

## « Botticelli: Two Madonnas at Chambord »



An unexpected treasure in the church of Saint Félix in Champigny-en-Beauce, the *Virgin Mary, Infant Christ, and the young St. John the Baptist*, initially dated as being 19<sup>th</sup> century, has recently been authenticated as an original 16<sup>th</sup> century piece from the studio of Italian painter Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510). It will be presented in the Chapel at Chambord from 19 October 2024 to 19 January 2025 alongside its model conserved in the Pitti Palace in Florence, exceptionally on loan from the Uffizi Gallery.

- Exhibition from 19 October 2024 to 19 January 2025.
- Public opening Saturday 19 October 2024.

Botticelli's original painting, displayed in the Palatine Gallery at the Uffizi Galleries in Florence, seems to have been made fifteen years before the one conserved in the church of Saint Félix at Champigny-en-Beauce, in the Loir-et-Cher department. This work long went unnoticed as it was thought to be a 19<sup>th</sup> century copy. Curator Matteo Gianselli was the first to draw attention to the painting at Champigny-en-Beauce during his research into Italian paintings conserved in French public collections. He identified the piece as an original 16<sup>th</sup> century work made in Botticelli's studio in Florence.

Restoration work was coordinated by the DRAC Centre-Val de Loire and carried out in workshops at the Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France (C2RMF). In 2021-2022, the Musée Jacquemart-André presented the work in an exhibition titled *Botticelli Artist and Designer*, alongside the prototype from Florence. Matteo Gianselli's intuition was confirmed both by critical examination from art historians and scientific analyses made by the C2RMF under Director Dominique Martos-Levif. Attributing the piece to the Botticelli studio also allowed the painting to be classified under the Historic Monuments regime as the property of the commune of Champigny-en-Beauce.



*Virgin Mary, Infant Christ, and the young St. John the Baptist*, studio of Sandro Botticelli, c. 1510, oil on canvas, 178 x 135 cm © GrandPalaisRmn, photo Tony Querrec



Domaine national de Chambord, Chapel © Sophie Lloyd

Another version of the *Virgin Mary, Infant Christ, and St. John the Baptist* was made in the Botticelli studio around 1500. It now belongs to the Barber Institute of Fine Arts in Birmingham, UK.

Similar but different, the two paintings displayed in the chapel of the château at Chambord demonstrate developments in painting technique as well as the functioning of Botticelli's studio and the extent to which artists in Florence created multiple representations of the Holy Family. The painting from Champigny is very close to the one in Florence, though the composition is reversed, no doubt on account of the duplication technique used, and shows background variation (outside with rose bush, inside with shadow).

Bringing these two paintings together reflects the influences of Italian artists in the Loire Valley, including Leonardo da Vinci whose work inspired the architecture at Chambord and its famous double-helix stairway.

“The Chambord National Estate is very proud to present the Virgin Mary, Infant Christ, and the young St. John the Baptist from Botticelli's studio, a painting which recently underwent a series of examinations and investigations to determine its origins and the conditions in which it was made, the results of which are most exciting.

On display since the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the church of Saint-Félix at Champigny-en-Beauce, it will now be shown at the chapel at Chambord for a period of two to three years, thanks to the generous loan of the commune de Champigny, owner of the painting.

From October 2024 to January 2025, it will be displayed in majesty alongside the work that served as its model: the magnificent Virgin and Child with the Young St John the Baptist from the Pitti Palace in Florence, painted in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century by Sandro Botticelli which, exceptionally, has been loaned to us by the Uffizi Galleries.

We are honoured to receive these two pieces, one for a few months, the other for a few years, reminding us that the Loire Valley was, and still is, the land of the Renaissance where the influence of Italian artists was fundamental”

Pierre Dubreuil

General Director of the Domaine national de Chambord



*Virgin and Child with the Young St John the Baptist*, Sandro Botticelli, c. 1490-1495, oil on canvas, 134 x 92 cm, © Photo SCALA, Florence - Courtesy of the Ministero Beni e Att. Culturali e del Turismo, Dist. GrandPalaisRmn / image Scala





The Domaine national de Chambord © Olivier Marchant

## The *Domaine national de Chambord*

For over 500 years, Chambord has aroused admiration and fascination throughout the world. Since 1821, the monument has been open to the public. Placed as early as 1840 in the initial list of historic monuments in France, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1981, Chambord is one of the most breathtaking Renaissance constructions. Bounded by a 32km (20-mile) wall, the château is located in an estate containing no less than 5440 hectares. The second most visited castle in France, Chambord welcomes more than one million visitors per year.

### Around the exhibition

- The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication, available for purchase at the château's shop;
- Public opening on Saturday, October 20, 2024;
- The exhibition will include *expert videos* explaining the historical and technical investigation of the Champigny-en-Beauce painting. These videos will be published on the website [chambord.org](http://chambord.org) and on the YouTube channel: [youtube.com/@chateaudechambord](https://youtube.com/@chateaudechambord);
- The exhibition will be enhanced with an augmented reality feature.

### Practical information

- The exhibition is included in the entrance ticket: full price €16; reduced price €13.50; free for EU citizens under 26 years old.
- Opening hours:  
October 20 - October 28, 2024: 9 AM - 6 PM.  
October 28, 2024 - January 19, 2025: 9 AM - 5 PM.

Last entry is 30 minutes before the château closes. The French formal gardens close 30 minutes before the château.

Property of the French state since 1930, the *Domaine national de Chambord* is an industrial and commercial public establishment placed under the high protection of the President of the Republic and under the joint authority of the French ministries of agriculture, culture and the environment. By dint of a state council degree dated 1 June 2018, the establishment has joined forces with the Grand Parc de Rambouillet.

The Board of Directors is chaired by Philippe Donnet. Since January 2023, the public establishment has been directed by Pierre Dubreuil.

### Scientific Council

The scientific council is overseen by:

- Matteo Gianceselli (heritage curator at the Renaissance Museum in Écouen, responsible for collections of paintings, tapestries, graphic arts, textiles, and leathers)
- Hélène Lebedel-Carbonel (chief heritage curator, inspector of heritage and architecture).

The mediation surrounding the exhibition is supplemented by insights from Dominique Martos-Leviv and Myriam Eveno, respectively research engineer and physicochemist at the C2RMF.

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