence c. 1386-1466
St. George and the Dragon

c. 1417
marble
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

In this famous bas-relief, designed as a base for the St. George in the Orsanmichele tabernacle, Donatello uses linear perspective (with a single vanishing point) to achieve compositional unity and suggest spatial depth, foreshadowing the use to which it was to be put in painting. This is also the first occasion on which he uses “flattened” relief, a technique in which the relief becomes gradually flatter as it fades into the distance, using barely perceptible shading which almost appears to have been drawn rather than carved.
FRANCESCO D’ANTONIO  
Florence recorded between 1393 and 1433  
**Christ Casting Out a Demon and Judas Receiving Thirty Pieces of Silver**  
c. 1425–6  
tempera and gold on canvas  
Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Johnson G. Collection

This painting, recently attributed to Francesco d’Antonio, attempts to depict perspective with two vanishing points, but the artist fails to place the pillars correctly or to render the arches with proper foreshortening. The temple is a simplified version of Florence cathedral and hints at the final aspect of Brunelleschi’s dome, still under construction at the time but for which the design was already known.

MASOLINO DA PANICALE  
Panicałe c. 1383-Florence c. 1440  
**Foundation of Santa Maria Maggiore**  
1427–8  
tempera and oil on wood  
Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

This painting was part of a triptych on the high altar of the Basilica of Santa Maria ad Nives, now Santa Maria Maggiore, built by Pope Liberius over the outline of a snowfall on Rome’s Esquiline hill on 4 August 352. The miraculous snowfall is shown in a composition split into two registers: the earth, with its graceful architectural setting draws the eye towards the painting’s focal point, while heaven with the divinities maintains a dimensional hierarchy that is still medieval.

LUCA DELLA ROBBIA  
Florence 1399/1400-1482  
**St. Peter’s Deliverance from Prison**  
1439  
marble  
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

In 1439, the year Luca completed the Cantoria and the panels for the Bell Tower, the Opera del Duomo commissioned altars from him for the chapels of St. Peter and St. Paul in the cathedral tribune, but he only produced two reliefs for them. As in Donatello’s Baptismal Font in Siena, he arranged the episodes on surfaces graded in depth, in a pattern taking both time and perspective into account and using Donatello’s “flattened” relief technique for the scene set outside the window.

DONATELLO  
Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; Florence c. 1386-1466  
**Herod’s Banquet**  
c. 1435  
marble  
Lille, Musée des Beaux Arts, Bequest of Jean-Baptiste Wicar, 1834

Donatello organises a rational space with a single vanishing point according to the principles of «artificial» perspective elaborated by Leon Battista Alberti in his *De pictura* (1435), which mentions the sculptor. The complex architecture allows him to illustrate two successive scenes – the dance of Salome and the presentation of John the Baptist’s head to Herod – in a single space conveying emotion and telling the story according to Alberti’s rules.
FLORENTINE GOLDSMITH

Christ Casting Out a Demon

c. 1450–60
plaque: silver; frame: silver gilt;
translucent enamels on a repoussé relief
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Objets d’art, Gift of Alfred André, 1904 (small plaque) Bequest of Adolphe de Rothschild, 1901 (frame)

This plaque, one of the first to be designed as an independent object, is a unique example of the birth of this new genre, thanks to the presence of the frame and the silver engraved in extremely flat relief. Christ stands before an Alberti-inspired building in the geometrical centre of the square. His head marking the vanishing point of the entire scene.

DESIDERIO DA SETTIGNANO

Settignano c. 1429–c. 1464
St. Jerome in the Desert

c. 1461
marble
Washington, National Gallery of Art, Widener Collection

Desiderio da Settignano, Donatello’s most important pupil after the master’s return from Padua in 1452, developed some of the premises implicit in the St. George and the Dragon, testing in his St. Jerome several principles that were to become typical of aerial perspective: the relief flattens as the eye moves away, making allowance for the impact of light on visual perception.

