FIAC
FOUNDATION
FOR ITALIAN
ART & CULTURE

Italian Masterpieces

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FOR ITALIAN
ART & CULTURE

Foundation for Italian Art & Culture, New York

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Antonello da Messina (1430–1479)
Virgin Annunciate
Oil on panel
17 3/4 x 13 5/8 in. (45 x 34.5 cm)
Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palazzo Abatellis, Palermo

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Jacopo da Pontormo, *Visitation*, detail (p. 48)

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p. 17 Gallerie Nazionali di Arte Antica, MIBACT- Bibliotheca Hertziana, Istituto Max Planck for the History of Art/Enrico Fontolan
p. 23 Ellen Page Wilson, courtesy the artist and Galleria Massimo De Carlo
p. 25 Ministero per I bene e le attivta culturali e per il turismo museo e real bosco di Capodimonte
p. 27 Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali. Photograph by Fabrizio Fenucci / Y. Press sr
p. 29 Scala/Art Resource, New York
p. 30 Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali
p. 39 Ministero dei Beni e delle Attivita' culturali Complesso Monumentale della Pilotta'- Galleria Nazionale di Parma
p. 41 Su concessione della Galleria Borghese
p. 44 © Ministero dei Beni e della Attività Culturali e del Turismo—Pinacoteca di Brera
p. 46 Archivio Patrimonio Artistico Intesa Sanpaolo / Foto Luciano Pedicini, Napoli
p. 51 © G.A.VE Photo Archive, courtesy of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities—Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice
p. 52 © Luigi Ciminaghi/Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa.
Pedro Berruguete, *Portrait of Federico da Montefeltro with His Son Guidobaldo* per gentile concessione di MIC – Galleria Nazionale delle Marche – Urbino
"Opera Italiana is in the Air"

CONTENTS

MISSION STATEMENT

The Foundation for Italian Art and Culture (FIAC) is a nonprofit, US incorporated organization established in New York City in 2003. FIAC's main purpose is to promote knowledge and appreciation of the cultural and artistic traditions of Italy, from the classical period to modern times, in the United States. Working closely with the Italian Ministry of Culture and with US and Italian museums, FIAC helps to bring outstanding works of art to audiences throughout the United States. In addition to sponsoring programs and exhibitions, FIAC acts as an intermediary to facilitate exchanges between American and Italian institutions.

From Left: Massimo Ferragamo, Carlo Clavarino, Alain Elkann, Patrizia Memmo Ruspoli, Daniele Bodini, Mario Gabelli, and Joseph Perella

LETTER FROM FIAC'S CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT

Over fifteen years ago, we met in Rome, in the office of Prof. Giuliano Urbani, the Italian Minister of Culture at the time. Together, we came up with the idea of creating a US foundation whose purpose would be to initiate and facilitate loans, exchanges, and restorations of works of art from the most important Italian museums to the most important US museums. With support on both sides of the Atlantic, we assembled a group of distinguished Italian and American board members, sponsors, and advisors who helped us establish a nonprofit organization, the Foundation for Italian Art and Culture (FIAC). Over the years, advocates, friends, and distinguished personalities of the art world have helped us realize our objectives, and because of them and our reputation, we have been able to introduce outstanding works of Italian art to audiences throughout the United States since 2003.

It is with great pride that we present this volume, which provides a historical overview of the masterpieces that FIAC has helped bring to major museums in the United States.

We express our sincere gratitude especially to our distinguished Board of Directors. Without their encouragement and ongoing support, these renowned artworks would not have been able to travel to the United States for these unique exhibitions, appreciated equally by critics and visitors. We are indebted to the directors and curators of the distinguished American institutions for their openness to work with us. Over the years, their collegial and serious approach to our foundation has created mutual respect and close, precious partnerships and friendships. We owe thanks to the many specialists who have provided the scientific research and scholarly analysis published in the many exhibition catalogues that have further enhanced our mission. Each year, our Board of Directors and Advisors have had the opportunity to present the FIAC Excellency Award to some of these outstanding art historians, curators, and museum directors from Italy and the United States, creating a strong bridge between these two countries.

Our deepest gratitude goes to the Italian Ministry of Culture and the Italian museum professionals for their willingness to lend the treasures in their care and to share them with audiences throughout the United States.

Daniele Bodini, Chairman

Alain Elkann, President

MAKING A CONTRIBUTION TO ITALIAN CULTURE IN NEW YORK

As Francis Haskell observed in his book *The Ephemeral Museum*, published after his death in January 2000, "Success in a museum is measured today both by sponsors and by governments in terms of the publicity that only the opening of new galleries or the mounting of temporary exhibitions can stimulate." True enough. But there are exhibitions that are done for the publicity they will receive and exhibitions that are done for the benefits to visitors. The relationship established between the Metropolitan Museum and the Foundation for Italian Art and Culture has resulted in three exhibitions that fall decisively in the second category.

The first of our collaborations dates to 2005, when FIAC sponsored a memorable, single-gallery display about one of the most original painters of the fifteenth century, Antonello da Messina. The catalyst was the possibility proposed by Alain Elkan of borrowing one of the supreme masterpieces of Renaissance painting, the haunting *Virgin Annunciate,* from the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, in Palermo. But as Alain and I discussed the project, it grew in scope. Our desire was not merely to put this masterpiece on view, as special as that would have been, but to create a unique opportunity for visitors to the Met to confront the genius of what I described in the catalogue as "the first truly European painter," an artist who brought into sublime synthesis the achievements of both Netherlandish and Italian painting. I have been told by many visitors to that exquisite assemblage of six pictures—each of extraordinary psychological intensity and originality—that it was one of the most memorable experiences they have had. The first work they encountered was a recently rediscovered double-faced painting showing on one side the *Madonna and Child with a Praying Franciscan Donor* and, on the other, an Ecce Homo. The work had been recently acquired at public auction by the Museo Regionale di Messina. Antonello's innovative portraits, in which the Sicilian master sought ways of animating the face, transforming the static portrait of the early Renaissance into a "living presence," were represented by the *Portrait of a Man* from Cefalù (Museo della Fondazione Culturale Mandralisca), with a smile as broad as on an archaic Greek kouros, and the Metropolitan Museum's own *Portrait of a Young Man*. What an extraordinary contrast they offered to the inward-gazing, solemn and mysterious *Virgin Annunciate*. She was imagined by Antonello as a teenage girl, her Sicilian features modestly framed by her blue mantle. She is shown against a neutral background, behind a simple reading desk, her hand outstretched in blessing. The other works—*Christ Crowned with Thorns*, a drawing attributed to the artist in the the Met's Robert Lehman Collection, and a double-sided panel of the Ecce Homo and Saint Jerome from a private collection—made for an unforgettable experience. The success of this remarkable "dossier" exhibition depended entirely on Alain's diplomatic skills, working closely with the Cultural Commissioner for the Sicilian Region, Hon. Alessandro Pagano.

Eight years later, following wonderful initiatives in other museums across the United States, Alain returned to me with another suggestion. Once again, its point of departure was to be a single work by another of the giants of Renaissance painting, Piero della Francesca. The work in question was a small panel created for private devotion that depicts Saint Jerome seated in a barren landscape with his books and a supplicant who kneels before him. In the Gallerie dell'Accademia it is easily overlooked, surrounded as it is with works by Giovanni Bellini and Giorgione. Once again, over the course of our conversations, what began as the presentation of a single work transformed into a far more ambitious, collaborative project: the picture would be cleaned, restored, and carefully examined at the restoration laboratories in Florence, the Opificio delle Pietre Dure; archival research would be undertaken to see what could be found out about the donor figure, identified by an inscription as a member of the Amadi family. The findings would then be published in a catalogue. I had the privilege of working with dear friends and colleagues in the Opificio, who wrote an exemplary essay documenting the restoration, as well as with Anna Pizzati, whose work in the archives unearthed new information.

Aside from his celebrated panel showing the Flagellation, Piero painted only four works for private devotion, and it was my desire to build on this first, exceptional loan, to construct an exhibition that would address his activity as an occasional painter of works intended for a private space—paintings that offered their owners an intimate and personal experience quite unlike that provided by Piero's familiar fresco cycles or altarpieces. That this has happened was due to the Italian Ministry's desire to celebrate the Year of Italian Culture with an exceptional loan, and of Rosaria Valazzi, who worked to see that Piero's *Madonna and Child with Two Angels* from Urbino—one of the artist's most iconically perfect works—would be available. To complete the theme of this exhibition two further works were secured: one practically unknown to scholars, and the other a small painting from the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin that had never been lent before. It was an added pleasure to have at the opening Luigi Cortellessa, the Colonel of the Carabinieri Corps, who represented the extraordinary recovery of Piero's Madonna in 1976, a year after it had been stolen from the Ducal Palace in Urbino.

"Once again, over the course of our conversations, what began as the presentation of a single work transformed into a far more ambitious, collaborative project: the picture would be cleaned, restored, and carefully examined at the restoration laboratories in Florence, the Opificio delle Pietre Dure"

Just three years later, Alain proposed a third project that he knew would be of special interest to me. In 1997 the Metropolitan Museum was most fortunate to acquire one of the last works painted by Caravaggio before his tragic death: *The Denial of Saint Peter*. It had been my longstanding desire to show this work alongside a picture depicting the Martyrdom of Saint Ursula that was commissioned by the Genoese patrician Marcantonio Doria. From a series of remarkable letters, we know that that work was painted just two months before Caravaggio's death in July 1610. Belonging to Intesa Sanpaolo bank in Naples, this last documented picture by the artist offers a remarkable parallel to the canvas in the Metropolitan Museum. Its minimalist style and profoundly poignant interpretation of its tragic subject demonstrate that both works dated from the same moment in Caravaggio's career. Indeed, the same helmet—evidently a prop in one of the Neapolitan workshops—appears in both canvases. (At a packed public event Pierre Terjanian, the head of the Met's Arms and Armor Department, discussed the anachronism of the armor in the two pictures.) Since 2004, when the two paintings were shown together in Naples and London in an exhibition devoted to the works Caravaggio made after fleeing Rome in 1606, we have learned a great deal about Caravaggio's last years. In these final paintings, using an unprecedented economy of color and a technique bordering on the unfinished, the artist probed a dark world burdened by guilt and doom, suggesting to some scholars a relationship with his biography.

