

## THE REVEALED MASTERPIECE

### The Polittico Griffoni

**Palazzo Fava host an exhibition dedicated to the homecoming of one of the greatest masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance from the 12th March to 28th June 2020.**

**The original 16 panels return for the first time with a facsimile of the Polittico thanks to cutting-edge digital technology.**

Bologna, 29th October 2019 – 9 international museums, 16 panels and 300 years of anticipation, the great masterpiece returns home. This extraordinary event is celebrated at Palazzo Fava, Palazzo delle Esposizioni of Bologna and marks the reconstitution of one of the greatest masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance: the Polittico Griffoni by Francesco del Cossa and Ercole de 'Roberti. The Polittico Griffoni returns in its splendid entirety, 550 years after its realization and 300 years after its disintegration, in an exhibition that brings together all the existing panels for the first time, thanks to the astonishing loans of all the Museums: National Gallery in London, Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan, Louvre in Paris, National Gallery of Art in Washington, Cagnola Collection in Gazzada (Va), Vatican Museums, National Picture Gallery of Ferrara, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen of Rotterdam, Vittorio Cini Collection of Venice.

The exhibition, commissioned by **Genus Bononiae. Musei nella città** and supported by the Cassa di Risparmio Foundation in Bologna, will open to the public from the 12th March to 28th June 2020.

The event consists of two initiatives: one focussed on the Altarpiece, its meaning, importance and history, curated by Mauro Natale, in collaboration with Cecilia Cavalca. The other, on the Factum Foundation and its work in the importance of technology in the preservation and sharing of cultural heritage, curated by Adam Lowe, Guendalina Damone and the Foundation team.

*"This exhibition is an extraordinary event, from a historical, artistic and cultural point of view; a unique tribute to Bologna and the Bolognese, who will be able to see "at home" a work born in San Petronio over 500 years ago. But it is also a great opportunity for everyone to rediscover one of the greatest masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance. The joy of seeing the reconstructed work repays us for a work that lasted over two years. A bet won, with pride, together with the curators"* explains **Fabio Roversi-Monaco, President Genus Bononiae Museums in the city of Bologna.**

### **The Polittico Griffoni is reborn in Bologna.**

The superb altarpiece dedicated to San Vincenzo Ferrer was designed for the family chapel of Floriano Griffoni in the Basilica of S. Petronio in Bologna. Its realisation, dated between 1470 and 1472, was entrusted to the Ferrarese Francesco del Cossa, who was then at the peak of his extraordinary artistic career, which began around 1456 and brutally interrupted by the plague in 1478. This fruitful interaction of the artist, active for almost twenty years, with the Emilian capital, created masterpieces such as the Annunciation of Dresden, the Madonna del Baraccano and the Pala dei Mercanti. The Polittico Griffoni marked the beginning of his collaboration with the younger Ercole de 'Roberti, one of the most remarkable artistic partnerships of the late Italian fifteenth century. The 'master of the axe', Agostino de Marchi da Crema worked together with Cossa and de 'Roberti on the frame. Around 1725 the new owner of the chapel, Monsignor Pompeo

Aldrovandi, had the altarpiece dismantled and allocated the individual portions figured in "room pictures" of the family's country residence in Mirabello, near Ferrara. During the nineteenth century, the paintings then entered the antiquarian market before reaching the 9 museums that currently own the works, over half of which are outside the national borders. The reunion of all the existing panels of one of the greatest masterpieces of the early Italian Renaissance, after more than five hundred years, in the city of Bologna (more than 90% of the complete work), represents an event of extraordinary importance.

In 1888, the Lombard art historian Gustavo Frizzoni was the first to promote a reconstructive hypothesis, however, it was only in 1934 that Roberto Longhi in his *Officina Ferrarese* imagined a much more monumental installation. Closer to the great fifteenth-century polyptychs, though combining the elements identified by Frizzoni - the three panels of the upper register preserved in Washington - Santa Lucia, San Floriano and the Crucifixion - and other magnificent figurative elements, among which, the two tondos with the Annunciation (Collection Cagnola). A sketch of the Polyptych was discovered in the 1980s attached to a correspondence of Monsignor Pompeo Aldrovandi, who ordered its dismantling, provided proof of the almost total accuracy of Longhi's hypothesis. The reconstruction by Cecilia Cavalca, presented in the exhibition, which foresees the presence of at least 7 figures of saints on the side pillars, is the most reliable to date.

*"The Polyptych was born in a crucial moment in the history of Italian art - and therefore worldwide - of which Francesco del Cossa and Ercole de' Roberti were key players." explains Mauro Natale, curator of the exhibition "Bringing their collaboration to centre stage means highlighting the importance of the Bologna in the wider panorama of Renaissance Art. With the Polyptych, a new canon of rendering space and volume was invented. Thus, this alternative path to modernity paved by these two Ferrarese in the Griffoni Polyptych should be considered as different to that of Piero della Francesca and Andrea Mantegna. It is somehow a 'figurative mosaic', which corresponds to the destiny of the dispersion of the various parts. It would be really extraordinary if the show was to trigger a sort of race in search of the missing elements." concludes Natale.*

### **Digital technologies for preservation.**

Alongside the exhibition of the individual works on the Piano Nobile of Palazzo Fava, visitors will be able to enjoy the reconstruction of the Polyptych made by Adam Lowe, founder of Factum Foundation, which for the last 20 years has been devoted to high resolution recording, archiving, digital restoration and the production of exact facsimiles that merge technology and craftsmanship. This initiative originated from a collaboration between the Basilica of San Petronio, Studio Cavina Terra Archietti and Factum Foundation, who started recording all the panels of the Polittico Griffoni in different parts of the world in 2012.

The exhibition on the second floor will show how these innovative technologies shed new light on our cultural heritage, demonstrating that works of art are not fixed objects but are dynamic forces that reflect how they were conceived, how they are valued, understood and shared.

*"The aura of a work of art, that intangible thing that has been used to define its originality, is actually its material presence. Through high-resolution recordings, digital mediation, and new technologies of display and re-materialization, we can have a deeper understanding of the material aspects that make the object*

*what it is. This forensic evidence not only reveals how this object was made but how it has been cared for, valued, transformed and moved from one city to another or from one institution to another” explains Adam Lowe.*

The section of the exhibition curated by Adam Lowe, Guendalina Damone and the Factum Foundation team and designed by Charlotte Skene Catling will offer the public an overview of the most advanced technologies for the conservation and sharing of cultural heritage, starting from the re-materialization of the Griffoni Polyptych to the reconstruction of lost works and documents.

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