

Eataly Protects Da Vinci's 'The Last Supper'

Kayla Pantano (April 21, 2017)



The Last Supper (Il Cenacolo) | Created by Leonardo da Vinci in 1495-1498

Eataly is funding an air-filtration system that will extend the painting's life by an estimated 500 years, nearly doubling its current age. The Italian food mecca shared the details of the installation at an international press conference linked between New York, Milan, and São Paulo, Brazil.

In case you're not familiar, the 519-year-old, 29-foot-by-15-foot depiction of Jesus Christ and his disciples—The Last Supper (1495-1498)—is one of the most illustrious paintings on the planet. Though it has stood the test of time (at least in terms of value), it's deteriorating rapidly, often referred to as the “most famous endangered species.” Fortunately, the world's largest purveyor of Italian delicacies, [Eataly](#) [2], is stepping up to save [Leonardo da Vinci](#) [3]'s legendary masterpiece.

Wear and Tear from Time, Humidity, and...Bombs

Painted in the refectory of the Dominican convent of [Santa Maria delle Grazie](#) [4], the work has endured humidity and vandals, even surviving a bomb during World War II. For centuries, it has undergone various restoration attempts; however, the fragility and vulnerability of the experimental technique adopted by Leonardo (dry tempera instead of traditional fresco technique) has caused it to continue to disappear more everyday and with each visitor's microscopic dust. As a result, it is restricted to only 1,300 viewers daily with a limited time of 15 minutes.

Conservation Efforts: Controlling Climate

But it takes more than a few visitation policies to preserve cultural heritage. The internal microclimate of the [Cenacolo Vinciano Museum](#) [5] (in terms of temperature, humidity, floating



particles and nanoparticles, air pollutants, and VOCs) is crucial for the conservation of The Last Supper. This is where Eataly comes into play.

In an exciting international press conference on April 19 at [Eataly Downtown](#) [6], founder [Oscar Farinetti](#) [7] announced that the piece will see at least 500 more years of life thanks to the installation of a cutting-edge air-filtration system. The [Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism](#) [8] designed the system in collaboration with top Italian research institutes ([ISCR](#) [9], [CNR](#) [10], [Polytechnic Institute of Milan](#) [11], and the [University of Milano Bicocca](#) [12]). And the giant grocery chain is the proud and only private financier of the system, which will filter in approximately 10,000 cubic meters of clean air into the convent everyday (compared to the current 3,500). The project is coordinated in Italy by the [Arts Council](#) [13] and in the US by the Italian Renaissance Fund. The installation is slated for completion in 2019, in time for the 500th anniversary of da Vinci's death.

Eataly Announces Protection Plan

With live video streams of both [Eataly Milano Smeraldo](#) [14] and [Eataly São Paulo](#) [15] and of course, Santa Maria delle Grazie, the world simultaneously rejoiced in this grand effort to preserve one of the most iconic, studied, and celebrated artworks of all time. Physically in attendance were the likes of [Nicola Farinetti](#) [16], Oscar's son and CEO of Eataly US; Vera Alemani, Member of the Italian Renaissance Fund; and [Alberto Cribiore](#) [17], Vice Chairman of [Citigroup](#) [18]. Virtual speakers from Eataly Smeraldo included [Andrea Guerra](#) [19], Executive President of Eataly, and [Stefano L'Occaso](#) [20], Director of the [Polo Museale della Lombardia](#) [21]. Not far by in Santa Maria were [Dario Franceschini](#) [22], Italian Minister of Culture, and [Chiara Rostagno](#) [23], Director of the Cenacolo Vinciano Museum. And lastly in Brazil, [Andre Sturm](#) [24], Secretary of Culture in São Paulo, and Renato Poma, Director of the Italian Cultural Institute in São Paulo.

Farinetti began, "Eataly will try to tell explain this initiative in a simple way. It's right to say that a business allocates a part of its profits to projects like this and that it tries to help a country like Italy."

Cribiore was the first to extend his thanks to Eataly and to Farinetti for increasing the number of visitors to The Last Supper, which he described as "an extraordinary and incredible work." He expressed, "The fact that it can be accessible to the world is absolutely extraordinary. This restoration presents a civic and moral duty for Italians to make sure that this patrimony that we have can be available to everybody."

After Farinetti noted how Easter weekend saw Italian museums full of people, Franceschini responded, "Easter weekend saw a very large influx in the cultural centers in Milan, Florence, and Rome, but also in little centers and neighborhoods of both tourists and Italian citizens. Through the monitoring of artistic and patrimony, we can contribute to economic growth in our country."

He continued, "We approved-3 years ago at this point-a fiscal incentive, the Art Bonus, the strongest in Europe today, for which each business and every citizen that donates a sum of money, even a symbolic one, towards the protection of national patrimony of a museum or a foundation, will receive a 65% tax credit." He concluded, "This has a very consistent material, educational, and cultural value."

To celebrate the news, every Eataly across the globe is offering guests the chance to reserve a special tour of the painting that will allow them 50 minutes in the space after the museum is closed. On the tour, visitors will be treated to an expert talk on the painting's creation, life, history, and secrets.

Next time you buy cheese, charcuterie, or whatever Italian treat your heart (or stomach) desires, you can justify the splurge as an investment in an early Renaissance-period art, allowing Italians, Americans, and other citizens of the world to revel in its wonder for generations to come.



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