The Martyrdom of Saint Ursula has come down to us in compromised condition, and as part of our arrangement with the Intesa Sanpaolo, we agreed to examine it with X-ray Fluorescence Spectrometry, giving us a better idea of the passages no longer legible. Like the other projects undertaken with FIAC, we wanted this exhibition to make a contribution to our knowledge of the artist. It is this that has been so singular in the exhibitions undertaken with Alain.

Keith Christiansen, Curator Emeritus, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

INTRODUCTION

The projects that the Foundation for Italian Art and Culture has undertaken in recent years and which this volume commemorates, take on new meaning in the context of the pandemic that we are now experiencing. The pandemic has dealt a blow to social equilibrium as well as to our individual health, and it has afflicted our cultural institutions, particularly art museums. In this difficult and unpredictable situation, even the largest museums have been forced to reconsider their missions and plans for the future. Long periods of mandatory closure and reopenings with many restrictions have radically changed our perception of works of art and the place of the museum experience in all of our lives. We no longer believe that things will return to the way they once were in the short term: what has happened cannot simply be forgotten, nor will it be remembered as a merely temporary inconvenience. In this light, the programs that FIAC has undertaken to foster transatlantic contacts under the banner of Italian art are even more important and meaningful, as they have brought a new selection of artworks from Italian collections before experts and the broader public (including Italian Americans).

To continue, or rather to strengthen, this dialogue is now more important than ever. The true vocation and *raison d'être* of the Foundation for Italian Art and Culture, like similar institutions, is to create initiatives for bequeathing, and exhibiting and preserving an immense patrimony of artistic creation, experimentation, innovation, and knowledge. For this to work, the individual artworks must be able to take on new life and grow in meaning in a context different from their places of origin and from the places where they are usually seen. A temporary de-localization, if carried out according to best practices and to the benefit of the work itself—offering a new study of technique or style, an analysis or cleaning by a conservator, or a revealing encounter with other works of art—can be a salutary experience and produce knowledge by suggesting answers to old questions, or leading us to ask entirely new questions.

"I use the gallery as if it were a doctor," Lucian Freud would say.[1] And to the extent that a museum exhibition is able to evoke the context of artistic creation as well as the quality of the artworks, the intentions of artists and patrons, and problematic aspects of the objects (from interpretation to dating, technique to conservation), it can nourish and enrich us in a profound way. Our need for culture, beauty, and memory is always with us—but it is in periods of crisis like the one we are now experiencing that these individual and collective needs become more intense and vital. Cultural memory, which works of art and museums as institutions transmit so effectively, serves not only to recall the past, but also to feed our sense of the future: it is for this reason that the need grows stronger when the future appears uncertain, as it does now. Art may not be able to heal our wounds, but it can soothe them, and easing the pain, it gives us inner richness, hope, and creativity.

"Cultural memory, which works of art and museums as institutions transmit so effectively, serves not only to recall the past, but also to feed our sense of the future: it is for this reason that the need grows stronger when the future appears uncertain, as it does now. Art may not be able to heal our wounds, but it can soothe them, and easing the pain, it gives us inner richness, hope, and creativity"

The Foundation for Italian Art and Culture has created a series of projects, presented in these pages, which focus on a single work or a small number of artworks brought from Italy to the United States for temporary exhibition in a very different visual, historical, and cultural context. In the last few decades, "one-painting shows" have become a distinct genre in the art of exhibition-making, a genre whose significance has been greatly enhanced by the growth of blockbuster exhibitions, with their great numbers of works, large audiences, and thick catalogues. Over the years (before the pandemic), the opportunity to concentrate our attention on a single work or a small group of artworks closely related by authorship, style, or theme, has offered some relief from the cultural and behavioral model of the blockbuster show. Too often, the possibility of transmitting knowledge is diminished or lost in the spectacular frame of a mega-exhibition and the great crowds of visitors that it attracts.

The mega-exhibitions that not so long ago attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors are now a distant memory, and unlikely to be planned for the near future. As a result, FIAC's experiments with exhibitions that are small but precious, and precious because they are carefully considered (as Keith Christiansen's pages in this very book show), may offer a more viable model for collaboration between museums and other institutions in various parts of the world. The language of art is not necessarily universal, as is often said: on the contrary, in our globalized and multicultural world, works of art can often be difficult to understand, are easily misunderstood, or appear inaccessible to non-specialists. However, when carefully constructed and intelligently staged, cultural exchange can be an effective channel for communicating knowledge not only about individual works of art, but also about museum practices and the delicate balance between the emotion that art can convey and its historical context. By providing these sorts of opportunities to increase the visibility of Italian art in America, the Foundation for Italian Art and Culture has made and continues to make a valuable contribution to the essential dialogue between our two nations.

Salvatore Settis, Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa

1 Michael Kimmelman, "Through the Eyes of Lucian Freud," *New York Times*, December 17, 1995, S. 2, p. 1.

TESTIMONIALS

It's so great to think that a group of Italians want to share Italian culture and our masterpieces in the United States, where our country has always been so loved. It's the greatest honor for me to be a part of this wonderful group, on this extraordinary mission.
— Carlo Clavarino

FIAC has accomplished a stunning amount of cultural exposure of the great works of Italy at an amazingly low cost. It is an efficient group that has brought never before seen treasures from Italy to the smaller cities of America and thus exposed many thousands of Americans to the magnificent Italian art culture.
— John S. Dyson

The Foundation for Italian Art and Culture (FIAC) has brought incredible works of art to US museums that otherwise would never have been able to display them. All the credit is due to Daniele Bodini and Alain Elkann. They are the ones who have made this possible.
— Massimo Ferragamo

The work of the Foundation for Italian Art and Culture, to bring the works of the great masters to the United States, will continue to bring the best of humanity and mankind to all.
— Mario J. Gabelli

For nearly two decades, FIAC has tirelessly championed Italian culture and artistic excellence in the United States. From Italian Renaissance masterpieces to contemporary works, the organization serves as a masterful curator. The Foundation's support of leading figures who help promote Italian culture and its sponsorship of programs and exhibitions shows sustained dedication and impact.

FIAC's partnership with the Italian Ministry of Culture has only deepened that impact over the years, both in the US and Italy, through rich cultural exchanges and collaborations. Espousing what is best about Italian culture and advocating for its perpetuity is a role to which FIAC is superbly suited.
— Joseph R. Perella

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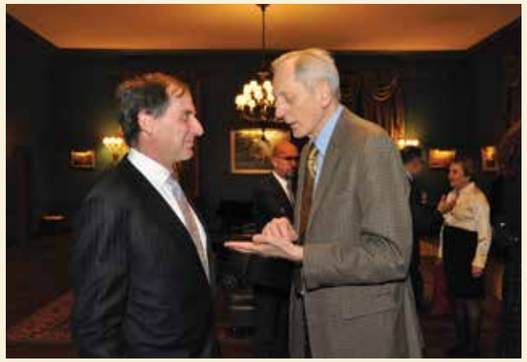
Director, State Museums of Campania, Naples

FIAC EXCELLENCY AWARDS

To honor leading figures in the United States and Italy who excel in activities relating to Italian culture, FIAC has established two annual awards, each amounting to $25,000. The awards go to one leading figure in the United States and to another leading figure in Italy. Nominations and awards are made by FIAC's United States Advisory Board for the Italian award, and by the Italian Advisory Board for the American award.

From Left: Keith Christiansen, Francesca Bodini, Elke Schmidt (standing), Isabel Achaval, Alain Elkann



Ian Wardropper, Keith Christiansen

From Left: Consul General Francesco Genuardi, Paola Marini, Daniele Bodini, Alain Elkann

From Left: Alain Elkann, Xavier F. Salomon, Paola D'Agostino, Daniele Bodini

FIAC EXCELLENCY AWARD WINNERS

AMERICAN

2005

Keith Christiansen
Curator of European Paintings
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

2006

David Alan Brown
Curator of Italian Painting
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

2007

Philippe de Montebello
Director
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

2008

Anne Poulet
Director
The Frick Collection, New York

2010

Malcolm Rogers
Ann and Graham Gund Director
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

2011

Glenn Lowry
Director
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

2012

Brian Ferriso
Director
Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR

ITALIAN

Antonio Paolucci
Superintendent, Museums of Florence
Former Director, Vatican Museums

Salvatore Settis
Professor
Director, Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa

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Museums of Florence

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Ministry of Culture

Rossella Vodret
Superintendent
Museums of Rome

Antonia P. Recchia
Secretary General
Ministry of Culture

FIAC EXCELLENCY AWARD WINNERS

AMERICAN

2013

Colin B. Bailey
Director
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

2014

Thomas P. Campbell
Director
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

2015

Eric Lee
Director
Kimbell Art Museum, Ft. Worth, TX

2016

Davide Gasparotto
Senior Curator of Painting
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

2017

Ian Wardropper
Director
The Frick Collection, New York

2018

Richard Armstrong
Director, The Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum, New York

2019

Xavier F. Salomon
Chief Curator
The Frick Collection, New York

ITALIAN

Daniela Porro
Superintendent
The Museums of Rome

Mariella Utili
Director
State Museums of Campania, Naples

Eike Schmidt
Director
Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence

Paola Marini
Director
Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

Gabriele Finaldi
Director
National Gallery, London

Paola D'Agostino
Director
The Bargello Museums, Florence

LA FORNARINA

Raffaello Sanzio, known as Raphael (1483–1520)
La Fornarina, ca. 1520
Oil on panel
33 5/8 x 24 1/4 in. (87 x 63 cm)
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Barberini, Rome

The inaugural project of the Foundation for Italian Art and Culture exemplifies FIAC's mission to present the finest examples of Italian art to American audiences. Spearheaded by Giuliano Urbani, the Italian minister of culture, and Claudio Strinati, the superintendent of museums in Rome, FIAC's first endeavor facilitated the loan of Raphael's celebrated painting *La Fornarina* from the Palazzo Barberini to The Frick Collection in New York. Under director Anne Poulet, The Frick Collection became FIAC's first American partner, and it has maintained a strong alliance with us ever since. The single-loan exhibition, an unusual format at the time, traveled to three venues and was met with critical acclaim. The New York Post declared, "For the next months, this may well be the most important painting in the Western Hemisphere."

