

ITALY

THE NIGHT OF THE UFFIZI

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Florence (Italy). Via Lambertesca, as seen from the piazzale degli Uffizi (Uffizi square). The explosion had a violent impact on this section of the Gallery. Overall, about 25 per cent of the Uffizi's artworks were damaged.

HOW 30 YEARS AGO THE MAFIA TRIED TO DESTROY ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS MUSEUMS

What if the Uffizi Gallery in Florence no longer existed? What if on the night between May 26 and 27, 1993, the Italian Mafia had succeeded in destroying one of the world's most unique examples of artistic heritage? 30 years ago the men of Cosa Nostra (the Sicilian Mafia) came close. And, had it not been for two surveillance cameras at the entrance to the Uffizi, a white Fiat Fiorino packed with explosives at 1:04 a.m. would have shattered one of the world's most famous museums. The two cameras prompted the perpetrators to park the van in nearby Via dei Georgofili, next to a medieval tower whose massive bulk protected the Gallery from the shock wave. The powerful explosion would probably have caused the entire building to collapse and destroyed much of the pictorial and sculptural heritage that is preserved in the Uffizi. But the Via dei Georgofili bomb remains the most serious attack on Italy's artistic heritage since World War II. The Gallery suffered severe damage to its walls, stairways, ceilings and 25 per cent of the artworks housed there: 42

archaeological busts, 16 large statues and 173 paintings (including Sebastiano Del Piombo's Death of Adonis) were damaged, while three works of art were literally destroyed. Above all, the Fiat Fiorino stuffed with 250 kilograms of TNT, PETN and nitroglycerin injured more than 40 people and claimed the lives of five victims: student Dario Capolicchio, Fabrizio Nencioni, his wife Angela Fiume and their two daughters, 9-year-old Nadia and Caterina, who was just 50 days old. Why did the Mafia attack the Uffizi Gallery 30 years ago? After the capture in January 1993 of Totò Riina, the head of Cosa Nostra, other Mafia leaders began to strike at Italy's cultural heritage in order to get the state to accept their demands. Perhaps – as emerges from the reports of the Parliamentary Commission on the Mafia – they did so with the collaboration of political figures, members of deviant secret services and some Masonic lodges. They were the hidden instigators of an attack that remains largely an Italian mystery.



Florence (Italy). The wall of the Torre dei Pulci (Pulci Tower), home of the Accademia dei Georgofili, which collapsed on account of the explosion. During restoration work it was decided to keep the reconstructed wall set back a few centimeters, as a symbol of the wound inflicted on people and cultural heritage.



Florence (Italy). One of the precious ancient volumes kept inside the Georgofili Academy damaged by the explosion and subsequent fire that developed in the ruins of the tower.



Florence (Italy). Paolo Lombardi, who lived at the intersection of Via dei Georgofili and Via Lambertesca, was only slightly injured along with his wife and children. The corner of the building cushioned and deflected the shock wave of the explosion.



Florence (Italy). Luigi Dainelli, husband of Patrizia Nencioni, the sister of Fabrizio, who was killed by the explosion. Luigi is currently the president of the victims' association, which has been working for 30 years in order to ensure that this tragedy is not forgotten.



Florence (Italy). The Corridoio Vasariano, which passes in front of Via dei Georgofili, felt the full force of the explosion; miraculously it did not collapse but the works of art inside it were damaged.



Florence (Italy). The clock in the apartment of Walter Ricoveri, founder of the association of the victims of the bombing. The clock stopped at the moment of the explosion.



