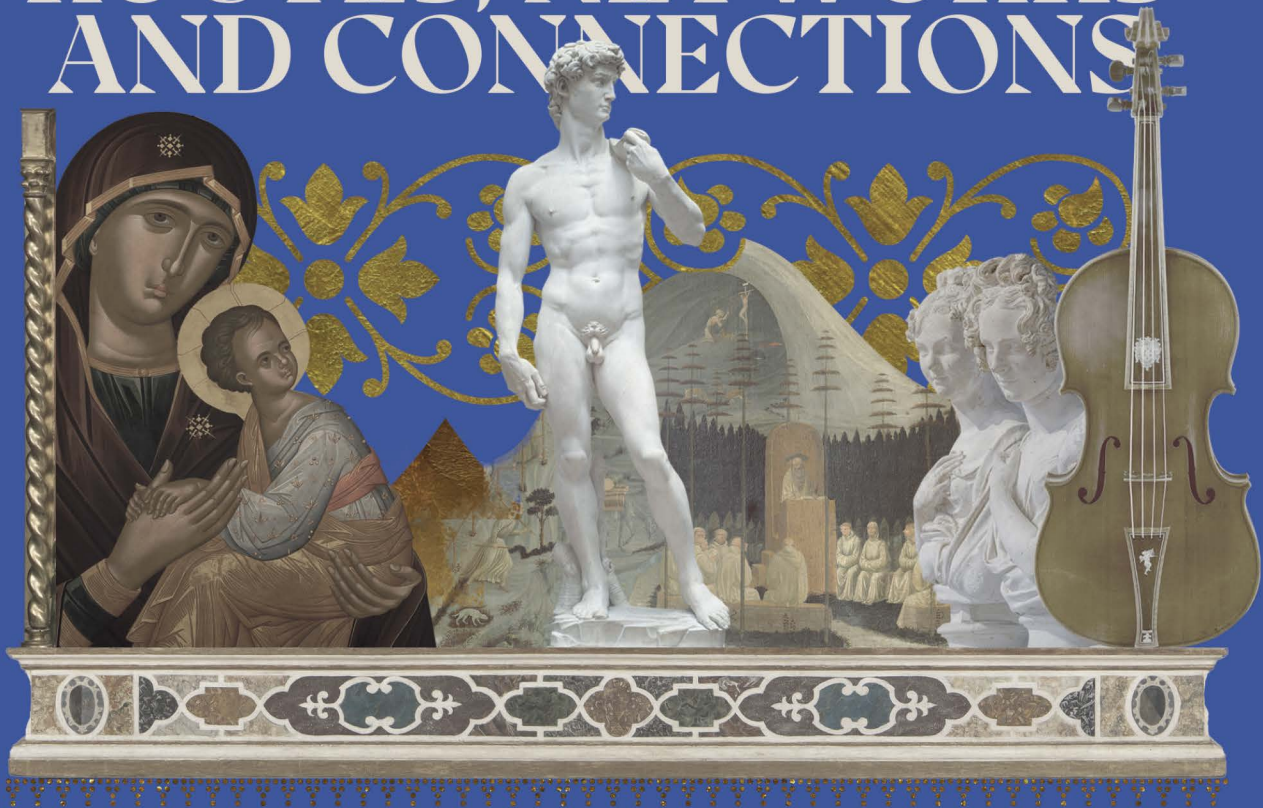




HERITAGE OF ROUTES, NETWORKS AND CONNECTIONS

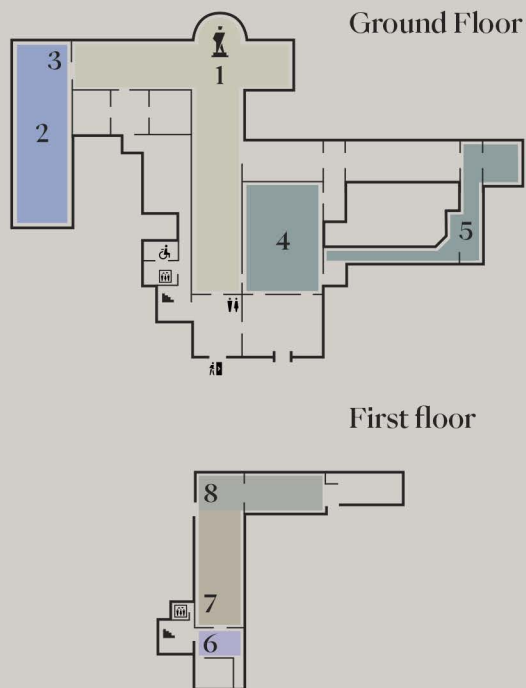


Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 September – 2024



Where do the works in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence come from? What journey did they undertake to become part of a collection as varied as that of our museum in terms of artists, chronology, type of works and subjects?

