**FRATELLO SOLE, SORELLA LUNA**

***Nature in Art, from Fra Angelico to Corot***

curated by Costantino D’Orazio, Veruska Picchiarelli and Carla Scagliosi

**PERUGIA | NATIONAL GALLERY OF UMBRIA**

**15 MARCH – 15 JUNE 2025**

**More than eighty works by the greatest Italian and European artists tell the story of the revolution launched by Saint Francis’s *Canticle of the Sun*, in the year that marks its eighth centennial.**

**Exceptional loans have been made by the Louvre, the Rijksmuseum, the Mauritshuis, the Vatican Museums and Italy’s leading public museums, constituting a journey through masterpieces from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries.**

**From 15 March to 15 June 2025, the National Gallery of Umbria in Perugia will be hosting the exhibition *Fratello Sole, Sorella Luna. Nature in Art, from Fra Beato Angelico to Corot***, on the occasion of the eighth centennial of the composition of the *Canticle of the Sun* by Saint Francis of Assisi. Not only one of the very first works of poetry in old Italian, it was also the first expression of a new relationship with Nature, to which the saint spoke for the first time in terms of intimacy, in an ecological ideal, in the etymological sense of the term, that was to exert an incredible influence on art from the thirteenth century onwards.

Curated by Costantino D’Orazio, Director of the National Museums of Perugia – Umbria Regional Directorate of National Museums, together with Veruska Picchiarelli and Carla Scagliosi, art historians responsible for the collections at the National Gallery of Umbria, and held under the patronage of the Region of Umbria and of the Municipality of Perugia, with the support of the National Committee for the Celebrations of the Eighth Centennial of the Death of Saint Francis of Assisi and a contribution from the Perugia Foundation, the exhibition will present **more than eighty works, comprising paintings, drawings, etchings, sculptures and printed volumes** by someof the most famous artists from Italian and European art history, such as **Pisanello**, **Stefano da Verona**, **Paolo Uccello**, **Jan van Eyck**, **Fra Angelico**, **Piero della Francesca**, **Antonello da Messina**, **Leonardo da Vinci**, **Leon Battista Alberti**, **Albrecht Dürer**, **Lorenzo Lotto**, **Dosso Dossi, Giambologna**, **Jan Brueghel the Elder**, **Domenichino, Annibale Carracci**, **Nicolas Poussin**, **Salvator Rosa**, **Giambattista Piranesi**, **Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot** and many more, whose masterpieces are milestones that mark the crucial changes in how the figurative arts tackled and reflected man’s relationship with Nature in the course of the centuries.

The aim is to furnish a profound, evocative account of the diverse nuances with which Creation has been observed by human sensitivity and interpreted in artistic vision.

“With this undertaking, the National Gallery of Umbria stands confirmed as a museum on an international level capable of building a dialogue with other leading museums in Italy and abroad”, **states Costantino D’Orazio**. “This process of networking not only contributes to maximising the value of our collections, but is also capable of stimulating studies and research projects that will offer visitors an experience that speaks to everyone, one where they will all find plentiful reasons for coming back and recommending us to their friends and acquaintances.”

**The Masterpieces on Show**

The most significant works on show in Perugia will include the formidable *Last Judgement* by **Fra Angelico**, on exceptional loan from the Museum of the Basilica of San Marco in Florence, while the Gallery of the Accademia in the same city will be sending the enigmatic *Thebaid* by **Paolo Uccello**, here also accompanied by the *Predella with the Miracle of the Profaned Host* from the National Gallery of the Marches in Urbino.

From the Galleries of the Accademia in Venice will come the celebrated *Saint Jerome* by **Piero della Francesca**, which will dialogue with the same subject painted some fifty years later by **Lorenzo Lotto**, now usually housed in the Castel Sant’Angelo in Rome.

The exhibition will also provide us with the opportunity to make an unprecedented pairing between the *Crucifixion* by **Antonello da Messina**, from the Brukenthal Museum in Sibiu (Romania), and **Jan van Eyck’s** *Crucifixion* from the Franchetti Gallery in the Ca’ d’Oro in Venice. Four drawings by **Pisanello** (from the Louvre) will detail the approach to nature of this great exponent of international Gothic art, a pioneer among artists for his scientific observation.

**Stefano da Verona’s** *Madonna of the Rose Garden*, an iconic version of nature depicted as unreal in its perfection, will illustrate late Gothic figurative culture. Just a short while afterwards, yet already in the full flush of Humanism, come the fundamental volumes of **Leon Battista Alberti’s** *De Pictura*, **Luca Pacioli’s** *Summa de aritmetica* and **Piero della Francesca’s** *De Perspectiva pingendi*, triggering an epoch-making revolution by codifying the perspective system as a means to achieve a realistic representation of space. There will be a special focus on **Leonardo da Vinci’s** *Codex Atlanticus*, with two sheets being loaned to Perugia by the Ambrosian Library in Milan, to investigate the maestro’s contribution to the study of the flight of birds, both through his observations of nature and through his reconstruction of flight in the form of a machine.

