



**BEST REGARDS
FROM FAR,**

Best regards from far,

Travel inspirators: eclectic content, in-depth articles, inspiring photos.

HOME ▾

AFRICA ▾

AMERICA ▾

ASIA ▾

EUROPE ▾

How to decode Italy's best Renaissance museum: the Uffizi (Florence)

Posted on August 27, 2020 by bestregardsfromfar

Text: Claire Lessiau

Photographs: Marcella van Alphen

The Uffizi is THE museum of the Renaissance in Italy; in the world actually! It was never intended to be a museum in the first place though. Initially, the urban palace designed by Vasari overlooking the Arno River a stone's throw away from Ponte Vecchio, was commissioned by the powerful Cosimo de' Medici in the 16th century. The Grand Duke of Tuscany needed offices to rule his duchy. His son Francesco converted part of its top floor in a private gallery to house his extensive Ancient Greek and Roman sculpture collection in 1581. The museum opened in 1769 making it one of the oldest museums in the world, and the most visited of Italy with over 2 million visitors per year today. Beyond Francesco's sculptures, some of the finest and most influential paintings of the Renaissance can be admired in these galleries. Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Lippi, Botticelli of course, and also Raphael, Caravaggio, Bronzino and more are well represented and waiting for you to be decoded...

The who's who of the Renaissance (The corridor)

Before even entering one of the galleries and starting to look at the paintings, the ceiling of the second floor of the Uffizi where your travel through the Renaissance starts, is striking. It is all decorated by frescoes in grotesque style with weird creatures, plenty of details and portraits, which honour the friends of the Medici's whether family, royalty, artists or business partners. This tribute continues with the individual portraits lining up the upper parts of the walls: popes, cardinals, kings, bankers, sultans, etc. form what seems to be a never-ending sequence of the Renaissance who's who. Known as the Gioivo Portraits (*Collezione Gioviana*), after the name of the painter, these 484 (!) paintings are interceded by larger portraits depicting the most important members of the Medici family. Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, the founder of the Medici bank in 1397, known as the father of the Tuscan nation, presides this series, with the branch of Cosimo the Old to his right – the main branch – and of his other son Lorenzo to his left. A few portraits down, on your left, you will see Cosimo de' Medici, the super Medici, born from the merging of both branches and who created the palace you are walking through.



Search ...

Search

Translate into your language!

Seleziona lingua ▾

Powered by Traduttore

Instagram



Like us on Facebook!



Best Regards Fr...
1.3K likes

Like Page



Giotto introduces body shapes, emotions & 3D (Room 2)

What is interesting to notice is the evolution of paintings at the end of the 13th century. Room 2 focuses on the enthroned Madonna and Child. Giotto's work (1310) showcases more body shapes, shadows, facial expressions and perspectives than his predecessors' late 13th century works. The style of the architect of the Duomo's bell tower had become a source of inspiration for the painters of the next century getting away slowly from the 2D and gold-dominated Byzantine style. It is by studying sculptures that Giotto apprehended his subject in three dimensions.

Also notice the flowers in the vases held by the angels: this is world's very first representation of still life. Giotto (1266-1337) is the first big name of Florentine painting.

In the Renaissance, the golden backgrounds disappear bits by bits to give way to perspective and landscapes in the background. Contrary to the previous polyptychs, now full scenes are represented in the same frame without separations. The study of natural light and anatomy starts showing as the paintings become more realistic as you walk through the chronologically ordered rooms.



Follow this awesome travel website via Email










Enter your email address to follow this awesome travel website and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Join 6,763 other followers

Follow

Follow Best regards from far,

Top reads:

- 
[5 insider's fun facts about Strasbourg that you probably did not know about!](#)
- 
[Traditional Hmong Batik, Laos](#)
- 
[A quick guide to Omani food](#)
- 
[Reviving Cambodia's pride: Khmer golden silk](#)
- 
[SCUBA diving some of the world's best](#)
- 
[The best of Kosi Bay in 4 unique adventures](#)
- 
[Traditional crafts of Cambodia \(4/7\): Rice paper, Battambang](#)
- 
[Live a Robinson expedition: Glover's reef, Belize](#)
- 
[Stories on the walls of Ataco, El Salvador](#)

Where are you traveling to?