Our journey begins in the summer of 1873, with the moving of Michelangelo's David from Piazza della Signoria to the Galleria dell'Accademia



1 Moving David

On the night of 31 July 1873, Michelangelo's most famous sculpture, the David, left Piazza della Signoria, where it had stood on a plinth in front of Palazzo Vecchio since its creation, to be transferred permanently to the Galleria dell'Accademia.

The decision to move the statue was taken for reasons of conservation and because of the need to protect the statue which, after centuries of being exposed to the open air and due to inadequate restoration, had become extremely fragile. This fragility was caused in part because Michelangelo had carved a marble block that had already been worked on by other artists.

A mechanical engineer, Francesco Porra, and architect Emilio De Fabris planned the transfer with the utmost care, devising a system that allowed for no margin for error and drew its inspiration from railway transport. A wooden and metal 'castle' was built around the David, equipped with a mechanism to absorb jolts. This was

placed on four wheels. The statue travelled along a dozen lengths of rail using a single rotating platform that was moved as necessary as the route curved and the rails with it.

It took ten days, many workers – who worked mainly at night because of the heat – and a great deal of physical exertion to complete a route of just 1.2 km through the centre of Florence.

After various stops – Via dei Calzaioli, the cathedral, Via Martelli and Via Cavour, Piazza San Marco and onward to what is now Via Cesare Battisti – the statue was brought to the courtyard of the adjacent Accademia di Belle Arti and, while awaiting the construction of the Tribuna, designed by De Fabris and completed in 1882, the David was 'brought back and lowered onto its base', where it still stands today and 'where it will stay as long as God wills', as we read in the report of the transport.



From the artist's studio

2

Following the death of the sculptor Lorenzo Bartolini in January 1850, the preparatory models for his works – portrait busts in great demand by a vast international clients and famous monuments such as the one to Nicola Demidoff in Florence – filled his workshop at 70 Borgo San Frediano. Here they remained under the care of his pupil Pasquale Romanelli, who moved his own studio there (today it is the Studio Galleria Romanelli).

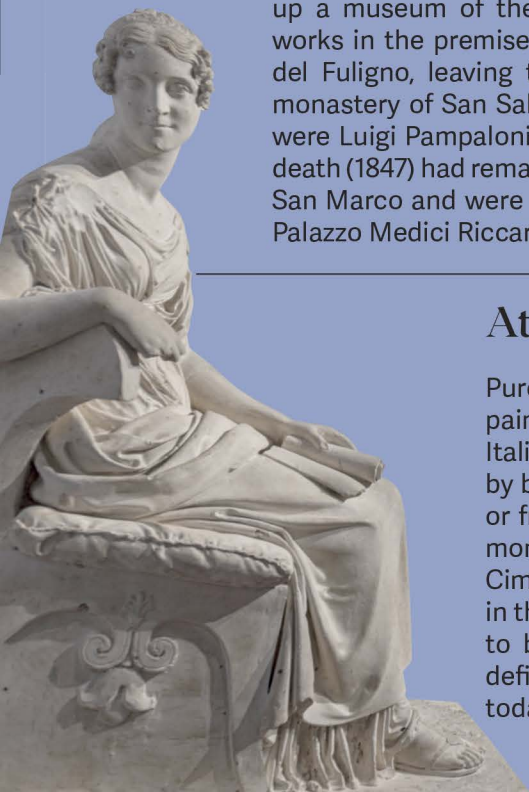
In 1889, the Italian State bought the collection from Bartolini's widow, Virginia Buoni, for 12,000 lire. For some years plans had been afoot to set up a museum of the most important plaster works in the premises of the former Cenacolo del Fuligno, leaving the others in the former monastery of San Salvi. Added to this nucleus were Luigi Pampaloni's models, which after his death (1847) had remained in his studio in Piazza San Marco and were later partly transferred to Palazzo Medici Riccardi. These works were also

bought by the State from the artist's family. The museum project came to nothing, however, and the plaster works of art remained for a long time in San Salvi and Fuligno, in what were the storerooms of the Florentine Galleries. Here they suffered from the flood of 1966, the signs of which are evident in the stains still visible today on many pieces.

