

For Immediate Release

THE POLO MUSEALE DELLA TOSCANA AND THE MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE IN FLORENCE PRESENT THE “REDISCOVERED APHRODITE” RESTORED THANKS TO THE GENEROSITY OF FRIENDS OF FLORENCE

September 19, 2018, Florence, Italy... The recently restored statue of Aphrodite housed in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale (National Archeological Museum/the Museum) in Florence, Italy, was unveiled in a public celebration on September 11, 2018. Funded by Friends of Florence with a donation by Michael and Sandy Collins, the cleaning and restoration process revealed a surprising development. Long thought to be a representation of the Spartan queen Leda that had been marred with dirt and grime over centuries, it was discovered to be the Greek goddess Aphrodite sculpted in now immaculately white marble.

“It is a great pleasure to present this ‘Rediscovered Aphrodite’,” said Simonetta Brandolini d’Adda, President of Friends of Florence. “In addition to the restoration, the project—originally a candidate in the first edition of the Friends of Florence Award Grant at the Florence Art and Restoration Fair in 2012—provided the unique opportunity to study the work in depth. The process was designed to allow the public to observe the restoration in an ‘open work site’ thanks to the kind cooperation of Mario Iozzo, director of the Museum, his staff, and restorer Daniela Manna who previously has worked on other important Friends of Florence projects. The open work site allowed us to help visitors understand what it means to restore a work of art, how delicate and precise the entire process is, and how important it is to conserve our artistic-cultural heritage. We thank all those who made this project possible, starting with our donors Michael and Sandy Collins, whose generosity enabled us to replace another tile in the great mosaic of Western art history and civilization.”

New source research during the restoration led to the identification of the statue as the one purchased in 1882 by Luigi Adriano Milani, then director of the Museum. It came from Palazzo Da Cepparello, in Florence. The building originally belonged to the Portinari family (Dante’s great love, Beatrice, was a Portinari). Subsequent owners include the Salviati family (a daughter Maria married Cosimo I de’ Medici). From its origins as a stately home, it later became a bank and is now being redesigned as apartments.

The statue has been identified as a good, first century A.D. Roman copy of a Hellenistic original dating from around 300 B.C. Restorers discovered that the marble (from the island of Paros) used for the body is different from the material of the head, which they revealed is antique but not original. The arms were sculpted and added in the eighteenth century when it was customary to repair broken statues by adding ancient or specially-made parts to make them whole and “beautiful,” in keeping with the times.



Aphrodite, (first century A.D.). White marble. Before (left) and after (right) restoration. Photo courtesy of Friends of Florence.



Aphrodite, (first century A.D.). White marble. During restoration. Photo courtesy of Friends of Florence.

Before starting the restoration, which was conducted by Daniela Manna and assistants, the statue was photographed and subjected to a series of diagnostic studies aimed at identifying any original polychrome, traces of which were indeed found on the drapery and hair (red ochre and gilding). After having analyzed the conservation condition and identified alterations and deterioration, the restoration team selected the most appropriate methods and tools for cleaning, partially removing previous restorations and repairing lacunae. The cleaning was done with a laser device that gradually removed the black incrustations. The final phases involved re-gluing an original fragment using the same types of materials as in antiquity—materials

which are still valid and appropriate for a statue displayed inside a museum.

Provenance research unearthed a catalogue entry and photography from the late 1800s of the statue in the Museum's garden loggias which corroborated the figure's identity. The "rediscovered" Aphrodite, on her beautifully carved, early nineteenth-century wooden base, will remain where she was studied and restored, on the ground floor and visible to all who enter the Museum.

Project details

The restoration was conducted with a grant from the Friends of Florence, through a gift from Michael and Sandy Collins.

Restorer: Daniela Manna

Assistants and photographic campaign: Simona Rindi, Serena Tizzanini, Carmine Santillo

Petrographic analyses: Emma Cantisani, Silvia Vettori (Istituto per la Conservazione e la Valorizzazione dei Beni Culturali – National Research Council, Florence)

Diagnostics: Andrea Rossi, Shao-Chun Huang (Diagnostica per i Beni Culturali)

Handling: Apice SCRL Florence

About Friends of Florence

Friends of Florence is a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C., supported by individuals from around the world who are dedicated to preserving and enhancing the cultural and historical integrity of the arts in the city and surrounding area of Florence, Italy. To date, the organization has raised and donated \$10 million for conservation projects in the region, including the substantial upgrading and retrofitting of the Botticelli Room at the Uffizi Gallery and conservation of 48 drawings by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo from the Horne Museum in Florence.

Friends of Florence provides financial support directly to the city's restoration laboratories to restore, safeguard, and make available to the public a broad range of art from paintings and sculptures, to architectural elements and collections of smaller objects.

Through educational programs and events and by working closely with local and national partners—including the City of Florence, Italian Ministry of Art, and numerous international committees and

organizations—Friends of Florence strives to increase public understanding and appreciation of Florence and Tuscany’s abundant art treasures. www.friendsofflorence.org

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