



## Online Press Kit

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### Press Release

**VERROCCHIO'S NEWLY RESTORED "DAVID" ON VIEW IN NATION'S CAPITAL, FEBRUARY 13 THROUGH MARCH 21, 2004; FIRST TIME RENAISSANCE MASTERPIECE HAS LEFT ITALY**

### Press Images

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

Andrea del Verrocchio  
 (Italian, 1435 - 1488)  
*David*, ca. 1465  
 Bronze, Height: 47-1/4 inches  
 National Museum of the Bargello,  
 Florence

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

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

particularly pleased to present *David* in the context of other important Florentine representations of this biblical hero and related works by the artist."

*David* will be seen for the first time in 527 years with the slain head of Goliath as Verrocchio originally placed it. The first in-depth technical examination and restoration, to be completed this fall by conservators at the National Museum of the Bargello, with support from the High Museum, confirmed that the head of Goliath was originally positioned outside David's right foot. In 1476, some ten years after the sculpture's conception, the head was repositioned between David's feet in order for the four-foot-high, 350-pound bronze to fit on a small pedestal next to a doorway inside the Palazzo Vecchio, the historic seat of city government in Florence. A wider pedestal base is being constructed for the U.S. installations. Restoration of *David* has also revealed brilliant gilding transforming his blond locks, as well as evidence that the sword is not original and vivid new anatomical details.

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

#### **Exhibition Support, Curators, and Catalogue**

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

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

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

the High Museum and the National Gallery of Art.

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

### Background

**Artist:** Andrea del Verrocchio, the leading sculptor in Italy in the second half of the 15th century, was also a painter and goldsmith. In addition to Leonardo da Vinci, his highly successful workshop trained such major artists as Sandro Botticelli. Verrocchio strove for technical perfection and realistic representation of the human form. Among his most renowned works is the equestrian monument of Bartolomeo Colleoni (1479-1488) in the Campo SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice, where Verrocchio died in 1488.

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

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

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

the transformative moment when David moves confidently beyond this act toward his destiny as warrior and king of Israel.

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

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### GENERAL INFORMATION

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are located on the National Mall between Third and Ninth Streets at Constitution Avenue, NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Through Labor Day, the Sculpture Garden's extended hours will be Monday through Thursday and Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Friday 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and Sunday 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1.

Visitors will be asked to present all bags and parcels for inspection. Backpacks and parcels must be left in the checkrooms. No parcels larger than 17 x 26 inches will be accepted in the checkrooms. Suitcases are permitted and must be x-rayed at the East or West Building entrances on 4th Street before being accepted in the checkrooms as they enter the Gallery.

Admission is always free.

General information: (202) 737-4215

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD): (202) 842-6176.

To receive the Gallery's free bimonthly Calendar of Events call (202) 842-6662

If you are a member of the press and would like more information or would like to be added to our press list, please contact the Press Office at [pressinfo@nga.gov](mailto:pressinfo@nga.gov), call (202) 842-6353, or send inquiries to:

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