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AiA Art News-service

THE ART NEWSPAPER

Italian Renaissance panels reunited after centuries apart

Antonello da Messina's triptych brought together in 15-year loan agreement
by [HANNAH MCGIVERN](#) | 6 November 2015



Antonello da Messina's triptych which depicts the Madonna and child flanked by Saint John the Baptist and Saint Benedict (around 1470-75)

An Italian Renaissance triptych has been reunited in a 15-year loan agreement between the Uffizi galleries in Florence and the Sforza castle in Milan.

The gold-ground panels by the Sicilian painter Antonello da Messina, which depict the Madonna and child flanked by Saint John the Baptist and Saint Benedict (around 1470-75), were divided for centuries. They were recently reassembled for an exhibition organised by the outgoing Uffizi director, Antonio Natali, and the art critic Vittorio Sgarbi, at Milan's Bagatti Valsecchi Museum during Expo 2015. Earlier this week, the Florence institution, which owns the left and centre panels of John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary, added the Sforza castle's right-hand panel of Saint Benedict to the display in its second-floor galleries. In exchange, the Uffizi is lending the Milanese museum Vincenzo Foppa's tempera on wood painting, Madonna and Child with an Angel (1479-80).

The provenance of the triptych is as sparsely documented as Antonello's life. The panel of Saint Benedict surfaced at the Milan-based auction house Finarte in 1995, where it was acquired for 4.5 billion lira by the Lombardy region. The following year, the Italian state bought the other two panels from the Old Master dealer Giancarlo Gallino for around 16 billion lira in 1996, giving them to the Uffizi after restoration in 2002. That acquisition fulfilled the dream of the Tuscan antiquarian, Stefano Bardini, who bequeathed his personal collection to the city of Florence in 1922 on the condition that it purchase Renaissance works of an equivalent value.