

FLOWERS OF THE UFFIZI





Let's pick out the flowers of the Uffizi Gallery

GALLERY
OF STATUES AND
PAINTINGS

◆ A floral itinerary

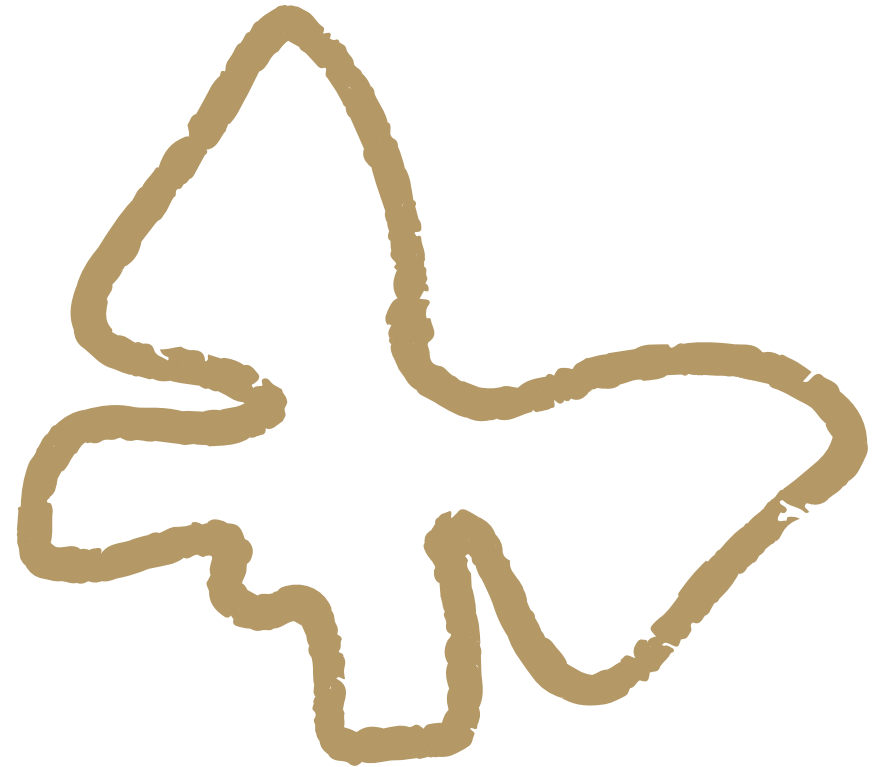
The Uffizi Gallery organizes a special “floral itinerary” for children, an opportunity for “little visitors” to see this beautiful museum accompanied by an adult. To be helped in their task, kids will be given a paper plainly explaining what a painting is and also provided with other general useful information.



Being a subject extremely popular in the figurative arts of all time, flowers represent at the same time both a very delicate representation of the beauty of Creation and a universe full of symbols which in the past were easily comprehensible to most people.

Children will be exhorted to focus their attention on a series of paintings where they can find beautiful flowers.

Once in the game, your children can also go on by themselves. Try to find out as many flowers as possible also in all the other paintings you will see in the museum during the visit with your escorts... as many as you can so as to make a beautiful bunch!



◆ A floreale itinerary

Flowers are very beautiful!

Flowers have many colours and shapes.

Flowers blossom in Spring.

We love to smell flowers!

We keep flowers in vases or grow them in gardens.

We love to pick them!

A flower can be a symbol, too.

A symbol is an image we use to express an idea.

In their works artists usually use flowers with several meanings.

What symbol can you see the lion Marzocco hold??

You will find the answers on the following page!



Very good!

The symbol for the city of Florence is a big, red iris!

Now, let's look at flowers in the works of art of the Uffizi Gallery.

Are you ready, children? Yes?

Come on, then!





◆ Enthroned Madonnas - work sheet 1

We see cut flowers in a vase. The vase is being offered to the Virgin Mary by a kneeling angel.

Flowers are a tribute to the Queen of Heavens, majestly enthroned.



