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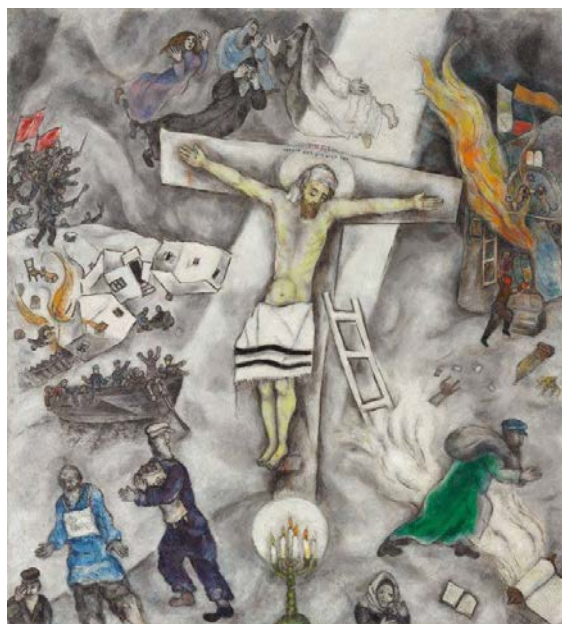
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MARC CHAGALL'S *WHITE CRUCIFIXION* TRAVELS TO THE ICONIC BAPTISTRY OF THE DUOMO FOR SPECIAL MOMENT IN POPE FRANCIS'S FIRST VISIT TO THE PEOPLE OF FLORENCE

More than 50,000 Welcome the Holy Father to Italy's Fifth National Ecclesiastical Conference and Share an Opportunity to View the Extraordinary Painting the Pope has Called His Favorite

CHICAGO—The Art Institute announces the exceptional news that on **Tuesday, November 10, 2015**, in Florence, Italy, at the iconic Romanesque **Baptistry of St. John** across from the Florence Cathedral with Brunelleschi's Duomo and Giotto's bell tower, **His Holiness, Pope Francis**, viewed one of the museum's most important works of modern art—**Marc Chagall's *White Crucifixion* (1938)**.



Marc Chagall painted *White Crucifixion* in 1938, depicting a Jewish Jesus wearing a tallit as a loincloth and surrounded by pogroms. It represents a critical turning point for Chagall, as the first and largest in an important series of his compositions featuring the image of Christ and Jewish martyrdom to call attention to the contemporary persecution and suffering of European Jews at the hands of the Nazi regime—brought to the fore by the widely-reported events of Kristallnacht from November 9-10, 1938, that sent shock waves through Europe and around the world. Chagall made intentional choices to move away from depictions of specific events to extend the symbolism of the painting, incorporating Christian and Jewish religious iconography to extend the dual identity of Jesus, and including details of violence and flight speaking both to events of the time, and a long history.

The painting has been on loan to the **Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, Italy**, for the exhibition ***Divine Beauty: From Van Gogh to Chagall and Fontana***, on view through January 24, 2016.



More than 50,000 people from around the world lined the streets, as the Holy Father, visiting Florence for the first time in his papacy, made his way to the heart of the city. The Pope chose to visit the Baptistry first, walking through Lorenzo Ghiberti's sculpted north doors as Cardinal Giuseppe Betori, Archbishop of Florence, welcomed him into a sacred space that has inspired generations of Florentines, artists, and architects since the 4th century.

Pope Francis met President and Eloise W. Martin Director Douglas Druick and Arturo Galansino, Director General of the Palazzo Strozzi Foundation, and viewed the *White Crucifixion*—expertly installed on a feature wall in the northeast corner of the Baptistry in dialogue with Cimabue's magnificent 13th century ceiling mosaics and Donatello's 14th century Tomb of the Antipope John XXIII.

Pope Francis appeared pleased and engaged as he viewed the Chagall painting, telling Douglas Druick, "Caravaggio and Chagall are my favorite artists." His Holiness then led Cardinal Betori, Druick, and Galansino through Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* east doors—an apropos path when recalling the exhibition of panels from Ghiberti's east doors at the Art Institute in 2007—and into the Florence Cathedral to open Italy's Fifth National Ecclesiastical Conference.



Druick shared of the experience, "The energy and excitement of thousands of people cheering Pope Francis as he entered the Baptistry to see the *White Crucifixion* for the first time, presented in the context of centuries of extraordinary religious art and design, defines a matchless moment in the life of this painting." He added, "The complexity of emotion as we brought the picture to life for Pope Francis there, on the 77th anniversary of Kristallnacht, as he prepared to speak to tens of thousands about rejecting corruption and an obsession with power—offers a poignant new layer of significance to *White Crucifixion's* ability to inspire to Chicagoans and people around the world."

Chagall's *White Crucifixion* returns to the Art Institute of Chicago in February 2016, and the museum plans to celebrate its homecoming with a special reinstatement and programs highlighting the painting's extraordinary journey and exhibition in Florence, Italy.

Images:

Pope Francis, Cardinal Giuseppe Betori, Arturo Galansino, and Douglas Druick view Marc Chagall's *White Crucifixion* (Marc Chagall. *White Crucifixion*, 1938. Gift of Alfred S. Alschuler. © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.) in the Baptistry of St. John in Florence, Italy on November 10, 2015.

Marc Chagall. *White Crucifixion*, 1938. Gift of Alfred S. Alschuler. © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Pope Francis waves to a crowd of thousands while crossing the Piazza del Duomo and entering the Florence Cathedral, after seeing Marc Chagall's *White Crucifixion* (Marc Chagall. *White Crucifixion*, 1938. Gift of Alfred S. Alschuler. © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.)

Douglas Druick and Arturo Galansino with Marc Chagall's *White Crucifixion* (Marc Chagall. *White Crucifixion*, 1938. Gift of Alfred S. Alschuler. © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.) in the Baptistry of St. John in Florence, Italy on November 9, 2015.

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