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**Cultural Diplomacy and Valorisation  
through the Loan of Masterpieces**

The case study of the exhibition 'Naples à Paris'

**Supervisor**

Ch. Prof. Angelo Maria Monaco

**Assistant Supervisor**

Ch. Prof. Cristina Baldacci

**Graduand**

Matilde Minieri

**Matriculation Number**

874115

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*Ai miei Nonni  
Alle mie Nonne*

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## **Abstract**

The exhibition *Naples à Paris, Le Louvre invite le musée de Capodimonte* opened at the Louvre on 7 June 2023. Presented as exceptional, the exhibition stands out for the collaboration between two important institutions; for the large number of works on loan, iconic works from the nucleus of the Farnese collection, but not only; and for the choice of layout: the artworks are not displayed in a single space dedicated to them, but are placed along the Grande Galerie, in the Salle de la Chapelle and in the Salle de l'Horloge, thus creating a dialogue with the Louvre's collection of Italian paintings. The exhibition has also been organised with the aim of giving greater visibility to the Neapolitan Museum, which, to the detriment of its remarkable collection, is off the major tourist circuits, taking advantage of the visibility of the Parisian Museum, with which it hopes to establish a fruitful relationship based on the principle of reciprocity of loans, and placing itself under the aegis of the Quirinale Treaty for cultural cooperation between Italy and France. Hence the decision not only to explore the Naples à Paris exhibition project, but to take it as a starting point for a reflection on the practice of temporary exhibitions and loans, their relationship with the museum institution, and the roles and balances at play as an instrument of Cultural Diplomacy.

## Introduction

In Paris, at the Louvre, the exhibition *Naples à Paris. Le Louvre invite le musée de Capodimonte* opened to the public on 7 June 2023. The exhibition, which follows the signing of a partnership agreement between the two prestigious museum institutions, is the result of the will of Sylvain Bellenger, director of the Capodimonte Museum and Real Bosco di Capodimonte, and Sébastien Allard, director of the painting department of the Louvre Museum, and is curated by: Charlotte Chastel-Rousseau, head curator at the Department of Painting, Dominique Cordellier, general curator at the Department of Graphic Arts, on the part of the Louvre Museum, and Patrizia Piscitello, curator of the Farnese collection and the collections of 16th-century paintings and sculpture, Alessandra Rullo, head of the Department for the Care and Management of Collections, curator of 13th-, 14th- and 15th-century painting and sculpture, Carmine Romano, curator, responsible for digitisation, on the part of the Capodimonte Museum and Real Bosco<sup>1</sup>.

The exhibition is described as exceptional for the meeting of two leading museums, allowing more than sixty masterpieces from the Capodimonte Museum to be housed in the rooms of the Louvre in an exhibition dedicated to it. Also unprecedented is the exhibition design decision not to host the artworks in a space of their own, but to scatter them throughout the Parisian Museum, placing them in dialogue with the artworks of the Grande Galerie's collection of Italian paintings, and setting up two saltellite rooms in the Salle de l'Horloge and Salle de la Chapelle. This opportunity is exploited by the Louvre to show itself once again capable of reinventing itself and as a moment of experimentation in view of a forthcoming rearrangement of the Grande Galerie, and is used as an international showcase for Capodimonte and for Naples itself, to the extent that a Neapolitan theatre, dance and music review is planned for the summer months. The exhibition also takes on accents of Cultural Diplomacy as the collaboration between the Louvre and Capodimonte is placed under the aegis of the Quirinale Treaty, the treaty signed on 26 November 2021 by

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<sup>1</sup> *Naples à Paris. Le Louvre invite le musée de Capodimonte*, exhibition catalogue (Paris, Louvre Museum, 7 June 2023 - 8 January 2024), edited by (S. Allard, S. Bellenger and C. Chastel-Rousseau, Coédition Gallimard/Musée du Louvre, 2023, p.8

Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and French President Emmanuel Macron for enhanced bilateral collaboration especially in the industrial and cultural fields. Hence the decision not only to examine the *Naples à Paris* exhibition project in depth, but to take it as a starting point for a reflection on the practice of temporary exhibitions, their role and the balances at play as an instrument of Cultural Diplomacy, on the lending of masterpieces today and their relationship with the museum institution, since as Francis Haskell recalls in his crucial *The Ephemeral Museum*:

«International loan exhibitions of Old Masters are, and always have been, expensive and complicated affairs - far too much so to be entrusted only to connoisseurs. Increasingly they came to depend upon public or private financial backers as well as requiring the collaboration of collectors (...). Diplomacy as well as administrative skill, government support as well as good connections, insurance and eventually public-relations experts and publishers would come to play an important part. For the promotion of such exhibitions profit and politics are as necessary as scholarship and altruism<sup>2</sup>».

Exhibitions are an interweaving of opportunities, intentions and circumstances which, if analysed, can reveal underlying trends that are essential to understanding the health and future scenarios of an era in which we are witnessing an enormous proliferation of exhibitions, which are almost replacing museums themselves as a tool for the transmission of artistic knowledge. This is why it seems important to reflect on certain key concepts that seem to emerge from *Naples à Paris*: the loan of masterpieces as a tool for Cultural Diplomacy and for valorisation, in this case of the museum institution itself.

The research work was carried out in situ by visiting the exhibition *Naples à Paris* at the Louvre Museum and visiting the Capodimonte Museum during the same period, in order to note how the rooms of the two museums presented themselves under the pressure of the huge loan. The exhibition catalogue of the *Naples à Paris* exhibition, the specialised magazines available in the museum bookshop, the explanatory captions, the conference presenting the exhibition and the interview with a large number of room staff made it possible to recall the different points of interest devised by the curators and the target audience to which they speak. The Capodimonte Museum's short guide, the catalogue of the *Oltre Caravaggio*

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<sup>2</sup> F. Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum, Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition*, London, Yale University Press, 2000, p 93

exhibition, my notes during previous visits and, above all, the invaluable support of the museum staff allowed for a reconstruction of the substitutions and shifts that took place in the rooms of the Capodimonte Museum affected by the loans, which is reproduced in the Appendix. The compilative method was then used in the drafting of the paper by analysing the existing literature with the aim of investigating the theme of Cultural Diplomacy, the loan of masterpieces in its evolution from an instrument of propaganda to an object contested between the reasons of conservation and those of valorisation, or even internationalisation, the power relations between museum institutions and temporary exhibitions.

Chapter 1 of the paper is devoted to a survey of the concept and evolution of Cultural Diplomacy. A ring structure was opted for, starting from the diplomatic significance of the specific case study, which enjoys the high patronage of the Italian Republic and the French Republic and is remembered as one of the most significant moments of cooperation since the Quirinale Treaty came into force. The discussion then widens to the definition of Cultural Diplomacy, which aims to pursue national policy through the instrument of culture; its declination in a supra-state dimension, namely from a European perspective; Cultural Diplomacy in Italy starting from a historical perspective, especially focusing on the fifteen years following the end of the Second World War, which is essential for understanding today's policies, and then delving into the bilateral cooperation relationship between Italy and France that led to the signing of the Quirinale Treaty.

Chapter 2 focuses on the practice of lending masterpieces and analyses its shift from an instrument of propaganda in fascist Italy to an issue of valorisation from post-war Italy to the present. Starting from the consideration of how, in retrospect, the political component is rooted in the organisation of temporary exhibitions, the *Italian Art 1200-1900* exhibition organised in London in 1930 and the different stages of the *Masterworks of Five Centuries* exhibition organised in the United States in 1939 are retraced. These exhibitions saw, among others, the participation of eminent personalities of the Italian cultural scene, including Roberto Longhi and Cesare Brandi, whose thinking on the practice of lending works, temporary exhibitions and their powerful relations with museums has been reviewed. Although these authors refer to an era that is now historicised, it is possible to discern many



similarities and interesting guidelines for today's Italian cultural landscape in which there is a tendency towards an oversimplified nexus between display and valorisation.

Chapter 3 focuses on the case study in question by tracing the exhibition itinerary of the *Naples à Paris* exhibition that winds its way through the Grande Galerie with the inclusion of works on loan from Capodimonte among the works of the Louvre's Italian collection, and is divided into two further rooms: the narration of the constitution and diversity of Capodimonte's collections in the Salle de la Chapelle, and an in-depth examination of the tool of preparatory cartoons between 1500 and 1550 with works from both institutions in the Salle de l'Horloge. The curatorial rationale is followed by some reasoned considerations on the exhibition and its value for both institutions involved, with particular reference to the valorisation and internationalisation strategy implemented by Director Sylvain Bellenger during his ten years at the helm of Capodimonte.

# Chapter 1

## Cultural Diplomacy

The researcher's interest in a particular art exhibition does not only originate from the restitution of meaning that the selection and juxtaposition of art works suggests, the art-historical problems considered or the meaning of the specific exhibition in the panorama of other exhibitions and research. The exhibition is, actually, a layering of «...significati, responsabilità, strumenti di comunicazione, che vive solo in una dimensione relazionale»<sup>3</sup>. The act of setting up interweaves numerous threads, among which, in addition to those just mentioned, stand out «il contesto culturale, le risorse economiche messe a disposizione dalla committenza e la posta politica in gioco»<sup>4</sup>; and is precisely this latter aspect the focus of this chapter, in which the intention is to emphasise the value that an exhibition can assume as a political tool for building bridges to other states and strengthening cultural alliances.

### 1.1 *Naples à Paris* among the threads of Cultural Diplomacy

The catalogue of the exhibition *Naples à Paris, Le Louvre Invite Le Musée de Capodimonte* opens with the high patronage of the President of the Italian Republic Sergio Mattarella and the President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron, and two preface texts signed by each of the Presidents. The text signed by Mattarella reads:

«... Le lancement de la collaboration entre Capodimonte et le Louvre est une source de satisfaction, particulièrement précieuse à la lumière de l'impulsion donnée par le Traité du Quirinal aux initiatives italo-françaises pour la mise en valeur du patrimoine artistique et l'intensification des échanges culturels»<sup>5</sup>.

The President of the Italian Republic makes explicit reference to the Quirinale Treaty, the treaty signed on 26 November 2021 by Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and French President Emmanuel Macron between the Italian Republic and the French Republic for enhanced bilateral cooperation. The Quirinale Treaty aims to improve

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<sup>3</sup> A.C. Cimoli, *Musei effimeri. Allestimenti di mostre in Italia 1949-1963*, Il Saggiatore, Milano, 2007, p.13

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p.13

<sup>5</sup> *Naples à Paris. Cit*, p.16

Franco-Italian relations, with particular reference to the industrial and cultural sectors, by articulating eleven specific areas of collaboration<sup>6</sup>.

The Quirinale Treaty is not only recalled in the preface of the catalogue of the Parisian exhibition, but, in the section on the second anniversary of the Treaty's signing on La Farnesina's website, there is a joint statement by the Italian and French ambassadors D'Alessandro and Briens that one of the most significant moments of cooperation in the year of the Treaty's entry into force, 2023, was precisely the inauguration «... dell'eccezionale mostra “*Naples à Paris*” al Louvre»<sup>7</sup>.

It is therefore noticeable how both the institutional authorities and the organisers were concerned to emphasise the link between the Quirinale Treaty and the *Naples à Paris* exhibition, making it a perfect example of the political significance that art exhibitions can exert, as mentioned above.

## 1.2 Defining the cultural diplomacy

Bilateral treaties are legal-political instruments that Italy signs with the different countries with which it intends to initiate relations of structured technological, scientific and cultural cooperation<sup>8</sup>, implemented by means of Executive Protocols of multiannual validity<sup>9</sup>.

Treaties of this kind are rightfully among the instruments of Cultural Diplomacy, which «...may best be described as a course of actions, which are based on and utilize the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural cooperation, promote national interests»<sup>10</sup>

and strengthen supranational interrelationships.

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<sup>6</sup> Camera Dei Deputati site, *Trattato di Cooperazione Rafforzata con la Francia*, <<https://temi.camera.it/leg19DIL/temi/trattato-di-cooperazione-rafforzata-con-la-francia-df>>, (consulted on 7 June 2024)

<sup>7</sup> Ministero degli Affari Esteri site, *Il Trattato del Quirinale: Dossier Stampa congiunto delle Ambasciate d'Italia in Francia e di Francia in Italia sul 2023, anno dell'entrata in vigore*, <[https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/retediplomatica/2023/11/il-trattato-del-quirinaledossier-stampa-congiunto-delle-ambasciate-ditalia-in-francia-e-di-francia-in-italia-sul-2023-annodellentratain-vigore/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/retediplomatica/2023/11/il-trattato-del-quirinaledossier-stampa-congiunto-delle-ambasciate-ditalia-in-francia-e-di-francia-in-italia-sul-2023-annodellentratain-vigore/)> (consulted on 30 May 2024)

<sup>8</sup> E. Torcutti, *Diplomazia Culturale e Politica Culturale*, thesis, Università degli studi di Trieste, a.a. 2004-2005, Supervisor R.V. Ferraris, p.29

<sup>9</sup> Ministero degli Affari Esteri site, *Protocolli e Progetti*, <<https://www.esteri.it/it/diplomazia-culturale-e-diplomazia-scientifica/cultura/protocolli-e-progetti/>>, (consulted on 7 June 2024)

<sup>10</sup> Institute for Cultural Diplomacy site, <[https://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en\\_culturaldiplomacy](https://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en_culturaldiplomacy)>, (consulted on 7 June 2024)

In other words, Cultural Diplomacy aims to apply different strategies and tools, such as art, culture, music, design, to pursue national policy in an alternative way<sup>11</sup>. The cultural relations that a nation decides to maintain with other countries are an integral part of its foreign policy, since in their direction they follow its main aspirations and are functional to it, and are necessarily not neutral but determined to support precise values<sup>12</sup>.

Although the general definition suggested by the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy was proposed above, it is not easy to find a univocal explanation of the concept of Cultural Diplomacy. The most commonly accepted definition in the specialist literature is the one proposed by Milton Cummings in 2003 according to which Cultural Diplomacy would be «..the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding»<sup>13</sup>.

However, this definition seems to ignore its political dimension, which is much emphasised in Hwajung Kim's definition, which identifies it as «..an international actor's attempt to promote the national culture, to give impacts on public opinions of counterparts and to build integrity and credibility through cultural exchanges»<sup>14</sup>.

Both of these definitions emphasise fundamental aspects, but fail to highlight the intrinsic complexity and multidimensionality of cultural diplomacy, which finds itself acting in the multidimensional complex of international relations in a context of continuous socio-political change<sup>15</sup>.

A dialogue common to several cultures determines the international influence of a country, the aim of which is the mutual recognition and willingness to pursue widespread international solidarity. According to the theorisations of Michael L. Krenn, Cultural Diplomacy focuses on the elements and values of a cultural object that can be understood in mutual dialogue with the international viewer, and emphasises the

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<sup>11</sup> B. Checchia, *L'evoluzione della Diplomazia Culturale nell'Era della Globalizzazione*, thesis, Università degli studi di Torino, a.a. 2018-2019, Supervisor U. Morelli, p. 4

<sup>12</sup> Torcutti, *Diplomazia Culturale*, cit. p.11

<sup>13</sup> M. Cummings, *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey*, «Cultural Diplomacy Research Series», June 2009, p.1

<sup>14</sup> H. Kim, *Cultural Diplomacy as the Means of Soft Power in an Information Age*, «Culturediplomacy.org», December 2011, p.3

<sup>15</sup> Checchia, *L'evoluzione della Diplomazia Culturale*, cit., pp. 8-9

educational value of culture, freedom of expression, equality, social justice and democracy<sup>16</sup>.

### 1.3 Between Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power

Cultural Diplomacy is not only exercised through treaties and institutional acts, but it also deals with non-governmental organisations and private individuals in order to create the most favourable conditions for conveying its message, sometimes taking the form of a real “brand diplomacy”, trying to make the image of one's own country appealing by influencing the internal public opinion of the country it acts on<sup>17</sup>.

The objective of cultural diplomacy to promote a favourable image of one's own nation abroad is certainly close to the idea of Soft Power put forward by the American political scientist Joseph Nye, according to whom a nation's attractiveness derives not only from its economic and military power, identified as Hard Power, but also from the dissemination of its culture and values<sup>18</sup>. According to the Soft Power model, fascination and attraction arise «... dalla cultura, dagli ideali e dalle pratiche politiche di un paese. Quando le nostre politiche appaiono legittime agli occhi degli altri, il soft power si rafforza»<sup>19</sup>.

The idea of soft power is certainly related to the practices of Cultural Diplomacy, which, however, in addition to the projection of the national interest, looks to dialogue in multilateral bodies and an effort to exchange cooperation and mutual understanding<sup>20</sup> as also suggested by Cummings' previously mentioned definition.

### 1.4 A European Dimension

It is interesting to take a look at the declination that Cultural Diplomacy, an instrument linked to national strategies, takes when applied to a supra-state entity such as the European Union.

«Nell'Unione Europea, gli Stati-nazione rimangono la realtà principale, tuttavia lo sviluppo di dinamiche politiche e amministrative sopranazionali e transnazionali sta

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<sup>16</sup> M. L. Krenn, *The history of United States Cultural Diplomacy. 1770 to the present day*, Bloomsbury academic, New York, 2017, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Torcutti, *Diplomazia Culturale*, cit., p.11

<sup>18</sup> Treccani site, *Soft Power*, <[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/soft-power\\_%28Lessico-del-XXI-Secolo%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/soft-power_%28Lessico-del-XXI-Secolo%29/)>, (consulted on 7 June 2024)

<sup>19</sup> J.S. Nye, *Un nuovo futuro per l'America*, Torino, Einaudi, 2005, p.19

<sup>20</sup> F. Rutelli, *La Diplomazia Culturale italiana*, Roma, Incontro di Civiltà, 2018, p.25

erodendo il paradigma classico senza condurre ad un modello veramente federale. L'insieme dello spazio pubblico europeo diventa un tessuto di molteplici legittimità»<sup>21</sup>.

The European union has decided to leave the substantial management of the various cultural policies to the member states, both out of fear of and in response to the cultural hegemony inherent in 20th century totalitarianism, and out of a political-institutional principle of 'subsidiarity'. And it is important to note that the member states themselves seem reluctant to delegate more room for action in the cultural sphere to the European Union<sup>22</sup>.

However, this does not detract from the fact that the European Union has to answer the question of how to reconcile the profound diversity of its constituent nations, which, while sharing a common cultural heritage, preserve a strong individuality, and the challenge of facing the global context as a cohesive front. A possible retort lies in identifying the ability to respect the cultural peculiarities of member states, while providing common norms, as a distinctive feature of the European Union.

Europe's cultural richness and diversity is closely linked to its role and influence in the world: recognising itself not only as an economic and commercial object but also as a social and cultural project, the European Union aspires to become a model founded on the values of human dignity, tolerance, solidarity and freedom<sup>23</sup>. The European Union's strategy is to promote a European culture of diversity and tolerance, an aspiration that meets both the goal of mutual understanding proposed by Cummings' definition of cultural diplomacy and that of attracting consensus through the demonstration of integrity, credibility and legitimacy, suggested by Kim.

In text of *Risoluzione del Parlamento europeo del 12 maggio 2011 sulla dimensione culturale delle azioni esterne dell'Unione europea* we read that the European Parliament notes the importance of cultural diplomacy and cultural cooperation in promoting and disseminating the interests of the European Union and its Member States and the values that make up European culture throughout the world; and that a

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<sup>21</sup> J.P. Darnis, *Francia-Italia: relazioni bilaterali, strategie europee*, IAI Quaderni, 2005, p.5

<sup>22</sup> Rutelli, *La Diplomazia Culturale italiana*, cit, pp.42-43

<sup>23</sup> European Parliament Resolution, 10 April 2008, in the field of "Agenda europea per la cultura in un mondo in via di globalizzazione"

multicultural approach can facilitate the conclusion of beneficial agreements, placing the European Union and third country partners on an equal footing<sup>24</sup>.

The European Union demonstrates an increasingly strategic approach to culture as an asset in external relations, identifying in the joint communication *Verso una strategia dell'Unione europea per le relazioni culturali internazionali* five fundamental principles for the European Union's international cultural relations: promoting cultural diversity and respect for human rights; promoting mutual respect and intercultural dialogue; ensuring respect for complementarity and subsidiarity; encouraging a cross-cutting approach to culture; promoting culture through existing cooperation frameworks<sup>25</sup>. These give rise to the three main lines of action: exploiting the full potential of culture and creativity for sustainable social and economic development; promoting peace and combating radicalisation through intercultural dialogue; intensifying cooperation in the field of cultural heritage<sup>26</sup>. Recognising, furthermore, the activity of international cultural relations as a priority within the framework of the *Risoluzione del consiglio sul piano di lavoro dell'UE per la cultura 2023-2026*<sup>27</sup>.

## 1.5 Italian politics in a historical perspective

It is from the affirmation of 19th century nationalism that

«...la “cultura nazionale” viene codificata e inizia ad essere considerata una vera merce da esportare che conferisce prestigio e influenza alla tradizione filosofica, letteraria, artistica e scientifica di ciascun Paese»<sup>28</sup>.

The claim to cultural primacy constitutes a leitmotif that accompanies the rhetoric of Italian history from the Risorgimento to fascism, from the Republic to the present day, each time attempting to connote Italy as a cultural power<sup>29</sup>. It is easy to see how it is part of today's debate to refer to Italy as a creative nation, a nation in which it is possible to trace a vein of excellence bestowed by a sort of “Italic genius” constituted by the

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<sup>24</sup> European Parliament Resolution, 12 May 2011, in the field of “*Dimensione culturale delle azioni esterne dell'Unione europea*”

<sup>25</sup> European Parliament Resolution, 5 July 2017, in the field of “*Verso una strategia dell'Unione europea per le relazioni culturali internazionali*”

<sup>26</sup> European Commission site, *Relazioni Culturali Internazionali*, <<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/it/policies/international-cultural-relations>>, (consulted on 7 June 2024)

<sup>27</sup> European Council Resolution on “*Piano di lavoro dell'UE per la cultura 2023-2026*” Gazzetta ufficiale dell'Unione europea, 7 December 2022.

<sup>28</sup> A. Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo dopo la seconda guerra mondiale: la reinvenzione di un'immagine (1945-1960)*, PhD thesis, Università di Pisa, Supervisor A.M. Banti, p.2

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p.2

sedimentation of culture and technical-craft knowledge. A creative nation not only by virtue of its golden chains of ancient art, music, live performance, cinema, contemporary art, but of the entire production system starting with education, technical, entrepreneurial and logistical sectors<sup>30</sup>.

The following is a brief review of the main steps taken in one of the key periods in the history of Italian cultural diplomacy, the post-World War II period, from which today's Italian cultural policies are in fact derived. The period after the Second World War is a particularly delicate and interesting one from the point of view of our research, since, at that time, Italy had to redeem its image internationally after twenty years of propaganda and the disastrous outcome of the war. Within fifteen years, Italy re-emerged on the international scene with a narrative of itself that was different and borrowed, in several passages and not without contradictions, from its own cultural tradition. On the basis of the actions undertaken since World War II, Italian Cultural Diplomacy would find maximum expression in the multilateral dimension, in cultural cooperation programmes and in particular in participation in UNESCO, to achieve dialogue, peace, rights and leverage for national economic and commercial interests<sup>31</sup>.