- Cambodia Cape Town
- Corsica France Guatemala
- Italy Japan [Japan food series](#)
- Laos Nicaragua Oman
- Panama Paris Reunion Island
- South Africa Spain
- Sweden Thailand USA - NYC
- USA - The West



What is your interest?

adventure architecture culture
ecotourism free downloadable map

GPS track hiking history **Off**
the beaten path
outdoors

photography society
trekking UNESCO World Heritage
wildlife

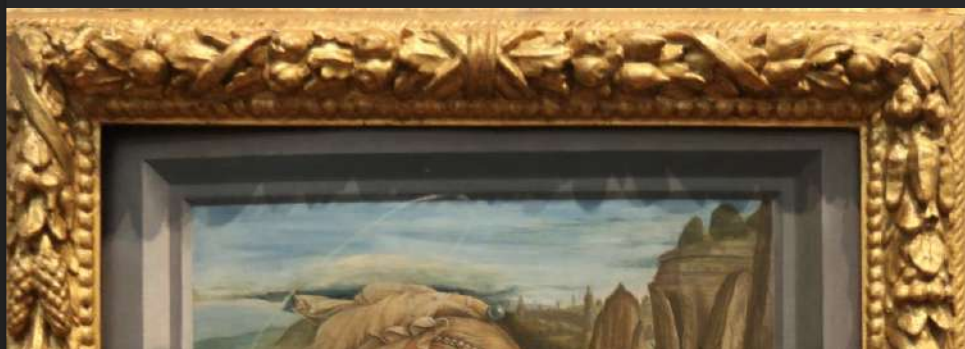
Contact us! Social media &
email:



Lippi: a monk falling in love with a nun! (Room 8)

Filippo Lippi's (1406-1469) most famous painting is *The Madonna and Child with Two Angels* (1465). The grace, loving expressions and liveliness conveyed in this painting contrast with his contemporaneous. The explanation may be simple. Lippi was a Carmelite monk. He met Lucrezia Buti, a nun from the convent of Piazza del Carmine in Florence, and they fell in love. They had a son in 1457, Filippino. In this painting, the Virgin Mary is Lucrezia and Filippino is the angel in the foreground who seems to act more like a roguish child than a well-behaved angel. This painting by Lippi is very characteristic of the Renaissance as another of its main traits is the humanisation of subjects.

Funnily, while Botticelli was a student of Filippo, Filippino became the student of Botticelli!





Botticelli & Renaissance's iconic paintings (Room 10-14)

The most iconic paintings of the Renaissance may very well be *Spring* (1480) and *The Birth of Venus* (1485) by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), both commissioned by Lorenzo de Medici to whom he was very close. Both cases present mythological themes and refined aesthetics, both dear to the Medici.

The Birth of Venus is a representation of a classic Antiquity theme depicting a naked Venus celebrating the female body. It is in fact the first painting of a naked female body.

Try to strike Venus' pose! It is too much to her left. The winds on the left also adopt improbable positions. Bulrushes do not belong here as they are a fresh water specie. Notice the absence of shadows and the very regular background that does not make the grass nor the sea very realistic.

In *Spring*, the blue Zephyrus, the god of wind is impregnating the nymph Chloris and she gives birth to Flora, the goddess of spring. In her beautiful flowery dress, Flora is pregnant to represent fertility. Venus and Cupid symbolise love while the three graces dancing personify beauty, and the messenger of the gods Mercury on the left, with his winged boots, is chasing the bad weather away as a symbol of peace of mind.

This painting is highly symbolic. Another read is following the Neoplatonism that was quite fashionable in intellectual circles in Florence at that moment: love and beauty (Cupid and Venus) bring you closer to God (Mercury pointing up).

Look closely: no less than 138 types of plants, each precisely depicted are painted! The oranges on the top recall the coat of arms of the Medici family and are a reminder of the commissioner.





