

MITTEILUNGEN  
DES KUNSTHISTORISCHEN  
INSTITUTES  
IN FLORENZ



LXIII. BAND — 2021  
HEFT 2



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HEFT 2

# MITTEILUNGEN DES KUNSTHISTORISCHEN INSTITUTES IN FLORENZ

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## Inhalt | Contenuto

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### \_ Aufsätze \_ Saggi

\_ 163 \_ *Francesco Saracino*

San Giovanni battezzato. Apertura su un tema fiorentino

\_ 181 \_ *Florian Métral*

The Sistine Chapel's Starry Sky Reconsidered

\_ 211 \_ *Alana O'Brien*

Who Holds the Keys to the Chiostro dello Scalzo, “scuola di molti giovani”?

### \_ Miszellen \_ Appunti

\_ 263 \_ *Roberta J. M. Olson*

New Evidence about the Patron, Date, and Original Location of Giovanni della Robbia's *Antinori Resurrection*

\_ 275 \_ *Luca Pezzuto*

“Mai a bastanza” sull'*Accademia di pittura* di Carlo Maratti. Con un'apertura su Henry Davenant, collezionista e gentiluomo inglese

\_ 285 \_ *Michele Amedei*

Manet's Second Stay in Florence in the Fall of 1857: New Documentary Evidence



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1 Édouard Manet, copy of the  
*Self-portrait* by Filippino Lippi.  
Paris, Musée d'Orsay

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# Manet's Second Stay in Florence in the Fall of 1857 New Documentary Evidence

Michele Amedei

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The Musée d'Orsay's recent acquisition of Édouard Manet's oil painting on wood copying Filippino Lippi's alleged self-portrait held in the Uffizi (Figs. 1, 2) sheds new light on the work carried out in Italy by one of the leading exponents of nineteenth-century French art. The interest the purchase has aroused in the media makes it imperative to clarify some of the mistakes that have been made about the painting, including its date. The panel has been dated to 1853, the year in which Manet seems to have visited Florence for the first time in the company of the politician Émile Ollivier.<sup>1</sup> Without any documentary basis, Henri Perruchot states that on this occasion the French painter visited the Uffizi and copied some of the works in the gallery, including the Orsay portrait after Filippino Lippi.<sup>2</sup> The latter had been acquired by the museum in 1771 from the Tuscan painter Ignazio Hugford. Its authenticity as Filippino Lippi's self-portrait has been challenged over the years, and it has been suggested that the painting might be a fake

by Hugford.<sup>3</sup> However, until the early twentieth century it was considered the self-portrait of another important exponent of Tuscan Renaissance art: Masaccio.<sup>4</sup>

Yet it is unlikely that Manet copied Masaccio's alleged self-portrait in 1853 because there is no trace in the Uffizi archive of the painter's presence as a copyist in the fall of that year, namely the letter of presentation (usually signed by a prominent figure of the Florentine artistic or diplomatic scene of the time) that he would have been obliged to submit to the director in order to be admitted to the gallery for studies or to make copies of the old masters preserved there.

Instead, the painting acquired by the Orsay was almost certainly made four years later, between October and December 1857, following Manet's definitive separation from his teacher Thomas Couture (with whom he had always had very tense relations), when he returned to Florence in the company of a friend, the sculptor Eugène Brunet.<sup>5</sup> This is confirmed by an

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<sup>1</sup> On Manet's first Italian journey see Henri Perruchot, *La vie de Manet*, Paris 1959, p. 335, and Peter Meller, "Manet in Italy: Some Newly Unidentified Sources for His Early Sketchbooks", in: *The Burlington Magazine*, CXLIV (2002), pp. 68–110. As both Perruchot and Meller admit, it is not entirely sure if Manet, after a stay in Venice together with his brother Eugène and Ollivier, indeed visited Florence on that occasion. The only evidence is a letter by Ollivier written in Florence on 15 October 1853 to one of the Manet brothers – presumably Eugène – in which he stated that he had passed eight days in the city with "votre frère", who was now leaving for Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Perruchot (note 1), p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce M. Cole/Ulrich Middeldorf, "Masaccio, Lippi, or Hugford?", in: *The Burlington Magazine*, CXIII (1971), pp. 500–507.

