

## THE COLOURS OF PROSPERITY: FRUITS FROM THE OLD AND NEW WORLD

Agostino Chigi's Villa – called Villa Farnesina from cardinal Alessandro Farnese, the owner at the end of the XVI century - was conceived by the wealthy Sienese banker Agostino Chigi, the merchant, banker and art patron, who earned the sobriquet of "Magnificent", like Lorenzo de' Medici. Villa Farnesina was designed by the Sienese Baldassarre Peruzzi and decorated with frescoes by Raffaello, Sebastianodel Piombo, Sodoma, and Peruzzi himself and it is one of the most representative buildings of the Italian Renaissance which became a model throughout Europe. Since 1948 Villa Farnesina and its magnificent garden were designed to the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei situated in the opposite Palazzo Corsini and it is open to the public like a museum.

In the Villa Farnesina the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche was wonderfully painted by Giovanni da Udine on a Raffaello project inspired by the novel from Apuleio (I sec. a.C). Giovanni da Udine decorated the Loggia with vegetal festoons intended to create the illusion of continuity between the gardens and the villa, as well as being endowed with a complex symbolic significance.

The festoons, consisting of about 170 depicted species, show indeed an ever unmatched painted biodiversity being the earliest documentation of American plant species that had recently arrived in Europe shortly after the continent's discovery.

The exceptionality of the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche will be celebrated within the exhibition "THE COLOURS OF PROSPERITY: FRUITS FROM THE OLD AND NEW WORLD", curated by the Lincei fellow Antonio Sgamellotti (Prof. Emeritus of Inorganic Chemistry, University of Perugia) and Giulia Caneva (Prof. of Applied and Environmental Botany, University of Roma Tre) which authored a monography concerning the species depicted in the Loggia. To the richness of botanical and iconographical variety are associated the results of non-invasive XRF, IR and IRFC imaging analyses which were performed *in situ* on the festoons to characterize the palettes and the execution technique of Giovanni da Udine. Such imaging analyses were made possible by the recent advances within spectroscopic field and integrate those carried out by the Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione e il Restauro during the 90's of the last century, shading new light on this extraordinary masterpiece, highlighting unprecedented aspects.

The exhibition itinerary articulates into the once private rooms of this magnificent building and includes a video room introducing the gardens of Villa Farnesina whose festoons constitute the perspective illusion thereof. Some exemplars of 16th editions texts from the Library of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana, delineate the artistic and scientific context from which originates the masterpiece of Villa Farnesina.

To get closer to such beautiful and extraordinary paintings and to learn more about their meaning, their symbolism and about the results of the diagnostic campaign, an interactive kiosk was designed which allows access to the "digital Loggia". The kiosk permits the visitor to navigate freely through the high resolution view of the painted ceiling and to admire it from a closer point of view. In this way it is easier to appreciate the over 170 different species painted within the festoons and to enjoy all those details barely observable from the floor distance (8 m). Within the kiosk some selected species of the panoramic view are described with detailed reports in which the story, the iconology and the scientific results are explained providing the visitor the chance to deepen his/her knowledge.

The interactive system can be browsed both from a touchscreen available within the exhibition and on the web at the link <http://vcg.isti.cnr.it/farnesina/> (available from april, 20<sup>th</sup>).

The exhibition catalogue is published by Bardi Edizioni S.r.l.

Museum opening times