

The Corsini Collection: A Window on Renaissance Florence

Exhibition labels

© Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2017
Reproduction in part or in whole of this document
is prohibited without express written permission.

The Corsini Family

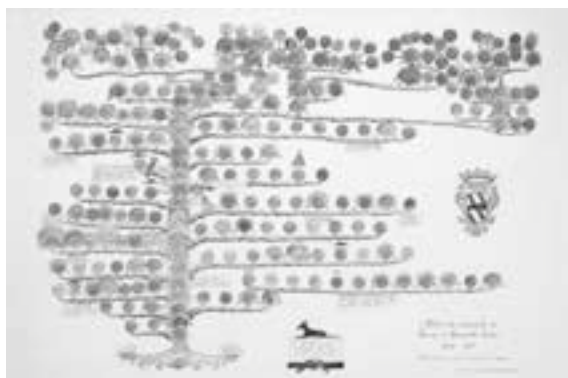
Members of the Corsini family settled in Florence in the middle of the 13th century, attaining leading roles in government, the law, trade and banking. During that time, the Republic of Florence became one of the mercantile and financial centres in the Western world. Along with other leading families, the Corsini name was interwoven with that of the powerful Medici until 1737, when the Medici line came to an end.

The Corsini family can also claim illustrious members within the Catholic Church, including their family saint, Andrea Corsini, three cardinals and Pope Clement XII. Filippo Corsini was created Count Palatine in 1371 by the Emperor Charles IV, and in 1348 Tommaso Corsini encouraged the foundation of the Studio Fiorentino, the University of Florence. The family's history is interwoven with that of the city and its citizens, politically, culturally and intellectually.

Between 1650 and 1728, the family constructed what is the principal baroque edifice in the city, and their remarkable collection of Renaissance and Baroque art remains on display in Palazzo Corsini today. The Corsini Collection: A Window on Renaissance Florence paints a rare glimpse of family life and loyalties, their devotion to the city, and their place within Florence's magnificent cultural heritage. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki is delighted that the Corsini family have generously allowed some of their treasures to travel so far from home.

Digital copies of the artwork labels and more information about the exhibition are available in the exhibition's reading room and online at aucklandartgallery.com/Corsini

A free audio guide can also be downloaded for this exhibition from the above website or via the Gallery's page in the Sound Cloud Application.



Giuliana, daughter of Emanuele Corsini (born 1928)
Italy

Family Tree from Corsini di Bonaccolto to Corsini 1271–1995 1995

lithograph
Private Collection, Florence

This delightful family tree follows an early Renaissance tradition of showing a 'tree of life' with strong roots. Giuliana Corsini has introduced wonderfully witty additions that highlight the family's achievements. Their family saint wears a gold halo, red cardinals hats hover over those who attained high rank in the church, and a pope's mitre sits above their own Pope Clement XII. An owl informs us of when the original house was acquired on via del Parione, and a parrot wearing a crown indicates the family's first prince. Most endearingly of all, at the base of the tree a black dog rests on top of a memorial tablet, on which is inscribed 'In memory of all the dogs, large and small, across the centuries, who have shared the lives of so many members of this family'.



Cesare Dandini (1596–1657)
Italy

Portrait of a Young Woman from the Corsini Family as Flora circa 1650

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

In the past, this young woman was mistakenly thought to be Lucrezia, wife of Marquis Filippo Corsini. The young woman is portrayed with her long hair curling over her shoulders, which suggests she is yet to be wed as it was traditional for hair to be tied up once a woman was married. The young woman's bouquet contains anemones, peonies and jasmine. Each flower has been painted in a botanically accurate manner. She is richly bedecked in jewels, denoting her status as a noblewoman, and is cast as the Roman mythological figure of Flora – goddess of plants, flowers and fertility.



Alessandro Allori (1535–1607)
Italy

Portrait of Bianca Cappello, Morganaic Wife of Francesco I de' Medici after 1579

oil on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Florentines disapproved when Grand Duke Francesco married Bianca Cappello in 1578, before appointing her Grand Duchess the following year. They feared Francesco would legitimise their son Antonio so that he could inherit the title.

When staying at their villa at Poggio a Caiano, in October 1587, the couple became seriously ill. Francesco's brother, Ferdinando, minimised the gravity of his brother's health in the dispatches sent to the Holy See, and when they both died, autopsies attributed their deaths to malaria. On exhumation in 2006, both bodies were found to contain large quantities of arsenic. This indicated possible foul play, although at the time arsenic was found in medicines and Francesco himself used the element in his scientific experiments.



Alessandro Allori (1535–1607)
Italy

Portrait of Francesco I de' Medici after 1579

oil on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici, son of Cosimo I, was an important patron of the arts. Fascinated by alchemy, he invented a method for melting rock crystal and encouraged the introduction of Florentine porcelain production.

The formality of these two portraits masks a familial and dynastic drama within the Medici family. In 1565, Francesco I (1541–1587) married Joanna of Austria, with whom he had eight children. Only two girls survived childhood, so there was no male heir to inherit the title. After Joanna's death in childbirth in 1578, Francesco secretly married his Venetian mistress, Bianca Cappello (1548–1587), with whom he already had an illegitimate son, Antonio, then aged two.



Justus Suttermans (1597–1681)
Flanders

Portrait of Grand Duke Cosimo II de' Medici (1590–1621) after 1620

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Cosimo II was grand Duke of Florence from 1609 until 1621, a time of peace and prosperity. His father, Grand Duke Ferdinand I, appointed astronomer and scientist Galileo Galilei as his tutor from 1605 to 1608.

Cosimo married Maria Magdalena of Austria, and they had eight children. Tubercular like his father, Cosimo was frail and therefore left day-to-day administration to his courtiers. He relinquished Medici banking interests, focusing on the lucrative trade markets of the East. In another portrait now in the Pitti Palace in Florence, Justus Suttermans depicted Cosimo wearing Turkish costume.



Justus Suttermans (1597–1681)
Flanders

Portrait of Grand Duke Ferdinand II de' Medici (1610–1670) after 1627

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Cosimo II's son, Ferdinand II, was passionate about shipping and in another portrait also by Justus Suttermans (also known as Justus Sustermans) this is conveyed by the compass he holds. He expanded the Livorno harbour to accommodate merchant ships and promoted trade agreements, including with the East. Ferdinand was a promoter of scientific research: he supported Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) when he was tried and convicted of heresy for his work proving the Earth moved around the Sun. Ferdinand's work was carried on in turn by his brother, Leopold de' Medici, who founded the scientific Accademia del Cimento in 1657.



Anton Domenico Gabbiani (1652–1726)
Italy

Glorification of the Corsini Family: Sketch for the Ceiling Fresco of the Presentation Room of the Palazzo 1696

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

This preparatory sketch for the *Glorification of the Corsini Family* which was painted in 1696. Anton Domenico Gabbiani shows Valour, Architecture and Ingenuity carrying the palace heavenwards, while the family's coat of arms and a crown are born aloft by *putti* who are celebrating the family's loyalty to Florence and their achievements within the church. Other figures are drawn from the world of antiquity: the river Arno as an ancient river god; the City of Florence, in front of Brunelleschi's dome, raising her hands to catch coins tumbling from a cornucopia, symbolising prosperity; and a nymph offering up a basket of flowers to the figure of Abundance.



Luca Giordano (1634–1705)
Italy

Sketch for the Dome of the Corsini Chapel in the Church of the Carmine in Florence 1682

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Being painted on a two-dimensional surface, Luca Giordano's preparatory sketch for the dome in the Corsini Chapel in the Church of the Carmine in Florence shows Heaven at the top of the canvas and the figure of Saint Andrea looking up on the left. Giordano specialised in ceiling frescoes which involved the technique of *sotto in su* (looking up from below), so that in the finished work the figures seem to hover over the viewer, breaking down the division of the heavenly and earthly realms. The blessed in heaven can 'speak' across the space, while Saint Andrea rises upward to infinity.



Unknown Artist
Italy

Door Curtain with the Corsini's Emblem mid-18th century

carryover embroidery: base fabric woollen cloth, applications of decorative patterns and silk fringe, cotton lining
Florence, Private Collection

Portiere (door curtains) were traditionally used to furnish the walls of presentation rooms, while serving the practical function of helping to keep the huge spaces warm. The centre of this curtain is embroidered with the emblem of the Corsini family – described in heraldic terms as ‘argent and gules bends, crossed with an azure fess’ inserted into a shield topped with a crown, a golden circlet with gems and studded with pearls.

Originally used to identify knights during tournaments when their faces were concealed by visors, coats of arms later became symbols of prestige which were reproduced on portraits, documents, buildings and objects.



Giuseppe Zocchi (1716/17–1767)
Italy

Palazzo Corsini circa 1744

from: *Views of Villas and Other Places in Tuscany*, 1744
hand-coloured etching
Florence, Private Collection

This print captures Palazzo Corsini's magnificent double bays and rooftop sculptures, which stand out against the skyline. The book in which this print was published was dedicated to Francis II Duke of Lorraine, husband of Maria Theresa of Austria, the newly appointed Grand Duke and Duchess of Florence. They had never been to the city, and Florentines vainly hoped that by setting 'before the eyes of curious observers . . . the most noble and charming views', they would remain in the city rather than returning to Austria.

A cross-section of Florentine society – including dozing road workers, a knife-grinder, sunbathers and elegantly clad figures – populate the foreground.



Francesco Maria Queirolo (1704–1762)
Italy

Bust of Pope Clement XII after 1730

marble
Florence, Galleria Corsini

A determined church reformer, Lorenzo Corsini (1652–1740) was elected Pope Clement XII in 1730 at the age of 78. The cardinals assumed he would only live a short time longer. He remained at the head of the church for another decade. This marble bust was commissioned for the Corsini Palace in Rome, but was finally moved to Florence.