<sup>4</sup> On the story of the painting see, in particular, *Gli Uffizi: catalogo generale*, ed. by Luciano Berti, Florence 1980, p. 918, no. A 538; Jonathan Katz Nelson, in: *Botticelli e Filippino Lippi: l'inquietudine e la grazia nella pittura fiorentina del Quattrocento*, exh. cat. Paris/Florence 2003/2004, ed. by *idem*/Daniel Arasse/Pierluigi De Vecchi, Milan 2004, pp. 232–235, no. 38; *idem*/Patrizia Zambrano, *Filippino Lippi*, Milan 2004, pp. 359f.; Cecilia Filippini, in: *I volti dell'arte: autoritratti dalla collezione degli Uffizi*, exh. cat. Venice 2007, ed. by Giovanna Giusti Galardi/Maria Sframeli, Milan 2007, p. 72, no. 1.

<sup>5</sup> On Manet's stay in Florence in 1857 and his interest in Italian and especially Tuscan old masters, see in particular Alain de Leiris, *The Drawings of Edouard Manet*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1969, pp. 44–54; Denis Rouart/Daniel Wildenstein, *Edouard Manet: pastels, aquarelles et dessins*, Lausanne/Paris 1975, pp. 40–76; Juliet Wilson, *Manet: dessins, aquarelles, eaux-fortes, litho-*



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2 Filippino Lippi, *Self-portrait*.  
Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi,  
Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture

unpublished document in the Uffizi archive dated 17 December 1857, with which Manet requested to export the works he had produced in Florence in the preceding weeks (Fig. 3). In the document, the Musée d'Orsay painting is listed in first place: it is described as a “Copia del Ritratto del Masaccio” on wood, measuring seventeen *soldi* and four *denari* in length and twelve *soldi* in width; that is, about 50 × 34.9 cm (slightly larger than its current size). The other paintings listed in the same document are, in order of appearance, the oil sketch on wood of Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, which was so important for the creation of the *Olympia*

*graphies, correspondance*, Paris 1978; Annemarie Kuhn-Wengenmayr, “Fünf Zeichnungen von Edouard Manet nach Benozzo Gozzoli”, in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XXXVIII (1994), pp. 165–182; Melzer (note 1).

<sup>6</sup> The letter of permission, whose current whereabouts are unknown, was first mentioned by De Leiris (note 5), p. 7, note I; an English translation is in Juliet Wilson Bareau, *Manet by Himself: Correspondence and Conversation*, London/Sidney 1991, p. 27.

painted by Manet a few years later, and four more oil paintings on wood, measuring about 33 × 17 cm each, that have not yet been identified: a *Saint Catherine* after Andrea del Sarto and three “studi dal vero”, to which we will return later.

#### Manet in the Uffizi: October–November 1857

The self-portrait of Masaccio and the copy of Titian's *Venus* must have been executed by Manet in the twenty days following 29 October 1857. A week earlier the painter had presented an application to the director of the Uffizi with the unpublished letter transcribed in the Appendix of this article, preserved in the historical archive of the museum. The letter from the Uffizi archive, which ends with a sentence written in French in Manet's own handwriting (the content of which we will return to shortly) and is signed by the museum's director, who grants the painter access to the gallery for twenty days starting on 29 October, reveals hitherto unknown information about the French painter's life in Florence in that year. First of all, it demonstrates that Manet decided to explore the Uffizi before visiting other sites in Florence, such as Andrea del Sarto's frescoes in the Chiostro dello Scalzo. As previous studies on the artist's stay in Florence have shown, only on 19 November 1857 did Manet receive admission to study the cloister through a letter from the director of the Accademia di Belle Arti.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, it shows who Manet was in contact with in the city, besides his friend Brunet. The document was in fact written in Italian for him by “Em. Fenzi & C.” who asked “that the person they recommend be granted the desired permission” to enter the gallery as a copyist, “presenting their respects to the illustrious Sig. Marchese del Monte”, director of the museum.

