

PRESS KIT

Broken. The Power of the Fragment

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Broken. The Power of the Fragment

(Florence, Palazzo Strozzi, 25 September 2026–24 January 2027)

(Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art, 3 March–27 June 2027)

**A journey through the history of sculpture:
from ancient Egypt and classical Greece to Michelangelo,
Auguste Rodin, Louise Bourgeois, Francesco Vezzoli, and Danh Vo**

From 25 September 2026 to 24 January 2027, Palazzo Strozzi presents ***Broken. The Power of the Fragment***, a major exhibition celebrating the evocative power and enduring fascination that the fragment has exercised in the history of sculpture, **from archaeology to contemporary art**.

Organized **in collaboration with the National Gallery of Art in Washington**, the exhibition offers an **exciting journey across cultures and histories from around the world** through **more than eighty works** that highlight not only their aesthetic value but also the compelling historical narratives and the powerful political and symbolic meanings contained in every sculptural fragment.

The exhibition brings together loans from major international institutions, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Musée du Louvre in Paris, the British Museum in London, the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, the Museo Nazionale Romano, the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Florence, and the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City. The project spans **historical periods and geographies**: from the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesoamerica, Etruria, Greece, and Rome, it extends to the premodern cultures of modern-day Cambodia, Mali, Mexico, and Peru.

Works by many of the **greatest masters of art history**, including Giovanni Pisano, Michelangelo, and Auguste Rodin, are shown alongside sculptures by **contemporary artists** including Louise Bourgeois, Huma Bhabha, Robert Gober, Francesco Vezzoli, and Danh Vo, who have taken the fragment as a starting point for new expressive possibilities. On the occasion of the exhibition, Palazzo Strozzi also presents a **new installation by Dutch-Belgian artist Mark Manders**, conceived for the Renaissance Courtyard.

The exhibition examines the reasons and circumstances that have led to the destruction or damage of sculptures, from ancient and modern **iconoclasm** to **wartime devastation**, from **vandalism** to **natural disasters**. The show traces crucial moments in history, including wars and religious reforms, the French Revolution, the world wars, and the 1966 flood in Florence, allowing for a broad reflection on the **political significance** that these works acquired through breakage.

If fragments are fundamental to our understanding of the past, they are far more than mere remnants of a lost whole. They exist as autonomous objects, worthy of being observed and interpreted as works of art, and capable of transcending their original context to tell **stories of transformation, destruction, and rebirth**. Over time, their meaning has evolved: from symbols of traumatic events, they have become stimuli for the imagination, generating a continuous and dynamic dialogue between past and present.

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The exhibition

Why do fragments continue to exert such a powerful fascination? What draws us to linger before a mutilated statue, a broken head, a body marked by force or time? Should we see such works as somehow exceptional or embodiments of a historical norm? Breakage has always been part of the history of works of art. Time, natural events, war, iconoclasm, devotion, reuse, and even artistic creation itself have transformed works conceived as complete wholes into fragmentary objects that nevertheless retain—and at times even intensify—their expressive power.

Spanning a broad chronological and geographical range, the exhibition unfolds through **thematic sections** that examines the fragment as a historical, cultural, and symbolic phenomenon, exploring the multiple lives of works that allow us to reflect on the relationship between destruction and memory, loss and imagination, absence and survival. The fragment thus emerges as an autonomous form of knowledge: a presence that preserves the traces of time and, in its gaps, continues to evoke the past while challenging us to rethink the present.

The exhibition opens with a large section devoted to the **evocative power of the fragment**, beginning with great impact: the remains of the *Funerary Monument of Margaret of Brabant* (1312–1314), which convey the power and innovation of the composition conceived by the great master of Italian sculpture **Giovanni Pisano**. This is followed by a series of fragmented faces from sculptural ensembles from various periods and geographic areas, including the famous **Nose and Lips of Akhenaten** (c. 1350 BCE) from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, an **Etruscan head** from the 6th century BCE from the Museo di Villa Giulia in Rome, a **head of the goddess Aphrodite** from the 2nd century BCE from the Acropolis Museum in Athens, and a rare fragment of an 8th-century bronze **Buddhist sculpture** from Vietnam from the MAO Museo d'Arte Orientale in Turin. The next gallery considers how fragmented bodies have been displayed, collected, or hidden from view: from the **Virile Torso Known as the "Livorno Torso"** dating to the 1st century BCE from the National Archaeological Museum of Florence, to the so-called *Scarified Woman* from around 200 CE, a celebrated find from the archaeological site of Tamtoc in Mexico.

The exhibition continues with the **themes of iconoclasm and *damnatio memoriae***, practices involving the destruction or alteration of images and objects for political and religious gain. At the center of the gallery are the remains of one of the oldest known bronze equestrian monuments from the **Agora of Athens** (c. 320–270 BCE), which was brought down in 200 BCE in one of the earliest cases of politically motivated destruction. These are joined by emblematic examples of **French Revolution** vandalism—a term that emerged in 1794 in this very context—such as the foot of the great equestrian statue of Louis XIV and the right hand of the monument to Louis XV, on loan from the Louvre. Many sculptures subjected to iconoclasm survive only as rubble, such as the fragment of the once-monumental statue of the **Aztec goddess Coatlicue**, thought to have been destroyed by the Spanish in the 16th century and now housed at the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City. The gallery closes with a **bust of Mussolini by Adolf Wildt** (1923), pierced by blows inflicted by partisans after the Liberation.

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The next section focuses on the effects of **war** and **colonialism**, which have damaged or altered works from antiquity to the twentieth century. Among the highlights are two works from Berlin museums that were severely damaged during **World War II**: a Neo-Hittite female figure (10th–9th century BCE), excavated at Tell Halaf in Syria, and the so-called *Prague Pietà* (c. 1380), a Gothic sculpture from which only the heads of Christ and the Virgin survive. A *Head of Buddha*, taken by the British in 1814 from the temple of Borobudur on the island of Java, testifies to Western colonial powers' impulse to **fragment and appropriate artistic and cultural heritage** across the globe.

Another section of the exhibition is devoted to **natural forces**. Some works have gradually worn down over time, such as the statue of the *Crouching Boy* (early 1st century BCE, National Archaeological Museum of Athens), recovered during the famous **Antikythera shipwreck** find in 1900: the part protected by sand survived, while the part exposed to seawater was corroded over two millennia. Others bear the marks of disasters such as the **flood of Florence in 1966**, which left a deep imprint on the city and its artistic heritage. In this context, a *Christ Carrying the Cross* by a Tuscan sculptor of the 14th–15th centuries, from the Museo di San Marco, is shown; although restored, it still preserves traces of that event.

The exhibition then turns to the idea of recomposition and to the **relationship between fragment and reconstruction**. The *African Youth* from the National Archaeological Museum of Florence is the refined result of a Renaissance intervention that integrated a Hellenistic bronze head onto a body made in the sixteenth century. The work bears witness to a **taste for reinventing antiquity**: the fragment is not only a trace of the past, but the basis for a new creation that follows not a restoration logic but an aesthetic and conceptual one, capable of transforming it into an autonomous work with a new identity. This approach can also be seen in the assemblage practices of contemporary artists such as **Francesco Vezzoli**, who in *The Swan* (2023) combines a Roman male portrait head from the second century CE with a late Renaissance female bust.

Starting from a striking comparison with works that have entered the collective imagination, such as the ***Right Hand of a Colossal Statue, Traditionally Associated with Constantine*** (1st–4th century CE, Rome, Capitoline Museums)—attention then shifts to modern artists who, beginning with **Michelangelo**, adopt the fragment as an autonomous language rather than as a simple outcome of loss. With **Auguste Rodin** and **Medardo Rosso**, the fragment takes on a central role: the “partial figure” is not mutilation but an intensification of expression, in which the body is reduced to its essential elements in order to release movement and vitality. Artists such as **Alberto Giacometti** and **Alina Szapocznikow** would develop this logic further, transforming the fragmented body into a field of formal, symbolic, and political experimentation, especially in relation to the crises of the twentieth century, and extending it to **postwar and contemporary artists** who have made the fragment a symbolic paradigm of their work, including Louise Bourgeois, Huma Bhabha, Robert Gober, Paul Pfeiffer, and Danh Vo.

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The exhibition is organized by the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Florence and the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Curated by C. D. Dickerson III, Dean of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts and Andrew Sears, assistant curator of northern European paintings, both at the National Gallery of Art, in collaboration with Arturo Galansino, Director General of Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi.

The **Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi** in Florence is one of the leading international cultural institution and a key reference point for the Italian art scene, housed in an icon of Renaissance architecture. Its exhibition program ranges from major shows devoted to old masters and modern art to site-specific projects and exhibitions by internationally renowned contemporary artists, such as Ai Weiwei, Olafur Eliasson, Marina Abramović, Anselm Kiefer or Anish Kapoor. Within this ongoing dialogue between past and present, Palazzo Strozzi is a place of artistic production and research, guided by innovation and accessibility for the public.

The **National Gallery of Art** welcomes all people to explore art, creativity, and our shared humanity. Millions of people come through its doors each year—with even more online—making it one of the most visited art museums in the world. The National Gallery's renowned collection includes over 160,000 works of art, from the ancient world to today. Admission to the West and East Buildings, Sculpture Garden, special exhibitions, and public programs is always free.

FACT SHEET

Title	<i>Broken. The Power of the Fragment</i>
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PHOTOSHEET

The images are intended solely for the promotion of the exhibition. When using them (e.g. article or blog post), it is necessary to specify the venue, title and dates of the exhibition: *Broken. The Power of the Fragment*, Florence, Palazzo Strozzi, 25 September 2026 – 24 January 2027. All images used must include the specified photo credit.