During the fascist period, Italy spasmodically sought international legitimacy as a political and military 'world power' based on the claim to be a solid and well organised state, able to compete economically and productively with the most advanced European countries<sup>32</sup>. The Italy to be shown was one restored from the imperial splendor, the achievements of the Renaissance and far removed from the liberal period<sup>33</sup>. Fascist rhetoric established an almost symbiotic relationship with culture and centered on the recovery of the myth of Latinity and Romanity, a heritage on which to base the claim of a universal role for Italy. The objective was to build an imperial civility that, within the global contest, would stand as the depository of high existential values capable of imposing themselves universally: Italianism, as the will to belong to the Italian nation, was to be the *trait d'union* of the peoples who, for historical and cultural reasons, were natural satellites of the empire<sup>34</sup>. Abroad, political propaganda on the

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<sup>30</sup> Rutelli, *La Diplomazia Culturale italiana*, cit, p.8

<sup>31</sup> M. Amicucci, *La Diplomazia Culturale come via di politica estera italiana tra guerra fredda e periodo post bipolare*, PhD thesis, Università di Bologna, Supervisor D. Restani, 2023 p.9

<sup>32</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p.4

<sup>33</sup> Amicucci, *La Diplomazia Culturale come via di politica estera italiana*, cit, p.14

<sup>34</sup> M. Pretelli, *Il fascismo e gli italiani all'estero*, CLUEB, Bologna, 2010, pp. 41-55



achievements of fascism merged very strongly in the 1930s with cultural action, of which the regime gradually took total control, with the aim of giving the country a civilising mission<sup>35</sup>.

At the end of the conflict, Italy's mission was to distance itself as far as possible from fascism by its propagandistic mixture of politics and culture. It was also important to reopen the Italian cultural and linguistic institutions around the world: an essential link in the chain that linked emigration, cultural policy and Italy's image.

In the post-war press<sup>36</sup>, it is possible to find traces of the widespread conviction that Italy, by virtue of its inalienable cultural past, could retain an apex role in international politics. Moreover, the tone of the narration of the events of the previous twenty years is essentially self-absolutory: the Italian people had been the victims of a dictatorship alien to their true nature, the 'Italian spirit' could have nothing to do with bellicose ultranationalism<sup>37</sup>.

To support this thesis, and to put itself forward again on the international stage, Italy's cultural tradition pervaded by humanism could play a primary role. Aldo Capitini, in the pages of *Nuova Europa*, suggested that, with the advent of the new world order dominated by the United States and the Soviet federation, the overcoming of European pre-eminence did not correspond to a decrease in its authority as a cultural leader. And in this sense, within Europe, Italy's role was evident. Moreover, the author urged Italy to open up to international cultural relations after years of autarchic tendencies, while at the same time warning against the danger of an uncritical foreignophilia that could erase the peculiarities of Italian culture<sup>38</sup>.

«Fra le rovine della guerra e le incognite della ricostruzione, la persuasione che all'Italia rimanesse ormai solo la cultura come atout spendibile nelle relazioni internazionali era assai diffusa nei circoli intellettuali<sup>39</sup>».

At issue, however, were the ways in which Italian culture was to spread throughout the world and be the vehicle for Italian demands and its unfading international weight: there were essentially two factions, divided

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<sup>35</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p.4

<sup>36</sup> The reference is, for example, to the newspaper *Italiani nel mondo*, which was founded in 1945 immediately after the end of the Second World War in order to make Italian emigrants aware of the new political direction of anti-fascist Italy.

<sup>37</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p.9

<sup>38</sup> A. Capitini, *La cultura italiana all'estero*, «La nuova Europa», 11 November 1945, p.11

<sup>39</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p.11

«tra i fautori di un intervento statale continuo e diretto (..) e i sostenitori di una visione che potremmo definire più “liberale” degli scambi intellettuali, secondo i quali le correnti di interesse dovevano fluire ed affermarsi in virtù della bontà intrinseca della produzione artistica, filosofica e letteraria di ogni Paese<sup>40</sup>».

In December 1946, the Direzione Generale per le Relazioni Culturali was created at the Ministero degli Affari Esteri, divided into three sections: General Affairs, Cultural Institutes and Schools. President Francesco Flora indicated as the guideline for the Direzione to «..accentuare l'attenzione all'umano non soltanto nelle arti della parola o nelle arti figurative o nella musica, ma nelle discipline scientifiche, nelle invenzioni più diverse..» with a special focus also on cinema, handicrafts and applied sciences<sup>41</sup>. Another task of the Direzione Generale per le Relazioni Culturali was to revise the various cultural agreements in place at the time, such as the *Amici della Francia* association and the Italo-British association, with which Italy had a rich cultural exchange, but also the suppression of some inconvenient realities inherited from the fascist period such as the *Amici del Giappone* association. Despite these institutional steps and the strong conviction that culture was the most useful and authoritative way to reassert itself on the international scene, Italian cultural diplomacy never received sufficient funds to realise its objectives, and certainly not comparable to those of other states such as France and England, in addition to also encountering problems on the organisational level where a lack of full awareness of cultural activities beyond the borders<sup>42</sup>.

The employment of the strategies of cultural diplomacy was also evident in the months preceding the signing of the Peace Treaty for which Italy attempted to spread the idea of a country of partisan struggle and strenuous resistance to fascism on the side of the Allies between 1943 and 1945; a country in which fascism had been at least badly tolerated by virtue of the deep pacifist convictions of the Italians, sons of humanist culture and the Renaissance. Through films, books and pamphlets, the intention was to distance the image of Italy as much as possible from the spectre of fascism and to promote the country's resilience. The example of the neo-realist films is emblematic. In the initial period of the anti-fascist coalition, they were encouraged and promoted

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<sup>40</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p.14

<sup>41</sup> F. Flora, *Le relazioni culturali con l'estero*, «*Italiani nel mondo*», a. III, n.7, 10 April 1947

<sup>42</sup> Amicucci, *La Diplomazia Culturale come via di politica estera italiana*, cit, p.56

abroad by the Italian embassies<sup>43</sup> for their great quality and innovation, only to be strongly criticised in later years with the charge of portraying an excessively degraded image of Italy<sup>44</sup>.

Italy's action takes place in different fields, from cinema to music, from art to philosophy. The idea was to focus on events with a great media resonance capable of attracting the attention of foreign public opinion: thus, the Mostra del cinema in Venice was given new impetus; international tours of Italian musicians and concert events with an international scope were devised; an international philosophy congress was held in Rome in 1946. It was also decided to play an active part in foreign events relating to Italy, such as Columbus Day in the United States: an occasion in which Italian politics could present itself to American opinion in a festive and popular context. It is precisely the recovery of certain emblematic historical figures, casually exploited as a metaphor for Italy's journey or as a symbol of its ideals, that is a recurring element, including Dante Alighieri, Marco Polo, Galileo Galilei, Francesco d'Assisi and Giuseppe Garibaldi<sup>45</sup>.

In 1945 Italy had been precluded from participating in the San Francisco Conference that led to the creation of the Charter of the United Nations, and, among the indignation of the leading cultural figures of the time including Benedetto Croce, had been vetoed from joining the United Nations. So, in 1947, as soon as it was possible, Italy applied to be admitted to UNESCO, since to be a member of the United Nations was not a requirement. Italy was showing itself as hard-working, peaceful and open to dialogue, far from the logic of politics and power, and UNESCO, which presented itself as universalist and hypothetically apolitical, responded perfectly to Italian aspirations between Atlanticism and neo-Atlanticism<sup>46</sup>. The positive vote for Italy's membership of UNESCO was the first real recognition in the cultural field, and the «...primo atto di rilegittimazione della comunità internazionale dopo la pagina nera della guerra e del fascismo<sup>47</sup>», followed by the UNESCO Conference hosted in Florence in 1950. In addition to the recognition, Italy counted on gaining funding for research institutes,

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<sup>43</sup> The Italian embassy in Paris encouraged the distribution of Roberto Rossellini's film *Paisà* in 1946

<sup>44</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p.28-29

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, p.43-47

<sup>46</sup> Amicucci, *La Diplomazia Culturale come via di politica estera italiana*, cit, p.44

<sup>47</sup> M.P. Azzario Chiesa, *L'Italia per l'Unesco. 50 anni della Commissione italiana*, Armando Editore, Roma, 1999, p.19

allocations for the restoration of heritage damaged during the war and the opportunity to make the voice of Italian culture heard<sup>48</sup>.

Since the exclusion of the parties of the Left and the victory of the Democrazia Cristiana in 1948, Italian cultural policy has tended to identify the element of diachronic unity of Italian culture in its being the seat of Catholicism, the reason for the universalist pre-eminence of Italy's artistic and intellectual wealth, the true core of the country's cultural identity. Italian culture is described as universal and at the same time a "cultural nationalism", a civil and historical superiority and a mission of the Italian people is outlined. Cultural diplomacy is the instrument for the collaboration and reintegration of Italy on an international level<sup>49</sup>.

The cosmopolitan impulses of the early post-war period were quickly replaced by polarisation between the Western bloc and the Soviet bloc, and cultural dialogue between the two sides became increasingly difficult. If in the USSR the tendency towards the subordination of culture for political purposes is emerging, making it very difficult for Western cultural institutions to act in Eastern European countries, it is also true that in Western countries the artistic denunciation of the imbalances of capitalism is assimilated to collaborating with the enemy. In Italy, which was aligned with the Western bloc, the film, artistic and literary works of artists close to left-wing ideas were hardly used in the diplomatic field, where pre-unification cultural products were then preferred. Cultural clashes and restrictions, therefore, did not only occur between the two sides, but also within the Western bloc, of which Europe was a fundamental part<sup>50</sup>.

In the 1950s, the government of the Democrazia Cristiana tried to convey abroad the image of an Italy firmly aligned with the Atlantic alliance, Europeanist and in the middle of reconstruction. Cultural policy was modulated according to the country of reference: references to the common Latin and Catholic roots took on considerable weight with France, Spain and the Latin American countries; with regard to the United States, there was a tendency on the one hand to emphasise the contribution that Italian emigrants made to the development of the American economy and on the other to reassure public

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<sup>48</sup> *L'Italia e l'Unesco: intervista con De Ruggiero*, in «*Relazioni internazionali*», a. XI, n.52, 27 December 1947

<sup>49</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p.64-65

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p.68

opinion on the good use of Marshall Plan funds; in the Middle East, the image of Italy as a bridge between the Arab and Western peoples was conveyed, marked instead, not without contrasts, by a neo-Atlantic orientation. Despite the efforts of cultural diplomacy to present an image that was industrious, tenacious and essentially peaceful, in international public opinion Italy was too often portrayed as oscillating between communist tendencies and fascist regurgitations<sup>51</sup>. The result was a fragmented image of Italy, in which contemporary artistic life did not particularly stand out.

The most successful contemporary cultural product was neo-realist cinema, which, as already mentioned, was opposed by some for the image of degradation it gave of Italy and at the same time considered by others to be a valid propaganda tool abroad. Interchange agreements were made with France, Germany, Spain and Argentina. Among the most important events were the Italian Film Week in Madrid and the Italian Film Week in New York, where press conferences and fashionable galas gave the Italian image an enormous resonance.

With regard to figurative art, there were many exhibitions of ancient or contemporary art organised by the Direzione Generale per le Relazioni Culturali, which were useful for the purposes of cultural diplomacy, but with varying critical judgments, as Roberto Longhi suggests:

«...e fu infatti attraverso i più o meno meditati accordi culturali che si videro improvvisare le mostre *I Fiamminghi e l'Italia*; quella (che nessuno ci aveva chiesto) dei tesori delle biblioteche italiane a Parigi; quella estremamente pericolosa per l'incolumità delle opere stesse, che fu la parata del *Moyen Age Italien* al Petit Palais; la mostra *Dal Caravaggio al Tiepolo* inviata, non so perché, fino al Brasile e giunta in porto mentre il Presidente brasiliano aveva appena finito di suicidarsi<sup>52</sup>».

The exhibitions referred to by Longhi are *I fiamminghi e l'Italia: pittori italiani e fiamminghi dal XV al XVIII secolo*, held in Bruges, Venice and Rome, the latter in

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<sup>51</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p.123-125

<sup>52</sup> R. Longhi, *Editoriale Mostre e Musei (un avvertimento del 1959)*, in *Critica d'arte e buongoverno 1938-1969* (edizione delle opere complete di R. Longhi, vol. XIII), edited by M.L. Strocchi, Firenze, Sansoni, 1985 p.68

October-November 1951; *Trésors des bibliothèques d'Italie: IVe- XVIe siècles*, held at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in 1950; *Trésors d'art du Moyen Age en Italie*, again in Paris in May-June 1952, and *Da Caravaggio a Tiepolo. Pittura italiana del XVII e XVIII secolo*, organised by the Comitato Generale per le Manifestazioni Italiane at the 4th centenary exhibition in San Paolo (which came to San Paolo in the aftermath of Getulio Vargas' suicide in 1954)<sup>53</sup>. Or again, the great exhibition on Rome, from Romulus onwards, organised in Tokyo in 1958, where models and photographs were used to reinforce cultural agreements and achieve good visibility in view of the 1960 Rome Olympics<sup>54</sup>. Concerning contemporary art, mention must be made of the *Exhibition of Contemporary Italian Art* in Scandinavia curated by the Art Club of Rome, recognitions such as the election of Marino Marini and Giorgio Morandi as honorary members at the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts, and participations in art exhibitions outside Europe such as the biennial of the Museum of Modern Art in San Paolo, Brazil in 1951 and international painting exhibitions in Tokyo in 1952 and 1953.

But also book fairs in Egypt, Brazil, Spain, the creation of the Book Office in 1952 for the dissemination of Italian literature abroad. Or again the circulation of the baroque and operatic music repertoire with tours of the Rome Opera, the Scarlatti Orchestra of Naples and the Maggio Fiorentino; the creation of Italian song festivals, as in Paris in 1953. And more even, Italy's attempt to position itself as a leading player in the field of textiles and fashion, taking the monopoly away from France: an operation between cultural diplomacy and commercial diplomacy at the basis of the creation of the symbol of "Made in Italy"<sup>55</sup>. If the cultural proposal tried to expand on different fronts, the funds allocated were still insufficient, and it was preferred to invest in more strictly and immediately productive activities.

The deepest sense of Cultural Diplomacy in those years was to propose traditional Italian culture abroad, strong in classical antiquity, the Renaissance and the Risorgimento, not to assert an Italian national primacy but as part of a broader universal heritage in which Italy wanted to participate<sup>56</sup>. Instead, in the public speech, there often remained a false rhetoric that was too weakly contested in which references

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<sup>53</sup> Cimoli, *Musei effimeri*, cit, p.32

<sup>54</sup> Amicucci, *La Diplomazia Culturale come via di politica estera italiana*, cit, p. 98

<sup>55</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p.173-176

<sup>56</sup> Amicucci, *La Diplomazia Culturale come via di politica estera italiana*, cit, p.28

to a primacy of Italian culture and the enormous weight given to it abroad were the legacy of the influence of the fascist narrative used to convince Italians of their unparalleled talents: the focus shifted from militarism to culture but the approach was similar<sup>57</sup>. Senator Arturo Labriola claimed that the all-Italian genius was a caricature opinion, that the Italian tradition was undeniable but that the level of the cultural proposal of the time was modest<sup>58</sup>. There was a lack of a truly supernational mentality and capacity for the development of effective cultural diplomacy, a situation that needs to be remedied.

In the new world order, with a military context locked by two nuclear superpowers, the scale of factors to measure the power of other countries was changing, military power was no longer the first factor and Italy could aspire to a non-marginal position: cultural diplomacy was no longer spoken of in residual terms but as a strategic element<sup>59</sup>. The years of Italy's economic boom brought more resources to invest in spreading the image of a developmental Italy, which was moving a long way from a peasant society and war to merge artistic skills and aesthetic taste with modern industrial techniques, and spread its own iconic lifestyle of design, fashion, cuisine, creativity and Italian taste<sup>60</sup>: the captivating image of a modern Italy, different from the previous conservative and confessional projection.

The 1950s also saw the consolidation of another strategic Italian aspect, tourism, which became «..l'une des principales industries de l'Italie – sinon la première<sup>61</sup>». During the second legislature, there was an enormous growth in arrivals from abroad, from 7.6 million in 1953 to 10.8 million in 1955, which gave Italy a world record and made tourism economically more important than agricultural exports. In cultural institutes abroad, cultural diplomacy, the promotion of cultural activities and tourism propaganda tended to merge and were increasingly encouraged together.

Sports competitions are also beginning to assume great importance, capable, much more than major cultural events such as the Venice Biennale, of attracting visibility,

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<sup>57</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p.181

<sup>58</sup> AP, *Senato della Repubblica, Discussioni*, 2 July 1952

<sup>59</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p. 251

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, p.249

<sup>61</sup> CADN, *Rome Ambassade 1944-1968*, b.260, f.Tourisme, *L'essor du tourisme en Italie*, 27 gennaio 1956

tourists, infrastructure investment and prestige. The *Giro d'Italia* takes on an international dimension and, thanks to television coverage, the spotlight is shone on little-known villages and regions, spreading the image of an Italy of beauty and widespread cultural heritage<sup>62</sup>. The assignment of the 1960 Olympics to Rome was then read as proof of the success of Italy's efforts to gain an equal role on the international stage. In addition to the strictly sporting aspect, the Olympics would have offered a unique opportunity to give life to exhibitions, conventions, shows, and lay the foundations for a strong growth in tourism<sup>63</sup>. The games gave enormous global visibility to Rome, with competitions held in the Terme di Caracalla and Fori Imperiali, and offered the image of an orderly and efficient Italy.

Republican Italy distanced itself from the militarist narrative of fascism but suffered its rhetorical after-effects, entrenching itself in a claimed cultural indispensability as a form of emergency patriotism to heal the wounds of war. In fifteen years, Italy reinvented its own narrative, drew from its cultural history to offer the image of a creative nation, a crossroads of cultures, welcoming, industrious and captivating, obtaining important international legitimations but without investing sufficiently and without a univocal and precise line of action.

## **1.6 Cultural Diplomacy in today's Italy**

Casting a gaze at the past today, in spite of proclaimed intentions, one can see how the seventy-year republican period has timidly projected Italy's national interest abroad, in part by marginalising the political-economic valorisation of culture and the creative industries and in part by establishing an alternate relationship with Cultural Diplomacy. The reasons include the decision to exclude a nationalistic approach, as a reaction to the twenty years of Mussolini's rule, favouring the multilateral sphere and supporting an Atlanticist and Europeanist vision; the inhibition that fascist rhetoric produced on the definition of a modern national unitary cultural identity, making the word *patria* and democratic patriotism hostile and divisive, pushing for the recognition of foreign cultural hegemonies; institutional-organisational reasons why, while it is true that in 1946 the Directorate General for Cultural Relations was created at the Ministry of Affairs, it was not until 1974 that an autonomous Ministry of Cultural Heritage and

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<sup>62</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p.340-346

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, p.445



the Environment was created, circumstances that indicate how the relevance of cultural policies and cultural diplomacy has struggled to assert itself in a relevant way; the guidelines and management methods were on the whole poorly coordinated<sup>64</sup>.

The balance, however, has slowly changed, and today the role of culture and cultural diplomacy must be read in relation to a changing international context: a historical phase is drawing to a close that, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, had seen the affirmation of globalisation, the season of internationalism of liberal democracies and the consolidation of the subjects of multilateralism with the United Nations and NATO, and the expansion of European integration. These changes in perspective are bringing the identity strategies of individual states back to centre stage, and Italy seems to be playing its cards as a state with a strong cultural sense, a complex and exceptional stratification and heritage, with its craft and industrial know-how and life style<sup>65</sup>.

The context changes, motivations shift, internal and external pressures vary, but the attributes of Italian culture remain more or less the same: it is necessary to trace the paths of Italian Cultural Diplomacy today, which is valuable not only to promote national interest, but also to contribute to international relations based on a dialogue that moderates nationalism.

Government action to promote Italian culture abroad is entrusted to the initiatives of the Ministero degli Affari Esteri e Cooperazione Internazionale. All the subjects and promotion initiatives come under the Direzione Generale per la Promozione del Sistema Paese. The institutions' activities range from the promotion of Italian culture and language through courses abroad and the Italian Cultural Institutes, to cultural, scientific, technological and inter-university cooperation agreements, to archaeological and heritage protection missions, and support for UNESCO<sup>66</sup>.

The different activities are articulated on several levels in which different actors operate, resulting in a varied panorama of Italian Cultural Diplomacy action.

A first dimension is properly institutional with the Ministero degli affari esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale and the Ministero per i beni e le Attività culturali. A

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<sup>64</sup> Rutelli, *La Diplomazia Culturale italiana*, cit., p.66-68

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem, p.19

<sup>66</sup> Checchia, *L'evoluzione della diplomazia culturale*, cit p. 29

second is mostly composed of international organisations of a supranational nature, such as the European Union. And finally, a third dimension is composed of individual actors, who act as indirect instruments while not directly referring to specific strategies dictated by institutional actors<sup>67</sup>.

Italy, as a medium-sized regional power with global interests, proposes its own cultural model based certainly on its important cultural heritage, but also on what is defined as the Italian way of life, that is, a way of life balanced between pleasure, style and good taste. This cultural model is exported by spreading knowledge of the Italian language, history, art and science, but also industrial and design products. We can find several national cultural models, among which the most pervasive is certainly the American model, but the model perhaps most similar to the Italian one is the French model where the conviction of the uniqueness of the value of one's own culture, as an expression of a national identity, is realised in the exportation of a way of life that becomes an object of imitation and is functional to the pursuit of national interests, also strong in the linguistic element through the Francophonie<sup>68</sup>.

## **1.7 Cultural relations between Italy and France**

In the immediate post-war period, new geopolitical balances were being defined, and if after the 1949 elections Italy was undoubtedly placed within the western sphere, it was not obvious to countries like Great Britain that it was convenient for them to make Italy part of the North Atlantic Treaty. France, for its part, did not look favorably on the predominant position that London was trying to claim, so it indirectly channelled its diplomatic support for Italian involvement. It was on this basis that France's season of new openness towards Italy began, which from a cultural point of view was sealed by the signing of the *Accordo Culturale* in 1949. The bilateral Italian-French agreement, signed by Carlo Sforza and Robert Schuman, provided for the increase of literary, artistic and scientific relations in both countries, pushing for the teaching of the respective languages, academic contacts and the opening of cultural institutes in Florence, Naples, Rome, Paris, Lyon and Marseilles<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Checchia, *L'evoluzione della diplomazia culturale*, cit, p. 43

<sup>68</sup> Torcutti, *Diplomazia culturale e politica culturale*, cit, p. 11-14

<sup>69</sup> Amicucci, *La Diplomazia Culturale come via di politica estera italiana*, Cit., p.55

Italy and France had historically always shared important cultural exchanges, and the Italian government sought to support the idea of their alliance as “Latin sisters” united by the classical tradition. Culture was an excellent element to use for diplomatic rapprochement and Italy took advantage of the cultural agreement and the periodic consultations of the joint commission provided by it<sup>70</sup>. The collaboration started with agreements on the film industry and the co-production of 149 films; the Italian cultural institutes offered music and figurative art and promoted the main Italian tourist locations, not to mention the publishing sector. Despite these positive approaches, there was no real mutualism: the French branches in Italy worked more methodically and consistently, while the Italian branches in France often encountered organisational and financial problems<sup>71</sup>.