“Em. Fenzi & C.” was a banking company founded by Emanuele Fenzi in 1820, which went bankrupt in 1890. Fenzi, one of the most influential men in Tuscany at the time, whose bank had financed, among other things, the first railway network linking Florence to Livorno,<sup>7</sup> had since the 1830s been presenting artists of different nationalities interested in studying the old masters to the director of the Uffizi.<sup>8</sup> We do not know how (and through whom) Manet came into contact with Fenzi. It is probable that the artist, like all other foreigners recommended by the banker to the director of the Uffizi, had some relationship with one of the Parisian branches of Fenzi's bank, given

<sup>7</sup> On Fenzi, see Andrea Giuntini, *Soltanto per denaro: la vita, gli affari, la ricchezza di Emanuele Fenzi negoziante banchiere fiorentino nel Granducato di Toscana (1784–1875)*, Florence 2002.

<sup>8</sup> E. g. in 1835 a certain “Aran de Velde” as well as the Spanish painter Philip Villamil (see Florence, Archivio Storico delle Gallerie Fiorentine, LIX [1835], parte II, ins. 40, permissions of 30 April and 20 August). In the 1850s he recommended, among others, the French painter Victor Léon Daguzan (see *ibidem*, LXXVII [1853], parte II, ins. 72, no. 62).

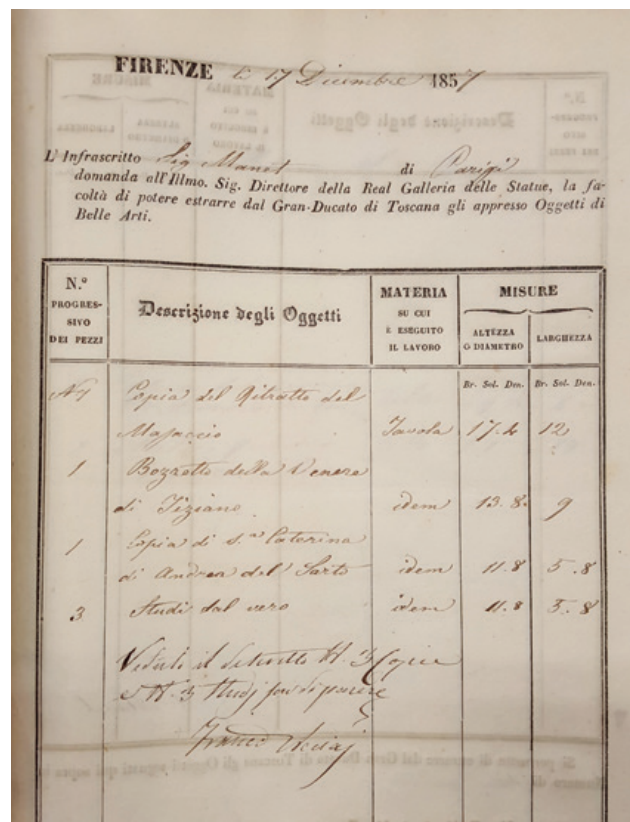
the intense financial relations that Fenzi had with the French capital. Nor do we know whether or not Manet had frequented the palace of the wealthy man (who loved to surround himself with artists) in the Via San Gallo. If so, it would have been an opportunity for the Frenchman to study the palace's mural paintings, including the precious frescoes on the ground floor depicting the labours of Hercules and executed with a fresh style and lively touch by the Venetian painter Sebastiano Ricci in the early eighteenth century.

