

N.C. Museum of Art Presents Completed Ghissi Altarpiece for First Time in Over 100 Years
Exhibition is a collaboration among conservators, curators, and mathematicians

Raleigh, N.C.—Beginning September 10, 2016, the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) presents *Reunited: Franciscuccio Ghissi's St. John Altarpiece*, the first time in more than 100 years that the altarpiece's eight known panels—and one recreated missing panel—can be seen and appreciated as one magnificent work of art. The free exhibition will be on view through March 5, 2017.



During the 19th or early 20th century, Ghissi's *St. John Altarpiece* was dismantled and sawed apart, and its nine panels were sold separately to art dealers and collectors. Three panels are today in the NCMA's collection (one panel shown left); one panel is in the Portland Art Museum's collection; three are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and the central *Crucifixion* panel is at the Art Institute of Chicago. After more than a century of separation, the individual panels travel to the NCMA to be reunited in an exhibition that retells the story of this Renaissance masterwork.

Because the ninth panel has never been found, the NCMA collaborated with Dutch conservation specialist Charlotte Caspers in taking the extraordinary step to re-create the missing panel using 14th-century materials and techniques. Over the course of several months, Caspers worked with NCMA Curator of European Art David Steel and NCMA Chief Conservator William Brown to determine the probable subject, composition, coloring, and other details; then she created the panel with the same pigments and gilding used by Ghissi 650 years ago (shown below).

Once the panel was complete, Duke University mathematicians, led by Ingrid Daubechies, developed algorithms to digitally age Caspers's work by matching crack patterns found in the eight original panels; a digital print of this virtually aged ninth panel will be installed with the original panels to complete the *St. John Altarpiece*. Using Caspers's panel, the team at Duke calculated algorithms to guide them in digitally removing the crack patterns from the original altarpiece's panels and used a color-mapping technique to approximate the original pigments—thus creating a version of the completed altarpiece as it would have looked in the 14th century.

"It was a true collaboration between conservators, curators, and mathematicians," says Steel. "Everyone learned from each other's research, and it resulted in this fascinating exhibition that combines art history, mathematics, and technology."



In addition to the reunited altarpiece, the exhibition features several conservational, interactive, and educational elements, including:

- A **virtual recreation of the altarpiece** showing how it might have appeared when it left the artist's workshop circa 1370
- A video documenting the **creation of the missing panel**
- A **display of pigments** similar to those used in the Renaissance with their mineral, insect, and plant sources, as well as brushes and gilding tools

- A video exploring the **mathematical algorithmic processes** Duke University researchers used to virtually age and revitalize the panels

Walking through the gallery, visitors will be able to travel from the 21st century—studying the technology and mathematics used to virtually re-create the panel—back to the 14th century to see the reunited *St. John Altarpiece* as it originally appeared together with the materials and techniques used by the artist to create it.

Reunited: Franciscuccio Ghissi's *St. John Altarpiece*

September 10, 2016–March 5, 2017

East Building, Level B

Free

About the Exhibition:

In Raleigh generous support is provided by the Ron and Jeanette Doggett Endowment, the Charles E. and Pauline Lewis Hayworth Endowment, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and the Joseph F. McCrindle Art Conservation Endowment. This exhibition is also made possible, in part, by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources; the North Carolina Museum of Art Foundation, Inc.; and the William R. Kenan Jr. Endowment for Educational Exhibitions. Research for this exhibition was made possible by Ann and Jim Goodnight/The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fund for Curatorial and Conservation Research and Travel.

Image Captions, from top to bottom:

Attributed to Franciscuccio Ghissi, *Acteus and Eugenius Implore St. John the Evangelist to Restore Their Wealth*, circa 1370–80, tempera and gold leaf on panel, 13 3/4 x 15 in., North Carolina Museum of Art, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation

Charlotte Caspers, after Franciscuccio Ghissi, *St. John the Evangelist Baptizing Aristodemus*, 2014, tempera and gold leaf on panel, 13 15/16 x 15 3/16 in., North Carolina Museum of Art

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About the North Carolina Museum of Art

The North Carolina Museum of Art's permanent collection spans more than 5,000 years, from ancient Egypt to the present, making the institution one of the premier art museums in the South. The Museum's collection provides educational, aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural experiences for the citizens of North Carolina and beyond. The 164-acre Museum Park showcases the connection between art and nature through site-specific works of environmental art. The Museum offers changing national touring exhibitions, classes, lectures, family activities, films, and concerts.

The Museum opened West Building, home to the permanent collection, in 2010. The North Carolina Museum of Art, Lawrence J. Wheeler, director, is located at 2110 Blue Ridge Road in Raleigh. It is the art museum of the State of North Carolina, Pat McCrory, governor, and an agency of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Susan Kluttz, secretary.