AGOSTINO DI DUCCIO

Florence 1418–Perugia c. 1481
St. Sigismund Fleeing to Agaunum

c. 1449–52
marble
Milan, Raccolte d’Arte Antica, Museo d’Arte Antica del Castello Sforzesco

This relief, carved for the church of San Francesco in Rimini, which Sigismondo Malatesta transformed into the Tempio Malestiano, narrates an episode in the life of Sigismund, the Christian king of the Burgundians. After having his son Sigeric slain and then going on a pilgrimage with his second wife and children, he is halted by an angel who orders him to expiate his sin in a monastery in Agaunum. Agostino di Duccio, who trained in Florence but subsequently left the city, returned to Gothic narrative perspective in his later years to depict the landscape and the procession of knights without imparting any hint of depth.
These drawings by Paolo Uccello – probably owned by Vasari – were the prototype for the perspective studies of a whole generation of artists. The paper’s entire surface is marked by a metal point on which the artist then builds the grid required to visualise a geometrical figure, which he subsequently highlights with a pen.

Paolo Uccello, heir to an ancient tradition found even in Brunelleschi’s wooden inlays, turned a routine object like the Florentine mazzocchio headdress into a crystalised shape transcending contingent reality, in what was for him a typical exercise based on the abstraction of form.
THE SPREAD OF BEAUTY

From the second decade of the 15th century onwards the success of the new style in sculpture was no longer restricted to large public works, and the production of reliefs depicting the Madonna and Child based on models by the greatest Florentine artists experienced an extraordinary growth. Madonnas and small altars for private devotion spread the new artistic criteria and prototypes to many sectors of society, making it accessible to all. The traditional hierarchical scale of materials became less important than the quality of a work’s execution. Terracotta embellished with colour and gold began to rival the preciousness of marble and bronze, with true masters turning their hand to the medium. Experimentation in techniques and the use of new materials resulted, shortly before 1440, in Luca della Robbia’s invention of enameled and glazed terracotta. These shimmering enamels, a glowing manifestation of the divine, owed their extraordinary success to their charm, their low cost and their resistance to the elements.

FILIPPO BRUNELLESCHI
Florence 1377–1446, or
NANNI DI BARTOLO
Florence recorded between 1419 and 1451

Madonna and Child
(Fiesole Madonna)
c. 1405–10
painted and gilded terracotta
Fiesole, Diocesi di Fiesole,
on loan to the Museo Bandini

The discovery of this Madonna in the Bishop’s Palace in Fiesole in 2008 has shed light on the serial production of devotional images in early 15th century Florence. It is the prototype of a composition – known from terracotta and stucco replicas made from a mould – modelled by hand, extremely rich in detail and of the highest quality, with an inscription in Gothic characters. This original has been attributed to Brunelleschi but here it is assigned to Nanni di Banco.

WORKSHOP OF LORENZO Ghiberti

Madonna and Child
c. 1425–30, painted stucco
Florence, Musei Civici Fiorentini - Museo Stefano Bardini

This Madonna and Child, with the patrons’ coats of arms and two angels holding garlands on its base, is derived from a prototype most likely by Ghiberti. The angels were a popular motif of Classical origin used by Donatello and Michelozzo in the Tabernacle of the Mercanzia in Orsanmichele (1423) and and taken by Ghiberti, among others, in his Shrine of the Martyrs dated 1425–8. The Virgin tenderly embracing Jesus echoes an iconographic model of Byzantine origin.
WORKSHOP OF LORENZO GHIBERTI

**Madonna and Child**

c. 1425–30
painted and gilded stucco
Florence, Venerabile Arciconfraternita della Misericordia

The design for this kind of Madonna, of which over fifty variants have been recorded, is attributed to the workshop of Ghiberti, who tells us in his *Commentarii* that he “made very many models of wax and clay”. The work, specially restored for the exhibition, is one of the best examples of the way in which Florentine workshops in the 15th century produced prototype moulds in marble or terracotta for the growing market in such items for domestic and devotional use.

FLORENTINE WORKSHOP, AFTER DONATELLO

**Madonna and Child (after the Pazzi Madonna)**

c. 1450
painted and gilded stucco
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Sculptures

With its unique and innovative composition, the *Pazzi Madonna* is one of the most significant models behind the series of reliefs on the Madonna and Child theme that was such a central genre in early 15th century Florentine sculpture. The Louvre purchased this stucco model in 1886 from antique dealer Stefano Bardini, who sold the marble original to the Berlin museum the same year.