While cultural cooperation was proceeding, the relationship between Italy and France was subtly conflicting. Not only did France also wish to establish itself as a cultural power, but the two nations also saw their foreign policy interests collide in the Mediterranean. Italy, while remaining at the service of Atlantic policy, sought to expand its sphere of influence in the Middle East and North Africa by spending its credibility as a medium-sized international power open to dialogue. In those same areas, France was seeking to create an alternative counterweight to the English-speaking world, undermining Italian ambitions in opposition to the former colonialist country<sup>72</sup>. The Mediterranean question has never been entirely dormant, and regarding the structural asymmetry of relations between the two nations, which continues to the present day, the “proximity paradox” is often invoked, according to which the proximity of two regions can influence the development of differentiating and even contrasting mechanisms<sup>73</sup>.

Nevertheless, despite the bitterness of the Mediterranean question, France remained and remains one of the main European references for Italy, as demonstrated also by the steps taken together in the direction of the constitution of the European community.

The cultural networks that have been formed since 1949, not least through fruitful university and research exchanges on both the artistic and scientific levels, have

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<sup>70</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p. 458

<sup>71</sup> Amicucci, *La Diplomazia Culturale come via di politica estera italiana*, cit, p. 116

<sup>72</sup> Spanu, *Il rilancio culturale dell'Italia nel mondo*, cit, p. 458

<sup>73</sup> P. Joannin, G. Gressani, *Le Franco-italien à la veille du Traité du Quirinal: Entre asymétrie et proximité*, «Fondation Schuman», 7 June 2021

constituted an important channel of communication between Italy and France, and Italian cultural expressions are well represented on the French scene. In France, interest in Italian culture is high and constant for reasons of geographical and historical proximity, and the French market is also of great interest to Italian artists and cultural operators.

However, the representation of the two states is not always clear and the mutual imagery is in many respects influenced by the idea of a more solid French administration than the Italian one, which sees France in a position of strength compared to Italy and in a leading position, also regarding culture<sup>74</sup>. If France's perception of Italy is rather unambiguous, Italy's perception of France is mixed. In the Risorgimento period, also as a result of the Napoleonic occupations, Italy looked to France as a model for the constitution of a central unitary state, while later it began to be inspired by the German and American models, and above all by Europeanism. It was precisely from this pro-European perspective that the reticence of Gaullist France was severely judged by the Italian state. However, since the end of the Cold War, a dialogue on national issues and the 'country system' has resumed in Italy, finding inspiration once again in France, which becomes a model to look up to and also to compete with<sup>75</sup>.

There has always been a strong and profound relationship between Italy and France, characterised by alternating moments of rapprochement and contrast, and the signing of the Quirinale Treaty is an enormously important step for relations between these two countries that marks the common will to collaborate from a European and Mediterranean perspective, leaving aside misguided preconceptions.

The idea of the Quirinale Treaty emerged in September 2017 during a summit in Lyon between French President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni. The project, resumed in 2018 on the occasion of the MED 5 meeting, subsequently suffered a stalemate due to misunderstandings between some political figures of the two administrations, before finally finding fulfilment on 26 November 2021 with the signature of Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and French President Emmanuel

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<sup>74</sup> Darnis, *Fancia-Italia relazioni bilaterali*, cit., p. 7-9

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem, p. 12

Macron. The Treaty for Enhanced Cooperation looks at the challenges of the European Union, from the consequences of Brexit, the implementation of the Next Generation EU, to the end of Angela Merkel's chancellorship. This last point is indeed important as the treaty not only strengthens the bond between Italy and France, but also opens the way for a trilateral dimension with Germany.

«Pur non definendo azioni comuni, il Trattato identifica molteplici aree di cooperazione e istituisce altresì meccanismi stabili di consultazione bilaterale, prefigurando in tal senso la possibilità di un allineamento strategico tra Roma e Parigi. Un avvicinamento che non si traduce necessariamente nell'esclusione di Berlino o nel ridimensionamento dell'asse franco-tedesco, storico motore politico ed economico del continente europeo. Del resto, l'evidente richiamo al Trattato dell'Eliseo del 1963, documento che ha segnato la saldatura – sebbene con motivazioni e obiettivi diversi - tra la Francia e la Germania, dimostrare interesse italo-francese ad un diverso equilibrio nei rapporti con i tedeschi. Parimenti, la sede scelta per la firma del Trattato vuole riflettere proprio l'eccezionalità dello stesso rispetto alle relazioni tra Roma e Parigi, storicamente caratterizzate da una dinamica sia di competizione sia di cooperazione<sup>76</sup>».

The Treaty, consisting of a preamble and twelve articles, focuses on three objectives: working together for a more united, democratic and sovereign Europe; integrating civil societies and in particular young people; strategically structuring bilateral cooperation with consultation frameworks<sup>77</sup>.

In particular, Article 9 of the Quirinale Treaty is dedicated to culture, youth and civil society, and reads:

1. «The Parties shall promote rapprochement between their peoples and a sense of common European belonging by encouraging exchanges within civil society and the mobility of young people, in particular by taking advantage of European programmes. They adopt a common strategy to encourage the engagement and mobility of young Italians and young French, within the framework of the

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<sup>76</sup> G. Natalizia, L. Termine, A. Carteny, E. Tosti di Stefano, *Executive Summary in Oltre il Trattato del Quirinale*.

*Le relazioni italo-francesi alla prova dei mutamenti politico-strategici in Europa*, Centro Studi Geopolitica.info, June 2022, p.1

<sup>77</sup> Ambassade de France en Italie site, *Trattato del Quirinale-Due anni dopo*, 21 November 2023, <<https://it.ambafrance.org/Trattato-del-Quirinale-Due-anni-dopo-6-Cultura-giovani-e-societa-civile>>, (consulted on 7 June 2024)

European youth strategy and the European structured dialogue. They coordinate this strategy within the joint commission provided for in the Cultural Agreement between Italy and France made in Paris on 4 November 1949. They organise a Franco-Italian Youth Council in the margins of the above-mentioned Joint Commission. Within the framework of the Italian universal civil service and the French civil service, and on the basis of cooperation between the agencies and government bodies in charge of managing the two programmes and youth mobility opportunities, the Parties establish an Italian-French volunteer programme entitled "Italian-French civil service". They examine the possibility of linking this programme to the European Solidarity Corps.

2. In recognition of the depth of the cultural ties between the two countries and their importance in the friendship that unites them, the Parties strengthen cooperation between Italian and French institutions, cultural bodies and artists. In this spirit, they encourage exchanges of experience, mobility of persons, research and training. They establish exchange programmes of excellence between art schools and for art professions.
3. The Parties undertake to support joint initiatives for the protection and enhancement of tangible and intangible cultural heritage at European and international level. They shall encourage the development of research. They shall in particular encourage the use of relevant programmes, mechanisms and special funds of the European Union, including in response to natural disasters or disasters affecting cultural heritage. They promote the coordination of new proposals within the framework of the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe for the protection of cultural heritage in the face of crises, emergencies and serious risks. They also foster coordination within the United Nations Security Council for the follow-up to Resolution 2347/2017 on the protection of cultural heritage in conflicts, adopted on the initiative of Italy and France, and promote support for UNESCO's action.
4. The Parties shall strengthen cooperation in the field of cultural and creative industries in order to foster the circulation of creations and productions and to accompany the digital evolution of the sector. They undertake to facilitate co-productions of cultural works, in particular cinematographic, audiovisual and

performing arts, and to explore the possibility of their distribution through a common cultural platform. They encourage mutual participation in major international events. They facilitate collaborations in the fields of live performances, design, architecture and fashion. They encourage the translation of literary works into each other's languages. They endeavour to foster the mobility of artists and authors between the two countries, in particular by connecting training institutions and encouraging the development of residencies.

5. The respective ministries responsible for culture and youth shall hold annual consultations with a view to identifying projects of common interest and taking care of their operational follow-up. The Parties also undertake to convene annually the Joint Committee provided for in Article 10 of the Cultural Agreement between Italy and France signed in Paris on 4 November 1949. They undertake to encourage this dialogue by promoting the exchange of good practices between the sectors concerned and by developing exchanges of officials between their respective ministries<sup>78</sup>».

Since the Treaty was signed, many initiatives have been set in motion, such as the New Grand Tour, a programme of artistic residencies in Italy and France; the inauguration of the Joint Civilian Service during the first meeting of the Italo-French Youth Council; the XR Farnese Residence for the creation of works for immersive reality; a residence grant for young translators from French into Italian; and the assignment of a role of honour to Italy during the Paris 2023 Book Festival<sup>79</sup>.

And it is precisely within this framework that the President of the Italian Republic, Mattarella, in the preface to the catalogue, as mentioned at the beginning, recalls the organisational and curatorial efforts of the exhibition *Naples à Paris, Le Louvre Invite Le Musée de Capodimonte*, in which more than sixty iconic works from the Neapolitan museum were exhibited in the Grande Galerie, Salle de la Chapelle, Salle de l'Horloge of the Louvre for six months from 7 June 2023 to 8 January 2024. According to Member

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<sup>78</sup> *Quirinale Treaty between the Italian Republic and the French Republic for Enhanced Bilateral Cooperation*, signed 26 November 2021

<sup>79</sup> Ambassade de France en Italie site, *Trattato del Quirinale-Due anni dopo*, cit.

of Parliament Amorese, the exhibition has the merit of ensuring enormous publicity for the Capodimonte Museum, intensifying cultural exchanges and loans of works between the two nations, and facilitating relations with the entire French museum system<sup>80</sup>. From this perspective, not only is the loan of works by the Capodimonte museum part of a broader strategy of cultural rapprochement between the Italian and French museum systems, but also the prestigious halls of the most important museum in the world make the masterpieces of the Neapolitan Museum known to an international public, giving them incomparable visibility. This vision perhaps seems to come close to the widespread perception, as previously mentioned, of a stronger French cultural administration than the Italian one, which is able to give an aura of relevance and legitimacy to the Italian museum, whose excellent quality of collection is acknowledged but which remains a little visited and valorised site on international circuits. This vision, however, seems at variance with the Italian narrative of the event, which reaffirms how, thanks to the exhibition and the dense network of collateral events, the great French capital speaks Neapolitan for six months. In a way, the tendency towards emulation and competition seems to be reconfirmed, using the weapon of cultural diplomacy formed by a constellation of initiatives such as the exhibition *Naples à Paris*, whose curatorial reasons will be analysed in Chapter 3.

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<sup>80</sup> 5-00245 Amorese: *Iniziativa per la promozione della collaborazione tra il Museo di Capodimonte e il Museo del Louvre di Parigi*, Annex 5, VIIth Permanent Commission (Culture, Science and Education), 18 January 2023



## Chapter 2

### **The loan of masterpieces: from propaganda tool in fascist Italy to a matter of valorisation from the post-war period to the present day**

Up to this point, we have sought to delineate the parameters and objectives of Cultural Diplomacy, the measures taken by the Italian Republic to chart its course in the present era, and to comprehend the diplomatic relations with France, which, in both direct and indirect ways, are reflected in the exhibition *Naples à Paris*.

But a retrospective examination reveals how deeply rooted the political component is in the history of exhibitions. Towards the end of the 19th century, nationalist sentiment became a fundamental element of European exhibitions, just consider the exhibitions inaugurated in Florence in 1875 to commemorate the birth of Michelangelo: the first example of the practice of associating celebrations of anniversaries linked to an important national artist with the exhibition of his works, and an example for the increasingly widespread tendency for exhibitions of old masters to be inspired by nationalist considerations. Or the 1898 exhibition set up in Amsterdam for Queen Wilhelmina's coronation of Rembrandt's work, an obligatory choice as he was considered to be exceptionally national, serious and moral. More generally, in France, in Germany, in Italy, there was a tendency to hold exhibitions on the Primitives, judged to be the best representatives of national ethics and greatness, and moreover, recalling the antiquity of their own culture and being dedicated more often to groups than to individual masters, they served the cause of opposing nationalisms well<sup>81</sup>.

These are examples of strongly nationalistic exhibitions, dedicated to individual masters or schools, which took place in cities with which they had an obvious relationship. However, after the First World War, exhibitions of old master art with a broad chronological and stylistic range were organised for display in other countries, in which the political element came to take on real propaganda characteristics<sup>82</sup>. Prominent examples of this trend are provided by the exhibitions organised by fascist Italy in London in 1930 and in the United States in 1939. The use of works of art as

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<sup>81</sup> Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum, cit.*, pp. 98-104

<sup>82</sup> *ibidem*, p.107

ambassadors in a foreign country is thus a long-standing idea. Although the circumstances and intentions of the *Naples à Paris* exhibition are quite different, and the current political and cultural context identifies Cultural Diplomacy as a moment for an exchange of ideas, information and art in order to increase mutual understanding between states<sup>83</sup>, without neglecting the goal of promoting one's national culture and building a sense of national credibility abroad<sup>84</sup> focusing on the educational value of culture as a vehicle for freedom, equality, social justice and democracy<sup>85</sup>, it is interesting to recall the events of two exhibitions that saw the massive displacement of Italian masterpieces (including some from the Capodimonte collection) for diplomatic purposes, even if only for the purpose of drawing the appropriate differences. The narration of these events is also useful to introduce the interesting questions that indiscriminate lending and the trend towards '*mostrismo*'<sup>86</sup> raise, such as the preservation of works and the long-standing question of power relations between museums and exhibitions, between permanent collections and ephemeral displays.

## 2.1 Works of Art as Ambassadors in fascist Italy

### 2.1.1 London 1930

Between 1920 and 1921 Burlington House hosted an exhibition dedicated to the Old Spanish masters in which some paintings by El Greco and Goya, which were little known to the British public, were also displayed. Burlington House's custom of hosting exhibitions had been interrupted with the outbreak of the First World War, and the exhibition of Spanish paintings, organised under the patronage of the Spanish government, was not only the first after the end of the conflict, but also included the loan of works from abroad. The loan was made possible mainly thanks to the intercession of the Spanish committee and the Count of Alba, who secured loans from private individuals, including the Prime Minister Eduardo Iradier. Not only that, Iradier went to the expense of lending Velasquez's *Self-Portrait* from the museum in Valencia, as well as many publicly visible works from museums and churches, creating a certain discontent among the Spanish people, relieved that at least<sup>87</sup> «...the *Burial of count Orgaz*

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<sup>83</sup>Cummings, *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government*, cit., p.1

<sup>84</sup>H. Kim, *Cultural Diplomacy as the Means of Soft Power*, cit., p.3

<sup>85</sup>M. L. Krenn, *The history of United States cultural diplomacy*, cit., p.2

<sup>86</sup>T. Montanari, V. Trione, *Contro le mostre*, Torino, Giulio Einaudi Editore, 2017, p.3

<sup>87</sup>C. Corbetta, *La movimentazione delle opere d'arte: radici di un problema attuale*, Thesis, University Ca' Foscari, 2012/2013, Supervisor E. Pellegrini, pp.32-33

and *Las Meninas* have naturally remained where they belong and the visitor to Spain will not be frustrated to find her museums and churches<sup>88</sup> despoiled of their greatest treasures<sup>88</sup>».

Although subject to some criticism, especially regarding the section dedicated to contemporary art, the news of the exhibition was received in Italy as a great triumph for Spain. In particular, the critic Ugo Ojetti described it in *Dedalo* «..come mostra ufficiale, mostra di governo, atto di propaganda nazionale<sup>89</sup>», urging Italy to follow the same example because, if beauty does not rule the world, it certainly helps, and creating attention on the nation through newspaper articles and discussions about an Italian art exhibition, where Italy had to choose from the splendours of six or seven centuries of art, could only be a good prospect. Works of art, he continued, are not the property of state employees but must be exported and displayed for the greater glory, prestige and benefit of the nation<sup>90</sup>.

However, the idea of a large exhibition of ancient Italian art in London came from Lady Chamberlain, wife of the British Foreign Secretary, inspired by the exhibition *Flemish and Belgian art 1300-1900*, staged by the Anglo-Belgian Union in 1927, which was organised with the cooperation of the Belgian government and aimed at promoting friendly relations of cooperation between the two great nations<sup>91</sup>. Lady Chamberlain proposed her ambitious project to Mussolini, who accepted enthusiastically, finding the initiative quite useful and inexpensive: in a period of political instability still suffering from the Matteotti affair, it was crucial to retain the support of the British Foreign Secretary. Indeed, the period of the exhibition coincided, although it was certainly not the sole cause, with Mussolini's moment of greatest prestige in England, where words of great gratitude were used for the loan of the masterpieces. Lady Chamberlain made arrangements with the Royal Academy to host the exhibition, while Mussolini appointed Ettore Modigliani as general commissioner of the exhibition. Modigliani, who headed the Italian committee but was in effect subordinate to the British committee, proposed to search for works to be exhibited only in Italy to show England how rich it still was in treasures, and was responsible for obtaining the loans.

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<sup>88</sup> E. Harris, *The Golden Age of Spanish paintings at the Royal Academy*, «The Burlington Magazine», 875, vol 118, February 1976, p. 112.

<sup>89</sup> U. Ojetti, *Commenti*, «Dedalo», I, 3, 1921, p.960

<sup>90</sup> Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum*, cit., pp.108-109

<sup>91</sup> R. Witt, *Exhibition of Flemish and Belgian art 1300-1900*, London, 1927, p.IX

Some voices of dissent and doubts arose from Italy about the risks the works would run, some of which are still valid today: the Undersecretary for National Education warned of the dangers of travelling for such important works and expressed the fear that works from private collections could be sold abroad, impoverishing the national heritage. The Director General of Antiquities and Fine Arts also expressed his reservations about the same dangers. The list of works requested by Lady Chamberlain turned out to include a huge number of masterpieces, but the Duce's word could no longer be retracted for political reasons, so it was proposed to her to divert the choice between small paintings and works from provincial museums that are generally outside the tourist circuits most commonly undertaken by British tourists. Lady Chamberlain was adamant and Mussolini resolved to remove any obstacle to the loan of the works<sup>92</sup>.

There were some resistance attempts, such as when the Poldi Pezzoli Museum refused, with justifiable reason, the loan of Pollaiuolo's *Ritratto di Dama* because it had become an iconic work for the entire collection. In the end, not only was the museum induced to lend it, but the work was placed as the exhibition poster. But in general, museums submitted to the initiative and, among other works, Masaccio's *Crocifissione* and Bellini's *Transfigurazione* were sent from Capodimonte. The only Italian museum that could veto this was the Musei Vaticani, which had been asked to lend the predella of the polyptych of *San Vincenzo Ferrer* by Cossa. The Santa Sede opposed the loan on the grounds that this might set a precedent for future exhibitions, and would also disappoint visitors who expected to see all the masterpieces listed in the catalogue. Loans were also requested from foreign museums, and for instance Berlin agreed to the loan by adhering to the principle of reciprocity between institutions, an argument that was later very successful. In England, on the other hand, there were more problems, as in the case of the National Gallery, which was forbidden by law to lend. After legal advice and many votes, the loan was granted but not without a heated debate in which Lord Crawford opposed it arguing the danger of transporting vulnerable works of art and moving them from places where they could be seen free of charge, and finally regretting the participation of English institutions in an essentially political project<sup>93</sup>.

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<sup>92</sup> Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum*, cit., pp.109-114

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*, pp.114-116

Lady Chamberlain was certainly an admirer of Mussolini and the dictator's almost total collaboration in authorising the loans must certainly have increased her and her husband's sympathy for fascism.

On the other hand, Sir Chamberlain's declarations were very well received in Italy where Francesco Saponi, an art historian who during the Ventennio generously supported fascism, in his *L'arte e il Duce* reports a note from the British Foreign Secretary with obvious propagandistic intentions:

«...Solo un capo di governo come l'onorevole Mussolini poteva avere l'autorità di rendere possibile questa Esposizione, sfidando tutti i rischi relativi all'invio e al trasporto dei tesori più cari all'Arte italiana. Io non credo che un altro capo di governo, soggetto alla tirannia delle maggioranze parlamentari, avrebbe potuto permettere a collezioni tanto preziose di uscire dai musei e dalle gallerie del proprio paese, senza correre il rischio di essere rovesciato dal potere quando i giornali pubblicavano che la nave che li trasportava lottava con la tempesta nel Golfo di Biscaglia<sup>94</sup>».

In fact, the ship *Leonardo da Vinci*, on which the 500 crates of Italian works of art had been embarked, faced a terrible storm on its voyage from Genoa to London, which really made people fear the worst and caused a great sensation in the newspapers. In general, the propaganda aspect is also widespread in Italy, where the great feat of showing the nation's greatness abroad is portrayed in the newsreels produced by the LUCE institute filming the packing of works leaving the Pinacoteca di Brera<sup>95</sup>, the loading operations, the arrival of the ship in port after a «penosa navigazione<sup>96</sup>» and the handshakes of the dignitaries. The support for the enterprise was dictated by the promotion of Italianness, but in the end the promise made by Mussolini to Lady Chamberlain seemed to be more expensive than expected, so much so that apparently at one point Mussolini was even nauseated by the whole affair and did not even want to be reminded of it<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>94</sup> F. Saponi, *L'arte e il Duce*, Milano, Mondadori, 1932, p.252

<sup>95</sup> *Dalla Pinacoteca di Brera partono i quadri italiani per l'Esposizione di Londra del 1° gennaio 1930*, Giornale LUCE, **A0483**, <<https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000029093/2/dalla-pinacoteca-brera-partono-i-quadri-italiani-l-esposizione-londra-del-1-gennaio-1930>> (consulted on 10 June 2024)

<sup>96</sup> *La nave italiana Leonardo da Vinci*, **Giornale LUCE, A / A049**, <<https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000029853/2/la-nave-italiana-leonardo-vinci->> (consulted on 10 June 2024)

<sup>97</sup> AC 6/7/20 letter by Sir Robert Graham to Lady Chamberlain, 27 Dicembre 1929

Finally on 1 January 1930 *Italian Art 1200-1900* was inaugurated at the Royal Academy: fifty per cent of the works on display came from Italy, the remaining thirty per cent from British collections and the remainder from foreign countries including America<sup>98</sup>. The exhibition catalogue stated:

«...Among the Italian State Galleries and Museum represented by important and interesting loans are the Uffizi, Pitti, Bargello, Borghese, Palazzo Venezia, Corsini, Brera, Ca' d'Oro, Academy Venice, and those of Naples, Modena, Siena, Turin, Perugia, Parma, Bologna, Ancona and Urbino<sup>99</sup>».

