

**Address by the Ambassador Gianluigi Benedetti
on the occasion of the Lecture on Raffaello
by Matteo Lafranconi, Director of Scuderie del Quirinale in Rome
hosted by the Tel Aviv Museum of Art
June 25, 2020**

Dear Director Coen-Uzzielli

Dear Director Lafranconi

Dear friends,

It is a real pleasure for me tonight to welcome in this online event Matteo Lafranconi, Director of Scuderie del Quirinale in Rome and curator of the biggest exhibition ever dedicated to Raphael on display in Rome till the end of August.

I would like to thank very much Tania Coen-Uzzielli, Director of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and all the staff of the Museum, for kindly hosting this seminar, which, I'm happy to say, it's going to be the first one of an art-talk series dedicated to Italian art, curators, art-historians, organized by the Tel Aviv Museum of Art in cooperation with the Italian Cultural Institute and the Italian Embassy in Israel.

At the moment we are obliged to an online version of the event, but we hope to be able to get back very soon to the original format, with the possibility of organizing the talks in person with our important guests from Italy.

As you all know, the cultural dialogue between Italy and Israel has always been intense: the attraction between our two Countries is reciprocal and the cultural ties are strengthening over time, becoming important generators of exchanges, shared experiences, mutual enrichment.

In this framework, the partnership with Tel Aviv Museum of Art, one of the leading cultural institutions in Israel, is very significant for us: the Museum has been performing a very precious task in Israel by offering the local and international audience incredibly high-quality exhibitions and programs, in a multicultural environment and playing an essential role in the vibrant cultural life of Tel Aviv.

We are very happy and thankful to be able to offer our contribution adding a touch of Italy to the Museum's program. Last year we had the opportunity to celebrate Leonardo da Vinci in the beautiful auditorium of the Museum by hosting a lecture of the Director of the Uffizi Galleries, a very successful event with hundreds of people participating.

This year we celebrate another giant of the Renaissance, Raffaello Sanzio, through an online event which sees the participation of an even larger audience, not only from Tel Aviv area but also from all over Israel.

Raphael's heritage is universal, his works embody the idea itself of harmony and excellence and keep on speaking to us through the centuries. The word Renaissance (Ri-nascimento) has in itself the idea of a re-start, and I'm confident that admiring the beauty of Raphael's works, we all can find the right inspiration even in these difficult times: the "Renaissance-man" is able to recognize the primacy of art, culture and sciences in overcoming the adversities, by making the best use of human abilities and skills.

The magnificent exhibition curated and directed by Matteo Lafranconi at Scuderie del Quirinale is a unique and a once-in-a-lifetime occasion to realize the greatness of the genius of Raphael by seeing, collected for the first time together, more than one hundred of his works, coming from prestigious international museums. We are very happy tonight to host Matteo Lafranconi and the presentation of this historical exhibition and we all hope to be able to go to Rome very soon on time to visit it in person.

The exhibition reopened on June the 2nd, the same date in which also the Tel Aviv Museum of Art restarted its activities with the public, which is, by the way, the same date of the Italian National Day. Let me finish this short introduction by saying that I take this coincidence and the presence of Matteo Lafranconi with us today as a good sign of hope for our future.

So thank you very much again Tania Coen for the hospitality, thank you Matteo Lafranconi for accepting our invitation, and thank you all of you for participating to this talk.

Grazie a tutti. Todà Rabà.