Clement XII is shown wearing the *camauro*, the red velvet cap bordered with ermine worn by popes outside of worship. Over the *mozzetta*, the short red cape closed with buttons worn by high priests, he wears a band with the Corsini emblem as well as papal symbols: the keys of Saint Peter standing over the *tiaregno* or papal tiara.



Domenico Zampieri, known as Domenichino (1581–1641)
Italy

Portrait of Cardinal Ascanio Filomarino 1641

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Appointed bishop of Naples in 1641, Cardinal Ascanio Filomarino (1583–1666) was an avid art collector who oversaw the redevelopment of several important public buildings. He is depicted standing in front of his *palazzo* in Naples, wearing the scarlet cardinal's mantle and holding a folded letter addressed to 'Eminent Prince Cardinal Filomarino'. He sided with Neapolitan rebels who revolted in protest at the huge taxes set by the kingdom of Naples (then ruled by Spain) and proved adept at negotiating to resolve the problem.

Formerly owned by the Rinuccini family, this portrait was gifted to Prince Tommaso Corsini by his mother, Marchesa Eleonora Rinuccini Corsini, in 1873.



Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659–1743)
France

Portrait of Don Neri Corsini 1710

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

The younger son of Filippo Corsini and Lucrezia Rinuccini, Neri Maria Corsini (1685–1770) served as ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany to France in 1709, and envoy to negotiations for the Treaty of The Hague (1720). In a letter to Florence from Paris on 20 December 1710, Neri made reference to his portrait being painted. Hyacinthe Rigaud's aristocratic clients loved his elegant, extravagant compositions. Neri cuts a dashing figure – swathed in silks and brocades, his magnificent velvet cloak ties the composition together.

Neri moved to Rome in 1723 to serve his uncle, Lorenzo, who was then a cardinal and later Pope Clement XII. Neri himself was named cardinal in 1730.



Giovan Francesco Barbieri, known as Guercino (1591–1666)
Italy

Saint Andrea Corsini 1630

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Bishop of Fiesole, Andrea Corsini (1302–1373), was beatified in 1440 and proclaimed a saint in 1629. Created a year later, Guercino's painting shows a single tear rolling down Andrea's cheek at Christ's suffering on the cross, which reflects Counter-Reformation beliefs that art should create empathy in the viewer.

The painting itself has suffered from man's inhumanity. In 1944, fearing the collection might be confiscated, Princess Elena Corsini saved larger paintings by having them hidden behind a false wall in one of the family's rural villas. Saint Andrea was hung on the false wall in the hope that he would protect the artworks behind it. Short on time, but having noticed the still-wet plaster and become suspicious, a soldier shot Saint Andrea Corsini through the forehead.



Ottone Hamerani (1694–1768)
Italy

Medal Case with Medals of Pope Clement XII 1733

leather, velvet, bronze
Florence, Private Collection

The fronts of these medals depict Pope Clement XII Corsini wearing the papal tiara and a liturgical cope on which are shown the family coat of arms and the family saint, Andrea Corsini. Architectural works commissioned by the pope are depicted on the reverse side. Three include architect Alessandro Galilei's interior of the chapel dedicated to Saint Andrea in San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome (1732–34) and the façade of the church (1735). The fourth shows the city of Ancona, where the pope engaged architect Luigi Vanvitelli in 1733 to build a quarantine warehouse and hospital to prevent the spread of infectious diseases brought by people and contaminated goods arriving by sea.



Raffaello Sanzio, known as Raphael (1483–1520)
Italy

Portrait of Pope Julius II della Rovere 1511–12

black chalk on four joined sheets of paper (original)
reproduction
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Although it is not known when it came into Corsini hands, this reproduction of a preliminary sketch for the painting *Portrait of Pope Julius II della Rovere* (National Gallery, London) demonstrates Raphael's mastery as a draughtsman. The original sketch is too fragile to travel.

A warrior and art collector, Giuliano della Rovere was elected Pope Julius II in 1503. He commissioned Raphael to decorate rooms in the Vatican, and it was during this time that the sketch was made. In the final painting, Julius wears a red velvet cap and cape over his cassock, and his beard is long because he vowed not to trim it until the French had left Italy. While his expression is weary, it also contains a determination which creates a direct relationship between us and the subject.

Florence in the Renaissance

The term Renaissance or 're-birth' is loosely applied to the period between the 14th and 16th centuries which saw a rediscovery of the ancient classical past, a search for knowledge, and a new understanding of what constituted the known world. In the early Renaissance, the church still taught that the Earth stood at the centre of the universe. By the beginning of the 15th century, man had become 'the measure of all things'.

Trade and exploration opened up new possibilities, with societies eager for an exchange of knowledge, and many were made wealthy through banking and the exchange of goods. When the city was a republic, men of learning and social stature from leading Florentine families were elected to govern the city, until the Medici obtained dominance in the latter part of the 15th century. During this period, Florence took on a leading role in the realms of architecture, literature and art.

Patrons dictated the scale of paintings and even the kinds of pigments that artists were to use in a work. Initially, the most common commissions were religious, with images of the Madonna, Christ Child and saints acting as moral markers of a life well led. A resurgence of interest in literature from ancient Rome and Greece also led to the burgeoning of classical themes in art. The heroes and heroines of mythology were adopted as symbols of the city and its leaders, and artists were at the forefront in promoting new understandings of the past.



Tintoretto (1518–1594)
Italy

Saint Simon circa 1540–94

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Saint Simon gazes sorrowfully out of the picture plane, his left hand clutching his heart and gesturing towards us in anguish. Simon was sawn in half for preaching his religious beliefs, and the saw resting against his right shoulder symbolises his martyrdom. Tintoretto has created an intimate depiction of Saint Simon's fervent piety. Presumably displayed in a candlelit chapel, Simon's head would have seemingly materialised from within the dark interior, creating an immediate relationship with the viewer that would have inspired personal devotion to the Catholic faith.



Jacopo Carucci, known as Jacopo da Pontormo (1494–1557)
Italy

Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist circa 1526–29

oil on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Jacopo da Pontormo became the leading painter in Florence in the mid-16th century. In the Corsini *Madonna and Child*, John the Baptist peers out at us as if he has been playing under the Virgin's discarded cloak. The Madonna and Child are more static, yet the folds of the Madonna's headdress animate her face, with one end looping down below her throat leading us to the rich red cloth draped over her shoulder. Her infant son raises two fingers in blessing while his swaddling band is looped up into a rosette, like an *ankh* – a symbol of eternal life that was adopted into Christian art from Egypt.



Unknown Artist

after Andrea del Sarto (1486–1530)
Italy

Madonna and Child with Saint Joseph and Saint John the Baptist (The Borgherini Holy Family) after 1527

oil on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

The primary version of the *Holy Family with the Infant St John*, also known as *Borgherini Holy Family*, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Interestingly, this Corsini painting also demonstrates links to Andrea del Sarto's *Charity* (National Gallery of Art, Washington), suggesting it was made in del Sarto's studio where sketches for both of the works would have been available for assistants to study. Here, the Virgin is wearing the same costume and striped headdress as *Charity*, and the women have identical double strands of fine gold chain around their necks. In both paintings the Christ Child rests his foot on a book. Depicted in this painting as an impish infant, his eyes sparkle mischievously as if unaware of his adult fate.



Fra Bartolomeo (1472–1517)
Italy

Holy Family 1511

oil on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Fra Bartolomeo trained under Piero di Cosimo. He was one of the first Florentine painters to imitate Leonardo da Vinci's studies of the relationship between light and shadow on forms and the depiction of space.

Fra Bartolomeo believed fiercely in the rights of the people and the republic of Florence, preferring the tradition of an elected Signoria (government) to the dominance of the Medici family. He became a Dominican friar at the Convent of San Marco in 1500 and was a devout follower of Savonarola, who preached that art must be easily understandable to people of all classes.



Florentine Painter after Francesco Rosselli
Italy

The Execution of Savonarola and Two Companions at Piazza della Signoria 16–17th century

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Girolamo Savonarola was a Dominican friar who fought for a renewal of church and society in the hope of transforming Florence into the 'city of God'. He instigated the Bonfire of the Vanities, which saw the destruction of precious books, artworks and objects. Excommunicated by the pope, on 23 May 1498, he and two of his supporters were hung and then burnt in Piazza della Signoria. Like other Florentines, even the Corsini family was divided in their support of the friar.

Many buildings can be clearly identified in the painting, including the loggia of the Signoria, the façade of Santa Croce, the Bargello tower, and Brunelleschi's remarkable dome of the cathedral.



Pier Francesco Foschi (1502–1567)
Italy

Portrait of Cardinal Antonio Pucci 1540

oil on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Instead of church attire, Cardinal Antonio Pucci (1484–1544) is depicted wearing informal garments. His scholarly interests are represented on the table, which includes a rare 15th-century Timurid carpet from Anatolia, an expensively bound book and writing materials symbolising his literary talents. The figure of the Spinario (the boy removing a thorn) on the inkwell is a copy of the antique bronze first identified in Rome in the 12th century.

The view through the window is thought to represent the sitter's villa at Igno, near Pistoia, where Pucci had invited Michelangelo in the unsuccessful hope that he would design a bridge and church for the grounds.



Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio (1483–1561)
Italy

Portrait of an Unknown Man circa 1540

oil on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

This composition format was used by Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio a number of times. Without architectural, natural or symbolic elements, paintings such as these have a psychological dimension: we are forced to concentrate on the face and its expression to learn something about the sitter. Here, a man of indeterminate years looks back at us, and the directness of his gaze is somewhat unsettling. His unembellished hat and costume suggest a person who values intellect over worldly possessions, and the stubble on his chin and shadow under his cheekbone imply he is a man of ascetic tastes.



Giovanni Santi (circa 1435–1494)
Italy

Terpsichore circa 1480–90

from: *The Muses*, circa 1480–90
oil on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Terpsichore is the Greek muse of lyric poetry and dancing, and she is also sometimes associated with flute playing. She is often shown with her lyre. Like all the Muses, Terpsichore is sometimes given other descriptions and attributes. For example, she has been described as the mother of the Sirens, beautiful hybrid creatures that are half-bird, half-woman, whose hypnotic singing lured sailors to their deaths.



