



**Update: September 16, 2019** (original release date: June 7, 2019)

Verrocchio's First Comprehensive Exhibition Explores His Innovation in Renaissance Art and Culture at National Gallery of Art, September 15, 2019 through January 12, 2020



Andrea del Verrocchio, *Putto Poised on a Globe*, c. 1480  
terra cruda (unbaked clay)  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art is pleased to present ***Verrocchio: Sculptor and Painter of Renaissance Florence***, the first-ever monographic exhibition in the United States on Andrea del Verrocchio (c. 1435–1488), the innovative artist, painter, sculptor, and teacher whose pupils included Leonardo da Vinci, Pietro Perugino, and likely Sandro Botticelli as well. The exhibition examines the wealth and breadth of Verrocchio's extraordinary artistry by bringing together some 50 of his masterpieces in painting, sculpture, and drawing that allow viewers to appreciate how his work in each art form stimulated creativity in the others. Groundbreaking technical research explores Verrocchio's materials and techniques, offering revelations about his artistic choices. Several carefully argued new attributions in different media are proposed in the exhibition. The sole American venue,

**Verrocchio: Sculptor and Painter of Renaissance Florence** will be on view at the National Gallery of Art from September 15, 2019, through January 12, 2020.

As a sculptor, Verrocchio was the most important figure in Renaissance art between Donatello and Michelangelo, making works of unprecedented technical accomplishment and breathtaking naturalism and beauty. As a painter, he formed a direct link in the central chain of Florentine painting between his master, Fra Filippo Lippi, and his own pupil, Leonardo da Vinci. As a draftsman, he was a pivotal figure who explored new media techniques and functions of drawing and profoundly influenced Leonardo, Raphael, and others. As a teacher, he headed a studio that became a kind of laboratory for experimentation and innovation and helped lead to the creation of the High Renaissance in the early 16th century. It is no accident that of the founders of the High Renaissance—Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael—one was the pupil of Verrocchio and the other two were trained by pupils of Verrocchio.

"A 'Renaissance man' in every way, Andrea del Verrocchio was a pioneering, versatile artist whose talents stood out for their brilliance," said Kaywin Feldman, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are grateful to the institutions and private collectors, as well as to the Bank of America and to the Buffy and William Cafritz Family Fund, without whom this exhibition would not be possible."

"Verrocchio was a visionary," said Andrew Butterfield, the exhibition curator and an internationally recognized expert on the artist. "He had a restless imagination and a relentless drive to experiment and improve on what he or anyone else had done before. But he was also like the *maestro* of an orchestra who could bring together many talents and draw forth the best from them. This was one of his secrets as a teacher."

### **Exhibition Organization**

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art in collaboration with the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi Florence, and the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, where a different version of the show is on view from March 9–July 14, 2019.

Bank of America is the proud lead sponsor of the exhibition.

Generous support has been kindly provided by the Buffy and William Cafritz Family Fund.

The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

### **Andrea del Verrocchio (c. 1435–1488)**

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Verrocchio had the good fortune to be born when the Medici family was rising to dominance in the cultural life of Florence, sparking a massive boom in the patronage of painting, sculpture, and architecture that completely transformed the city. Trained initially as a goldsmith, Verrocchio as a young man also learned to paint and sculpt, probably working with such luminaries as Fra Filippo Lippi, Desiderio da Settignano, and Lorenzo Ghiberti and his workshop. By the time he was about 30 years old, Verrocchio had emerged as a master of the first rank and the Medici began to entrust him to make the most important bronze sculptures in the city: first, around 1465, a statue of *David with the Head of Goliath*, made as a kind of complement to or rival of Donatello's earlier bronze of the same subject; and then in 1467 awarding Verrocchio the most prestigious sculpture commission of late-15th century Florence, the bronze group of *Christ and Saint Thomas* for an outdoor niche on Orsanmichele, the church and grain reserve at the center of Florence. Taking 16 years to complete, the sculpture, upon its unveiling in 1483, was declared to be "the most beautiful work there is." In these years he also began making other celebrated masterpieces, among them the tomb of Giovanni and Piero de' Medici (c. 1469–1473), the *Cardinal Niccolò Forteguerri Monument* (begun 1476), and the famous *Equestrian Monument to Bartolomeo Colleoni* in Venice (begun c. 1479).