Giotto di Bondone, *Madonna in trono col Bambino fra angeli e santi* "Maestà di Ognissanti", particolare, 1306-1310, tempera su tavola



The red rose is the symbol of Mary's love for God and humanity.

The white rose is the symbol of her humbleness, while the white lily is symbolic of her purity.

Roses have always been associated for their beauty and fragrance to Mary, as a symbol of her eternal youth.

Rosaries, a string of small beads used by Roman Catholics for counting prayers, were once made with dried rose hips; that's where the name comes from!



Giotto di Bondone, *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Angels and Saints* "Maestà di Ognissanti", 1306-1310, tempera on panel



◆ 14th Century - work
sheet 2

Four cut white lilies are in a golden vase.
The lilies have long stalks and many pointed
leaves.



Simone Martini and Lippo Lemmi, *Annunciation with SS. Ansanus and Maxima and Prophets*, 1333, tempera on panel

The Archangel Gabriel is carrying an olive branch, as a sign of peace.

The special attention to the white lily reminds us of Mary's purity.

The lilies are depicted both closed and in full bloom, in an attempt to represent nature as it is.



Simone Martini and Lippo
Lemmi, *Annunciation with SS.
Ansanus and Maxima and Prophets*,
1333, tempera on panel, detail



◆ Gentile da Fabriano - work sheet 3

The painting shows the moment the Three Kings have found Jesus and are adoring Him.

Flowers seem to sprout out from the pillars of the carved frame. Flowers here are used as decorative elements, but they also have symbolic meanings.

Gentile da Fabriano, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1423,
tempera on panel

From left: white roses, blue forget-me-nots, Spanish broom, Morning glories, crocuses, calendula (or Butterwort), daisies, violets.

Each flower carries Christian symbology tied to Christ's Birth, Death and Resurrection.



◆ Gentile da Fabriano - work sheet 4



Gentile da Fabriano, *The saints Mary Magdalene, Nicholas of Bari, John the Baptist and George*, 1423, tempera on panel



Floral patterns are used for the rich robe of St. Nicholas of Bari (a bishop). The fabric of the robe is Oriental in style and pattern, a stylized pomegranate.



A floral pattern is used for the floor in majolica. A white and red flower with eight petals decorates the majolica.



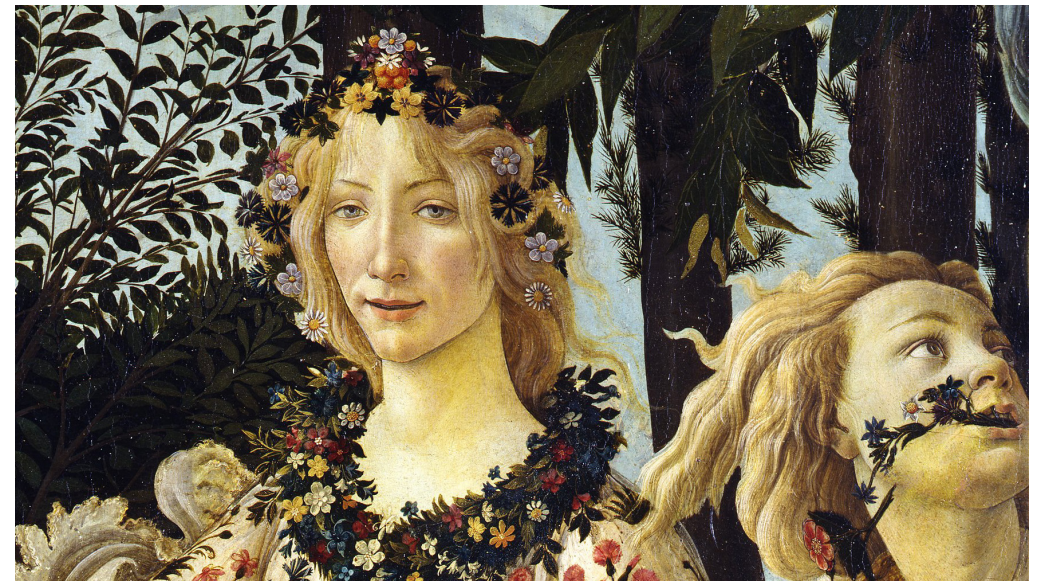
◆ Sandro Botticelli - work sheet 5



Alessandro Filipepi, called Botticelli,
The "Primavera" (Spring), 1478-1482
circa, tempera on panel

Botticelli's masterpiece, *the Primavera*, contains the most beautiful representations of nature in the entire museum. The painting was probably made for the wedding of Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici to Semiramide Appiani and once, it was in the palace of Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco himself. It was then transferred in the Medicean villa of Castello.

