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Release Date: June 10, 2008 (Updated: October 9, 2008)

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***POMPEII AND THE ROMAN VILLA:  
ART AND CULTURE AROUND THE BAY OF NAPLES  
PREMIERES AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART,  
WASHINGTON  
OCTOBER 19, 2008–MARCH 22, 2009***

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Stabiae

*View of a harbor town*, 1st century BC - 1st century AD  
fresco

Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

*Pompeii and the Roman Villa: Art and Culture around the Bay of Naples* presents some 150 works of sculpture, painting, mosaic, and luxury arts, most of them created before the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 AD. They include recent discoveries on view in the U.S. for the first time and celebrated finds from earlier excavations. Exquisite objects from the richly decorated villas along the shores of the Bay of Naples and from houses in the nearby towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum reveal the breadth and richness of cultural and artistic life, as well as the influence of classical Greece on Roman art and

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culture in this region.

The first exhibition devoted to ancient Roman art at the National Gallery of Art will premiere in Washington October 19, 2008, through March 22, 2009, and travel to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, May 3 through October 4, 2009.

"We are honored to bring this exhibition of exquisite archaeological treasures for a five-month stay in the nation's capital, which is itself a monumental and living tribute to our Greek and Roman heritage," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are also very grateful to lenders from around the world and, in particular the region of Campania, as well as to the many sponsors and supporters who have enabled the Gallery to present this landmark exhibition of Roman art and to offer a variety educational programs to our visitors."

**Partners and Support**

***Pompeii and the Roman Villa*** is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, with the cooperation of the Direzione Regionale per i Beni Culturali e Paesaggistici della Campania and the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei.

The exhibition in Washington is made possible by The Exhibition Circle of the National Gallery of Art.

It is also made possible by Mr. and Mrs. Joe L. Allbritton.

Bank of America is proud to be the national sponsor.

The exhibition in Washington is also supported by The Charles Engelhard Foundation and by Mary and Michael Jaharis.

Additional funding in Washington is provided by Robert and Arlene Kogod, the John J. Medveckis Foundation, and the Malcolm Hewitt Wiener Foundation.

The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Lead funding for the catalogue is provided by the Leon Levy Foundation. An additional grant toward the catalogue has been provided courtesy of Rita Venturelli, director, Italian Cultural Institute, Washington, and Francesca Valente, director, Italian Cultural Institute, Los Angeles. We are grateful to the HRH Foundation for supporting the film made on the occasion of the exhibition and for making possible the exhibition brochure.

"Bank of America is pleased to serve as national sponsor both at the National Gallery of Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for this significant exploration of a fascinating period of European history," said Rena M. DeSisto, Arts and Culture Executive, Bank of America. "Not only will this exhibition present a remarkable experience for visitors, but it will serve to support two critical institutions in Washington, DC, and Los Angeles. Museums such as the National Gallery and LACMA are cultural treasures as well as important economic drivers in their communities, and Bank of America is pleased to support them in bringing *Pompeii and the Roman Villa: Art and Culture around the Bay of Naples* to those communities, and to visitors from across the country and beyond."

### **Exhibition Highlights**

In the first century BC, the picturesque Bay of Naples became a favorite retreat for vacationing emperors, senators, and other prominent Romans. They built lavish seaside villas in the shadow of Mt. Vesuvius where they could indulge in absolute leisure, read and write, exercise, enjoy their gardens and the views, and entertain friends.

Artists, who came to this region from as far away as Greece, created sculpture, paintings, mosaics, and luxury arts to adorn the lavish seaside villas. Many of them would also have found patrons in the nearby towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum (modern Ercolano) who emulated the lifestyles of the powerful elite. Julius Caesar, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero owned seaside villas in Baiae (modern Baia); the emperor Augustus vacationed in Surrentum (modern Sorrento), Capreae (modern Capri), and Pausilypon (modern Posillipo); and the lawyer Cicero had homes at Cumae (modern Cuma) and Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli) as well as in Pompeii.

