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Pontormo: The Artist Who Bridged the Renaissance and Mannerism

Rome exhibition brings together 100 works tracing the restless Tuscan master's evolution from classicism to innovation.

*Italian Hours*

Lucy Gordan



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Organized in collaboration with the Uffizi, from October 9 until February 7, 2027, the Quirinal's Scuderie will host the first major solo exhibition ever dedicated to the Tuscan painter and portraitist, Jacopo Carucci, best-known as Pontormo (1494-1557), after his hometown near Empoli. A central figure of 16th-century Florence, he was a key artist of the period marking the transition from the High Renaissance to Mannerism. The exhibition's full title is "Pontormo: the restless genius who changed the face of the Renaissance."

Orphaned at age 10, which undoubtedly caused him to be forever "solitary and melancholy," according to his contemporary artist/biographer Giorgio Vasari, Pontormo was sent to Florence, supported by Medici family patronage that would shape his artistic destiny. After his early training with Leonardo da Vinci and a brief apprenticeship in Piero di Cosimo's workshop, the painter Andrea del Sarto recognized Pontormo's talent and gradually trained him to become one of the most original artists of his generation.



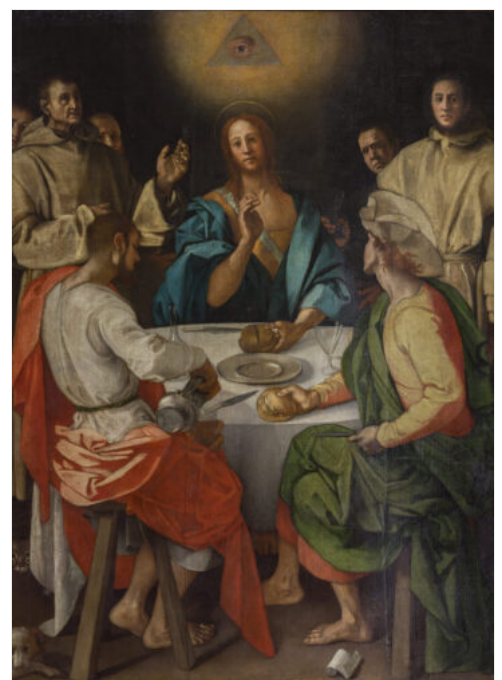
Pontormo. Visitazione

The exhibition of some 100 paintings and drawings on paper—a fundamental tool for understanding Pontormo's working method and the evolution of his style—will be displayed primarily in chronological order, although there will also be thematic sections designed to highlight specific aspects of his work and figurative language. For Pontormo gradually shifted from the traditionally calm, perspectival Classical Renaissance style and developed his own personal language: elongated, jittery, twining, unnatural spiral human figures with intense emotional tension, which often seem to float in an uncertain environment, unhampered by the forces of gravity; unexpected, ambiguous perspectives; luminous colors in unreal light; suspended gestures; and haunted faces imbued with intense spirituality—in short, Mannerism.

According to a review published by the staff of Le Finestre dell'Arte, "it was precisely this ability to transcend the conventions of the mature Renaissance that made Pontormo a figure particularly beloved by 20th-century culture. His work exerted a powerful fascination on contemporary artists, filmmakers and intellectuals—from Pier Paolo Pasolini to Bill Viola—who recognized an extraordinary modernity in his painting."

Works from the Uffizi, which houses the most significant collection of Pontormo's work, play a central role, but among the other participating museums are the Galleria dell'Accademia and the Bargello Museum, also in Florence; the Istituto Centrale per la Grafica in Rome; the Louvre; the National Gallery in London; the British Museum; the Met; the National Gallery in Washington; the Art Institute in Chicago; and the Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

Symbolically opening the exhibition will be what is generally considered Pontormo's most famous masterpiece: the *Visitation*, on loan from the Church of St. Michael the Archangel in Carmignano near Prato, one of the pinnacles of 16th-century Italian painting and one of the most iconic images of Pontormo's work. Other highlights include the *Resurrection* (1523-25), a fresco from the Certosa di San Lorenzo at Galluzzo on the outskirts of Florence; *The Supper of Emmaus* (1525) from the Uffizi; and *Portrait of a Halberdier* (1529-30) from the Getty Museum.



During the last years of his life, Pontormo worked almost in isolation on the frescoes of the Basilica of San Lorenzo in Florence. These works are now lost, but he left behind a diary from 1554-56. Penned on 16 separate sheets in *cancellaresca corsivo* in vernacular Italian, it recounts his diet, his daily habits, his loneliness, and his fear of death, and, illustrated with 40 drawings of body parts, it is preserved under strict conservation rules at the National Central Library in Florence, but a facsimile will be on display at the Scuderie. A second facsimile is permanently on display at his home, now a museum, in Pontorme.

Pontormo. *Cena in Emmaus*

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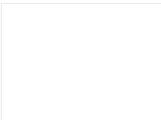
Lucy Gordan
Italian Hours

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