The painter represented forty kinds of plants - flowers, bushes, and trees - although identification is not always immediate.



Gods and goddesses pose in the scene (from right: Zephyr, Chloris, Flora, Venus, the Three Graces, Cupid with an arrow, Mercury). We see a meadow with flowers beneath their feet, while the entire scene takes place in a beautiful garden.

An orange grove and other trees are in the background.

Flora is looking at us.

Springtime is one of the four seasons and a time of rebirth.

Can you find the violet irises, symbol of Florence?

◆ Sandro Botticelli - work sheet 6



Alessandro Filipepi, called Botticelli, *Madonna and Child with six angels* ("The Madonna of the Pomegranate"), 1487 circa, tempera on panel



Some angels are carrying the traditional white lily.

Two angels are carrying red and pink roses in the pleats of their white robes.

The roses are shaped into wreaths.

They don't prick the angels because Mary is the "rose with no thorns". In the Virgin Mary good prevails over evil.

The presence of fleur de Lys in the frame refers to the traditional alliance between Florence and France.



◆ Hugo Van Der Goes - work sheet 7



Hugo Van der Goes, *The Adoration of the Shepherds* ("Portinari Triptych"), 1476-78 circa, oil on panel

Each flower, matched with a number in the reproduction above, has a corresponding symbol:

1. **Red lily** It's symbol of love and sacrifice.
2. **White iris bianco** alludes to the purity of Mary.
3. **Blue iris**. It stands for God's infinite wisdom, as large as heavens.

All these three colours are usually found in Mary's dress, as if to say that she is covered with love, purity and knowledge.

4. **Columbine**. This flower, with its leaning corolla, alludes to Mary's sorrows.

The dove-shaped petals of the columbine allude to the Holy Spirit, which Christians represent with a dove.

5. **Red carnations** allude to the nails of the Cross of Christ.

6. **Violettes** are the flowers of the meek and allude to Mary's humbleness.

7. **Sheaves of wheat** stand for the bread of the Eucharist.

The cut flowers are in a small tin-glazed majolica vase and in a glass, placed in the foreground of the painting.



◆ Antonello da Messina - work sheet 8

The sweet Virgin Mary by Antonello hugs her son Baby Jesus holding on to his mother's veil with his little hand.

You may say this is a common representation of a mom with her child but for an important detail: it is identified as a saint image for the presence of two Angels who place on Mary's head a queenlike golden crown adorned with gems, and white and red roses entwined with laurel.



Antonello da Messina, *St. John the Evangelist; Madonna and Child Enthroned with Angels*, 1470-75 circa, oil on panel





Something similar could be seen during the traditional festivity of Calendimaggio when young countrywomen used to dance with flowers on their heads to celebrate the coming of spring when nature reawakens and roses thus become symbols of love.

◆ The 15th century in Emilia Romagna - work sheet 9



Francesco Rabolini detto "il Francia", *Madonna and Child with St. Francis of Assisi and St. Anthony of Padua*, 1500 circa, oil on panel

Virgin Mary is seated on a simple pedestal and looks at us tenderly while holding Jesus in her arms. The saints on both sides wear an identical garment because they belong to the same religious order, namely, the Franciscans.

At the bottom of the pedestal there is a vase with five red long-stemmed carnations. In this case flowers have a symbolical meaning other than a decorative function.

They in fact remind of Jesus's Passion and his Death on the Cross. Carnations remind of nails, hence "cloves".