Executed in the last years of Raphael's life, when the artist was at the height of his fame and ability, this portrait has been known as *La Fornarina* since the eighteenth century and has long been thought to depict Raphael's beloved, a Sienese woman named Margherita Luti, the daughter of a baker (*fornaio*). However, in recent times it has been proposed that the woman may be either a courtesan or an allegorical representation of profane love.

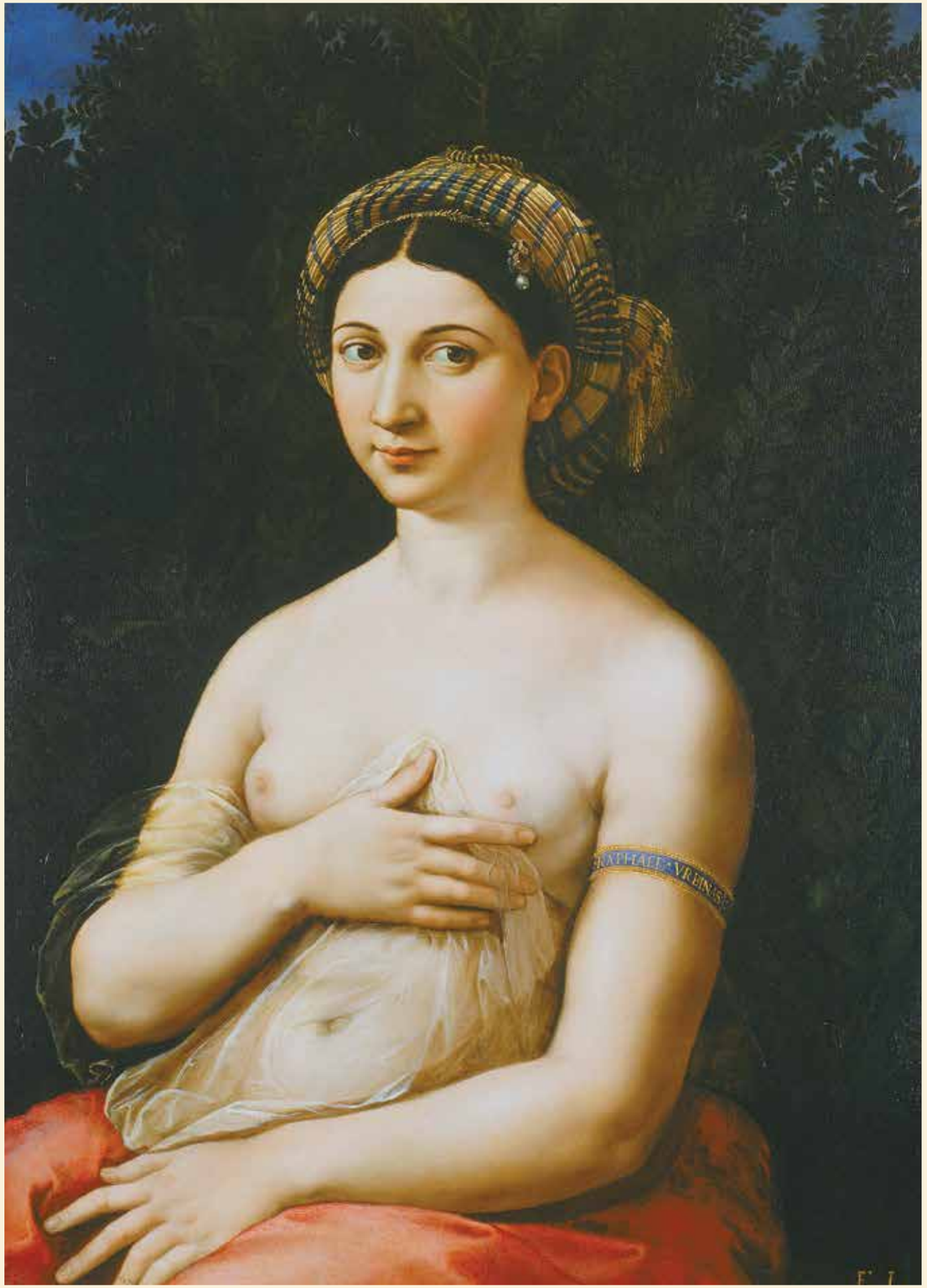
Her seated pose recalls that of a Venus pudica and for this reason evokes visual associations with modesty even as her breasts are bared. Her right hand holds a transparent veil that heightens her state of semi-nudity, while her left hand is positioned in front of her genitals. The sensuality of the image is underscored by the inclusion in the background of a myrtle bush, a symbol associated with Venus.

The raven-haired woman turns her head slightly to the right, averting her large brown eyes from the spectator. The elaborate turban and its suspended jeweled pin draw attention to her face and complement the blue and gold of the band she wears on her left arm. While Raphael placed his signature, Raphael Urbinas (Raphael of Urbino), on the armband, some scholars have suggested the painting is a collaborative work, carried out with assistance from Raphael's most important pupil, Giulio Romano.

Colin B. Bailey, Director, The Morgan Library and Museum, formerly Chief Curator, The Frick Collection

The Frick Collection, New York	December 2, 2004 – January 30, 2005
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston	February 13 – April 17, 2005
Indianapolis Museum of Art	May 6 – June 26, 2005

Illustrated publication: Claudio Strinati, *Raphael's Fornarina*
(New York: Frick Collection, 2004)



SAINT MATTHEW

Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378 – 1455)
Saint Matthew, 1419–21
Bronze
H. 8 feet 10 in. (2.7 m)
Museo di Orsanmichele, Florence

Statues of seven holy protectors of Florence traveled to Washington, DC in 2005 for an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art (NGA) celebrating their recently completed conservation. Ghiberti's colossal bronze *Saint Matthew* (1419–21), Nanni di Banco's marble *Four Crowned Martyred Saints* (ca. 1409–16), and Verrocchio's bronze *Christ and Saint Thomas* (1466–83) made the journey to, "Monumental Sculpture from Renaissance Florence: Ghiberti, Nanni di Banco, and Verrocchio at Orsanmichele," co-organized by the NGA and the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence, in collaboration with the Soprintedenza al Patrimonio Storico Artistico e Etnoantropologico and the Soprintendenza di Beni Architettonici e Ambientali di Firenze, Pistoia e Prato, Florence. Eleonora Luciano (1963–2017), assistant curator of sculpture at the National Gallery, was the curator. Support came from an anonymous donor, an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities, and the Foundation for Italian Art and Culture, which sponsored conservation work on the Ghiberti statue.

Karen Wilkin wrote about the show in the *Wall Street Journal* (December 22, 2005):

> ***This spectacular exhibition unites key works spanning roughly the entire Quattrocento by three of the most inventive, influential artists of the period. Individually, each of the exhibited sculptures is a masterwork; collectively, they provide a capsule history of sculpture in 15th-century Florence—which is to say they define "Italian Renaissance." And—miracolo!—everything is at optimum viewing height, beautifully lit, surrounded by ample space.***

The statues belong to a series created over many decades for outdoor display in the center of Florence. Each was designed to stand in a niche on the exterior of Orsanmichele, a grain market and storage facility converted to a church in the fourteenth century under the patronage of the Florentine trade guilds. In 1406, the guilds, each of which had been assigned a niche, were pressed to complete their patron saint within ten years. Competing for the most compelling image, many guilds sought out the most brilliant sculptors of their time to create heroic spiritual presences. The exhibition celebrated a conservation project, begun in 1984 by the Pietre Dure that led to the statues' display in a new museum which opened at Orsanmichele in 1996. After more than five hundred years of exposure, the originals are now protected in a new interior hall above the church and are visible from close up; replicas are displayed in the outdoor niches to perpetuate the impact of the statues on the cityscape.

The show was seen by 130,683 visitors.

Alison Luchs, Curator, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC Sept. 18, 2005 – Feb. 26, 2006

Brochure: Eleonora Luciano, "Monumental Sculpture from Renaissance Florence: Ghiberti, Nanni di Banco, and Verrocchio at Orsanmichele." (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2005)

VIRGIN ANNUNCIATE

Antonello da Messina (1430–1479)
Virgin Annunciate
Oil on panel
17 3/4 x 13 5/8 in. (45 x 34.5 cm)
Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palermo

With support from the Italian Ministry of Culture and representatives of the Regione Sicilia, FIAC was able to secure the loan of two of the three paintings that formed the core of the exhibition "Antonello da Messina: Sicily's Renaissance Master," organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York. All of the works are held by separate museums in the artist's native Sicily and were seen for the first time in the United States on this occasion. They were displayed with four others by Antonello—three paintings and a drawing—as well as four related works by the artist's Netherlandish and Venetian peers and followers. At the Sicilian-themed opening gala, staged at the Met and co-sponsored by FIAC, Metropolitan Museum curator of European paintings Keith Christiansen was presented with the Foundation's annual Excellency Award.

Christiansen has called Antonello "the first truly European painter," and Antonello's *Virgin Annunciate* is an undisputed masterpiece: "One of the single finest panels of the entire [fifteenth] century," according to former Metropolitan Museum director Philippe de Montebello. The painting portrays the Virgin as a humble young Mediterranean woman veiled in a plain blue mantle. The figure's gesture and lowered gaze convey the quiet intensity of an exalted moment.

