

**On public view again
from 27 March 2019**

***Il Raffaello dell'Ambrosiana.
In principio il Cartone***

now completely restored



Raphael, *Preparatory cartoon for the School of Athens* © Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Mondadori Portfolio

After four years of intense work, the restoration of Raphael's Preparatory Cartoon for the *School of Athens*, at the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana in Milan, is now complete.

The project for its restoration and enhancement and its new display, in which the work will be set, will be presented to the city and international public on 27 March 2019 at the exhibition 'Il Raffaello dell'Ambrosiana. In Principio il Cartone'.

Fondazione Fiera Milano, official partner of the Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana for the two-year period 2018-2019, will contribute to supporting promotional activities for Raphael's Cartoon, completely restored, as well as the enhancement of the Institution's Leonardo patrimony during the celebrations for the 5th centenary of the Florentine genius's death.

This is the largest Renaissance cartoon to have come down to us (it measures 285 x 804 cm) and was completely hand-drawn by Raphael (Urbino, 1483 - Rome, 1520) as a life-size preparatory drawing of the *School of Athens*, one of the four frescoes commissioned from Raphael in 1508 by Pope Julius II to decorate the Stanza della Segnatura at the Vatican.

Although the work is known as the *School of Athens*, the correct title is *Philosophy*: the four walls of the Stanza della Segnatura depict – in keeping with a complex iconographic programme – Philosophy, Theology (*Disputation of the Holy Sacrament*), Jurisprudence (*The Virtues*) and Poetry (*Parnassus*).

The Cartoon in the Ambrosiana has been preserved in its entirety since it was not actually used to transfer Raphael's drawing to the wall, but to show the Pope the overall effect of the work once completed.

The masterpiece, divided into "two pieces of drawing by Raphael of Urbino on cardboard", reached the Ambrosiana in 1610 as a loan from Count Fabio II Visconti di Brebbia, to be finally sold in 1626 by his widow Bianca Spinola Borromeo for the exorbitant sum of 600 imperial liras.

In May 1796, it was requisitioned by the French commissioner Peignon, who listed the Cartoon at the head of the works to be confiscated from the Ambrosiana. Once it was in Paris, a lengthy restoration of the work was begun.

On 30 September 1815, the Cartoon was delivered by the Director General of the Louvre to the Austrian Commission for the recovery of works of art from the Italian regions under Austrian rule.

Transferred in 1918 to Rome to be protected from the risks of bombardment in the Great War, in 1942 it was placed for safekeeping in the vault of the Cassa di Risparmio delle Province Lombarde. In 1946 it was displayed at the exhibition in Lucerne held to raise funds to rebuild the Ambrosiana.

Room 5 of the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana was last renovated by Luigi Caccia Dominioni in 1966.

In 2014 the Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, through the Fondazione Cardinale Federico Borromeo, started a long and challenging study of the Cartoon, leading to its conservative restoration coordinated by a prestigious Scientific Committee. This committee is composed of the College of Fellows of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana and experts from the Higher Institute for Conservation and Restoration, the Vatican Museums, the Milan Superintendency and the Conservation and Restoration Centre "La Venaria Reale", with Pinin Brambilla Barcilon as technical consultant, and the collaboration of lecturers from various Italian universities.

The project was wholly supported by the contribution of the company RaMo SpA, at the behest of its Founder, Giuseppe Rabolini.

With the completion of the restoration operations, directed and coordinated by Maurizio Michelozzi, the Cartoon will be placed in a new showcase, replacing the one made in 1966 by Luigi Caccia Dominioni, and will again be visible to the public completely restored from 27 March 2019.

Designed and manufactured by the company Goppion SpA, to respect delicate constraints ensuring the preservation of the work and enabling the Cartoon to be viewed without interference, the new display case consists of an imposing protective pane of glass measuring some 24 square metres.

At the same time, the exhibition gallery wholly devoted to the Raphael Cartoon is being redesigned, based on a project by Stefano Boeri, with equipment illustrating the restoration and history of this masterpiece.

The operation reinforces the presence of the work and the Pinacoteca itself within an ideal circuit of Renaissance Milan: in an area of a few square kilometers, there is the *Last Supper by Leonardo* (Santa Maria delle Grazie), the *Pietà Rondanini* by Michelangelo (Castello Sforzesco) and the Cartoon of the *School of Athens* by Raphael, all open to the public.

Furthermore, the rich collections and wide-ranging itineraries enable the Pinacoteca to offer the public a variety of guided tours and educational activities for schools, families and adults, devised and organized by Ad Artem and Milanoguida. Visitors to the Pinacoteca will also be offered new audioguides, created by the Seelabs Soluzioni e Servizi company, thanks to a contribution from the Gruppo Esprinet, which will equip the museum with the necessary devices.

The exhibition devoted to the Cartoon will be accompanied by a bilingual Italian/English publication (Electa) with texts by Alberto Rocca, Director of the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana.

Press Conference
to present the exhibition

Monday 25 March 2019, at 11.30 am
Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana,
Piazza Pio XI 2,
Milan

#raffaelloambrosiana

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