The ancient Greeks called the carnation dianthus, namely, “flower of gods”. An old legend tells that this flower sprouted from the teardrops of Mary mourning for the her son’s pains during his Holy Passion.

A flower may have several meanings: this is the case of the carnation.



Medieval legends tell about a bride who hid in her dress this colourful flower that her husband would later find out. For this reason, the red carnation is also considered a symbol of marriage.

◆ The Corridor Ceilings - work sheet 10a

If we look up, facing the Arno river, and turn to our left, we can see white roses on trellises rich of animals.

What animals can you see among the flowers?





Alessandro Allori and his workshop, Grottesque decoration with trellises structure and the Bianca Cappello's coat of arms, fresco, 1581 circa

◆ The Corridor Ceilings - work sheet 10b

Turning to the right, the style of the fresco decoration is Baroque.

The scenes show the virtues of the Medici grand dukes.

In the wreath we see yellow and red tulips, a flower from the Netherlands, which was very popular at the Medici court.

Flowers here are decorative but also celebrative of the glory of the House of Medici.



Giuseppe Nasini and Giuseppe Tonelli, the ceiling of the Second Corridor in the Uffizi Gallery, 1696-1699

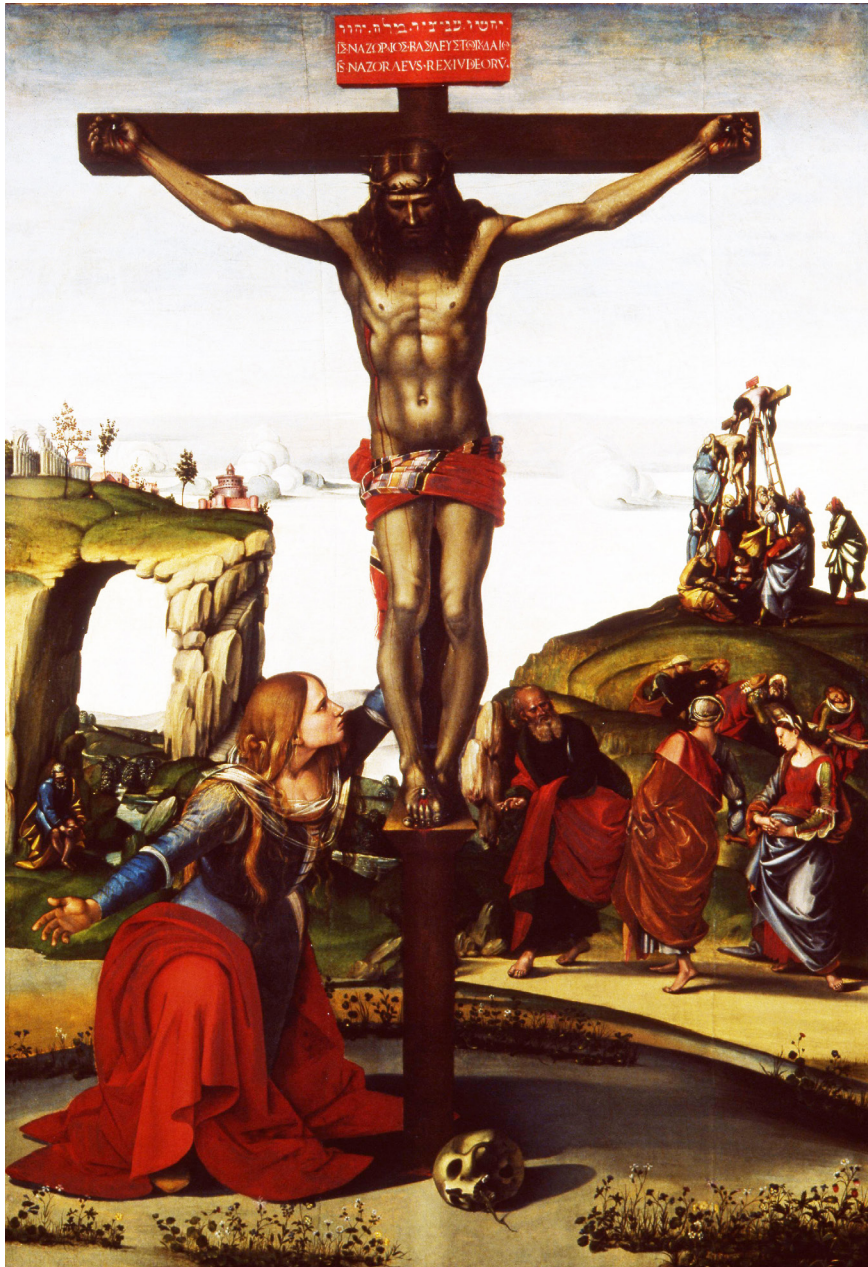
◆ Luca Signorelli - work sheet 11

The small meadow is in the foreground and it is growing out of dry earth.

The meadow has flowers with symbolic meanings tied to the Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

There are violet pansies, three-leaf clovers, forget-menots, daisies, buttercups and especially strawberries (fruit and blossom).

Luca Signorelli, *Crucifixion with St Mary Magdalene*, 1502-1505 circa.



◆ Della Robbia / Contini Bonacossi Collection - Work sheet 12



Now we're not going to show you a painting, but a medallion made up of glazed terracotta with the Pazzi family's Coat of arms at its centre and a great garland of fruits and flowers around it.

Giovanni della Robbia was a member of a family who was specialized in the use of the glazed terracotta technique. This particular kind of art developed in Florence during the Renaissance and it could join together painting, sculpture, color and relief!