While Antonello spent most of his life in Messina, his birthplace, it is known that he apprenticed in Naples and later worked in Venice. During these sojourns and perhaps in the course of additional travels, he assimilated Northern European naturalism as well as the abstract geometries and delicate sensibility associated with the Tuscan artist Piero della Francesca, weaving together these cultural threads in devotional pictures, portraits, and landscapes. By the time Antonello arrived in Venice, he was himself an influencer, particularly in the realm of portraiture. *Portrait of a Man*, one of his earliest surviving works in this genre, exemplifies his unparalleled capacity to capture not only what his subjects looked like, but what they *were* like, in manner and spirit. The third painting shown was *Madonna and Child, with a Praying Franciscan Donor,* from Messina's Museo Regionale.

The show contains only seven works by Antonello and four by other relevant artists... but it's a powerhouse. — New York Times

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York December 13, 2005–March 5, 2006

Exhibition catalogue: Gioacchino Barbera, with contributions by Keith Christiansen and Andrea Bayer, *Antonello da Messina: Sicily's Renaissance Master* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005)

SENSO UNICO: A CONTEMPORARY SHOW OF EIGHT ITALIAN ARTISTS

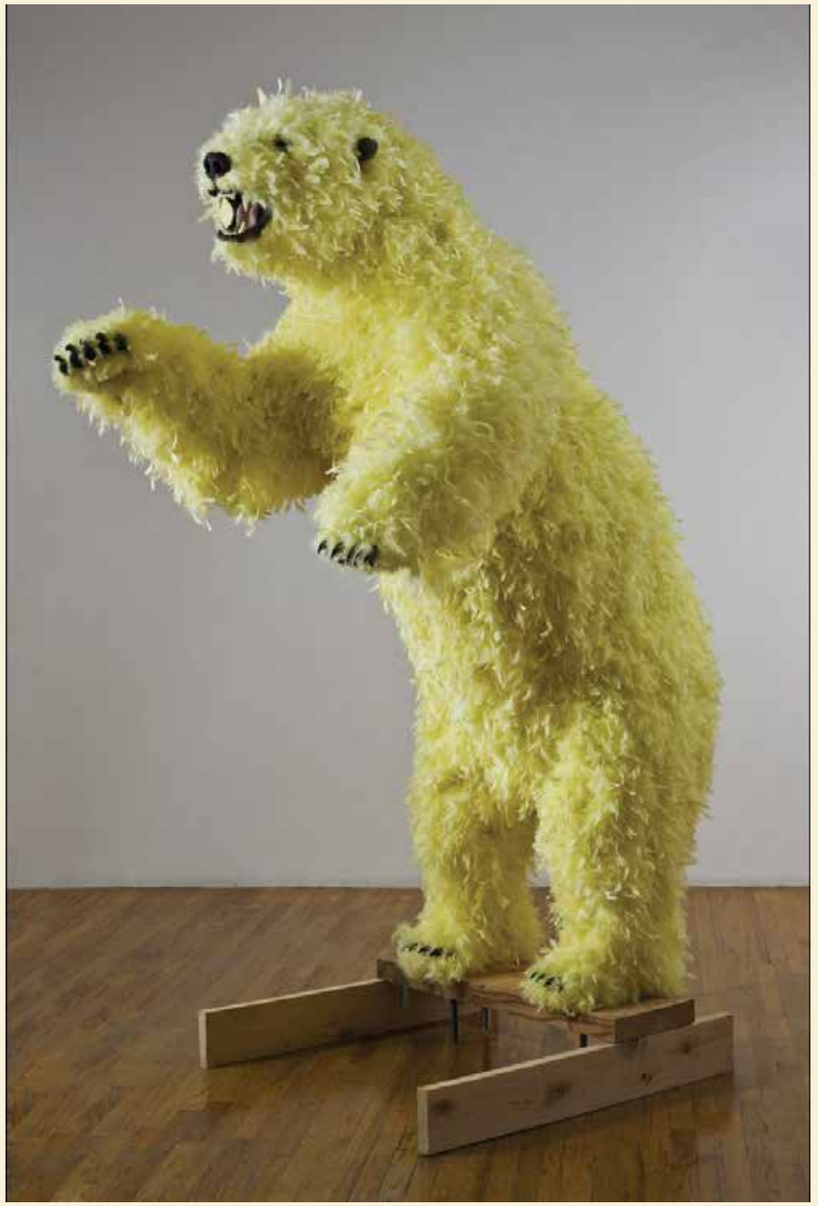
MoMA PS 1 presented “Senso Unico,” an exhibition featuring works by eight Italian artists who had gained prominence in the international contemporary art world during the previous decade. The show took a close look at the art of Vanessa Beecroft, Paolo Canevari, Angelo Filomeno, Ra di Martino, Adrian Paci, Paolo Pivi, Pietro Roccasalva, and Francesco Vezzoli.

Not linked by any particular school, movement, or shared artistic vision, these influential artists presented their distinctive works together for the first time in this exhibition. Standouts included Paola Pivi’s extraordinary grizzly bear, with yellow feathers in place of fur; the US premiere of Francesco Vezzoli’s acclaimed film installation *Marlene Redux: A True Hollywood Story!*; Paolo Canevari’s *Continents*, a video projection; two luminous, ghostly portraits by Vanessa Beecroft; Adrian Paci’s painting series *Vangelo Secondo Pasolini*; and a moving video projection by Rä di Martino. Pietro Roccasalva recreated an installation of two magical rooms, and Angelo Filomeno presented a diptych of embroidered paintings plus two spectacular feathered helmet sculptures.

“Senso Unico” was curated by PS 1 Founding Director Alanna Heiss and organized by MoMA PS1 in collaboration with FIAC. The exhibition was made possible by The Alexander Bodini Foundation, Terry Allen Kramer (1933–2019), Enzo Viscusi, and the International Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

Senso Unico gave PS 1 a much-appreciated opportunity to update its long commitment to contemporary Italian art, which included a major exhibition on Arte Povera from as far back as 1981. With FIAC’s support we were able to focus attention on eight prominent living artists and their remarkably diverse creations.
—Alanna Heiss, Founding Director, PS 1

MoMA PS 1, Queens, New York October 21, 2007 – January 7, 2008



Paola Pivi
Life is Great, 2007
Polyurethane foam, plastic, wood, feathers
203 x 198 x 112 cm

ANTEA

Girolamo Francesco Maria Mazzola, known as Parmigianino (1503–1540)
Antea, ca. 1531–1534
Oil on canvas
54 x 34 in. (136 x 86 cm)
Museo di Capodimonte, Naples

Working closely with Nicola Spinosa, then director of the Museo di Capodimonte, FIAC collaborated with The Frick Collection for a second time to facilitate the loan of Parmigianino's *Antea* from the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples. The painting had not been seen in the United States in more than twenty years.

Seductive and enigmatic, the beguiling portrait enthralled visitors to "Parmigianino's *Antea*: A Beautiful Artifice," the 2008 exhibition held at The Frick Collection. The elegant subject stands against a dark green background, captivating viewers with the intensity of her gaze. Although the title appears to name her, it was given to the painting only after the artist's death; the woman's identity remains unknown. While she has been identified variously as a courtesan, a bride, and the painter's mistress, the work probably does not depict an actual person. Rather, it likely describes a Renaissance poetic ideal, an emblematic depiction of beauty itself. Parmigianino lavished attention on the woman's dress and accessories. Magnificently attired, she wears a sumptuous silk gown with voluminous sleeves and a delicately embroidered apron. A marten fur, associated with both fertility and the taming of carnal desire, is draped over her right shoulder; the animal's head rests on her gloved hand. Her other hand suggestively toys with a chain-link necklace that complements the pearl earrings framing her oval face.

As noted by the exhibition's curator, the woman's delicate facial features correspond precisely with those in one of Parmigianino's male figure drawings. This revelation, which points to an androgynous ideal, provides a clue to what is perhaps the portrait's true subject: a comparison between the artifice of painting, the desire to depict an unattainable poetic ideal, and nature itself.

Colin B. Bailey, Director, The Morgan Library and Museum, formerly Chief Curator, The Frick Collection

The Frick Collection, New York January 29 – May 1, 2008

Exhibition catalogue: Christina Neilson, *Parmigianino's* Antea: *A Beautiful Artifice* (New York: Frick Collection, 2008)

LEONARDO DA VINCI: DRAWINGS FROM THE BIBLIOTECA REALE IN TURIN

Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519)
Study of a Young Woman's Face [Angel for the Virgin of the Rocks], 1480s
Metalpoint heightened with white on laid paper prepared with a buff colored ground
7 1/8 x 6 ¼ in. (18.1 x 15.9 cm)
Biblioteca Reale, Turin

In 2008, FIAC initiated and made possible the exhibition "Leonardo da Vinci: Drawings from the Biblioteca Reale in Turin," organized by Jeannine A. O'Grody, curator of European Art at the Birmingham Museum of Art, in Alabama. The exhibition featured one of the most significant groups of drawings by Leonardo ever loaned to a US museum and was the first presentation outside Italy of many of Leonardo's drawings from Turin's world-renowned collection. Eleven of the Biblioteca's thirteen drawings were included as was the artist's celebrated *Codex on the Flight of Birds* (1505/06). These works spanned some thirty years of Leonardo's creativity. They included meticulously detailed anatomical studies of humans and animals as well as sketches of architecture and machines. Among the highlights was the study of a young woman's face (opposite) that the art historian Kenneth Clark described as "one of the most beautiful [drawings] in the world." The work served as a preparatory drawing for the angel in the first version of the *Virgin of the Rocks*. Another drawing in the exhibition showed a series of figure studies related to Leonardo's unfinished mural *The Battle of Anghiari*, his celebrated commission for the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. The Codex contains eighteen fascinating sheets on which Leonardo considers the movement of birds and the possibility of flight for humans. These drawn deliberations are interspersed with sketches of flowers, architecture, rivers, and diagrams showcasing the artist's restless, ingenious mind. An interactive digital display enabled visitors to explore the pages of the Codex that were not included in the exhibition.

Some forty thousand visitors attended the exhibition in Birmingham, where it received national and international press coverage before traveling to the Legion of Honor in San Francisco. The Birmingham Museum of Art also hosted a scholarly symposium and published a fully illustrated catalogue with contributions by Jeannine A. O'Grody, Carmen Bambach, Juliana Barone and Wolfgang Kemp, and Richard O. Prum.