The letter of recommendation signed by Fenzi and Manet helps us to better understand the latter's interest in the old masters during the weeks he spent in Florence in 1857, particularly in the Uffizi. Before focusing on Titian's *Venus* and Masaccio's self-portrait, Manet was particularly interested in another work in the gallery. As can be seen from the note written by the painter at the bottom of his letter of recommendation, he asked permission to enter the museum to copy not the two aforementioned works, a project which must have matured later, but Raphael's self-portrait: "Je desire [sic] copier le portrait de Raphaël peint par lui même." No trace remains, however, of that copy, not even in the document of 17 December 1857 with which Manet asked to export the six works from Florence, including the Orsay picture.

Could it be that once he entered the Uffizi Manet preferred the freshness of the alleged Masaccio self-portrait, painted with a lively touch akin to a contemporary study *d'après nature*, to Raphael's one? It is, however, worth noting that new works by both artists had recently been discovered in Florence. In fact, a few weeks before Manet's arrival in Tuscany, the discovery of a precious painting attributed to Raphael in the Florentine house of William Kennedy Lawrie had caused a sensation in the press,<sup>9</sup> while the famous *Trinity*, painted by Masaccio in Santa Maria Novella, was brought to light in early 1857 after more than four hundred years of oblivion.<sup>10</sup> Since Manet's interest in Masaccio seems to be limited to his self-portrait, it is possible, however, that the choice to practice on that painting and, earlier, on Raphael's self-portrait was rather inspired by the fascinating biography of the two great masters on the one hand and the good lighting conditions of the rooms in which they were kept on the other. It is possible, in fact, that the two self-portraits were hung at a good height on the wall and were better illuminated and more accessible than all the other self-portraits in the museum's rich collection, displayed on the walls of two large rooms.

<sup>9</sup> "Ritrovamento di un'opera di Raffaello", in: *Rivista di Firenze e Bollettino delle Arti del Disegno*, I (1857), pp. 384f.

<sup>10</sup> Laura Tosi/Alessandro Uras, "Gli affreschi rinvenuti nella chiesa di Santa Maria Novella durante l'intervento di 'ammodernamento' del



3 Exportation request by Manet for his works painted in Florence in 1857. Florence, Archivio Storico delle Gallerie Fiorentine, LXXXI (1857), parte II, ins. 71

### The Uffizi at the Time of Manet

What did the Uffizi Gallery rooms look like when Manet visited them? There is no study of the museum display in those years; however, we can get an idea by consulting the guide-books of the time which are also of great help in understanding Manet's movement within the gallery, whose rooms were organized differently than today. From consulting a French guide of Florence published in 1853,<sup>11</sup> we discover, for example, that the old master drawings could not have been copied by Manet in that year (as stated by Denis Rouart and Daniel Wildenstein) but only four years later, as already argued by Meller in 2002.<sup>12</sup> In fact, it was only at the end of 1854 that the Uffizi inaugurated the Nuovo Gabinetto dei Disegni, in

1857–58: Gaetano Bianchi e il distacco della *Trinità* di Masaccio", in: *Bollettino della società di studi fiorentini*, 9/10 (2001/02), pp. 97–103.

<sup>11</sup> *Guide de Florence et ses environs*, Florence 1853.

<sup>12</sup> See Meller (note 1), p. 70.



4 Amasa Hewins,  
*The Tribuna of the Uffizi*.  
 Boston, Museum of Fine Arts

which a selection of drawings was exhibited in a specific room of the gallery at the end of the west corridor, without altering the already consolidated circuit of the museum.<sup>13</sup> Prior to that date, the Uffizi's collection of prints and drawings had been closed to the wider public, and artists could only access it through a special application.