In the garland of laurel and citrus trees we can recognize bunches of grapefruit, figs, cucumbers, apples, pine cones, bellflowers, capsules of poppy, chestnut burrs. There are also some small animals: two snails, a lizard, a cicada and a frog. Try to find it!

Giovanni della Robbia, *Pazzi coat of arms*, 1510-1520 ca.

◆ Jacopo Ligozzi - work sheet 13

Allegory. Do you know what this word means?

It means “representing an idea through an image” as the painter does with this particular representation of Virtue, which refers to all good human qualities, such as goodness, honesty, integrity, modesty, pureness and innocence.

In this case Virtue is represented as a young and beautiful girl leant against a rock face who asks for help by looking up to the sky above. Two weird women are harassing

her. Why weird? One has donkey's ears, the other one has bat wings and owl feathers on the sides of her head.

Jacopo Ligozzi, *Allegory of Virtue rescued by Love from Ignorance and Prejudice*, 1580 ca.



Also these two women are allegorical figures and in fact represent Falsehood and Vice and all the worst evils of mankind. The rocks on the background are dark and bare; they are covered with perfectly recognizable flowers: lilies, tulips, thick tufts of wood sorrel, cardoons, red lantanas.

Beautiful and colourful flowers are ideally linked with daylight and nurturing, positive nature as Virtue - represented as a young and gracious girl - in fact is.





◆ Titian - work sheet 14

The work here on view shows the same mythological female figure in the Primavera, only the style and taste of the times have completely changed. The goddess here is a woman who looks very life-like and is very sensual.

The woman is holding flowers and leaves in her hand: roses, violets and Jasmine flowers.

Roses usually have thorns. Thorns prick!

These roses have no thorns, so maybe they are a symbol of true love.

The flowers look real, as we see the veins in each leaf, their stalks, the folded petals.



Flora is offering us roses and other little flowers. The artist is very good with colours.