Giovanni Santi (circa 1435–1494)
Italy

Apollo circa 1480–90

from: *The Muses*, circa 1480–90
oil on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

The father of Raphael, Giovanni Santi (1435–1494) was employed at the court of the Duke of Urbino, Federico da Montefeltro (1422–1482). These four panels were originally created for the Temple of the Muses in the Ducal Palace, a small, private room located in a tower staircase leading to the Duke's private dressing chambers and his famous *studiolo* (studio). The temple walls were covered with a series of paintings depicting Greek and Roman gods – Apollo, Minerva and Athena – and the nine Muses, who together embodied the arts of music, dance and literature.



Sandro Botticelli and Workshop (circa 1445–1510)
Italy

Madonna and Child with Six Angels circa 1500

tempera and oil on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Under the influence of the zealous friar Savonarola, Sandro Botticelli turned away from painting classical themes at the end of the 15th century to focus on the life of Christ.

Here, the Madonna rests her cheek against her little son's and her eyes are closed, as if she is holding back tears. Two angels hold aloft a pearl-inlaid crown studded with sprigs of lilies, which symbolise the Virgin's ultimate place at her son's side as Queen of Heaven. First, though, she must accept that when he is an adult, he will sacrifice his life to save humanity. Two angels on the right gaze sadly at the instruments of Christ's future Passion, while those on the left look out inviting us to share their sorrow.



Giovanni Santi (circa 1435–1494)
Italy

Clio circa 1480–90

from: *The Muses*, circa 1480–90
tempera on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Clio is the muse of history, a guardian of the ages who knew all the stories that make up the past.

After the death of the last Duke of Urbino, Cardinal Francesco Barberini (1597–1679) was appointed legate of the province and was gifted paintings from the Palazzo Ducale in a papal deed of 1632. Four of Giovanni Santi's paintings were apparently destroyed sometime after 1644. The remaining works became part of the Barberini collection in Rome until 1818, when they were given to Carlo Felice, Duke of Castelvechio and subsequently inherited by Principessa Donna Anna Corsini.



Giovanni Santi (circa 1435–1494)
Italy

Polymnia circa 1480–90

from: *The Muses*, circa 1480–90
tempera on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

The Muses were the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (the personification of memory). Polymnia, representing sacred poetry, is framed within a rocky outcrop.

The set of nine Muses to which these four paintings belong celebrated Federico da Montefeltro's knowledge of ancient literature and his love of the arts. The temple was located directly opposite the Cappella del Perdono, the Duke's private chapel. Their proximity proclaimed the Duke's scholarly interest in antiquity alongside his religious piety, while also implying that this relationship ensured his position in both 'the shining kingdom of the immortals' and in Heaven.



Antonio di Donnino del Mazziere (late 15th century–1547)
Italy

Mythological Scene (Fables of Apollo, Daphne and Narcissus) early 1520s

oil and gold on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Unified by costume, gesture and backdrop, these two tales from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* warn against unrequited love. On the left, Apollo chases Daphne, who, in her desperation to escape his attentions, begins to turn into a laurel tree. In the centre, Narcissus gazes admiringly at his reflection in a pool of water, with the fatal consequences of this obsession indicated by his lifeless body to the right. This painting may have originally belonged to a small Ovidian cycle commissioned for a *spalliera*, a type of wall panel decoration set above furniture.



Matteo Rosselli (1578–1650)
Italy

Jael and Sisera 1610

oil on copper
Florence, Galleria Corsini

A tale of revenge and loyalty from the biblical Book of Judges, the story of Jael and Sisera provided a popular allegorical paradigm in the tumultuous 17th century. Determined to kill the enemy of her people, Jael looms above Sisera, and her legs form a strong pyramidal shape that conveys her mental resolve and physical power. Her hammer is suspended at the top of the canvas, leaving us to anticipate the force with which the nail will plunge into Sisera's head below. Similar in scale to Rosselli's *Triumph of David*, the paintings may have been commissioned as a pendant pair proclaiming the virtue of self-sacrifice for civic duty.



Jacopo Ligozzi (1547–1627)
Italy

Martyrdom of Saint Catherine of Alexandria circa 1594–1620

oil on copper
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Jacopo Ligozzi was employed from 1577 as a court artist for Francesco I de' Medici. He established his own workshop in 1594, where he specialised in religious paintings on commission. *Martyrdom of Saint Catherine of Alexandria* shows the saint moments before she was executed for refusing to relinquish her Christian faith. The powerful diagonal of the man's raised sword counterbalances the downwards curve of Catherine's back, locking the two figures in a tense relationship of suspended action. While not part of the original story, the angel above Catherine's head is characteristic of the celestial visions Ligozzi liked to invent, which symbolise divine protection.

Baroque Rome , Conflict, Renewal & Innovation

After the turbulence of Martin Luther's revolt against the Catholic Church in 1517, followed by the Sack of Rome in 1527, it was imperative that papal authority was reasserted. Consecutive popes, including Clement XII Corsini, introduced radical reforms within the church, while engaging in fresh enterprises to glorify the Papal State. During the next two centuries, Rome was rebuilt and artists and architects vied for commissions for magnificent new public and private edifices constructed in the city.

The Corsini family played a role in establishing Rome as the predominant art centre. Pope Clement XII and Cardinal Neri Corsini oversaw the acquisition and redevelopment of Palazzo Corsini in Trastevere, establishing a magnificent library and art collection which was later gifted to the state. The Catholic Church introduced new guidelines asserting art's role as a devotional aid, and believers were exhorted to engage personally with the suffering of Christ and his followers. Caravaggio was at the forefront of this revolutionary approach, cropping compositions as if they were cinematic close-ups to capture the key moment in a narrative. Many Florentine artists travelled to Rome to study these innovations introducing the dynamic, evocative Caravaggesque style to churches and domestic interiors in Florence. The baroque design and artistic environment of Palazzo Corsini in Florence were influenced by this creative revolution. Although the power base had moved to Rome, the palazzo overlooking the river in Florence remained the beating heart of the Corsini family.



Formerly attributed to Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641)
Flanders, England

Prometheus and the Eagle early 17th century

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Prometheus stole fire from the gods on Mount Olympus and presented it to humans. As punishment, Zeus chained him to a rock in the Caucasus Mountains, where an eagle flew down and tore out his liver. His wounds healed overnight, but the torture was renewed daily – until Hercules rescued him.

Variations on this composition exist. Rubens' *Prometheus Bound* (Philadelphia Museum of Art) depicts the Titan as a more mature figure. Van Dyck also portrayed Prometheus as an older man, one screaming in agony (Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai). That work also shows the eagle only just breaking through the surface of the flesh with his beak.

In August 2017, this painting was reattributed to a Flemish artist called Theodoor Rombouts (1597–1637) who was in Italy between 1616 and 1625. He was studying Caravaggio's style in Rome as well as staying in Florence, where it is thought he worked for Grand Duke Cosimo II de' Medici. A second version of this painting, identical in composition, is held in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels and is signed by Rombouts on the lower right. It demonstrates the paler palette developed by the artist after his return to Flanders.



Niccolò Codazzi (1642–1693)
Italy

Architecture in the Countryside circa 1685–93

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Niccolò Codazzi was a leading 17th-century painter of architectural views, which he sometimes drew from his imagination rather than basing on specific buildings or places. *Architecture in the Countryside* celebrates the continued prosperity of a harmonious ancient civilisation. A monumental classical edifice dominates the composition, dwarfing the surrounding people and landscape. Yellow highlights accentuate rich details of the Corinthian pilasters and showcase Niccolò's knowledge of ancient architecture. The bridge in the background is an interpretation of the ancient Roman Ponte Rotto (Broken Bridge), which partially collapsed in 1598.



Matthieu van Plattenberg, known as il Montagna
(1606–1660)
Flanders

Stormy Sea early 17th century

Sailing Ship in a Storm early 17th century

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Rather than representing particular events, most maritime paintings from the 17th century demonstrate the period's vision of the sea as a reflection of the tempestuous passions, fortunes and conflicts afflicting human life. In *Stormy Sea*, Matthieu van Plattenberg powerfully conveys humankind's vain struggle against nature's unrelenting energy. Accentuated by swishes of white paint, the surging waves drag the ships towards the battered coastline. The strongly illuminated tower, clinging with its surrounding buildings to the cliff top does, however, offer a beacon of hope while also reinforcing the notion of humanity's struggle with nature.



Niccolò Codazzi (1642–1693)
Italy

Ruined Building circa 1685–93

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Ruined Building fuses reality and fantasy in its depiction of a romanticised, classical past. The repetitive arch motif derives from the ancient Roman Arch of Constantine and is used by Codazzi to explore geometric relationships. Accentuated with highlights and shading, the various irregularities and recesses of the crumbling blocks present opportunities to investigate depth and rhythms of form. Codazzi's two paintings in this exhibition poetically and nostalgically evoke the lost glory of a past civilisation.



Unknown Maker
Italy

after Giovan Francesco Barbieri, known as Guercino
(1591– 1666)
Italy

Persian Sibyl after 1648

tapestry
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Tapestries were highly esteemed during the Renaissance and Baroque periods, when many were imported into Italy from France and Flanders. The Florentine Medici workshops were set up in 1545, and in Rome, the Barberini tapestry workshop operated from 1627 to 1684. Another workshop was set up by Pope Clement XI, the designs for which came mainly from paintings held in the papal collections. This included Guercino's original painting, *Persian Sibyl*, in which the figure is shown paused in the act of writing. While the painted Sibyl is somewhat pensive, in this tapestry her gaze is more direct, with the half-smile on her lips creating an intimacy with the viewer.



