

TEEN AGER KIT

A stylized illustration of a girl with purple hair and a joyful expression, wearing an orange tank top. She is surrounded by various art supplies: paintbrushes, tubes of paint, a palette, and a ruler. The background is a solid teal color with white wavy borders on the left and right sides. The title 'TEEN AGER KIT' is written in large, white, hand-drawn letters, with 'TEEN' and 'KIT' underlined. A dashed white arrow points from the 'KIT' towards the girl.

A tool designed for teenagers aged 12 to 19
for exploring the exhibition

DONATELLO, THE RENAISSANCE

The *Donatello, the Renaissance* exhibition in Palazzo Strozzi tells the story of the life and works of a great artist named Donato di Niccolò di Betto, better known as Donatello, who worked in several cities including Florence, Prato, Siena and Padua.

He influenced many generations of artists with his innovative style. Start your tour by focusing on the sculpture of *David Victorious*...

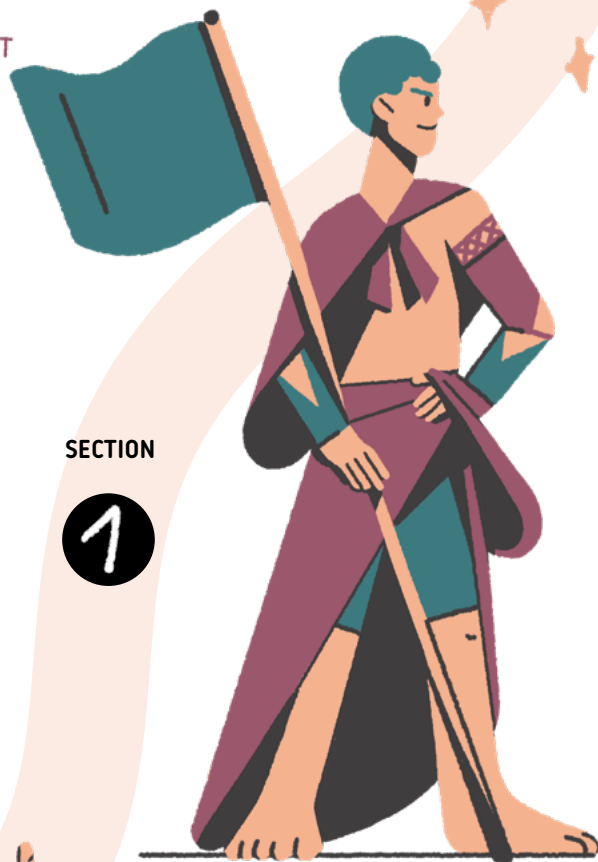
1. The bible story of David and Goliath tells of an **UNEQUAL FIGHT** between a young shepherd armed only with a sling who takes to the field against a giant terrorising the people of Israel. Despite the huge difference in their conditions, David defeats Goliath by slinging a stone at him and hitting him in the middle of his forehead, knocking him out and then finishing him off by chopping his head off with a sword.

Over the centuries this subject has become a symbol of a grand undertaking bolstered by faith and courage in the struggle against injustice. Donatello portrayed this episode at the start of his career and so it is with this that we begin our tour of the exhibition.

SECTION

1

START



In our own day what undertaking by an individual or a group of people would you compare with David's feat?

2



2. Donatello's work is remarkable for the natural expressions of his figures. The poses of the figures in his versions of the *Madonna and Child* conjure up feelings of **AFFECTION, TENDERNESS AND INTIMACY** sometimes the Christ child almost appears to merge with his mother in an embrace, while in others he's pulling away from her like the

Look at all the exhibits in the room, paying attention to the details, expressions and gestures. Which of these would you say best represents your own parent-daughter/son relationship?

At home look in the drawers or on the computer for photos of you with one of your parents when you were tiny. Choose any one you like, stage it all over again and take a new photograph.

3. Donatello trained as a goldsmith in Ghiberti's workshop and learnt to work metal with great skill. *The Reliquary of Saint Rossore* (1422–5) reveals that skill in full: the gilded bronze **SCULPTURE-CONTAINER** is at once detailed and expressive. Made to hold the saint's sacred head, it has his features which Donatello has captured in both a naturalistic and an idealistic way. Reliquaries are vessels designed to hold parts of the body or items belonging to saints. They were made to preserve the relics and to allow them to be venerated in places of worship.

What's valuable to you?
How do you keep it safe?

