

# HINTHIAL

L'OMBRA DI SAN GIMIGNANO

L'Offerente e i reperti rituali etruschi e romani

1 dicembre 2019  
31 maggio 2020

Museo Archeologico  
SAN GIMIGNANO  
Via Folgore, 11

## Press Release

### ***Hinthial. The Shadow of San Gimignano. The Offerer and the Etruscan and Roman Ritual Finds***

1 December 2019 – 31 May 2020

Museo Archeologico di San Gimignano

### **On public display for the first time, a superb bronze statue together with its associated finds discovered in the area of San Gimignano**

The exhibition ***Hinthial. The Shadow of San Gimignano. The Offerer and the Etruscan and Roman Ritual Finds*** opens at the Musei Civici in San Gimignano on 30 November 2019, presenting **to the public for the very first time** an outstanding discovery unearthed on the heights of Torraccia di Chiusi in the territory of San Gimignano, a short distance from the Fosci stream, in the foothills descending from San Gimignano towards the Valley of the Elsa River.

The archaeological discovery was made in the course of renovation work on a private building in 2010. Workmen engaged in digging stumbled upon a discovery that can only be described astonishing. A **bronze statue** lay buried in a supine position at the bottom of the trench.

Halting all work, the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le province di Siena, Grosseto e Arezzo embarked on a series of investigations in 2011, followed by an archaeological excavation that brought to light an **extraordinary open-air Etruscan sacred area**, which had been in use for at least 500 years, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The statue had been buried close to a squared stone monolith, which must have served as an altar, and on which ritual sacrifices in the form of religious offerings were made to the local gods. The block of stone showed clear signs of having been exposed to fire. The archaeologists also found coins, potsherds, whole unguent pots and fragments of brick in the vicinity. The sacred area was situated close to a spring, so it may have been associated with the worship of a god linked to water and earth.

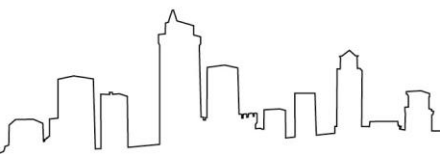
The discovery owes its outstanding nature to unearthing of the *Offerer*, a wonderful statue in the style of the elongated small bronzes of the Hellenistic era that is visually reminiscent of the celebrated *Evening Shadow* of Volterra. The figure, 64 cm in height, is indeed the most elegant and sophisticated such statue in the entire corpus of known Etruscan bronzes. Similarly to the *Evening Shadow*, it was also produced in series. As the product of a highly experienced craftsman, it harks back to the precedent of great early Hellenistic sculpture and recalls the elongated ex-votos of central Italic inspiration bound to local religious tradition. Both the statue and the cultural sphere of the artist who created the San Gimignano *Shadow* can be traced back with certainty to ancient *Velathri*/Volterra in the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. We may safely assume that the Torraccia di Chiusi area of workshop was one of the sanctuaries marking the border of the

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territory of Volterra: the "narrow passage" concealed in the place name alludes to the pre-Roman, Imperial and Early Medieval road that was later to become the Via Francigena and that passes directly through the sacred area. The "mouth" hidden in the name of the Fosci stream mark the entry into the territory of *Velathri/Volterra*.

In the words of Mayor **Andrea Marrucci** *"this is a wonderful discovery of which we are proud and which enriches our cultural heritage with a work of immeasurable artistic and historical value. Because of this discovery we can increase our knowledge of our past and our origins, when our land was already an area of exchange and encounter among peoples and cultures, along the way that was later to become known as the Via Francigena"*.

The bronze statue, unearthed in excellent condition, depicts a standing male figure wearing a toga hanging down to his calves and leaving his shoulder, right arm and most of his chest bare; on his feet he wears sandals laced up to his calves. In his right hand he holds a mesomphalos phiale while his left, held close to his body, emerges from his mantle with the palm facing outwards. His legs are slightly apart, suggesting a slight movement to the left. His facial features are clearly defined with large eyes and a prominent nose, full lips and a chin with a typical dimple in the middle. His hair is arranged in wavy locks conveyed with deep furrows running from a parting at the back towards his face, covering part of his forehead and ears.

Cultural Affairs Councillor **Carolina Taddei** is certain that *"with this discovery, San Gimignano, a UNESCO site famed for its medieval architecture, will no longer be simply the city of the beautiful towers but also the land of this small Etruscan bronze that echoes the profile of our towerhouses in its verticality"*.

The *Shadow* of San Gimignano is on display at the heart of an exhibition whose title uses the Etruscan term *Hinthial*, which can be translated as "soul" and "sacred" and which has been devised as a full immersion in San Gimignano's sacred landscape in the Etruscan and Roman eras. The close encounter with the *Shadow* sets out to accompany visitors to the area of worship along a ritual pathway that recalls the gestures and perceptions of the *Offerer*. Thus this toreutic masterpiece has arisen from its burial place and tells us of the hopes, prayers and offerings made for over five centuries in this sacred area that stood on the border of the territory of ancient Volterra in the Hellenistic era.

The exhibition, curated by Enrico Maria Giuffrè and Jacopo Tabolli, is promoted by the Comune di San Gimignano and the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le province di Siena, Grosseto e Arezzo with the organisational assistance of the Civita Group and has received the patronage of the Regione Toscana. The finds have been restored with a contribution from the Fondazione Monte dei Paschi di Siena, while *Archeo* magazine will be supporting the exhibition via an editorial partnership.

The Scholarly Advisory Committee, comprising academics of national and international renown, is multidisciplinary in its fields of expertise. Ranging from ceramic offerings and coins to the archaeological

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landscape, a description of the *Shadow* and a study of its alloy and materials, scholars have reconstructed the entire archaeological context, which is now being presented to the public for the very first time.

The exhibition catalogue, published by Sillabe - Livorno and edited by the Scholarly Advisory Committee, contains essays and entries by other experts on the San Gimignano area together with a detailed analysis of the statue of the *Offerer*, the stratigraphic context in which it was found, material data and a contextualisation of the archaeological landscape.

### Technical Factsheet

#### Exhibition title

*Hinthial*. The Shadow of San Gimignano. The Offerer and the Etruscan and Roman Ritual Finds

#### Exhibition dates

1 December 2019 – 31 May 2020

#### Exhibition venue

Museo Archeologico, Via Folgore, 11, San Gimignano

#### Opening hours

1 December – 31 March: 11.00 am – 5.30 pm

1 April – 31 May: 10.00 am – 7.30 pm

25 December: closed

1 January: 12.30 pm – 5.30 pm

#### Admission

€ 9.00 – full price

€ 7.00 – reduced price: children aged 6 to 17, seniors aged over 65, groups of at least 20 people (admission free for up to two accompanying group leaders), public school groups on educational outings (admission free for up to two accompanying group leaders)

Free admission: children up to 6 years old, residents of San Gimignano, disabled visitors requiring care and their carers, tour guides, I.C.O.M. membership cardholders.

#### For further information

[www.sangimignanomusei.it](http://www.sangimignanomusei.it)

[prenotazioni@sangimignanomusei.it](mailto:prenotazioni@sangimignanomusei.it)

Call-centre for information and reservations: +39.0577.28.63.00

#### Press Office

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