Drawn from the collections of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, and from site museums at Pompeii, Boscoreale, Torre Annunziata, and Baia, as well as museums and private collections in the United States and Europe, the exhibition is organized in five sections:

**Patrons at Home:** Proprietors and other inhabitants of the maritime villas or the well-appointed houses of Pompeii and surrounding towns collected works of art that included marble or bronze portraits of members of the ruling families and individualized private portraits. They are installed here with interior furnishings from the residences,

such as frescoes that depict seaside villas, marine delicacies from the Bay of Naples, and intimate genre scenes. Silver wine cups decorated with episodes from the Labors of Hercules, a mirror with a lively scene of cupids fishing, vessels of colorful glass or inlaid obsidian, and gold jewelry reflect the owners' taste for luxury.

**Courtyards and Gardens:** Bronze statues and fountains, marble sculptures and reliefs, and frescoes decorated the colonnaded courtyards at the heart of Roman villas and houses. Much of the garden sculpture depicts wild animals and Dionysos, god of wine, theater, and nature, with his entourage of satyrs and maenads. Frescoes portray peacocks, swallows, magpies, and other birds as well as flowers and various flowering shrubs, including roses, laurel, and oleander. Evoking the setting of Plato's Academy, which is portrayed in a mosaic in this section, gardens were also places for reflection and learning.

**Moregine:** A highlight of the exhibition is a dining room from the site of Moregine on the Sarno River south of Pompeii. Discovered in 1959 and further excavated in 1999–2001, the walls from its flooded dining rooms were removed in order to preserve their frescoes. The exhibition features three dining-room walls decorated with images of Apollo, god of the arts, with the muses, shown floating against a red background and framed by elegant architectural fantasies. Ancient Roman dining rooms were often located to offer diners a view of the garden, and a living garden in the exhibition echoes a nearby fresco from the House of the Golden Bracelet.

**The Legacy of Greece:** The Roman reverence for classical Greece and taste for antiquities characterized the art collections formed by wealthy Romans. Cicero's correspondence with his art dealer reveals a burgeoning market. Patrons commissioned works of art in the full range of Greek styles, including a marble statue of Artemis in an archaic style and a monumental sculpture of Aphrodite that echoes the classical style. A portrait of Homer, an equestrian statuette of Alexander the Great, and a relief depicting scenes from the Trojan War exemplify the Roman appreciation of works representing Greek subjects and themes.

**Rediscovery and Reinvention:** Eighteenth-century excavations and the rediscovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum had a major impact on the art and culture of the modern world. During the 1700s, the Bourbon excavations yielded vast numbers of antiquities, and a subsequent publication, the illustrated volumes of *Delle antichità di*

*Ercolano*, refueled the rage for classical antiquities. Reproductions of the antiquities grew into a major industry. Pompeiana soon permeated travel writing and affected the art, interior design, and culture of Europe and finally North America. Great houses in Europe and eventually even rooms in the United States Capitol were decorated in the Pompeian style, characterized by paintings of architectural fantasies or maenads floating against brightly colored backgrounds.

### **Curator, Catalogue, and Documentary**

Carol Mattusch, Mathy Professor of Art History at George Mason University, is the guest curator of the exhibition.

The fully illustrated catalogue for ***Pompeii and the Roman Villa*** is written by Mattusch, with essays by Mary Beard, professor of classics, University of Cambridge; Bettina Bergmann, Helene Philips Herzig '49 Professor of Art, Mount Holyoke College; Stefano De Caro, Direttore Generale per i Beni Archeologici, Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Roma; Professor Pietro Giovanni Guzzo, Soprintendente, Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei; and Kenneth Lapatin, associate curator of antiquities, The J. Paul Getty Museum. Published by the Gallery in association with Thames and Hudson, the 384-page catalogue includes 312 color and 53 black-and-white illustrations. It will be available from the Gallery Shops for \$60.00 (hardcover) and \$40.00 (softcover) in late October 2008. To order, call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or email [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

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### **General Information**

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov).