The role of **Francesco Colonna’s** *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* will be to tackle the theme of the symbolic value of natural elements, which was also explored by such artists as **Dosso Dossi**, with his *Melissa* from the Borghese Gallery in Rome, **Paris Bordon**, with the *Holy Family with Saint John the Baptist* from the Brukenthal Museum in Sibiu, **Federico Barocci**, creator of an emotional rendering of the *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, which will come from Fossombrone, and **Correggio**, whose *Portrait of a Man Reading* will be loaned by the Sforza Castle in Milan.

Visitors will then be immersed in idealised visions of nature as seen in the works of champions of classical and Baroque painting, from **Annibale Carracci**, with his *Vision of Saint Eustace*, to **Giovanni Lanfranco’s** *Assumption of Magdalena*, from the Museum of Capodimonte in Naples. The pivotal moment of the advent of a modern approach to the natural sciences, in the classification of living species (including the ones found in the New World), will be illustrated by the passage from the collections typical of the *Wunderkammer*, or Cabinets of Curiosities, to the publications of **Ulisse Aldrovandi**, while the scientific and astronomical discoveries of the early seventeenth century will be represented by the exceptional manuscript of the *Sidereus Nuncius* by **Galileo Galilei**, which is now preserved in the Central National Library in Florence.

There will be a rich section investigating nature as it is represented in landscape painting from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, featuring works of artists of enormous importance to art history, such as **Nicolas Poussin**, **William Hamilton**, **Donato Creti** – with two exceptional loans from the Vatican Museums – **Claude Lorrain** and **Giambattista Piranesi**, culminating in the exhibition’s finale, entrusted to the *Marmore Waterfall* (*Waterfall at Terni*), painted by **Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot**.

**The Sections of the Exhibition**

The visit to the exhibition will start with an investigation of Mother Nature, the generous earth, as modelled by the labour of man, whose depiction starts from the remotest centuries of the Middle Ages, progressing through the cycles of the months and the activities that take place in them.

An extensive section will be devoted to the representations of Creation, in other words Nature construed as the space occupied by mankind, where the divine will stands revealed. As the Middle Ages evolved into modernity, landscape and views acquired the status of autonomous genres, as the method of linear perspective and of the central vanishing point was devised and subsequently fully theorised.

In addition to their sensitive manifestations of Creation, artists allowed themselves to be seduced by oneiric, imaginative visions of a nature that was impossible in its perfection or its monstrosity. Scenarios of wonder accompany their reproductions of Eden or of the Kingdom of Heaven, for example in Stefano da Verona’s *Madonna of the Rose Garden* and in the Paradise in Fra Angelico’s *Last Judgement*.

The most enigmatic aspects of Nature will be analysed by an entire section of the exhibition, which sets out to investigate man’s inner turmoil when faced with indomitable, overpowering forces, as his reverential fear of the fury of the elements typical of mediaeval sensitivity gave way to the sense of bewilderment, terror and tension towards infinity when faced with Nature of the nineteenth century, which experienced the last, intense period of great landscape painting.

Throughout the exhibition will run a transverse thread that concentrates on the animal kingdom, whose dignity as a living, sentient creature was recognised for the first time, thanks to Saint Francis. In mediaeval figurative culture, it was because of the most celebrated episodes from the saint’s life – his *Preaching to the Birds* and the *Taming of the Wolf of Gubbio* – that these creatures ceased to be iconographic attributes, abstract symbols of vices or virtues, or figures playing mere walk-on parts instrumental to a narrative, to become leading characters in the story.

The experience found in the National Gallery’s immersive room will focus on the *Canticle of the Sun*, which the public will be able to explore, so as to rediscover the meaning of this masterpiece: a prayer, but also an ode to the sublime beauty of Nature, just as it is portrayed in the works on show in the exhibition.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue published by **Moebius**, with essays by the exhibition’s curators and numerous other scholars (Costantino D’Orazio, Davide Rondoni, Sofia Menconero and Leonardo Baglioni, Giacomo Calogero, Veruska Picchiarelli, Carla Scagliosi, Lucia Corrain, Giuseppe Cassio), whose aim is to investigate and develop on one of the most fascinating, yet still partly unpublished, episodes in art history.

The exhibition benefits from the collaboration of RAI Umbria as media partner.

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Perugia, National Gallery of Umbria (Corso Pietro Vannucci, 19)

**15 March – 15 June 2025**

**Opening hours**: Tuesday to Sunday 08.30 a.m. – 7.30 p.m. (last admittance at 6.30 p.m.) Closed on Mondays

**Tickets**: full price €10.00; reduced price €2.00.

**NATIONAL GALLERY OF UMBRIA**

Perugia, Corso Pietro Vannucci, 19

**Information**: T +39 075 58668436; [gan-umb@cultura.gov.it](mailto:gan-umb@cultura.gov.it)

**Website**: [www.gallerianazionaledellumbria.it](http://www.gallerianazionaledellumbria.it)

**Press Office, National Museums of Perugia – Umbria Regional Directorate of National Museums**

**CLP Relazioni Pubbliche** | Clara Cervia | [clara.cervia@clp1968.it](mailto:clara.cervia@clp1968.it) | [www.clp1968.it](http://www.clp1968.it)

T +39 02 36755700 | M +39 333 91 25 684