In Manet's time, the museum was not yet focused on European painting as it is today. Preference was given to the alternation of ancient works of art (Egyptian, Roman, and Etruscan masterpieces) with modern pieces, organized into schools. The Uffizi included in the exhibition itinerary its rich collection of fifteenth-century Tuscan sculpture, the so-called Gabinetto di Scultura, where Manet also spent some time, as we will see. Since the early 1820s, this section was positioned just before the Tribuna, the heart of the gallery, and developed along a narrow corridor wedged between the

rooms dedicated to the Tuscan school, the collection of medals, and the Museo Etrusco.

"Quando il povero visitatore arriva con lena affannata in cima ai 126 scalini ove l'inverno la temperatura è spesso sotto lo zero", wrote an anonymous author in an article on the Uffizi Gallery published in the *Rivista di Firenze e Bullettino delle Arti del Disegno* in 1857, "ad un tratto lo abbagliano quei lunghi corridoi ripieni di statue, di busti e di quadri che tutti malamente si vedono".<sup>14</sup> And he added: "Il visitatore passa per mezzo di questa confusione di oggetti, perché anela di entrare nella Sala della Tribuna ove è quanto di più bello possiede Firenze in fatto di pittura e scultura. Eccolo finalmente nel tabernacolo sacro delle Arti."<sup>15</sup> In the Tribuna, Manet quickly sketched Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, which had been displayed in that room since the opening of the museum, as demonstrated by Johann Zoffany's famous painting *The Tribuna of the Uffizi* (1772) as well as by the

<sup>13</sup> For the opening of the Nuovo Gabinetto dei Disegni, see the newspaper article "I disegni della R. Galleria di Firenze", in: *Monitore Toscano*, no. 267, 17 November 1854.

<sup>14</sup> "Le Gallerie di Firenze", in: *Rivista di Firenze e Bullettino delle Arti del Disegno*, I (1857), pp. 468–471: 469.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.



5 Leonardo, study for the *Madonna of the Cat*. Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 421 E



6 Édouard Manet, study sheet with copies from drawings by Leonardo and Raphael. Paris, Musée d'Orsay, kept at the Musée du Louvre, inv. RF 30296r

canvas of the American painter Amasa Hewins depicting the Tribuna in the early 1830s (Fig. 4): at that time the *Venus of Urbino* was hung high on the wall above another famous *Venus*, the so-called *Medici Venus*. However, the Tribuna's lighting was not the best. To his amazement, wrote the anonymous author, the visitor "si trova in loco non muto d'ogni luce, ma con tre soli pertugi che danno dall'alto un fioco lume appena sufficiente per riconoscere non per gustare alcuni dei quadri famosi: il resto sta involto nell'oscurità".<sup>16</sup> Better, he suggested, to spend more time in those rooms that allowed one to peruse the exhibited works in a better light, for instance "la gran Sala dei quadri di Scuola Toscana acquistati al tempo della soppressione dei Conventi" and that of Venetian art. In the latter, "la luce è bella, e la stanza è di giusta grandezza".<sup>17</sup>

Manet seemed to be of the same opinion. With the exception of the sketch from Titian's *Venus of Urbino* and the copy of Masaccio's alleged self-portrait, he spent a large amount of time in those rooms. In the Sala dei Veneziani he discovered, among other paintings, Giorgione's *Childhood of Moses*, from which he made a study of a figure on the far

right in a page of the sketchbook now in the Louvre;<sup>18</sup> and in the section dedicated to Tuscan art, divided into two rooms, Manet sketched in pencil on paper a detail of the *Circumcision* by Fra Bartolomeo.<sup>19</sup> Curiosity drove Manet to linger at length in the Nuovo Gabinetto dei Disegni. Among the many drawings displayed in that room, including masterpieces by the major Italian and European artists, Manet concentrated mainly on those of the Tuscans. His eye ran from drawings by Fra Bartolomeo to those of Andrea del Sarto (a Florentine artist he was particularly fond of) as well as Leonardo, from whom, as already demonstrated by Rouart and Wildenstein,<sup>20</sup> the Frenchman sketched a detail of a study for the so-called *Madonna of the Cat* (Figs. 5, 6).