Approximately a hundred years after their purchase, these works by Bartolini and Pampaloni, together with others by Francesco Pozzi and Ulisse Cambi, found a definitive home in the Galleria dell'Accademia's Gipsoteca, or plaster art gallery. This was laid out between 1983 and 1985, and again in 2023, and presented alongside some paintings from the competitions organised by the Accademia di Belle Arti, owned by the Accademia itself and on deposit in our museum, testifying to the deep historical bond that has united the two institutions for centuries.

At the Galleria dell'Accademia

Purchased by the State in 2003, Odoardo Borrani's small painting entitled *At the Galleria dell'Accademia* reminds us that Italian museums have never stopped adding to their collections by buying works of art on the market, at auction, from galleries or from private individuals. This delightful picture captures the moment when, in the nineteenth century, masterpieces such as Cimabue's and Giotto's *Madonna and Child Enthroned*, formerly in the Florentine churches of Santa Trinita and Ognissanti, were to be found in the Galleria dell'Accademia, well before their definitive transfer to the Uffizi, where they can still be admired today.



3



The oldest nucleus

Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many works by masters of the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance were transferred from monasteries and other ecclesiastical institutions to the Accademia in the wake of the suppression of religious orders and congregations by the Lorraine government (1786), during the Napoleonic period (between 1808 and 1811) and after the annexation of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany to the Kingdom of Italy in 1860. Moreover, during the French domination, these works were partly deposited at the Convent of Saint Mark, where a 'collection point' of goods requisitioned from suppressed institutions had been set up.

Paintings of great importance thus found a new home in the Galleria. One such was the monumental Assumption of the Virgin by Perugino, from the high altar of the Vallombrosa Abbey (in the Metropolitan area of Florence). Requisitioned during the Napoleonic period and transported to the Louvre Museum in Paris, the altarpiece returned to Italy in 1817; it was initially placed in the Galleria dell'Accademia, then passed to the Uffizi and, during the Second World War, was removed from Florence to keep it safe from bombing and looting, before returning to this museum.



The Museum of Musical Instruments

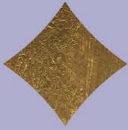


Retracing the 'path' of our collections also enables us to reconstruct the history of the Museo degli Strumenti Musicali – the Museum of Musical Instruments – created in 1996 through a collaboration between the Galleria dell'Accademia and the nearby Conservatorio Luigi Cherubini.

The collection has about 400 items, including string, wind and percussion instruments, dating from the sixteenth century to the present day and originating from all over the world. About forty objects can be admired in the current display, representing what remains of the extremely rich collections of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany – the Medici and the Lorraine – while the rest of the collection is kept in storage.

The collaboration between the Galleria dell'Accademia and the Conservatorio Luigi Cherubini also manifests itself through a number of promotional activities: concerts and musical events involving the institute's students, such as the one held on the occasion of the European Heritage Days on the evening of Saturday 28 September.





The display cabinet preserves some icons in the Byzantine style of the 'Venetian-Cretan' school, which flourished in Crete and the Greek islands under Venetian rule (from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century). These were inspired by models that were somewhat conservative and archaic, but appreciated in Europe throughout the modern age. We do not know how and when these icons, that are so distant from our tradition, arrived in Florence, but their presence is of great interest for studies on collecting and the circulation of artists and works in Europe and the Mediterranean.

In particular, the Madonna of the Passion by Andreas Ritzos, an exponent of an illustrious family of Cretan painters, presents a popular iconography, replicated numerous times: the infant Jesus, frightened, clings to his mother and in turning to the right, loses a sandal from his foot, while at his sides two angels carry the spear and the cross with nails, the instruments of his future Passion.



The recovery of stolen works

Italy is famed throughout the world for the richness of its cultural heritage, only part of which is preserved and displayed in museums. Many masterpieces are to be found in private collections or in open spaces, in archaeological parks, buildings and monumental complexes. Unfortunately, this important heritage is constantly threatened by criminals who attack its integrity through theft, illegal sales and illicit exports.

