

Peta Motture

## The making of „Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance“



Fig.1: Partial view of 'Creating Sculpture' display in 'Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance'. © Victoria and Albert Museum

In autumn 2019, the Victoria and Albert Museum was invited to collaborate with the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi and Musei del Bargello on an exhibition project devoted to the Florentine sculptor Donatello (c.1386-1466), a leading light of the Renaissance and arguably the greatest sculptor of all time. *Donatello: The Renaissance* had already been devised by its curator in Florence, Francesco Caglioti, and was scheduled to open in Spring 2022, the first major exhibition dedicated to the artist since those organized in Florence, Detroit and Fort Worth in 1985/6.[1] I was given the amazing opportunity of devising a related exhibition to frame Donatello's pioneering role in Renaissance art that was specific to the V&A.[2] Soon afterwards, we were joined by the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, as a third venue under the curatorial auspices of Neville Rowley. This article reflects on some of the V&A's ambitions, unique challenges and outcomes afforded by this complex multi-venue project.[3]

### Connections and differences

A distinct benefit of the partnership was the possibility to share objects from our three collections, and to discuss and jointly negotiate other loans that were significant for each venue. This was vital in some instances, such as the spectacular bronze Crucifix and reliefs from the High Altar of the Basilica of St Anthony in Padua, and the stunning *Bust of San Rossore* from the Museo Nazionale di San Matteo in Pisa. Each show was designed to fit our respective venues and audiences: to be diverse, while complementary.

At Palazzo Strozzi and the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, the scene was set by providing a comprehensive chronological journey through Donatello's extensive *oeuvre*, complemented by related works, and incorporating his impact on both sculpture and painting, within and beyond the 15<sup>th</sup> century.[4] Berlin focused on loans attributed by the curator to Donatello, shown primarily in the context of important

sculptures, paintings and other works from their own rich collections, as well as addressing the context of Donatello in the Berlin museums.[5]

The idea behind the London exhibition was to place Donatello within the artistic and cultural background of his time, touching on the impact he had on future generations, and including the inter-relationships of work across media. Select comparisons with objects from the medieval past and antiquity would shed light on where Donatello looked for inspiration and how he interpreted and transformed this source material. In reviewing Donatello's approach to art, I wanted the exhibition to present some fresh connections for those for whom his work was familiar, and to introduce his extraordinary talents to new audiences, particularly through his innate ability to capture human emotions in sculptural form. In this context, I also felt it important to address the thorny issue of how attributions can be contested and changed, due in part to the collaborative nature of production, and to consider Donatello's enduring impact into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Shaping the exhibition

Although later given a more-catchy headline, the working title of *Donatello. Innovation, Collaboration and Inspiration* provided the ideas that underpinned and guided the exhibition's narrative as it developed. Drawing on the V&A's extensive collections and thanks to the generosity of our partners and other lenders in the UK, Europe and USA, we were able to present outstanding works by Donatello, together with significant objects by key artists with whom he had inter-connections, including Ghiberti, Masaccio, Baroncelli, Bellano, Bertoldo, Filippo Lippi and Domenico Veneziano.

While loosely chronological, the show was organized thematically, so as to underline and explore some of the fundamental aspects of Donatello's ingenuity and impact. It comprised six sections, which were modified over time in response to agreed loans and discussion with

internal and external colleagues.[6] For instance, a zone exploring 'Piety, Power and Politics', intended to examine the significance of Donatello's patronage, morphed into 'Bronzes: Sacred and Secular', focusing on the sculptor's exploitation of that particular medium for a variety of patrons and settings.[7] Not surprisingly, some themes resonated across the venues, such as Donatello's ten-year sojourn in Padua, including the inter-relationship of his prolific workshop with that of Francesco Squarcione. Similarly, the V&A's theme 'Devotion and Emotion' chimed with aspects of Berlin's section on 'Pathos', and we all addressed Donatello's fundamental impact on the image of the Virgin and Child. However, none of these sections was a precise duplication. Even the same objects were often interpreted from different perspectives.

