

## The Last Supper, Timeless Inspiration

### **Leonardo's Last Supper for King Francis I**

*A masterpiece in gold and silk  
exhibition curated by  
Pietro Marani*

### **The Last Supper: The Living Tableau**

*Created by Armondo Linus Acosta  
Vittorio Storaro, Cinematography  
Dante Ferretti, Production Design  
Francesca Lo Schiavo, Set Decoration*

**Palazzo Reale, Milan**

**8 October – 17 November 2019**

On the occasion of the celebrations in progress for the 500th anniversary of the death of Leonardo da Vinci, through the claim "The Last Supper, Timeless Inspiration", Palazzo Reale intends to use two important works, a tapestry and a work on film crafted 500 years apart, to highlight the fascination that Leonardo's masterpiece has held and continues to hold on the work and creativity of artists.

After the major exhibition "Leonardo da Vinci 1452-1519 – The Drawing of the World", staged during the 2015 Universal Expo featuring 250 works from museums and institutions worldwide, the Palazzo Reale's prestigious Sala delle Cariatidi will once again host two extraordinary works, now as part of the Milan Leonardo 500 program.

The first is the exhibit curated by Pietro C. Marani, which showcases a little-known work of great importance for the diffusion of Leonardo's art: the Tapestry of the Vatican Museums reproducing *The Last Supper* by Leonardo, commissioned by Francis I, King of France and his mother, Louise of Savoy evidenced by the coats of arms and crest it contains.

The second is an installation of an evocative nine-minute tableau vivant entitled *The Last Supper: The Living Tableau*, created and filmed with meticulous attention down to the smallest detail by Armondo Linus Acosta, with the Academy Award Winners Vittorio Storaro, Dante Ferretti and Francesca Lo Schiavo. This is the Italian premiere of "The Living Tableau" and its worldwide premiere in a major art institution.

The video is produced by The Academy of Film and the Arts and presented by Crescentera Productions.

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The exhibition is open to the public from 8 October to 17 November 2019 with free admission.

## **THE TAPESTRY EXHIBITION**

For the first time since its restoration, it will be possible to see a copy of Leonardo's *The Last Supper* a tapestry woven between 1516 and 1525 and commissioned by Luisa di Savoia and Francesco I, King of France. The tapestry, held in the Vatican Museums, was probably woven in Flanders based on a cartoon by a Lombard artist (presumably Bramantino) and therefore represents one of the very first copies of Leonardo's masterpiece, destined to satisfy the needs of the French court. With the very few copies made in the early 16th Century for French buyers, the tapestry with the insignia of Louise of Savoy and Francis I, King of France, played an important role in spreading knowledge of Leonardo's art in France.

The new dating for the tapestry proposed after its restoration partially matches Leonardo's sojourn in Amboise (1516-1519), so that it can be assumed that at least the cartoon had been executed under the supervision of the master. Donated in 1533 to Pope Clement VII, the tapestry returned to Italy and has never since left the Vatican Museums. On display will be two tapestries of the Months by Bramantino, from the Trivulzio Collection of the Castello Sforzesco in Milan. Through their centralized perspective, they reveal a re-working of the *The Last Supper* and help contextualize the copy of Leonardo's *The Last Supper* within the framework of the luxury and refined taste of the French court, allowing comparisons and new reflections on its attribution. The portraits of the kings of France, from Charles VIII to Francis I, who commissioned the Vatican tapestry, together with his mother Louise of Savoy, are also exhibited through medal, bas-reliefs and paintings. A series of 16th Century engravings by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau (1576-1579) also depicts the castles of Blois, Amboise and Chambord where the tapestry of the *The Last Supper* may have been displayed before 1533, when it was donated by Francis I to Pope Clement VII. Its presence in Milan, near to the mural painting from which it derives, gives it great symbolic value.

Once the Vatican Museums, thanks to the generosity of their director at the time, Professor Antonio Paolucci, had accepted the request to loan the precious tapestry to Milan, on the condition that it would be restored, the new museum director Dr. Barbara Jatta decided that the exhibition of the tapestry in Amboise, and subsequently in Milan, would not only be an opportunity for maintenance and restoration, but also an impetus for further study and for testing previous hypotheses on the manufacture of the tapestry, its history and its timeline.