This is why, in 1969, Italy was the first country in the world to set up a special task force to protect the national heritage, the Comando Carabinieri per la Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale (TPC), a special branch of the Carabinieri engaged in the fight against the international traffick of works of art. It is responsible for investigations aimed at identifying crimes and recovering stolen cultural goods.

Thanks to the TPC, a valuable fourteenth-century gold-ground painting of Saints Jerome and Julian by by Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, a prolific Florentine painter was returned to Italy after it had been fraudulently exported. Tracked down in Switzerland, the painting was seized as part of a complex investigation conducted by the Antiques Section of the Carabinieri TPC Division in Rome.

After its return to Italy, the work was assigned to the Galleria dell'Accademia in view of the chronological and stylistic relevance to its painting collections.



Travelling artists

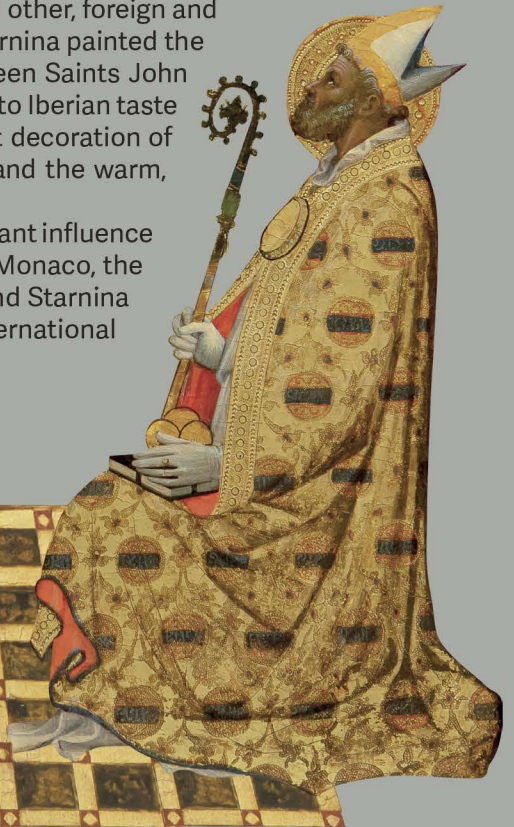


Our journey reminds us that it is not only the works that 'set out', but also and above all the artists who produce them. Indeed, painters, sculptors and architects have always found new commissions and evolved their style through travelling and coming into contact with works by the great masters of the past and their contemporaries.

Gherardo Starnina trained in Florence in workshops where Giotto's tradition was still very much alive, despite the fact that several decades had passed since Giotto's death (1337). Between 1395 and around 1401, the painter worked in Toledo and Valencia, both lively and cosmopolitan cities, coming into contact with Spanish and other, foreign and artists. On his return to homeland Starnina painted the

altarpiece with the Madonna and Child with four Angels between Saints John the Baptist and Nicholas, in which the adaptation of his manner to Iberian taste is clearly evident: for example, in the flowing drapery, the bright decoration of Saint Nicholas' robes, the strong expressiveness of the faces and the warm, bright colours that are typically Valencian.

Moreover, after his trip to Spain the artist's style exerted a significant influence upon the entire Florentine milieu and was decisive for Lorenzo Monaco, the most elegant painter of the time, who, with Lorenzo Ghiberti and Starnina himself, played a decisive role in the development of the International Gothic style in Florence.



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1. The transport of David from piazza della Signoria in an illustration of that time, 1873
2. Lorenzo Bartolini, *Portrait of the Irish Poetess Mary Tighe*, 1816-20 ca. and female busts
3. Odoardo Borrani, *At the Galleria dell'Accademia*, 1860-70
4. The Convent of Vallombrosa, Vallombrosa, Reggello (Fi)
5. Antonio Stradivari, *Tenor Viola, known as Medici Viola*, 1690 and Domenico del Mela, *Upright Piano*, 1739
6. Andreas Ritzos, *Madonna and Child with Angels bearing the Instruments of the Passion*, 1450-60 ca.
7. Niccolò di Pietro Gerini, *Saints Jerome and Julian*, 1385
8. Gherardo Starnina, *Madonna with Child and four Angels between Saints John the Baptist and Nicholas*, 1405-10 ca.