The V&A's *Chellini Madonna*, for instance – given by the artist to his doctor in 1456 and crucial for the study of Donatello's impact on Marian imagery – was placed in the context of the artist's return to Tuscany in the Florence show, and in a section on 'Madonnas' in Berlin. In London, this unique bronze, designed as a mould, similarly heralded an expansive exploration of the Virgin and Child under 'Tradition and Innovation', specifically Donatello's use of the tondo, and introduced the issue of replication and dissemination of his designs. Berlin's *Pazzi Madonna*, which graced the catalogue covers in Florence and Berlin, featured prominently here in a grouping of intimate mother and child images, linked with a trecento painting by Lippo di Dalmassio from the National Gallery, London, and Filippo Lippi's superb *Madonna of Palazzo Medici Riccardi*.

Certain narratives were unique to the V&A, including that addressing the creative process of sculpture. Despite the evident challenges and limitations, we felt it essential to explain workshop practice and techniques early in the exhibition – particularly in light of the museum's commitment to design and making. This area explored Donatello's elusive but rele-

vant early training as a goldsmith, and its significance for his later production, together with the role of drawings and models.<sup>[8]</sup> As no documented goldsmithery by the artist survives, objects from the collection served to illustrate the techniques, augmented by two key loans. One was the exquisite, monumental head of *God the Father* from the Museo del Duomo in Milan, chosen as a contemporary example of sculptural goldsmiths' work (fig.1).<sup>[9]</sup> Similarly, we lack secure examples of Donatello's reputed draughtsmanship. The Rennes Musée des beaux-arts's double-sided sketch of *David/Massacre of the Innocents* formerly in Vasari's collection, which was shared with Berlin, therefore, served as an important attributed work.

This area included tools and touch objects that were featured in a short, soundless video, which provided an evocative demonstration of modelling and carving. These two basic sculptural techniques have changed little and could therefore be closely replicated.<sup>[10]</sup> Visitors responded positively to this display, notably those who were less *au fait* with the subject, for whom it was primarily intended.<sup>[11]</sup>

Donatello's partnership with Michelozzo, featuring shared loans from the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Prato, including elements of the Prato pulpit (see fig.1), was supplemented by the artists' 1427 catasto/tax *portate*, from the Archivio di Stato, Florence, written in Michelozzo's hand. These documents provided a fascinating snapshot of their families and the status of their workshop, referencing the nearby *San Rossore*, as well as the Aragazzi monument, elements of which were also uniquely displayed at the V&A.<sup>[12]</sup> Donatello's role in the development of the portrait bust, and his invention of *rilievo schiacciato* formed sub-sections of 'Tradition and Innovation', followed by that devoted to bronze.<sup>[13]</sup>

The final section, 'Homage to Donatello', was divided into two: 'Renaissance Followers', for which some objects provided the added benefit of representing works by the master that were lost or couldn't travel – and 'Renaissance

Revival'. The latter, developed by the exhibition co-curator Whitney Kerr-Lewis, explored the 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century response to Donatello based primarily around the V&A collection.<sup>[14]</sup> While this research was already underway, the exhibition provided the catalyst and focus for a broader and deeper investigation of the objects, resulting in some reattributions from the Renaissance to the later period.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Challenges and resolutions

From word go, there were a number of advantages and challenges faced by the project team, including the timescale, and – as it soon transpired – the timing. While we benefitted from Florence's initial loan list, their schedule was already set, leaving me limited time to put together the narrative. Almost immediately after the exhibition was confirmed, the world was caught up in the Covid-19 pandemic, which obviously had a telling impact. While on furlough for several weeks, I was out of touch with developments,<sup>[16]</sup> during which time, the slots for the V&A and Berlin shows were swapped, with London moving to third place.

The reschedule created complications for proposed loans that had been expected to move directly from Florence to London, and continued travel restrictions prevented face-to-face visits with potential lenders, my first taking place with Exhibition Research Assistant, Sabrina Villani, in late 2021.<sup>[17]</sup> On the other hand, the deferral allowed much-needed time for planning and preparation, and gave us the bonus of visiting the Florence exhibition prior to finalizing the catalogue. For example, seeing the unique juxtaposition of the *Seated Virgin and Child* from the Detroit Institute of Arts (the fragility of which confined it to one venue), and the V&A's similar sculpture, led me to reconsider the latter's authorship, albeit maintaining some caution, as 'possibly Donatello'. Equally, as Palazzo Strozzi were able to borrow all five recently conserved bronzes by Niccolò Baroncelli and Domenico di Paris from Ferrara Cathedral for