Michelangelo Merisi, known as Caravaggio (1571–1610)
Italy

Portrait of Maffeo Barberini circa 1597

oil on canvas
Florence, Private Collection

A scholar and collector, Maffeo Barberini (1568–1644) was appointed Cardinal (1606) then Pope Urban VIII (1623). Caravaggio depicts him wearing the robes of a *protonotario apostolico* or prelate of the Roman curia, which was a very prestigious role. The deep green, moiré silk manteletta or over-garment contrasts the bold slash created by its red lining. Caravaggio became a master at painting naturalistic still-life elements in his early days in Rome, which he learned from northern painters working there at the time. Here, dianthus, jasmine and white roses stand in a stemmed glass vase whose fluted sides slightly distort the petals floating in the water.



Carlo Dolci (1616–1686)
Italy

Hope 1653

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Although commissioned for an allegorical series including *Poetry*, *Patience* and *Painting*, there are notable similarities between *Hope* and Carlo Dolci's small devotional paintings produced for private chapels. The figure of Hope looks towards the heavens in apparent religious surrender. Her clasped hands and parted lips convey her intense faith and invite us to emulate her beseeching gesture. She is captivatingly lifelike: the crisp folds of her sleeves project outwards in a naturalistic manner against the dark background. *Hope* invokes both poetic and divine inspiration, testifying to the individual and universal faith in celestial guidance.



Vincenzo Dandini (1607–1675)
Italy

Bacchante 1650

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

While Queen Artemisia's consumption of her husband's ashes was a noble act of devotion, the wine in this bacchante's vessel serves a different purpose. In adoration of Bacchus, the god of wine, agriculture and fertility, bacchantes left behind their familial obligations, dedicating themselves to rituals associated with the transformative nature of wine, for under its influence you might commune with the gods.

Wreathed in ivy, which, like vine leaves, are the traditional plants associated with Bacchus, Vincenzo's *Bacchante* raises her cup of wine and smiles at us teasingly, inviting us to disregard the solemnity of Cesare's *Artemesia* and join her in pleasurable folly.



Cesare Dandini (1596–1657)
Italy

Artemisia circa 1650

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Cesare Dandini and his younger brother Vincenzo, whose painting *Bacchante* is displayed alongside, worked together in a close partnership. *Artemisia* was commissioned, along with Vincenzo's *Bacchante*, by Marquis Bartolomeo Corsini around 1650.

Queen Artemisia was famous for drinking her husband Mausolus's ashes, which she did daily while grieving for him. Here, Artemisia looks mournfully at his urn, while the dark blue and purple tones of her garb and the background add to the image's solemnity. Queen Artemisia was praised for her loyalty to her husband. The vessel's proximity to the viewer invites us to emulate her wifely devotion.



Giovanni Martinelli (1600–1659)
Italy

Music 1650

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

The figure of Music emerges from the shadows as she turns towards us, momentarily distracted from playing the recorder in her hands. Her twisting shoulders and eye contact within the foreshortened composition create an arresting, intimate spontaneity: we have momentarily interrupted her private enjoyment of musical inspiration and, in meeting her timeless gaze, are invited to join her in expressing our lyrical talents. Giovanni Martinelli completed at least two versions of this painting, indicating that it was in demand from other patrons.



Unknown Artist (Circle of Guido Reni)
Italy

Prosperity (Richness) early 17th century

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

While in antiquity 'abundance' referred to economic or political wealth, in the Renaissance the concept was associated with an individual's moral and intellectual assets. Traditionally, personifications of Prosperity showed her surrounded by gold, holding a vessel filled with fruit and flowers; whereas here she conveys the fulfilment enjoyed from personal virtue and repose. The urn represents traditional Christian iconographical associations with temperance, one of the seven virtues. Depicted in 17th-century attire and ornamentation, this painting of Prosperity is engagingly familiar: her peaceful restraint and noble character inspires and reflects that of her spectator.



Matteo Rosselli (1578–1650)
Italy

The Triumph of David 1610

oil on copper
Florence, Galleria Corsini

An Old Testament hero, David became a symbol of honour and strength for Florence, and leading families utilised the biblical tale to proclaim their power and civic virtue. Matteo Rosselli's David is a bold and rational leader. Fluid diagonals and jewel-like colours enliven the composition, and their vivacity is grounded by the harmonious triangle formed by the three frontal figures. The arc of David's sword serves as the focal point at its apex, drawing our attention to his noble act of bravery in service of his people. Stability is balanced with dynamism, providing an apt exemplar for a leading Florentine family.



Orazio Fidani (1610–after 1656)

Head of Bacchus 1650

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Bacchus (Greek Dionysus) was the god of wine, agriculture and fertility. He is often shown as part of a narrative, surrounded by dancing bacchantes, or with Ariadne, daughter of Minos, king of Crete.

Here, although wearing his traditional leopard skin, Bacchus has oak rather than vine leaves wreathed in his hair. In the earliest Greek images of Dionysus, he was shown as an adult with a beard and robe, and only later did he take on this more boyish appearance.

Domestic Pleasures & Public Celebrations

One of the rooms important to creating harmony in houses, whether large or small, was the kitchen, and obtaining and retaining a good cook or chef was vital to everyone's happiness. In early Renaissance religious paintings, it became popular to include vignettes of food being prepared, cooked or served in association with scenes of banquets, and these provided a fascinating glimpse into traditional storage, preparation and consumption of food. Monasteries served food in refectories, and many artists were commissioned to paint religious themes such as the Last Supper on the walls above the dining tables. Caravaggio, whose painting is on display in the adjoining gallery, learned the art of depicting lush fruits and botanically accurate flowers from northern artists working in Rome.

Still-life painting of the time often employed subtle religious, allegorical or social symbols.

Public festivals were important for maintaining social cohesion. Throughout Europe, the feasting and revelry of all social classes were captured in depictions of religious fairs, which were held during the summer months. Celebratory public processions in Florence were equally important events because they allowed displays of loyalty and religious piety. Even today, several parades take place yearly at which people in historical costume are led through the streets of Florence by prominent figures in society.



Giovanni Domenico Cerrini (1609–1681)
Italy

Woman Holding a Basket of Eggs circa 1645

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Giovanni Cerrini worked in Florence in 1656 for the Medici family. An immediate link to the paintings of Guido Reni can be seen in this young woman's upward glance, as if her thoughts are on higher matters than the mundane business of carrying a basket of eggs. The painting could be read as symbolising the three stages of life: eggs representing its beginning; a young woman in her prime; and an older woman envious of what she once was. Alternatively, it could represent the popular theme of an older woman attempting to lure an honest girl into a life of sin.



Unknown Maker

Copper Kitchen Utensils

copper
Florence, Private Collection



Antonietta Corsini (1864–1881?)
Italy

Recipes for Titbits 1881

paper
Florence, Private Collection

Written in an extremely clear and elegant hand, Antonietta Corsini's collection of recipes includes a kind of sweet bread called *affricani* which requires 12 egg yolks and sugar. It had to be beaten for half an hour before flavouring with vanilla essence and then baking. Other recipes include *ciambelle romane*, which Antonietta notes in the index is very fattening. There are also recipes for ginger biscuits, pizza and marsala-laced *pan dolce* for Christmas, which sounds rather like the delicious *pan forte* that is still a great favourite in elegant Florentine cafés.



Aloisi from Livorno
Italy

Costume Worn by Anna Barberini Corsini 1887

textiles
Florence, Private Collection

Tommaso Corsini oversaw the completion of the façade of Florence cathedral Santa Maria del Fiore. As part of the celebrations at its unveiling on 12 May 1887, Tommaso's wife Anna took part in the parade which took the form of a re-enactment of the solemn entrance into Florence of Amedeo VI, Count of Savoia, in 1387. This costume, which she wore for the parade, is decorated with Barberini bees, the symbol of her own family.



Michele Schemboche (active 1860–circa 1906)
Italy

Portrait of Anna Barberini Corsini 12 May 1887

black and white photograph
Florence, Private Collection



Agostino Tassi (1578–1644)
Italy

The Fair at Grottaferrata early 17th century

oil on canvas
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Two annual fairs have been held at Grottaferrata, outside Rome, since medieval times, celebrating the Annunciation of the Virgin (25 March) and her Nativity (8 September). Here, Agostino Tassi has painted the fortified rear of the church, which looms over the revellers below.

Terracotta vessels and pewter platters are piled up at one side because fairs were important places for trading. People of all classes are involved in the merrymaking. Gruel is being cooked in a cauldron for poorer revellers, and in the foreground a group of brightly clad women and their courtiers feast from food-laden platters.



Aloisi from Livorno
Italy

Page's Costume Worn by Filippo, Son of Anna Barberini Corsini 1887

textiles
Florence, Private Collection

Filippo Corsini wore this costume at the parade celebrating the completion of the façade of the Cathedral, also known as the Duomo, in Florence. He served as a page attending his mother, whose costume for the day is also on display.



Michele Schemboche (active 1860–circa 1906)
Italy

Filippo, Son of Anna Barberini Corsini, Dressed as a Page 12 May 1887

black and white photograph
Florence, Private Collection



Unknown Maker

Gaming Table

wood and inlay
Florence, Private Collection



Unknown Artist (School of Antwerp)

Boar Hunt in the Wood 16th century

oil on panel
Florence, Galleria Corsini

Wealthy families in Florence often had three kinds of dwellings: large city houses (*palazzi*), smaller houses (*casini*) outside the city walls, and country villas. Rural estates were vital for providing food and wine for city residences, while their forests allowed hunting for game. This scene of a boar hunt suggests a cacophony of sounds – one hunter on foot blows his horn, mastiffs bark at the boar and huntsmen cry instructions to each other. A gentleman on horseback grips a weapon ready to strike, and two others hold lances in case the boar tries to break away.

The 20th Century, A Story of Survival

When under threat during World War II, the quick thinking and determination of Princess Elena Corsini and her devoted servants saved the art collection from confiscation. Larger paintings were secreted away in the countryside or in Palazzo Corsini itself, while smaller works were stored in the crypt beneath the Brancacci chapel in the Church of the Carmine, across the nave from the chapel dedicated to their family saint, Andrea Corsini. When Ponte Trinita, the bridge near the palazzo, was blown up, the palazzo sustained damage but the sculptures on the roof remained upright, demonstrating that all was not lost.

