

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EXHIBITION

GREAT EXHIBITIONS AT LA VENARIA REALE *Jesus. His Body and Face in Art*



1. Jean (de) Boulogne, known as “Giambologna” (Douai, 1529 – Florence 1608)

Crucifix, ca 1573

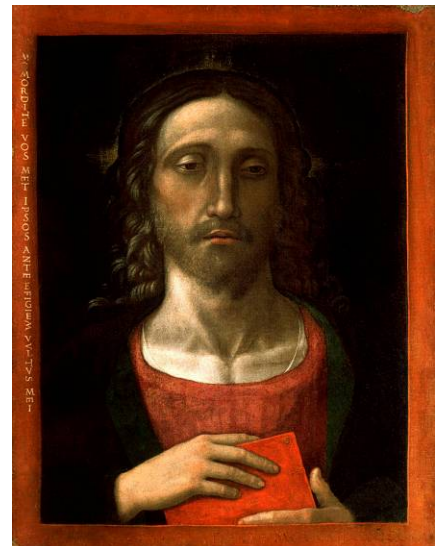
Bronze casting and traces of silver plating, 20 x 20 cm
Cento, Grimaldi Fava Collection

The Crucifix by Giambologna - the greatest sculptor of the 16th century after Michelangelo - is a masterpiece of technical prowess and formal refinement. This prototype was crafted by the artist in the wake of the Catholic Reform, when princes and common believers alike focused their devotion and piety on the purifying acceptance of the suffering and the death of Jesus on the cross.

2. Andrea Mantegna (Isola di Carturo, 1431 - Mantua, 1506) ***Christ the Redeemer, 1493***

Tempera on canvas, 55 x 43 cm
Correggio, Fondazione “Il Correggio”

Originally used for private worship, this portrait is one of the latest works by Mantegna, whose name appears at the bottom near the date 1493. It is an intense, powerfully emotional representation of the melancholy and suffering of Christ, presented here without the traditional iconographic attributes of the Passion, holding in his hand a book with the writing *Ego sum: nolite timere*. Vertically on the left side a sentence in Latin exhorts: “Repent before the image of my face”.



3. Giorgio da Castelfranco, known as Giorgione (Castelfranco Veneto, ca 1478 – Venice 1510) ***Christ carrying the Cross, ca 1510***

Oil on canvas, 68,2 x 88 cm
Venice, Scuola Grande Arciconfraternita di San Rocco

This extraordinary image of Jesus with his tormentor was positioned on an altar in the Venetian church of San Rocco. For a long time the miraculous powers attributed to the painting obscured its excellent quality and raised doubts as to its authorship, attributed to Giorgione or Titian. The exceptional brightness of the colors following restoration and the intense emotional relation between Jesus and his tormentor dragging him along towards his death and the spectator, seem to indicate that the painting was the work of Giorgione.



4. Maestro del Crocifisso Corsi

Painted crucifix, first quarter of the 14th century

Tempera on wood, 152 x 128 cm
 Florence, Galleria Moretti



The production of painted crosses was particularly common in Central Italy from the 12th to the mid-15th century. The cross on display is missing the ends of the cross arms and the top frieze, that was probably decorated with an image of the Pelican, a very popular Christological symbol in the 14th century, while on the end of the left cross arm was a painting of the *Mourning Virgin*. This work documents the originality of Florence-based *Maestro del Crocifisso Corsi* and his unique and at times violent expressive language.

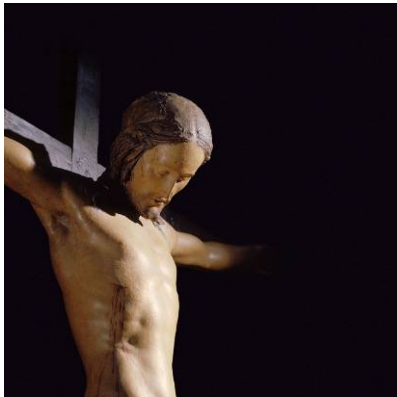
5. Luca Della Robbia (Florence, 1399/1400-1482)

Madonna of the Apple, 1440-1445

Glazed terracotta, 74 x 48 cm
 Florence, Istituti Museali della Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino, Museo Nazionale del Bargello



The relief belonged to the collections of the Medici Grand Dukes and it is listed in the inventory of assets of Lorenzo the Magnificent. The tender humanity of the gestures of mother and child belongs to a very popular repertoire in sculpture in 15th century Florence. This type of Madonnas was generally commissioned by religious communities and private citizens. In the works by Luca della Robbia the sense of family warmth is further enriched by precious matters and refined colors.



6. Michelangelo Buonarroti (Caprese 1475 – Rome 1564)

Christ on the Cross, ca. 1492-1493

Polychrome linden tree wood; tow and stucco; 139 x 135 cm
 Florence, Musei Civici Fiorentini, Church of Santo Spirito (Patrimonio Fondo Edifici di Culto – Ministry of the Interior, Central Directorate Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration)

This work has been indicated as the wooden *Crucifix* crafted by a young Michelangelo for the high altar of the Church of Santo Spirito. The figure of Jesus has a youthful, epebic appearance, his bodily structure is tender and delicate and his face expresses intimate and controlled suffering. The Passion is elevated to a

spiritual level as a visual transposition of the *Treatise on the Love of Jesus Christ* by Girolamo Savonarola (1492). Michelangelo's authorship is supported by the anatomical accuracy, the careful finishing and the superb quality of the work.