Painting was less his principal focus, and yet he was active and innovative in this field as well. His best-known work is his *Baptism of Christ* (c. 1472–1474, Gallerie degli Uffizi) made with Leonardo da Vinci, who was still his student and assistant at the time, likely in the early 1470s. Verrocchio generally took a collaborative approach to painting, employing younger masters to execute his pictures from his designs before coming in at the end to put the finishing touches on the works. Among the artists known or believed to have spent time in this capacity are Leonardo, Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Perugino, Lorenzo di Credi, and others. A collaborative approach to painting in a master's workshop was not new in Renaissance Italy, although Verrocchio seems to have organized this painting production more thoroughly than any other painter before. Verrocchio was highly regarded in his lifetime as a painter, working for the Medici and other discerning patrons, and he was praised by contemporaries as the "spring" from which other painters drank "whatever they have that is good."

His contributions to the history of drawing are especially clear. Trained as both a goldsmith and painter, he united the drawing techniques of the two practices and made something new. His pen and ink drawings have an unprecedented vivacity and freedom, so much so that both Leonardo and Raphael were deeply influenced by them. His black-chalk and charcoal drawings have a new subtlety in the depiction of light and form; they are perhaps the first images in Italian art that unambiguously display *sfumato*—a kind of smoky effect in shading, which helps to amplify the apparent three-dimensionality of the forms. *Sfumato* was to become a fundamental component of Leonardo's painting and drawing.

## Exhibition Highlights

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**Verrocchio: Sculptor and Painter of Renaissance Florence** is the first comprehensive exhibition to present his sculptures, paintings, and drawings together as a group. Driven by a passion for inquiry and innovation, Verrocchio shows the cross-fertilization he embodied through the combination of ideas and practices from the variety of media in which he worked. Among these important groupings of works on view together in the exhibition for the first time are three images of ideal beauty created in different media—*Lady with Flowers* (c. 1475) in marble, and the black-chalk drawing, *Head of a Woman with Braided Hair* (c. 1475/1478), alongside the Gallery's *Ginevra de' Benci* (1474/1478) by Leonardo.

The exhibition brings together Verrocchio's sculptures in a variety of material, including bronze, marble, painted and unpainted terracotta, *terra cruda* (unbaked clay), plaster, gilded silver, and agate. This presentation allows viewers to see the range not only of Verrocchio's materials but also of his artistic practice, from initial, quick compositional sketches to exquisite completed works. Among the sculptural masterpieces on view is the celebrated statue *David with the Head of Goliath* (c. 1465, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence). With its elegant design, tensely graceful movement, and absorbing facial expressions, it may be Verrocchio's earliest statue in bronze and probably was made for Piero de' Medici, the father of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

A core group of Verrocchio's paintings is on view in the same room for the first time in the exhibition, except for the *Madonna di Piazza* (1475/1485, Pistoia Cathedral, San Zeno) and the *Baptism of Christ* (c. 1468–1475, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence), providing a rare opportunity to see and understand his mastery as never before. Several of the paintings on view have not traveled to the United States prior to this exhibition, including *Madonna and Child with Two Angels* (c. 1470/1474) and *Tobias and the Angel* (c. 1470)—both from the National Gallery, London—which show Verrocchio's collaboration with Leonardo and other assistants in his workshop.

Verrocchio's highly personal technique and style of execution in his drawing exemplify the relationship between sculpture and painting and depict his original and experimental combinations of different media. Several preparatory drawings for his sculptures and paintings are on view in the exhibition, including studies of nudes, animals, drapery, and funerary monuments, as well as one of his earliest surviving drawings—*Study of the Madonna Adoring the Child* (c. 1470).

### **Technical Study of Verrocchio's Masterpieces**

Technical research for the exhibition was realized by Gallery conservators Dylan Smith, Robert H. Smith Research Conservator in the department of object conservation, and Elizabeth Walmsley, senior painting conservator, and Gallery scientist John K. Delaney, senior imaging scientist in the scientific research department. They were assisted by a distinguished team of conservators and scientists from various international institutions. Modern methods of analysis allowed the investigations of

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Verrocchio's works to take place in advance and at their respective institutions, providing a wealth of new observations that inform and enrich the exhibition and accompanying catalog.