Apart from the Nuovo Gabinetto dei Disegni, in 1857 Manet also spent a long time in the Gabinetto di Scultura, whose statuary groups appear to have struck him deeply. After all, he had never seen such things in Paris before. His eye was thus attracted by the plasticity of the dynamic figures of the most important work in the room: Luca della Robbia's *cantoria* which, as the above-mentioned 1853 guidebook reports, was

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*. The italics that mark the words as a (slightly varied) quote from Dante (*La Divina Commedia, Inferno, V, 28*) are in the original.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> Rouart/Wildenstein (note 5), p. 57, no. 63; Meller (note 1), p. 69, note 9.

<sup>19</sup> Rouart/Wildenstein (note 5), p. 55, no. 56.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 49, no. 32.





7 Luca della Robbia, *cantoria* (detail). Florence, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo



8 Édouard Manet, study sheet with copies from the *cantoria* by Luca della Robbia. Paris, Musée d'Orsay, kept at the Musée du Louvre, inv. RF 30459r

on display here “divisé en dix parties”.<sup>21</sup> Six drawings testify to the long time Manet spent in front of that masterpiece. One of them, composed of three figures, does not reflect the original too faithfully (Figs. 7, 8), since the putto with the tambourine on the far left was copied from another panel of the *cantoria*, creating a composition that seems more inspired by a scene observed from reality than by a Renaissance artwork.

The variety of stimuli Manet received during the days and weeks spent in the Uffizi must have convinced him to continue his practice by moving to other museums and monuments of the city, such as the Galleria Palatina in Palazzo Pitti and especially several sites in the San Marco district. In this latter, he studied the frescoes by Fra Angelico in the Dominican convent,<sup>22</sup> those by Bernardino Poccetti in the Cappella del Sacramento in San Marco,<sup>23</sup> and, as mentioned above, from 19 November 1857 those by Andrea del Sarto in the nearby Chiostrò dello Scalzo.<sup>24</sup> His interest in Andrea del Sarto had probably matured between the Uffizi and the Galleria Palatina, where Manet could find inspiration for studies such as the above-mentioned *Saint Catherine*, perhaps a detail of the so-called *Pietà di Luco* in the Palatina.

<sup>21</sup> *Guide de Florence* (note II), p. 51.

<sup>22</sup> Rouart/Wildenstein (note 5), p. 53, nos. 46–51.

### Epilogue: Manet, Florence, and the Macchiaioli

In addition to copying intensively some of the old masters, in Florence Manet painted a group of “studi dal vero” on three panels. What these panels could have depicted is unknown. In Florence at that time, *studi dal vero* meant studies inspired by landscape or city views. If this also applied to those three paintings, they would be the first recorded evidence of Manet’s interest in the landscape genre using oil as a medium (his first sketches of landscapes known today were made after his trip to Italy). It remains to be understood why he became interested in that genre, particularly in Florence. One reason could be the connections that Manet possibly established with local artists, such as the group of Macchiaioli painters. They had already been experimenting since 1855/56 with painting in chromatic *taches* (the *macchia*) on wooden or cardboard supports, not too dissimilar in size from those used by Manet, depicting views of Florence or its countryside as well as Venice, such as Telemaco Signorini’s *Calle della Scuola a Venezia* from 1856 (Viareggio, Società di Belle Arti).<sup>25</sup> Scholars such as Carlo Del Bravo have advanced the hypothesis that Manet frequented the Macchia-

<sup>23</sup> Meller (note 1), pp. 70–72.

<sup>24</sup> Rouart/Wildenstein (note 5), pp. 43, 45, 47, nos. 9–12, 16–23.

ioli during his stay in Florence.<sup>26</sup> This assumption is confirmed in the writings of the group's theorist, Diego Martelli, who in the biography of one of its protagonists, the French-Florentine painter Stanislao Pointeau, writes that the latter befriended Manet when both frequented the Caffè Michelangiolo.<sup>27</sup> This café was located in what was once called Via Larga (now Via Cavour), not far from the sites visited by Manet with his friend Brunet between the end of November and December 1857.