More than six hundred paintings were displayed, an exhibition like none before, and it was said that there would never be another like it, a prophecy soon disproved. The exhibition was a success with the public, but not with the critics due to its weak scholarly structure: the layout was essentially chronological, dominated by Berenson's vision of the Renaissance, and the rooms dedicated to the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries were poorly attended<sup>100</sup>. The exhibition in any case was strenuously defended, Roger Fry argued that:

«...l'adorazione dei capolavori d'arte antica può essere spinta all'eccesso e può addirittura comportare dei pericoli per simili oggetti. [...] Si può quasi sostenere che i dipinti... abbiano bisogno di cambiare aira e compagnia. Per quanto la conservazione materiale di un quadro rivesta importanza immensa, questa importanza dipende dal fatto che il quadro continui ad esercitare la sua essenziale funzione di fonte di vita spirituale<sup>101</sup>».

### **2.1.2 Re e Principi 1935**

Five years after the unrepeatable London exhibition, many of the masterpieces that had taken part in it left for the Petit Palais in Paris for a new unrepeatable exhibition «...quale non si è mai vista e non si vedrà mai più<sup>102</sup>». The exhibition hosted in the French capital was the result of the mutual interests of the two governments: on the one hand France wished to weaken the Italian alliance with Germany, on the other hand Italy hoped to obtain France's desistance before the invasion of Ethiopia. The

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<sup>98</sup> Corbetta, *La movimentazione delle opere d'arte* cit., p.36

<sup>99</sup> *Exhibition of Italian Art 1200-1900*, exhibition catalogue, London, Burlington House, 1930, p. XV

<sup>100</sup> Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum*, cit., pp.123-125

<sup>101</sup> R. Fry, *Notes on the Italian Exhibition at Burlington House: 1 and 2*, «The Burlington Magazine», February 1930, pp.72-89 and 129-136

<sup>102</sup> L. Carletti, C. Giometti, «*San Francisco will see old masters*». *La fiera delle vanità del regime nel 1939*, «Studi Storici», 52, no.2 (Aprile-Giugno 2011), p.467

exhibition was the fruit of realpolitik, and French Foreign Minister Laval and Mussolini, describing the understanding reached, spoke of “*unione latina*” and the «*comune origine etnica, religiosa, militare e culturale del grandioso impero romano*»<sup>103</sup>. Ojetti was appointed as curator and was instructed by Mussolini himself to curate a splendid exhibition of ancient and modern art<sup>104</sup>, whose Renaissance heart was bent to the service of Italianism in Galeazzo Ciano's opening speech that celebrated Humanism as an antithesis to the Germanic spirit. The artworks, repeatedly called ‘*Re e Principi*’ by Ojetti, travelled by rail and, on the orders of the Duce, without insurance in order to minimise costs<sup>105</sup>. Once again, the exhibition was a success with the public, setting a record number of visitors for French museums, but it was also emphasised its lack of scientific content<sup>106</sup>. Nevertheless, on 3 October 1935 the Italian army invaded Ethiopia and only then did international public opinion mobilise, the League of Nations imposed economic sanctions on Italy, which did not cause the slightest slowdown in the grandiose military operations that led to the establishment of the Italian Empire on 9 May 1936. Shortly afterwards, the Rome-Berlin Axis was made official.

### 2.1.3 United States 1939

After the attack on Ethiopia, the attitude of the American press towards Mussolini, until then essentially positive, changed, and the need to rebalance a rapidly deteriorating relationship became urgent<sup>107</sup>. The opportunity for an operation of cultural diplomacy would present itself in 1936, when the United States was planning two international fairs, one in New York and one in San Francisco, for which an exhibition of ancient art had been proposed. Italy's participation in these events was therefore very interesting for diplomatic reasons, and Foreign Minister Ciano's efforts were aimed at fostering a climate of détente with the United States by exploiting the cultural tradition of the Renaissance as a prodrome of the Duce's generous authoritarian democracy<sup>108</sup>. But there also existed commercial reasons and questions of reciprocity of loans in view of the Esposizione Universale in Rome (E42), planned for 1941, then rescheduled for the

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<sup>103</sup> E. Serretta, *Feconda fraternità latina: il trionfale successo delle mostre d'arte a Parigi*, «L'Ambrosiano», 17 maggio 1935

<sup>104</sup> M. Dei, *Ojetti e l'exposition de l'art italien de Cimabue à Tiepoli di Parigi*, 2011, «Studi di Memofonte. Rivista online semestrale», 6, pp.81-89

<sup>105</sup> L. Carletti, C. Giometti, *Raffaello on the road, Rinascimento e propaganda fascista in America (1939-1940)*, Roma, Carocci editore, 2016, p.19

<sup>106</sup> Carletti, Giometti, «*San Francisco will see old masters*» cit., p.468

<sup>107</sup> Carletti, Giometti, *Raffaello on the road* cit., p. 27

<sup>108</sup> Carletti, Giometti, «*San Francisco will see old masters*» cit., p.475

first two decades of fascism and never realised due to the outbreak of the Second World War: receiving in Italy a huge quantity of works from America, as well as a political counterbalance, constituted an indispensable opportunity for study, strongly supported also by Roberto Longhi who, starting from Lionello Venturi's studies on American collections, drew up a list of desiderata<sup>109</sup>.

As we shall see, Italy decided to participate in both exhibitions, but to send Old Masters works only to the San Francisco fair. This lending of masterpieces for diplomatic purposes presents some interesting differences with respect to the previously presented cases of London 1930 and Paris 1935, in fact the American exhibition would not have taken place in a venue dedicated to culture but within a trade fair, the sending of a small number of indispensable masterpieces, 6 sculptures and 21 paintings, with Renaissance masters and a significant participation of 17th and 18th century artists<sup>110</sup>. In addition, two exhibition stops will be added during the American expedition, which were not foreseen in the original plans, taking the works on tour and undergoing repeated and damaging handling.

In the summer of 1937, the contract was signed for the construction of the Italian pavilion at the New York fair with the theme *The World of Tomorrow*, but it remained to be decided how to participate. Shortly afterwards, Walter Heil, Special Commissioner for Fine Arts of the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco, arrived in Italy with the task of securing the loan of small groups of masterpieces of ancient art. The opportunity, coupled with the fact that the cost of packing, transport and insurance would be borne by the Americans, was good, so Bottai agreed, requesting that the masterpieces be given a prominent place in the exhibition and subordinating them to the American government's commitment to grant Italian works of art for the 1942 Rome Exhibition<sup>111</sup>. It was now necessary to define the exhibition programmes of both fairs, also because, in the meantime, a request had arrived to organise an exhibition of ancient Italian art from American collections in New York. This prospect, as Giulio Carlo Argan, then a young official of the Antiquities and Fine Arts Division, pointed out, could interfere with the exhibition at E42:

«... il dilemma non consiste dunque nel dare la preferenza alla mostra di New York o a quella di San Francisco, ma nel decidere se all'esposizione di New York o a

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<sup>109</sup> Carletti, Giometti, *Raffaello on the road* cit., pp.6-7

<sup>110</sup> Carletti, Giometti, «*San Francisco will see old masters*» cit. p.469

<sup>111</sup> Carletti, Giometti, *Raffaello on the road* cit., pp.61-73



quella del 1941 debba essere assicurato un sicuro elemento di successo qual è la presenza delle opere d'arte italiane delle collezioni americane. A questo proposito, mi permetto di far presente all'E.V.: I° che quelle opere, pur presentando grande interesse anche per il pubblico americano, costituirebbero una ben più grande attrattiva per il pubblico prevalentemente europeo che visiterà l'esposizione del 1941 – II° che quelle opere, esposte isolatamente a New York, ritroverebbero a Roma la cornice storica di un eccezionale complesso di capolavori dei nostri Musei e la loro esposizione acquisterebbe così un nuovo e più profondo significato culturale<sup>112</sup>».

The preferences of Bottai and the Italian academics were all for the success of the Roman exhibition, so it was decided to take care of relations with the American museums as much as possible in order to obtain loans according to the principle of reciprocity, and this was possible through the mediation of Heil and the better success of the exhibition at the San Francisco fair. Bottai appointed Argan and Longhi as those responsible for defining the works to be loaned to San Francisco. Longhi's appointment definitively ousted Ojetti, who had initially been Heil's first contact in Italy. It was around Ojetti, one of the protagonists of the London and Paris exhibitions, that the dissatisfaction with the American exhibition was concentrated, including Ferruccio Ferrazzi who wrote in a letter to him about the loan hypothesis:

«...Siamo sulla via di concedere di esporre nei baracconi americani del 939 la *Madonna della Seggiola*! Insieme a questa enormità che solo privarsene per un giorno significa aver perduto ogni senso di responsabilità del nostro tesoro d'arte nazionale, dovrebbero partire la *Tempesta*, la *Bella* di Tiziano, l'*Innocenzo X* di Velázquez, il fragile tesoro dei ritratti di Piero, la *Velata* di Raffaello, la *Nascita di Venere* (che già rischiò nelle baracche del Circo Massimo come ti dirò a voce), un Leonardo mi pare l'*Annunciazione*, il *Giulio* di Raffaello, *Paolo III* di Napoli e così via fino a contare venti miracoli dell'arte! Tutto questo rischio in momenti torbidi, attraversando zone di guerra, facendole viaggiare sia pure con tutte le precauzioni e con garanzie che vanno ai cinque milioni di lire!!! Per la *Madonna della Seggiola*! Ma poi quali garanzie, quali assicurazioni possono salvarci e tutelare quello che è fuori di ogni grossolana valutazione di banca? [...]poi verrà Tokyo, poi il polo nord e fra qualche decennio avremo rovistato tutto il patrimonio di pittura trasportabile da un capo all'altro del mondo<sup>113</sup>».

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<sup>112</sup> Report by Argan to Bottai, 28 December 1937, ACS, AABBA, General Affairs, *Mostre d'arte antica all'estero*, A-B, b.122

<sup>113</sup> Letter from Ferrazzi to Ojetti, 8 June, GNAM, Fondi Storici, Fondo Ojetti, box 30, insert 5, 739

Ojetti would also reiterate his concerns more than once following the Chicago and San Francisco stages in controversy with Minister Bottai and Commendator Ventura, who did not fail to mention that Ojetti himself had taken part in the very first phase of the San Francisco project as well as not having flinched at the dangers that the works had run in the London crossing in 1930 and the political complications with France at the Paris exhibition in 1935<sup>114</sup>.

Twenty-seven works were selected, to be joined by twenty-three others from American collections, and a section of contemporary art was also to be organised in San Francisco. Roberto Longhi's contribution can be seen in the selection of works such as Guercino's *Bagno di Diana*, which he investigated in *Officina Ferrarese*, and materialised through the loan of 4 works from his personal collection: the *Fanciullo morso dal ramarro* for the ancient art section, and Carlo Carrà's *Chiaravalle*, *Natura morta con drappo giallo* and *Natura morta con oggetti in viola* by Giorgio Morandi for the contemporary art section<sup>115</sup>. A small number of works of the highest level had been chosen to give an idea of the highest moments of Italian figurative art in the knowledge that, compared to the precedents in London and Paris, it would be difficult to reconstruct the Italian artistic fabric in an exhaustive manner, and it was decided to fill the gaps with works from American collections: thus, it was decided to obtain the *Madonna in trono* by Pietro Lorenzetti of Philadelphia to illustrate Sieneese painting, and to send Masaccio's *Crocifissione*, an artist absent in the United States<sup>116</sup>. Botticelli's *Nascita di Venere* was considered essential by Heil and the loan could not be refused as the work had already been exhibited in both London and Paris<sup>117</sup>.

The artworks were accompanied by Commendator Eugenio Ventura, signatory on the Italian side, and Brera Director Morassi, loaded onto the steamer *Rex* departing from Genoa on 4 January 1939, disembarked in New York on 12 January and loaded onto four trucks for San Francisco. The state-owned works were not insured and the corresponding sum was set at 40000 dollars, all of which did not entail a discount for

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<sup>114</sup> Letter from Ventura to Lazzari, 20 March 1940, AABBA, Carte Argan

<sup>115</sup> Carletti, Giometti, «*San Francisco will see old masters*» cit., p.471

<sup>116</sup> Carletti, Giometti, *Raffaello on the road* cit., p.96

<sup>117</sup> Carletti, Giometti, «*San Francisco will see old masters*» cit., p.476

the American organisers and those funds were destined to the construction of the Gabinetto Centrale del Restauro Italiano.

Thus, it was that *Masterworks of Five Centuries* opened on 18 February 1939 within the Golden Gate International Exhibition. In San Francisco, the works were exhibited behind unbreakable glass for fear of retaliation due to the anti-Italian sentiments widespread in the United States and amplified by the promulgation of the racial laws.

In the summer of 1939<sup>118</sup>, a law was promulgated by Bottai that prevented the lending of works of art outside Italy, and recalling this decision, he pointed out that it was highly inappropriate to lend the works to other centres in America after the conclusion of the San Francisco Fair<sup>119</sup>. Cesare Brandi, Inspector of Fine Arts, also wrote that the last major international exhibition of Italian art after London and Paris would be the Golden Gate International Exhibition<sup>120</sup>. These claims were soon disproved when at the close of the fair, shortly after the invasion of Poland by Germany, only the contemporary art works were sent back to Italy, while the Old Masters' art works were first accompanied to Chicago by Argan and then to New York by Brandi.

Argan was instructed by Bottai to go to the United States and take care of the collection of the works and their return to Italy. In the meantime, the city of Chicago tried in every way, through official and unofficial channels, to secure an exhibition stop for the masterpieces on their return journey to the East Coast<sup>121</sup>. The invasion of Poland and the outbreak of the Second World War radically changed the cards on the table and Bottai retraced his own steps, considering that perhaps the best strategy for the protection of the masterpieces was to keep them in America until the international situation calmed down. With the E42 hypothesis and the emphasis on the reciprocity of loans now over, the Chicago proposal was re-examined, and, also considering that at least until the spring, the return would have been risky, a second stop in New York

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<sup>118</sup> At the Superintendents' Conference in July 1938, as reported in the "Bollettino d'Arte" in the summer of 1938, Bottai had declared that «...sarebbe senza dubbio opportuno, che le Mostre d'arte antica, o la partecipazione italiana a siffatte Mostre, fosse esclusivamente condizionata a precise esigenze culturali, ad assolute necessità politiche. Nell'un caso e nell'altro, la partecipazione sarebbe rigorosamente giustificata, anche dal punto di vista critico». Although emphasising the element of protection as primary in his discourse, the political motivation falls within the narrow circle of justifications for moving works of art.

<sup>119</sup> Carletti, Giometti, «*San Francisco will see old masters*» cit., p. 487

<sup>120</sup> C. Brandi, *L'Italia all'esposizione di San Francisco*, «Panorama», 27 aprile 1939

<sup>121</sup> Carletti, Giometti, *Raffaello on the road* cit., p.112

was considered, for which the Museum of Modern Art was suggested, as it was brand new and certainly more suitable for the works' storage than the Washington embassy<sup>122</sup>.

On 17 November 1939, the *Masterpieces of Italian Art* exhibition opened at the Art Institute of Chicago. Argan, together with the museum's director and staff, curated the exhibition, which he reported on in the magazine *Le Arti* in 1940:

«Dal punto di vista strettamente organizzativo, e prescindendo dalla prima e fondamentale esigenza di accompagnare ogni atto con le più assolute garanzie per la salvaguardia e la conservazione delle opere, era essenziale il problema di limitare al minimo indispensabile il periodo di tempo tra la chiusura di una esposizione e l'apertura della successiva, in modo da sfruttare tutto il tempo utile per la Mostra. [...] La Mostra non presentava, dal punto di vista tecnico, problemi tecnici complessi. Benché l'edificio dello Art Institute non sia recentissimo e non aderisca quindi - come aderisce invece il Museum of Modern Art di New York - alle più nuove esigenze museografiche, gli impianti per garantire un rapporto costante di umidità e temperatura erano in grado di assicurare alle nostre opere le migliori condizioni ambientali. Un sistema di osservazioni e registrazioni frequenti permetteva inoltre di compensare gli squilibri che l'affollarsi o il diradarsi dei visitatori provocava nella temperatura dell'ambiente. [...] Cinque delle migliori sale del Museo, una delle quali grandissima, furono vuotate, completamente decorate ex novo ed adibite alla Mostra dell'antica pittura italiana. Le pareti furono ricoperte di tele, cui un vago disegno appena stampigliato e quasi illeggibile per la sostanza invadente del colore toglieva la durezza e l'unità della superficie [...] dovendosi necessariamente sistemare le poche opere nelle poche sale disponibili, non era stato possibile seguire una rigorosa successione cronologica né, per l'architettura dei locali, spezzare l'impegno di una simmetria impostata sul dato dimensionale delle opere: nell'impossibilità di dare ad ogni opera un proprio spazio ed una propria luce, l'unità tonale dei fondi e il coefficiente luminoso costante erano in realtà il vero tessuto connettivo dell'esposizione<sup>123</sup>».

After the inauguration, Argan returned to Italy, passing first through New York to sign agreements with the Museum of Modern Art and estimated that additional funds could

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<sup>122</sup> Carletti, Giometti, *Raffaello on the road* cit., pp.130-133

<sup>123</sup> G.C. Argan, *Le mostre degli antichi capolavori italiani a Chicago e a New York*, «Le Arti», II, April-May 1939-1940, pp.270-272

be raised from the two exhibitions to be allocated to the newly established Istituto di Restauro.

Towards Christmas, Brandi arrived in the United States. He was concerned about the state of conservation of the works in the Chicago Museum due to the excessively high temperatures and excessively dry air, and tried to redress the situation by placing pots of water over the radiators in order to regulate the humidity. The journey from Chicago to New York was even more painful for Brandi, who obtained to transport the works in a temperature-controlled wagon attached to an express train in order to shorten the journey time.

Curator of the exhibition, together with Brandi, was Alfred Barr, and the exhibition design criteria at the MoMa were different from those at the Art Institute of Chicago and innovative, favouring an aseptic and rarefied display that did not hinder the enjoyment of the artworks<sup>124</sup>. The technical innovations and exhibition design solutions of the modern museum were of great interest to Brandi, who described the exhibition in the magazine *Le Arti* in 1940:

«Nel Museum of Modern Art il sistema fondamentale di illuminazione consiste in file di lampade, montate su snodi che permettono tutte le varietà delle inclinazioni volute [...] D'altronde con tale sistema il centro della stanza resta in una luce quieta, mentre sulla parete vi è un trapasso di luminosità, che sul dipinto culmina e si centra. Il raccoglimento, l'isolamento, la valorizzazione del dipinto risultano così senza effetti violenti: e in verità fra quanti Musei si possono vedere, e non solo in America, il Modern Museum sembra possedere il più riuscito impianto di illuminazione, e da solo, vorrei dire, avrebbe giustificato la scelta fatta a suo tempo da G. C. Argan, come delegato Ministeriale, di questo piuttosto che di altri Musei di New York che si contendevano l'onore dell'Esposizione dei capolavori italiani. Ma tale scelta fu felice anche per altro motivo, annullando praticamente la vieta separazione fra arte antica e arte moderna. Per l'opera d'arte, infatti, se veramente tale, non c'è bisogno di suscitare intorno un presunto e inanimato ambiente del tempo, [...] tutto il resto è scenografia, che avrà i suoi meriti, ma non in un museo. [...] Nuovissimi criteri di allestimento, non ultimo quello di cambiare il colore delle pareti nella stessa sala, a seconda dei dipinti che vi si dovevano disporre. A cose fatte ciò non veniva neppure osservato, tanta era la convenienza dell'attuazione e la modestia alla quale venivano restituite le pareti, nude e senza il minimo fasto; [...] Si può affermare senza timore che mai una esposizione di così eccelsi capolavori era stata pensata e realizzata con spirito tanto nuovo e pure così

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<sup>124</sup> Carletti, Giometti, *Raffaello on the road cit.*, pp.152-159

aderente e sottomesso alla qualità individuale di ogni opera. [...] non minori risultarono le previdenze per la conservazione. Il Museo possiede un modernissimo impianto di aria condizionata che permette, una volta stabilito il rapporto proporzionale fra umidità e temperatura, di ristabilirlo in pochissimo tempo ed automaticamente, non appena per afflusso di gente o per influenza della temperatura esterna il rapporto stesso subisse dei cambiamenti<sup>125</sup>».

Shortly before Italy's entrance into the war, on 13 April 1940, the works of old masters, without war insurance, set sail to return to their homeland after a kermesse called for political propaganda, reciprocal loans, business and fundraising for the creation of the Istituto del Restauro, perhaps the most legitimate motivation.

## **2.2 Examination of conscience after the experiences of the fascist exhibitions**

What about the artworks? Only in 1956 Brandi reveals the exact consequences of the American tour on the conservative state of the artworks: in reality the museum in Chicago had only heating system that by American standards is generally very high, condition that combined with dry air produced serious damage.

«...quando arrivai trovai che la *Sacra Conversazione* di Palma, delle Gallerie di Venezia, presentava sollevazioni a tetto di grande estensione e in molti punti, sicché dovette subito essere staccata e adagiata in piano. Lo stesso era accaduto al *San Giorgio* di Mantegna della stessa Galleria Veneziana; si era sollevato in modo pauroso verticalmente in basso; nella *Madonna della Seggiola* le assi di supporto segnavano in modo assai più distinto, e la *Crocifissione* di Masaccio s'era incurvata in modo definitivo [...] il Palma e il Mantegna richiesero un lungo e minuto intervento di restauro e in quanto al Masaccio rimase curvo<sup>126</sup>».

It is significant that these testimonies of Brandi emerge only in 1956, in a changed political environment that, however, as said, does not stop relying on cultural diplomacy, when news arrives of the will for a new parade of masterpieces, very similar to the one just described, to be set up in Washington and New York. The intent is to warn of the risks of preservation, and was followed by the uprising of many

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<sup>125</sup> C. Brandi, *Le mostre degli antichi capolavori italiani a Chicago e a New York*, «Le Arti», II, April-May 1939–1940, pp. 272-274

<sup>126</sup> C. Brandi, *Relazione del 10 dicembre 1956*, Archive Istituto Centrale del Restauro – Exhibition section, pp. 28-29

personalities of the art world who denounced «il vecchio complesso di inferiorità nei riguardi dell'estero per cui si cerca, ostentando i valori eterni dell'arte, di procacciarsi l'altrui benevolenza<sup>127</sup>».

Although among the protagonists of this story, Brandi matures over time a completely different opinion, and speaks in depth about the problem of exhibitions. A positive aspect of the American adventure is the obtaining of funds for the establishment of the Central Institute of Restoration of which Brandi will be director from 1939 to 1959, and from the awareness of the fragility of the works of art originate his considerations on the exhibitions. The works are an irreplaceable unicum that must first of all be preserved, and conservation is the imperative is the necessary premise to which we cannot answer simply by noting that the exhibitions have entered into the customs of our days and respond to a certain extent to an educational need. It is for this reason that art exhibitions, which provide for the lending and therefore the handling of artistic goods, must be subject to precise guidelines. The imperative of conservation can only be overcome «quando si tratta di opere la cui considerazione nella presente empirica scala dei valori artistici o si trova scaduta o addirittura erroneamente motivata<sup>128</sup>». It follows that the appreciation of the work is functional to conservation because the more an artwork is appreciated and known, and the better the attention to its protection will be. In this sense, the displacement of little-known artworks, of artworks coming from the deposits, of artworks that thanks to the participation in an exhibition can benefit from a restoration, is acceptable if not even desirable.