DONATELLO

Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; Florence c. 1386-1466

**Madonna and Child (Pazzi Madonna)**

c. 1420–5, marble
Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Bode-Museum

The group of two figures, tightly wedged into a space built in accordance with Brunelleschi's then revolutionary rules governing perspective, is set in its turn in a foreshortened frame. Donatello uses the «flattened relief» technique to convey the volume of his figures according to the optical effect of successive surfaces. The Madonna's classicising profile, tenderly overlapping that of her son, appears to be based on a Classical original.

**Madonna and Child with Four Angels (Chellini Madonna)**

c. 1450, bronze, partly gilt
London, Victoria and Albert Museum.
Purchased with the aid of public subscription with donations from the Art Fund and the Pilgrim Trust in memory of David, Earl of Crawford and Balcarres

Donatello used this bronze relief to pay his doctor, Giovanni Chellini, in 1456. In his diary, Chellini describes it as “hollow on the outside so, casting molten glass in it, it would produce the same figures.” The back does indeed present the meticulously detailed image “in negative” so that copies could be made by pouring molten glass, terracotta, stucco or wax into it. This suggests the artist expected and deliberately planned for this work to enjoy widespread circulation.
WORKSHOP OF DONATELLO OR OF LORENZO Ghiberti

**Nativity (Ford Nativity)**
c. 1420–30
terracotta with traces of polychromy and gilding
Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts, Bequest of Eleanor Clay Ford

**Nativity**
c. 1430
terracotta with traces of polychromy and gilding, wooden frame
Florence, Musei Civici Fiorentini - Museo Stefano Bardini

The *Ford Nativity*, and the *Nativity* from the Museo Bardini reproduced from it, are representative of the innovations and of bas-relief technique in early 15th century Florence. The *Ford Nativity* is the work of a Florentine sculptor from Donatello’s (or possibly Ghiberti’s) workshop, while the Bardini version is a near contemporary derivation. In both reliefs, of modest size and intended for private devotion, the figures of Mary and Joseph appear to have been inspired by Roman sarcophagi.

DONATELLO

Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; Florence c. 1386-1466

**Madonna and Child (Madonna of the Apple)**
1422–5
painted terracotta
Florence, Musei Civici Fiorentini - Museo Stefano Bardini

In the pyramidal composition and modelling of this terracotta piece, formerly attributed to Luca della Robbia but now thought to be by Donatello, the artist imparts such volume to the Virgin’s head that it almost appears to have been made in the round. The Mother’s concentrated expression is mirrored in that of his *St. Louis of Toulouse*, now in Santa Croce, made between 1422 and 1425, a likely date for this Madonna as well.

DONATELLO

Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi; Florence c. 1386-1466

**Madonna and Child**
c. 1445
painted and gilded terracotta
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Sculptures

This terracotta relief, originally in the Chapel of San Lorenzo a Vigliano outside Barberino Val d’Elsa, is the largest of the many that Donatello produced and the one with the greatest expressive power. The largely original polychromy contributes to the relief’s rich overall feel with its hanging curtain, the Virgin’s robe decorated with a pomegranate motif, the sophisticated headgear and the exquisite armrest.
LUCA DELLA ROBBIA
Florence 1399/1400-1482
Madonna and Child
c. 1430–40
painted terracotta
Florence, Church of Santa Felicita

This terracotta piece was probably part of the interior decoration of a palazzo, where it was used for private devotion. Unlike other reliefs on the same theme, where the figures embrace and gaze into each others’ eyes, the players here seem to be immersed in their own thoughts. The compositional originality and depth of sentiment point to the hand of a great master identified as Luca della Robbia, who worked in terracotta before turning to glazed sculpture.

FLORENTINE SCULPTOR
Madonna and Child
c. 1425
painted and gilded terracotta
Washington, National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection

This relief combines both late Gothic and Renaissance elements, the drapery with its pronounced folds echoing Ghiberti’s style on north door of the Baptistry, while the monumental composition, bold modelling and the Virgin’s incisive profile have led scholars to attribute the piece variously to Donatello, Jacopo della Quercia, Nanni di Bartolo and Antonio Federighi.

LUCA DELLA ROBBIA
Florence 1399/1400-1482
Madonna and Child (Genoa Madonna)
1445–50
glazed and gilded terracotta
Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts, City of Detroit Purchase

Luca della Robbia perfected his innovative method for glazing terracotta (to protect its surface and to suggest more valuable marble) in the 1440s. The affectionate intimacy of this composition, intended for private devotion, was crucial to the popularity of the genre, whose spread was encouraged by the mendicant orders. It is known as the Genoa Madonna because a version was kept in the courtyard of Casa Serra in Genoa.

