

in the two triptychs by Lorenzo Monaco and in the small *Maestà* by Filippo Lippi, the viewer can follow the history of early 15th-century Florentine painting, in other words, the gradual shift from the elegance of the international Gothic to the great achievements of the Renaissance.

In the last two rooms of the picture gallery is a series of paintings ranging from the second half of the 15th century to the first decades of the 17th century. Both rooms are dominated by two monumental altar apparatuses from the collegiate church. These are the *Tabernacle of St Sebastian*, painted by Francesco Botticini, at the centre of

which is the “excellent” statue of St Sebastian, the work of Antonio Rossellino, and the *Tabernacle of the Sacrament*, made by Francesco and Raffaello Botticini. The *Annunciation* is also ascribed to the Botticini workshop, while the *Incredulity of St Thomas* by Jacopo da Empoli marks the period of transition to the counter-reformation, of which the artist was one of the leading exponents.

Finally, on exhibit in the *loggiate*, or exterior gallery, are some glazed terracotta works of varying provenance, ascribed to the Della Robbia and Buglioni workshops.



The Glass Museum of Empoli is organised in the evocative spaces created inside the Magazzino del Sale (Salt Warehouse), one of the city’s oldest buildings. Its construction dates back to 1365, and over the years it was extended and connected to a salt mill located near the nearby river port on the Arno. The salt from the Volterra salt pans was then deposited and preserved here. Once it arrived in Empoli, it was then distributed throughout Florence and the surrounding area.

The exhibition itinerary of the Glass Museum focuses on the glass industry, which strongly epitomised Empoli’s identity in terms of urban planning and local economic development. Bearing witness to this is the documentary *Vetro verde* (*Green Glass*), made in 1958 by the great Florentine documentary maker Lionetto Fabbri, who

accompanies the visitor throughout the itinerary. The narration begins on the ground floor, where the history of the first Empolese green glass products is illustrated, showing the workplaces and the processing phases. The objects on display – bottles, flasks, demijohns, glasses – are those that for decades were commonly used, populating kitchens, houses, tables and cellars and which have characterised the customs and habits of daily life of the last century. Documents, photographs and work tools are used to retrace the changes that have taken place in Empoli’s glass production, from manual production to semi automation and finally, full mechanisation.

On the upper floor, the second part of the exhibition is instead dedicated to art glass production, one of the most original expressions of

## MUSEUMS IN EMPOLI

### MUSEO DELLA COLLEGIATA DI SANT’ANDREA

THE MUSEUM OF THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF SANT’ANDREA IN EMPOLI  
piazza della Propositura 3

### CASA DEL PONTORMO

via Pontorme 97

### MUSEO DEL VETRO

THE GLASS MUSEUM  
via Cosimo Ridolfi 70

### CASA BUSONI

piazza della Vittoria 16

### GALLERIA D’ARTE MODERNA E DELLA RESISTENZA

THE GALLERY OF MODERN ART AND THE RESISTANCE  
via Giuseppe del Papa 41

### MUSEO CIVICO DI PALEONTOLOGIA

THE CIVIC MUSEUM OF PALAEONTOLOGY  
piazza Farinata degli Uberti

information: tel. +39 0571 76714, [empolimusei@comune.empoli.fi.it](mailto:empolimusei@comune.empoli.fi.it) | [www.empolimusei.it](http://www.empolimusei.it)



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## THE MUSEUM OF THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF SANT’ANDREA IN EMPOLI



Against the background of the Risorgimento riots that led to the proclamation of the Unification of Italy, on 29 June 1859 the Museum of the Collegiate Church of Sant’Andrea was established in Empoli. Today, it is still one of the oldest ecclesiastical museums in our country. It was instituted thanks to the interest (and a donation of 5,040 Lire) of the Empolese Vincenzo Salvagnoli, Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs in Tuscany at that time.

It was called ‘di Sant’Andrea’ or ‘della Collegiata’ since most of the works actually came from this church, and the first rooms to house the museum were annexed to the church. The current exhibition site, inside the Palazzo della Propositura, is also adjacent to the Collegiate Church, a sacred place around which the city has been developing since the Medieval, and still today, one of Empoli’s symbolic buildings.

The first body of works, which, as mentioned, came from the Collegiate Church, but also from nearby churches and private donors, was catalogued by the Royal Inspector Carlo Pini in 1863. The collection was then opened to the public in the late 1880s, after Guido Carocci, Inspector of the Superintendence and great expert regarding the territory, reorganised it according to chronological criteria.

The exhibition itinerary that came as a result of the collection’s reorganisation in 1990 begins on the ground floor in the evocative space that was the collegiate church’s baptistery since 1464: preserved here is the prized baptismal font, dated

to 1447 and attributed to Bernardo Rossellino, and some frescoes flanking the *Vir dolorum* by Masolino da Panicale. The work was discovered in the late 19th century beneath the plaster and is one of the most significant testimonials to the painter’s work, documented in Empoli in 1424, when he was called to paint the series with the *Stories of the True Cross* in the nearby church of Santo Stefano degli Agostiniani, now part of the museum itinerary.