SECTION

3

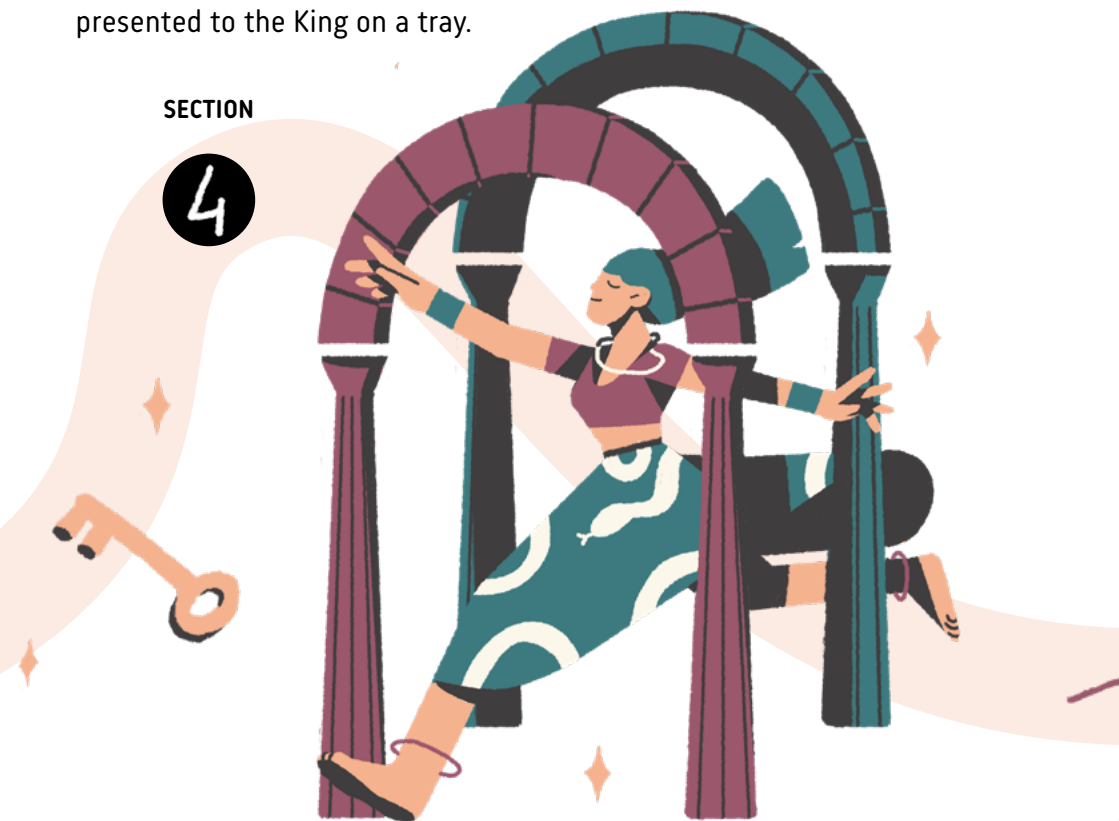


4. *The Feast of Herod* is a bronze relief modelled by Donatello for the baptismal font in the Baptistery in Siena in 1423–7. The panel tells the story of the martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist, who was beheaded at Salome's request.

The **MAGNIFICENT DANCE** with which the young woman mesmerises Herod and the entire court allows her to voice the gruesome wish that the saint be killed and that his head be presented to the King on a tray.

SECTION

4



Thanks to a canny use of perspective, Donatello manages to tell different moments of the story by subdividing the panel into various different rooms. The figures inhabit the spaces and gradually emerge from the background, right up to the foreground where the most dramatic moment in the whole story is set.

Compare the various exhibits in the room, observing the experimental approaches to perspective in painting and sculpture alike.

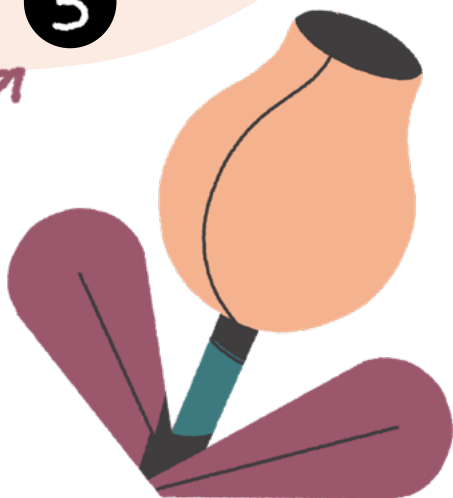
5. Donatello produced the *Amor-Attis* in the 1430s. It's a sculpture whose meaning is still shrouded in mystery today. A winged child dressed with a belt and breeches that only cover a part of him smiling and gesticulating while crushing a serpent beneath his foot at the same time.

Donatello here has combined attributes that are generally ascribed to gods of the pagan world (Eros, Mercury, Hercules and Attis) with the features of an angel from the Christian tradition, an amazing **DISPLAY OF FREEDOM** and innovation for the time!



SECTION

5



The poppies in relief on the belt are the symbol of the family that probably commissioned the work, the Bartolini-Salimbeni.