1.1	<p>Giovanni Pisano (Pisa, 1248 ca.–Siena, 1315 ca.) <i>Fragments of the Funerary Monument of Margaret of Brabant (Elevatio animae)</i> 1312–1314 Apuan marble 78 × 118.2 × 33.8 cm Genoa, Museo di Sant'Agostino, MSA 258</p> <p>Credits: Photo Scala, Firenze</p>	
1.2	<p>Egyptian Art <i>Face of Senwosret III</i> c. 1878–1840 BCE red quartzite 16.5 × 12.6 × 11.4 cm New York, Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1394)</p> <p>Credits: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource / Scala, Firenze</p>	
1.3	<p>Cham Art <i>Head of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśhvara</i> probably found in Quang Nam Province, Vietnam c. 700–800 CE copper alloy 23 × 23 × 12 cm Paris, Guimet—Musée National des Arts Asiatiques, MA7067</p> <p>Credits: © RMN-Grand Palais / Thierry Ollivier / RMN-GP / Dist. Photo SCALA, Firenze</p>	

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Firenze
Palazzo Strozzi

25.09.2026

24.01.2027

1.4	<p>Egyptian Art <i>Nose and Lips of Akhenaten</i> from Akhetaten, now Amarna, Egypt c. 1353–1336 BCE 9.1 x 6.3 x 5.5 cm indurated limestone New York, Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1395)</p> <p>Credits: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource / Scala, Firenze</p>	
1.5	<p>Etruscan Art Master of Apollo? <i>Head of Turms (Hermes)</i> from the Portonaccio Sanctuary at Veii, Italy 510–500 BCE terracotta with traces of pigment 46 x 28 x 26 cm Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, 40772</p> <p>Credits: © Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia. Archivio fotografico. Foto Mauro Benedetti</p>	
1.10	<p>Ghandaran Art <i>Head of Buddha</i> from northwest Pakistan or Afghanistan c. 300–400 CE stucco with traces of pigment (red and black on the eyelids, black in the auricle) 84.5 x 51 x 56 cm Turin, MAO Museo d'Arte Orientale, IAs/17</p> <p>Credits: By permission of Fondazione Torino Musei. Photo Studio Fotografico Gonella 2026</p>	

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<p>2.1</p>	<p>Nuragic Art <i>Warrior with Shield</i> from Mont'e Prama, Sardinia, Italy 900–700 BCE micritic limestone Warrior: 198 × 61 × 32 cm Shield: 65 × 65 × 16 cm Cabras, Fondazione Mont'e Prama—Museo G. Marongiu, 201879, 201881</p> <p>Credits: Archivio Fondazione Mont'e Prama – Photo Nicola Castangia</p>	
<p>2.2</p>	<p>Greek Art <i>Virile Torso Known as the "Livorno Torso"</i> 1st century BCE bronze 93 × 58 × 32 cm Florence, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze, inv. 1638</p> <p>Credits: By permission of Ministero della Cultura - Direzione regionale Musei nazionali Toscana - Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze. Photo Nicola Salvioli</p>	
<p>3.4</p>	<p>Roman Art <i>Bust of Germanicus Caesar</i> from Egypt c. 19 CE basanite 47 × 30 × 24 cm London, British Museum, The Trustees of the British Museum, 1872.0605.1</p> <p>Credits: © The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved</p>	

3.5	<p>Jenné-Jeno Artist <i>Fragment of a Kneeling Figure</i> from Inland Niger Delta region, Mali c. 1000–1400 terracotta, 48 × 23 × 26 cm Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, Maurice D. Galleher, Ada Turnbull Hertle, and Laura R. Magnuson funds, 1983.917</p> <p>Credits: © The Art Institute of Chicago / Art Resource, NY/ Scala, Firenze</p>	
3.7	<p>Mexica Art (Aztec) <i>Statue of Chalchiuhtlicue</i> from Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City, Mexico c. 1325–1521 diorite 80 × 37.5 × 27.5 cm Mexico City, Museo Nacional de Antropología, Secretaría de Cultura—Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 10-82215</p> <p>Credits: © Secretaría de Cultura- Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia- Archivo Digital de las Colecciones del Museo Nacional de Antropología</p>	
	<p>François Girardon (designer); John Balthazar Keller (caster) <i>Left Foot from the Equestrian Statue of King Louis XIV</i> 1692–1694 bronze 40 × 71.5 × 29.5 cm Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Sculptures. On long-term loan at Musée Carnavalet—Histoire de Paris, Paris, MR3448</p> <p>Credits: © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Pierre Philibert / Art Resource, NY / Scala, Firenze</p>	

3.13	<p>Adolfo Wildt (Milano, 1868–1931) <i>Dux</i> 1923 bronze 95 × 140 × 60 cm Collezione Carlo Eleuteri</p>	
4.1	<p>Neo-Hittite Art <i>Seated Grave Figure</i> from Guzana, now Tell Halaf, Syria c. 1000–800 BCE (reconstructed 2001–2010) basalt 192 × 82 × 100 cm Cologne, Max Freiherr von Oppenheim Stiftung, TH B 0001</p>	
4.2	<p>Egyptian Art <i>Face and Shoulder from an Anthropoid Sarcophagus</i> c. 332–330 BCE greywacke 47 × 52.1 × 12.7 cm New York, Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 37.1516E Credits: Photo Brooklyn Museum</p>	
4.5	<p>Lando di Pietro <i>Head of Christ</i> (fragment of a <i>Crucifix</i>) 1338 polychromed walnut wood 31 × 22 × 18 cm Siena, Museo Aurelio Castelli, Basilica dell'Osservanza / Arcidiocesi di Siena—Colle di Val d'Elsa—Montalcino Credits: Courtesy of the Arcidiocesi di Siena—Colle di Val d'Elsa—Montalcino. Photo Bruno Bruchi</p>	

4.8	<p>Antonio Canova <i>Bust of Religion</i> 1815 plaster, without rays: 81 × 43 × 35 cm Possagno, Museo Gypsotheca Antonio Canova, 338</p> <p>Credits: Photo Lino Zanesco</p>	
6.9	<p>Italian Artist <i>Restored Head and Right Arm of Sleeping Ariadne</i> 1540s–1580s Docimian marble 43 × 67 × 38 cm Florence, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze, inv. 13727</p> <p>Credits: By permission of Ministero della Cultura - Direzione regionale Musei nazionali Toscana - Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze © Photo Antonio Quattrone</p>	
6.12	<p>Francesco Vezzoli (Brescia, 1971) <i>The Swan (Portrait of Emperor Marcus Aurelius with a Female Bust)</i> 2023 (Roman marble head, c. mid 2nd century CE; Italian fragmentary bust, late 16th or early 17th century) marble column, chalk, and acrylic paint 193 × 70 × 38 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Franco Noero</p> <p>Credits: © Francesco Vezzoli, by SIAE. Photo: Daniele Molajoli / Azienda Speciale Palaexpo</p>	

7.1	<p>Roman Art <i>Right Hand of a Colossal Statue, Traditionally Associated to Constantine</i> found in Rome, Italy, in a house near the Capitoline Hill 1st–4nd century CE (Imperial Period) Luni marble 166 × 90 × 65 cm Rome, Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali, Musei Capitolini, MC S 786</p> <p>Credits: © Vanni Archive / Art Resource, NY</p>	
7.2	<p>Michelangelo Buonarroti (Caprese, 1475–Rome, 1564) <i>Model of a Nude Woman</i> c. 1533 terracotta height: 35 cm Florence, Casa Buonarroti, 193</p> <p>Credits: Archivio Fotografico, Fondazione Casa Buonarroti © Photo Giusti Claudio Firenze</p>	
7.3	<p>Auguste Rodin (Paris, 1840–Meudon, 1917) <i>The Walking Man (L'Homme qui marche)</i> c. 1878–1900 (model); probably 1903 (cast) bronze 85.1 × 59.8 × 26.5 cm Washington, National Gallery of Art, Gift of Mrs. John W. Simpson, 1942.5.11</p> <p>Credits: Courtesy National Gallery of Art</p>	

7.10	<p>Robert Gober (Wallingford, Connecticut, 1954) <i>Untitled</i> 1991 wax, cloth, wood, leather, and human hair 31.3 × 26 × 95.3 cm Whitney Museum of American Art, Purchase, with funds from Robert W. Wilson 92.6 Credits: © Robert Gober, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. Digital image © Whitney Museum of American Art / Licensed by Scala</p>	
7.13	<p>Adrian Villar Rojas (Rosario, AR 1980) <i>Untitled (From the series The Theater of Disappearance)</i> 2019 interrupted robotic CNC milling reconstruction of the lower section of <i>David</i> by Michelangelo in Carrara marble 195.6 × 150 × 104 cm Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City and New York Credits: © Adrián Villar Rojas. Courtesy l'artista e kurimanzutto, Citta del Messico / New York. Photo: Daniel Terna</p>	
7.17	<p>Julius von Bismarck (Breisach am Rhein DE, 1983) <i>The Elephant in the Room (Otto von Bismarck)</i> 2023 mixed media 380 × 150 × 318 cm Studio Julius von Bismarck, Berlin, alexander levy, Berlin, Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf, Max Levai, New York Credits: © Courtesy Julius von Bismarck; alexander levy, Berlin; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf; Max Levai, New York. © Julius von Bismarck; VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2026. Photo: Roman März</p>	
7.19	<p>Paul Pfeiffer (Honolulu, 1966) <i>Justin Bieber Head (Seville)</i> sculpted by José Antonio Navarro Arteaga, Seville, Spain 2023 cedar wood, and paint 40.6 × 16.5 × 31.8 cm Courtesy of the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London Credits: Courtesy The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). Photo Zak Kelley</p>	

EXHIBITION WALKTHROUGH

Texts by Andrew Sears and Ludovica Sebgondini

Broken. The Power of the Fragment at Palazzo Strozzi brings together more than 80 works, from antiquity to contemporary art, spanning different cultures, periods, and geographical regions. The exhibition sections explore the many meanings of the fragment, from transformations brought about by time and nature to destruction caused by iconoclasm, war, and colonialism, and on to processes of reassembly and the central role of incompleteness in modern and contemporary sculpture. The exhibition also includes focused presentations dedicated to Danh Vo and Paul Pfeiffer, bringing historical and contemporary works into dialogue through unexpected juxtapositions.

The exhibition extends into the Courtyard of Palazzo Strozzi with Mark Manders's *Silent Studio (Reduced to 88%)*, an installation conceived by the artist as a "temporary outdoor studio."