Robert Schindler, Curator, Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama

Gail Andrews, director of the Birmingham Museum, said the loan had come about after discussions with the Foundation for Italian Art and Culture, whose mission is to promote the knowledge of Italian Art. – New York Times

Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama	September 28–November 9, 2008
Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco	November 15, 2008–January 4, 2009

Exhibition catalogue: Jeannine A. O'Grody, *Leonardo da Vinci: Drawings from the Biblioteca Reale in Turin* (Birmingham, Alabama: Birmingham Museum of Art, 2008)

LA DONNA VELATA

Raffaello Sanzio, known as Raphael (1483–1520)
La Donna Velata (The Woman with the Veil), ca. 1516
Oil on canvas
33 1/2 x 25 1/4 in. (85 x 64 cm)
Palazzo Pitti, Florence

The Woman with the Veil is one of the most celebrated of Raphael's portraits. The sitter, shown half-length against a featureless, dark background, succumbs to the viewer's gaze, creating a unique intimacy. The lavish gold and white of her attire and the extravagant form and painterly bravura of her left sleeve are contrasted with her soft facial features.

The gemstones in the sitter's jewelry suggest that this may be a bridal portrait: the amber of her necklace is associated with fertility; the ruby, sapphire, and pearl of her hair ornament are symbols of love, fidelity, and the goddess Venus, respectively. However, neither they nor any other aspects of the painting securely identify the woman. Her face recalls Raphael's portayals of the Virgin in two of his major devotional works, the *Sistine Madonna* and the *Madonna della Seggiola*, both done about four years earlier. She also resembles the provocative nude in *La Fornarina* (p. 19). If *The Woman with the Veil* was modeled on a specific individual, Raphael transformed her likeness into an idealized form of female beauty.

In Portland, the exhibition of *The Woman with the Veil* was transformational. Not only did it give our community the opportunity to focus on one of the great works from the High Renaissance, but it also set the stage for a series of other extraordinary works to be highlighted, including Titian's *La Bella* (1536–38), also thanks to FIAC, and El Greco's *The Holy Family with Saint Mary Magdalen* (1590–95). The presentation encouraged slow looking, and we welcomed over twenty thousand individuals. *The Woman with the Veil* attracted extensive coverage in the local press and was the subject of a lecture by Renaissance scholar Jesse Locker. Prior to the painting's presentation in Portland, representatives from the museum traveled to Florence to help raise funds for the exhibition and to raise recognition of our museum's desire and ability to bring the world's great works of art to our community. We are extremely grateful to the foresight of Daniele Bodini and the entire leadership of FIAC for facilitating this remarkable cultural exchange with the Pitti Palace, one of the world's finest repositories of Italian art.

Brian Ferriso, Director, Portland Art Museum

Portland Art Museum, Oregon	October 24, 2009–January 3, 2010
Arte Italia & The Nevada Museum of Art, Reno	January 9–March 21 2010
Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin	March 26–June 6, 2010

Exhibition catalogue: Jesse Locker, *Raphael: The Woman with the Veil* (Oregon: Portland Art Museum, 2009)

LA BUONA FORTUNA

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, known as Caravaggio (1571–1610)
La Buona Fortuna (The Fortune Teller), ca. 1594
Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 59 in. (115 x 150 cm)
Musei Capitolini, Rome

FIAC's efforts to display the best of Italian art throughout the United States resulted in the presentation of Caravaggio's *The Fortune Teller* in New York and Louisville, Kentucky, in 2011. The loan of this important early work gave American viewers a rare opportunity to see for themselves a painting by this revolutionary master, as fewer than a dozen of his works are on public display in the US.

Caravaggio was just twenty-four or twenty-five and a relative newcomer to Rome when he painted this remarkable picture. As Europe's artistic capital, Rome boasted a sophisticated art establishment that favored paintings of noble subjects rendered in an idealized manner. *The Fortune Teller* introduced into this refined aesthetic environment a radically new type of painting that was shocking in its novelty. Instead of an elevated subject, Caravaggio chose a common street scene showing a Gypsy girl reading a young dandy's palm while stealing a gold ring from his finger. The artist chose his models from the streets around him and painted them swiftly, from life, foregoing preparatory studies and underdrawing.

The Fortune Teller launched Caravaggio's success. It was probably the first of the artist's paintings purchased by the influential Roman collector Cardinal Francesco del Monte. The cardinal became Caravaggio's patron and introduced him to the world of important collectors and prestigious public commissions. Even after his death, Caravaggio continued to change the course of European painting through the profound influence his artistic innovations exerted on painters throughout Europe.

At the Speed Art Museum, in Louisville, *The Fortune Teller* was the centerpiece of a focus exhibition exploring Caravaggio's effect on artists working in France, Flanders, and the Netherlands in the early seventeenth century. The comparative works were drawn from the Speed Art Museum's own small but significant collection of paintings by the Caravaggisti, as Caravaggio's followers are known. Their paintings showed how elements of Caravaggio's style were reinterpreted not only by artists who studied his works directly but also by those who admired the works of his emulators.

"Caravaggio's The Fortune Teller: A Masterpiece from the Capitoline Museums, Rome" was FIAC's first collaboration with the Speed Art Museum.

The display of The Fortune Teller allowed Louisville museum-goers the unique opportunity to study Caravaggio's profound influence on these artists firsthand.
— Kim Spence, Director of collections and exhibitions, the Speed Museum

Italian Cultural Institute, New York	May 11–15, 2011
Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky	May 18 – June 5, 2011

LA BELLA

Tiziano Vecellio, known as Titian (1490–1576)
La Bella (Woman in a Blue Dress), 1536
Oil on canvas
39 3/8 x 29 1/2 in. (100 x 75 cm)
Palazzo Pitti, Florence

Continuing in its efforts to promote the best of Italian art throughout the United States, FIAC facilitated the first trip of Titian's celebrated *La Bella* (beautiful woman) to the US, where the magnificent portrait traveled to three museums and was seen by thousands of people. At each institution, the work was the subject of a single-masterpiece exhibition, enabling spectators to concentrate full attention on the painting's visual splendor, freshly renewed after recent cleaning and restoration.

Titian was the most celebrated painter of Renaissance Venice, famed for his religious paintings and portraits as well as for his images of beautiful mythological women. His clients included Pope Paul III and the Hapsburg emperor Charles V, both of whom he portrayed on multiple occasions. *La Bella* was first owned by the Duke of Urbino, who, along with his consort, Eleanora Gonzaga, was among Titian's many eminent sitters. Scholars have long tried to identify the individual portrayed in *La Bella.* Her facial features match those found in two other female portraits by Titian—*Woman in a Fur Coat* and *Woman in a Plumed Hat*—and also those in his *Venus of Urbino*. These resemblances suggest that the same model was used for all these pictures.

La Bella's opulent attire signals wealth, while her direct gaze, rouged cheeks, slightly upturned mouth, and alluring shoulders and décolleté appear as notes of seduction. She could represent a courtesan or a newly betrothed member of the Venetian nobility. Her costly damask gown is cut in the latest fashion. Trimmed with lace and fur and embellished with gold embroidery that echoes the golden highlights of her stylishly arranged hair, the garment is rendered in exquisite detail with a confident brush. Lest we overlook the most precious of her accessories—presumably gifts from an admirer—she points to the *zibellino,* or sable fur, she wears over her right forearm.

La Bella's visit to America was a momentous occasion, and even more so since she had just undergone the cleaning and restoration that made her more resplendent than ever. I am so grateful to FIAC for making it possible for American audiences to experience firsthand such remarkable works of art, thereby bringing Italy and the United States closer. – Eric Lee, Director, Kimbell Art Museum

Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth	July 22–September 18, 2011
Nevada Museum of Art and arte italia, Reno	September 23–November 20, 2011
Portland Art Museum, Oregon	November 25, 2011–January 29, 2012

Exhibition catalogue: Marco Ciatti, Fausta Navarro, and Patrizia Riitano, eds. *Titian's* La Bella*: Woman in a Blue Dress* (Florence: Edizioni Firenze, 2011)

JUDITH SLAYING HOLOFERNES

Artemisia Gentileschi (1593 – ca. 1656)
Judith Slaying Holofernes, ca. 1620
Oil on canvas
78 3/4 x 64 in. (200 x 162.5 cm)
Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence

Working closely with Cristina Acidini, former Superintendent of the Museums of Florence, and Eve Straussman-Pflanzer, then a curator at the Art Institute of Chicago, FIAC facilitated the exceptional loan of Artemisia Gentileschi's defining work, *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, from the Gallerie degli Uffizi, in Florence. The spectacular image derives from the Old Testament account of the beautiful widow Judith, who deceived the Assyrian general Holofernes with her seductive charm and then decapitated him with his own sword, thus bringing to an end the fateful siege he had imposed upon her city. As seen in the comparative works included in the Chicago museum's exhibition "Violence and Virtue: Artemisia Gentileschi's *Judith Slaying Holofernes*," Judith's heroic deed was frequently depicted in European art as a fait accompli: these images typically show Judith, accompanied by her maidservant, holding Holofernes's severed head or carrying it in a basket. By contrast, Artemisia depicts the execution of the violent act itself by two powerful female figures. Blood spurts, spattering Judith's elegant gold dress and ample décolleté, and runs down the bedsheets in rivulets that descend to the bottom edge of the canvas. The brutality of the grisly scene has been interpreted partly as the artist's cathartic response to having been raped when she was seventeen.

Artemisia gained international acclaim during her lifetime and supported herself through her art. Yet while her talent was indisputable—she was the first woman to be admitted to the prestigious Accademia delle Arti del Disegno, in Florence—her visceral imagery and naturalistic style, nowhere more apparent than in the Gallerie degli Uffizi's *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, had their detractors. After her death her ambitious, unladylike paintings slipped into obscurity. Rediscovered in the twentieth century, they are now considered among the finest works of the seventeenth century.