Fig. 2: Partial view of 'Florentine Foundations' section in 'Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance'. © Victoria and Albert Museum

Palazzo Strozzi, we requested the *St Maurelius* and *St George* instead of the Crucifix, an amendment that was kindly supported by the lenders.[18]

As always, there were objects that could not travel to the show, primarily on conservation grounds. As noted above, this occasionally informed the narrative, but in some cases, substitutions were possible, either supported by lenders or from the V&A collections. For instance, Masaccio's *Saints Jerome and John the Baptist*, offered by The National Gallery, London, in lieu of another painting, complemented the predella panel from the Pisa Altarpiece from Berlin (fig.2). Seen in relation to the Bargello marble *David* and terracottas, displayed nearby, it embodied an additional connection between painting and sculpture in the round. Similarly, the terracotta *Pietrapiana Madonna*, which had just been acquired by the Museo Nazionale del Bargello and

couldn't travel, was replaced by the V&A's painted plaster version, conservation of which allowed us to learn more about its facture. And the Bargello's iconic bronze *David* – arguably Donatello's most famous work – was represented by the V&A's high-quality 19<sup>th</sup>-century plaster cast in 'Renaissance Revival', raised to hint at its original high viewpoint, as was the original sculpture in the Florence show (see fig.6).

In some cases, there was no suitable alternative, making the lack of wood sculpture by the artist an understandable but regrettable lacuna; we were, nonetheless, able to show nearly every material and technique that Donatello employed. We had also aimed to represent Donatello's contributions to Siennese art more fully, beyond the superb *Spiritello with a Tambourine and Dancing Spiritello* from the Siena Baptistery font, lent by our partners in Berlin and at the Museo Nazionale del Bargello,

respectively.<sup>[19]</sup> While similarly fortunate to have the inscription from the Aragazzi monument, our initial ambition was to reunite other statues from Montepulciano with the V&A's *Angels* from the same ensemble. Significantly, the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence no longer lends.<sup>[20]</sup> Donatello's marbles created for the Cathedral workshop were therefore exemplified solely by the *David* of c.1408-9 from the Bargello, another remarkable loan, which introduced all three exhibitions.

Alongside the loans, a substantial number of V&A works – sculptures, paintings, metalwork and drawings – formed part of our own show. While involving more staff time, which was at a premium, it importantly enabled a review of their status. For example, a rare multimedia model of c.1887 for the monument to Donatello for Santa Croce – acquired in 1969 but never displayed – was rediscovered and evaluated by Kerr-Lewis, resulting in a rethink of its authorship and its more likely role as a competition piece. Like so many of the objects, this also benefitted from conservation treatment, as did the painted stucco *Virgin with Saints and Angels* of c.1426-30. New evidence also emerged through a curatorial and conservation collaborative examination of that relief, which concluded that it could not be a squeeze taken from the so-called marble *Hildburgh Madonna*, also in the V&A, as often suggested.<sup>[21]</sup>

Other aims proved a bridge too far, notably a potential collaboration to undertake additional scientific analysis of the three key bronzes in the V&A – the *Chellini Madonna*; the *Lamentation* and the *Putto with a Fantastic Fish*. This will hopefully be achieved in future, providing data for comparison with existing analysis of documented works.

### Cataloguing and attribution

Each venue produced its own catalogue, with our partners also publishing in English. From the outset, we agreed to write independently to fit the context of each show, but with Florence and

Berlin collaborating on entries for their joint loans. Our indexed volume comprised a brief introduction, with six contextual essays (some expanding on topics that could not be fully explored in the show itself), complemented by a Timeline, built primarily around documented evidence.<sup>[22]</sup> Concise entries were angled to the theme in which the artworks appeared, many written by the objects' curators, and each reflecting the current thinking of the authors.<sup>[23]</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the nature of the beast, the curators of the three exhibitions did not always share the same attribution. This is reflected in the catalogue entries, for example in relation to the early works in terracotta, which were more firmly given to Donatello in Florence and Berlin. This 'mismatch' between catalogues could be perceived as problematic. However, diversity of opinion for undocumented works is common. We aimed to present the material (in both catalogue and gallery text) in such a way as to express where we felt uncertainty was relevant, noting, for example, the centrality as well as the vagaries of workshop practice, as introduced in the opening section.<sup>[24]</sup> This issue of uncertainty, familiar to scholars, was undoubtedly more challenging for some visitors, but nonetheless important to acknowledge.<sup>[25]</sup>