Then, on 4 November 1966, the river Arno burst its banks and water inundated the city. No building near the river was exempt, but again the family rallied and the frescoes and grottos on the ground floor were ultimately restored. The portraits and photographs on display here capture these events, and the determined women who continue to preserve the heritage established by the Corsini family over many centuries.



Pietro Annigoni (1910–1988)
Italy

Portrait of Princess Elena Corsini 1950

oil and tempera on panel
Florence, Private Collection

Pietro Annigoni was known as the ‘painter of queens’ with his subjects including Elizabeth II of England. Elena Avogadro of the Counts of Collobiano was born in Turin in 1903, and she married Prince Tommaso Corsini in 1929. Here she is seated on a rock in the wild mountains of Maremma, an area in the south of Tuscany where the family owned vast properties. Her dark grey cape almost blends in with the landscape – only the red scarf at her feet, the rose in her hand and autumn’s yellowing leaves provide a touch of colour. Annigoni has also included two tiny figures on the left, scurrying against the wind.

The princess was responsible for saving the Corsini art collection from the German armed forces in 1944.



Luciano Guarnieri (1930–2009)
Italy

Portrait of Countess Anna Lucrezia Sanminiatelli Corsini 1958

oil on canvas
Florence, Private Collection

This portrait of Countess Anna Lucrezia creates links to two other portraits in the exhibition. Ridolfo Ghirlandaio's *Portrait of an Unknown Man* also places the sitter close to the picture plane, while the landscape in the background of *Antonietta Corsini von Waldstätten* is similarly framed by stone. However, the view behind Antonietta leads to the hills inland from Florence, whereas Anna Lucrezia wished to be depicted with a view of the Arno valley, in which the river can be seen gently winding its way to the sea.



Luciano Guarnieri (1930–2009)
Italy

Portrait of Countess Lucrezia Miari Fulcis Corsini 1964

pastel on paper
Florence, Private Collection

In 1964, Luciano Guarnieri portrayed Prince Don Tommaso Corsini and Donna Elena's daughters: 25-year-old Anna Lucrezia ('Annalu'), wife of Cosimo Andrea of the Counts Sanminiatielli; and 28-year-old Lucrezia, who was married to Count Giacomo Miari Fulcis. Luciano Guarnieri was Pietro Annigoni's favoured disciple and for decades had his studio on the top floor of the Corsini Palace on Via del Parione. It was here that the two young women posed for their portraits.

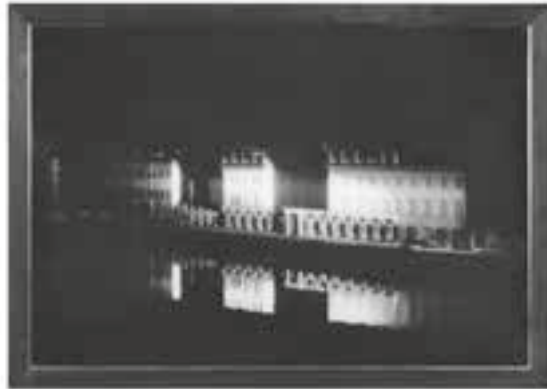
The portrait of Lucrezia appears – despite the traditional pose – to take a modern and essential approach: the figure stands out against a neutral background.



Unknown Photographer

View of Ponte Santa Trinita from Lungarno Corsini 1966

from: *Photos of the Palazzo During and After the Flood of 1966*, 1966
black and white photograph
Florence, Private Collection



Unknown Photographer

Palazzo Corsini at Night 1966

from: *Photos of the Palazzo During and After the Flood of 1966*, 1966

black and white photograph

Florence, Private Collection



Unknown Photographer

**The Bridge at Santa Trinita and the Lungarno
Photographed from the Rooftops of Palazzo
Corsini Moments before the Flood of November
4 1966 4 Nov 1966**

from: *Photos of the Palazzo During and After the Flood of 1966*, 1966
black and white photograph
Florence, Private Collection



Luciano Guarnieri (1930–2009)
Italy

Palazzo Corsini During the Flood of November 4 1966 1967

from: *Florence Flood 4 November 1966*, 1967
lithograph
Florence, Private Collection



Unknown Photographer

Lungarno Corsini and the Remains of Ponte Santa Trinita 1944

black and white photograph
Florence, Private Collection

The Corsini Family in the 18th & 19th Centuries

For centuries, aristocratic families have made alliances through marriage. The selection of a spouse for the sons and daughters of heads of state was a strategic matter, and portraits played a vital role when choosing a husband or wife from another country. In the Renaissance, families settled feuds by marrying their daughters to the sons of their enemies, and traditionally these decisions were made without consultation with the future spouses, who might only meet shortly before or on their wedding day. Once married, a woman's allegiance shifted to her husband's family.

However, from the 18th century onwards, young people often had time to get to know their partner to be. The portrait of Amerigo Corsini, son of Prince Tommaso Corsini and the Pisan heiress Luisa Scotto, was painted around 1852, before he went to Paris to meet the daughters of Don Ferdinando Muñoz, Duke of Riáñzares and Maria Cristina of Bourbon, the widow of Ferdinando VII King of Spain. He chose the eldest daughter, Donna Maria Amparo, to be his bride and the wedding date was set for the following year. On his return to Florence, Amerigo fell ill and died aged only 18. His mother dedicated her life to preserving Amerigo's memory, including binding his watercolours into the album seen here and embroidering panels with his name.



Dante Sodini (1858–1934)
Italy

Medal Depicting Prince Tommaso Corsini 1915

bronze
Florence, Private Collection

Tommaso Corsini, son of Neri and Eleonora Rinuccini, inherited the title of prince after his cousin Amerigo died tragically young. Married to Anna, a noblewoman of the Barberini and Colonna families, Tommaso became a politician in the new Kingdom of Italy and was mayor of Florence between 1880 and 1886. A mathematics graduate from Pisa University, he was also a passionate archaeologist and many ancient relics were excavated from his properties, which he later donated to the Etruscan Museum in Florence. He sold Palazzo Corsini on the Lungara in Rome to the Italian state, and gifted the nation the Corsini Gallery and Library that remain there today.



Unknown Photographer

Photograph of Anna and Luisa, Daughters of Prince Barberini Colonna, Wives of Tommaso and Pierfrancesco Corsini after 1863

black and white photograph with brown velvet covered frame with gold decoration
Florence, Private Collection

Anna Barberini Colonna married Tommaso Corsini (son of Neri and Eleonora Rinuccini) in 1858, and her younger sister Luisa married Tommaso's younger brother Pierfrancesco in 1863. Anna's choice of husband was partly motivated by the strong bond between the two sisters – they were able to remain close after marrying into the same family.



Natale Carta (1800–1888)
Italy

Portrait of Anna and Luisa, Daughters of Prince Barberini Colonna, Wives of Tommaso and Pierfrancesco Corsini 1852

oil on canvas
Florence, Private Collection

Anna (born 1840) and her younger sister Luisa (born 1844) were descendants of Maffeo Barberini's family, whose portrait by Caravaggio is also in the exhibition. Here, they are depicted in the latest fashion of the time. Anna wears a white dress tied at the waist with a tartan sash, and her straw hat is tied with a matching ribbon. Luisa, who is dressed in pink, has removed her hat so that she can play more freely with her hoop. The setting is their garden in Rome, where Natale Carta, an artist from Messina, had his studio near the stables at Palazzo Barberini. Both sisters married into the Corsini family and could therefore remain close even after they had wed.



Pietro Benvenuti (1769–1844)
Italy

Portrait of Antonietta Corsini von Waldstätten 1812

oil on canvas
Florence, Private Collection

This portrait was painted shortly after Prince Tommaso Corsini married Antonietta, and Pietro Benvenuti depicts her glowing with the freshness of youth. She is seated on a flowery shawl in front of the view over the garden of the Corsini Palace on Prato (as opposed to Palazzo Corsini in via del Parione, which even then was used for formal occasions rather than daily living). Wearing a crimson empire-line dress made fashionable by the Napoleonic court, she is drawing a scene with a bridge in the sketchpad on her lap.



Pietro Benvenuti (1769–1844)
Italy

Portrait of Tommaso Corsini 1812

oil on canvas
Florence, Private Collection

Prince Tommaso Corsini played an active part in Italian political life working in the court of Napoleon's sister Elisa Baciocchi, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, who became an imperial princess after her brother's coronation as King of Italy. In 1802, while in Vienna, Tommaso married Antonia, known as Antonietta, the daughter of Baron Joseph Karl von Waldstätten. In 1814, when Napoleon's rule collapsed, Tommaso and Antonietta moved to Rome. Pietro Benvenuti was an important neo-classical painter and official portraitist at the court of Elisa Baciocchi, and he would have been a natural choice to portray the happy young couple.



Unknown Artist

Portrait of Amerigo Corsini circa 1852–53

oil on canvas

Florence, Private Collection



Luisa Scotto Corsini (1808–1888)
Italy

Embroidered Pillow after 1853

needlepoint
Florence, Private Collection



Amerigo Corsini (1835–1853)

Italy

**Watercolour Album of Drawings Made by Amerigo
Corsini, Compiled by His Mother Luisa Scotto Corsini**
after 1853

album

Florence, Private Collection



Luisa Scotto Corsini (1808–1888)
Italy

Amerigo Corsini with His Tutors circa 1840

pencil, watercolour and body-colour on paper
Florence, Private Collection

The Dining Room

In this room, a small-scale display of a dinner setting used by the Corsini family in Florence has been reconstructed. Each of the Chinese porcelain plates is decorated with hand-painted flowers, and the Vermeil cutlery is made from a French technique involving fire-gilding, where a thin layer of gold is coated onto silver. The porcelain-handled knives have the Corsini family crest engraved on the shaft of the blade. Many Florentines had political and mercantile associations with France over the centuries. From 1801 to 1814, Tuscany was under the dominion of Napoleon's France, which saw a heightened adoption of French customs in the homes of leading Florentines. As witnessed in the menu on display, French cuisine epitomised this cultural focus. Many aristocratic households had a French chef in residence, and even the Bordeaux tablecloth is French in origin.