In the idea of Brandi, the political motivation is not valid. The exhibitions organized for propaganda purposes or cultural diplomacy, precisely because of their intrinsic purpose do not concern works that need a revaluation, but aim at the exposure of the most famous masterpieces, the well-known and prestigious names that lend themselves well to the role of ambassadors. From Brandi's point of view and for the purpose of conservation, this type of initiative is completely unnecessary and handling can only be risky. Legitimate exhibitions are those that serve the work, and not the other way around, are the exhibitions that lead to a revaluation, to change the current taste, to make known a neglected historical period. The planning is therefore essential, that they are prepared in accurate way and with adequate times to the restoration and

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<sup>127</sup> A. Caderna, *Capolavori a Mare*, «Il Mondo», 30 ottobre 1956

<sup>128</sup> C.Brandi, *Il problema delle esposizioni*, Terzo programma, 1957, in *Il Patrimonio insidiato, scritti sulla tutela del paesaggio e dell'arte*, edited by M. Capati. Editori Riuniti, 2001, p.388

the full value of the works<sup>129</sup>. Finally, Brandi notes that even though technology allows us to transport the works in a less risky way, that same technical ability allows us to travel in absolute simplicity to observe the works in their locations, and publishing and other media should provide education for the public.

Among the voices of protest for the exhibition of Italian masterpieces in the United States that made Brandi unveil the conservative background of the exhibitions of 1939, there was also that of Longhi<sup>130</sup>, which, as we have seen, was advisor to Minister Bottai in that exhibition. Longhi, during the war years, matures a new awareness of the conservation needs of cultural heritage, and the link between protection and knowledge, awareness, of the artistic treasure by citizens:

«il primo bombardamento di Genova dovrebbe risolversi in un interminabile esame di coscienza per noi storici dell'arte. Anche noi, gli anziani soprattutto, siamo responsabili di tante ferite al torso dell'arte italiana, almeno per non aver lavorato più duramente, e per non aver detto e propalato in tempo quanti e quali valori si trattava di proteggere. [...] Di qui, del resto, si risale ad altre vecchie carenze della nostra cultura: la storia dell'arte che ogni italiano dovrebbe imparar da bambino come una lingua viva (se vuole avere coscienza intera della propria nazione): serva, invece, e cenerentola dalle classi medie all'università; dalle stesse persone colte considerata come un bell'ornamento, un sovrappiù, un finaletto, un colophon, un cul-de-lampe di una informazione elegante<sup>131</sup>».

Longhi's reflections address the significance of the context, of the relationship that works entertain with other works, with places, with history, and initiate a deep reflection that challenges the notion of 'absolute masterpiece', a theme very relevant also in the exhibition events of our days:

«L'opera d'arte, dal vaso dell'artigiano greco alla Volta Sistina è sempre un capolavoro squisitamente 'relativo'. L'opera non sta mai sola, è sempre un rapporto. Per cominciare: almeno un rapporto con un'altra opera d'arte. Un'opera sola al mondo non sarebbe neppure intesa come produzione umana, ma guardata con riverenza o con orrore, come magia, come tabù, come opera di Dio o dello stregone, non dell'uomo. E s'è già troppo sofferto del mito degli artisti divini e divinissimi, invece che semplicemente umani<sup>132</sup>».

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<sup>129</sup> Brandi, *Il problema delle esposizioni* cit., pp.384-393

<sup>130</sup> Carletti, Giometti, *Raffaello on the road* cit., p.188

<sup>131</sup> R. Longhi to Giuliano Briganti, in *Opere complete*, 13° vol., 1985, p. 129

<sup>132</sup> R. Longhi, *Proposte per una critica d'arte*, «Paragone», I, 1950, pag. 4



In the editorial *Mostre e Musei* of 1959 he recalls the use of the fascist period to adorn the homeland with the crown of art and tells with condemnation of the London exhibition of 1930 and the terrible crossing of the works to England, «ma cosa venisse a guadagnarsi per la cultura - perché noi siamo qui per discutere il risultato di utile diffusione culturale che possono a vere le mostre – da quella grande parata non saprei dire<sup>133</sup>». It defends some Italian exhibitions of the thirties as a real opportunity for study and rare intellectual freedom. He recalls, still in harsh tones, the Paris exhibition of 1935, with all his «capolavori a spasso<sup>134</sup>», but he does not mention the 1939 exhibitions in San Francisco, Chicago and New York in which he had participated to some extent, nor the hopes of the exhibition at E42. The initial disappointment at the shipwreck of the project, combined with the new awareness of the fragility of the heritage gained during the war, perhaps explain the silence on an operation in fact subordinate to indirect propaganda and the logic of profit<sup>135</sup>.

It is also interesting, recalling the considerations of the previous chapter regarding the efforts and developments of cultural diplomacy in a European and supranational key, the reference to the exhibitions of baroque and rococò organized under the patronage of the Council of Europe and awkwardly dedicated to the rediscovery of «una eterna, immanente unità ideologica europea [...] in una Europa sempre divisa di concetti, di religioni, di filosofie, e perciò anche d'arte<sup>136</sup>». This is a subject to which Brandi also returns, and which, as has been said, is today dealt with in a completely different way, with the emphasis on the coexistence of diversity as a key to European culture.

Almost prophetic, thinking of the present day, is the passage in which Longhi speaks about the «sorpresa che ci coglie rilevando che, in confronto alle circa quaranta mostre del ventennio fra la prima e la seconda guerra - cioè fra il '20 e il '40 – nel quindicennio che segue la seconda (e speriamo ultima), dal '45 al '59, anno in cui parliamo, le mostre sono più di trecento. Non saranno troppe?<sup>137</sup>». We then proceed with the drawing of guidelines for legitimate exhibitions: personal exhibitions that, optimistically in the hope of Longhi, are made once and disturb the museums once, the regional reconnaissance exhibitions that have the merit of rediscovering little-known works and ensuring them

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<sup>133</sup> Longhi, *Editoriale Mostre e Musei, cit.*, p.63

<sup>134</sup> *Ibidem*, p.63

<sup>135</sup> Carletti, Giometti, *Raffaello on the road cit.*, p.190

<sup>136</sup> Longhi, *Editoriale Mostre e Musei cit.*, p.70

<sup>137</sup> *ibidem* p.72

better protection, subject in agreement with Brandi, and those resulting from restoration. Instead, it attacks exhibitions that with little scientific project but high potential for political reflection requires museums the famous paintings that alone ensure success, and even more harshly the curators of parades of masterpieces that reduce museums to «cadavres più o meno exquise [...] nient'altro che dei reservoirs cui attingere a piacere<sup>138</sup>».

A relevant example to return to the present day and look at the museum of Capodimonte, are the most recent pilgrimages of Titian's *Danae* that include participation in exhibitions *Flesh and Blood. Italian Masterpieces from the Capodimonte Museum* in the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth in 2020, *The Road to the Baroque - Masterpieces from the Capodimonte Museum* in the Hong Kong Museum of Art in 2022, *I Farnese, Architettura, Arte, Potere* exhibition in the Complesso monumentale della Pillotta in 2022, *ARTE LIBERATA 1937-1947. Capolavori salvati dalla guerra*, at the Scuderie del Quirinale in 2023, *Naples à Paris, Le Louvre invite le musée de Capodimonte* in 2023-2024, *Capodimonte da Reggio a Museo – cinque secoli di capolavori da Masaccio a Andy Warhol* in Venaria Reale in 2024.

### 2.3 The relevance of a classic

It is at this point that Longhi coined an extremely interesting slogan for the purpose of our reflections:

«Le esposizioni? Ma le esposizioni siamo noi!: questo dovrebbero dire i musei<sup>139</sup>».

While it is true that our reflections originate from the political aspect of the exhibition *Naples à Paris*, it is also true that we have touched throughout this narrative another fundamental aspect, and well represented by our exhibition, namely that the loan, for political exhibitions with their great ambassadors or not, inevitably impact on the museum reality. If, as Longhi notes, the exhibitions have become a constant element of the artistic panorama, so as to induce a reflection on the balance of power between the permanent exhibitions of museums and the ephemeral exhibitions already at the end of the fifties, this reflection is even more important today.

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<sup>138</sup> Longhi, *Editoriale Mostre e Musei cit.*, p.73

<sup>139</sup> *Ibidem*, p.73

Longhi's statement was born in the context of a deep tension exhibition-museum, separate and perhaps even conflicting elements, where however superintendents and directors of museums are equally engaged on both fronts. In the fifties, exhibitions and museums have different ways and move different political interests that create tensions between the parties involved, divided between conservators and superintendents who wish to consolidate the ongoing transformations in the conception of museum institutions, and mayors, administrators and ministers who want to exploit the attractiveness of exhibitions mostly in an economic key or as a bridge to establish new cultural alliances with other states<sup>140</sup>. Although it is a different era, it is possible to see some similarities with the cultural panorama of our days in which more and more often the scene of contention takes place within the museum itself. The museum sector is undergoing many changes, recalibrating itself in relation to the public and the challenges of a time when exhibitions have established themselves as the main devices of artistic fruition. Haskell already intervened on this point in 1990, commenting on an exhibition on Titian at the Palazzo Ducale in Venice, and saying that the exhibitions are replacing museums as the main means for transmitting visual culture, as before museums had replaced ecclesiastical institutions and private collections<sup>141</sup>. In addition, this year marks the tenth anniversary of the Franceschini reform that imposed a profound reorganization of the Italian cultural sector, and, especially for museums with special autonomy, opened a season of renewal, bringing together different audiences, enhancing collections to arouse interest and increase the number of visitors<sup>142</sup>.

Attention has increasingly been focused on the moment of valorization, making it one of the key points of cultural heritage management, which, becoming more isolated from protection, has strong repercussions on those involved. There is a strong relationship between valorisation and fruition which also underlies the need to arouse the interest of visitors, and in this sense the exhibitions, and everything that can contribute to the direct knowledge of a cultural asset, take on a significant role<sup>143</sup>. Speaking of exhibitions the concept of valorization is also associated with the concept of loan, and the need, very felt especially in the period following the economic crisis of 2008 and

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<sup>140</sup> Cimoli, *Musei effimeri*, cit., pp.19-20

<sup>141</sup> F. Haskell, *Titian and the Perils of International Exhibition*, « The New York Review of Books», 16 august 1990

<sup>142</sup> C. Di Francesco, *Dieci anni di riforma Franceschini*, «Finestre sull'arte», n°22, anno VI, 2024, p.42

<sup>143</sup> E. Pellegrini, *Mostrare significa valorizzare?*, «Predella», anno IV, 2005, pp.129-130

according to the principles of spending review, context from which also derives the initial inspiration of the Franceschini reform<sup>144</sup>, to put in value the mobile cultural heritage. One purpose of lending works of art abroad can be that, in addition to spreading the values of our culture in the world, it also allows greater revenue to the Treasury: putting assets to income without losing their availability to the state. In this case, in order to meet the criteria of valorisation and fruition, the onerous loan should, however, concern works that are not generally exposed to the public or with the aim of making known the cultural realities less known to the general public<sup>145</sup>. The valorisation is increasingly charged with an economic significance, often marginalizing the importance of the value of scientific projects, in a paradox in which it is not the demand to determine the exhibition activity but the exhibition industry to establish the demand<sup>146</sup>. Not all exhibition processes, therefore, lead to a valorisation of the good: showing and valuing are not necessarily consequential activities and the conviction of an immediate relationship between exhibition and acquisition of value must be limited<sup>147</sup>.

It is long time that Italian museum professionals have been denouncing the risk of improper competition between the event exhibitions and the activities of permanent cultural institutions that cause the drainage of resources and visitors to the detriment of museums, and the risk of cultural desertification in favor of a culture of the event. The political, media and economic profitability of the exhibitions does not correspond to the cultural and educational objectives of the museum, but they often impact on their normal activity. It does not seem to be verified also the argument, often used, that the public that approaches the art world through exhibitions then becomes a museum user, while it is true that museums must acquire public through a daily activity on site taking root with their own narrative in the society that surrounds them<sup>148</sup>. It follows in this sense that the exhibitions that speak of the museum collection, which become a laboratory of preparation and story are instead a useful teaching of experiences and should also be an attractor, the museum should take up from the exhibitions the

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<sup>144</sup> Di Francesco, *Dieci anni di riforma Franceschini* cit., p.38

<sup>145</sup> L. Casini, *Valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale pubblico: il prestito e l'esportazione di beni culturali*, «Il Mulino», file 1-2, June-September 2012

<sup>146</sup> F. Negri Arnoldi, *Sul concetto di valorizzazione del patrimonio artistico nazionale*, «Prospettiva», No. 64, October 1991, p.9

<sup>147</sup> Pellegrini, *Mostrare significa valorizzare?* Cit., pp.131-132

<sup>148</sup> ICOM Italia, *Mostre-spettacolo e musei: i pericoli di una monocultura e il rischio di cancellare le diversità culturali*, Milano, 14 June 2008, p.2

challenge of presenting its collections in the form of pseudo-temporary exhibitions that make perceive a dynamism of museum activity<sup>149</sup>.

There are also exhibitions designed to focus the spotlight not so much on a particular theme or painting school but on the museum itself, exhibitions that provide for the loan of a large number of masterpieces in order to show in different contexts the value of your museum collection. A museum enhancement of this type is often implemented by the Vatican Museums in the context of their policy of internationalization: most of the masterpieces are loaned to take part in an exhibition dedicated entirely to the collection of the Santa Sede and are often also a way to regulate diplomatic relations in place<sup>150</sup>. The latter case is quite similar to that of the exhibition *Naples à Paris* where the museum of Capodimonte, also taking advantage of the favorable opportunity offered by the Quirinale Treaty, has granted more than sixty of the most emblematic works of the collection to the Louvre Museum with the explicit intention of making known to a wider international audience, that of the most visited museum in the world, the value of its collection.

It is a museum that uses the loan as an instrument of valorization and internationalization of its collection, it is a museum, therefore, that is shown in the form of exhibition inside another museum, and in this regard, it is curious to note the reversal of the meaning of the words that Longhi wrote to greet the opening to the public of the galleries of the museum of Capodimonte in 1957:

*«Sfiancati dalle mostre... ci si ristora volentieri alla mostra finalmente di un museo<sup>151</sup>».*

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<sup>149</sup>F.Federici, *Mostre e Musei: dall'inimicizia all'ibridazione*, «Artribune», 14 giugno 2020

<sup>150</sup> E. Andreani, *I musei come attori di una rete. L'internazionalizzazione attraverso i prestiti delle opere d'arte nei Musei Vaticani*, thesis, Ca'Foscari Univesisty, Venezia, Supervisor F. Panozzo, 2020, p.57

<sup>151</sup> R. Longhi, *La nuova galleria di Capodimonte. Finalmente la mostra di un museo*, «l'Europeo», 2 June 1957

## Chapter 3

### The Case Study of the exhibition *Naples à Paris*

#### 3.1 Exhibition's distinctive features

As is the case in everyday life, the media and word of mouth play a significant role in shaping our ideas about exhibition events. It is therefore interesting to approach this exhibition with some quotes from the catalogue and the press:

«Entièrement remodelée pour “Naples à Paris”, la Grande Galerie – éminemment française par l’histoire, puissamment italienne par l’accrochage- présente ce qui restera sans doute comme l’une des plus impressionnantes réunions de chefs-d’œuvre jamais déployées<sup>152</sup>» (Laurence de Cars)

« Le Louvre invite le musée de Capodimonte, une exposition qui n’est consacrée ni à un artiste, ni à un mouvement artistique, ni à un thème transversal de l’histoire de l’art, mais à la rencontre de deux musées, constitue une première dans l’histoire des expositions, qui met sous nos yeux le rôle des collections permanentes dans l’écriture de l’histoire de l’art<sup>153</sup>» (S. Bellenger)

«La notizia del partenariato tra il Louvre e il Museo Capodimonte di Napoli per il 2023 riempie di orgoglio il mondo della cultura e l’Italia intera. La scelta compiuta qualche anno fa di riconoscere completa autonomia di gestione ai grandi musei italiani si dimostra, ancora una volta, vincente perché offre grandissime opportunità come quella che aprirà ‘una vera stagione napoletana a Parigi<sup>154</sup>» (D. Franceschini)

«Quella del Louvre sarà una bella vetrina per Napoli, perché l’esposizione dei capolavori di Capodimonte sarà accompagnata da una stagione culturale dedicata a Napoli, che presenterà al pubblico francese la storia, la letteratura, la musica, il teatro e il cinema della città partenopea<sup>155</sup>» (G. Sangiuliano)

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<sup>152</sup> *Naples à Paris, cit.*, p.21

<sup>153</sup> *Ibidem, Paris, cit* p.20

<sup>154</sup> Ufficio stampa e comunicazione MiC, Roma, 14 June 2022

<<https://www.beniculturali.it/comunicato/23051>> (consulted on 30 May 2024)

<sup>155</sup> Ufficio Stampa e Comunicazione MiC, Roma, 16 February 2023 <<https://cultura.gov.it/comunicato/24188>> (consulted on 30 May 2024)

«L'inauguration de l'exposition «Naples à Paris» au musée du Louvre par les présidents Sergio Mattarella et Emmanuel Macron permet de renouer avec la symbolique positive de la diplomatie culturelle<sup>156</sup>»

«"I francesi hanno un grandissimo rispetto per la persona del presidente Mattarella che ha sempre avuto l'amicizia italo-francese a cuore (...) Il suo prossimo viaggio avviene per un'occasione speciale, la mostra, inedita e splendida, del Museo di Capodimonte al Louvre: sottolineo che è la prima volta che il Louvre apre tutti i suoi spazi per una mostra dedicata a un altro museo". Una visita, con l'incontro con il presidente Macron, che ha anche un significato politico rilevante. "La visita del presidente Mattarella anche in questa occasione (...) dimostrerà ancora una volta quanto siamo uniti dalla cultura e da una comune visione del mondo intorno all'umanesimo"<sup>157</sup>» (Christian Masset)

«The tremendous exhibition Naples in Paris hosts the treasures of the Museo di Capodimonte, Europe's least-known great museum, on the big stage of the French capital. It confirms the Louvre, traditionally staid and inward-looking, as newly outward-bound, experimental and capable of surprise. The Neapolitan guests — greeted by Presidents Macron and Mattarella at the inauguration in June — were welcomed as no other visiting pictures have been received in Paris for half a century: they were accorded places within the museum's historic heart, the 300m Grande Galerie of Italian Renaissance paintings. Unprecedentedly integrated into the long-established display here, they spark a dizzying parade of comparisons, challenges, parallels, echoes<sup>158</sup>»

«Mise en abyme au musée (...) C'est une vue inouïe sur l'ensemble des écoles de la peinture italienne classique que le Louvre propose à ses visiteurs avec cette éblouissante exposition / immersion de plus de soixante-dix œuvres du musée de Capodimonte<sup>159</sup>»

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<sup>156</sup> J.P. Darnis, *Crise bilatérale permanente: comment structurer la relation entre la France et l'Italie?*, «le Grand Continent», 6 June 2023 <<https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2023/06/06/crise-bilaterale-permanente-comment-structurer-la-relation-entre-la-france-et-litalie/>> (consulted on 30 May 2024)

<sup>157</sup> R. Marmo, *L'ambasciatore francese: "Migranti, economia e difesa: la vicinanza tra Parigi e Roma è la forza per le sfide epocali"*, «Quotidiano Nazionale», 3 June 2023 <<https://www.quotidiano.net/politica/francia-italia-migranti-intervista-ambasciatore-6af49953>> (consulted on 30 May 2024)

<sup>158</sup> Jackie Wullschläge, *Naples in Paris, Louvre —Italian treasures travel to the French capital*, «Financial Times», 28 June 2023 <<https://www.ft.com/content/fcdc155c-943b-49a0-a586-b20c7f016df3>> (consulted on 30 May 2024)

<sup>159</sup> A. Jamin, *Mise en abyme au musée : Naples à Paris. Le Louvre invite le musée de Capodimonte*, «Diacritik1», 6 June 2023 <<https://diacritik.com/2023/06/16/mise-en-abyme-au-musee-naples-a-paris-le-louvre-invite-le-musee-de-capodimonte/>> (consulted on 30 May 2024)

«È un sontuoso assaggio borbonico, quello che vede il Museo di Capodimonte, diretto dal francese Sylvain Bellenger, prestare ben sessanta opere al Louvre fino all'8 gennaio 2024. "Naples à Paris. Le Louvre invite le musée de Capodimonte" incarna la prima volta che il museo parigino dedica una grande mostra a un altro museo. L'esposizione, curata da Sébastien Allard, direttore del dipartimento delle Pitture del Louvre, e dal sopracitato Sylvain Bellenger, mostra una partnership esclusiva e originale che dà luogo a un evento imperdibile<sup>160</sup>»

The proposed statements indeed contain all the characteristic aspects of this exhibition. The exhibition, as usual, is hailed by the organisers and the press, both national and international, as exceptional, an absolute first in the meeting of two great museums, hosting more than sixty artworks from the Capodimonte museum, true masterpieces, in an exhibition entirely dedicated to the Neapolitan Museum. The exhibition becomes a showcase for Naples and during the summer months is accompanied by a cultural programme of theatre, dance and music for a Neapolitan season in the setting of the Louvre. The exhibition also takes on accents of Cultural Diplomacy since the partnership between the two great institutions, as seen, is placed under the aegis of the Quirinale Treaty<sup>161</sup>, signed by the Italian Republic and the French Republic for enhanced cooperation, especially in the Industrial and Cultural fields. The exhibition, perfectly fulfilling the objectives set by the Treaty and remembered as one of the most significant moments since its entry into force<sup>162</sup>, is also an opportunity to settle some physiological differences between the two states. But that's not all, the works are not displayed in an area dedicated to them but are set up in the Grande Galerie, together with the Louvre's collection of Italian paintings, in the Salle de la Chapelle and the Salle de l'Horloge, offering visitors a sort of *mise en abyme* of the museum and reshaping the layouts, giving the Parisian Museum the opportunity to prove itself capable of reinventing itself.

### 3.2 Curatorial objectives and exhibition design analysis

The exhibition brochure made available to visitors at the entrance to the pyramid warns that «les chefs-d'œuvre du musée de Capodimonte s'exposent au musée du Louvre

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<sup>160</sup> F. Vertucci, *Naples à Paris, i capolavori del museo di Capodimonte incantano il Louvre*, «Sole 24 Ore», 20 June 2023 < [https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/naples-a-paris-capolavori-museo-capodimonte-incantano-louvre-AEd8ykfD?refresh\\_ce=1](https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/naples-a-paris-capolavori-museo-capodimonte-incantano-louvre-AEd8ykfD?refresh_ce=1)> (consulted on 30 May 2024)

<sup>161</sup> *Naples à Paris*, cit., p.16

<sup>162</sup> *Il Trattato del Quirinale: Dossier Stampa congiunto*, cit.



en trois actes, dans trois lieux distincts». There are three main moments in the exhibition: a comparison between the Louvre's encyclopaedic collection of Italian art and the artworks from Capodimonte, the heart of the exhibition, and satellite rooms for an account of the constitution and diversity of the Capodimonte collections, and for an in-depth study of preparatory cartoons between 1500 and 1550 with works from both institutions. The reconstruction of the proposed exhibition route takes into account the personal visit to the exhibition, the exhibition captions, the catalogue, the exhibition presentation press conference and the videos presenting the different rooms by the curators, and other information material available in the museum bookshop.