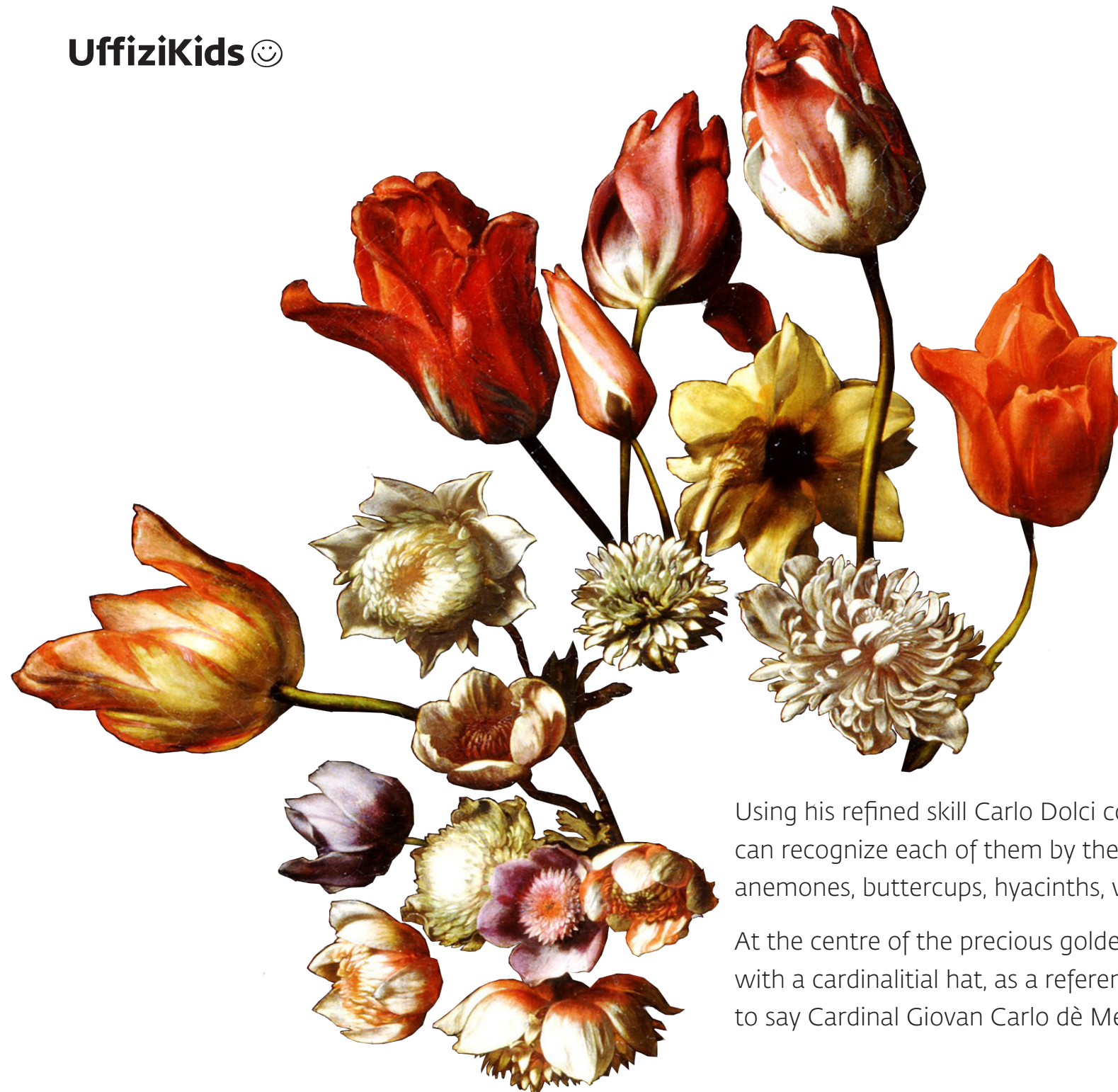
Tiziano Vecellio, *Flora*, 1515 - 1520

◆ Carlo Dolci - work sheet 15

Flowers are the real protagonists of this painting by Carlo Dolci: it's a kind of picture known as "Still life", that is a genre of painting born at the beginning of 17th century.



Carlo Dolci, *Natura morta*,
1662, Olio su tela



Using his refined skill Carlo Dolci could depict several flowers and we can recognize each of them by their brilliant colours: tulips, narcissus, anemones, buttercups, hyacinths, violets, orange flowers.

At the centre of the precious golden pot there is the Medici Coat of arms with a cardinalial hat, as a reference to the buyer of this painting, that's to say Cardinal Giovan Carlo de' Medici, who was fond of Bothany

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