



## LA VALLE DEI TESORI

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12 GIUGNO - 19 NOVEMBRE 2006

UNA MOSTRA NEL TERRITORIO  
DELL'EMPOLESE VALDELSA

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New Initiative of the Ente Cassa Di Risparmio for  
the Little Big Museums

# The Valley of Treasures: Mirroring Masterpieces Compared

A comparison of art works to re-launch the  
“Uffizi of the Countryside”

So many precious jewels of art transferred from their customary seats to promote the Florentine area, possibly the most important “scattered museums” in the world. It is the “Valley of Treasures. Mirroring Masterpieces Compared”, the new initiative by the Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, part of the “Little Big Museums” project and carried out this year with the contribution of the Regione Toscana.

The works of art have already been transferred, from the Uffizi, the Borghese Gallery and other important exhibition seats, to five small museums in the Empoli area and the Valdelsa and, this is the real novelty, so as to be compared with similar works from the same period or by the same artist, of great value, although generally less famous. The exhibition, whose objective is making these small but important museums known, will run from June 12<sup>th</sup> to November 19<sup>th</sup> 2006.

In order to carry out the original plan of “mirroring masterpieces”, the Uffizi “have gone to the country” thanks to the loan of one of the most prestigious works of its collections: Botticelli’s “*Annunciation*” which is compared with the one by Botticini at the **Museum of the Collegiate Church of Empoli**; the **Civic Museum of Fucecchio** houses the “*Nativity with Saints Michael, Clement, Martha and Peter*” surmounted by a *lunette with the Eternal Father and the Evangelists*, a work by Giovanni Larciani compared to other creations by the same artist: the altar-piece triptych representing the *Annunciation* between the *Visitation* and *Saint Joseph*, surmounted by a *lunette* representing the Eternal Father, which comes from the Church of Montopoli and two paintings representing “*Madonna and Child*” borrowed from the Borghese Gallery in Rome and from the Uffizi’s storerooms. In **Castelfiorentino**, the **Museum of Santa Verdiana** allows studying the similarities and differences between Mariano d’Agnolo Romanelli’s “*Annunciation*” and a wooden group attributed to Francesco di Valdambriano from the National Museum of San Matteo in Pisa; Filippo Lippi is the absolute protagonist of the **Montespertoli Museum of Sacred Art** where its “*Madonna and Child*” and a similar painting customarily found in the Palazzo Medici Riccardi in Florence mirror each other. The tour finishes with a comparison of two astonishing 13<sup>th</sup> wooden crucifixes at the **Museum of Sacred Art in Certaldo**. In addition, the updating of the

didactic services and of the display panels for the tour of the **San Vivaldo complex in Montaione** have been included in the initiative's overall plan.

These small museums can truly be defined as “the Uffizi of the countryside” boasting works by Cimabue, Taddeo Gaddi, Benozzo Gozzoli, to name only a few, which might as well be housed in any large city museum. “In this privileged part of the world – underlines Antonio Paolucci, Regional Director for *Beni Culturali E Paesaggistici Della Toscana* (Tuscany's arts, culture and landscape) – Beauty comes with Beauty. It is inside the museum and outside the museum, it spreads in the squares and in the streets, it lies in the contours of the hills, in the colors of the facades, in the melodious and rigorous order of the urban fabric. In order to make all this visible and comprehensible and didactically relevant, the Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze's initiative has taken shape and is repeated this year.” After the success of the exhibition *The Madonnas of Chianti*, held in 2005, which involved three museums of sacred art in the towns of Greve in Chianti, Impruneta and Tavarnelle Val di Pesa, the Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze has launched this new initiative. “There are some who could interpret the direct and visual comparison between ‘city’ art works and ‘country’ art works a “squaring of the circle” – emphasizes Edoardo Speranza, the President of the Ente – whereas it is actually about interpreting our entire complex artistic heritage -born in small parish churches, villages, among olive trees, in castles, in big cities- as a unique asset, a ‘scattered museum’, according to an authoritative definition previously expressed. The Ente is delighted to have the opportunity of carrying out this project to reaffirm the area's civil and cultural unity by promoting its widespread historical and artistic heritage.”

Also the Regione Toscana, which has greatly contributed to this year's project from a financial point of view, strongly approves of this initiative. In the opinion of Mariella Zoppi, the Spokeswoman for the Arts of Regione Toscana, “It is a good example of how cooperation among the various territorial authorities, together with the participation of the private subjects, can contribute to making the seed of the knowledge of the Tuscan cultural heritage grow”.

The event is deeply rooted in the Florentine area's extraordinary past, as Rosanna Caterina Proto Pisani, the exhibition's curator, confirms. “The initiative – says Proto Pisani – has followed in the footsteps of a glorious past, felt with a strong municipal pride, there, where once stood ancient castles, are small local museums of sacred art: autonomous structures that are yet direct emanations of the city museums. The Uffizi of the countryside can actually boast works which might as well be displayed in important city museums”. The event also acquires additional meaning. “Guided by the Archangel Gabriel – Proto Pisani continues – we start from Botticelli's Annunciation in Empoli, passing to the nativity and the Child in Mary's arms, ending with the Certaldo Crucifixes: a striking figurative-artistic itinerary following Jesus' life.”

The exhibition “The Valley of Treasures: Mirroring Masterpieces Compared”, is the leading event of a wider communication strategy promoted by the Ente in order to enhance the value of the rich heritage in the Florentine area and that, this year, will provide the museums housing the scattered exhibition, with new guide books, display panels, a new arrangement and restorations carried out for the occasion.

In particular, the museums' silver collections have been polished; a second entrance without architectural barriers has been built at the Montespertoli Museum of Sacred Art; the paintings at the Museum of the Collegiate Church of Empoli have undergone restorations; some lighting systems have been serviced and finally, the open gallery in Boccaccio's House in Certaldo and the Hall of the Crucifix in the Certaldo Museum of Sacred Art will be restored.

To make the Empoli Valdelsa area known to the visitor, the exhibition entrance ticket, the “Valley of Treasures Card”, will give the tourist the opportunity to admire not only the exhibition but also to visit for free other territorial “jewels” such as the Palazzo Pretorio in Certaldo, the Vinci Museum, Pontormo's House in Empoli, the Museum of Montelupo Fiorentino, the Museum of Grapes and Wine in Montespertoli, the Municipal Art Collection

in Castelfiorentino, the Villa of Cerreto Guidi and the glass production exhibition in Gambassi.

Art is reflected in the territory, in its landscapes but also in its traditions, in the people and their products; for this reason, a series of side initiatives have been added to the exhibition: free tastings on farms that have a special agreement, reductions and discounts to events and to some restaurants of the area. For school children, a series of didactic itineraries have been set up and four meetings with the project's curators will be held for teachers who accompany their own classes to the exhibition. On the occasion of the exhibition, the municipal libraries of the area are launching a group educational game directed at the youngest students in order to introduce them to the beauties of their land and, at the same time, to give them practice in bibliographical research.

***The Valley of treasures. Mirroring Masterpieces Compared***

***An exhibition in the Empoli Valdelsa area***

June 12<sup>th</sup> - November 19<sup>th</sup> 2006

**Opening Hours**

From Thursday to Monday, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Free guided visits on Saturdays and Sundays

**Admission** full price ticket € 6.00; reduced price ticket € 4.00 for: visitors over 65 years of age, students, the disabled, groups of more than 15 people, teachers with Card Edumusei, ACI members, Touring Club members, Art'è members and Coop members

**Information** tel. 0571-244304 every day 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

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