Imagine you're a patron of the arts. What symbol would you use to represent your family?

Think of something that's emblematic of your family and draw it when you get home.

8. *Saint John the Baptist* is the patron saint of Florence, and in Donatello's day he was often portrayed in works of art.

In this exhibition he appears in 5 exhibits (3 in this room and 2 in a later section), and in each one he's shown at a different age.

In the paintings and sculptures you can see the passage of time: *Saint John* **GROWS AND HIS BODY CHANGES** but certain things like his camel hair tunic and tall thin cross remain the same so that we can identify him.



SECTION

8

There are things around us that change rapidly, like technology, and others that don't seem to change much even after years.

What do you think is still going to be around from our world in 50 years' time, and what do you think is going to change?

9. The *Imago Pietatis* is the iconography of Christ rising from the grave even though he's dead. Sometimes he's supported by two or more figures, who can be angels or mourners. The versions carved by Donatello in the 1430s and '40s set a trend and many of the artists whose work you can see in this room took their inspiration directly from his compositions.

This iconography speaks of a moment of **SUFFERING AND SUPPORT**. The arrangement of the figures, their movement and their expressions, as well as the material used for the works, can trigger different emotions.

Look carefully at the five versions. What's the strongest feeling or emotion you associate with each one?

Choose one word for each one, and then try and analyse why you chose that particular word.

SECTION

9



10. Donatello also worked on tombs, for instance the *Floor Tomb of Bishop Giovanni Pecci* (1448–50) in which he use bronze to portray the deceased churchman with immense realism.

Art has always been a tool for immortalising important people – and sure enough, the tomb slab is the image by which the good Bishop's going to be **REMEMBERED FOR ALL ETERNITY!**



Think of the hundreds of images you have of yourself. Many of them are on social media beyond your control. Which of them would you never want to be remembered by?
Now share that image with a friend!



11. In the last years of his life Donatello worked mainly in bronze, which was far less demanding for a very old man to work with. He modelled the *Bearded Head* in around 1455. The subject is still a mystery to us today, but it may portray a prophet.

Next to it you can see a portrait of a *Young Philosopher* made by Donatello's pupil Giovanni di Bertoldo.

Young and old alike, they both look as though they are **LOST IN THOUGHT**.

SECTION

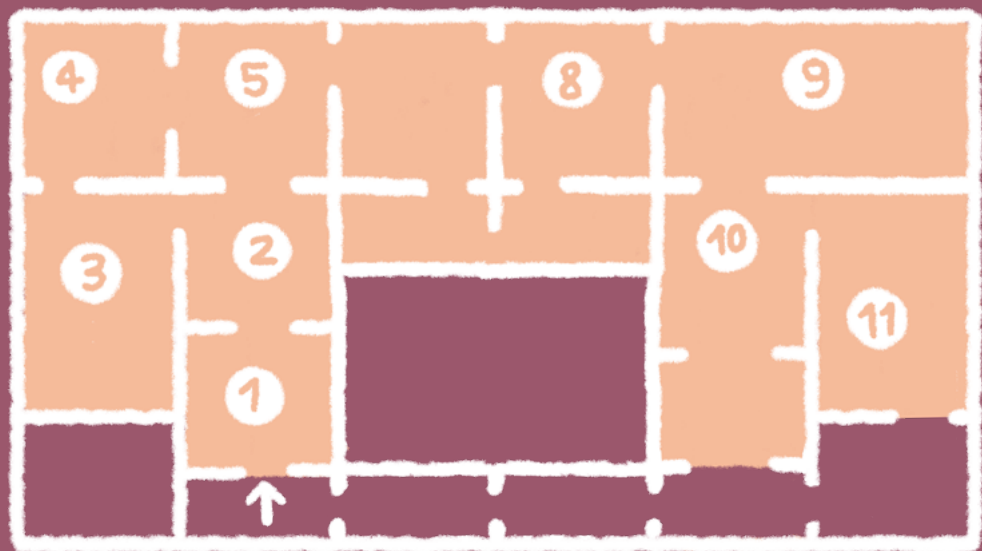
11

Donatello was a great source of inspiration both for his own pupils and for many artists that came after him.

Adults always play the role of masters and that puts them in a position where they can be listened to and dispense advice and counsel.

Well, now let's switch roles! At your age, what advice do you think you could give an adult?





The numbers on the map indicates the sections where to stop and read the corresponding text.

The Teenage Kit is a tool for exploring the *Donatello, the Renaissance* exhibition in 9 stages, with exercises and creative activities.

The Kit has been devised for teenagers and has been realized in collaboration with the students of Liceo Ernesto Balducci school in Pontassieve, in the context of *Plurals*, the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi's PCTO programme.



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The Teenager Kit is a project by Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi
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