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**ROMAN WORKS UNIQUE TO NATIONAL GALLERY
OF ART'S COLLECTION ARE ON VIEW DURING
POMPEII AND THE ROMAN VILLA:
*ART AND CULTURE AROUND THE BAY OF NAPLES***

Visitors to *Pompeii and the Roman Villa: Art and Culture around the Bay of Naples*, presented October 19, 2008, through March 22, 2009, will have an opportunity to view works in the National Gallery of Art's permanent collection that relate to the exhibition, including an intriguing Roman mosaic, a marble torso of Aphrodite, and two small bronze sculptures. The ancient Roman objects are unique to the Gallery's collection of European and American art, which primarily dates from the 15th century.

Italian Cabinet Galleries

The Italian Cabinet Galleries 25 through 27 are designed to evoke the interior of an Italian Renaissance palace or villa. The suite of three rooms showcases paintings and precious objects like those kept in the home of a prince, a humanist, or a well-to-do merchant. Many of these works reveal the Renaissance fascination with classical Greece and Rome.

Among the objects in gallery 26 is *Symbols of Bacchus as God of Wine and the Theater*, a colorful third-century AD mosaic. Made of marble and glass, it was excavated at El Jem in Tunisia and given to the National Gallery of Art for the American people by the people of Tunisia in 1961. The range of mosaic styles developed by craftsmen in North Africa became influential throughout the Roman world in the early centuries AD. Most of the decorative motifs in the Gallery's mosaic—including theatrical masks, peacock feathers, and a tambourine—allude to the cult of Bacchus, which flourished at El Jem (the ancient Roman city of Thysdrus), a market town in a prosperous agricultural region. Measuring approximately six by eight-and-a-half feet, the mosaic is set into the floor and surrounded by nine 16th-century wall frescoes made by Bernardino Luini for a patrician house

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in or near Milan, Italy. In these frescoes, Luini follows two Renaissance practices: an interest in reviving classical style as well as a tendency to give moralizing religious meanings to pagan myths.

Adjacent to the frescoes is the white marble *Torso of Aphrodite*, which stands approximately three-and-a-half feet tall. Acquired as an ancient Greco-Roman work but possibly post-antique, it is a voluptuous variation of the celebrated Medici Venus type in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Ground Floor Sculpture Galleries

On view in gallery 14 of the Sculpture Galleries, West Building Ground Floor, are two Roman bronze statuettes given by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation in 1957. *Winged Child Carrying a Torch* (first century BC to first century AD) is a five-inch-tall rendering of Cupid shown with a graceful, dancelike movement. *Striding Cupid* (first or second century AD) stands three inches tall. He has an animated face, a plump body, and a lively walk, embodying the Hellenistic—and subsequent Roman—delight in naturalistic depictions of children. Ancient figurines of this type depicting children or Cupid may have been used as a souvenir or votive figurine.

Roman Architectural Influence

The direct influence of Italian precedents can be found throughout the West Building of the National Gallery of Art, designed by John Russell Pope (1874–1937) and opened to the public in 1941. The central Rotunda, the most important space in the structure, is modeled after the ancient Pantheon in Rome, echoing its balanced proportions and coffered plaster dome, oculus, and twenty-four dramatic Ionic columns made of Italian Verde Imperial (columns) and Botticino (capitals and bases) marble.

Twenty-seven galleries were designed for the Italian paintings and sculpture where approximately 25,000 cubic feet of Italian travertine was used for the wainscoting and trim. Showcased here are the Gallery's truly outstanding collection of Italian medieval and Renaissance masterworks, with no fewer than two works by Giorgione, five by Raphael, many more by Titian, and the only painting by Leonardo da Vinci in the Western Hemisphere on view around the year.

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.

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.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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