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VERROCCHIO'S NEWLY RESTORED "DAVID" ON VIEW IN NATION'S CAPITAL FEBRUARY 13 THROUGH MARCH 21, 2004



David with the head of slain Goliath outside his right foot.

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Andrea del Verrocchio
(Italian, 1435 - 1488)

David and the Head of Goliath, c. 1466

Bronze, Height: 47-1/4 inches

National Museum of the Bargello, Florence

Washington, DC -- One of the greatest masterpieces of Renaissance art will be on view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in *Verrocchio's "David" Restored: A Renaissance Bronze from the National Museum of the Bargello, Florence*, February 13 through March 21, 2004. The restoration and presentation of Verrocchio's *David* have been organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta--where the exhibition will be seen November 22, 2003, through February 8, 2004--in cooperation with the National Museum of the Bargello, Florence. Verrocchio (c. 1435-1488), a leading Florentine artist, had a profound impact on his famous pupil, Leonardo da Vinci, and Renaissance sculpture.

"This is an extraordinary opportunity not only to see one of the most outstanding works of Western sculpture ever created, but to see it as scholars now believe it was originally conceived by Verrocchio himself," said National Gallery of Art director Earl A. Powell III. "At the National Gallery, home to the most important collection of works by Verrocchio

and his school outside Italy, we are particularly pleased to present *David* in the context of other important Florentine representations of this biblical hero and related works by the artist."

David will be displayed with Goliath's head to the right of the figure for the first time in 527 years, giving scholars and audiences an opportunity to evaluate this major work in a new form--as the first sculptural interpretation of David without the slain head anchoring the sculpture at its base. Art historical research and conservation analysis indicate that Verrocchio originally intended the slain head of Goliath to be situated next to David's right foot, rather than between the figure's feet.

Florentine scholars believe that the sculpture may still have been in progress when the Medici family sold it to the Florentine city government in 1476. At that time, in order to fit the *David* on a small pedestal next to a doorway inside the Palazzo Vecchio (seat of the city government), the original cast of Goliath's head was altered, or recast entirely from an altered wax model, in which locks of Goliath's hair were just cut off and the head slightly compressed to make the form narrower so that it could be inserted between the sculpture's feet. This unexpected adaptation to Goliath's head is evidenced by the artist's fingerprint--captured in the wax cast and in turn, preserved in the cast bronze--which is now clearly visible as a result of the restoration. The restoration has also revealed vibrant gilding on David's hair and clothing, as well as vivid new anatomical details; it also confirms evidence that the sword is not original.

In Washington, *Verrocchio's "David" Restored* will be presented in the rich context of works from the Gallery's permanent collection, which reflects the patronage, the artist's oeuvre, and the iconography of David and Goliath. The Gallery's installation will include terracotta busts of Piero de' Medici's sons, Lorenzo (1478/1521, follower of Verrocchio) and Giuliano (1475/1478, Verrocchio), who sold Verrocchio's *David* to the City of Florence in 1476; a marble relief of Alexander (1483/1485, workshop of Verrocchio); the charming *Putto Poised on a Globe* (probably 1480, Verrocchio), made of unbaked clay; Andrea del Castagno's parade shield *The Youthful David* (c.1450), and the marble sculpture of *The David of the Casa Martelli* (second half of 15th century, follower of Donatello).

Exhibition Support, Curators, and Catalogue

Verrocchio's "David" Restored: A Renaissance Bronze from the National Museum of the Bargello, Florence, is organized by the High Museum of Art and the National Museum of the Bargello in Florence. This exhibition is generously supported by Worldspan, L.P. The restoration is supported in part by Progetto città and Steinhauslin Bank in Florence.

The guest curator for the High Museum of Art exhibition is Gary Radke, professor of fine arts, Syracuse University. The curator of the exhibition in Washington is Eleonora Luciano, assistant curator of sculpture in the National Gallery of Art's department of sculpture and decorative arts, headed by Nicholas Penny, senior curator of sculpture and decorative arts.