Gallery 1 - Faces

The exhibition opens by introducing some of its recurring themes. The surviving fragments from Giovanni Pisano's masterpiece, the *Funerary Monument of Margaret of Brabant*, lead to a group of faces from different periods and cultures. Their varying states of brokenness reflect many forces: natural erosion, political upheaval, iconoclasm, excavation, looting, restoration, and reuse. Separated from their original bodies and settings, these faces develop new meanings and gain in intensity: Breakage focuses attention on their features, expressions, and the traces of history.

The *Face of Senwosret III* reveals the passage of millennia: from the stone's extraction to its carving, deterioration, and breakage. The *Head of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara*, once part of a figure expressing infinite compassion, has been rendered spiritually meaningless. The Akan *Commemorative Portrait Head*, modeled by a woman to house the spirit of a deceased royal, reveals traces of women's artistry in sub-Saharan Africa. In the *Head of a Female Saint* from an *Entombment*, the face's sacred sorrow seems to mirror the work's mutilated state.

Classical antiquity also shows how fragments can generate new meanings. The *Head of a Youth (Ephebe)*, formerly owned by Johann Joachim Winckelmann, reflects the eighteenth-century fascination with incomplete forms. In the *Head of a Goddess Statue* from the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in Athens, oxidation from the bronze eyelashes runs down the cheeks like tears, turning a material accident into an image of intense emotion.

Gallery 2 - Bodies

The fragments in this room reflect the many ways that bodies can take shape. *Warrior with Shield* from Mont'e Prama, the *Livorno Torso*, the *Colossal Torso of Domitian Dressed as Hercules in Combat*, and the *Scarified Woman* from Tamtoc all demonstrate how wholeness is an arbitrary and fleeting state: Fragmentariness is most enduring.

Some fragments preserve or intensify the figure's gestures and actions. In the *Fragment of Hermes Tying His Sandal*, the movement of the messenger of the gods remains legible: his bent leg, inclined torso, and hands preparing the figure to depart. The *Crouching Venus* retains the sensuality and grace of a celebrated Hellenistic model. The pose, common among Greek

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women bathing with the assistance of female attendants, together with the remains of the swan and the cupid, evoke a scene connected with water, leisure, rest, and bodily pleasure.

The *Standing Figure*, carved between 150 and 250 CE and originating from Teotihuacan, a major Mesoamerican site outside Mexico City, shows a different meaning of breakage. Its head and limbs were systematically severed, perhaps during a ritual “killing” of the sculpture or amid the political upheavals that accompanied the city’s fall around 700 CE. The fragments were dispersed to prevent the image from being reconstituted and its power from resurfacing. The *Torso of Christ* from a *Deposition*, found in a field in France and used as a scarecrow, shows how a fragment can lose its original function and pass through unexpected uses, places, and meanings.

Gallery 3 - Iconoclasms

Among the most charged symbols of political power are equestrian monuments, raised in public spaces to celebrate it and toppled to deny it. The fragments of a sword, a piece of drapery, and a leg from the Athenian Agora may have belonged to the equestrian statue of King Demetrius I Poliorcetes, erected in 303–302 BCE and destroyed in 200 BCE. It is one of the earliest examples of a type of sculpture that for more than two millennia has represented power par excellence. The same intention to deny power drove the destruction of the equestrian monuments of Louis XIV and Louis XV during the French Revolution.

The *Torso of an Akkadian Ruler*, broken into hundreds of pieces, may have been destroyed by political enemies or reused as building material. The *Fragment of a Kneeling Figure* from Jenné-Jeno may have been fragmented for ritual reasons or amidst religious change across the western Sahel.

Elsewhere, concealment and reuse shaped sculptures’ fates: the *Soest Altarpiece*, hidden in the church tower during a wave of Protestant iconoclasm, was long forgotten, with serious consequences for its preservation, while the *Head of a Magus* from Notre-Dame, removed during the French Revolution, was reused in the foundations of a building. The fragments reveal the political and religious conflicts that determined their present condition.

Gallery 4 - War and Colonialism

War, the art market, and raids for precious objects have transformed works into fragments, altering their form, function, and provenance.

Bombing, fire, and looting in times of war have imperiled cultural heritage: the *Neo-Hittite Seated Grave Figure*, the *Prague Pietà*, and the *Head of Christ* were damaged during World War II, while Antonio Canova’s plaster heads still bear the marks of artillery fire at Possagno in World War I.

Colonialism and political upheaval have displaced sculptures from their monumental, religious, and communal contexts. The *Head of Buddha* from Borobudur bears witness to the appropriation of sacred sites under colonial rule. The *Statue of Rama* was looted from a Khmer temple after the Cambodian Civil War and put on the international art market. The *Hampatong*, an ancestral figure that guarded its community in Borneo, became a collector’s object in the West.

In other cases, works were destroyed for what they contained. The Egyptian *Face and Shoulder from an Anthropoid Sarcophagus*, conceived to ensure the deceased a continued

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presence beyond death, may have been damaged in antiquity by tomb robbers who, while searching for the precious objects buried with the mummy, also removed the nose to deprive the image of its vital force and prevent the deceased from taking revenge on the desecrators. Today, these histories inform debates surrounding restitution. Returning a work to its place of origin means acknowledging the rupture caused by past violence, rebuilding relationships with communities of origin, and questioning the role of museums in preserving and interpreting cultural heritage.

Gallery 5 - Nature

Natural forces transform works in different ways: through the slow erosion of water, wind, and sand; the sudden impact of earthquakes, floods, and eruptions; or deterioration intended from the outset. The *Figure Wearing a Mask*, carved by a Jarai artist of Vietnam's Central Highlands, belongs to this last category. Placed at a tomb during a solemn send-off ceremony, it remained outdoors to accompany the deceased, its head resting in its hands as a permanent gesture of mourning. Decomposition was not to be resisted but might have formed part of the work's function.

In other cases, transformation is accidental, as shown by the finds from a ship that sank near the Greek island of Antikythera in the first century BCE and was discovered in 1900 by sponge divers. The *Left Arm of a Boxer* and the *Crouching Boy* come from the wreck; the latter shows the selective action of the sea over almost two millennia. The part buried in sand preserved the marble surface, while the part exposed to water was severely pitted by marine organisms. Natural disasters can have opposite effects. The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE both destroyed and preserved Pompeii and Herculaneum, while the Florence flood of November 4, 1966, struck and damaged cultural heritage in museums and churches: the *Christ Carrying the Cross* now in the Museum of San Marco still bears traces of the flood sixty years later. In all these cases, nature does not merely erase it alters, selects, and sometimes completes the meaning of works.

Gallery 6 - The Reassembled Body

Reconstructing an ancient sculpture means interpreting and sometimes reinventing it. In Europe from the sixteenth century onward, as collecting expanded, different fragments could be reassembled or completed with modern parts to restore an appearance of wholeness. The *Statuette of an African Youth* emerged from this practice: a Hellenistic head, once part of a small jug, was joined in the sixteenth century to a body made of different materials. Reconfiguration can also serve more generative ends, as in Francesco Vezzoli's *The Swan*, which combines ancient fragments into a genderfluid figure.

A single body part can also evoke an entire figure, following the principle of "the part for the whole" (*pars pro toto*). Hands and arms acquire symbolic, ritual, or devotional meanings: the Roman *Figured Crossbeam Head with Hand and Forearm*, the Lambayeque *Hand and Forearm*, and the Byzantine *Arm Reliquary of Saint Anna* all charge the bodily fragment with a power beyond itself. With the latter, the shape of the arm holds and displays the saint's relic, following the type of so-called "speaking reliquaries," modeled on the body part they contain. Other works evoke how the body can be reconfigured through breakage. The Japanese *dogū* condenses meanings associated with protection and ritual power into a stylized body; the

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Chacmool reprises a model widespread in Mesoamerica, broken to invoke the power of the ruins that the Aztecs encountered across their region. With the *Olmec Mask Fragment Pendant*, part of a broken mask is transformed into a new object with a different form and function. The fragment thus becomes the source of new presences and meanings.

Gallery 7- Danh Vo

Born in Vietnam in 1975, Danh Vo left the country with his family at four in a makeshift boat. Rescued by a Danish cargo ship, they settled in Denmark. Flight, displacement, and encounter with a new culture have shaped his practice.

His installations bring together objects, images, and documents from different periods and contexts: family memories, photographs, and letters relating to the Vietnam War, as well as sculptural fragments from the Roman and Renaissance periods. Removed from their original function and placed in new relationships, these elements question how identity, historical memory, and cultural heritage are constructed.

In the three works from the *meat cables* series, fragments of sixteenth-century Cupids or Roman marbles are combined with contemporary elements. In one, they are placed in a Rimowa suitcase; in the other two, they are supported by construction wood, in one case with a column fragment. These juxtapositions evoke the circulation of artworks and the formation of European collections, as well as forced displacement and the trafficking of human bodies.

The work with the suitcase reprises a solution Vo adopted in 2008: to transport a sixteenth-century wooden statue of Saint Joseph without paying shipping costs, he cut it into pieces small enough for carry-on luggage, later exhibiting the sculpture with the suitcase.

In his work, what survives of an object is not only evidence of the past, but a means of reinterpreting it and showing how every identity is fluid, layered, and shaped by different histories.

Gallery 8 - Sculpting the Fragment

The *Right Hand of a Colossal Statue, Traditionally Associated with Constantine* shows how fragmentation can transform a body part into a powerfully autonomous form. Michelangelo recognized this force in the *Belvedere Torso* (1st century BCE, Vatican Museums), whose twisting musculature projects a powerful energy that extends beyond the surviving form. The same tension returns in Michelangelo's "non-finito," where incompleteness is essential.

More than three centuries later, Auguste Rodin made the power of the partial figure a principle of his sculpture. *L'Homme qui marche* draws on Michelangelo's energy, while the *abattis*—arms, hands, heads, and legs—reveal his method: a repertoire to isolate and recombine.

Other artists turn to the fragment to grieve loss. The *Male Figure (Waka Sran)*, once owned by a Baule woman in Côte d'Ivoire, was deposited in the forest after her death by her heirs, who continued to sculpt its form by leaving it behind. Decades later, Louise Bourgeois sculpted *Foot* to process the trauma of losing her mother and sister.