FILIPPO LIPPI
Florence c. 1406-Spoleto 1469
Madonna and Child
c. 1460
 tempera on wood
Florence, Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Provincia di Firenze

In the vigorous plasticity that makes this painting almost a sculptural relief, and in the warm intimacy of the figures’ loving gestures, Lippi, who was clearly aware of Donatello’s interpretations of the theme, achieves one of the most intense 15th century interpretations of the Byzantine Panagia Glykophilousa icon. The Child’s feet on the sill and the affectionate embrace were also part of Luca della Robbia’s vocabulary at the time, as we can see in several of the reliefs on display here.
Works in glazed terracotta, a technique invented by Luca della Robbia, played a major role in spreading the Renaissance style: because they could be mass-produced they were less costly, without affecting the quality in any way. Luca developed numerous models of Madonnas for private devotion. In this instance the arms of the Florentine Bartorelli and Baldi families suggest that the relief was a gift to mark the marriage of two of their members.

The Madonna of the Apple and its several variants was one of the most popular of the many Madonnas produced in Luca’s workshop thanks to their instant success and to growing demand. Similar reliefs helped to spread the Renaissance style well beyond the walls of Florence after the middle of the 15th century.
Public welfare institutes were the beneficiaries of the most important public commissions in 15th century Florence. Numerous masterpieces were made for architectural complexes of special importance in the city because art played a social and educational role in its hospitals, pilgrim hospices, childcare institutions and confraternities. The importance of this tie between the cult of beauty and the spirit of Christianity also came to the fore in works of art inspired by the Council of Florence in 1439. Attended by Pope Eugene IV, Patriarch Joseph II of Constantinople and Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaeologus along with dignitaries, Humanists and theologians from the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, these talks embodied Florence’s aspiration to be considered the “City of God”. But at the very moment in which this major event sanctioned Florence’s political and moral primacy, it also marked the rise of Medici power.

BEAUTY AND CHARITY. HOSPITAL, ORPHANAGES AND CONFRATERNITIES

GENTILE DA FABRIANO
Fabriano c. 1370-Rome 1427
Presentation of Jesus in the Temple
tempera and gold on wood
1423
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Peintures

This small panel was part of the predella of the Adoration of the Magi (now in the Uffizi) commissioned by Palla Strozzi for his chapel in the church of Santa Trinita. The theme is the contrast between wealth and poverty: on one side an elegant young girl strolls outside a luxurious home, on the other two beggars ask for alms before a loggia reminiscent of the Ospedale degli Innocenti. The beauty and architectural harmony of Florence appear to unite the two social classes.

DELL'O DELL'I
Florence 1403-Spain post 1466
Coronation of the Virgin
c. 1420–4
terracotta with traces of polychromy and gilding
Florence, Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova, Patrimonio Storico Artistico dell'Azienda Sanitaria di Firenze

This relief, as we can see in Bicci di Lorenzo’s fresco displayed alongside it, once graced the lunette above the west door of the church of Sant’Egidio in the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. Vasari mentions it in his life of Dello Delli along with other works which the artist (whose style contains both Gothic and Renaissance elements) produced for the hospital, a major centre of art patronage in the early 15th century. The terracotta was the object of a complex restoration project for the exhibition.
DElLO DeLLI
Florence 1403 circa-Spain post 1466
*Christ Showing the Wound in His Side*
c. 1420–4
painted terracotta
London, Victoria and Albert Museum

This sculpture, set in the lunette above the door leading into the Chiostro delle Ossa, the cemetery of the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, appears in Bicci di Lorenzo's fresco depicting the *Consecration of the Church of Sant'Egidio* on display alongside it. Christ's gesture, holding open his wound to show it to the faithful, highlights the hospital's role in caring for body and soul alike, while also stressing the social and educational role of art.