Other notable divergences include the V&A's marble *Dead Christ supported by Angels*, the so-called *Hildburgh Madonna*, and the *Dudley Madonna* (fig.3).<sup>[26]</sup> The last was identified by Caglioti in 1992 as a work referenced in Vasari's *Lives* as by Donatello, a proposal examined in depth at the Bargello, demonstrating that the design was known during the Renaissance period, and providing an opportunity to consider its relationship to the tabernacle painted by Fra Bartolomeo with which it has been associated.<sup>[27]</sup> Undoubtedly a work of high quality, some scholars accept the Donatello attribution, others still consider it to be by one of the master's contemporaries or followers (notably Desiderio da Settignano), or that it could potentially be a 19<sup>th</sup>-century version of this Renaissance design.<sup>[28]</sup>



Fig. 3: Possibly after a design by Donatello or Desiderio da Settignano, *Virgin and Child (Dudley Madonna)*, marble, possibly c.1450-1530 or after c. 1850, V&A: A.84-1927. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

For me, as indicated in the catalogue, it remains a puzzle, but having seen it alongside the *Ascension* and *Madonna of the Clouds*, I do not believe it to be by the same hand. Nonetheless, such differences of interpretation highlight the challenge of dealing with an artist as talented, enigmatic and imitated as Donatello, as well as the need for continued investigation with an open mind.

### The role of Design

Design plays a critical role in how the visitor experiences any display, working with the interpretation to support the narrative. Our in-house designers took the city of Florence as their guide, creating within the vast Sainsbury Gallery, a series of 'piazzas' into which the 'side streets' flowed, accompanied by covered loggias.[29]

The sections were defined through shifts in the wall and plinth colours, and sometimes by object placement, as with the Busts display, mounted on a curve to guide visitors to the next segment (fig.4). The evocative design - open without losing a sense of discovery - proved to be popular with visitors and reviewers alike, allowing appropriate space for the large-scale works as well as close viewing.[30]

Lighting was also paramount, and equally challenging at times, given the diverse materials and integration of light-sensitive objects throughout the exhibition. A solution had to be found to reveal the subtlety of the marks and undulations of the extremely shallow carving in the *rilievo schiacciato* display (discussed below, see fig.7), and uplighting was employed to illuminate the winged child, which emerges from the top of the bronze capital from the Prato pulpit (see fig.1). Significantly, the oculus in the roof was partially unveiled for the first time since the gallery opened in 2016, offering shifting effects of daylight, while the careful placement of light-sensitive paintings and drawings, often within the loggias, ensured their protection.[31] The natural light primarily illuminated the massive bronze *Carafa Protome* from Naples, which originally stood outdoors, with Donatello's bronze *Crucifix* from the Santo, flanked by two of the saints from Ferrara Cathedral, amongst the other sculptures that benefitted (fig.5).

Along with meticulous planning, an element of pragmatism and flexibility was required, through both the preparation and installation. For instance, the largest object, the *Carafa Protome*, arrived after opening, creating a design and installation challenge, which was cleverly resolved by a site-specific seat that transformed into the sculpture's plinth. Here as elsewhere, the UK regulations requiring a metre distance from any work on open display led to compromise and thinking outside the box. In light of this, the two *spiritelli* from the Musée Jacquemart André that had been on open display in Berlin, were placed in vitrines due to space restrictions, while the high placement of the V&A's large marble





Fig. 4: Partial view of 'Tradition and Innovation', showing Busts display, looking through to 'Bronzes: Sacred and Secular', and 'Padua and Northern Italy', in 'Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance'. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

Fig. 5: Installation view of 'Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance', showing Donatello's *Carafa Protome*, bronze, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, linking 'Bronzes' and 'Padua and Northern Italy'. © Victoria and Albert Museum.