Gentileschi's* Judith Slaying Holofernes*...is the centerpiece of "Violence and Virtue," an exhibition [that]...explores the painting in the context of Gentileschi's career, and looks at the ways other Renaissance and Baroque artists depicted Judith, the biblical heroine. –ARTnews

The Foundation for Italian Art and Culture in New York played an indispensable role in securing the loan. Individual recognition is due to Daniele Bodini and Alain Elkann as well as to Olivia D'Aponte." —Eve Straussman-Pflanzer, Curator, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

Art Institute of Chicago October 17, 2013–January 9, 2014

Exhibition catalogue: Eve Straussman-Pflanzer, *Violence and Virtue: Artemisia Gentileschi's* Judith Slaying Holofernes (Art Institute of Chicago, 2013)

SAINT JEROME AND A SUPPLICANT

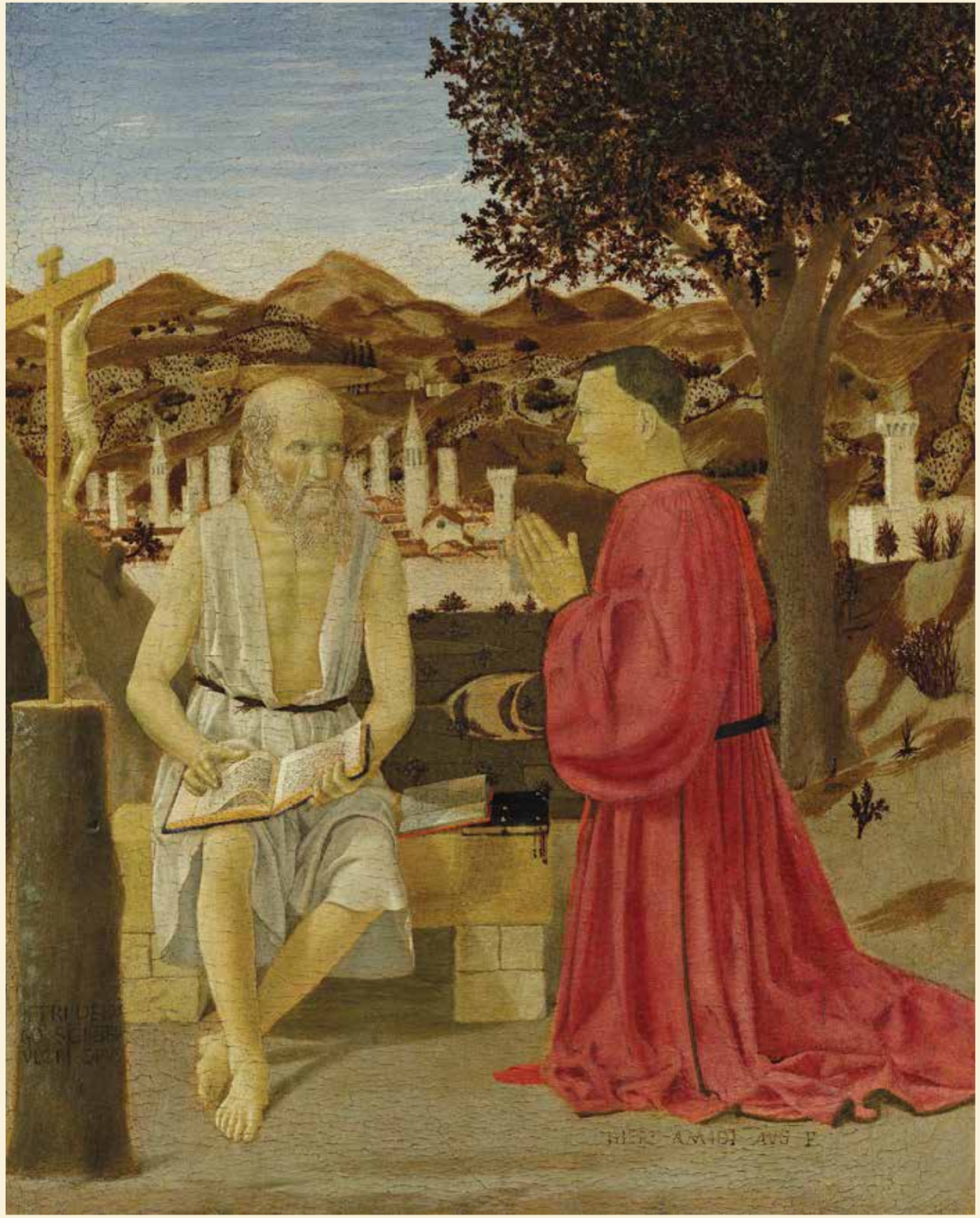
Piero della Francesca (1415/20–1492)
Saint Jerome and a Supplicant, ca. 1460–64
Tempera and oil on wood
19 1/2 x 16 1/2 in. (49.4 x 42 cm)
Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

In 2012 during a visit to the Gallerie dell'Accademia with Matteo Ceriana, then the institution's director, Alain Elkann and his host discussed the Accademia's challenges, FIAC's mission, and which, if any, of the great works in the collection could travel to the US. When they came upon Piero della Francesca's small, faded yet powerful picture Saint Jerome and a Supplicant, the conversation immediately turned to restoration. Honoring its commitment to conservation, FIAC supported the subsequent restoration of the panel at the renowned Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence. The loan of this highly prized painting to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art was set in motion, and what began as a conversation about the exhibition of a single work grew into a much larger project.

Saint Jerome and a Supplicant, one of only four surviving signed works by Piero and one of his least studied masterpieces, was the catalyst for the Metropolitan Museum's "Piero della Francesca: Personal Encounters," an exhibition devoted to Piero's four private devotional paintings—his entire output in this genre. Dispersed in European and US collections, the works, which span the artist's career, had never before been brought together. A series of happy coincidences, including the recent repatriation of one of the pictures by the Italian Carabinieri Command, allowed the Met's curator of European paintings, Keith Christiansen, to expertly orchestrate these works in a deeply researched exhibition. The occasion marked the opening of the Metropolitan Museum's new European Paintings Galleries; served as a glowing finale for the Year of Italian Culture; and gave rise to fresh scholarship and fascinating insights into Piero's art. Christiansen said the exhibition was "exactly the kind of collaborative project that the Metropolitan Museum and I really enjoy doing."

Saint Jerome, the late fourth-century scholar and translator of the Bible, is depicted as an aged ascetic, his plain tunic belted at the waist with thorny vines. The elegantly dressed supplicant kneels before him in profile. A name written on the ground near the hem of the supplicant's robe suggests that the figure represents Girolamo Amadi, a wealthy Venetian whose family maintained close ties to its roots in Tuscany. Amadi would likely have been drawn to a Tuscan artist such as Piero to execute a homage to his patron saint. Against a background of hills sheltering a walled city with Renaissance-style towers, the two men lock eyes, bridging a gap of over a thousand years.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York January 14–March 30, 2014
Exhibition catalogue: Keith Christiansen, ed. *Piero della Francesca: Personal Encounters* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013)



SCHIAVA TURCA

Francesco Mazzola, known as Parmigianino (1503–1540)
Schiava Turca, ca. 1531–34
Oil on panel
26 3/4 x 20 7/8 in. (68 x 53 cm)
Galleria Nazionale di Parma

Celebrated in the sixteenth century as "Raphael reborn," Parmigianino is known for his graceful, elegant figures and striking portraits. No painted portraits by the artist are in a US museum collection. What is more, only about four of Parmigianino's surviving portraits depict women. Of these, Parmigianino's two most compelling portraits of women were exhibited in the US in collaboration with FIAC: *Antea* (see p. 25), in 2008, and *Schiava Turca*, in 2014.

At The Frick Collection in New York and the Legion of Honor in San Francisco (where *Schiava Turca* traveled after its presentation at the Frick), Parmigianino's portrait was given pride of place at the heart of galleries devoted to it, surrounded by complementary works. At the Frick, *Schiava Turca* held court among the Frick's lauded portrait of *Lodovico Capponi* by Bronzino, Titian's *Pietro Aretino*, and a portrait of a man by Parmigianino loaned from a New York private collection for the special occasion of *Schiava Turca*'s presentation.

Mysteries surround the portrait: the identity of the woman is unknown, and exactly when and by whom it was commissioned is uncertain. One thing is sure: it does not represent a Turkish slave (*schiava turca*). The painting's title was conferred in the eighteenth century by someone who evidently mistook the sitter's accessories—her headdress (a fashionable Northern Italian *balzo*), ostrich fan, and sleeve embellished with a gold chain—for those of an elegant captive in eastern dress. But, as is argued in the exhibition catalogue, these elements allude to the woman's class, character, and profession, and would have been readily understood by Parmigianino's sophisticated patrons. Because of her hat badge depicting the winged horse Pegasus, traditionally an emblem associated with poetic inspiration, scholars have suggested that she is a male poet's muse. However, hat badges were typically an accessory of male dress, and its placement at her head, while she points her feather fan to her heart, suggests that, rather than being a muse, she might be a poet herself. Her lively expression and the torsion of her pose, so at odds with the conventions of female portraiture of the time, indicate that the so-called *schiava* was an engaging, self-possessed subject—one very much in command.

FIAC's initiative to bring Parma's iconic picture, Parmigianino's *Schiava Turca*, from its National Gallery to in the United States would not have taken place without the strong interest and support of long time FIAC board member, Mario Gabelli. The foundation's third collaboration with The Frick Collection to feature a female portrait from the Renaissance (see pp. 19 and 27) was celebrated with a beautiful opening reception in the Frick's storied Garden Court and significant press coverage in New York and Italy.