The visit continues in the sculpture room, which houses works covering a chronological period from the late 13th to the 18th century. The most important work is undoubtedly the tondo depicting the *Madonna and Child* attributed to a very young Giovanni Pisano. Accompanying this are notable works such as the *Madonna and Child* by Mino da Fiesole and the *Magdalene* in wood made by Romualdo da Candeli and Neri di Bicci, based on an example of the one made by Donatello for the Baptistery of Florence and today in the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo in Florence.

On the main floor, the picture gallery covers four rooms, chronologically arranged; two of which face the cloister. In the first two rooms, panels and polyptychs, often dismembered, for centuries objects of worship in the churches of the area, provide an account of the history of Florentine painting between the 14th and 15th centuries. These are the paintings by the Master of 1310, Niccolò di Pietro Gerini and Agnolo Gaddi. The next room houses the museum’s masterpieces:



Italian craftsmanship of the 1930s. A vast and complex array of products, made up of table ware and green glass décor objects, evolved until the 1970s, it also includes creations in white and coloured glass and crystal, as the Empoli glassworks rapidly met the demands of Italian and foreign customers. Additional pieces, today exhibited in the rooms, have been generously donated to the Museum's collection over the years by numerous citizens and collectors.

While there is confirmation of glass production in Empoli as early as the 15th century, it experienced a boom in the second half of the 18th century, when Domenico Lorenzo Levantini began to produce majolica and glass near Porta Pisana. It was precisely at this kiln that Francesco Del Vivo and Michele Ristori established a glass factory active from 1830 to 1984. The presence of the glassworks, their chimneys rising above the city's

skyline, the noises of the kiln and voices of the glassmakers who worked there by the thousands, and those of the *fiascaie*, the basket weavers who covered flasks and demijohns, going about their jobs, have all, for decades, contributed to creating a city identity, inextricably bound to glass production. The photographs of the labourers and *fiascaie* at work, some dating back to the 1940s, represent a first trace of that documentary interest in the world of glass that also inspired the painter Sineo Gemignani. In 1956, he created his work *Il vetraio (The Glassmaker)*, part of the collection of the Gallery of Modern Art and the Resistance, now exhibited here.

In the 1980s, the historic glassworks began to move out of the city centre, in many cases closing permanently. And disappearing along with them was that urban landscape made up of factories, sounds and habitual traditions.



The Gallery of Modern Art and the Resistance was established by the Municipal Council of Empoli in 1974 with the aim of raising awareness among the younger generations regarding the facts of the Resistance, and acquainting the public with Tuscan art, particularly Empolese art of the second half of the 20th century.

The idea that Empoli could have a civic museum dedicated to contemporary art can be traced back to 20th-century local artists, in particular to Virgilio Carmignani and Gino Terreni who trained at the renowned Royal Institute of Art of

Porta Romana in Florence. There they studied, along with Mario Maestrelli and Sineo Gemignani, the lessons of Rosai and Soffici. They spent entire afternoons thinking about art and experimenting with techniques.

All of those artists who lived in Empoli at those years developed an interest in painting; so that this group was soon joined, not only by peers such as Loris Fucini, Cafiero Tuti, Dante Vincelle, Renato Alessandrini but also his father Nello, already a well-known professor. When they were in their early thirties, many of them were over-

whelmed or felled by the war. Maestrelli died too soon, while crossing a field near Empoli, and no one knows whether he was killed by a mine or a bullet. Carmignani survived, but spent years in captivity. He returned a changed man, not only physically but also spiritually. There is a clear gap between the works of the 1930s and those of the post-war period: not only in the collection of prison watercolours but also the works on canvas and on wood, from portraits to still lifes, are filled with shivering, jagged, passionate emotions.

The war also deeply affected Sineo Gemignani, who, after the conflict, began to take an interest in all forms of labour, interacting with the world of trade unions and politics, giving a clear modern social character to his expression and the figurative art he preferred. The youngest of those from Empoli to study at the Porta Romana Institute and continue along the path taken by his colleagues was Gino Terreni. His artistic experience was also heavily conditioned by his personal experiences. After 1943, he evaded the draft and took part in the liberation as a partisan. His art was therefore a testimonial to the history he experienced, to memory, and a warning for the new generations.

While the intention behind the acquisitions for the Gallery of Modern Art and the Resistance, since its founding, was primarily to create a valuable body of works by Empolese painters, once the aims of the gallery were established, major donations of works arrived over time, expanding the collection and improving its quality: noteworthy acquisitions are the paintings by Paduan Gastone Breddo, the Florentine Primo Conti and Quinto Martini, born in Carmignano (Prato).



Jacopo Carucci, known as Pontormo, was one of the greatest Italian artists. He epitomised that extraordinary season that Giorgio Vasari called the 'modern manner'.