Unknown Makers

Small-scale Reconstruction of the Dining Room with a Table Setting for Six People

Bordeaux table cloth, white embroidered centrepiece, napkins, Chinese porcelain plates, glasses with golden rim, Vermeil cutlery, white and gold chairs with cushions, framed menu

Florence, Private Collection

Many Italian aristocratic families employed French chefs, and the French language was an essential part of a good education. Beautifully decorated with corner scrolls, much like a medieval illuminated manuscript, the menu for this banquet held at Palazzo Corsini on 22 March 1857 lists seven courses. These began with game soup with barley and hard-boiled yolks of eggs cut in small pieces, and oyster soup followed by an *hors d'oeuvre* of little *pâtés*. Then there were *relevés* (dishes with sauce) which included fish with shrimp hollandaise and fillet of beef in madeira sauce, followed by vegetables.

Next, *entrées* were served comprising chicken breast in cream sauce, lamb cutlets in the Périgord style, chilled fillets of woodcock in aspic and truffles in champagne, served with Roman punch. These delicacies were followed by *pintades* (roast guinea fowl) accompanied by asparagus in hollandaise sauce, lobster in aspic and garnished ham.

Finally, the *entremets* or dessert course included warm English pudding, cheese mousse, Neapolitan cake and Russian jelly.

Jacopo Peri (1561–1633)
Italy

Euridice

1600 (first performance)

Recording: Ensemble Les Arts Baroques, conducted by Mireille Podeur, 2017 (release)

During the Renaissance and Baroque periods Florence was the birthplace not only of the art you see in this exhibition, but also of a new music genre – opera, an art form which endures today. Jacopo Peri was at the heart of this musical development. Born in Rome, he travelled to Florence to study and then later worked as a singer, musician and composer in the Medici court.

In about 1597, Peri wrote the music for a composition which is considered to be the world's first opera: *Dafne*. Peri's later *Euridice*, which can be heard playing in this dining room, is the earliest opera that survives in full. It was first performed in 1600 at the Palazzo Pitti, only a kilometre from the Palazzo Corsini, on the occasion of the marriage of King Henry IV of France and Maria de' Medici. Curiously, the King did not travel to Florence for the occasion, the marriage instead taking place by proxy.

Greek mythology was a source of fascination and inspiration for composers. Peri's opera was based on the Greek myth of the doomed lovers Orpheus and Eurydice, found in Book X of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The music tells the story of their meeting, Eurydice's death, Orpheus winning the blessing of the gods with his song of grief and sorrow, and his ill-fated journey into the underworld to retrieve his lover.



Unknown Photographer

Photograph of Anna and Luisa, Daughters of Prince Barberini Colonna, Wives of Tommaso and Pierfrancesco Corsini after 1863

black and white photograph with brown velvet covered frame with gold decoration

Florence, Private Collection

Anna Barberini Colonna married Tommaso Corsini (son of Neri and Eleonora Rinuccini) in 1858, and her younger sister Luisa married Tommaso's younger brother Pierfrancesco in 1863. Anna's choice of husband was partly motivated by the strong bond between the two sisters – they were able to remain close after marrying into the same family.

‘ . . . forty minutes duration (although that is of no importance, as one will see) [consisting] of one unique continuous “sound,” drawn out and deprived of its beginning and of its end, creating a feeling of vertigo and of aspiration outside of time. Thus, even in its presence, this symphony does not exist. It exists outside of the phenomenology of time because it is neither born nor will it die. However, in the world of our possibilities of conscious perception, it is silence – audible presence.’

(Yves Klein, ‘Overcoming the Problematic of Art’ in *Overcoming the Problematic of Art: The Writings of Yves Klein*, Klaus Ottmann (ed and trans) Spring Publications, Putnam, CT, 2007, p 47)

Italy in Auckland

Predominantly dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, these artworks testify to the lively spirit of Italian pageantry and competition and the important role of art in the period.

There are multiple cross-references here to the people and art featured in the Corsini collection. Commissioned by the Medici, the prints of Jacques Callot and Stefano della Bella celebrate the family's power and love of opulent display within the vibrant city of Florence. Print copies of Raphael's tapestries and Michelangelo's frescoes for Pope Julius II, in the first room of the Corsini exhibition, provide insight into the nuanced messages of papal authority contained in major artistic commissions.

Giorgio Vasari's biography of painters and sculptors, published in 1550 and greatly expanded in 1658, framed artists as divine intellectuals, encouraging a competitive culture in which the title of 'master' was highly sought after. Fellow artists, as well as connoisseurs, collected drawings and prints. Drawings were prized for their immediacy, – the inspired artist's eye and mind translated through the hand. These provide evidence of the period's delight in virtuosic and competitive displays of creative skill.

Owned by the people of Auckland, the artworks in this room bring New Zealand and Italy together in cross-cultural and cross-temporal exchanges of ideas, art and history, providing an apt conclusion to Auckland's showcase of the Corsini Collection.



Giovanni Battista Castello (1547–1639)
Italy

The Crucifixion 1609

tempera on panel
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
gift of Moss Davis, 1927

Giovanni Battista Castello was influenced by the villa decorations of Luca Cambiaso in Genoa as well as the work of Raphael and Giulio Romano. Although much of his work was centred on grand-scale architectural decoration, Castello also produced intimate votive works such as *The Crucifixion*.

The scene of Mary and Christ's followers grieving at the foot of the cross became an important theme during the Catholic Counter-Reformation in the 17th century. Artists were encouraged to paint scenes that touched the spectator directly, and the desolation of his followers, unable to alleviate Christ's suffering, was considered particularly effective in bringing about this response.



Ugo da Carpi (1445–1537)

Italy

after Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio) (1483–1520)

Italy

The Descent from the Cross circa 1512–25

chiaroscuro woodcut

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

purchased 1962

Although based on a painting by Raphael, Ugo da Carpi's interpretation is entirely his own. Da Carpi claimed to have invented the chiaroscuro woodcut technique, where strong blocks of colour are used to give effects of light and shade. With its use of rich ochre, *The Descent from the Cross* provides a warm contrast to the tragic events that the print depicts. The strong pyramidal composition draws us to the central theme of the work – Christ's suffering is over, and humanity is left to grieve.



Anton Domenico Gabbiani (1652–1726)
Italy

The Presentation of the Virgin 1673–1726

pen and brown wash
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Dedicated to the temple at birth by her grateful parents who had long struggled to conceive a child, the scene shows the young Mary climbing the steep steps of the temple towards the high priest Zacharias, who awaits her at the top. Her aged parents Anna and Joachim, who have brought doves as offerings of thanks, stand at the foot of the steps accompanied by onlookers. The theme was meant as a visible symbol of the Virgin's consecration as the 'chosen vessel' of Christ's Incarnation, and young women were encouraged to emulate her innocence, purity and obedience.



Giulio Clovio (1498–1578)
Italy

The Prophet Isaiah and King Ahaz circa 1564

The Visitation circa 1564

pen and bistre
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah informs King Ahaz that a young woman will give birth to a son Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us’ (Isaiah 7:14). This revelation prefigures the Annunciation of the birth of Christ in the New Testament. In the second drawing here, however, a later event in the narrative is shown.

The Visitation refers to the meeting between the Virgin Mary, pregnant with the Christ Child, and her older cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist.

The decorative borders are drawn from classical sources, harmoniously combining the two great fields of contemporary artistic expression.

Clovio was born in Croatia but trained as an artist in Italy, studying initially in Venice and then in Rome with Giulio Romano. One of his most famous commissions was the Grimani Evangeliary (Marciana, Venice) containing numerous illuminated initials and illustrations, the frames of which contained complex decorative motifs. Both *The Prophet Isaiah and King Ahaz* and *The Visitation* are closely connected with miniatures in the Farnese Hours (J Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York), which Clovio prepared for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in 1546.



Ventura Salimbeni (1568–1613)
Italy

Massacre of the Innocents date unknown

pen and brown wash
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
purchased 1962

Learning of Christ's Nativity and fearing that his own power would be usurped by the future 'king of the Jews', Herod the Great ordered the slaughter of infants in Bethlehem. The Holy Family fled into Egypt to escape the massacre. Here, there is so much swirling action that it is hard to find a central focal point. Ventura Salimbeni, who became known later in life as Bevilacqua, was an Italian Counter-Mannerist painter and printmaker who was highly influenced by the sensuous handling seen in the work of Federico Barocci.



Luca Cambiaso (1527–1585)
Italy

Hercules Fighting Cerberus 16th century

pen and wash
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
purchased 1981

Many artists looked back to Michelangelo as a source when drawing the muscular male body, particularly with the figure of Hercules, who personified physical strength and courageous heroism. Along with his battle with the Hydra of Lerna, one of the 12 Labours of Hercules involved him descending into the underworld to capture Cerberus, the three-headed dog that guarded the entrance to Hades. Although a number of artists depict Hercules with an upraised club, the myth described him as catching the monstrous hound by the throat until it weakened and yielded to him.



Giovanni Caraglio (circa 1505–1565)

Italy

after Rosso Fiorentino (1494–1540)

Italy

Hercules Killing the Hydra of Lerna circa 1525

from: *Six Herculean Subjects*, circa 1525

engraving

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

gift of Robert Newton, 1993

Rosso Fiorentino trained in the studio of Andrea del Sarto in Florence, where he had access to a large print collection. Many artists used prints for studying different compositions. Rosso moved to Rome when Giulio de' Medici was elected Pope Clement VII, in the hope of attaining his patronage. Part of a set of six depicting the Labours of Hercules, this work was printed by Giovanni Caraglio after Rosso's design, which demonstrates the influence of Michelangelo's muscular depictions of human anatomy.