In contemporary art, the fragment becomes a critical tool. In *Inside Story*, Fred Wilson breaks apart the body of a Black servant and inserts a figurine of a white child reading: an image of innocence preserved at the expense of others. In Alina Szapocznikow's *Filozof*, the dismembered body, marked by war, oscillates between vulnerability and resistance. The corroded surfaces of Huma Bhabha's *Untamed* show an incoherent figure that seems to be

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removed from time. Sculpting the fragment means working on form as well as the memories and the conflicts it contains.

Gallery 9 - Sculpting the Fragment

By breaking down the body and reconstructing it through autonomous parts, the fragment thus becomes a form of creative process. The female figure composed of Roman anatomical votives makes this logic clear: elements conceived separately generate a new body when assembled.

Paul Thek takes this exploration to a radical dimension. After visiting the Capuchin Catacombs in Palermo in the 1960s, he began creating sculptures resembling body parts and shreds of flesh. In *Untitled (Meat Cable)*, these wax forms are attached to a cable stretched through space, as if remains, relics, or elements of an abstract structure. By transforming perishable matter, Thek creates an image suspended between body and spirit, sexuality and death, sacred and profane. His practice was an important source of inspiration for Danh Vo, who adopted the title for his *meat cables*, examples of which are included in the exhibition.

Robert Gober, by contrast, starts from a recognizable anatomical form but alters its coherence by combining it with an incongruous element: a candle. In his *Untitled*, an isolated leg condenses desire, vulnerability, and the memory of the AIDS crisis.

The same operation can affect the symbolic body of power. In *The Elephant in the Room (Otto von Bismarck)*, Julius von Bismarck dismantles and reassembles a commemorative monument, revealing the precariousness of the authority it represents. Sculpting the fragment means creating new forms through discontinuity and questioning the apparent integrity of bodies, images, and history.

Gallery 10 - Paul Pfeiffer

Born in Honolulu, US, in 1966, Paul Pfeiffer explores how the media transform athletes and celebrities into collective images, objects of desire, and figures of worship. In the *Incarnator* series, he chooses Justin Bieber, a global icon of the digital age, and entrusts his likeness to sculptors working in Mexico, Spain, and the Philippines, places shaped by different colonial histories and by the spread of Catholicism.

Heads, torsos, arms, and legs are carved and painted separately using techniques associated with the production of sacred images. Pfeiffer draws in particular on those of the *encarnadores*, artisans specialized in giving wood the appearance of living flesh.

Bieber's features and tattoos are reproduced with precision, but the body is never reassembled: each part is an autonomous, complete work, not intended to be joined to the others.

The installation thus appears as a constellation of fragments, bringing religious veneration into dialogue with the contemporary cult of celebrity. Bieber becomes a relic of the present, multiplied and circulated through images consumed on a global scale. Fragmentation does not signify loss, but generates a new, plural body.

By entrusting the execution to different sculptors, Pfeiffer also challenges the idea of the single author. *Incarnator* shows how colonial power is built not only by imposing an order, but also by dismantling, absorbing, and transforming what it encounters.

EXCERPTS FROM THE CATALOGUE

Foreword

by Kaywin Feldman (Director, National Gallery of Art)
and Arturo Galansino (Director General Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi)

Sculptures have been broken for as long as they have been made. We are intrigued by fragmented sculptures for a mix of psychological, aesthetic, and cultural reasons. What looks “broken” often feels strangely complete to us, and sometimes a broken sculpture is even more potent than it was when it was intact. Fragments compel us to consider the varied forces responsible for their making. Perhaps most familiar to us are fragments wrought by the inevitable passage of time, but many fragments document human behavior—for better or worse. Acts of breakage are integral to artistic practice, religious devotion, and societal renewal. Fragments also result from violence, whether through targeted attacks of iconoclasm or through the broader devastations of war, vandalism, and colonialism. *Broken: The Power of the Fragment* explores these tensions and more.

Fragments prompt responses that may seem contradictory at first: allure and awe alongside pity and empathy. Understanding brokenness’s many facets requires engaging with a wide range of approaches. This volume reflects that mandate, bringing together perspectives from art history, conservation, philosophy, anthropology, social history, disability studies, ecocriticism, neuroscience, and poetry. As the lessons from these varied frameworks merge in our minds, they help us navigate the divisions of today’s world by revealing surprising connections and paths to mutual understanding. Among the other ways fragments exert their influence is by inviting us to consider a world where breakage is embraced as a starting point for renewal and optimism.

The exhibition that this volume accompanies brings together more than eighty works spanning the third millennium BCE to the present, each possessing a distinct aesthetic force that bears witness to the damage it has sustained. It also emerged within a contemporary climate marked by the destruction, contestation, and removal of public monuments. These events have brought renewed international attention to the role of images in shaping collective memory and the responsibility of cultural institutions to engage with complex and sometimes contested historical legacies. *Broken* is the result of the fruitful collaboration and shared vision of the National Gallery of Art and the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi. The exhibition unfolds across two venues, in Florence and in Washington. These are not identical repetitions, but two distinct installations calibrated to the architectural specificities and cultural contexts of each institution.

International collaborations like this exhibition are a key part of how our world can improve its current fractured state. The exhibition would not have been possible without the extraordinary generosity of public collections across the world, including in Italy of course, Cambodia, France, Germany, Greece, and Mexico. More than fifty institutions have entrusted us with the care of some of their most treasured objects, while also opening their storerooms and allowing us to borrow works that are lesser known, but whose stories are equally powerful. While museums are rightly understood as sites of preservation, they are also repositories of beautiful brokenness. What is more, many of the fragments have contested histories and meanings. By recognizing breakage as both a shared condition and an opportunity for healing (or at least reinterpretation), our exhibition proposes a new way of using museum collections to forge institutional partnerships.

Framing the Fragment

by C. D. Dickerson III

For various periods between around 230 BCE and 670 CE, visitors coming to the Greek island of Rhodes were treated to an extraordinary sight on the beach fronting the principal harbor: the broken remains of a larger-than-life-size statue in bronze of the sun god Helios—the famed *Colossus of Rhodes*. One person who was awestruck by the spectacle, probably around 70 CE, is the Roman historian and natural philosopher Pliny the Elder. After noting that an earthquake caused the statue to break and topple, he writes that “even lying on the ground, it is a miracle.” His brief description of what he saw—of the fragments strewn on the beach—cuts to the heart of this volume. As Pliny intimates, breakage is not necessarily a force of ruin. In the fragments it creates, it holds the power to transmit its own kind of spell. Looking at a statue in its broken state can be as electrifying as seeing it intact.

This volume and the exhibition it accompanies take it on faith that there is something about fragments that has always affected humans powerfully. The written record is replete with examples, while other evidence dates from prehistoric times. Furthermore, recent tools offered by the science of cognitive perception also allow an understanding of why fragments deserve to be treated as a distinct category of sculpture. But before pursuing those threads, it is first essential to establish that Pliny’s fragment veneration was by no means an isolated case. His sense of wonder at seeing the *Colossus of Rhodes* in pieces on the ground would have been broadly understood during his own day. By the end of the sixteenth century, it had become codified in the language of the Italian Renaissance, a mandatory first stop for any book concerned with situating the fragment in the history of sculpture and thus my primary focus here.

ROME AS CRADLE OF FRAGMENTS

Almost a full millennium separates Pliny from the next individual who is known to have written about fragments as a special case, the French theologian and clergyman Hildebert of Lavardin. During a trip to Rome in 1100 or 1123, he heaped praise on the city precisely because of the fragments he saw there: “Nothing is equal to you, Rome; although you are almost entirely a ruin. Broken, you teach how much you were worth when you were whole.” The passage interrelates several vital points. First, in centering Rome, it foreshadows the dominant position the city would come to occupy in the promotion of the fragment to cultlike status—a story told over the following pages. Second, Hildebert touches on one of the most frequent ways that fragments have been acknowledged as working their magic: They provide a means of appreciating a lost totality.⁵ If a fragment communicates a grandeur in its own right, or if a mass of fragments combines to convey an unthinkable sort of splendor, then we are left to assume that what’s missing is many times more fabulous than what remains. Simultaneously, our estimation of the civilization responsible for creating what has disappeared soars, and we cling to the hope that through the fragments, we can retrieve an understanding (of sorts) of what’s been lost.

An excellent demonstration—albeit one unknown to Hildebert—are the so-called *Giants of Mont’e Prama*, a group of colossal statues carved in sandstone that was discovered in thousands of pieces during the late 1970s in Sardinia. Among the earliest anthropomorphic figures found in Europe, they can be attributed to a people who flourished on the island between the eleventh and eighth centuries BCE. The ambitions of the sculptures, with boldly abstract faces and daringly projecting elements such as the shield held by a warrior, leave many questions about who these people were. On the basis of the fragments alone, we cannot

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help but think that the sculptures were the product of a civilization on the precipice of rivaling any in their world. As we try to fill in the pieces—both literally and figuratively—we are transported to prehistoric Sardinia and given a tantalizing glimpse of what once was.

The third point raised by Hildebert's passage concerns his use of the word "ruins." He applies it in a general way to indicate that Rome's built environment has fallen into a decrepit state. While a ruin is a part of a whole and thus technically a fragment, the word covers many different types of broken things, not only sculpture. Most often, it is used to describe a crumbled or fallen building. Admittedly, in a place like Rome, where ancient sculptures were abundant, broken columns, pediments, and vaults tended to blur in the imagination with broken heads, legs, and torsos. Nevertheless, this book draws a hard line between ruins in the architectural sense and the fragments of bodily sculptures that are its focus. [...]

The story of the fragment's rise in Renaissance Italy begins during the thirteenth century with the earliest known description of a specific fragment locatable to Rome: the remains of a colossal statue in bronze of an emperor (likely Constantine)—a left hand, a head, and an orb (now part of the collections of the Musei Capitolini, Rome). These are not to be confused with the marble fragments of an even larger statue of Constantine from the Basilica of Maxentius, including the giant hand with a pointed finger that has sat in the courtyard of the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the Capitoline Hill since the late fifteenth century. Unlike those fragments of Constantine, however, the bronze ones cannot be identified with a specific statue or location. By the middle of the thirteenth century, they had come to be placed on columns in front of the Lateran Palace in Rome. This is how an Englishman known as Master Gregorius described seeing them during a visit to Rome around 1250 (or maybe earlier), and his reaction is revealing. He begins by emphasizing their enormous size, which he describes as "horrific," as though admitting that their presence struck a subconscious nerve. He then pivots to a more reasoned assessment, extolling their beauty and the skill with which they were executed. The important part is Master Gregorius's brief moment of introspection, when he acknowledges that fragmented statues are different from whole statues in the kinds of emotions they engage.