The Gallery's research includes the first comprehensive survey of Verrocchio's bronze sculpture, combining careful visual examination, alloy analysis with portable x-ray fluorescence spectrometry, and x-radiography. In addition to the major bronzes presented in the exhibition, such as *David with the Head of Goliath* and his *Candelabrum* (1468–1469), the study considers works that could not be present. Investigation of Verrocchio's *Tomb of Cosimo de' Medici* (by 1467) and *Tomb of Giovanni and Piero de' Medici* (c. 1470–1473) in the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence offers new insights into these remarkable multimedia monuments. A new interpretation of the casting technique of Verrocchio's *Christ and Saint Thomas* from Orsanmichele is also given. Considered together, these new observations offer a clearer understanding of the innovative methods Verrocchio used to design and execute his bronzes, as well as new insights into their chronology, including the proposal of an earlier date for *Putto with a Dolphin* (c. 1465/1480). The 2018–2019 conservation treatment of *Putto with a Dolphin* was funded by Friends of Florence.

For the exhibition, a select group of Verrocchio's paintings was intensively examined. Noninvasive chemical imaging techniques and point analysis (x-ray fluorescence and multi- and hyperspectral reflectance spectroscopies) were used to confirm Verrocchio's palette and better understand the paint handling and techniques. Two distinct interpretations of the *Madonna and Child* (c. 1465/1470; c. 1470/1472) from the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin were considered, as well as *Tobias and the Angel* (c. 1470) from the National Gallery, London—all of which are on view in the exhibition. In addition, the Gallery's advanced high-resolution infrared spectral imaging cameras were used to study Andrea del Verrocchio and Leonardo da Vinci's *Baptism of Christ* in the collection of the Gallerie degli Uffizi. The spectral images obtained reveal differences among the figures regarding the paint buildup and use of materials that further our understanding about the working methods of artists in Verrocchio's workshop.

### **Exhibition Curators**

The exhibition is curated by Andrew Butterfield, an internationally recognized historian whose monograph *The Sculptures of Andrea del Verrocchio* (Yale University Press 1997) won the prestigious Mitchell prize. Collaborators include Gretchen A. Hirschauer, associate curator of Italian and Spanish painting, and Alison Luchs, curator of early European sculpture—both from the National Gallery of Art, Washington; and Lorenza Melli, curator of the Corpus of Italian Drawings 1300–1500/Rome-Munich-Florence. The exhibition was conceived by the late Eleonora Luciano (1963–2017), associate curator of sculpture and decorative arts, National Gallery of Art, and is dedicated to her memory.

### **Exhibition Film**

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Created for the exhibition, a 30-minute film narrated by Glenn Close explores the breadth of Verrocchio's talent as sculptor, painter, and master of one of the most vibrant workshops in 15th-century Florence. A 15-minute version will be on view in the exhibition; the full film will be shown in the West Building Lecture Hall. The film is available online at [nga.gov/audio-video/exhibition.html](https://www.nga.gov/audio-video/video/exhibition.html) as well as on a free-loan basis through the department of education at [nga.gov/education/teachers/loan-video.html](https://www.nga.gov/education/teachers/loan-video.html). The film is made possible by the Embassy of Italy and the HRH Foundation.

The DVD is available for purchase in the West Building and East Building Shops; [shop.nga.gov](https://shop.nga.gov); (800) 697-9350 (phone); (202) 789-3047 (fax); or [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

### **In the Library: Verrocchio, Connoisseurship, and the Photographs of Clarence Kennedy**

In conjunction with the exhibition, the National Gallery of Art Library presents a selection of photographs of Verrocchio's sculpture by the scholar and photographer Clarence Kennedy. Kennedy's exquisitely detailed photographs allowed him to compare motifs, methods, and styles to distinguish the master's hand from the work of his assistants. This installation primarily includes photographs from Kennedy's album, *The Unfinished Monument by Andrea del Verrocchio to the Cardinal Niccolò Forteguerri at Pistoia*, in which Kennedy reestablished this complicated and underappreciated monument within Verrocchio's body of work. The installation is on view from September 16, 2019, to January 10, 2020, in the East Building Study Center, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

The Gallery would like to thank the Harvard Fine Arts Library for the loan of their unbound deluxe copy of this portfolio, making this installation possible.

Organized by the National Gallery of Art, this installation is curated by Melissa Beck Lemke, image specialist for Italian art in the Library's department of image collections, National Gallery of Art.