Fig. 6: Installation view showing the *David* sculptures in 'Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance'. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

*Virgin and Child with Angels* avoided the use of a Perspex hood, and helpfully reflected its apparent perspective (visible in fig.1). The V&A's *Verona Madonna* and the Museo Bardini's *Madonna with the Apple* were always planned to be seen at height for this reason.[32]

A low plinth separating the visitor from drawings, paintings and sculptures in 'Padua and Northern Italy' was added to allow the two bronze reliefs from the Santo High Altar to be openly displayed (visible in fig.5).[33] These cannot generally be seen *in situ*, especially the spectacular *Miracle of the Mule*, with its delicate gilding and treatment of perspective, which resides on the back of the altar, making their close viewing in all three exhibitions an exceptional treat.

Vistas and juxtapositions that link objects can be both aesthetic and provide insight, within and beyond the chosen narrative. One

example was the window allowing visitors to view Donatello's  *Davids* together – the early marble from the Bargello, the V&A cast of the bronze, the late marble *Martelli David*, carved by followers, from the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., and even the small bronze from Berlin (fig.6). When standing at a particular sweet spot, the visitor could also turn back to see the *Martelli St John the Baptist* (also from the NGA, Washington D.C.) in the previous section on 'Devotion and Emotion'.

It was also a boon to be the last venue in terms of the design, as we were able to adapt a few of our partners' ideas that would work for us. The Florence display, for instance, helped us to refine the heights of some objects, while Berlin shared their design for the support for the Bargello's bronze *Attis-Amorino* (partially visible in fig.4), and a lighting solution for the *rilievi schiacciati*. The lighting was particularly crucial,





Fig. 7: Partial view of 'Rilievo schiacciato' display, in 'Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance'. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

as in London we were uniquely able to bring together the V&A's *Ascension with Christ giving the Keys to St Peter*, which didn't travel on conservation grounds, and the *Madonna of the Clouds* from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the latter generously lent to all three venues (fig.7).<sup>[34]</sup> Unfortunately, it was not possible to include the *Feast of Herod* from the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille, which formed a centrepiece in their newly refurbished displays. Visitors could instead compare and appreciate Desiderio da Settignano's skill in this difficult technique in the *Panciaticchi Madonna* from the Bargello.

### Beyond the exhibition space

The gaps created in the Robert H. Smith Gallery devoted to 'Donatello and the Making of Art' in the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries, when the

objects left for Florence and Berlin, were later compounded when we added to our own exhibition. These absences were mitigated by the appointment of the sculptor Rebecca Stevenson as Shifting Perspectives Artist in Residence, who created works in wax and bronze inspired by Donatello, connecting contemporary practice with that of the Renaissance.<sup>[35]</sup> Articles about the residency and other content made in connection with the exhibition remain online, including interactives of the V&A's *View of Florence* painting of 1489-95, showing sites for which Donatello made sculpture, and the *Ascension* relief, special photography of which reveals the effect of differing light sources on the surface of this delicately carved relief.<sup>[36]</sup>

*Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance* was the first major sculpture exhibition at the V&A since 2002.<sup>[37]</sup> At times, the organization

felt like building a three-dimensional jigsaw, with some loans shared between all partners, some just with Florence, others with Berlin, and more than 30 for London alone, with over 50 not previously seen in the UK. And, as always, the exhibition had to be brought to fruition within budget, and, in this case, while learning new ways of working as a result of the pandemic. Exploring the art of Donatello – a ‘non-conformist’, who didn’t follow a neat trajectory of artistic development, and much of whose work remains in situ or unable to travel – was always going to be a challenge. Throughout, the partners’ close working relationships were critical. Our Florentine colleagues took the lead in negotiations for shared loans, notably those from Italy, and we were greatly assisted by colleagues in Berlin. This three-way partnership resulted in a richer exploration of Donatello’s unique talents and impact than would have been feasible in a single exhibition, with each venue offering relationships and themes that prompted fresh thinking.

In London, we highlighted the importance of the comparatively new strand of research into Donatello’s early training as a goldsmith, which resonated, for example, in his use of mixed media in the Prato pulpit reliefs and the Musée du Louvre’s *Piott Madonna*, as well as the rich decoration of his bronzes, including the Santo reliefs and the *Medici Crucifixion* in the Bargello. Equally, the displays signaled the nature and significance of Donatello’s workshop practice and collaboration, including with bronze founders, and presented new theories and evidence in relation to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century imitators.