In spite of examples like Pliny the Elder and Master Gregorius—for whom fragments were endowed with unique qualities that enabled them to engender special feelings—there was no shortage of discourse throughout the fifteenth century on how beauty was the primary measure by which fragments should be judged. Manuel Chrysoloras, a writer from Byzantium who visited Rome between 1410 and 1413, is a case in point. In his book on the differences between ancient and modern Rome, he considers the appeal of such fragments, noting that broken statues "seem beautiful even in their dismembered state." Over and over, we hear that there is something about fragments that simply pleases the eye, although we would be remiss to assume that we could know what beauty meant for Chrysoloras other than it likely had some basis in classical idealism. Surely, however, he did not see fragments as beautiful only because they retained some part of their classical identity. What else was he seeing? This book offers speculation, suggesting the range of sources from which fragments seem to derive their aesthetic power.

Broken to Completion

by Andrew Sears

Around 1400, the Mexica of Tenochtitlan (present-day Mexico City) were in the middle of an extensive campaign to renovate the sacred precinct at the city's center, a large double pyramid now known as the Templo Mayor (*Huey Teocalli* in Nahuatl). One of the most notable additions was a brightly painted sculpture carved from volcanic stone that was placed at the north pyramid's summit before the entrance to the shrine of the rain god Tlaloc. This *chacmool*—showing a recumbent figure turning its head and holding a vessel in its lap—belongs to a common sculptural type found across Mesoamerican temples. Although it remains unknown whom exactly such works were meant to depict—perhaps a priest, an ancestor, or a captive awaiting sacrifice—the containers they hold suggest they served as receptacles for offerings.

Like many acts of refurbishment, the installation of this *chacmool* spoke as much to the present as to the past. The sculpture's archaizing style was meant to evoke the much older ones erected by the Toltecs at Tula, a site that had been abandoned around 1150 and by the fifteenth century survived only in ruins. The Mexica were conscious of the fact that they were a rather young society, having begun as a seminomadic group who settled in their capital of Tenochtitlan only in 1325. To legitimize their emergent power, they looked to venerable past civilizations whose architectural and artistic remains surrounded them in the Valley of Mexico. Toltec art was especially important for Mexica self-fashioning because the first Mexica king, Acamapichtli, was believed to have descended from Tula's royal lineage. Throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, before the arrival of the Spanish in 1519, the Mexica traveled regularly to Tula to explore and excavate. While many of their findings served as sources of artistic inspiration, others were believed to index Toltec power and were subsequently transported back to Tenochtitlan to endow their new constructions with material potency. These ranged from small, portable objects, like pieces of jade and obsidian, to monumental sculptures and monoliths, including a Toltec *chacmool* weighing 1.5 tons that was carried over fifty miles. Many fifteenth-century cultures shared this impulse toward antiquarian self-fashioning. [...]

Italians in the same period were also undertaking frenzied excavations, unearthing ancient sculptures, and mobilizing a past civilization—the Roman Empire—to engender a cultural “rebirth” (*rinascita*) that today we call the Renaissance. Yet these two cultures diverged in their artistic and conceptual approaches to the remains they encountered. In Italy, the convention was to repair fragments of the Roman past through conservation and restoration—acts motivated by the belief that the past needed to be “completed” in order to be efficacious. In contrast, the Mexica seem to have understood completion to be wholly unattainable and thus modeled their approach to rebuilding and reclaiming the past on the ruinous state of their surroundings. Confronted with innumerable fallen and broken sculptures across their landscape, the Mexica perhaps saw their future as being just as inevitably fragmented as their past. [...] they built in a way that already anticipated what would eventually be “broken, turned upside down, ignominiously exposed.” Across the Templo Mayor, acts of breakage, fragmentation, and displacement were integral to renovation, as evidenced by the degree to which new construction was continually counterbalanced with deposits of fractured sculptures, remains of humans and fauna, and offerings divorced and decontextualized from their original locations. Before the installation of the *chacmool* at the shrine of Tlaloc, for example, a

substantial cache of precious greenstone and obsidian offerings of unknown origins was interred beneath it, and caches nearby contained similar objects that were intentionally broken. In other instances, chacmools themselves appear to have been broken and turned into offerings; twelve examples have been found across the site, many of them cleanly decapitated, which suggests some kind of ritual transformation was carried out before they were deposited into new building fabric.

Breaking and creating were inseparable, if not synonymous, and within this context it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between the two. Indeed, the painted chacmool atop the Tlaloc shrine and the decapitated example deposited in the ground may have been understood as not all that different, since both were part of the same dialectical processes that endowed the site with potency. The fragmented chacmool—a work that might appear “broken” to modern eyes but in its original context was considered to be fully realized—indicates just one of the many ways in which artists since premodernity have engaged in and conceptualized acts of breakage and fragmentation as generative modes of creation.

Silent Studio:

Mark Manders for the Courtyard of Palazzo Strozzi

As part of the exhibition *Broken. The Power of the Fragment* on the Piano Nobile (first floor), Dutch-Belgian artist Mark Manders presents *Silent Studio (Reduced to 88%)*, an installation that transforms the courtyard of Palazzo Strozzi into what Manders himself describes as a “temporary outdoor studio.”

At its center is the monumental sculpture *Tilted Head*, which looks fragile, unfinished, and made of modeled clay. In fact, the work is a resin cast of the original clay model, blurring the boundary between appearance and reality. It is accompanied by a series of furnishings made at 88% of their actual scale, an almost imperceptible reduction that nevertheless creates a subtle sense of estrangement. Pages from a newspaper created by the artist also appear, used as coverings or laid on the objects. Composed of every word in the English language, each used only once and arranged randomly, they resemble a real newspaper while remaining unreadable and feature photographs of accumulated dust from the artist’s studio.

Central to Manders’s practice is a conceptual exploration of sculpture, developed through the relationship between language and matter, idea and perception, in which the fragment emerges as an ambiguous condition, suspended in time and space.

In *Silent Studio*, this investigation takes the form of the artist’s studio, superimposed on the Renaissance architecture of the courtyard, creating a tension between the installation’s apparent precariousness and the monumental stability of the space.

Mark Manders

Silent Studio (Reduced to 88%)

2005-2026

Tilted Head

2015-2026

fiberglass-reinforced resin, painted bronze,
aluminium frame, paper

Studio Chair with all Existing Words (Reduced to 88%)

2005-2026

aluminium, offset print on paper

Novelist Lounge Chair (Reduced to 88%)

2005-2026

stainless steel, offset print on paper

Studio Chair (Reduced to 88%)

2020

Steel

Courtesy Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

Mark Manders (Volkel, Netherlands, 1968) lives and works in Ronse, Belgium. His practice, developed through sculpture, installation, drawing and architecture, is grounded in the idea of an ever-expanding self-portrait: environments, figures and objects appear to belong to a single, ongoing work suspended between archaeology, memory and imagination. Manders represented the Netherlands at the 55th Venice Biennale (2013) with *Room with Broken Sentence* and has exhibited at major international institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Louvre in Paris, the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich and the Bonnefanten in Maastricht. Recent exhibitions include *Silent Studio* at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin (2024–2025), *Mindstudy* at Museum Voorlinden in Wassenaar (2025–2026), and *Room with All Existing Words* at London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE (2026).

Curator's Choice:

7 works of art telling the story of the evocative power of the fragment

A selection of seven works chosen by the curators to illustrate the variety and breadth of cultures, eras, and geographies featured in the exhibition.



1) Egyptian Art, *Nose and Lips of Akhenaten*,

from Akhetaten, now Amarna, Egypt

c. 1353-1336 BCE, indurated limestone

New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1395)

The fragment, probably part of a portrait of Akhenaten, pharaoh of Egypt from about 1353 to 1336 BCE, comes from the sanctuary of the Great Aten Temple at Akhetaten, the new capital founded by the ruler, now known as Amarna. Akhenaten introduced a new cult centered on Aten, the solar disk. After his death, the religious reform was abandoned, many statues were destroyed or reused, and attempts were made to erase the pharaoh's memory.

Sculptures often break in ways that leave us with fragments that invite us to consider small details—perhaps a thumb, or a nose and lips. We might otherwise overlook these details if they were not presented in isolation. With this fragment, we are made to focus on the extraordinarily sensuous carving that characterizes the edges of the lips.



2) Huastec Art, *Scarified Woman*,

from Tamtoc, now Tamuín, Mexico

c. 200 CE, sandstone, 100 x 21.5 x 44 cm

San Luis Potosí, Zona Archeológica de Tamtoc, Secretaría de Cultura – Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 10-655098

This sculpture was deliberately broken but never meant to be seen as it is today. Discovered in 2005 at Tamtoc, the ancient capital of the Huastec civilization in north-central Mexico, it had been deposited with other broken offerings in a basin fed by a natural spring. The figure is distinguished by 52 raised scars on each shoulder: a reference to the Mesoamerican calendar, which renewed every 52 years. Patterns on the thigh evoke ears of maize, linking the figure to agricultural fertility. The sculpture may represent a high-ranking priestess connected to earthly and cosmic cycles.

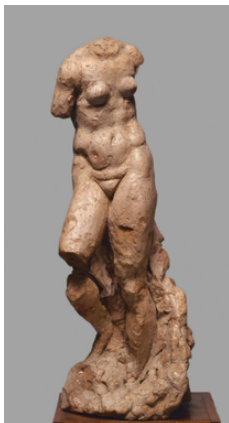
Why the Huastecs disarticulated the sculpture is unknown, but its careful placement underwater indicates there was a purpose for hiding it from view.