### **3.2.1 Grande Galerie – Chefs-d'œuvre de la peinture italienne**

The Capodimonte Museum, by virtue of the dynastic vicissitudes that made up its collection, is perhaps the only museum in Italy that can illustrate the history of art from the 13th century through the Renaissance to Contemporary art, spanning the various Italian, Nordic and French schools and the applied arts<sup>163</sup>. Thirty-one of Capodimonte's most representative masterpieces, twenty-five of which are illustrated on the concise guide sold at the entrance, the same ones that usually appear on the posters and advertisements of its exhibitions, have been selected and positioned along the Salon Carré, the Grande Galerie and the Salle Rosa, the most emblematic and prestigious rooms of the museum on the first floor of the Denon wing that are dedicated to Italian painting. Setting up the works on loan from Capodimonte in these rooms, and not in an area specifically dedicated to them, implies a major organisational effort. It is a logistically complex operation since these are rooms that are indispensable for visitors to the Louvre Museum, and it is therefore only possible to intervene during the days when the museum is closed. It follows that the curators' effort must be well motivated and the idea, besides paying due homage to the quality of the works on loan, is to critically examine the way the Louvre's Italian collection is presented and interpreted. According to the curators' intentions, the juxtaposition with the works from Capodimonte allows them to highlight the strengths but also the outstanding shortcomings of the Louvre's collection: thanks to the encyclopaedic collections of both museums, the works have been chosen in light of these multiple objectives<sup>164</sup>. In the Grande Galerie, the works on loan from Capodimonte are marked by the red ropes

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<sup>163</sup>L. Gallo, N. Giustozzi, *Guida al Museo di Capodimonte*, Electa, Milano, 2017, p.5

<sup>164</sup> *Naples à Paris*. Cit, p.130

with which they are hung, and the display is interspersed with banners with concise explanatory texts in French, Italian and English that provide food for thought and comparison.

The Salon Carré is the treasure chest of the Italian Primitives and it is in this room that Masaccio's *La Crocifissione*, *La fondazione di Santa Maria Maggiore* and Masolino's *Assunzione della Vergine* are housed. While Tuscan painting is particularly well represented in the Louvre, Masaccio is an illustrious absentee, a void temporarily filled by the Neapolitan loan.

Bellini's *La Trasfigurazione* is also placed to reinforce a lacking moment in the Louvre's collection: with regard to the 15th century, Mantegna is marvellously represented by the canvases from Isabella d'Este's Studiolo or *San Sebastiano*, while for his brother-in-law Bellini the collection is less rich and the loan of *La Trasfigurazione* allows for a better reconstruction of the value and complexity of the Venetian scenario.

The display of Colantonio's *San Girolamo* and *San Vincenzo Ferrer* altarpieces required the removal of all works from the relevant portion of the Grande Galerie to open up a glimpse of 15th-century Neapolitan art to the Parisian visitor. Under the reigns of Renato d'Angiò and Alfonso il Magnanimo, the Renaissance was more Nordic than Tuscan in taste, concerned with painting reality in an analytical and scrupulous manner, but also with Spanish accents: the 15th century south was a crossroads of distant influences, but also from central Italy, creating a 'Mediterranean' cultural unity that found its point of irradiation in Naples<sup>165</sup>. The art of Colantonio, Antonello da Messina's master, stands in stylistic continuity with the northern and Provençal artists gravitating around the Neapolitan court, and the visitor is invited to explore the exhibition on his own by looking for the works of Barthélemy van Eyck in the Richelieu wing of the Louvre. In the essay *Eglise et Cours de la Renaissance*, published in the exhibition catalogue, it is suggested as a further argument in favour of loans from these old masters, that the southern artistic language learned by Antonello da Messina through Colantonio also took root in Venice during the Messina painter's stay in the lagoon city, and that it also influenced Bellini's research into colour and light<sup>166</sup>.

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<sup>165</sup> *Naples à Paris, cit.*, p.69

<sup>166</sup> *Ibidem*, p.71

Concerning the portrait of *Luca Pacioli e un allievo* attributed to Jacopo de Barbari, the focus is not only on the scientific nuance of humanism, but also on the attribution that has been cast into doubt by some studies: the hope of the exhibition organisers is that the proximity to other artists of the 15th and 16th centuries may stimulate the debate around the authorship of the work for which the hypothesis of Jacometto Veneziano has recently been put forward<sup>167</sup>. While Lorenzo Lotto's Portrait of *Bernardo de Rossi* is compared to *San Girolamo* by the same author.

Girolamo Mazzola Bedoli's *Annunciazione* is placed not far before the works of Parmigianino, of whom he is one of the main followers, which are housed in the Grande Galerie's most prestigious space, the Tribuna. On the north wall of the Tribuna are Parmigianino's *Antea*, Tiziano's *Danae* and Parmigianino's *Portrait of Galeazzo Sanvitale*, set against, on the opposite wall, Raffaello's *Autitratto con un amico*, Correggio's *Sonno di Antiope* and Raffaello's *Baldassare Castiglione*. This display offers on the one hand a sample of the female nude in the Renaissance with the *Danae* and *Antiope* not far from the *Concerto Campestre* and Tiziano's *La Venere del Prado* set up in the Salle des Etats<sup>168</sup> (a comparison, however, that the expert visitor has to make on his own) and on the other hand an exceptional gathering of masterpieces of portraiture between 1515 and 1525<sup>169</sup>. Parmigianino's *Antea* and *Galeazzo* juxtaposed with Raffaello's *Self-Portrait* and the *Portrait of Castiglione*, the prototype of all the great male portraits of the Italian Renaissance, placed close to Sebastiano del Piombo's *Portrait of Clemente VII* and Rosso Fiorentino's *Ritratto di giovane uomo*, two other loans from Capodimonte, give an idea of the strength of these two institutions together regarding the Renaissance. The discerning visitor can complete the comparison, as suggested by Allard, by searching the Louvre galleries for Savoldo's *Ritratto di Gaston de Foix* and Tiziano's *Uomo dal guanto*, and conclude with Tiziano's *Ritratto di Papa Paolo III a testa nuda* and *Papa Paolo III e i nipoti* exhibited in the Salle de la Chapelle<sup>170</sup>.

The overview of Parmigianino is completed by the loan of *Lucrezia* displayed next to Niccolò dell'Abate, Jacopo Bertoja and Michelangelo Anselmi, his disciples in Parma,

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<sup>167</sup> A. Angelini, *Jacometto Veneziano e gli umanisti, Proposta per il Ritratto di Luca Pacioli e di Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, del museo di Capodimonte*, «Prospettiva» 2014, pp. 126-149

<sup>168</sup> *Naples à Paris*. cit, p.132

<sup>169</sup> *Portfolio*, «Grande Galerie», n°63, 2023, p. 54

<sup>170</sup> Louvre site, *Présentation d'exposition: « Naples à Paris »*, 12 June 2023, video, <<https://www.louvre.fr/expositions-et-evenements/evenements-activites/presentation-d-exposition-naples-a-paris>> (consulted on 30 May 2024)

testifying to the space Parmigianino occupied in 16th century and modern European collections<sup>171</sup>.

The Louvre Museum possesses two Roman works by Caravaggio, *La Morte della Vergine* and *La Buona Ventura*, and a work from the Maltese period, *Portrait of Alof de Wignacourt*. The loan of the Capodimonte *Flagellazione* thus enriches the narrative of the artist's work. However, the curators' choice is not to place the *Flagellazione* next to the other three Caravaggio paintings, but to juxtapose it with the Florentine Mannerism of Francesco Salviati's *Incredulità di San Tommaso*<sup>172</sup>. The canvas, denoting Caravaggio's naturalist approach that had a great impact on the Neapolitan art scene, serves to introduce the comparison between the classicist vein favoured by the French collection and the almost expressionist one of the Capodimonte collections<sup>173</sup>.

This is followed by Annibale Carracci's *Ercole al Bivio*, painted for Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, which betrays the Bolognese painter's awe of classical antiquity upon his arrival in the Urbe. Bringing this work together with the *Pietà* from Capodimonte, the *Pietà* from the Louvre, which denotes the painter's evolution in style from a dramatic tension to a more ideal vision, and his other canvases in the Louvre such as the *Caccia* and the *Pesca*, provides an important insight into Annibale Carracci's art and his classicist influence on 17th century French art<sup>174</sup>.

The attention focused on Neapolitan painting thanks to the loans from Capodimonte is an opportunity to reflect on the Louvre's choice to display its collection by national 'schools'. The complexity of the building and the unbalanced nature of the collection justify this approach, followed by a further subdivision regionally and by production area. While Bolognese and Roman art is certainly well represented with regard to the 17th century, Neapolitan 17th century art is not very rich. For this reason, the loan request and exhibition choice envisage devoting entire walls to Giordano and Ribera. One wall accommodates Ribera's *Sileno Ebbro* and *Apollo e Marsia* and Giordano's reinterpretation of the same subject, while another houses Giordano's *La Madonna del Baldacchino* and the large *Natura Morta con pesci* by Recco and *Natura morta con*

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<sup>171</sup> *Naples à Paris. cit.*, p.279

<sup>172</sup> Louvre site, *Présentation d'exposition, cit.*

<sup>173</sup> A. Fayol, *Le Louvre invite le Musée de Capodimonte*, «Dossier de l'art», n°309, 2023, p. 7

<sup>174</sup> *Naples à Paris, cit.*, p.132

*frutti e fiori* by Brueghel and Ruoppolo, before Mattia Preti's *San Sebastiano* and *San Nicola* and Guarino's *Sant'Agata*, which are housed in the Salle Rosa<sup>175</sup>. The *Madonna del baldacchino* is the largest painting lent by the Neapolitan Museum. It is a classical subject that pays homage to the instinctive and popular religiosity typical of Parthenopean sacred processions, and its setting in the Grande Galerie is entirely taken from that of the permanent exhibition *Oltre Caravaggio* on the second floor of the Capodimonte museum, where Giordano's work is juxtaposed with the distinctly Baroque religiosity of the joy of life through the fruits of the earth and the sea, of the two still lifes that refer to the prosperity of the world as a gift from God<sup>176</sup>. These displays are located on the north walls of the gallery, opposite the series of Guido Reni's *Storie di Ercole*, and introduce, with their realism and even expressionism a disruptive element in the narrative of Italian painting usually told in the Grande Galerie. As mentioned, the attitude is to prefer a subdivision by national schools, and in this case the four other Ribera works from the Louvre collections, three of which are clearly of Neapolitan origin, are exhibited among the Spanish paintings. The choice is justified by the origin of the painter and the political situation in Bourbon Naples, but is above all motivated by the desire to quantitatively strengthen the Louvre's collection of Spanish paintings<sup>177</sup>. The brutality and violence of the canvases by Ribera and Giordano, as well as Artemisia Gentileschi's *Giuditta e Oloferne* and Lionello Spada's *Caino e Abele*, also on loan from Capodimonte and exhibited not far away, disrupt the essentially Bolognese and Roman narrative resulting from the history of the Parisian collection, the taste of the rulers and collectors of the *ancien regime*<sup>178</sup>, which tends to reject naturalism in favour of a clear line and a balanced, classical strength. In fact, the canvas on loan *Atalante e Ippomene* by Guido Reni fits perfectly with the *Storie di Ercole* and is the paradigm of French taste. The curators of the Louvre then wonder that perhaps an ulterior motive for exhibiting Ribera among the Spaniards is to favour this particular interpretation of Italian art history, and so the presence of the works from Capodimonte takes on an almost exotic feel<sup>179</sup>.

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibidem*, p.134

<sup>176</sup> S. Causa, P. Piscitello, *Oltre Caravaggio, un nuovo racconto della pittura a Napoli*, Napoli, Artem, 2022, p 136

<sup>177</sup> *Naples à Paris*, cit., p.137

<sup>178</sup> Fayol, *le Louvre invite le Musée de Capodimonte*, cit., p.7

<sup>179</sup> *Naples à Paris*, cit., p.137

### 3.2.2 Salle de la Chapelle – Des Farnèse aux Bourbons, histoire d'une collection

In this room, on the first floor of the Sully wing, paintings, rare objects, busts, porcelain and furnishings are displayed to illustrate to the visitor the constitution of the Capodimonte collections, some highlights and its opening to the public as a state museum.

The history of the Capodimonte Museum begins with Papa Paolo III Farnese, Cardinale Alessandro Farnese and their descendants, who built up a very rich art collection over two centuries. Masterpieces of painting such as Tiziano's *Ritratto di Papa Paolo III a testa nuda*, *Ritratto di Paolo III e i suoi neipoti* and *Ritratto del cardinale Alessandro Farnese*, and of sculpture such as Guglielmo della Porta's *Busto di Paolo III*, set up in the corner to the left of the entrance to the square room, introduce the visitor to these strong personalities and emphasise the power of the Farnese family. In the centre of this portion of the room is the *Tazza Farnese*, part of the collection but in fact now housed in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples together with the rest of the Farnese archaeological finds. In fact, the family collected many antiquities unearthed from the excavations, including the famous *Ercole Farnese*, from which the belief that the lineage of the family descended from Hercules was born. This became a key element of the family's iconography, as recalled by the *Cassetta Farnese*, surmounted by the figure of Hercules at rest with a Hesperides' apple, set up nearby. The *Cassetta Farnese*, one of the most famous objects of the Renaissance, was commissioned by Alessandro Farnese from the Florentine goldsmith Manno Sbarri, who combines a complex decorative apparatus with precious materials and a refined technique<sup>180</sup>. The loan of this precious box helps to illustrate the strategy of the family, which, like the Medici, Colonna and Borghese families, used art and luxury as political instruments and instruments of social affirmation. As further evidence of the close relationship that the Grand Cardinal had with the artists of the late Renaissance, a *portrait of Giulio Clovio* by El Greco, the famous miniaturist and creator of the Book of Hours, was placed in the portrait, long believed to be the precious contents of the *Cassetta Farnese*<sup>181</sup>.

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<sup>180</sup> C. Chastel-Rousseau, *Des Farnese aux Bourbons, deux temps Forts de la collection*, «Grande Galerie», 2023, n° 63, p.60

<sup>181</sup> *Naples à Paris, cit.*, p.289

The narrative continues with the link between the Farnese and Bourbon families being Elisabetta Farnese, the last descendant of the lineage, heiress of the entire collection scattered in the family palaces between Rome, Parma and Piacenza. Elisabeth decided to donate the collection to her son Carlo di Borbone on his accession to the throne of Naples and Sicily, which had become an independent kingdom. Carlo had the Farnese collection transferred to Naples, realising that to be counted among the great Enlightenment capitals, the city had to display a great artistic heritage, as well as modern manufactures and a great opera house such as the San Carlo. The arrival of the Farnese collection in Naples also provoked the construction of the Reggia di Capodimonte, on the top of the hill of the same name, surrounded by an immense park that is both a historical garden, a hunting reserve but also agricultural land that makes the Reggia self-sufficient<sup>182</sup>. Carlo di Borbone created the Real Fabbrica della Porcellana di Capodimonte and on his departure for the Spanish throne, his son Fernando di Borbone, the new King of Naples, created the Real Fabbrica Ferdinanda. The dynastic succession is narrated to the visitor through two canvases illustrating the *Partenza di Carlo di Borbone per la Spagna*, seen from land and sea, and *Ferdinando a Cavallo con la corte di Joli*. The protected manufactories created by Borbone became renowned throughout the courts of Europe for the production of fine tableware, demonstrating the power of the technical knowledge possessed by the new kingdom. The visitor can admire some pieces of the precious table service of views of Naples in the corner showcase of the room, as well as virtuosic and eccentric pieces such as the *Bacile a forma di conchiglia* by Gricci and the *Centauri e Cupidi* by Tagliolini, but the most astonishing work is the *La caduta dei giganti* by Tagliolini, a porcelain biscuit group of enormous dimensions intended to adorn the table of the royal banquets and an exceptional testimony to the splendour of the Bourbon court<sup>183</sup>.

In 1805 the French Empire occupied the kingdom of Naples and Napoleon Bonaparte crowned his brother Giuseppe as King of Naples until 1808 when he was succeeded by Joachim Murat, husband of Caroline Bonaparte. After the Farnese and Bourbon families, the Salle de la Chapelle houses the equestrian *portrait of Joachim Bonaparte* by Gros, belonging to the Louvre collections, against the backdrop of which the silhouette of Vesuvius and the island of Capri as it is freed from British occupation, and

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<sup>182</sup> Gallo, Giustozzi, *Guida*, cit, p.9

<sup>183</sup> Chastel-Rousseau, *Des Farnese aux Bourbons*, cit, p.61



two armchairs with views of Paris commissioned by Carolina Murat from a Neapolitan manufactory: this display offers visitors the opportunity to highlight once again the links and exchanges between Naples and Paris. The Queen personally chose and invited artists and decorators to renovate the Neapolitan residences, including Dunouy, whose *Veduta di Napoli da Capodimonte* is exhibited in the room, where the painter combines the classical approach of French landscape painting with experimentation with variations in light<sup>184</sup>, and in which the palace of Capodimonte still under construction can be seen. In Naples, cultural history is that of exchanges, transport, the contamination of the mobility of men and ideas. Capodimonte was only created a state museum in 1957, after the war, when all over the peninsula museums were being rebuilt even before the walls of houses, this, as seen in Chapter 1, not only out of a gesture of national pride but also in an attempt to re-present itself on the international scene with a new image, to show Italy for its cultural identity. The collections have been increased by the various dynasties, by acquisitions such as that of the d'Avalos collection, and, since the 1970s, the museum has opened up to contemporary art as witnessed by the loan of Andy Warhol's *Vesuvius*.

### **3.2.3 Salle de l'Horloge - Cartons Italiens de la renaissance, 1500-1550**

The Capodimonte drawing cabinet is among the most extensive and important in Italy and is best known for possessing a number of Renaissance preparatory cartoons. Four large cartoons by Michelangelo and Raffaello have been loaned to the Louvre and are exhibited in the Salle de l'Horloge together with rare cartoons and drawings from the Louvre's drawing cabinet, all dating between 1500 and 1550. This display serves to show the public a procedure, a working tool of the Renaissance workshops, but also to show that a true stylistic revolution was taking place in Italy at that time. On display are large one-to-one scale models that serve to transfer the drawing onto the support to be painted, but these are not the replacement cartoons inevitably damaged in the process, but the *benfinito-cartone* that, through the work of Leonardo and Michelangelo, rise to the status of collector's artwork<sup>185</sup>. The prestigious nucleus of Capodimonte cartoons was collected by the humanist and philologist Fulvio Orsini, librarian to Odoardo Farnese, to whom he donated them, and they became part of the legacy of Carlo di Borbone together with the Farnese collection.

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<sup>184</sup> *Naples à Paris cit.*, p.286

<sup>185</sup> *Ibidem* p.226



The cartoon of Michelangelo's *Armigeri*, preparatory to the lower left-hand corner of the fresco of *the Crocifissione di San Pietro* in the Cappella Paolina, is an altogether remarkable work because of all the cartoons by Michelangelo that have come down to us, it is the only one preparatory to a work of which the master took on the execution himself, it also presents on the right margin a gap filled by a piece of the replacement cartoon bearing the punctuation lines for the lower abdomen of San Pietro<sup>186</sup>, and because it shows the subtle workmanship and finish of the drawings, much admired by Michelangelo's contemporaries, which testifies to a powerful and interior spirituality<sup>187</sup>.

Also, on display in the room, however, are some small cartoons by Raffaello, *L'annunciazione* and *Santa Apollinare* or *Santa Caterina*, which date back to 1503 and tell of Raffaello's style at this time height, which is still 15th-century, gentle, in the manner of Pietro Perugino, quite different from the cartoon of *Mosè* preparatory to the fresco in the stanza di Eliodoro in the Vatican. This cartoon, in which the monumental figure covers his eyes in front of the burning bush, is from 1514: Raffaello demonstrates that he has studied and assimilated Michelangelo's style in the Cappella Sistina, and integrates grandiosity, energy and intensity tempering them with the study of reality and ancient statuary<sup>188</sup>. Raffaello is not an emulator but reworks Michelangelo's lesson through his figurative culture, as can be seen in two other cartoons from the Louvre exhibited in the room: the *Testa di Giovane Uomo* from 1511-1514 for the stanza di Eliodoro in which Raffaello dominates the style of *terribilità*, and the preparatory cartoon of *Dio Padre* from 1509-1510 for the stanza della Segnatura where a vigorous and spontaneous stroke is evident<sup>189</sup>, almost a paradox compared to the delicacy of the finishing touches of Michelangelo's cartoon of the *Armigeri*.

Also on loan from the Capodimonte collection, is the cartoon *Venere e Cupido*, in the Neapolitan museum's catalogues attributed to Michelangelo, while for the exhibition,

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<sup>186</sup> *Naples à Paris, cit.*, p.296

<sup>187</sup> D. Cordellier, *Voir les cartons de Michel-Ange et de Raphael*, «Grand Gallerie», 2023, n° 63, p.65

<sup>188</sup> *Naples à Paris, cit.*, p.300

<sup>189</sup> *ibidem*, p.299

the Louvre opts for the probable attribution to Vasari, as suggested by some critics<sup>190</sup>. The history of this composition is known through Vasari's accounts: the subject is commissioned by Bartolomeo Bettini to Michelangelo who, being overburdened, provides the charcoal drawing for it to be painted by Pontormo<sup>191</sup>. In the written accounts, the composition would seem to resemble more the small drawings of the same subject in the Louvre collections and displayed for comparison, where the focus is on the two figures and the sfumato<sup>192</sup>.

The Salle de l'Horloge houses two other important loans from Capodimonte: the *Madonna del Divino Amore* by Raffaello and a cartoon with the same subject from Raffaello. This loan makes it possible to tell from a different point of view how cartoons were considered a great means of transmitting artistic knowledge even though, as in this case, they were not preparatory. The cartoon of the *Madonna del Divino Amore* was for a long time considered to be by the hand of the master, but the attribution was cast into doubt during a 1995 restoration by Simonetta Funel and in 2011 when the altarpiece of the *Madonna del Divino Amore* was subjected to reflectographic examinations that revealed that the drawing underlying the pictorial layer did not correspond to that of the finished work nor to the cartoon. The cartoon therefore instead of giving the impression of the basic composition of the altarpiece, as it should be if it were its preparatory cartoon, corresponds to the final version of the work: it follows that the cartoon is actually a one-to-one copy of the finished work. Moreover, as traces of stylus transfer can be observed on it, this drawn copy served as a cartoon for the preparation of one of the many painted copies of Raffaello's *Madonna del Divino Amore*<sup>193</sup>.

### 3.3 Some consideration on the exhibition

The decision to select more than sixty artworks from the Capodimonte museum, which share the fact that they are among the museum's major masterpieces, but are very different in terms of periods and styles, of various subjects and provenance, and which have come to the museum collection in different ways through dynastic routes,

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<sup>190</sup> P. Joannides in *Venere e Amore, Michelangelo e la nuova Bellezza ideale*, catalogue of the exhibition (Florence, Gallerie dell'Accademia, 26 June-3 November 2002), edited by F. Faletti, J. Katz Nelson, Florence, Giunti 2002

<sup>191</sup> *Venere e Amore*, cit., p.5

<sup>192</sup> Louvre site, *Présentation d'exposition*, cit.