Individual displays also highlighted the importance of seeing works together. For example, viewing the *San Rossore* alongside both the disputed *Bust of a Man* (known as Niccolò da Uzzano) and the enigmatic *Bust of a Young Man (Platonic Youth)* (see fig. 4) demonstrated that the debate over their authorship is not yet settled. The former, which had been reattributed to Desiderio da Settignano was brought back tentatively to Donatello; the latter had been reat-

tributed in Florence to Donatello’s follower, Bertoldo, but remains open to further investigation.[38] Similarly, the direct comparison for the first time of the *Ascension* with the *Madonna of the Clouds* revealed in three dimensions the affinity between the two reliefs.

The opportunities provided by such exhibitions advance our knowledge, but, importantly, they also open debate and act as a catalyst for further studies. Those already underway include the all-important research into Donatello’s workshops, as well as his activity in Siena.[39] And there is undoubtedly scope for additional collaborations, such as those pursuing technical examination, as well as through archival discoveries of both Renaissance and later sources, so as to provide further insight into the sculptor’s artistic production and legacy.

## Endnotes

1. Alan P. Darr (ed.), *Italian Renaissance Sculpture in the Time of Donatello* (Detroit Institute of Arts; Kimbell Art Museum), Detroit 1985; Alan Phipps Darr and Giorgio Bonsanti (eds), *Donatello e i Suoi. Scultura fiorentina del primo Rinascimento* (Forte di Belvedere, Florence), Detroit-Florence-Milan 1986. Donatello has featured prominently in several other exhibitions.
2. See Peta Motture (ed.), *Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance* (Victoria and Albert Museum, 11 February-11 June 2023), London 2023 (hereafter London). The exhibition provided me with a privileged swansong to my career, collaborating with a diverse group of specialists within and beyond the museum (see London, pp. 7, 8 and 283). Following my retirement in September 2022, I continued part-time as exhibition lead curator while Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the V&A Research Institute, with the invaluable support of co-curator Whitney Kerr-Lewis, and Exhibition Research Assistant, Sabrina Villani on the curatorial team, and colleagues across the museum, notably Exhibition & Loans, Conservation, Design, Interpretation and Technicians. My thanks to Kira d’Albuquerque, Rachel Boyd, Emilie Foyer, Uli Gamper, Holly Hyams, Charlotte King, Benedetta Gestri, Whitney Kerr-Lewis, Lucy Macmillan, Michelle O’Malley, Imogen Tedbury, Callum Walker and Michaela Zöschg, and all who assisted in relation to this article.
3. The collaboration was proposed to Antonia Boström, Director of Collections, and Daniel Slater, Head of Exhibitions and Loans, of the V&A by Arturo Galansino, Director General of the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, with Paola D’Agostino, Director, Musei Nazionale del Bargello, subsequently joined by Julien Chapius, Director, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

