

# The Renaissance of the Antique

## Unexpected revival of Egyptian blue in Raphael's *Galatea*

As part of the celebrations for the fifth centenary of Raphael's death, the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei organizes the exhibition "**Raphael in Villa Farnesina: Galatea and Psyche**" curated by the Lincei fellow Antonio Sgamellotti and the curator of Villa Farnesina Virginia Lapenta. It will be held from 6 October 2020 to 6 January 2021 in the Villa built and decorated by the very wealthy banker and close friend of Raphael, Agostino Chigi.

On this occasion will be showed the amazing results of the non-invasive analyses on the materials of Raphael's fresco, the *Triumph of Galatea* carried out by the group coordinated by prof. Sgamellotti and composed by Claudio Seccaroni (ENEA), Chiara Anselmi (IRET-CNR), Michela Azzarelli, Manuela Vagnini (Laboratorio di Diagnostica per i Beni Culturali di Spoleto), Roberto Alberti, Tommaso Frizzi (XGLab-Bruker). Such results were obtained by integrating the knowledge acquired during past restorations with those deriving from the most advanced analyses, both punctual and by images.

During the investigations a pigment known as Egyptian blue, the first man-made blue in the history of art and one of the first non-natural pigments ever, was identified throughout the sky, the sea and even in the eyes of Galatea. Its manufacture dates back to the Egyptians, from whom it takes its name, and its diffusion was extremely wide throughout antiquity up to the Roman Empire, after which its traces are lost. The extensive use made of it by Raphael excludes the source of archaeological material found occasionally and rather indicates the artist's precise intention to use the pictorial materials of antiquity, to portray a mythological subject. The palette of the ancients was known at that time through the traces visible in the excavations, but also and mainly through the written sources, in particular Vitruvius who in his treatise *De Architectura*, reports the ingredients and the preparation procedure of the Egyptian blue, then known as *caeruleum*. Raphael's passion for the Antique, so far known only through documentary evidences, actualizes in the materials that he himself decided to recreate, first of all the Egyptian blue, to restore the ancient Romans' palette.

During the exhibition will be presented to the public for the first time the drawings discovered in the 1970s on the plaster of the lower part of the walls with the *Polyphemus* by Sebastiano del Piombo and the *Triumph of Galatea* by Raphael, normally hidden by "fake" nineteenth-century curtains.

The section dedicated to the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche and housed there, will show the phases of the realization of the frescoed vault through the study of the *giornate* and the preparatory drawings of the currently visible scenes, the so-called heavenly, and of those never realized, the so-called earthly which unfortunately remained in the embryo, of which however exist drawings that illustrate their creative path.

On the first floor of the Villa Farnesina, in collaboration with the Central Institute for Graphics, the exhibition entitled "**The Fable of Cupid and Psyche in the graphic translation of the Regia Calcografia. Drawings, photographs, Copper plates**" <https://www.grafica.beniculturali.it/in-evidenza/raffaello-la-favola-di-amore-e-psiche-10422.html> emblematically summarizes the last phase of the historical path of classic Italian engraving which, since its origins, drew from the work of Raphael and his school the main source of inspiration, strength and driving force for the development of its own flourishing publishing market that from the nineteenth century, more and more widely and more effectively, will be replaced by photographic reproduction and photomechanical processes.

Together with the exhibition about Raphael's work in Villa Farnesina, Gianpaolo Palma and Eliana Siotto (ISTI-CNR) developed a dedicated interactive system that allows to freely navigate inside the

"digital Loggia" to observe the very particular pergola in the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche and to distinguish more easily the 170 vegetable species present in the festoons and the 50 animal figures represented in the spandrels of the vault, as well as to enjoy all those pictorial details of Apuleius' tale that are difficult to observe from the normal distance (8 meters). Moreover, within the "Digital Loggia" it will also be possible to consult the artworks exhibited by the Central Institute for Graphics. The system will be available through a touchscreen at the exhibition site or directly on the web at the link <http://vcg.isti.cnr.it/farnesina/loggia/>

The exhibition catalogue, in Italian and English, is published by Bardi Edizioni s.r.l.

**Documents and Images:** <https://bit.ly/32cK2Zh>

**Info:**

The villa is open to the public from Monday to Saturday from 9am to 14pm and every second Sunday of the month.

Visitors presenting the ticket to the Vatican Museums within 7 days from the date of visit, will enjoy a price reduction of Villa Farnesina ticket.

**Sunday opening:**

Every second Sunday of the month from 9 am to 17 pm.

**Reservations:** [farnesina@lincei.it](mailto:farnesina@lincei.it);

**Special openings on the second Sunday of each month 9am-5pm**

**Booking:** tel. 06 68027268

**Visitors Office:** [farnesina@lincei.it](mailto:farnesina@lincei.it); tel. 06 68 02 72 68

**Ticket price:**

Full ticket: 10 euro

Reduced ticket: 9 euro

Reduced ticket for students: 7 euro

Reduced ticket for school groups: 5 euro

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**COVID19 PROVISIONS** on the website [www.villafarnesina.it](http://www.villafarnesina.it)