<sup>193</sup> *Naples à Paris*, cit, p.301

acquisitions or as a precautionary deposit, seems to be meaningful, as mentioned above, in the decision to showcase the museum itself, in all its complexity.

From the reconstruction, proposed above, of the layout and the suggested tour for visitors, it emerges how the exhibition is not configured as an organic narration of a precise trajectory, but rather as a succession of small exhibition events: masterpieces of portraiture between 1515 and 1525, the female nude in the Renaissance, a sampling of different periods of Caravaggio, the comparison between the classicist taste of the French collection and the more expressive vein of the Neapolitan collection, the Ribera case and the Neapolitan 17th century, in the Grande Galerie; the patronage of the Farnese and Bourbon families, an overview of porcelain art in Naples, the French Decade in the Salle de la Chapelle; an in-depth look at the tool of the preparatory cartoon, Raffaello's stylistic evolution, the case of Michelangelo's Cupid and Venus and that of Raffaello's Madonna of Divine Love in the Salle de l'Horloge.

The decision to locate the main moment of the exhibition in the Grande Galerie, the «saint des saints du plus grand musée du monde<sup>194</sup>», a space in itself already compulsory in the Louvre visitor's itinerary, is exalted and strongly asserted by the curators because it gives the idea of the value of the works of Capodimonte and because it allows a dialogue between the collections. It is precisely this dialogue between the collections, which, thanks to their strengths alone, offer different insights, that seems to be the most interesting point of the exhibition: if it had been organised in a space dedicated only to the works of Capodimonte, it would have been much more sterile because it would have been a mere repetition of what can already be visited in Naples. In this sense, if the primary idea is to portray a museum as a whole, the satellite exhibition in the Salle de la Chapelle proves necessary and indispensable to allow the visitor to have an overview of the Neapolitan Museum, to learn about the generation of the different collections and the origin of the Reggia di Capodimonte. The satellite exhibition in the Salle de l'Horloge is certainly very interesting because it takes on the connotations of a small specialised exhibition on a particular theme that is little known to the public, and allows us to illustrate another strong point of the Capodimonte Museum such as its collection of drawings, but it appears perhaps more as a stand-alone exhibition. Moreover, it is important to remember that while the exhibition in the Salle de l'Horloge lasted shorter than the entire project (7 June to 25 September 2023)

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<sup>194</sup> *Naples à Paris*, cit, p 130

due to the specific medium - the drawings cannot be exposed to light for long periods for conservation reasons - the Salle de la Chapelle was suddenly closed in early November, two months before the general end of the exhibition, and the works were returned to Capodimonte in early December. This inconvenience certainly adversely affected the benefit and enrichment brought by the exhibition to the visitor.

But to whom is this exhibition addressed? To access the exhibition, the visitor only needs to buy the normal museum entrance ticket since, as mentioned, the exhibition spaces are part of the Louvre's normal visiting route. The Grande Galerie, in particular, is one of the most famous spaces, from which, among other things, you can access the Salle des Etats where Leonardo's Gioconda is on display. Whoever walks through the museum's door is led to interface with the masterpieces of Capodimonte, consciously or unconsciously: if it is true that the exhibition is advertised and signposted by banners and posters at the entrance and during the tour, it is reasonable to expect that a large proportion of visitors visit the museum independently and without being fully aware of the event taking place, overwhelmed by the quantity of masterpieces and unmissable moments in the museum. In addition, at the entrance, the Louvre offers the possibility of using a Nintendo 3DS to orientate oneself within the museum and listen to the explanation of the collections, but there is no audio guide of the *Naples à Paris* exhibition on the device, nor is there any additional material in printed form, with the exception of the heavy catalogue, other than a brochure showing the three areas covered by the exhibition on the museum map, a QR-code to discover the cultural programme of the *saison napolitaine à paris* and a QR-code for an interactive visit dedicated to children. The visitor can understand the exhibition's narrative through the concise exhibition texts, which give an overview but are limited in their content, or through the one-and-a-half hour guided tours with a fixed start, which take place once a day at 3.30 pm. Considering these characteristics, bearing in mind that moreover part of the insights are given to the visitor independently by the curators themselves, taking into account the museum's enormous tourist flows, and from the interview with numerous room staff, it seems that the exhibition is indeed able to speak mainly to experienced visitors, to people with a good basic artistic culture, able to grasp the main points independently, and who above all already know the rooms of the Louvre and the works of the Grande Galerie. For the rest of the visitors,

the experience could be characterised by a certain passivity, an inert enjoyment enlivened by the excitement of one more Caravaggio.

As said, *Naples à Paris* was born from a strategic partnership signed between the two great institutions, and is concretized with a large loan and a large exhibition, there are therefore two perspectives of this experience, that of the Museum of Capodimonte and that of the Louvre Museum. For Capodimonte it is an opportunity to implement a strategy of internationalization of its collections in order to make itself known to a wider audience in an attempt to increase the flow of visitors. This is a need very felt by the Neapolitan Museum because, although it has one of the most important collections in Italy, it is outside the major tourist circuits: in the statistics of the most visited museums in Italy in 2023 proposed by *Il Giornale dell'Arte* the Neapolitan Museum ranks forty-fifth, under the Museum of Murano Glass, with 168,906 visitors. The ranking also does not take into account some state museums due to delays in the compilation of statistics by the Ministry of Culture, thus excluding even large museums such as the Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia<sup>195</sup>. Capodimonte has devised a precise Masterplan with the aim of becoming one of the world's great museums and becoming a cultural Campus capable of integrating the Reggia, the Bosco and the buildings scattered throughout it. Among the reasons behind the masterplan are:

«da un lato, il settore dei beni culturali e le connesse dinamiche del turismo stanno conoscendo, anche in Campania, un'intensa fase di espansione, con una differenziazione dell'offerta in grado di attrarre flussi turistici sempre più ampi; dall'altro, nonostante la crescita di pubblico degli ultimi anni, la riconoscibilità e la capacità competitiva di Capodimonte meritano di essere sostanziosamente rafforzate per poter concorrere sul "mercato della conoscenza" nazionale e internazionale. Si tratta di una sfida rispetto alla quale Capodimonte parte col vantaggio di dotazioni uniche, ma anche con l'handicap di ritardi da colmare rapidamente<sup>196</sup>».

The strategy of valorization and internationalization implemented through the loan of a large number of masterpieces, a system also adopted by other museums such as the Vatican Museums<sup>197</sup>, is in fact a strategy very often used by the outgoing director of

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<sup>195</sup>L. Cheshire, J.da Silva, A. Martini, *17mo anno: la classifica mondiale dei musei più visitati nel 2023*, « *Il Giornale Dell'Arte* », 19 April 2024, < [https://www.ilgiornaledellarte.com/Articolo/mo-anno-la-classifica-mondiale-dei-musei-piu-visitati-nel->](https://www.ilgiornaledellarte.com/Articolo/mo-anno-la-classifica-mondiale-dei-musei-piu-visitati-nel-) (consulted on 30 May 2024)

<sup>196</sup> Capodimonte site, *Masterplan*, < <https://capodimonte.cultura.gov.it/masterplan/>>, (consulted on 30 May 2024)

<sup>197</sup> Andreani, *I musei come attori di una rete*, cit., p.57

the Museum of Capodimonte Bellenger during his two terms. Bellenger, who became director through the public competition of 2014 following the Franceschini Reform of autonomous museums, expresses very clearly his philosophy in 2016 by responding to the complaints related to the practice of loans:

«È un comportamento provinciale, che è un freno per il museo. L'unico limite è la fragilità dell'opera, perché è indispensabile essere nella mappa mondiale dei musei e far conoscere non i capolavori dei depositi, ma quelli esposti. Vadano per il mondo anche i Caravaggio. Quando una delle sue tele è stata mandata a Monza, su richiesta del Fec che ne è il proprietario, sono insorti quelli che mai una volta sono venuti a vederlo<sup>198</sup>».

Among the various loans, it is interesting to mention that of about 40 works at the Seattle Art Museum for the exhibition *Flesh and Blood: Italian Masterpieces from the Capodimonte Museum* between October 2019 and January 2020, which also had a second act at the Kimbell Museum in Forth Worth, in Texas, inaugurated on 28 February 2020 and averted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the exhibition also in that case dedicated to the Neapolitan Museum, which included the exhibition of masterpieces in different American stages, many of the 40 works are on loan to the Paris exhibition. And again, the Museum responded to those who commented on the reasons for that exhibition that lending activity and exchange relations between institutions increase the profile of the museum, attract interest in the support of new projects and make known in the world the permanent collection. The director on that occasion also emphasised what he sees as another positive aspect of the loan, namely that, strange as it may seem, it is not only the best way to export a positive image of Capodimonte and Naples, but also to create curiosity and attachment on the part of the Neapolitan population, who may be curious about the works exhibited abroad<sup>199</sup>.

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<sup>198</sup> A. P. Merone, *Bellenger: ecco chi sono i nemici di Capodimonte*, «Il Corriere del Mezzogiorno», 2 august 2016 <[https://napoli.corriere.it/notizie/cultura-e-tempo-libero/16\\_agosto\\_02/bellenger-ecco-chi-sono-nemici-museo-capodimonte-5702b598-588b-11e6-b030-cb9e943d5840.shtml](https://napoli.corriere.it/notizie/cultura-e-tempo-libero/16_agosto_02/bellenger-ecco-chi-sono-nemici-museo-capodimonte-5702b598-588b-11e6-b030-cb9e943d5840.shtml)> (consulted on 30 May 2024)

<sup>199</sup> M. G. Redavid, *40 capolavori da Capodimonte al Texas: è polemica sul prestito*, «Exhibitart», 29 febbraio 2020 <<https://www.exhibitart.com/beni-culturali/40-capolavori-da-capodimonte-al-texas-e-polemica-sul-prestito/#:~:text=Il%20Museo%20di%20Capodimonte%20ha,anche%20al%20Seattle%20Art%20Museum>> (consulted on 30 May 2024)

Note the strategy implemented in the last ten years by the Museo di Capodimonte, and returning to the exhibition *Naples à Paris*, it should be noted that although the masterpieces of Capodimonte are potentially noticed by all visitors to the Louvre for a period of six months, address that meets the goal of internationalization of the Museum, who would really benefit and greater understanding are those users already accustomed and probably know the museum of Capodimonte. The strategy is to remove the artworks from their usual home, the most prestigious and recognizable works, in an attempt to attract international visitors, but leaving the museum free of more than sixty of his major artworks for the duration of six months, in which visitors can admire beautiful artworks but they are certainly disappointed not to find the masterpieces of their guides, not to mention the opportunities for teaching school groups that fail. In fact, if the loan in press releases and newspapers was justified in addition to the value of the exhibition, the importance of the partnership and the happy contingency of the Quirinale Treaty, it is also due to the fact that the Museo di Capodimonte had announced the start of major works to modernize the air conditioning and lighting systems<sup>200</sup> because of which it should have remained closed to the public. In the face of this discomfort, the idea of the loan at the Louvre assumed a greater value, but in reality, at the start of the work did not correspond to the closure of the museum but its opening with a deeply modified tour and a forviant communication plan, with a drop in visitors compared to the previous year's entrances<sup>201</sup>.

The exhibitions always impact on the museum institutions involved in them, and in this exhibition in particular the two museums have been profoundly modified, even if for a given period of time, and just as the new temporary Grande Galerie, in the Appendix has been placed an account of the substitutions and modifications of every room of Capodimonte affected by the loan for the Parisian exhibition.

For the Louvre, the huge loan of artworks from Capodimonte is an interesting opportunity to show itself not as a stationary and inward-looking reality but to confirm its ability to experiment and surprise. The exhibition *Naples à Paris*, in the words of Laurence des Cars, inaugurates at the Louvre a new form of scientific programming in which the exhibition is not a fact detached from the museum but instead invites the

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<sup>200</sup> Capodimonte site, *Breaking news*, <<https://capodimonte.cultura.gov.it/capodimonte-aperti-durante-i-lavori-verso-gran-capodimonte-2025/>> (consulted on 30 May 2024)

<sup>201</sup> Cheshire, da Silva, Martini, *17mo anno: la classifica mondiale dei musei*, cit.

visitor to look at it differently<sup>202</sup>. The opportunity to blend the artworks of Capodimonte within the collections of the Louvre, especially in anticipation of the renovation of the Grande Galerie planned for 2025, is taken as an interesting training ground and an opportunity to take a critical look at the subdivision of the painting collection by schools and to reason about how cultural institutions influence the narrative of art history due to the characteristics of their collections. The exceptional event of the mingling of works within the Grande Galerie is then cleverly exploited by the Parisian Museum, which commissioned a photo shoot of the installation from photographer Robert Polidori for the publication of a book co-edited by the Louvre and Gallimard editions entitled *Un Moment au Louvre*. In addition, as mentioned, the partnership is the starting point for the selection of shows and concerts of the *Les étés du Louvre* festival, which included performances in various locations in the museum such as *Comment tomber amoureux de Naples* in the Laclotte auditorium, *Eduardo De Filippo ou Les fantomes de Naples* in the Cour Lefeul, *De Pulcinella à Polichinelle* in the Jardin des Tuileries, and the Nu Genea live concert at the base of the pyramid. An occasion on which much praise has been spent by Italian politicians for its ability to draw attention to the city of Naples and the promotion of *napoletanità*. The Parisian Museum thus gains the opportunity to consolidate international relations and to offer an own reinterpretation particularly enjoyable for its regular visitors, friends of the museum and supporters.

In the exhibition *Naples à Paris*, the reasons of Cultural Diplomacy, which uses the occasion of prestigious loans to consolidate ties and agreements, and the managerial considerations of museums with a view to a certain form of valorisation that places great trust in the instrument of loan are intertwined. However, recalling Brandi's views, mentioned in Chapter 2, on the practice of exhibitions according to which lending should be justified by the revaluation of an artwork, and on his consideration of exhibitions organised for cultural propaganda reasons, these views are found to be disregarded since it is possible to read the *Naples à Paris* exhibition, regardless of the political or valorisation motivation, as a parade of masterpieces, perfectly preserved and not in need of revaluation. While the value of the masterpiece for the purposes of Cultural Diplomacy is undisputed, it could be argued that the objective of valorisation in this case is not placed on the specific artwork but on the Capodimonte museum itself and that, even if the masterpieces are well-known, the public might be surprised by

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<sup>202</sup> *Naples à Paris*, cit, p.21



their provenance. In this regard, it must be considered that although the recent management of the Neapolitan Museum has achieved remarkable results, the internationalisation achieved by repeated lending is matched by frequent and considerable interference with the narrative integrity of the museum, which, in order to attract visitors from abroad, penalises the public on site.

Through the Louvre Museum, the international spotlight has been on the Capodimonte Museum for six months, but perhaps, with regard to the work done by the outgoing management, what is really worthwhile and of interest from the point of view of the museum's long-term enhancement is the part of the master plan that concerns the redevelopment of the Bosco and its various structures - for example, Santiago Calatrava's intervention in the Church of San Gennaro - the renovation of the facilities and energy efficiency, the project to rearrange the collection and reopen spaces that cannot be visited today<sup>203</sup>, and above all the experiments in fruitful hybridisation between the instrument of the exhibition and the reality of the museum. The exhibition project *Oltre Caravaggio*, which saw the reorganisation of a large part of the museum's second floor and followed in the footsteps of *Carta Bianca. Capodimonte Imaginaire, Depositati. Storie ancora da scrivere* and *Napoli, Napoli. Di lava, porcellana e musica*, did not borrow artworks from outside museums but was confined to the flourishing Capodimonte museum collections, with the aim of proposing a new narrative of the 17th and 18th century<sup>204</sup>. The aim is to bring the public closer to the permanent collections by taking the creativity and ability to guide the visitor from exhibitions, without resorting to excessive use of the loan instrument but making the museum welcoming and attractive, a *moving* organism in the spirit of Adalgisa Luigi's words:

“Per un organismo (i museo) che contiene il passato, ma si confronta continuamente col presente, credo che veramente la più grossa contraddizione sia la pretesa di rimanere immobile<sup>205</sup>”.

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<sup>203</sup> Capodimonte site, *Masterplan*, cit.

<sup>204</sup> Causa, Piscitello, *Oltre Caravaggio*, cit., pp. 9-10

<sup>205</sup> A. Luigi, *Contributi del Museo a un'educazione storico culturale comprensiva del momento estetico*, in *L'educazione estetica*, Firenze 1978, pp. 222-231

## Conclusion

In a historical phase in which the cultural heritage sector is facing great changes, characterised by the endless succession of temporary exhibitions and major structural reforms that have introduced significant changes in the museum sector, the present work set out to reflect on the practice of temporary exhibitions, and specifically on the value that the loan of works of art, masterpieces in particular, can have as a tool of Cultural Diplomacy on the one hand, and of museum valorisation on the other, and the points of contact between them. The starting point and final case study was the exhibition *Naples à Paris*, which seemed particularly relevant for this purpose since it was the result of a partnership agreement between the Capodimonte Museum and the Louvre Museum and placed under the aegis of the Quirinale Treaty for enhanced bilateral collaboration and intensified cultural exchanges between France and Italy.

The focus was primarily on the topic of Cultural Diplomacy, as politics has always been part of the history of temporary exhibitions and is one of their various layers of meaning. Cultural Diplomacy today takes the form of an exchange of ideas, information and art to increase mutual understanding between states<sup>206</sup>, without neglecting the goal of promoting one's own national culture and building a sense of credibility abroad<sup>207</sup>, focusing on the educational value of culture as a vehicle for freedom, equality, social justice and democracy<sup>208</sup>. It follows that the cultural relations a State undertakes are an instrument and a reflection of that State's foreign policy. At the same time, Cultural Diplomacy is also an important element of the policies of a supra-state organisation such as the European Union, which intends to identify and show itself not only as a normative and economic object but also as a social and cultural project. The conclusion of cooperation treaties between member States of the European Union is an important instrument supported by it. Through the presentation of Italy's main guidelines on Cultural Diplomacy from the post-World War II period to the present day, it was possible to better understand the dynamics that led to the signing of the Quirinale Treaty in 2021, which marks the two countries' willingness to cooperate from a European and Mediterranean perspective. The Italian cultural model, based on its cultural heritage

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<sup>206</sup> Cummings, *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government* cit., p. 1

<sup>207</sup> Kim, *Cultural Diplomacy as the Means of Soft Power*, cit., p. 3

<sup>208</sup> M. L. Krenn, *The history of United States cultural diplomacy*, cit., p. 2

and the *Italian way of life*, has the greatest similarities with the French cultural model, but the relationship between the two is not always clear and balanced and sees a shift of the needle of the scales in favour of France as a country with a stronger and more solid cultural administration. The political vision and participation in the *Naples à Paris* exhibition, seen as part of a broader strategy of cultural rapprochement between the Italian and French museum systems, through which an international public was also able to get to know the masterpieces of the Neapolitan Museum as they were exhibited in the halls of the world's most important museum, seems to support this unbalanced view. France's position of strength seems to be repeated in the perspective for which an aura of relevance and legitimacy is bestowed through the Parisian Museum to the Neapolitan Museum. This vision, however, contrasts with the Italian narrative of the event according to which, thanks to the *Naples à Paris* exhibition together with the programme of collateral events, the French capital would speak Neapolitan for six months. Thus, France confirms itself as a model to look up to and compete with, also through the instrument of Cultural Diplomacy.

Subsequently, the discussion shifted from Cultural Diplomacy to the lending of masterpieces, focusing, with a historical point of view, on the transfer of balances from a real instrument of propaganda to a question of valorisation. The narration of the huge loan of masterpieces that took place in 1930 in London for the exhibition *Italian Art 1200-1900*, promoted by the Italian government led by Benito Mussolini to strengthen its popularity in England, and the three American stages of the exhibition *Masterworks of Five Centuries* in 1939, organised to rebalance relations with the United States and in the hope of obtaining advantageous loans for the E42, proved useful to introduce the themes of conservation of works and the long-standing question of power relations between museums and exhibitions. It is also thanks to these experiences that an awareness of the fragility of artworks of art emerges, on which Cesare Brandi reasoned at length: the artwork is an irreplaceable unicum and loans cannot be granted just for the easy circulation of exhibitions. Loans become functional for the artwork if they result in greater awareness and consequently greater attention to conservation. On the contrary, the masterpieces, which are the great ambassadors of Cultural Diplomacy, would be precisely the works that do not need to travel. Roberto Longhi also commented on the proliferation of exhibitions and the ease with which the greatest masterpieces began to be requested on loan, capable by themselves of guaranteeing

the success of the event and reducing museums to repositories from which to draw. The subject of the balance between exhibitions and museums is proving to be highly topical as the moment of valorisation is increasingly emphasised in order to arouse visitors' interest in museum collections, not least through exhibitions. But not all exhibition processes result in valorisation and museum professionals find an increasing improper competition between temporary and permanent exhibitions. If legitimate exhibitions seem to be those that place themselves at the service of the artwork, its valorisation and protection, the *Naples à Paris* exhibition seems to be configured differently. If, as emerges from the tour that moves from the Grande Galerie, with its dialogues between the Parisian and Neapolitan collections, to the Salle de la Chapelle and Salle de l'Horloge, with their thematic insights, the curatorial efforts are appreciable and interesting food for thought can be grasped, it must be noted that in this case it is not the exhibition that serves the artworks, but the loan of the artworks that serves the cause of valorisation, which in turn has benefited Cultural Diplomacy. There is often too simple an overlap of meaning between exhibition and valorisation, which in some cases is promoted by the museums themselves. It has been noted that the Capodimonte Museum has in recent years implemented an extensive loan policy in order to internationalise its collection, which, although of great prestige, finds itself outside the major visitor circuits. The museum has often lent a large number of masterpieces for exhibitions dedicated to its own collection, seeking with this method a solution to management needs, but in effect eroding its own coherence and narrative completeness. The feeling is that by trying to attract audiences abroad, it penalises visitors on site, reiterating the notion that the profitability of exhibitions often impacts on the museum's normal operations.

With *Naples à Paris*, through the halls of the Louvre, the spotlight of international culture was shone on Italy, on Naples and on Capodimonte, but what really seems to be worthwhile in terms of valorisation is all the work carried out in recent years by the outgoing management of Capodimonte on the redevelopment of the museum's facilities and on the temporary exhibitions focusing on the innovative presentation of the permanent collection, such as the *Oltre Caravaggio* exhibition, succeeding in rooting themselves with their presence and narrative in the community around them.