A many-headed monster, the Hydra of Lerna has been given legs in this print rather than the traditional form of a water snake. When Hercules cut off one of its heads, two others immediately took its place. The goddess Juno, who had reared the monster, sent a crab to nip Hercules' feet, to no avail.



Thomas Holloway (1748–1827)

England

Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio) (1483–1520)

Italy

Miraculous Draft of Fishes 1821

proof engraving and etching
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
transferred from Auckland City Libraries
gift of the Leys Institute, 2009

Thomas Holloway produced copies of seven cartoons produced by Raphael, from 1515 to 1516 for a series of tapestries commissioned by Pope Leo X Medici for the Sistine Chapel in Rome. The tapestries focused on scenes from the lives of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, the founders of the Christian Church and sources of papal power. This cartoon depicts the apostles achieving a miraculously bountiful catch of fish after Christ instructs Peter to cast his net into the water. Peter kneels before Christ in devotion as the men struggle to lift their full nets. The fishes' capture is a metaphor for the salvation of the fishermen's souls, while the flock of cranes symbolise the wisdom and power of Leo X's papal rule.



Thomas Holloway (1748–1827)
England
after Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio) (1483–1520)
Italy

The Healing of the Lame Man 1820

engraving and etching
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
transferred from Auckland City Libraries
gift of the Leys Institute, 2009

This is another story from the *Life of Peter* commissioned by Pope Leo X for the series of tapestries in the Sistine Chapel. Saints John and Peter heal a cripple, framed by twisting Solomonic columns that derive from the First Temple of Jerusalem. It was thought that these ancient columns were salvaged by Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor. They were incorporated into the first basilica dedicated to Saint Peter built in 4th century AD, where they remained into the 16th century. Leo X was criticised for his lavish spending — the project cost 16,000 ducats, more than five times the amount paid by his predecessor Pope Julius II to Michelangelo for the decoration of the Sistine Chapel ceiling.



Francesco Aquila (circa 1676–1740)

Italy

after Raffaello Sanzio, known as Raphael (1483–1520)

Italy

Parnassus 1722

from: *Engravings after Raphael's Vatican Frescoes*, 1722
engraving

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
transferred from Auckland City Libraries
gift of the Leys Institute, 2009

Also commissioned by Julius II for the Stanza della Segnatura, *Parnassus* celebrates Poetry. Apollo, the god of poetry, truth and music, is seated in the centre of Mount Parnassus, the home of the Muses. Like *School of Athens*, Raphael intermingles classical and contemporary figures to suggest the timelessness of poetic art. Renaissance poets Ludovico Ariosto, Giovanni Boccaccio and Dante Alighieri stand alongside the ancient poets Homer, Virgil and Sappho. They are accompanied by the mythological muses Clio, Terpsichore, Thalia and Calliope.



Francesco Aquila (circa 1676–1740)

Italy

after Raffaello Sanzio, known as Raphael (1483–1520)

Italy

School of Athens 1722

from: *Engravings after Raphael's Vatican Frescoes*, 1722

engraving

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

transferred from Auckland City Libraries

gift of the Leys Institute, 2009

Raphael's *School of Athens* (1509–11) is one of four frescoes commissioned by Pope Julius II for the Stanza della Segnatura, his study in the official papal apartments at the Apostolic Palace. Each fresco depicts branches of spiritual and worldly wisdom and *School of Athens* is a visual celebration of philosophy. In the centre Plato and Aristotle debate the relationship between the cosmos and the material world. Figures representing classical scholars like Socrates and Pythagoras intermingle with Raphael's contemporaries. Michelangelo rests against a plinth in the central foreground. Fusing both antique and Renaissance learning, *School of Athens* heralds the importance of knowledge, while also celebrating Julius's dedication to the arts and literature.



Cherubino Alberti (1553–1615)

Italy

after Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564)

Italy

One of the *Ignudi* from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel Ceiling 1573

engraving

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
purchased 1955

This engraving is a detail from Cherubino Alberti's larger print of one of the 20 *ignudi* (muscular nude figures) that appear at intervals around the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. Michelangelo's aim was to combine teachings from the classical Greek world that 'man was the measure of all things' and the religious beliefs of his own time.

Determined to understand the workings of the human body, Michelangelo had carried out dissections at a Florentine hospital, a practice criticised by the Church, which preached that at the Resurrection the human body must be entire.



Léonard Gaultier (1561–1641)

France

Michelangelo (1475–1564)

Italy

The Last Judgement late 16th century

steel engraving

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

gift of Wallace Alexander, 1940

Pope Paul III commissioned *The Last Judgement* in 1534 for the sanctuary wall of the Vatican Chapel in Rome. The work is a marked contrast to the ceiling frescoes from the Old Testament including the *Creation of Adam and Eve* that Michelangelo completed in 1512 for Pope Julius II, whose portrait sketch by Raphael is in the Corsini exhibition. The Last Judgement marks the end of time when humans are resurrected before Christ. Although without the luminous colours of the fresco, Gaultier's print captures the seething mass of figures that writhe in horror as they descend, or gaze in wonder as they rise towards heaven, according to Christ's judgement of their deeds on earth. Michelangelo's portrait is included between the two curved pendentives that support the ceiling.



Pier Francesco Mola (1612–1666)
Italy

Bust of a Priest in Profile 1632–66

red chalk
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Although born near Lugano, Pier Francesco Mola grew up in Rome, and that was where he carried out most of his work as an artist. He is renowned for his drawings, often using a gall ink which problematically becomes fugitive over time, so we are fortunate with this depiction of a priest that he chose to use red chalk instead. There is something fresh and immediate about drawings such as this, where the artist's eye and hand are in rapid communication, the lines swirling and darting over the surface of the paper. Among others Mola was influenced by Guercino and Agostino Tassi, whose works are in the Corsini exhibition, keeping a collection of the latter's work in his studio.



Agostino Carracci (1557–1602)
Italy

Head of a Young Girl late 16th century

chalk
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

From Bologna, Annibale, Ludovico and Agostino Carracci set up an academy that stressed the importance of studying nature, with an emphasis on natural colour, rather than the exotic hues loved by the Mannerists.

This drawing has been identified against a 17th-century engraving from a group of prints forming a 'drawing book' after drawings by Agostino Carracci. These books were eagerly sought after by artists who wished to make copies or adapt a composition to their own ends. For example, this drawing was later engraved by Francesco Bizio and Luca Ciamberlano.



Giovan Francesco Barbieri, known as Guercino
(1591–1666)
Italy

A Young Girl Holding a Sleeping Child circa 1640

pen, brown ink and brown wash
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Guercino (who earned his nickname because he had developed a squint in his eye as a child) had a passion for drawing. His style has been described as full of *sprezzatura*, a term made popular by Baldasar Castiglione in his *Book of the Courtier* (1528), which historian Peter Burke defines as combining a kind of nonchalance, careful negligence, effortlessness and ease. In this drawing by Guercino, the young mother's shawl and her dress are defined by a few, rapid lines, with only a few patches of wash to add depth. We can sense the weight of the sleeping baby, clad only in a tattered vest, in his mother's arms.



Guido Reni (1575–1642)
Italy

A Sleeping Child 17th century

pen and brown ink and grey wash
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

When Guido Reni died in 1642, almost 2000 drawings were found stacked up in his studio. This sketch is related to a fresco – a medium he had not used for many years – that Reni was commissioned to paint at St Peters in Rome in 1627 by the Barberini. Instead he painted a small work *Sleeping Child* in fresco, now in Palazzo Barberini, which was later detached from the wall and mounted in a frame. The same sleeping child appears in several other paintings by Reni in slightly different positions. The paper has a letter on the back signed by one of Reni's assistants, Gian Giacomo Sementi, who sometimes took drawings from his master and sold them to eager collectors.



Jacques Callot (1592–1635)
France

The Chariot of Thetis 1616

from: *War of Beauty*, 1616
etching
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
bequest of Dr Walter Auburn, 1982

Thetis, the goddess of the sea, is depicted seated on a pearl-encrusted conch shell, her chariot bedecked with coral and sea shells. The figure was described as costumed in silver and adorned with a green hairpiece. Surrounded by Tritons and personifications of the Tyrrhenian, the Adriatic and the Aegean Seas, the chariot may symbolise the maritime triumphs enjoyed by the Medici and the Rovere families and their powerful dominion over the Italian peninsula. In 1571, the two families joined a successful alliance of European Catholic states in the Battle of Lepanto, the largest naval battle witnessed since antiquity. An immortal nymph and the mother of Achilles, the hero of the Trojan War, Thetis symbolises eternal greatness and the strength of family lineage.



Jacques Callot (1592–1635)
France

The Chariot of Mount Parnassus 1616

from: *War of Beauty*, 1616
etching
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
bequest of Dr Walter Auburn, 1982

This chariot representing Mount Parnassus symbolises the magnificence of Duke Federico Ubaldo della Rovere and his family. In Ancient Greek mythology Mount Parnassus was sacred to Apollo, the god of knowledge, music and poetry, and home to the Muses. Emblematic of knowledge and poetic inspiration, the mountain confers these attributes onto the Rovere family. The oak tree (*rovere*) on the mountain's peak symbolises the family and their coat of arms. Carrying figures representing the Muses, scholars, Fame and Truth, the chariot celebrates the Rovere family's dedication to knowledge, literature and the arts, which in turn bestows Fame and magnificence on the family court, Duke Federico Ubaldo della Rovere, and his intended bride, Claudia de' Medici.



Jacques Callot (1592–1635)
France

2nd Interlude: Hell Arms Itself to Avenge Circe 1616

from: *The Interludes*, 1616
etching
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
bequest of Dr Walter Auburn, 1982

Several plays were performed to celebrate the marriage of Caterina de' Medici to Ferdinand Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, in 1616. Wedding festivities were noted for their splendour, often featuring triumphal processions, banquets, ballets, fireworks and mock battles. This print depicts the escape of Tirreno and Arnea from imprisonment by the sorceress Circe, and her resulting fury. Devilish figures cavort across the 'stage' and in the sky, engulfing buildings in flames. Skeletons, goats, dragons and other bizarre creatures abound; otherworldly beings that may not have appeared in the production but are instead Callot's imaginative vision of Hell and its malevolent forces.



