

# ARTE SENESE

DAL TARDO MEDIOEVO AL NOVECENTO  
NELLE COLLEZIONI DEL MONTE DEI PASCHI DI SIENA  
SIENA, 15 SETTEMBRE - 8 GENNAIO 2023  
COMPLESSO MUSEALE SANTA MARIA DELLA SCALA

## THE EXHIBITION

The idea for this exhibition is not simply to shed light on a major piece of art heritage closely bound to the city of Siena, it is also to retell the story of a bank that has made patronage of the arts one of its strong points. The selection of works on display in the prestigious venue of Santa Maria della Scala, a strategic piece of the puzzle that is Siena's identity, was deliberately chosen to illustrate a farsighted policy consciously forged and pursued by one of the oldest banks in the world.

**Starting in the second half of the 13th century** Siena saw the birth of a native and highly individual **school of art** which could be identified by a certain style that proved capable, over the ages and well into the 19th century, of maintaining its originality, yet without ignoring developments in Italian and European art. The exhibition sets out to review this age-old story with a careful selection of works of art owned by the Monte dei Paschi bank – **works by Sienese masters produced for Siena and its hinterland** but also for patrons outside its boundaries old and new, given that the reputation of so many of its masters spread well beyond the city walls. The later Middle Ages, the late 13th century and throughout the 14th, was the period when the Sienese style reached its apogee, proving popular as far afield as Avignon thanks to Simone Martini, but the following centuries also produced a spate of talented artists capable of taking their measure of the Renaissance, Mannerist and Baroque styles, right up to the day when Siena rediscovered its medieval roots in the 19th century to become one of the bulwarks of the Purist style.

The exhibition opens with a terracotta *bozzetto* of the monument to Sallustio Bandini (1878) commissioned from Tito Sarrocchi to mark the renovation of Piazza Salimbeni, where the Monte dei Paschi di Siena still has its headquarters today. The renovation of the square to a design by Giuseppe Partini was one of the most significant and impacting operations ever commissioned by the bank. The following room marks the start of the chronological exhibition proper with **two extremely rare 13th century paintings** – the Tressa Master's *Madonna and Child with Saints* and Margaritone d'Arezzo's *Christus Triumphans* – **from the Chigi Saracini collection**, one of the most celebrated art collections in Italy, which the bank acquired in 1955

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and which still hangs in the palazzo in Siena that now houses the Accademia Chigiana. The 14th century works of art on display include paintings by the well-known painter **Pietro Lorenzetti**, whose small panels dating back to around 1335– the central and right-hand panels of a portable triptych – were acquired by the Monte dei Paschi in 1986, and work by two such major sculptors as **Tino di Camaino**, with a celebrated “portable altar” possibly commissioned by a wealthy patron associated with the Angevin court and allowing us to reconstruct Tino’s highly selective output of works for personal devotion, and another by **Giovanni d’Agostino** which Count Chigi purchased from the Florentine antique dealer Ariodante Riccardi in 1950.

These pieces are accompanied by paintings essentially by Late Gothic masters such as **Martino di Bartolomeo**, **Benedetto di Bindo** and **Andrea di Bartolo** who ferried the great 14th century tradition into the following century. In each instance they are works of art acquired relatively recently with the aim of bringing back to Siena items that would otherwise have emigrated elsewhere, an operation viewed with favour by the local Directorate General for Fine Art. In that sense, a panel by Martino di Bartolomeo is especially valuable in that as it gives us a glimpse of Siena in the **early 15th century** with the miraculous apparition of the Virgin above the church of San Pietro alla Magione.

Of particular interest for the **first half of the 15th century** is the work of Stefano di Giovanni, known as Sassetta, the first Siennese painter to take his measure of the new world and the mastery of perspective developed by Masaccio and Donatello yet without sacrificing the grace of Siennese Gothic. The Chigi Saracini Collection provides us with his fairytale-like *Adoration of the Magi* and three surviving fragments of a huge painted crucifix dated 1433 from the church of San Martino, which Galgano Saracini rescued from destruction two centuries ago. Equally interesting is his robust yet charming *St. Anthony the Abbot* purchased by the bank and originally part of a polyptych which also included a *St. Nicholas* now in the Musée du Louvre in Paris.

No less talented were **Giovanni Antonio Bazzi**, known as **Sodoma**, who was born in Vercelli, and the native Siennese Domenico Beccafumi. Sodoma’s *Allegory of Heavenly Love* and Beccafumi’s youthful heroines *Judith*, *Artemisia* and *Cleopatra* open the section of the exhibition

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devoted to work from the Chigi Saracini Collection, enriched with paintings by Raphael's follower Andrea del Brescianino and by Bartolomeo Neroni, known as Il Riccio, who was Sodoma's son-in-law and heir. The innovations of Leonardo and Michelangelo can also be detected in a graceful sculptural group of *Venus and Cupid* carved in the late 16th century, whose sculptor scholars have as yet been unable to identify yet who was unquestionably of master of some talent.

The next few rooms house work by a generation of painters who lived and worked at the turn of the 16th century such as the inspired Francesco Vanni who was dazzled by the palette of Federico Barocci, or, from the following century, Rutilio Manetti and Francesco Rustici who embraced and popularised the naturalism of Caravaggio, along with a number of large-format paintings of outstanding quality by Bernardino Mei, Raffaello Vanni and Domenico Manetti from eminent collections and cycles in the Siena of the period, or the *Four Seasons* by Bologna-born artist Antonio Ugolin painted for a villa on the outskirts of Siena.

Turning to the 18th century and the Age of Enlightenment, it was precisely an interest in work from the region that justified the Monte dei Paschi's acquisition of two extremely fine pictures illustrating festivities in Piazza del Campo, painted by the illustrious Florentine *vedutista* Giuseppe Zocchi between 1748 and 1749 for the Florence home of the Sienese dignitary Orazio Sansedoni, a Bâli Knight of the Order of Malta.

The theme recurs in a painting by Francesco Nenci entitled *The Historic Parade of the Palio on 18 August 1833*, commissioned by the Ricasoli family to celebrate the wedding of Leopold II and donated by the heirs of that noble household to Cavalier Ferdinando Rubini from Siena in 1880. In parallel, the Tuscan Academic and Purist style of the 19th century, which found fertile terrain in the Istituto di Belle Art in Siena, is exemplified here by the work of such masters as Luigi Mussini, Cesare Maccari and Giovanni Dupré, leading us towards the end of the exhibition which winds up with a series of *bozzetti* by Fulvio Corsini: a youthful work depicting a *Male Figure* and the sculptural model for the *Fountain of Abundance*, known locally as the *Fontana della Granocchia* ("Frog Fountain" in Sienese parlance) situated in the small square adjacent to Via Montanini, blocking the entrance to the former church of San Donato.

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