GHERARDO DI GIOVANNI
Florence c. 1446-1497
*Pope Martin V Consecrates the Church of Sant'Egidio in 1420*
1474–6
Missal; parchment manuscript, ink, tempera colours, gold
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

This missal was commissioned for the church of the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, dedicated to Sant'Egidio. The lower panel shows Pope Martin V presiding at the consecration ceremony on 8 September 1420, although in reality he was only present the next day when he confirmed the privileges granted to the institution. The scene testifies to the hospital's desire to link the event to the pope's prestigious presence, disregarding historical fact.

BICCI DI LORENZO
Florence 1373-1452
*Pope Martin V Consecrates the Church of Sant'Egidio in 1420*
c. 1424
detached fresco
Florence, Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova, Patrimonio Storico Artistico dell'Azienda Sanitaria di Firenze

The former aspect of the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, adopted as a model throughout Europe on account of its advanced healthcare methods and innovative architecture, is shown in this fresco commissioned by the hospital's director Michele di Fruosino, seen here kneeling before Pope Martin V. Bicci di Lorenzo undoubtedly drew his inspiration from Masaccio's lost *Sagra* of 1424–25 depicting the consecration of the church of the Carmine.
FRANCESCO D’ANTONIO DEL CHIERICO
Florence 1433-1484

*Pope Eugene IV Consecrates the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore in 1436*
1471, Gradual; parchment manuscript, ink, tempera colours, gold
Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, fol. 7v

This lavish choirbook, produced for Florence cathedral, celebrates moments of special importance for the city and for the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, as shown by the presence of the patrons and of the Agnus Dei, the institution’s symbol. The illumination depicts Pope Eugene IV’s consecration of the cathedral on 25 March 1436, the first day of the Florentine new year. The solemn ceremony coincided with the completion of Brunelleschi’s dome.

FLORENTINE GOLDSMITH’S WORKSHOP

*Casket belonging to Cardinal Cesarini*
1439
silver, semi-precious stones and enamels
Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana

This refined Casket was designed to hold the “Bull of Union” with which the patriarch of Constantinople accepted the Catholic dogma of the Holy Trinity on behalf of the Orthodox Church, appending his signature to it alongside that of Pope Eugene IV. The Signoria of Florence was offered the casket by Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, who attended all three sessions of the Synod: first in Basel, then in Ferrara, and finally in Florence from 10 January to 6 July 1439.

PISANELLO
Antonio di Puccio Pisano; Pisa or Verona c. 1395-Napoles? c. 1455

*Medal of Emperor John VIII Palaeologus*
1438–9
bronze
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

This medal of John VIII Palaeologus by Pisanello (one of the earliest examples of a new artistic genre that was to become popular in the second half of the century) is almost a symbolic manifesto of the Council of 1439. The front bears a profile bust of the Byzantine emperor while the back highlights the meeting of the two civilisations in the artist’s double signature, in Latin and Greek, and in the figure of the emperor on horseback.

LUCA DELLA ROBBIA
Florence 1399/1400-1482

*Dove of the Holy Ghost*
1441–2
gilt bronze
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

This relief was originally set in the centre of a tabernacle made by Luca della Robbia between 1441 and 1442 for the Chapel of St. Luke in Santa Maria Nuova. The focus on the gilded Dove below the figures of the Father and the Son was closely linked to the issues debated at the Council. The schism between the Eastern and Western Churches was sparked by the dogma of the Holy Spirit, descended from the Father alone in the Eastern creed, while the Latin Church had added descent also from the Son (the “Filioque” clause).
LORENZO Ghiberti
Florence 1378 or 1381-1455
Christ the King Blessing
(set in a cast of the Sant’Egidio Tabernacle)
c. 1450
gilt bronze
Florence, Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova, Patrimonio Storico Artistico dell’Azienda Sanitaria di Firenze

Bernardo Rossellino’s marble tabernacle for the Women’s Hospital in Via delle Pappe – the version on display here is a plaster cast specially made for the exhibition – was completed by April 1450, when the workshop of Lorenzo and Vittore Ghiberti received a commission for its gilt bronze door. Christ the King wears a special crown and crossed stole similar to those donated to the Convent of Santa Maria Novella by the Greek fathers who convened in Florence for the Council.