7. Giovanni Battista Crespi called il Cerano (Romagnano Sesia, Novara 1573- Milan 1632)

Christ on the Cross with Saint James, Saint Francis and Saint Philip, ca 1625

Oil on canvas, 360 x 180 cm
 Seveso, Seminario Arcivescovile



In a careful balance between humanity and transcendency, this altarpiece from the Church of San Protaso ad monacos in Milan represents the personal reflection made by Cerano on the mystery of Passion. The body of Christ is bright and resplendent in reference to the transfiguring splendor of Resurrection. The painting dates to the last part of the life of the artist, one of the main protagonist of painting in Lombardy in the 17th century, with a texture that recalls Rubens and Van Dyck.

8. Pieter Paul Rubens (Siegen 1577 - Antwerp 1640)

***Christ Risen*, 1615-1616**

Oil on canvas, 183 x 155 cm

Florence, Istituti Museali della Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino, Galleria Palatina di Palazzo Pitti

The excellent quality of this grandiose painting is believed by critics to be the work of Rubens at the time of his full maturity. Christ has a muscular body, inspired to ancient statuary, as he rises in triumph from his sepulcher bathed in light while an angel lifts the shroud in which he was wrapped and two others hold his crown of thorns, the symbol of his martyrdom. This work belonged to the collections of Ferdinando de' Medici. The upper portion of the painting with the top of the staff with the cross and the standard is missing.



9. Giovanni Bellini (Venice 1438/1440 - 1516)

***Lament over the Dead Christ*, 1575 ca**

Oil on wood, 107 x 84 cm

Vatican City, Picture Gallery of the Vatican Museums

This painting was originally the cyma of the altarpiece with the *Coronation of the Virgin* painted for the Church of San Francesco in Pesaro (today Musei Civici). The body of the dead Jesus is supported by Joseph of Arimathea while Nicodemus offers Magdalene a jar of embalming ointment. In this ultimate act of pious devotion, the hands of Jesus and Mary Magdalene are indissolubly entwined, like the history of humanity and divinity. The Pesaro Altarpiece marks the full maturity of the Venetian artist whom Dürer defined "the best painter of all".

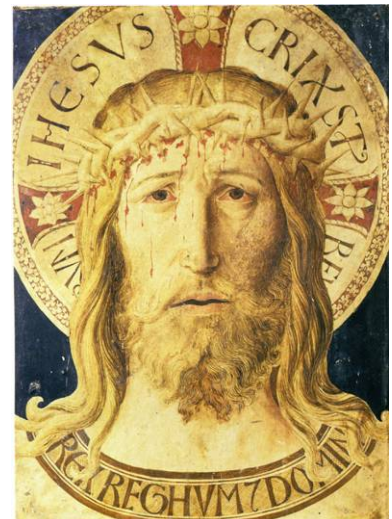
10. Follower of Fra Angelico from Umbria

***Christ crowned with thorns*, ca 1450**

Ink and tempera on parchment mounted on wood, 46,4 x 34,6 cm

Assisi, Sacro Convento di San Francesco

The suffering Jesus is portrayed against a dark background with his hair falling loose on his shoulders, a blond beard, red hollow eyes and a face smeared with the blood of the wounds inflicted by the crown of thorns. The meticulous drawing, halfway between a painting and a miniature, recalls the images of Jesus painted by Fra Angelico, particularly *Christ crowned with thorns* in Livorno. The parchment is documented in 1600 with the holy relics of the sacristy of the Lower Basilica of Assisi as if it was not actually man-made.





11. Antonio del Pollaiuolo and assistants (Florence ca 1443 - Rome 1498)

Crucifix, 1457-1459

Embossed silver and translucent enamel, 205 x 50 cm
Florence, Museo dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore

The silver Cross, a masterpiece of Renaissance goldsmith's work, was commissioned to the young Antonio del Pollaiuolo by Arte di Calimala, the guild entrusted with maintaining the Baptistery of San Giovanni, to enshrine a fragment of the True Cross. Designed as a candelabrum, this work shows the crucifix leaning against Mount Calvary and Jerusalem in its upper part and a hexagonal temple (a citation of the lantern of the Duomo) with statuettes of the Prophets and John the Baptist.

12. Flemish manufacturer, Brussels, Raes? from Pieter Paul Rubens (Siegen 1577 - Antwerp 1640)

Tapestry with Institution of the Eucharist, ca 1632-1650

Wool, silk, 500 x 350 cm
Ancona, Museo Diocesano

Formerly in the Church of SS. Sacramento, the tapestry depicts the *Last Supper* according to the iconographic variant of the First Communion of the Apostles. This interpretation of the Eucharist was very popular in the Counter-Reformation period, when the Church reasserted the doctrinal value of sacraments. The reference to Rubens is clearly evident, particularly to the altarpiece by the same subject that is preserved at the Pinacoteca di Brera, and that was popularized through engravings in the largest Flemish centers, from which Brussels weavers made cartoons to manufacture precious tapestries.

