**A NEW WORLD: CLASSIC ART AND ENGINEERING MARVELS**

**AT THE LIMONAIA OF THE BOBOLI GARDENS**

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If we were to enter the Boboli Gardens, as early 19th-century visitors did, through the original north entrance, now known as the “Rondò di Bacco,” the first ancient sculptures appearing in our view would be the two red porphyry Dacians. Of the many classical sculptures – more than a hundred in all – that grace the paths and woods of this immense park, it was these two precious relics of the sculptural ornamentation of Trajan’s Forum which, in Medici Florence, represented the perfect synthesis of the grandeur of imperial Rome and the splendour of its art. While many other fragments of the immense architectural universe that was the *Forum Ulpium* are present in the Uffizi collections (the giant female figures of the imperial lineage installed under the Loggia dei Lanzi and the solemn Dacian in the Palatine Gallery immediately come to mind), the two porphyry sentries standing guard at the gardens’ entrance provide the clearest evidence of the destiny that binds this place to Trajan’s Column and its myth. No place other than Boboli (itself a sort of Renaissance translation of the imperial *horti* that surrounded ancient Rome) seems more appropriate for recreating the fame and fortunes of a monument that has always been perceived as a paradigm of the glory of the Eternal City. It’s certainly no coincidence that the Roman Senate, as far back as 1162 – centuries before humanism rediscovered the value and beauty of antiquity – decided to protect the Column “throughout eternity, until the end of the world, in order to safeguard the honour of the City of Rome forever”. Ever since, antiquarians, artists, historians, connoisseurs and archaeologists have written enough volumes about this pillar of Western culture to fill entire libraries.

Never before, however, has sufficient attention been focused on the stupefying feat of engineering represented by that “centenary” column (so called due to its height of one hundred Roman feet), which, pedestal included, soars upwards for nearly forty meters. Merit must go to Giovanni Di Pasquale for revealing to us this hidden side of a peerless monument, reconstructing with rigour and method the complex phases of an architectural miracle made possible thanks to incomparable organizational, engineering and sculptural ability.

Only an artist of the calibre of Claudio Capotondi, however, could restore form and life to this incredible feat of building with detailed models and sketches of rare precision and power, in which his clear, concise style has imagined – with the aid of a lifetime of experience working with marble – the gestures, tools and solutions that created a colossus worthy of rivalling the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

The excellent results achieved and the originality of the project, an essential premise for any good exhibition, confirm the benefits of the fruitful collaboration between two of our city’s leading institutions, the Museo Galileo and the Uffizi Galleries. On the heels of the resounding popular and critical success of the exhibition *Water as Microscope of Nature. Leonardo da Vinci’s Codex Leicester*, which closed just a few months ago, with this new chapter the pairing of art and science reveals itself yet again to be a truly inexhaustible reservoir. Such an approach not only enables the exploration of as-yet inadequately explored fields of knowledge, but gives life to original and intriguing exhibition itineraries destined to captivate both experts and the general public.