Aimee Ng, Curator, The Frick Collection

Like the Mona Lisa, the 'Turkish Slave' looks directly at the viewer from across the centuries. But unlike Leonardo da Vinci's enigmatic lady, this young woman's gaze leaves little to the imagination. —Wall Street Journal

The Frick Collection, New York May 13–July 20, 2014
Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco July 26–October 5, 2014
Exhibition catalogue: Aimee Ng, *The Poetry of Parmigianino's Schiava Turca* (New York: Frick Collection, 2014)

PORTRAIT OF A LADY WITH A UNICORN

Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, known as Raphael (1483–1520)
Portrait of a Lady with a Unicorn, ca. 1505–6
Oil on canvas transferred from panel
25 5/8 x 20 15/16 in. (67.7 x 53.2 cm)
Galleria Borghese, Rome

The depiction of a blond-haired young woman holding a tiny unicorn on her lap has delighted and puzzled viewers for centuries. Just one hundred years after the painting was completed, the circumstances of its making were forgotten. No one knew who the sitter was or who had painted her. Only in the early twentieth century was Raphael recognized as the work's author. The exhibition's catalogue suggests that the subject is Laura Orsini delle Rovere represented as a thirteen-year-old newlywed. Laura is thought to have been the child of Giulia Farnese, whose coat of arms included a unicorn, and Pope Alexander VI. The pope himself may have commissioned Raphael to paint the portrait on the occasion of Laura's marriage. It is possible that Raphael, then based in Florence, never actually saw his young model, who lived in Rome, but modeled her features on those of the ideal female described in the love sonnets of Petrarch. Widely read at the time, these poems were inspired by Petrarch's own beloved, who was also named Laura. Mystery solved?

A curator from the Cincinnati Art Museum approached FIAC with the ambitious idea of exhibiting Raphael's *Lady with a Unicorn*, which had never before traveled to the United States. As the Foundation had launched its activities with a Raphael exhibition (see p. 16), there was great enthusiasm to pursue this particular loan. Careful coordination with the Superintendent of the Museums of Rome, Daniela Porro, and the longtime Director of the Galleria Borghese, Anna Coliva, led to the iconic *Lady with a Unicorn* being graciously sent to the United States.

FIAC made this important exhibition possible in both Cincinnati and San Francisco, where many delighted museum visitors viewed Raphael's masterpiece in person for the first time.
– Esther Bell, Chief Curator, Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts

One of the most visually stunning objects to reside in the city right now.
– Cincinnati Citybeat

I like to think that sometimes, though rarely, paintings can be thieves themselves. That sometimes you are the one briefly taken, stolen by a work's sublimity.
– San Francisco Chronicle

Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio October 3, 2015–January 3, 2016
Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco January 9–April 10, 2016
Exhibition catalogue: Esther Bell, ed., *Sublime Beauty: Raphael's Portrait of a Lady with a Unicorn* (Cincinnati Art Museum and London: GILES, 2015)

ALLEGORICAL PORTRAIT OF DANTE

Agnolo Bronzino (1503–1572)
Allegorical Portrait of Dante, 1531–32
Oil on canvas,
51 1/8 x 53 1/2 in. (130 x 136 cm)
Private collection, Florence, on extended loan to the Gallerie degli Uffizi

Allegorical Portrait of Dante was exhibited for the first time in the United States on the 750th anniversary of the birth of the renowned Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265–1321). The painting is little known even in Italy. Privately owned, it has only recently been placed on public display, at the Gallerie degli Uffizi, in Dante's native Florence. The US exhibition was held at the Italian Cultural Institute of New York and was supported by FIAC.

Bronzino shows Dante seated on a boulder, facing left. The poet looks into the distance toward a mountain (Purgatory) that rises from a lake. His profile, with its hooked nose and protruding chin, is immediately recognizable as the one that has been handed down to us by history. Dante is shown wearing the red robe and laurel-wreath crown of a poet.

According to Giorgio Vasari's account of Bronzino's life, published in 1568, the portrait was commissioned to decorate a room in the house of the Florentine banker Bartolomeo Bettini. For the same room, Bronzino, who was himself a Florentine and a poet, was also asked to paint portraits of Petrarch and Boccaccio. Their love poems, like Dante's, were written in the Tuscan vernacular. The portrait of Dante, the only one of the three known to survive, is an important chapter in the construction of Dante as a model poet, a Renaissance rather than a medieval figure, and embodies a new culture based on the highly stylized discourse of art, Tuscan language, and love.

The portrait was also politically charged. Bettini and his friends were committed to the defense of the Florentine Republic against the tyranny of Duke Alessandro de' Medici. The opening text of Dante's *Paradiso XXV*, legible in the manuscript the poet holds in this portrait, expresses his desire to return from exile, evoking precisely the theme of collision between tyranny and political freedom.

The New York exhibition was part of a FIAC project dedicated to exhibitions built around a single painting of the highest quality, with the mission of promoting the artistic excellence of Italian culture among the American public. The choice of the painting was also based on its particular ties to the United States. A copy of the portrait, at the National Gallery in Washington, DC, was attributed to Bronzino until 2002, when the original painting reappeared in Italy. The superior quality of the Uffizi version and its lunette shape, which corresponds perfectly with Vasari's description of its original architectural setting, made it possible to identify the work in Washington as a subsequent copy.

Fabio Finotti, Director, Italian Cultural Institute, New York

Italian Cultural Institute, New York December 15, 2015 – January 15, 2016

“**Guido Cagnacci: Dying Cleopatra**”
Italian Cultural Institute, New York December 2, 2016 – January 19, 2017

“Cagnacci: Painting Beauty and Death”
Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio March 12 – July 22, 2018

Publication: Lisa Hilton and Letizia Lodi, *The Death of Cleopatra* (Milan: Skira, 2016)

THE DEATH OF CLEOPATRA

Guido Cagnacci, (1601–1663)
Cleopatra Morente (The Death of Cleopatra), ca. 1660–62
Oil on canvas
47 1/2 x 62 1/4 in. (120 x 158 cm)
Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

The years 2016–18 do not mark a special anniversary for Guido Cagnacci, the great crafter of enigmatic, sensual paintings, master colorist and dramatist. Instead, these years became a watershed moment for this artist, it seems, simply because his time had come to be reappraised and celebrated, to be better understood within the history of the Italian Baroque.

These modern *anni di Cagnacci* did not come about without considerable effort, with the Foundation for Italian Art and Culture taking a leading role. Alain Elkann and James Bradburne, director general of the Brera, identified Cagnacci’s mysterious, powerful *Death of Cleopatra* in that museum’s collection as a candidate for conservation and then exhibition in America, where it could advance understanding of Italian art and open new eyes to the riches of Milan’s great paintings collection. The Italian Cultural Institute under the leadership of Dr. Giorgio van Straten became a natural third partner, and the painting was brought to New York at the end of 2016 and exhibited for six weeks at the institute’s landmark building on Park Avenue. FIAC underwrote an accompanying publication: *The Death of Cleopatra*, Letizia Lodi and Lisa Hilton’s evocative meditation on the Brera painting.

At almost the same time, the Frick Collection opened a single-painting exhibition featuring Cagnacci’s most ambitious canvas, the *Repentant Magdalene*, on loan from the Norton Simon Museum, accompanied by Xavier F. Salomon’s *The Art of Guido Cagnacci*, the first comprehensive publication in English on the artist. Also in 2016, The Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired its first painting by Cagnacci, coincidentally an early interpretation of Cleopatra by the artist.

During a visit to Milan in the summer of 2016, Cameron Kitchin, director of the Cincinnati Art Museum (CAM), was captivated by *The Death of Cleopatra*. The museum and FIAC already had a strong relationship, with one successful project behind us and another already under discussion (see pp. 40 and 50). So, in 2018, FIAC supported the painting’s journey across the Atlantic again—this time for the benefit of new audiences in Cincinnati. There it became the centerpiece of a dossier exhibition on Cagnacci that I organized. The Brera picture was exhibited alongside the Met’s recently-acquired *Cleopatra*, Cagnacci’s *David Holding Goliath’s Head*, lent by South Carolina’s Columbia Museum of Art fresh from a revelatory conservation treatment by the Kress Foundation, and Bernardo Strozzi’s *David with the Head of Goliath*, from the CAM’s own collection.

And thus the *anni di Cagnacci* carried on triumphantly into a second year, with the Brera picture as the linchpin. As we consider the remarkable painting itself, a more complex protagonist could hardly be imagined; sex, power, self-sacrifice, and the allure of the unknown are all bound up in Cagnacci’s choice of subject. Cagnacci used his subject to describe the beauty of the female body, but he also built profound ambiguities into the image. Cleopatra has the reddish-blond hair of a Venetian courtesan but sits enthroned in a chair similar to those in portraits of popes and monarchs. Cagnacci paints a naturalistic, contemporary woman staged as a historical exemplar of sacrifice and leadership. The figure is at once a warning against the pleasures of the flesh and an enticement to them. The strong side-lighting sculpts her bared upper body, soliciting our gaze. At the same time, she may be looking at us through eyes nearly closed, cloaked in shadow.

Peter Jonathan Bell, Curator, Cincinnati Art Museum

THE MARTYRDOM OF SAINT URSULA

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, known as Caravaggio (1571–1610)
The Martyrdom of Saint Ursula, 1610
Oil on canvas, 56 1/4 x 70 7/8 in. (143 x 180 cm)
Intesa Sanpaolo Collection
Gallerie d'Italia - Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano, Naples

From April 11 through July 9, 2017, the Metropolitan Museum hosted a painting by Caravaggio owned by the Banca Intesa Sanpaolo in Naples. Depicting the Martyrdom of Saint Ursula, the Intesa's painting was commissioned by the Genoese patrician Marcantonio Doria two months before Caravaggio's death, in July 1610. It is the last documented picture by the artist and is painted in an unprecedentedly minimalist style. We know that upon completion in Naples, the picture was set in the sun to speed dry, with unhappy results; the picture had to be returned to the artist. Finally, it was sent to Genoa by boat on May 27 and arrived on June 18. Marcantonio Doria's representative wrote him from Naples that all who saw the picture were "stupiti"—astonished—at its appearance. This is easy to understand, since both in its interpretation of the tragic event that is its subject and the abbreviated manner of painting the work has a parallel in the Metropolitan Museum's canvas by Caravaggio, *The Denial of Saint Peter*.