### **Related Activities**

#### **Lectures**

November 3, 2:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

*Introduction to the Exhibition—Verrocchio: Sculptor and Painter of Renaissance Florence*

Andrew Butterfield, exhibition curator

A signing of the exhibition catalog follows

The program will be streamed live at [nga.gov/live](https://www.nga.gov/live)

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December 9, 12:10 and 1:10 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

*Verrocchio's Medici Tombs: New Observations and Technical Analysis*

Dylan T. Smith, Robert H. Smith Research Conservator, department of object conservation, National Gallery of Art

December 15, 2:00 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

*Verrocchio and the Interplay between the Arts*

Sir Nicholas Penny, currently visiting professor, National Academy of Art, Hangzhou; previously director, National Gallery, London (2008–2015); former senior curator of sculpture, National Gallery of Art (2002–2008)

January 6, 12:10 and 1:10 p.m.

West Building Lecture Hall

*Some Notes on Andrea del Verrocchio and a Forgotten Attribution*

Maximillian Hernandez, graduate student, University of Florence

### **Exhibition Catalog and Gallery Shops**

Published in association with Princeton University Press, this beautifully illustrated, 384-page book presents a comprehensive survey of Verrocchio's art, spanning his entire career and featuring some 50 sculptures, paintings, and drawings, in addition to works he created with his students. Inclusive scholarly essays, in-depth catalog entries, and breathtaking illustrations, exhibition curators and conservators Butterfield, Hirschauer, Luchs, Melli, and Walmsley draw on the latest research in art history to show why Verrocchio was one of the most innovative and influential of all Florentine artists. An essay on Florentine culture in Verrocchio's time is contributed by Charles Dempsey, professor emeritus in the history of art at Johns Hopkins University. Groundbreaking technical essays by research conservator Dylan Smith and imaging scientist John K. Delaney and his team reveal technical aspects of Verrocchio's methods and material.

The Gallery Shops will celebrate ***Verrocchio: Sculptor and Painter of Renaissance Florence*** with an assortment of merchandise, including postcards, notecards, an ornament, and more.

The exhibition catalog and other merchandise are available for purchase in a special installation near the exhibition exit, the West Building Shops, and the East Building Shops; [shop.nga.gov](http://shop.nga.gov); (800) 697-9350 (phone); (202) 789-3047 (fax); or [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

Update: August 23, 2019

*This update includes added ideminty credit line and exhibition film narrator.*

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Update: September 4, 2019

*This update includes a correction to the corporate sponsor credit.*

Update: September 6, 2019

*This updates includes additional related programming.*

Update: September 12, 2019

*This updates includes a correction to the corporate sponsor credit and to a related program.*

Update: September 16, 2019

*This update include the acknowledgement of the conservation treatment of Putto with a Dolphin funded by Friends of Florence.*

**Press Contact:**

Laurie Tylec, (202) 842-6355 or [l-tylec@nga.gov](mailto:l-tylec@nga.gov)

**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 at 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. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt), Twitter at [www.twitter.com/ngadc](http://www.twitter.com/ngadc), and Instagram at <http://instagram.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.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

Department of Communications

National Gallery of Art

2000B South Club Drive

Landover, MD 20785

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phone: (202) 842-6353  
e-mail: [pressinfo@nga.gov](mailto:pressinfo@nga.gov)

Anabeth Guthrie  
Chief of Communications  
(202) 842-6804  
[a-guthrie@nga.gov](mailto:a-guthrie@nga.gov)

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## PRESS KIT ▼

### Exhibition Press Release

[Checklist](#) (PDF 461 KB)

[Exhibition Highlights](#)

[Conservation](#)

[Curatorial Biographies](#)

[Bank of America Statement](#) (PDF 481 KB)

[In the Library: Verrocchio, Connoisseurship, and the Photographs of Clarence Kennedy](#)

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## AUDIO / VIDEO ▼

[Press Event: Verrocchio: Sculptor and Painter of Renaissance Florence](#)

Audio, Released: September 10, 2019, (30:26 minutes)

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## ONLINE RESOURCES ▼

[Exhibition Page](#)

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## PRESS CONTACT ▼

Laurie Tylec  
(202) 842-6355  
[l-tylec@nga.gov](mailto:l-tylec@nga.gov)

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Questions from members of the media may be directed to the Department of Communications at (202) 842-6353 or [pressinfo@nga.gov](mailto:pressinfo@nga.gov)

The public may call (202) 737-4215 or visit [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov) for more information about the **National Gallery of Art**.

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[http://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/press/rss/press\\_feed.xml](http://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/press/rss/press_feed.xml)

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