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon

entering the East and West Buildings. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 x 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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Bank of America is honored to serve as the national sponsor of *Pompeii and the Roman Villa: Art and Culture around the Bay of Naples* at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The exhibition focuses on the cultural and artistic life in the region around the Bay of Naples from the first century BC through the first century AD and features recent discoveries from the area that have never before been seen in the United States.

*Pompeii and the Roman Villa* is the latest in a series of exhibitions that Bank of America has supported at some of our nation's greatest museums. Most recently, Bank of America served as the national sponsor for *J. M. W. Turner* in Washington, Dallas, and New York; *Frida Kahlo* in Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and San Francisco; and *El Greco to Velázquez* in Boston and Durham.

There are many important reasons we have chosen to be a leading supporter of arts and culture in the United States. Through our programs that support the arts in our communities, we provide access to cultural treasures across the country. When we support arts education, we hope to provide young people with experiences that will serve them all their lives. When we lend to museums from our art collection, we expand cultural resources for the public. And, when we make grants to help institutions grow, we support the economy, our communities, and all those served by these institutions.

At Bank of America, we recognize that cultural resources are part of the foundation on which healthy communities are built. We hope you enjoy *Pompeii and the Roman Villa* whether you see it in Washington or Los Angeles. And we hope that you continue to share our passion and enthusiasm for the important role art plays in all our lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth D. Lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "L".

Kenneth D. Lewis  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Bank of America



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Biography

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### CAROL C. MATTUSCH

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Carol C. Mattusch, exhibition guest curator, *Pompeii and the Roman Villa: Art and Culture around the Bay of Naples*, October 19, 2008–March 22, 2009. Photo © Lynn Nelms ([click here to order this image](#))

Carol C. Mattusch is the Mathy Professor of Art History in the department of history and art history at George Mason University. She has taught at the university since 1977 and specializes in courses on Greek and Roman art and archaeology and the rediscovery of classical antiquity. A graduate of Bryn Mawr College, Mattusch received her PhD in Art History from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1975.

Mattusch is the principal author and editor of *Pompeii and the Roman Villa: Art and Culture around the Bay of Naples* (2008). Mattusch was also the curator of *The Fire of Hephaistos: Large Classical Bronzes from North American Collections* (1996) at Harvard University Art Museums for which she wrote the catalogue. Her other books include *The Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum: Life and Afterlife of a Sculpture Collection* (2005); *The Victorious Youth* (1997); *Classical Bronzes: The Art and Craft of Greek and Roman Statuary* (1996); *Greek Bronze Statuary: From the Beginnings through the Fifth Century B.C.* (1988); and *Bronzeworkers in the Athenian Agora* (1982).

Mattusch has written chapters for *The Handbook of Engineering and Technology in the Classical World* (2008), *The Art of Antiquity: Piet*



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*de Jong and the Athenian Agora* (2007), *Greek Sculpture, Function, Materials and Techniques in the Archaic and Classical Periods* (2005), and she has written articles for *Hesperia*, *Art Journal*, *American Journal of Archaeology*, and *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*.

Among her awards are the Charles Rufus Morey Book Award (2006) from the College Art Association and the James R. Wiseman Book Award (1997) from the Archaeological Institute of America. She has held three fellowships at the National Gallery of Art's Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts (CASVA), including the Paul Mellon Senior Fellowship (2005-2006) and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation Paired Fellowship for Research in Conservation and Archaeology with Henry Lie (1997-1998).

Mattusch is a long-standing member of the Managing Committee for the American School of Classical Studies at Athens and currently serves on its executive committee. She is a member of the planning committee for the 17th International Bronze Congress, scheduled to be held in Athens in 2009.

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