Michelangelo's one & only surviving painting (Room 35)

Tondo Doni (1506) was executed by Michelangelo (1475-1564) for the wealthy Doni family, after he completed the David and before he painted the Sistine Chapel. It is his only painting that has survived. The circular shape of the frame means the painting was commissioned for a birth, in this case, the Doni's first born son. They are depicted as the Holy Family. Before Jesus was born, humanity was pagan (represented by the naked men in the background) and thanks to baptism (figure of Saint John the Baptist on the right), it became sacred.

Take a close look at how muscular the body of Mary is! Michelangelo's ability to perfectly represent the male body shows in this painting that made him realize that his true passion was sculpting.

Notice the faces of the Holy Family. In most previous paintings, subjects tended to be idealized. It is Hugo van der Goes who started depicting the faces as they really were instead of idealizing them (Room 15 for *The Adoration of the Shepherds with Angels and Saint Thomas, Saint Anthony, Saint Margaret, Mary Magdalen and the Portinari Family*). He greatly influenced Ghirlandaio, Michelangelo's master, and this shows in this painting.



©
BEST REGARDS
FROM FAR,

Leonardo Da Vinci's first painting (Room 35)

The Baptism of Christ (1470-1475) marks the beginning of Leonardo and the end of his master Verrocchio. The latter realized most of the painting and Leonardo painted the angel on the left. He was only 18 or so, inexperienced, and while Verrocchio's subjects are rather plain, Leonardo could convey a complexity to his angel that greatly upset his old master who put an end to his own career!

In *The Adoration of the Magi* (1482), Da Vinci (1452-1519) changed the normal composition that used to represent the Holy Family on one side and the magi in the centre. Here, the characters are placed along a semi-circle with Mary in the centre of a pyramid with the magi surrounding her. This rough sketch was never finished by Leonardo who left Florence for Milan and it is Filippino Lippi who executed the painting (1496) for the Augustinian monks who commissioned it (Room 28).



Bronzino the photographer (Room 65)

On the more austere first floor, the second Florentine Renaissance is showcased with examples of the mannerism movement. Long figures, lack of perspective, dark backgrounds and a disconnection from reality are some of the main characteristics of the style.

Bronzino who was a court painter for the Medici was a mannerist portraitist. Studying his paintings, he was a photographer! Pay attention to the portrait of Eleonora di Toledo, the wife of Cosimo I.





Paying tribute to the founder of the Tuscan nation (Room 65)

The portrait of Cosimo de' Medici was commissioned by the Pope Leo X. Cosimo the Elder is considered the father of the Tuscan nation. As shown by the branches in the background, in 1519, the main branch of the Medici was dying with Catherine de' Medici, Queen of France. This is represented by the cut branch. At the same time, the birth of Cosimo I, an offspring of both branches, meant a new Medici branch was about to take over, symbolized by the new branch. Pontormo also painted Cosimo's hands that were deformed by the gout very realistically. Referred to as the illness of the kings and wealthy, as it is due in part to an excessive intake of alcohol, fat and meat, it was running in the Medici family.



This article is a brief selection of some of the masterpieces of the Renaissance that can be admired at the Uffizi. Decoding the symbols, learning about the small history of the painters in the big scheme of this special time in History, and discussing the interpretations of some of the most influential art works in the world definitely adds a dimension to your visit.

Travel tips:

- For opening hours and tickets, refer to the [Uffizi website](#). Note that lines can be very long and it is recommended to book a time slot. Early morning is best to enjoy the art in the quietest possible way. To add a dimension to your visit of the Uffizi, take a licensed guide. We strongly recommend [Elisabetta Carraro](#) who is a very knowledgeable guide with an excellent English, a communicative passion for arts and history, and good sense of humour.
- To enjoy Florence in style, stay at the [Hotel Bernini Palace](#) in a 15th century palace full of history and luxury in the heart of the city!





Exceptional location of the Hotel Bernini Palace, Florence, Italy



- Check out this interactive map for the specific details to help you plan your trip and more articles and photos (zoom out) about the area! Here is a [short tutorial](#) to download it.

Italy by Best Regards From Far ☆

Questa mappa è stata creata da un utente. [Scopri come c](#)



Termini

Like it? Pin it!