Published by the High Museum, in association with Giunti Editore, the 96-page catalogue, *Verrocchio's "David" Restored: A Renaissance Bronze from Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence*, includes 65 color illustrations and 25 duotone illustrations, as well as essays by leading experts Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi and Maria Grazia Vaccari, David Alan Brown, Gary Radke, John Paoletti, and Ludovica Nicolai. The hardcover catalogue will be available for \$25 in leading bookstores this fall or through the shops of the High Museum and the National Gallery of Art.

An essay in the exhibition catalogue by David Brown, one of the foremost scholars of Leonardo da Vinci and curator of Italian paintings at the National Gallery of Art, argues that Verrocchio's *David* is a portrait of the sculptor's most famous pupil, Leonardo da Vinci. In a recent article ("Leonardo apprendista," *Lettura Vinciana* XXXIX, 17 April 1999 [Florence, 2000]), Brown states that an early 16th-century portrait of Leonardo in his old age by one of Leonardo's pupils (Windsor Castle, inv. N. 12558) bears a striking resemblance to the face of Verrocchio's *David*.

Background

Artist: Andrea del Verrocchio, the leading sculptor in Italy in the second half of the 15th century, was also a painter and goldsmith. In addition to Leonardo da Vinci, his highly successful workshop trained such major artists as Sandro Botticelli. Verrocchio strove

for technical perfection and realistic representation of the human form. Among his most renowned works is the equestrian monument of Bartolomeo Colleoni (1479-1488) in the Campo SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice, where Verrocchio died in 1488.

David: Verrocchio's *David*, probably executed between 1465 and 1470, is one of his most famous and admired sculptures. It was most likely commissioned by Piero di Cosimo de' Medici (1416-1469), father of Lorenzo the Magnificent (1449-1492), who sold it to the city government in 1476. Together with Donatello's celebrated bronze of the same subject--also commissioned by the Medici (c. 1446-1460) and housed at the Bargello--and Michelangelo's monumental marble *David* (1504), Verrocchio's masterpiece remains among the most important sculptural interpretations of the biblical figure. David's pose reflects Verrocchio's profound knowledge of antique sculpture. David's youthful and lean, yet muscular figure; direct, satisfied, gaze; engaging smile; and the fact that he is clothed in military-inspired garb makes the sculpture unique among other interpretations.

Restoration: The restoration conducted at the Bargello by conservator Ludovica Nicolai under the supervision of the national restoration laboratories of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure has revealed the sculpture's original, deeply colored bronze surface, as well as a long-concealed layer of fine gilding covering the figure's hair and parts of his garment and boots.

The repositioning of Goliath's head makes visible the figure's fluid stance and sense of movement, significantly altering the overall composition and interpretation of *David* and making it an even more important milestone in the history of art. The former composition, with the head tightly positioned between David's feet, anchors the figure and draws the viewer's focus downward, making the work appear static and pyramidal in the tradition of Donatello's *David* and all preceding interpretations in marble and bronze. Restored to its original composition, Verrocchio's *David* becomes the first sculptural interpretation with Goliath's head to the figure's side, making it a distinctly narrative work--one of the first in the history of art--illustrating the transformative moment when David moves confidently beyond this act toward his destiny as warrior and king of Israel.

The removal of layers of non-original patina has exposed pronounced veins in David's young, muscular arms, giving the figure a greater sense of strength and power--qualities later amplified to great effect in Michelangelo's *David*. A new laser technology has been used to remove years of dirt and black varnish that hid the fine gilding. The neodymium YAG laser coaxial with a helium neon laser, modeled on that used in laser surgery, is capable of penetrating precisely to the level of the original gold leaf without loosening a single flake of gold. The restoration of *David* has also revealed that the original gold leaf was applied using glue--rather than fused with mercury--a significant discovery confirming that the sculpture was originally intended for indoor display.

Prior Tour: The only known trips taken by *David* prior to this current U.S. tour are as follows: Royal Academy of Arts, London, in 1930; Petit Palais, Paris, in 1935; and a U.S. tour in 1939-1940, which included The Art Institute of Chicago, San Francisco Golden Gate International Exposition, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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