3) Prague (Baden bei Wien), *Heads of Mary and Christ from a Pietà*, c. 1380-1400, limestone
27.5 × 23.2 × 16 cm (Mary); 16.5 × 17 × 12 cm (Christ)
Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für
Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv.
2743

Two heads are all that remain of a once magnificent sculpture representing the Pietà. The facial expressions of Mary and her dead son, Christ, allow us to imagine the mournful embrace that once united them. The sculpture has suffered two fires: one in 1812 at the church where it was originally located, and one in 1945 in Berlin. Just

days after Berlin surrendered in World War II, a fire broke out in the bunker where masterpieces of the city's museums, including this sculpture, had been stored for safekeeping. The surviving fragments were taken by Soviet authorities to Moscow and returned to East Germany in 1958. The missing bodies of this sculpture may remain somewhere in Russia and may one day be reunited with the orphaned heads.



4) Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Model of a Nude Woman*, c. 1533, terracotta, h. 35 cm
Casa Buonarroti, Florence, 193, DEX 63

Michelangelo was fascinated with fragments. He drew them, wrote about them, and created sculptures that evoked them—including this terracotta figure here. While the left arm is definitely broken, finger marks under the edges of the other arm indicate that he deliberately created that arm to stop where it does. The figure was meant to look like a fragment, which sets it at the very beginning of a dominant trend in Western sculpture: the broken figure as a complete work of art.



5) François Girardon (designer); **John Balthazar Keller** (caster), *Left Foot from the Equestrian Statue of King Louis XIV*, 1692–1694, bronze, 40 × 71.5 × 29.5 cm
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Sculptures. On long-term loan to the Musée Carnavalet—Histoire de Paris, MR3448.

The statue, which originally stood on the Place Vendôme in Paris, was destroyed on August 12, 1792, as part of the French Revolution. The fragment of the left foot is an illustration of iconoclasm—deliberate damage aimed at an image because of what it represented or whom it showed. The reasons for these attacks varied. Some sculptures were targeted out of fear of the person or god they depicted. Many were attacked during conquest as a form of control. Others were broken by ordinary people resisting unjust rulers. Iconoclasm can look like destruction, liberation, or something in between; it depends on who is telling the story.



6) Alina Szapocznikow, *Filosof (Philosopher)*, 1965, plaster, 137 × 25 × 31 cm

Courtesy The Estate of Alina Szapocznikow | Galerie Loevenbruck, Paris | Hauser & Wirth

Since 1900 fragmentation has become the new norm in sculpture. Some artists have used it to comment on violence that has shaped the modern world, including both World Wars. Others have used it to explore what the body means today, recognizing that bodies are unfinished, changeable, or made of parts. Still others have turned inward, using fragmentation to explore personal yet universal experiences of loss and resilience.

Alina Szapocznikow, who moved to Paris after surviving the Holocaust, sculpted *Philosopher* to present male intellectualism as eerie and unstable, its oversized head teetering on a sinewy leg.



7) Danh Vo, *meat cables*, 2021

16th century Cupid, Roman marble (1st–2nd century CE), and Rimowa luggage, 71 × 39 × 50 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Xavier Hufkens, Bruxelles
ProWinko ProArt Collection

Danh Vo's *meat cables* take its title from an earlier work by Paul Thek, displayed nearby. Thek's work shows flesh disintegrating on a steel cable, as if it has fallen victim to an industrial force. Vo explores how the forces that cause violence are not always so visible.

Vo has disarticulated a Renaissance cupid made from ancient marble and placed it in a suitcase by the luxury brand Rimowa. The fragments are fixed with construction lumber. This unsettling treatment evokes global networks of wealth that hide the ways they displace both artworks and people. Many of Vo's works consider this theme. Born in Vietnam in 1975, he fled the country with his family at age four in a makeshift boat. Rescued by a Danish cargo ship, they settled in Copenhagen, where Vo later attended art school.

Restorations on the occasion of the exhibition

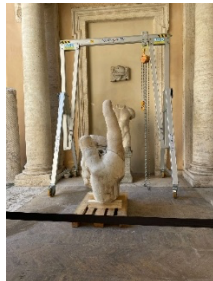
The exhibition *Broken* has made possible the restoration of sculptures in wood, marble, stone and plaster, as well as reliquaries, providing an opportunity to address specific conservation issues and to offer the public a renewed understanding of important works. Other objects have undergone maintenance treatments, which have also provided an opportunity to deepen our knowledge of materials and techniques of execution.

Carried out in collaboration with the lending museums and entrusted to highly experienced conservators, these treatments have enhanced the legibility of the works, combining the promotion and appreciation of artistic heritage with a concrete commitment to its long-term care and preservation.

Restoration of the *Right Hand of a Colossal Statue, Traditionally Associated to Constantine* – Rome, Musei Capitolini – Carlo Usai



before restoration



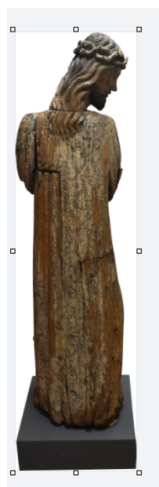
during restoration

Restoration of *Christ Carrying the Cross* – Florence, Museo di San Marco – Simone Beneforti

The treatment included insect control, surface cleaning, consolidation of the base and of the most fragile and deteriorated areas, together with aesthetic integration of the surfaces. The work, whose original location is unknown, and which was damaged during the 1966 flood, was kept for many years in the storage facilities at Villa La Petraia.



in storage at Villa La Petraia, post 1966.



after restoration

Restoration of the *Arm Reliquary of Saint Anna* – Genoa, Museo del Tesoro di San Lorenzo – Francesca Olcese

The reliquary was heavily oxidised. The entire surface was therefore cleaned, removing corrosion deposits and polishing the gilded silver. The index, middle, and ring fingers showed dents and deformation in the terminal phalanges, which had collapsed inwards towards the palm; these areas were returned to their original position and reshaped.



Before restoration

After restoration

The contribution of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure and the offices of the Soprintendenze in Cagliari and Possagno was essential in enabling the rapid completion of conservation treatments on the *Warrior with Shield* from Mont'e Prama and on Canova's *Head of Terpsichore* and *Bust of Religion* from Possagno.

Restoration of the *Warrior with Shield* - Cabras, Fondazione Mont'e Prama – Museo G. Marongiu – Restauro Arborense

Restoration of the *Head of Terpsichore* and *Bust of Religion* - Possagno, Museo Gypsotheca – Passarella Restauri

Special thanks go to Friends of Florence and Simonetta Brandolini d'Adda, whose generous support made possible the restoration of the *Virile Torso* known known as the "*Livorno Torso*" from the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze. Long planned and begun in 2024, the project was carried out by Nicola Salvioi together with an international multidisciplinary team.

Broken

The Power of the Fragment

Firenze
Palazzo Strozzi

25.09.2026

24.01.2027

A Geography of the Fragment

The exhibition *Broken. The Power of the Fragment* brings together works from widely different periods and geographical areas, offering a broad perspective on the history of sculpture. In some cases, a single geographical area encompasses objects associated with different cultures, revealing how the same territories have, over time, been home to diverse artistic, religious, and political traditions. What emerges is a complex geography of the fragment, spanning civilizations, periods, and continents and highlighting, through unexpected comparisons, the universal dimension of the themes explored in *Broken*.



PROMOTED AND ORGANIZED BY



National
Gallery of Art

The Exhibition in Numbers

OVER 80 WORKS

The exhibition brings together over 80 works, from antiquity to the present day, in an exceptional journey spanning a vast chronological and geographical range: 2 works from the ancient Near East, 4 Egyptian, 6 Greek, 2 Nuragic and Etruscan, 11 Roman, 7 Asian, 3 sub-Saharan African, 7 Mesoamerican, Central American and Andean, 17 European works dating from the 13th to the 18th century, 10 modern and 12 contemporary works.

OVER 60 LENDERS

The exhibition brings together loans from over sixty international lenders, including museums, foundations, and public and private collections.

4,300 YEARS OF HISTORY

The exhibition spans approximately 4,300 years of history, from c. 2300–2250 BCE to the present day, encompassing more than four millennia.

THE OLDEST WORK

Akkadian art, *Torso of a Ruler*, from Aššur, Mesopotamia, c. 2300–2250 BCE.

THE SMALLEST WORK

Egyptian art, *Nose and Lips of Akhenaten*, c. 1353–1336 BCE, 8.1 × 6.3 × 5.5 cm.

THE LARGEST WORK

Mark Manders, *Tilted Head*, part of *Silent Studio (Reduced to 88%)*, 2005–2026, 340 × 421 × 332 cm.

THE TALLEST WORK

Julius von Bismarck, *The Elephant in the Room (Otto von Bismarck)*, 2023, 380 × 150 × 318 cm.

THE HEAVIEST WORK

Adrián Villar Rojas, *Untitled (From the series The Theater of Disappearance)*, 2019, approximately 2,900 kg.

18 ELEMENTS, ONE WORK

Paul Pfeiffer's *Incarnator* is a single work comprising 18 sculptural elements, created between 2018 and the present day.

OVER 900 FRAGMENTS

Neo-Hittite Art, *Seated Grave Figure*, c. 1000–800 BCE, destroyed during World War II and restored between 2001 and 2010, reassembled from over 900 fragments.

Voices on the Fragment

“Even lying on the ground [the *Colossus of Rhodes*], it is a miracle.”

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, c. 70 CE

“Nothing is equal to you, Rome; although you are almost entirely a ruin. Broken, you teach how much you were worth when you were whole.”

Hildebert of Lavardin, in **Magister Gregorius**, *De mirabilibus urbis Romae*, 12th century

“Broken statues seem beautiful even in their dismembered state.”

Manuel Chrysoloras, *Comparatio veteris et novae Romae*, 1410–1413

“Since in those buildings and their remains the fragility of human affairs may be contemplated more clearly.”

Pope Pius II Piccolomini, *Cum aliam nostram Urbem*, 28 April 1462

“There are already many ruins from which new ruins are made every day.”

Fra Giovanni Giocondo, *Epigraphic Sylloge*, 1489, dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici (Lorenzo the Magnificent), 1489

“Abused and mutilated to the extreme, it appears, to those capable of looking into the mysteries of art, in a blaze of its former beauty.”

Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, 1764

“Many of the works of the ancients have become fragments. Many modern works are fragments as soon as they are written.”

Friedrich von Schlegel, *Athenäums-Fragmente*, 1798–1800

“Canova declared that, however much one might regret that these statues [from the Parthenon] had suffered so greatly from time and barbarism, it was nevertheless beyond dispute that they had never been retouched; that they were the work of the finest artists the world had ever seen; [...] it would have been sacrilege for him—indeed, for any man—to presume to touch them with a chisel.”