4. See Francesco Caglioti (ed.) with Laura Cavazzini, Aldo Galli and Neville Rowley, *Donatello. Il Rinascimento* (Palazzo Strozzi and Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, 19 March-31 July 2022), Venice 2022 (hereafter Florence); see also Caglioti in this volume. The exhibition comprised an extraordinary and extensive gathering of sculptures by the master, many seen within the same space for the first (and doubtless the last) time, that could only have been achieved in Italy.
5. See Neville Rowley (ed.) in association with Francesco Caglioti, Laura Cavazzini and Aldo Galli, *Donatello: Erfinder der Renaissance* (Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2 September 2022-8 January 2023), Berlin and Leipzig 2022 (hereafter Berlin); see also Rowley in this volume.
6. The sections initially comprised 'The Early Years'; 'Piety, Power and Politics'; 'The Master of his Art'; 'Devotion and Emotion'; 'Donatello Abroad'; 'Homage to Donatello'. For the final layout, see London, Contents and Catalogue.
7. The role of patron was present throughout, but covered specifically in an essay by John Paoletti, (London 2023, pp. 74-87), who chaired a session on the topic at the associated conference, *Donatello: workshops, patronage, revival* (held 19-20 May 2023), with papers by David Wilkins and Giulio Dalvit; see <https://www.vam.ac.uk/event/py81NNKMqJ/donatello-conference-may-2023>.
8. This sub-section reflected some recent Donatello scholarship, notably by Amy Bloch, with catalogue entries by Sabrina Villani, and Philippe Malgouyres.
9. This exceptional loan trended on social media as one of the stars of the show.
10. Charlotte Hubbard reproduced a terracotta panel from V&A: 7613-1861 (London 2023, cat. 1.9); Simon Smith copied a section of the Prato pulpit from the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo (London 2023, cat. 1.27). A QR code provided access within the exhibition to longer explanatory films: click on [Film 1](#), [Film 2](#).
11. Nicholas Penny, however, felt our choices were too well-known (in 'Donatello', *London Review of Books*, vol. 45, no. 18, 18 May 2023; [www.lrb.co.uk](http://www.lrb.co.uk)). A film based on a specifically made bronze proved unfeasible within the time and funding constraint, and in light of our desire to replicate historical techniques as closely as possible. Bronze casting is a particularly complex topic, given Donatello's collaboration with founders who used different techniques, see for example London, pp. 179, 201 and relevant entries, with references. See also <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/donatello-a-master-at-work>
12. The *portate* were summarized on the labels, but with hindsight the inclusion of a partial transcription to highlight these connections would have been useful. The V&A *Angels* from the Aragazzi monument were accompanied by the inscription, kindly lent by the Episcopal Palace, Montepulciano.
13. *Rilievo schiacciato* was represented in each exhibition, and was the subject of an essay by Frank Fehrenbach in Berlin, pp. 59-67. Only the *Carafa Protome* appeared in both the Florence and V&A shows in a topic related to bronzes (Florence, pp. 323-43).
14. The only loan in this section was Alceo Dossena's 1929 *Virgin and Child* from the Detroit Institute of Arts, representing the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
15. See Whitney Kerr-Lewis in Berlin, pp. 105-17; London, pp. 88-99, and 245-49, 251-7; cats 6.14-6.18, 6.20-26.
16. Furlough was the government scheme to support businesses during lockdown, the terms of which prevented access for furloughed staff to work-related information and systems.
17. Sabrina Villani joined the project in May 2021.
18. With thanks to Donatella Fratini and colleagues in Ferrara. For the terracottas, see Florence, pp.124-27, cats 2.2-2.3; London, pp. 108-9, cat.1.3 (co-written with Laura Chase).
19. The absence of other key works from Siena resulted in the reworking of 'Donatello Abroad' to 'Padua and Northern Italy'.
20. The exceptional loan exhibition at the (now closed) Museum of Biblical Art in New York in 2015 was organised during the Florentine museum's closure for redevelopment (see Timothy Verdon and Daniel M. Zolliis (eds), *Sculpture in the Age of Donatello: Renaissance Masterpieces from Florence Cathedral* (20 February-14 June 2015), New York and London 2015. The Museo dell'Opera del Duomo's Director, Timothy Verdon, kindly contributed an essay to London (pp. 48-59).
21. This information was shared with our partner curators, but unfortunately came too late for them to review for their catalogues. Further examination and 3D imaging was not possible at the time.
22. A comprehensive summary of Donatello's career was provided by Caglioti in Florence, pp. 25-105.
23. See London, pp.8 (Contents), 9 and 283 for the many internal and external colleagues whose contributions made both the exhibition and its catalogue possible.
24. Naturally, authorship was clearly stated for works that may not be fully documented, but generally (if not universally) accepted – including the V&A's bronze *Lamentation*, the Museum of Fine Art, Boston's *Madonna of the Clouds*, Berlin's *Pazzi Madonna* and the more recently attributed *Carafa Protome* from the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples.
25. Alexander Röstel's suggestion (p. 770) that uncertainties were not openly communicated is at odds with both the gallery text and catalogue entries, as well as the responses received from both scholars and general public during the course of the exhibition; see 'Donatello in Florence, Berlin and London', *The Burlington Magazine*, 165 (July 2023), pp. 761-71 (hereafter Röstel 2023).
26. Having now had the opportunity to compare the *Dead Christ* alongside the Prato pulpit reliefs (bearing in mind the wear on the latter), I still believe it to be derivative, and not by the same hands.
27. Florence, pp. 398-431. Comparisons with the works by Bandinelli and Bronzino that clearly share this design were most convincing.
28. Cf, for example, Beverly Louise Brown, review of *Donatello. The Renaissance* in *Colnaghi Studies*, vol. 11 (Oct. 2022), pp. 82-91, esp. 91; Ulrich Pfisterer, review 'Capolinea Donatello?', *ART-Dok* (Heidelberg 2023), pp. 1-15, esp. 9 -10, Capolinea Donatello? Donatello. Erfinder der Renaissance, a cura di Neville Rowley per i Musei statali di Berlino; in collaborazione con Francesco Caglioti, Laura Cavazzini e Aldo Galli, Berlin / Leipzig 2022, 344 p. - [Rezension] ([uni-heidelberg.de](http://uni-heidelberg.de)); Röstel 2023, p.768. The varied views cited were shared by scholars over the course of the exhibition.
29. In house design led by Sam Brown and Kane Carroll; graphics by Martin McGrath Studio; lighting by studio ZNA Lighting Design. With sustainability in mind, existing showcases were used wherever possible, and materials chosen that could be recycled and reused.
30. See, for example, Alistair Sooke, 'The Renaissance genius who could paint in marble', *The Daily Telegraph*, 8