The opportunity was immediately accepted by the Municipality of Milan which, together with the Clos Lucé Castle in Amboise, decided to finance its restoration, lasting almost two years. The tapestry, which had never before left the Vatican Museums, after having been restored and finally studied in its executive and stylistic peculiarities by Alessandra Rodolfo and the Vatican Museums team of restorers from June to September 2019, was thus exhibited for the first time in the Clos Lucé Castle in Amboise, where Leonardo had spent the last years of his life and where he died on 2 May 1519. Now, the tapestry is on display in the Royal Palace of Milan, in the city that hosts the original *The Last Supper* just a few hundred meters from Piazza Duomo at the Refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie.

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The presence in the exhibition of two tapestries of the Trivulzio Months Series lent by the Civic Art Collections of the Castello Sforzesco helps underline how the echoes and influence of *The Last Supper* rang out in profane art as well. Additionally, since this series was woven in Vigevano between 1503 and 1509, it was probably known to Louis XII, to Louise of Savoy and to Francis I, as in 1507 Louis XII had been a guest in the house of Marshal Trivulzio and in the presence of the half-brother of Louise of Savoy, a famous admirer of tapestries (as evidenced by the tapestry with her insignia preserved in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston) and the person who, together with her son, commissioned the tapestry copy of Leonardo's *The Last Supper*. The comparison of the Vatican tapestry with the series of Months, located in Vigevano was certainly alluded to during the sumptuous reception of 1507 (Gaston de Foix, Georges d'Amboise and all the French nobility were in attendance), and may provide additional cues on its technical execution and manufacture, as well as on its style, especially in light of the fact that the Vatican tapestry is now thought to have been woven between 1516 and 1525, a timeframe that partly overlaps with Leonardo's stay in Amboise.

The exhibition catalog is published by SKIRA.

## **THE TABLEAU VIVANT**

One of the world's seminal masterpieces — Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* — comes to life in *The Last Supper: The Living Tableau*, an evocative nine-minute video tableau vivant. "The Living Tableau" was created and filmed in exquisite and exacting detail by Director Armondo Linus Acosta with the Academy Award-winning team of Vittorio Storaro, the acclaimed cinematographer, and Dante Ferretti and Francesca Lo Schiavo, the famed set design and set decoration team.

This year marks the 500th anniversary of the death of Leonardo da Vinci. It is therefore fitting that these legendary filmmakers have joined together now in a tour de force re-creation of Leonardo's masterwork. They have produced a piece of ultimate beauty to be exhibited in museums, churches, galleries and piazzas worldwide as a breathtaking and large-scale video installation.

"The Living Tableau" will "give the direct experience as passionately and divinely inspired as possible," says Acosta. Each element was crafted with deep reverence for Leonardo and the painting (circa 1495-1497), respecting the groundbreaking parameters of its perspective. Acosta's "The Living Tableau" is a work that blends high art and theater using a compelling technique which provides an inspired view of *The Last Supper*; "I intentionally filmed this in extreme slow motion as I do not consider this work a film per se, but a 'tableau'.

A painstakingly accurate piece whereby you have the opportunity to meditate on the divine details of this extraordinary mystical masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci."

The scene opens poetically on a timeless landscape over the first deep notes of Rossini's *Stabat Mater*. From this evocative view, the room and iconic table are slowly revealed becoming a poignant moment of reflection where the twelve Apostles expectantly await the arrival of Jesus. As the men whisper to one another, and wonder why they have been gathered, Jesus enters, taking His central position. Upon

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blessing both the disciples and the meal, the announcement of a betrayal from one amongst them is felt by all.

Leonardo's great classic, a cornerstone of Italian cultural heritage, stands out in the popular imagination as the definitive portrayal of the Last Supper. Now captured on film, art lovers around the world will have the chance to experience the scene viscerally, feeling its depth and monumentality. "The Living Tableau" renders the experience of Leonardo's painting in the refectory of Santa Maria Delle Grazie accessible in myriad settings, from intimate to grand, around the globe.

Acosta's interpretation of Leonardo's *The Last Supper*, is the pinnacle of his personal commitment and lifelong pursuit of artistic integrity, spiritual understanding, passion for beauty and deep admiration for Leonardo da Vinci. This installation is an exceptional interpretation of a pivotal historical moment, and of a chef d'oeuvre that has resonated throughout time as one of the most revered works of art ever created.

### **INFORMATION**

#### **The Last Supper, Timeless Inspiration**

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FREE Entry

Timetables:

Monday 14:30 – 19:30; Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday 9:30 – 19:30;

Thursday and Saturday 9:30 – 22:30

Last entry one hour before closing

[www.palazzorealemilano.it](http://www.palazzorealemilano.it)

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