The house in which he was born was purchased by the Municipality of Empoli in 1995, at the closing of the celebrations for the fifth centenary of the artist's birth, an event which involved numerous Tuscan institutions.

The building was identified by Ugo Procacci in 1956, and on the façade is a commemorative plaque made by Emilio Cecchi for the fourth cen-

tenary of the painter's death. Here Jacopo is defined as 'solitary, tormented, demanding', giving a reliable image of the artist who is hard to imagine as serene, also because of the string of early deaths in the family that scarred his spirit from childhood. On the same gravestone, the word 'dolente (sorrowful)' also appears: while the course of his existence was undoubtedly sorrowful and his happiness 'disturbed', the expressive results of his art were instead marked by a quivering vitality.

The Pontorme house is a medieval three-storey building spread over a total area of more than one

hundred square metres. On exhibit there are objects and works that recall the master's expression. On display are facsimiles of the preparatory drawings Jacopo made on paper for the *Saints John the Evangelist and Archangel Michael* painted by him around 1519 on the altar panel of the nearby church of San Michele, and also the facsimile of the edition of the artist's famous *Diary*, to represent his humanity.

The connections between the house and the painter, who had lived there surrounded by the greatest affection, are ideally illustrated in a panel, a beautiful ancient replica of the *Madonna of the Book*, a work by Pontormo whose autograph version is still unknown, "without a doubt the most copied work" by him, "and, in all probability, the most copied Madonna of the entire Florentine 16th century" (Ph. Costamagna, *Pontormo*, Milan, 1994, p. 225). A work that succeeds



'A little outside the centre of the town lies the Campaccio, a very extensive unpaved square used as a horse market. And it was in one of the *casupole* that surround it that I came into this world'.

Situated in this 'casupola' (hovel), as Ferruccio Busoni calls it in one of his autobiographical fragments, is the House-Museum that bears his name.

Ferruccio Busoni was born in Empoli in 1866 and died in Berlin in 1924. His parents, both musicians, had him study music, and he became a

in evoking domestic intimacy and imbuing the rooms with the memory of a soon-to-be interrupted everyday life.

The multimedia installation 'Quiete, silenzio e solitudine' ('Quiet, silence and solitude'), specifically created for these rooms, allows the visitor to steep themselves in the artist's era, and better interpret the works evoked.

Also exhibited in house are some archaeological artefacts found during the excavation work required for the building's restoration: they recall the transfer of ownership, after Jacopo's death, to the family of a potter who used the ground floor as a workshop. The supports used to stack the pottery, the mixtures used to seal the vents of the kiln, the firing surfaces, and the fragment of an olla speak of a production destined for local consumption, which in Pontorme is documented up to the end of the 17th century.

The museum collects rare manuscripts, original librettos, autographed letters, period photos and other documents of great historical and musical interest related to the pianist. Among the objects most closely tied to Ferruccio's artistic output and biography are the 1907 manuscript for voice and piano from Busoni's first opera *Die Brautwahl*, the original libretto, in a limited edition of the work, illustrated with sketches and images by Karl Walzer (the opera's first set and costume designer), the manuscript of

a piano composition for 4 hands, *Finnländische Volksweisen*, and again numerous letters, today precious testimonials to the relationships forged between Busoni with his friend Emilio Anzoletti and the musician Felice Boghen.

Over the years, one of the museum's finest and most fascinating pieces has been added to the collection: the original piano which Busoni played during his stays in Empoli and the marble bust of the musician, the work of the sculptor Bruno Antonini.



The Civic Museum of Palaeontology, established in 1988 by the Municipality of Empoli, is housed in the ancient rooms of the Palazzo Ghibellino. It was in this very building, founded in the medieval and overlooking Piazza Farinata degli Uberti, that in 1260, the Ghibelline Council was held. During the council, Farinata degli Uberti, made famous by Dante Alighieri's Canto X of the *Inferno*, gave the famous oration in defence of Florence.

Initially consisting of a single room, over the years, local and international fossil finds have been added to the museum's collection, which today represents a vertical section of the last 2 billion years of Earth's history.

The exhibition itinerary illustrates the work of the palaeontologist and the fossilisation processes and, at the same time, presents complex themes such as the genesis of the solar system and the origin of life on our planet.

The main body of the collection consists of fossil finds from Pliocene marine deposits that have surfaced in various parts of Tuscany, making it possible to reconstruct the history of the paleogeographic and paleoclimatic evolution of our region. Numerous insights are also dedicated to the history of the population of Tuscany with precise references to the cultural achievements of the different Homo species that inhabited the territory.

In addition to the Environmental Education Laboratory, which has been a valid support for didactic-educational activities for schools of all levels since 1996, the museum also offers a tactile-sensory experience which allows the user to be an active subject who seeks out, discovers, elaborates, interprets and directly understands the contents presented.