Lord Elgin, *Memorandum on the Subject of the Earl of Elgin's Pursuits in Greece*, 1810

“Some of these transformations are sublime. To the beauty conceived by a human mind, an age or a particular form of society, they add an involuntary beauty, associated with the accidents of history and produced by natural causes and the passage of time. Statues so beautifully broken that a new work emerges from the ruin, perfect in its very fragmentation.”

Marguerite Yourcenar, *Le Temps, ce grand sculpteur*, 1983

“Ruins are symbols of time and society. They are important, because there is always a reason why they are ruins.”

Thomas Hirschhorn, interview with Louisiana Channel, 2021

“I think things being broken and presented leaves things to the imagination.”

Cannupa Hanska Luger, in conversation with Dakota Hoska, 2026

Activities and Public Program

Palazzo Strozzi pays particular attention to its visitors and offers a wide range of activities designed to make the experience of art engaging and accessible to all audiences.

Discover all our activities at www.palazzostrozzi.org

Guided Tours

For groups: €100 for adult groups; €80 for university student groups; max. 20 participants.

For school groups: €3 per student; €5 per student with workshop.

For individual visitors: free with exhibition admission every Monday at 6.00 pm and Sunday at 3.00 pm, with the support of Unicoop Firenze.

Booking required: T. +39 055 2645155 / prenotazioni@palazzostrozzi.org

Reconstructing the Past

Fondazione CR Firenze and Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi present a series of special guided tours of the exhibition through exploring the history of sculpture through the centuries..

Tuesday, October 20; Tuesday, November 3; Wednesday, November 18; Wednesday, November 25; Wednesday, December 2; Wednesday, December 16, at 6.00 pm

Booking is required through the Fondazione CR Firenze website. Fondazione CR Firenze offers free admission and participation in the activity to residents of the Metropolitan City of Florence.

No Adults

Guided tours of the exhibition exclusively for teenagers, led by students from the Liceo Artistico di Porta Romana in Florence and Sesto Fiorentino. Friday, January 8, 15 and 22, 4.00–5.00 pm

The activity is free with exhibition admission.

With the support of Fondazione Hillary Merkus Recordati.

Timeless Sculptures

Starting October 17, every Saturday afternoon from 3:00 to 6:00 pm, students from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze and the University of Florence introduce visitors to Mark Manders' installation in the Palazzo Strozzi Courtyard. These informal conversations offer an opportunity to explore the artist's practice, his approach to sculpture and the way his large-scale installation relates to the exhibition at Palazzo Strozzi.

Free activity, no booking required.

Stories of Fragments

A special project developed in collaboration with Stazione Utopia, offering new transcultural perspectives on the themes of memory, identity and transformation. Through a series of six dialogue-based tours led by mediators with migration experiences, working together with Palazzo Strozzi educators, the project invites participants to reflect on what happens when an object is separated from its original context and takes on new meanings. The experiences and reflections emerging from the meetings will be brought together in a free visitor resource, also available in digital format. Tour dates: Tuesday, October 27; November 10 and 24; December 15; January 12, at 6:00 pm. The activity is free with an exhibition ticket.

Booking required: T. +39 055 2645155 / prenotazioni@palazzostrozzi.org

Activities for Families

Workshops, kits and activities for families with children of all ages.
With the support of Gruppo Beyfin S.p.A.

Family Workshops

Special exhibition tours and workshops for children and adults to experience together.

Activities are free with exhibition admission.

Booking required: T. +39 055 2645155 / prenotazioni@palazzostrozzi.org

- *Tutto d'un pezzo*: every Saturday at 10.30 am (ages 3–6)

- *Fare e disfare*: every Sunday at 10.30 am (ages 7–12)

Family Kit

A resource designed for families with children aged 5 and over to explore the exhibition together and engage with art through play. A journey through the rooms of Palazzo Strozzi featuring suggestions for looking closely at the works and prompts for reflection. Available free of charge at the ticket office and downloadable from palazzostrozzi.org.

Open Space

A space designed for families visiting the exhibition. Every Saturday afternoon, from October 3 to January 16, 3.30–6.30 pm, the rooms of the Educational Center open to provide a welcoming place to spend time before or after visiting the exhibition, with a large cushion-covered area and self-guided activities for anyone wishing to take a break. Designed especially for children aged 0–6, *Open Space* welcomes visitors of all ages to rest, relax and play. Admission is free with an exhibition ticket.

Special Events

Monday, October 12, 5.30 pm

Biblioteca della Toscana Pietro Leopoldo

Piazza dell'Unità Italiana 1

Ludovica Sebregondi, *Presentation of the Fuorimostra*

Thursday, December 3, from 6.00 pm

Palazzo Strozzi Night

A special evening for Under 30s, in collaboration with Unicoop Firenze

Accessibility Programs

A program of activities designed to make Palazzo Strozzi a space in which differences can coexist and be shared. Further information: edu@palazzostrozzi.org

With Many Voices

A cycle of visits and workshops for people living with dementia and those who care for them, offering an opportunity to experience the exhibition through dialogue, emotions and imagination.

Free Flowing

A program dedicated to the well-being of people living with Parkinson's, using movement, dance and body language as ways of engaging with the works of art. A series of activities will take place throughout the exhibition, culminating in a final performance on Thursday, December 17.

Nuances

A cycle of visits and workshops for autistic young people and adults, offering exhibition experiences attentive to different ways of communicating, perceiving and relating to others.

Connections

A program for people with disabilities, mental health conditions and other situations of vulnerability, designed to encourage a personal and shared relationship with art.

Signs and Words

A program for people with sensory disabilities, including tours in Italian Sign Language (LIS) for Deaf and hard-of-hearing visitors, in collaboration with ENS (Ente Nazionale Sordi – Sezione provinciale di Firenze), and a series of narrated tactile tours for blind and partially sighted visitors, in collaboration with UICI (Unione Italiana Ciechi ed Ipovedenti Firenze).

- Tours with LIS interpretation: Friday, November 13 and Friday, January 8, at 17.30

- Narrated tactile tours: Wednesday, October 28; Thursday, November 19; Friday, December 11; Wednesday, January 13, at 17.00.

THE MARIA MANETTI SHREM EDUCATIONAL CENTER

Opened in 2022 with **more than 60,000 people attending over 1,000 activities**, the Maria Manetti Shrem Educational Center has become the heart and the starting point for all the Palazzo Strozzi's activities for schools, families, young people, and adults, with a particular focus on accessibility.

These spaces have been specifically designed to allow as many people as possible to experience Palazzo Strozzi's exhibitions through numerous activities aimed at transforming the encounter with art into an opportunity where the expressive potential of each participant is valued, and **where everyone can feel involved**.

The Maria Manetti Shrem Educational Center is a space where it is possible to forge new relationships between individuals and their families, as well as create an interdisciplinary field of work and discussion among artists, museum educators, healthcare professionals, and experts from various disciplines. A fundamental part of the activities is those dedicated to inclusion and accessibility, for autistic young people (*Nuances*), for people with dementia (*With Many Voices*), disabilities and mental distress (*Connections*), tours in Italian Sign Language or tactile visits (*Signs and Words*), and a dance pathway devoted to the wellbeing of people with Parkinson's (*Free Flowing*).

"The art of living is the art of giving. I am truly pleased to support the arts and culture and, in particular, make access possible for the most vulnerable people. Art can help people by bringing them together through a holistic vision." (Maria Manetti Shrem)

Born in Florence, Italy, Maria Manetti Shrem relocated to San Francisco, California, in 1972, where she played a pivotal role in the internationalization of iconic fashion brands such as Gucci and Fendi. The Manetti Shrem Foundation, chaired by Maria, supports over 55 charitable programs across the U.S., Italy, France, Mexico, Africa, and the UK, contributing to the support of more than 35 foundations. The Foundation's philanthropic mission spans education, opera and symphonic music, art, hospitals and medicine, making a lasting social impact worldwide. The Manetti Shrem Foundation supports institutions such as UC Davis, UCSF, Sutter Health, the San Francisco Opera, Festival Napa Valley, the Metropolitan Opera, the King's Foundation, the Royal Drawing School, UC Berkeley-Cal Performances, KQED, the San Francisco Symphony, SF Film, SF MoMA, ArtSmart, Palazzo Strozzi Foundation, Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Andrea Bocelli Foundation, the Italian National Trust, Museo Novecento, Mascarade, Friends of the Louvre, Friends of Versailles, and Venetian Heritage. Maria has also funded a series of scholarships in Africa through the Global Sojourns Giving Circle, empowering the next generation of women leaders.

Maria and Jan co-founded the Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at UC Davis, whose architectural design was recognized by *ARTnews* as "One of the World's 25 Best Museum Buildings of the Past 100 Years." Maria has been honoured as a cultural ambassador and philanthropist. In 2019, Italian President Sergio Mattarella awarded her the *Grand Officer of the Order of the Star of Italy*. In 2022, the Mayor of Florence presented her with *the Keys to the City* for her exemplary patronage, following in the spirit of the Medici legacy. The City and County of San Francisco also declared June 22 as *Manetti Shrem Day for Philanthropy*. Her accolades include the inaugural *Angels of the Arts Award* from Festival Napa Valley, the *Spirit of the Opera Award* from the San Francisco Opera, and the lighting of the dome of the San Francisco City Hall in the Italian flag colors during *Maria—50 Years in America*, a celebration of her legacy. She also received the 2023 *UC Davis Medal*, the highest honour from the University of California system, in recognition of her extraordinary contributions to the arts. In 2024, UC Berkeley has acknowledged Maria and Jan among the *Builders of Berkeley*. In Spring 2024, Maria made history by donating to the College of Letters and Science at UC Davis the largest gift ever made for the enduring support and enhancement of the arts and humanities, through the creation of eight special funds, creating a Renaissance Zeitgeist through the establishment of a dedicated Art District, inaugurated in January 2025. In recognition of her global philanthropy, Maria received the 2024 *Premio StellaRe* from Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Torino, Italy. In Spring 2025, Maria Manetti Shrem was presented the *California Performing Arts Visionary Award* for her outstanding philanthropy, specifically underwriting the first California Orchestra Residency of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra at Cal Performances, UC Berkeley. On the celebratory occasion of the naming of the *Maria Manetti Shrem Emerging Artists Program* at the Academy of Il Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Maria was awarded the *Pegaso d'Oro*, the highest honor of the Region of Tuscany. Because of her impactful philanthropy, she is also a 2025 *Ellis Island Medal of Honor* recipient. Maria Manetti Shrem continues to lead with vision and generosity, shaping cultural landscapes and enriching lives across the globe.