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## Appendix

### **The set-up of the rooms of the Capodimonte Museum affected by the loans during the *Naples à Paris* exhibition at the Louvre Museum**

The history of the layout of the Capodimonte Museum collection is long and eventful. The Reggia was destined to house the art collection of Carlo di Borbone from the moment it was designed, and after the second world war it opened to the public as a museum institution. If in the 18th century historiography had suggested the arrangement of the works according to biographical medallions, when it opened in 1957, the collection was arranged with the aim of illustrating the history of Italian art according to stylistic development processes, by schools and regional painting personalities. Later, between the late 1970s and the 1980s, important donations, the integration of artworks from local churches, the opening to contemporary art, and the need for a structural adjustment led to a rethinking of the layout of the collection. The new setting is conceived around the enhancement of the history of the palace and its various collections<sup>209</sup>. Since then, while sticking to the idea of enhancing the history of the build-up of the collections, the artworks have undergone many moves and relocations. In addition, especially during the years of director Sylvain Bellenger's tenure, works have very often been on loan and have been replaced by works from the deposits, leading to a frequent reorganization, sometimes of entire rooms. Finally, the Museum is currently undergoing major renovation and restoration work on some of its rooms, which is leading to a gradual relocation and rearrangement of the collection according to the areas affected by the work. We could say, therefore, that the display of the works at Capodimonte is characterised by a certain fluidity that does not allow one to refer to a usual setting, but rather at the time of the research was different even from the guidebook<sup>210</sup>, written in 2017, sold in the museum bookshop. The reconstruction proposed below was carried out on site with the help of museum staff with the aim of reconstructing, as best as possible, the exhibition layout of the rooms affected by the loans for the exhibition *Naples*

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<sup>209</sup> *Oltre Caravaggio, cit.*, p.25-27

<sup>210</sup> Gallo, Giustozzi, *Guida al Museo di Capodimonte*, cit.

à Paris, *Le Louvre invite le musée de Capodimonte* immediately before (condition assumed as "normal") and during the Paris exhibition (condition assumed as "temporary"). At the time of the survey, some works had already returned from Paris and, for the most part, had resumed their usual location.

## FLOOR I

The first floor of the Capodimonte Museum and Real Bosco di Capodimonte houses the Farnese Gallery, the Wunderkammer, the Farnese and Bourbon Armoury, the De Ciccio Collection, the Salottino Pompeiano and the rooms of the Royal Apartment.

**Room 1-2** Room of Tiziano and the Venetians. This is a large room, the first in the museum itinerary, and is historically set up as an incipit to the narrative of the Farnese collection, which extends for almost half of the first floor, along the east wing, from Room 1 to 30. It is now divided into two portions, the first dedicated to various authors of the Venetian school, and the second set up with works by Titian, with the main emphasis on the figure of Pope Paul III, initiator of the first nucleus of the Farnese collection.

Veneti area. On the left, Bellini's *Trasfigurazione* is now replaced by Alvise Vivarini's *Madonna col bambino tra i santi Francesco e Bernardino*, a work often found in storage. The space of Lotto's portrait of *Bernardo de Rossi* is now occupied by *Madonna col Bambino, San Pietro martire e un donatore* by Lorenzo Lotto. The latter work, which is usually located in a more elevated position, has itself been replaced by a copy from Bellini of *Circoncisione*, which is usually placed above to the left of the *Trasfigurazione*, and whose position is now occupied by *Martirio di San Lorenzo* by Girolamo Santacroce. It should also be noted that the change of position between Mantegna's *Santa Eufemia*, relocated alone on the corner entrance wall, and Mantegna's portrait of *Francesco Gonzaga*, is a move contemporary with the loan but not directly related to it.

Tiziano's area: on the fontal wall, in place of *Paolo III a testa nuda* and di *Paolo III con Nipoti* and *Busto di Paolo III*, for the duration of the loan to the Louvre, Tiziano's *L'Annunciazione* was placed, which is usually found on the right wall,

and which was in turn replaced by Tiziano's *Maddalena*, which normally stands next to it and was more central on this occasion. Tiziano's *Alessandro Farnese* was also removed from the right wall. The left wall should normally house Tiziano's *Danae* but has long since been replaced by Tiziano's *Filippo II* because it is one of the works subject to the most displacement (In recent years it has participated in the exhibitions: *Flesh and Blood. Italian Masterpieces from the Capodimonte Museum* in the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth in 2020, *The Road to the Baroque - Masterpieces from the Capodimonte Museum* in the Hong Kong Museum of Art in 2022, *I Farnese, Architettura, Arte, Potere* exhibition in the Complesso monumentale della Pillotta in 2022, *ARTE LIBERATA 1937-1947. Capolavori salvati dalla guerra*, at the Scuderie del Quirinale in 2023).

**Room 3** Room of cartoons containing *Amore e Venere* attributed to Michelangelo (interestingly, during the period of the exhibition, the Louvre instead indicated the attribution of the work to Vasari as probable<sup>211</sup>), *Mosè* by Raffaello, *Gruppo di Soldati* by Michelangelo, *Madonna Amor Divino* drawn by Raffaello. All the works in this room were works on loan from the Louvre, so during the six months of the Paris exhibition the room was closed.

**Room 5** Masaccio's *Crocifissione*, Masolino's *Fondazione di S. Maria Maggiore*, Masolino's *Assunzione della Vergine* are replaced by Filippino Lippi's *Annunciazione e santi*.

**Room 8** The room houses 15th century works from the Farnese collection by painters of the Flemish school. Van Cleve's *Adorazione dei Magi* during the loan was replaced by Van Cleve's *Crocifissione*, which is usually on the opposite wall, replaced in turn by Hugo Van der Goes' *Deposizione* and a *Deposizione* by an unknown Flemish artist.

**Room 9** Despite the relocation of Raffaello's *Madonna del Divino Amore*, the room did not undergo many changes: the paintings on the long wall were enlarged a little, and similarly Andrea del Sarto's *Ritratto di Leone X con i cardinali Giulio de' Medici e Luigi de' Rossi* was moved more to the centre, on the side wall.

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<sup>211</sup> *Naples à Paris. Cit*, p.229



**Room 10** Rosso Fiorentino's *Ritratto di giovane* was replaced by Maso da San Friano's *Doppio Ritratto Maschile*.

**Room 11** The gap left by El Greco's *Ritratto di Giulio Clovio* has been filled by placing *El Soflon* by El Greco in the centre of the wall; the two paintings are generally found side by side, but are in fact often on loan.

**Room 12** In this large room, dedicated to central Italian painting of the 16th century, there have been many moves. On the long wall opposite the windows, *Antea* is replaced by *Santa Chiara* by Mazzola Bedoli, while Parmigianino's *Ritratto di Galeazzo Sanvitale* is replaced by Michelangelo Anselmi's *Ritratto di Gentiluomo* by Unknown from 1536.

Slightly to the side, Parmigianino's *Lucrezia* is replaced by Mazzola Bedoli's *Ritratto di un sarto*, which is in turn replaced by Jacopo Zanguidi's *Madonna del dente* from Parmigianino, which is usually in storage. *Annunciazione* by Mazzola Bedoli is replaced by *Madonna co Bambino in gloria e santi Pietro, Giovannino e Caterina d'Alessandria* by Rondani. The *Cassetta Farnese*, which is usually in a case on a pedestal in the center of the room, has not been replaced.

**Rooms 13 - 14** Galleria delle Cose Rare: complements the Farnese collection of paintings with rare and precious objects.

It is set up on the 18th century model of the Wunderkammer desired by Duke Ranuccio II in the Galleria Ducale in Parma. *Ventagli* from Ceylan, *Diana Cacciatrice* by Jacob Miller the Elder, and *Plates and Porcelain* by Giacomo Milani have not been replaced.

**Room 20** *Attalanta and Ippomene* by Guido Reni is replaced by *Quattro stagioni* by Guido Reni, *Caino e Abele* by Lionello Spada is replaced by *Allegoria della liberalità e Modestia* by Giovanni Giacomo Semenza

**Room 27** In place of Annibale Carracci's *Ercole al bivio*, which is usually located in the centre of the wall, and Annibale Carracci's *Pietà*, which is placed next to it, Annibale Carracci's *Sposalizio mistico di Santa Caterina*, which is usually located

on the opposite wall to the right of the window, has been placed, this, in turn, was temporarily replaced by Annibale Carracci's *Bacco*, which is usually located on the wall to the left of the window under Annibale Carracci's *Allegoria Fluviale*, and also temporarily replaced by Annibale Carracci's *Satiro*.

**Room 29** Instead of Lanfranco's *Maddalena* was placed *Samaritana al Pozzo* by Lanfranco.

**Room 32** Placed on a small table, Giuseppe Gricci's *Bacino a Conchiglia* was not replaced.

**Room 33** The two paintings by Joli *Partenza di Carlo di Borbone per la Spagna vista da terra e vista da mare* were placed opposite each other on the short walls. The room, located in the area of the royal flats, is dedicated to the history of the families that have inhabited the palace: the placement of the two works in it is very recent and replaces some portraits by Le Brun, and took place when the works were returned from the Louvre. Previously, the works were located on the upper floor in Room 81.

**Room 34** Mengs' *Ritratto di Carlo di Borbone* was replaced by Mengs' *Ritratto di Ferdinando I di Borbone*.

**Room 37** The *Caduta dei Giganti* by Tagliolini, which stands majestically in the centre of the great hall had been replaced by a *Tavolo da centro con cariatidi di bronzo e medaglioni di pietra lavica* by neapolitan manufacture.

**Room 38-40** De Ciccio Collection: *Centauri e Cupidi* by Tagliolini were not replaced.

## FLOOR II

The second floor of the museum houses the D'Avalos Tapestry Room, the Gallery of the Arts in Naples from the 13th to the 18th century, from 2022 partly reorganised according to the narrative of the exhibition *Oltre Caravaggio, Un*

*nuovo racconto della pittura a Napoli*, the Baroque Corridor of the 18th century, the Presepe Napoletano and contemporary art.

**Room 67** The *San Girolamo nello studio* by Colantonio is replaced by Colantonio's *Deposizione*, while the *Polittico di San Vincenzo Ferrier* has been replaced by the *Polittico di San Severino apostolo del Norcio in trono e santi* by the Maestro di San Severino.

**Room 77** This is the room from which the new layout of the permanent collection, created for the exhibition *Oltre Caravaggio, Un nuovo racconto della pittura a Napoli*, begins. The room is dedicated to Caravaggio's *Flagellazione*, the starting point for a re-reading of Neapolitan painting beyond and despite Caravaggio's stays in Naples<sup>212</sup>. The work, while on display at the Louvre, has been replaced by three screens smaller than the room's environment, showing photographs of Caravaggio's three works present in Naples: *Flagellazione*, *Le Sette opere di Misericordia* housed at the Pio Monte della Misericordia and *Martirio di Sant'Orsola* housed at the Gallerie d'Italia in the Palazzo del Banco di Napoli.

**Room 81** The two paintings by Joli *Partenza di Carlo di Borbone per la Spagna vista da terra e vista da mare* are replaced by Liani's portrait of *Carlo di Borbone* and *Carlo di Borbone in visita alla Basilica di San Pietro* by Giovanni Paolo Panini. On their return from the Louvre, the two paintings by Joli were set up in room 33 on the first floor.

**Room 84** The absence of Joli's *Ferdinando a cavallo con la corte* has been remedied by moving Claude Joseph Vernet's *Carlo di Borbone a caccia di folaghe sul lago di Licola* to the centre of the wall; the two paintings are usually located one above the other on the same wall.

**Room 89** According to the original location planned for the exhibition *Oltre Caravaggio*, this room on the left should display Artemisia Gentileschi's *Giuditta e Oloferne*, in actual fact the work was almost never exhibited because it was

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<sup>212</sup> *Oltre Caravaggio, Un nuovo racconto della pittura a Napoli*, exhibition catalogue (Naples, Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, 31 March 2022 – 7 January 2023) edited by S. Causa and P. Piscitello, Arteam, 2022, p.14

always on loan, and was immediately replaced by Simon Vouet's *Circoncisione*. On the opposite wall, on the other hand, Reni's *Quattro stagioni* should be exhibited, which was instead called upon to replace *Atalanta and Ippomene* in Room 20, and was replaced by Vaccaro's *Trionfo di David*.

**Room 90** Ribera's *San Girolamo* is replaced by Annibale Carracci's *San Girolamo*, which is usually located on a short wall on the opposite side of the room. To the side, Schedoni's *Elemosina di santa Elisabetta* has been replaced by De Rosa's *Santa Maria Egiziaca* and *Maddalena* by the Maestro della Maddalena.

**Room 91** Ribera's *Sileno Ebbro* is replaced by *Annuncio ai pastori* by the Maestro dell'annuncio ai pastori.

**Room 93** Guarino's *Sant'Agata* is usually placed alongside *Salomè con la testa del Battista* by Charles Mellin, both flanked by a pair of *Garofani e Tulipani* by Andrea Belvedere.

**Room 100** Preti's *San Sebastiano* has been replaced by Preti's *Giuditta e Oloferne*, Preti's *San Nicola* has been replaced by Preti's *San Giovanni Battista*, which, having been moved from its location on the opposite side of the wall, has in turn been replaced by Preti's *Madonna di Costantinopoli*, which is usually in storage.

In addition, Ribera's *Apollo e Marsia* and Giordano's *Apollo e Marsia*, usually displayed in dialogue on the same wall, are replaced by Luca Giordano's *Deposizione*.

**In Room 103** Giordano's *Madonna del Rosario* has been replaced by Recco's *Natura morta con festoni di fiori e cacciagione*, Recco's *Natura morta con pesci e animali marin'* has been missing from its location for some time because it has undergone restoration, and has been replaced by a still life by Cusati, as has Ruppolo and Brueghel's *Natura morta con fiori e frutta*.

## List of Capodimonte artworks on loan to the Louvre

1. *Crocifissione*, Masaccio, 1426, tempera and gold on panel, 83x63 cm
2. *Fondazione di S. Maria Maggiore*, Masolino da Panicale, 1427-1429, tempera, oil and gold on panel, 144x76 cm
3. *Assunzione della Vergine*, Masolino da Panicale, 1427-1429, tempera and oil on panel, 142x76 cm
4. *Trasfigurazione*, Giovanni Bellini, 1478-1479, oil on panel, 115x152 cm
5. *San Girolamo nel suo studio*, Colantonio, 1444-1450, oil on panel, 126x152 cm
6. *Pala d'altare di San Vincenzo Ferrier*, Colantonio, 1456-1458, oil on panel
7. *Ritratto di Luca Pacioli con un allievo*, Jacopo de' Barbari, 1495, oil on panel, 99x120 cm
8. *Ritratto di Bernardo de' Rossi*, Lorenzo Lotto, 1505, oil on panel, 54,7x41,3 cm
9. *Ritratto di Clemente VII senza barba*, Sebastiano del Piombo, 1526, oil on canvas, 145x100cm
10. *Ritratto di giovane*, Rosso Fiorentino, 1524-1526, oil on panel, 120x86 cm
11. *Ritratto di Galeazzo Sanvitale*, Parmigianino, 1524, oil on panel, 108x80 cm
12. *Ritratto di giovane donna - Antea*, Parmigianino, 1535, oil on canvas, 138x86 cm
13. *Lucrezia*, Parmigianino, 1540, oil on canvas, 68x52 cm
14. *L'annunciazione*, Girolamo Mazzola Bedoli, 1555-1560, oil on canvas, 228x157 cm
15. *Danae*, Tiziano, 1544-1545, oil on canvas, 120x172 cm
16. *Ercole al bivio*, Annibale Carracci, 1596, oil on canvas, 165x239 cm
17. *Pietà*, Annibale Carracci, 1599-1600, oil on canvas, 156x149 cm
18. *La flagellazione*, Caravaggio, 1607, oil on canvas, 286x213 cm
19. *Atalante e Ippomene*, Guido Reni, 1615-1618, oil on canvas, 192x264 cm
20. *Giuditta e Oloferne*, Artemisia Gentileschi, 1612-1613, oil on canvas, 158,8x125,5 cm
21. *Caino e Abele*, Lionello Spada, 1612-1614, oil on canvas, 178,5x118 cm
22. *Sant'Agata*, Francesco Guarino, 1637-1640, oil on canvas, 87x72 cm
23. *San Girolamo e l'angelo del giudizio*, Jusepe de Ribera, 1626, oil on canvas, 261x164 cm
24. *Sileno ebbro*, Jusepe de Ribera, 1626, oil on canvas, 185x229 cm

25. *Apollo e Marsia*, Jusepe de Ribera, 1637, oil on panel, 182x232 cm
26. *Apollo e Marsia*, Luca Giordano, 1660, oil on canvas, 205x259 cm
27. *San Nicola in estasi*, Mattia Preti, 1653, oil on canvas, 217x156 cm
28. *San Sebastiano*, Mattia Preti, 1656 oil on canvas, 240x169 cm
29. *Madonna del Rosario*, Luca Giordano, 1685, oil on canvas, 430x240 cm
30. *Natura morta con pesci e altri animali marini*, Giuseppe Recco, 1671, oil on canvas, 260x340 cm
31. *Natura morta con frutta e fiori*, Abraham Brueghel e Giuseppe Ruppolo, 1680-1685, oil on canvas, 255x338 cm
32. *Partenza di carlo Borbone per la Spagna vista da terra*, Antonio Joli, 1759, oil on canvas, 128,5x208,5 cm
33. *Partenza di Carlo di Borbone per la Spagna vista dal mare*, Antonio Joli, 1759, oil on canvas, 128,5x208,5 cm
34. *Vista di Napoli da Capodimonte*, Alexandre Dunouy, 1813, oil on canvas, 129x180 cm
35. *Eruzione del Vesuvio dal ponte della Maddalena*, Pierre Jacques Volaire, oil on canvas, 1782, 130x240 cm
36. *Ritratto di Paolo III con i nipoti*, Tiziano, 1545, oil on canvas, 210x174 cm
37. *Busto di Paolo III con la cappa*, Guglielmo della Porta, 1546-1549, marble and alabater, 80 cm
38. *Ritratto di Paolo III a testa nuda*, Tiziano, 1543, oil on canvas, 106x85 cm
39. *Coppia di ventagli*, Ceylan, second half of the 16th century, ivory and silver, 56,5x27x3,5 cm
40. *Cassetta Farnese*, Manno di Sbarri e Giovanni Bernardi, 1548-1561, gilded silver, rock crystal, lapis lazuli 49x42x26 cm
41. *Ritratto del Cardinale Alessandro Farnese*, Tiziano, 1545-1546, oil on canvas, 97x73 cm
42. *Ritratto di Giulio Clovio*, El Greco, 1571-1572, oil on canvas, 81,4x104 cm
43. *L'elemosina di Santa Elisabetta di Ungheria*, Bartolomeo Schedoni, 1611, oil on canvas, 180x128 cm
44. *Maddalena portata in cielo dagli angeli*, Giovanni Lanfranco, 1616-1617, oil on canvas, 109x78 cm
45. 3, Jacob Miller il Vecchio, late 16th century, gilded silver, 31,5x24x12 cm

46. *Ritratto di Carlo III di Borbone*, Anton Raphael Mengs, 1774, oil on canvas, 80x63,5 cm
47. *Ferdinando IV a cavallo con la corte*, Antonio Joli, 1760-1761, oil on canvas, 71,5x137,5 cm
48. *Bacino a forma di conchiglia*, Giuseppe Gricci, 1745-1750, white porcelain from Capodimonte, 12,5x31x19 cm
49. *Six candlesticks belonging to Carlo di Borbone*, Gaetano Fumo, 1745-1750, white porcelain from Capodimonte, 84 cm
50. *Servizio delle vedute di Napoli*, Giacomo Milani, 1793-1795, painted and gilded porcelain from Real Fabbrica Ferdinanda.
51. *Four grandi teste a mezzo busto*, Filippo Tagliolini, 1782-1785, porcelain bisque from Real Fabbrica Ferdinanda
52. *Two di centauri cavalcanti da cupidi*, Filippo Tagliolini, 1785-1795, porcelain bisque from Real Fabbrica Ferdinanda
53. *La caduta dei Giganti*, Filippo Tagliolini, 1785, porcelain bisque from Real Fabbrica Ferdinanda
54. *L'adorazione dei Magi*, Joos van Cleve, 1525, oil on panel, 131x217 cm
55. *Two poltrone con vedute di Parigi*, Neapolitan and Parisian manufacture, 1812-1814, carved, painted and gilded wood, painted velvet, 103x67x49 cm
56. Gruppo di armigeri, Michelangelo, paper, 263x156 cm
57. *Venere e Amore*, Giorgio Vasari, from Michelangelo, paper 131x184 cm
58. *Mosè*, Raffaello, paper
59. *La Madonna dell'amor divino*, 16th century Italian artist, from Raffaello, paper 134x111 cm
60. *La Madonna dell'amor divino*, Raffaello, 1516-1518, oil on wood, 134x111 cm

## Illustrations



Figure 1: Layout of room 77 on the second floor of Capodimonte during the *Naples à Paris* exhibition period: Caravaggio's *Flagellazione* is replaced by three screens with photos of the three Caravaggio paintings hosted in Naples.



Figure 2: Caravaggio's *Flagellazione* at the Louvre in the Grande Galerie  
Source: louvreguide.com site, *Naples in Paris Louvre Exhibit private Tour*, <<https://louvreguide.com/our-stories/f/naples-in-paris-louvre-exhibit-private-tour-in-english>>, (consulted 12 June 2024)





Figure 3: The usual setup of Caravaggio's *Flagellation* in Room 77 from the rearrangement of the second floor of Capodimonte that took place with the exhibition *Oltre Caravaggio*.  
 Source: Capodimonte site, *Aprire la mostra Oltre Caravaggio*, <<https://capodimonte.cultura.gov.it/aprire-la-mostra-oltre-caravaggio-un-nuovo-racconto-della-pittura-a-napoli/>> (consulted 12 June 2024)



Figure 4: Setting up room 2 on the first floor of Capodimonte during the loan of Titian's *Ritratto di Papa Paolo III*, *Ritratto di Papa Paolo III con i nipoti* and *Ritratto del Cardinale Alessandro Farnese* for the exhibition *Naples à Paris*.





Figure 5: Layout of the Salle de la Chapelle housing Titian's *Ritratto di Papa Paolo III con i nipoti* e *Ritratto di Papa Paolo III* and Della Porta's *Busto di Papa Paolo III*.

Source: *Visite privée Naples à Paris*,

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztkRrN8Tems&t=10s>>(consulted 12 June 2024)



Figure 6: Usual layout of room 2 on the first floor of Capodimonte.





Figure 7: Layout of room 12 on the first floor of Capodimonte during the loan of *Antea* and *Galeazzo Sanvitale* by Parmigianino for the exhibition *Naples à Paris*.



Figure 8: Parmigianino's *Antea* and *Galeazzo Sanvitale* and Titian's *Danae* in the Tribune of the Grande Galerie in the Louvre  
Source: scribeaccroupi.fr site, Visite Privée Naples à Paris, < <https://scribeaccroupi.fr/visite-privee-exposition-naples-a-paris-chefs-d-oeuvre/>> (consulted 12 June 2024)



Figure 9: The usual set-up of room 12 on the first floor of Capodimonte in which one can glimpse Parmigianino's *Antea* and *Galeazzo Sanvitale*.

Source: Capodimonte site, *Blog*, < <https://capodimonte.cultura.gov.it/weekend-12-13-14-novembre-2021-al-museo-e-real-bosco-di-capodimonte/>>, ( Consulted 12 June 2024)

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