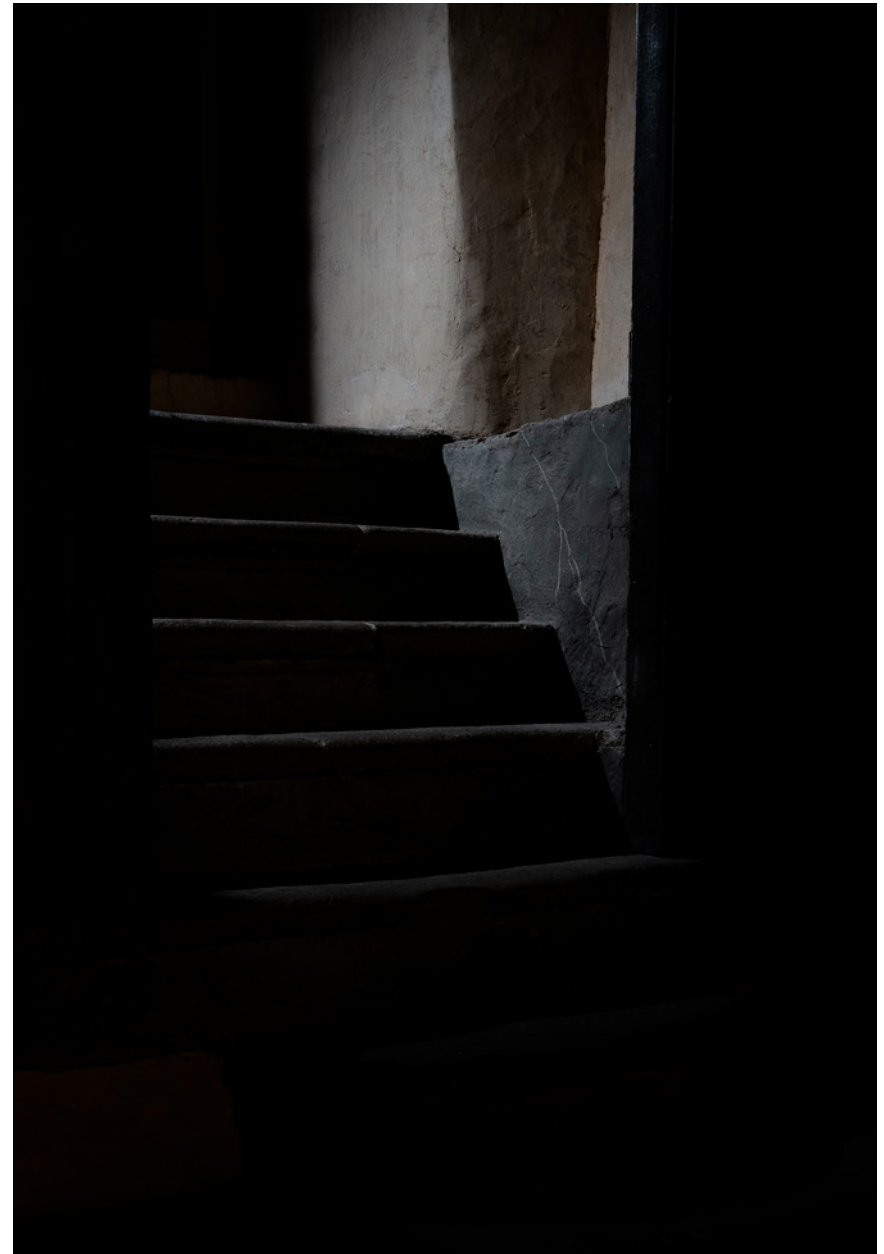
Florence (Italy). The house number of the Gabbrielli family home located at the intersection of Via dei Georgofili and Via Lambertesca. It remained perfectly intact despite being located 10 meters from the point of the explosion.



Florence (Italy). Construction sites for the expansion and renovation of the Uffizi Gallery. The intention of the Mafia was to demolish the Uffizi by placing the car bomb inside the square, but they were prevented from doing so by the presence of surveillance cameras.



Florence (Italy). The Georgofili Academy is a historic institution which has been promoting studies in agronomy, silviculture, economics and agricultural geography for more than 250 years. Since the 1930s it has been housed in the 14th-century Torre dei Pulci (Pulci Tower) building.



Florence (Italy). These stairs inside the Georgofili Academy were discovered after the bomb explosion. The staircase leads to 400 square meters of space that had been sealed off and no one knew they existed.

Florence (Italy). Sara Olmastroni, along with her husband Daniele Gabbrielli and their son, lived at No. 6 Via Lambertesca, at the intersection with Via dei Georgofili. The living room windows of her home faced the point where the car bomb was placed.





Florence (Italy). On November 5, 1992, a Brixia model mortar shell dating from World War II was found behind the statue of Marcus Cautius in the Boboli Gardens in Florence.



Florence (Italy). A chair from Danielle Mosca's apartment. It shows the visible damage caused by the fire that followed the explosion and swept through the building opposite the Torre dei Pulci (Pulci Tower). Dario Capolicchio, a student who lived on the floor below, was killed.



Florence (Italy). One of the rooms in the library at the Georgofili Academy where the oldest books are kept. Many of these volumes were damaged during the explosion.



Florence (Italy). Leonardo Gabbrielli with his children. He was a child at the time of the bombing and lived at number 6 Via Lambertesca, about 10 meters from where the explosive-packed Fiat Fiorino was parked. He survived because, like his parents, he slept in a bedroom that looked out onto a side street.



Florence (Italy). The Tuscany Region Archives where trial documents are kept. After the assassination of criminal prosecutor Paolo Borsellino the State introduced tougher sentences for Mafia crimes, Cosa Nostra (another term for the Sicilian Mafia) decided to put the State under pressure by threatening new attacks.



Florence (Italy). Danielle Mosca lives in the same apartment on Via dei Georgofili. On the night of the explosion she managed to take refuge on the roof. She was unable to escape using the stairs as they had collapsed.



Florence (Italy). The poem "Il Tramonto" (The Sunset), which was written by little Nadia three days before the explosion. Investigators used "Tramonto" as the name of the operation that led to the capture of Mafia boss Matteo Messina Denaro in January this year.



Florence (Italy). "La Bubina," Nadia's doll, which Patrizia found on top of the mountain of clothes, objects and rubble that had been removed from the site of the explosion.



San Casciano in Val di Pesa (Florence, Italy). The Romola Cemetery. The family is buried in the local cemetery. A bronze olive tree was placed at the site of the explosion in memory of the victims.

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