FUORIMOSTRA

For each exhibition, Palazzo Strozzi offers an itinerary in the region, creating a connection between the exhibition and museums, cultural institutions and partners in the Metropolitan City of Florence and the Region of Tuscany. Palazzo Strozzi acts as a catalyst for Florence and Tuscany, seeking synergies and collaborations that stimulate the cultural promotion of the area. The Fuorimostra is a printed publication distributed free of charge, also available for free download at www.palazzostrozzi.org/fuorimostra.

Florence

1. Accademia delle Arti del Disegno
2. Collezione Casamonti
3. Fondazione Salvatore Romano
4. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze
5. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo
6. Museo di Antropologia ed Etnologia
7. Museo Stefano Bardini
8. Museo Ferragamo
9. Palazzo Gucci
10. Villa e Giardino Bardini

Arezzo

11. Museo Nazionale d'Arte Medievale e Moderna

Fiesole

12. Musei di Fiesole

Lucca

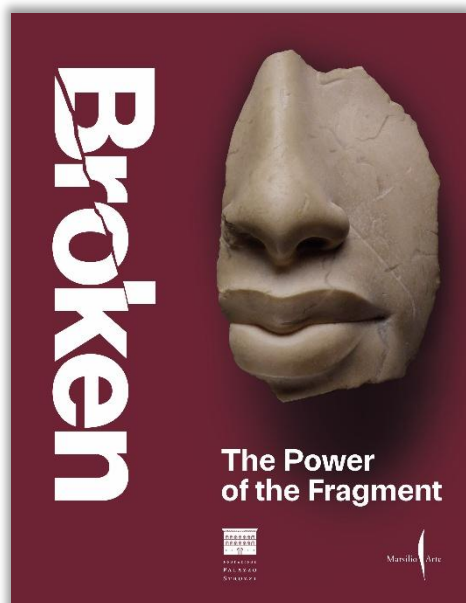
13. Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi

Pietrasanta

14. Fondazione Museo Igor Mitoraj

Pontremoli

15. Museo delle Statue Stele A.C. Ambrosi



Broken
The Power of the Fragment

Curated by C. D. Dickerson III
 and Andrew Sears

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In bookstores from September 22, 2026

On the occasion of the exhibition *Broken. The Power of the Fragment*, curated by C. D. Dickerson III and Andrew Sears, on view at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence from September 25 to January 24, 2027, Marsilio Arte publishes the exhibition's namesake catalogue.

The exhibition, born from a joint project between the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, where it will open in spring 2027 in a specially calibrated installation, places at the center of its inquiry the aesthetic significance and symbolic scope of the fragment, showing how incompleteness, damage, or censorship do not diminish the expressive power of a work, but rather amplify its communicative "power."

From the plastic expressions of antiquity to the contemporary era, *Broken* explores how the life of sculptural artifacts is constantly marked by vicissitudes and traumas of various kinds: natural disasters, the devastation of war, iconoclastic fury, devotional practices, or processes of reuse and material recontextualization. Ranging from artifacts dating back to the third millennium BC to the most recent artistic interventions, the exhibition examines the residual condition as an autonomous form of knowledge, reflecting on the dialectic between loss and memory to show how the wound left by time - or by the hand of man - can transform into a valuable stimulus for reading the present.

The publication accompanies the exhibition itinerary of broad international scope, bringing together more than eighty works thanks to an exceptional network of loans from the most important museums and private collections. The choral dimension of the exhibition is conveyed by the breadth of its

transgeographic and transtemporal references: from the sculptural testimonies of Egypt and Etruria to the precolonial ones of Mali, Peru, and Cambodia, up to the masterpieces of old masters such as Giovanni Pisano, Michelangelo, and Auguste Rodin, which are set alongside the practices of artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Francesco Vezzoli, and Danh Vo. The itinerary concludes with the intervention of Mark Manders, who has created for the occasion a site-specific installation in the Renaissance Courtyard of Palazzo Strozzi.

The rich critical apparatus, with an introduction by directors Kaywin Feldman and Arturo Galansino, gathers the contributions of curators Dickerson and Sears alongside the multidisciplinary insights of A.E. Stallings, David Freedberg, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Miriam K. Said, George Wheeler, Stanley Abe, Timothy Morton, Joanna Fiduccia, and Cannupa Hanska Luger.

Marsilio Arte

C. D. Dickerson III, director since 2026 of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, joined the institution in 2015 as curator and head of the department of sculpture and decorative arts, becoming senior curator of European and American art in 2022. His principal exhibitions include *Alonso Berruguete: First Sculptor of Renaissance Spain* (2019–2020) and *Canova: Sketching in Clay* (2023–2024).

Previously, he was curator of European art at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth for eight years. He earned a PhD in art history from the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University.

Andrew Sears has been assistant curator of Northern European painting at the National Gallery of Art since 2023, where he handles the acquisition, study, and exhibition of German, Austrian, Franco-Flemish, and Netherlandish paintings of the 15th and 16th centuries. He previously was a David E. Finley Fellow at the museum's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Bern, and a fellow at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence and the Berlin State Museums. He earned his PhD in art history and medieval studies from the University of California, Berkeley.

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INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUNDER

The National Gallery of Art is the nation's art museum, welcoming all people to explore art, creativity, and our shared humanity. Through its renowned collection, special exhibitions, and public programming, the institution shares the ever-changing story of how art reflects our nation and world. The National Gallery's collection—featuring over 160,000 works spanning the history of Western art from classical to contemporary—includes some of the most iconic works of art ever made and is a singular resource for the nation.

Situated in the heart of the nation's capital and occupying nearly a quarter of the National Mall, it is one of the world's most visited art museums, and welcomes millions of visitors each year. Admission to the National Gallery of Art is always free, allowing local, national, and international visitors to experience the transformative power of art.

The National Gallery was built on the spirit of generosity. Its collection and resources belong to the entire nation, with opportunities for discovery both within and beyond the museum's walls, including dynamic exhibitions, musical programs in the Sculpture Garden, and digital content that enables audiences of all ages and from all places to engage with art.

Collection

The National Gallery's collection features more than 160,000 works reflecting the history of Western art. Its holdings of works by American and European artists are unparalleled in the United States, including the most extensive public collections of works by Mark Rothko and Alexander Calder; the only Leonardo da Vinci painting in the Americas; one of the largest impressionist collections outside of Europe; and among the largest collections of works by Johannes Vermeer and Amedeo Modigliani in the world.

The collection can be experienced well beyond the walls of the museum. The National Gallery shares its renowned collection and original scholarship with broader audiences through special exhibitions that tour institutions throughout the United States and around the world. The "Across the Nation" lending program, taking place from 2025 to 2026, brings key works of art from its collection to partner museums across the United States, creating unprecedented access to masterworks in the nation's art collection in communities throughout the country. Through a robust and growing suite of digital content across the National Gallery's website, video platforms, and social media channels, anyone can engage digitally with the National Gallery's online information, activities, and educational resources.

History

The National Gallery of Art was founded as a gift to the American people. It was conceived by Andrew W. Mellon, a financier and art collector who served as secretary of the treasury under three presidents from 1921 to 1932 and believed that the United States should have a world-class national art museum. In 1936, Mellon wrote to President Franklin D. Roosevelt offering a gift of his art collection to establish a new museum. It was to be built and financed with Mellon's own funds and located on federal land in Washington, DC. With Roosevelt's endorsement, Congress accepted Mellon's gift in 1937. President Roosevelt dedicated the National Gallery's first building, designed by American architect John Russell Pope and now known as the West Building, on March 17, 1941.

The East Building was added to accommodate the National Gallery's growing collection of modern art and scholarly programs. Designed by architect I. M. Pei, the East Building was dedicated by President Jimmy Carter on June 1, 1978. Today, the East Building houses the National Gallery's significant collection of

modern and contemporary works, its library and archives, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (the Center), the renowned cultural research institute established in 1979.

The National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden was a gift of the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, and first Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton dedicated it on May 19, 1999. The garden showcases iconic 20th-century works by artists including Alexander Calder, Joan Miró, Louise Bourgeois, Ellsworth Kelly, and Claes Oldenberg.

Conservation and Scholarship

The National Gallery of Art serves the nation by advancing art historical research, scholarship, and public dialogue.

The National Gallery of Art is home to one of the most highly respected art conservation and scientific research laboratories in the world. With a staff of more than 40, the conservation department includes experts in conservation treatments, preventive conservation, chemistry, hyperspectral imaging, and art history, as well as a host of interns and fellows who train at the National Gallery. The scientists, curators, and conservators of the department work collaboratively on topics related directly to its own collection and beyond. Through conservation research and development, and by investigating artists' methods and materials, they contribute to the international conservation and art historical community.

The National Gallery of Art Library is one of the world's foremost resources for the study of art history. Its publicly accessible, constantly growing collection spans more than 16 million images and 500,000 volumes. These include thousands of rare books dating back centuries, and many of these resources are available online.

Programming

The National Gallery of Art prioritizes visitor experience as a cornerstone of its mission to serve and reflect the nation. Its exhibitions, programs, and initiatives are informed by ongoing visitor research and are developed to reach many audiences—from local to national, in-person to virtual, and seasoned art lovers to first-time museumgoers.

The National Gallery of Art presents thousands of free programs and events each year that welcome visitors to connect and engage with art, including tours, lectures, educational and family programs, films, concerts, and large-scale community events like Jazz in the Garden and National Gallery Nights. In partnership with local schools and educators, the museum presents its flagship "Art Around the Corner" educational program, which offers something for every member of the school community, including student visits, teacher workshops, and family programs, both at the museum and in schools. Over its 30-year history, "Art Around the Corner" has engaged approximately 21,000 students.