LUCA DELLA ROBBIA
Florence 1399/1400-1482
Madonna and Child
1446–9
glazed terracotta
Florence, Museo degli Innocenti

In 1419 the Arte della Seta guild took charge of running a new institution dedicated to the holy „Innocents“ as a home for abandoned children. The Della Robbia family produced numerous works for the orphanage, which was built to a design by Filippo Brunelleschi. This Madonna, among the earliest items in the hospital and displayed in the „women’s“ church inside the institution, is one of Luca’s very first works in glazed terracotta.
FROM CITY TO PALACE.
THE NEW PATRONS OF THE ARTS

Towards the middle of the 15th century, the republican spirit which had prompted the flowering of great works of sculpture and monumental fresco cycles began to wane in favour of an art concerned with depicting magnificence, which was to become the prerogative of the city’s oligarchy. In the new Palazzo Medici – a symbol of the power which the family was starting to wield over the city – Cosimo the Elder and his son Piero launched a fashion for sumptuous art patronage in which private citizens vied with the public sector for the privilege of granting the most prestigious commissions. Other wealthy merchant families in the city were to follow the Medici’s example, building residences befitting their new role in society and furnishing them with sophisticated works of art to reflect their learning. The Model of Palazzo Strozzi evokes the construction of the most extravagant private building in 15th century Florence, in ideal counterpoint to the Wooden Model of Brunelleschi’s Dome on display at the beginning of the exhibition.

FLORENTINE WARE
Basin with lion passant (Marzocco) holding a banner with the arms of Florence
c. 1420–50
majolica
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Objets d’art

The presence of the Marzocco, the heraldic lion symbolising the Florentine Republic, and the two holes used to suspend the basin suggest that it was designed for display, possibly on a public building in the city. It was thus a ceremonial dish celebrating the Republic, its form and decoration illustrating how even Florentine ceramists drew their inspiration from Spanish ware produced in Manises, near Valencia.
HISPANO-MORESQUE LUSTREWARE (MANISES, VALENCIA)

Vase with Arms and Ring Device of the Medici
c. 1465–78
tin-glazed earthenware decorated with blue, yellow and purple lustre
London, The British Museum

This highly unusual vase bears the Medici family crest on one side, with the addition of the Lily of France granted by Louis XI to Piero the Gouty in 1464, and on the other a diamond-tipped ring with two feathers, one of the oldest and possibly the most frequently used of the Medici emblems. Probably commissioned through the Medici bank’s Valencia branch, this is one of those luxury objects imported from Moorish Spain that enjoyed immense popularity among the wealthy and powerful families of Florence.

DESIDERIO DA SETTIGNANO
Settignano c. 1429-circa-Florence 1464
Julius Caesar
c. 1455
marble
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Sculptures

This kind of marble profile of Roman emperors and illustrious women was invented by Desiderio da Settignano, as shown by a payment in 1455 for twelve heads «of Caesars», a series the sculptor never completed but the first such series since the end of the Classical era. The genre, intended to decorate palazzi, rooms, courtyards and studies, was immensely successful. The relief shows Desiderio’s sensitivity as a marble sculptor in the carving of the body and the drapery.

MINO DA FIESOLE
Mino di Giovanni; Papiano or Montemignaio 1429-Florence 1484
Julius Caesar
c. 1455–60
marble
Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund

Mino da Fiesole, the artist responsible for the largest number of still extant reliefs of emperors, portrays Caesar with a paludamentum – a cloak fastened with a brooch – on his shoulders in this recently rediscovered relief. The rediscovery and appreciation of Classical texts (Suetonius, Plutarch, the Historia Augusta) together with an interest in such Roman items as coins, medals and cameos, lay behind the new fashion for these imperial profiles.

DESIDERIO DA SETTIGNANO
Settignano c. 1429-Firenze 1464
Olympias, Queen of the Macedonians
c. 1460–4
marble
Segovia, Palacio Real de La Granja de San Idelfonso, Patrimonio Nacional

Based on Roman coins and jewels, and much prized to decorate studies and to adorn buildings, the profiles of the emperors and heroines of antiquity were originally brightly coloured. Easy to move and able to survive the ordeal of a journey, these profiles helped to spread a sophisticated classicising model from Florence and, along with reliefs of the Madonna, form a representative genre of Florentine Quattrocento art.
MINO DA FIESOLE
Mino di Giovanni; Papiano or Montemignaio 1429-Florence 1484

*St. Helena Empress*
c. 1465–70
marble
Avignon, Musée Calvet, Gift of dr. Clément

Of all the specialists in portraying Classical emperors and heroines, Mino da Fiesole played an important role in popularising profiles of women. This effigy, undoubtedly a private commission, depicts a saint, but is by no means conceived as an image for devotion. The Empress Helena, Constantine’s subsequently canonised mother, is framed in a round shield which almost turns the effigy into a medallion – a deliberate allusion to marble profiles’ numismatic origin.