The Metropolitan's picture must have been painted at this same moment in Caravaggio's career as *The Martyrdom of St. Ursula*, though we first hear of it in the collection of a Roman printmaker in 1613, when it was given to Guido Reni to settle a debt. The exhibition was a rare opportunity to see these two exceptional pictures brought together. They were last reunited in 2004, on the occasion of an exhibition in Naples and London devoted to Caravaggio's paintings after his flight from Rome in the summer of 1606. Since then we have learned a great deal about Caravaggio's last years, transforming our understanding of the novelty of his late style (the artist died of fever while attempting to return to Rome; he was only 39). It is a style that might be called "essential," with pictorial means entirely subservient to the conveyance of the psychological dimension of the story. The emphasis is less on the naturalistic depiction of the figures than on their psychological presence, conveyed by means of an unprecedented economy of color and a technique bordering on the unfinished. Caravaggio probes with unparalleled poignancy a dark world burdened by guilt and doom, suggesting to some scholars an intersection with his biography. We may, indeed, say that with these two works Caravaggio laid out a challenge concerning the objectives of painting and his sense of the tragedy of life.

Keith Christiansen, Curator Emeritus, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

FIAC was honored to facilitate and support the loan of Caravaggio's *Martyrdom of Saint Ursula* to The Metropolitan Museum of Art for this memorable occasion. The Metropolitan Museum generously reciprocated by lending Caravaggio's *Musicians* from its collection to the Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano in Naples.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York April 11 – July 9, 2017

PONTORMO: MIRACULOUS ENCOUNTERS

Jacopo da Pontormo (1494–1557)
Visitation, ca. 1528–29
Oil on wood
81 1/2 x 62 5/8 in. (207 x 159 cm)
Church of Saint Michael and Saint Francis, Carmignano (Pistoia)

FIAC is strongly committed to the restoration and preservation of Italian cultural heritage and was honored to support "Pontormo: Miraculous Encounters," organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum in collaboration with the Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, and the Morgan Library and Museum, in New York. The exhibition, curated by Davide Gasparotto, senior curator of paintings at the Getty Museum and a FIAC awardee, and Bruce Edelstein, coordinator for Graduate Programs and Advanced Research, New York University, Villa La Pietra, Florence, was conceived as a fund-raiser for the conservation of the fourteenth-century Tuscan church that is home to the show's centerpiece, Pontormo's breathtaking *Visitation*.

Pontormo was the leading painter of mid-sixteenth century Florence, and the *Visitation* is among his greatest masterpieces. It was displayed in the United States for the very first time as the focal point of this deeply researched, visually riveting presentation of eleven works. The paintings and drawings brought together for the exhibition shed new light on the iconography, interpretation, patronage, and provenance of the *Visitation*, which depicts the encounter between the Virgin Mary and her cousin Elizabeth, both of them pregnant, as recounted in Luke (1:39-45).

The elegant figures wear billowing garments with almost ovoid contours. Sharply contrasting values within color areas reveal the shapes of the legs and shins beneath the fabric. The mysterious, suspended atmosphere of the picture is strengthened by the calm simplicity and abstract qualities of the composition, the disproportionate size of the figures in comparison with the architectural backdrop, and the doubling—as though in a mirror—of the protagonists in the scene. Facing the viewer and staring fixedly into space, the two handmaidens standing behind the Virgin and Elizabeth are fully-fledged alter egos of the main figures: the colors worn by the younger handmaiden are the same, in reverse, as those worn by the Virgin, while the older handmaiden bears an extraordinary likeness to the figure of Elizabeth. "It is one of the most memorable and unforgettable paintings of the Cinquecento," says Davide Gasparotto, "and for its almost abstract quality [is] also hugely admired by contemporary artists."

Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence	May 8–July 20, 2018
The Morgan Library and Museum, New York	September 7, 2018–January 6, 2019
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles	February 5–April 28, 2019

Exhibition catalogue: Bruce Edelstein and Davide Gasparotto, eds., *Pontormo: Miraculous Encounters, from Drawing to Painting* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2018)

LA VECCHIA

Giorgione (ca. 1477/78–ca. 1510)
La Vecchia (The Old Woman), 1502–8
Oil on panel, transferred to canvas
26 3/4 x 23 1/4 in. (68 x 59 cm)
Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

After FIAC's successful collaboration with the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice on the restoration of Piero della Francesca's *St. Jerome and a Supplicant* and the display of that painting at the Metropolitan Museum in 2014 (see p. 37), FIAC placed increased emphasis on its mission to restore works of art. A strong connection with the former and current directors of the Gallerie dell'Accademia—Paola Marini and Giulio Manieri Elia, respectively—paved the way for FIAC to support an important restoration of Giorgione's *La Vecchia*. The years-long operation was expertly carried out by Giulio Bono, beginning in 2015 with investigations into the state of conservation and resuming in 2018 with physical processing operations on the paint surface.

The fact that Giorgione's paintings are extremely rare added to the excitement of seeing this freshly restored work in "Giorgione's *La Vecchia*," a single-painting exhibition shown at the prominent museums of Cincinnati and Hartford. The painting's conservation treatment recaptured the brilliant luminosity of the image, heightening most notably the dramatic contrast of light and dark that underscores the picture's haunting allegorical theme. This exhibition marked the Foundation's third collaboration with the Cincinnati Art Museum (CAM), which welcomed Raphael's mysterious *Portrait of* a *Lady with a Unicorn* in 2016 and Guido Cagnacci's sensuous *Cleopatra Morente* in 2018 (see pp. 43 and 46). And we were pleased that, through CAM, we were given our first opportunity to work with the venerable Wadsworth Atheneum, the oldest continuously operating public art museum in the US. The Wadsworth's location in Hartford, Connecticut, enabled FIAC to reach new audiences.

All the elements of *La Vecchia* are calculated to unsettle. The subject, an aged woman, is depicted in three-quarter view behind a low parapet. This is a standard portrait pose, yet *La Vecchia* is anything but a conventional portrait. Illuminated against a stark, black void, the sitter is described with unsparing realism. Her outward gaze and open mouth seem to address us with the words inscribed on the slip of paper emerging from her sleeve: *COL TEMPO*, "with time." The work is at once the portrait of an individual and an allegory reminding us that, with time, we, too, will grow old and die.

"Giorgione's *La Vecchia* is a milestone in European portraiture," says Oliver Tostmann, Susan Morse Hilles Curator of European Art at the Wadsworth Atheneum. "Rarely do we have the opportunity in the United States to examine a major painting by Giorgione. At the Wadsworth, *La Vecchia* invigorated our notable Renaissance collection. It was a unique and memorable occasion for us to introduce our visitors to Giorgione and invite them to appreciate his poetic response to the phenomenon of aging."

[La Vecchia's] presence at Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford is a rare luxury, a chance to see a High Renaissance masterpiece without having to fly to Italy. — Hartford Courant

The foundation [FIAC] funded a conservation treatment of the painting…that has breathed new life into La Vecchia. — Cincinnati Business Courier

Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio	February 15–May 5, 2019
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut	May 15–August 4, 2019

OTHER PROJECTS

Arlecchino Servitore di Due Padroni Lincoln Center Festival, New York; Colorado Springs; Los Angeles; Berkeley, California; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Minneapolis, and Chicago.
July–October 2005
FIAC sponsored a US tour by the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Italy's leading theater company. The company performed Carlo Goldoni's 1746 comedy *Arlecchino Servitore di Due Padroni* (Arlecchino, Servant of Two Masters), which the Piccolo Teatro has presented worldwide and to critical acclaim for over fifty years.

Grinzane Masters Award On April 17, 2007 the novelist and short story writer Philip Roth received the first Grinzane Masters Award in recognition of his literary achievement and for introducing to American readers the work of Primo Levi, the Italian writer and Holocaust survivor. Roth was awarded the $25,000 prize on the twentieth anniversary of Levi's death. The event was hosted by Columbia University's Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America and was sponsored by the Compagnia di San Paolo and FIAC.

"**Federico da Montefeltro and His Library**," at the Morgan Library and Museum
June 8–September 30, 2007
FIAC was honored to support the first exhibition ever devoted to the library assembled by Federico da Montefeltro, the duke of Urbino (1422–1482). Among the greatest book collections of Renaissance Italy, it is renowned for the encyclopedic range and aesthetic quality of the more than nine hundred manuscripts it contained when the duke died. Remarkably, it is one of only two such collections that remain largely intact almost six hundred years later. Thanks to its acquisition by Pope Alexander VII in 1657, Federico's library has been preserved at the Vatican Library ever since. A representative selection of these magnificent codices was displayed in "Federico da Montefeltro and His Library" alongside the duke's imposing, eagle-shaped lectern and the extraordinary double portrait of himself and his young son that once hung in Federico's splendid library, the greatest of all his treasures. The exhibition was held most fittingly in a museum that houses the private library of another ambitious book collector, John Pierpont Morgan.
Exhibition catalogue: **Marcello Simonetta**, ed., *Federico da Montefeltro and His Library* (Milan: Y. Press, 2007)

"**Opera Italiana Is in the Air**" was supported by FIAC from the planning of the event's strong cultural and social components to sponsoring its first-ever production. The inaugural performance, an evening of Italian opera, was held at the Naumburg Bandshell, in Central Park, in July 2017. Since then, "Opera Italiana" has staged presentations in Chicago, Miami, London, Rome, Milan, and Naples.
The project succeeds in its mission to bring the beauty of Italian opera to the public by hosting free outdoor performances of high caliber. An important goal of attracting young audiences is met by recruiting young performers and promoting the productions on social media. Opera Italiana also reaches out to audiences that would not otherwise have access to its performances. In Milan (September 2020), small groups of young artists brought entertainment to the elderly, the population most severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic; in New York, Opera Italiana developed a project with the music therapy department of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. www.operaitalianaisintheair.com
Alvise Casellati, Founding Director and Conductor

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Our Sponsoring Board Members have steadily and generously supported the work of FIAC over the years. We extend our sincere gratitude to them and to all of our sponsors.

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