- February 2023, pp. 10-11; Paul Hills, 'Stones that Speak', *Art & Christianity*, vol. 13 (Spring 2023), pp. 2-5.
31. This involved analysis of light modelling studies and consultation with Conservation, taking into account the varied materials on display.
  32. The V&A *Verona Madonna*, displayed high in the permanent gallery, was alongside the Musée du Louvre's painted cartapasta version, shown at eye height; the Bardini relief, though not approached from the precise perspective, was transformed by viewing from below.
  33. In Florence, the reliefs were also on open display, and without a barrier, while in Berlin they were cased well, and visible at close quarters.
  34. Various lighting designs were modelled by ZNA, and the use of wall-mounted projecting lights with track lighting proved to be the best.
  35. This included workshops, notably for young people, as part of the events programme; see, and [In Transformation - Display at V&A South Kensington · V&A \(vam.ac.uk\)](#). With thanks to Michaela Zöschg for the initial idea, and to Simon Dodi and colleagues.
  36. See <https://www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/donatello-sculpting-the-renaissance#articles>. With thanks to Laura Chase, Kira Zumkley, Holly Hyams and all involved in both projects.
  37. Bruce Boucher (ed.) with the collaboration of Peta Motture, Anthony Radcliffe, Paola D'Agostino and Carlo Milano, *Earth and Fire. Italian Terracotta Sculpture from Donatello to Canova* (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 18 November 2001-3 February 2002; V&A, 14 March-7 July 2002), New Haven and London 2001.
  38. The 'Uzzano', which was uniquely shown in London, p. 144, cat. 2.3 (Sabrina Villani) as 'Donatello (?)', was re-evaluated by Georges Didi-Huberman in Berlin, pp. 68-81; Gianluca Amato's new attribution of the 'Platonic Youth' is accepted by Caglioti (Florence, pp. 338-9, cat. 11.4), but here attributed to the Circle of Donatello, p.144, cat. 2.5 (Villani). My thanks to Ilaria Ciseri for our close viewing of the busts during deinstallation.
  39. Including a book by Daniel Zolli and an exhibition on Sieneese 15th-century bronzes at the Frick Collection, New York, curated by Giulio Dalvit, both of whom presented some new research at the V&A conference, cited at n. 7.

## Figures

Fig. 1: Partial view of 'Creating Sculpture' display in 'Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance'. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

Fig. 2: Partial view of 'Florentine Foundations' section in 'Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance'. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

Fig. 3: Possibly after a design by Donatello or Desiderio da Settignano, *Virgin and Child (Dudley Madonna)*, marble, possibly c.1450-1530 or after c. 1850, V&A: A.84-1927. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

Fig. 4: Partial view of 'Tradition and Innovation', showing Busts display, looking through to 'Bronzes: Sacred and Secular', and 'Padua and Northern Italy', in 'Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance'. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

Fig. 5: Installation view of 'Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance', showing Donatello's *Carafa Protome*, bronze, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, linking 'Bronzes' and 'Padua and Northern Italy'. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

Fig. 6: Installation view showing the *David* sculptures in 'Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance'. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

Fig. 7: Partial view of 'Rilievo schiacciato' display, in 'Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance'. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

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## Title

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