**HISPANO-MORESQUE LUSTREWARE (MANISES, VALENCIA)**

*Dish with Medici or Federighi Coat of Arms*
1450–60
tin-glazed earthenware
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection

*Dish with Ricci Coat of Arms*
1450–75
tin-glazed earthenware
Paris, Musée de Cluny - Musée National du Moyen Âge

*Dish with Martelli Coat of Arms*
1466–70
tin-glazed earthenware
Naples, Museo di Capodimonte, De Ciccio Collection

*Dish with Gondi Coat of Arms*
c. 1486–1487
tin-glazed earthenware
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Objets d’art, Bequest of Jean-Léonce Leroux, 1892

*Dish with Ridolfi Coat of Arms*
mid 15th century
tin-glazed earthenware
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection

In mid-15th century Florence, the more sophisticated collectors showed an interest in exotic and valuable objects. These large dishes, decorated with aristocratic emblems in metallic lustre, illustrate wealthy families’ common habit of commissioning work from the ceramists of Moorish origin working in Muslim Spain, particularly in the area around Valencia. These Hispano-Moresque ceramics reached the markets of central Tuscany via the emporium of Majorca and the port of Pisa. Thanks to the organisational structure of the Florentine merchant companies operating in the Mediterranean, it was possible to track every phase of a commission given to the Valencia ceramists, from the despatch of the order with the correct heraldic design to the delivery of the finished product to the customer. This illustrates wealthy Florentine families’ desire, after the middle of the century, to display their coats of arms on buildings, items of furniture, fabrics, codices, frames, tableware, precious banquet services and majolica.
AGOSTINO DI DUCCIO
Florence 1418-Perugia c. 1481
Madonna and Child
(Auvillers Madonna)
c. 1460–5
marble
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Sculptures

This relief probably comes from Palazzo Medici and may have been commissioned by Piero or Giovanni, as shown by the presence on the candelabrum of one of the Medici devices (a diamond-tipped ring) and of a variant of the family coat of arms (with five balls). Agostino’s sophisticated art was much appreciated in Medici circles for its delicate and charming decoration.

CLASSICAL ROMAN ART
Portrait of a Man
1st century BCE
greek marble
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Antikensammlung

From the early 15th century the leading lights in Florentine sculpture looked to examples of Roman portraiture of the Republican age. Donatello, for instance, drew inspiration from the period for some of his heads of Prophets for the cathedral bell tower. A particularly significant comparison can be made with Desiderio da Settignano’s Niccolò da Uzzano who turns his head vigorously to the left, like this portrait now in Vienna.

DESIDERIO DA SETTIGNANO
Settignano c. 1429-Florence 1464
Niccolò da Uzzano
c. 1450–5
painted terracotta
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

The markedly individual features of this portrait of Niccolò da Uzzano – one of the leading players in Florentine political history – has prompted scholars to rule out the traditional attribution to Donatello, who showed little interest in a genre that expressed individuality. The resolute turn of the head, its face taken from a death mask, bears a similarity to some of the works of Desiderio, who invented the profile relief in marble, while portraits busts were traditionally frontal.
FLORENTINE MEDALLIST

Medal of Cosimo de’ Medici the Elder, “Pater Patriae”
c. 1465
silver
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

Being an aristocratic and celebratory genre, medals were foreign to the social and political fabric of Florence, where they appeared later than elsewhere. This medal, commemorating Cosimo the Elder with the posthumous title of pater patriae, granted by the Republic on 16 March 1465, is thought to be one of the oldest extant examples. The medal is reproduced in gilded stucco – though larger and in reverse – in Botticelli’s famous Portrait of a Young Man in the Uffizi.