Jacques Callot (1592–1635)
France

Ensemble View of the Festival 1616

from: *War of Beauty*, 1616
etching
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
bequest of Dr Walter Auburn, 1982

In October 1616, Federico Ubaldo della Rovere, duke of Urbino and bridegroom of Claudia de' Medici, made an official visit to Florence. The city celebrated with balls, masques and theatre performances showcasing the Medici and Rovere families' glory. An elaborate equestrian ballet, *The War of Beauty*, was performed in Piazza Santa Croce at the climax of these festivities, of which *Ensemble View of the Festival* provides a panoramic view. Horse riders prance across the arena as part of a mock battle, the chariot of Thetis leading a procession towards the middle. This was followed by an allegorical personification of Fame, proclaiming the magnificence of the two courts. Over 25,000 people watched the performance.



François-Auguste Moitte (1748–1790)
France
after Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805)
France

Florentine Gentlewoman with a Little Muff 1765–80

From: *Different Italian Costumes*, 1765–80
engraving
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
gift of Dennis R Nathan, 1972

Prints such as this became popular among artists who wished their works to have a contemporary feel, but also among women who wished to study the latest fashions from home and abroad. As well as her muff, the young woman carries a prayer book. She is outside a church, as if she has just come from mass, thereby framing the frivolity of fashion within the respectability of religious devotion. During the Renaissance, respectable women would never have left the house unaccompanied, as reflected in Jacques Callot's *Maria Maddalena and the Dowry Procession*, where young women are appropriately chaperoned.



Stefano Della Bella (1610–1664)
Italy

The Grotto of Mugnone 1650–56

From: *Views of the Villa Pratolino*, 1650–56
etching
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
bequest of Dr Walter Auburn, 1982

The construction of Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici's villa and gardens at Pratolino were supervised by the architect and engineer Bernardo Buontalenti from 1569 to 1584. This project was extensive, transforming farmland and woods into a 'garden wonderland'. Renaissance scholars revitalised the classical vision of gardens as retreats for poetry, philosophical discourse, study and sensuous enjoyment. This concept was realised in the playful and captivating grottos, sculptures, tree houses, alleyways and fountains at Villa Pratolino. The Medici family still possessed these etchings in the 1700s, indicating that they most likely commissioned the series from Della Bella.



Stefano Della Bella (1610–1664)
Italy

Jets of Water Spurting out of the Ground in a Pine Wood 1650–56

From: *Views of the Villa Pratolino*, 1650–56
etching
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
bequest of Dr Walter Auburn, 1982

The villa and surrounding gardens of Pratolino were designed for Francesco's mistress, Bianca Capello, and finished in time for their wedding in 1579. Pratolino was particularly famous for its numerous water features, an essential part of the Renaissance garden. Many designers used water to introduce witty interventions to amuse people as they strolled around the grounds of country estates. In the avenue depicted here, one ran the risk of getting soaked, and no doubt many visitors chose to pick up their skirts or clutch their jackets and see if they could outrun the spurts of water.



Jacques Callot (1592–1635)
France

Restoration of the Dome of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence 1615–19

from: *The Life of Ferdinando I de' Medici*, 1615–19
engraving
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
bequest of Dr Walter Auburn, 1982

Jacques Callot's *The Life of Ferdinando I de' Medici* celebrates the life of Cosimo II's father, Ferdinando I (1549–1609). Santa Maria del Fiore, also known as the Duomo, is the Cathedral of Florence. When finished, its dome, designed by Filippo Brunelleschi and completed in 1434, was hailed as a masterpiece of engineering. In this print Ferdinando I de' Medici views plans for the restoration of the church's dome, which can be seen in the background. These events are not supported by historical evidence; the print does not seem to depict a specific event but is most likely a general glorification of the numerous building projects that Ferdinando I de' Medici instigated throughout his rule to beautify the city.



Jacques Callot (1592–1635)
France

The Grand Duchess Maria Maddalena and the Festival of the Dowry 1615–19

from: *The Life of Ferdinando I de' Medici*, 1615–19
engraving
Mackelvie Trust Collection
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
bequest of Dr Walter Auburn, 1982

In May 1614, Grand Duchess Maddalena led 141 girls in the traditional Dowry Procession after they had attended mass in the church of San Lorenzo in Florence where each girl was presented with a bag of dowry money, thereby allowing her to marry. Passing the Baptistery in front of the Duomo, women from leading families walked the girls on to the Hospital of San Paolo, a charitable institution in piazza Santa Maria Novella. Cosimo II's father, Ferdinand I, had taken over the hospital's organisation in 1592, turning it into a home where citizens could convalesce for three days. Thus, the event (and the print) celebrated the two charities sponsored by the grand duke.



A M Monogrammist (17th century–)
The Netherlands

Jupiter and Antiope 1643

oil on panel
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

The central figures are taken from a larger composition of *Jupiter and Antiope* (Pardo Venus) in the Louvre by Tiziano Vercellio, known as Titian. The myth relates how Jupiter disguised himself as a satyr and seduced Antiope, daughter of the king of Thebes, as she slept. Antiope later gave birth to twin sons, Amphion and Zethus, who their father promptly exposed on Mount Cithaeron and where they were rescued by a shepherd. Amphion grew up to become a magical player of the lyre, an instrument given to him by Hermes. Antiope was punished for her inadvertent fall from grace, but when grown, her sons returned to avenge their mother. Titian borrowed the reclining figure of Venus from his fellow Venetian Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (Staatliche Gemaldegalerie, Dresden).



Giuseppe Cesari, known as Cavaliere d'Arpino
(1568–1640)
Italy

Saint Ursula date unknown

oil on panel
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
gift of Sir George Grey, 1887

Early in the Christian era, Ursula, daughter of the king of Brittany, was journeying to Rome accompanied by a group of virgins, when they were martyred by the Huns at Cologne. At some point her 11 companions expanded erroneously to 11,000. The patron saint of young women, Saint Ursula's story became a popular theme in art. The arrows indicate the manner of her death.

Guido Reni, whose drawing of a sleeping child is also on display, worked briefly alongside Cavaliere d'Arpino painting Pope Paul V's future funeral chapel in Rome, and from 1613–14, d'Arpino worked with Agostino Tassi (included in the Corsini exhibition) at what is now Villa Lante in Bagnaia.



Unknown Artist

Italy

after Raffaello Sanzio, known as Raphael (1483–1520)

Italy

Madonna of the Armchair early 19th century

oil on canvas

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

gift of Mrs J B Russell, 1895

There are innumerable copies of Raphael's famous *Madonna of the Armchair* (Pitti Palace, Florence), including one in the Corsini Collection. Auckland's version is much smaller than the original and the date of its execution is unknown but it is a faithful translation of the famous composition, which shows the Madonna seated in a wooden chair, cradling her child, while the infant Saint John the Baptist looks on. The *tondo* (round) format was very popular the previous century, being favoured by Botticelli, Michelangelo and others. Raphael painted the original in Rome, but by 1589 it was in the Medici collection in Florence.



Unknown Artist
Italy

Pietra Dura Table with Parakeet and Other Birds, Trees, Flowers and Butterfly

late 18th century—early 19th century

inlaid marble top with decorative brasswork
on sides and legs
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
gift of Norman B Spencer, 1967

Florence has been famous for its production of *pietra dura* (literally, hard stone) inlay work since the Renaissance, and examples grace many of the fine palaces of Italy. The technique is also used in a wide range of decorative arts. This particular table is a veritable still life of birds, fruits and plants, but while the trees with their berries are local, their exotic, brilliantly coloured plumage suggest the birds originated somewhere like India or North Africa. Giuseppe Zocchi, whose print of Palazzo Corsini is in the exhibition, worked for many years creating designs for Florence's *pietra dura* trade.



Paris Bordone (1500–1571)
Italy

Madonna and Child with Saint Sebastian circa 1518

oil on panel
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
purchased 1960

With its rich Venetian palette, this early painting by Paris Bordone reflects the influence of Titian, who was his master, but also Titian's younger rival, Giorgione. The painting is a type of *Sacra Conversazione*, the term given for the depiction of saints in dialogue with the Virgin and Child. Small works tended to be private commissions for domestic dwellings, where the owner/s might confide in the figures in the work, asking for their support in dealing with life's woes. Saint Sebastian was believed to protect against disease, particularly the plague, while the Madonna and Child represent the protection of the Church.



Antonio da Venezia (circa 1340–circa 1387)
Italy

Saint Bartholomew circa 1376

gesso and tempera on panel

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

purchased with assistance from the National Art Collection Fund and the Watson Bequest, 1965

The oldest painting in the Gallery's collections, *Saint Bartholomew* is one of four panels of saints which once flanked a painting of the Madonna and Child now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. One of the 12 apostles, Bartholomew was reputed to have been martyred by being flayed, hence his attribute of a butcher's knife. Little of Antonio's work survives apart from the Camposanto frescoes at Pisa, but he was an important link in the chain of development between early Italian masters such as Giotto di Bondone, Pietro Lorenzetti and Masaccio (Tommaso di Giovanni di Simone Cassa).



Federico Barocci (1535–1612)
Italy

The Annunciation 1582–84

etching and engraving
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
Peter Tomory Collection
purchased 2010

The Council of Trent decreed after the Sack of Rome (1527) that art must return to tradition, instead of the complex compositions that artists such as Michelangelo and Pontormo delighted in. Federico Barocci's print from his *Annunciation* (Vatican Art Collection) demonstrates this new clarity of meaning. It became popular to capture the moment when time seems to stop, the angel and the world of the faithful waiting for Mary's response to Gabriel's declaration that she has been chosen to bear the Son of God.