In conclusion, beyond the possible links between Manet and his contemporary Tuscan colleagues, the fact remains that the visit to Florence, which presumably lasted until 20 December 1857, offered him the opportunity to examine the works of the Italian Renaissance. The atmosphere of the city, not yet affected by the frenzy that would characterize Florence in the years immediately before and especially after the unification of Italy in 1861, would do the rest. Recalling the time he spent in Florence at the end of the 1850s, the art critic Georges Lafenestre described the Tuscan capital as a city “ne s'arrachant qu'avec peine à son calme séculaire”,<sup>28</sup> and he added that in these years – that is before the modernization process that followed its election as capital of the Regno d'Italia from 1865 to 1871 – the city still had that “charme apaisant de retraite intellectuelle et cosmopolite qui, depuis longtemps, attirait vers elle tous les rêveurs et tous les désolés des deux mondes, sous la tutelle paternelle et indulgente des grands-ducs”.<sup>29</sup> As Lafenestre recounts, the Florentine society was “des plus mêlées, où les nobles esprits et les grands cœurs n'étaient point rares, et que purifiaient, dans l'apparence, des habitudes aimables de dilettantisme élevé”.<sup>30</sup> It was in relation to that society, “singulièrement intéressante, instructive, et la plus libre aussi qu'il y eût en Europe”,<sup>31</sup> that Manet nurtured his interest in the art of the Tuscan Renaissance without ignoring what was being discussed in the rooms of the Caffè Michelangiolo – a place where a group of artists of Manet's age were breaking new ground in the history of Italian or, more generally, European art.

<sup>25</sup> The painting, which measures 31 × 21 cm, is published in *Telemaco Signorini e la pittura in Europa*, exh. cat. Padua 2009/10, ed. by Giuliano Matteucci et al., Venice 2009, p. 82, no. 17.

<sup>26</sup> Carlo Del Bravo, “Milleottocentosessanta” [1975], in: *idem, Le risposte dell'arte*, Florence 1985, pp. 271–284: 283.

<sup>27</sup> Diego Martelli, “Macchiette artistiche: Stanislao Pointeau”, in: *Fanfulla della Domenica*, 18 December 1881, p. 110: “Nato da madre italiana e da padre francese, aveva modo di vivere nell'ambiente dell'arte fiorentina, e di frequentare egregi artisti che dalla Francia venivano a studiare i documenti del sapere antico, nelle nostre gallerie. (Fra questi i celebri Manet e Degase [sic]).”

<sup>28</sup> Georges Lafenestre, “Marcellin Desboutin (1823–1902)”, in: *La Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, XII (1902), pp. 401–416: 402.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

## Appendix

*Letter from Édouard Manet to the director of the Uffizi Gallery, Luca Bourbon del Monte.*

*Florence, Archivio Storico delle Gallerie Fiorentine, LXXXI (1857), parte II, ins. 70, no. 218.*

Ill.mo Sig. Dirett. della Galleria di Firenze

Il sottoscritto fa istanza a V. S. Ill.ma onde voglia compiacersi di permetterli di fare qualche copia di quadri che si conservano nell'I. e R. Galleria degli Uffizi. Persuaso di esser favorito anticipa i suoi ringraziamenti e si rassegna con la più alta stima.

Firenze 22 ottobre 1857

Devoto aff.to

E. Manet

Em. Fenzi & C. nel presentare i loro ossequi all'Ill.mo Sig. Marchese Del Monte la pregano di favorire al loro raccomandato il bramato permesso.

Je desire [sic] copier le portrait de Raphaël peint par lui même

Al di 29 ottobre concessi per giorni venti

Del Monte.

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