FLORENTINE MEDALLIST

Medal of Piero and Giovanni de’ Medici
1472
bronze
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

This medal – the only extant example and displayed here for the first time – has two front sides, being dedicated to both the figures portrayed, as indeed is their tomb by Verrocchio in San Lorenzo, inside which the medal was found in 1949. Lorenzo the Magnificent commissioned the tomb for his father Piero and his uncle Giovanni, probably acting on suggestions from Leon Battista Alberti and Donato Acciaiuoli. Reviving Classical usage, the medal was intended to complete the humanist message enshrined in the tomb as a whole.

MINO DA FIESOLE

Mino di Giovanni; Papiano or Montemignaio 1429-Florence 1484

Giovanni di Cosimo de’ Medici
c. 1454
marble
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

The prestige enjoyed by Mino da Fiesole from a very early age made him a forerunner of the new portrait bust genre. His reputation is borne out by the importance of such patrons as Cosimo the Elder’s sons Piero and Giovanni de’ Medici, whose marble portraits by Mino were the first he produced. This portrait of Giovanni reflects his personal enthusiasm for the heroes of antiquity, which prompted him to collect medals, fragments and Classical heads and to have Mino portray him as a Roman patrician in armour.
This portrait by Antonio Rossellino was probably commissioned by Giovanni Chellini himself (1372/73–1462), a physician and humanist from San Miniato, acting on a suggestion from Donatello, who had paid him for his services the same year by giving him the bronze relief known as the *Chellini Madonna*, on display in a previous room. The bust, one of the artist’s first known works and one of the first Renaissance portrait busts, is remarkable for its expressive force and for the meticulous depiction of the sitter’s features in the attempt to convey a true likeness.

The bust of Francesco di Tommaso Sassetti (1421–90), manager of the Medici Bank’s Geneva branch and an important patron, is one of the first Renaissance marble portraits in which the sitter wears the Classical *paludamentum*. While the realistic rendering of the sitter’s features speaks in favour of an attribution to Rossellino, an affinity with Verrocchio’s work appears in particular in the way the arms acquire form and movement compared to the bust, a characteristic which the artist was to develop in full in his *Lady with a Bunch of Flowers* at the Bargello.
Mino di Giovanni; Papiano or Montemignaio 1429-Florence 1484

**Dietisalvi Neroni**
1464, marble
Paris, Musée du Louvre, département des Sculptures, gift of Madame Gustave Dreyfus and her children in memory of Gustave Dreyfus, 1919

In 1464, the date assigned to this portrait, Dietisalvi Neroni (Florence 1401 – Rome 1482) was at the height of his power; as the brother of the archbishop of Florence, a close friend of Cosimo de’ Medici and adviser to his son Piero, but his part in a conspiracy against the Medici in 1466 led to his permanent exile. As the classicising garb alluding to Republican virtus suggests, the bust was intended for a private residence, possibly Dietisalvi’s own palazzo situated near San Lorenzo.

Desiderio da Settignano
Settignano c. 1429-Florence 1464

**Marietta Strozzi**
c. 1464, marble
Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Bode-Museum

This bust has been identified as that of Marietta di Lorenzo di Palla Strozzi, carved by Desiderio da Settignano and known since the late 15th century. Desiderio can have made this portrait of Marietta, born in 1448 and one of the most beautiful young women of her day, only shortly before his death. The delicate modelling, the sensitivity with which the artist mediates between abstraction and elegance of form, and the lively expression and individuality of the sitter’s features confirm the attribution.

Giuliano da Sangallo
Florence 1445-1516, or Benedetto da Maiano
Maiano 1442-Florence 1497

**Model of Palazzo Strozzi**
1489, carved wood
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello (on permanent loan to Palazzo Strozzi)

This model of Palazzo Strozzi is the only extant model of a private Renaissance residence. It is attributed alternately to Benedetto da Maiano, whom Vasari claims produced the model for the palazzo and who was the „family“ artist, and Giuliano da Sangallo who was paid for making two models in 1489. This, the only surviving model, can be taken apart to view the palazzo’s three different floors and shows the internal layout of the rooms. The model remained in the family’s ownership and inside the palazzo until 1937.
This publication brings together the explanatory texts of the exhibition

The Springtime of the Renaissance
Sculpture and the Arts in Florence 1400-1460
Florence, Palazzo Strozzi, 23 March–18 August 2013
Paris, Musée du Louvre, 26 September 2013–6 January 2014

Curated by
Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi
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www.palazzostrozzi.org
Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi
Piazza Strozzi, 50123 Firenze

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