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## *Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, and the Renaissance of Venetian Painting* at the National Gallery of Art Washington June 18–September 17, 2006

—Titian's *Concert Champêtre* Comes to the U.S.  
for the First Time—



Titian

*Pastoral Concert* ("Concert Champêtre"), c. 1510

oil on canvas

unframed: 105 x 136.5 cm (41 5/16 x 53 3/4)

Musée du Louvre, Departement des Peintures, Paris

Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY

Washington, DC. A major new international exhibition, **Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, and**

**the Renaissance of Venetian Painting**, will present more than 50 masterpieces from the most exciting period of the Renaissance in Venice. Premiering June 18 through September 17 at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the exhibition explores the relationships between these and other artists, emphasizes their innovative treatments of new pictorial themes such as the pastoral landscape, and reveals what modern conservation science has discovered about the Venetian painters' techniques.

Two museums with outstanding collections of Renaissance art, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, are the exhibition organizers: together they are contributing about one-third of the works on view. Among the most admired masterworks of the Renaissance, Titian's *Pastoral Concert* ("*Concert Champêtre*") (c. 1510), is being lent by the Louvre to the United States for the first time. The exhibition features significant loans from The National Gallery, London; the Prado, Madrid; the Uffizi, Florence; and many other museums and private collections. After closing on September 17 in Washington, the exhibition will travel to the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, where it will be on view from October 17, 2006, to January 7, 2007.

"I am very pleased and proud to be able to offer the Italian Embassy in Washington's cooperation in the installation of this outstanding show," said the Italian ambassador Giovanni Castellaneta, who also thanked the National Gallery of Art, "which, together with Bracco, has made possible an event that captures in all its artistic glory such a fervent period in our cultural history."

"This exhibition brings the Renaissance alive not only as an era in history, but also as a concept embraced by the most adventurous artists of their time," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "It is gratifying to be able to share with the public so many masterpieces, thanks to the generosity of our lenders. We are also very grateful to the Bracco Group for making this exhibition possible; we welcome them as a sponsor to the Gallery, and appreciate their enthusiastic support."

### **Exhibition Support**

This exhibition is made possible by Bracco, an international leader in diagnostic

imaging.

"Bracco, an internationally known leader in diagnostic imaging solutions for health care, is proud to support the National Gallery of Art in this extraordinary project, one of this year's most important art exhibitions," said Diana Bracco, president and CEO of the Bracco Group. "This initiative represents a continuation of our support of the artistic and cultural heritage of Italy, particularly in the United States, where Bracco is directly present and where it has also established significant research and clinical development activities. The exhibition will unveil hidden features of Renaissance paintings, thanks to radiological and other sophisticated techniques, the same kind of technological platforms that Bracco develops for medical applications."

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

## **The Exhibition**

**Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, and the Renaissance of Venetian Painting** differs from previous surveys of 16th-century Venetian art by focusing exclusively on paintings from the first three decades of the century, and by presenting them thematically, rather than by artist. The period represents, visually and intellectually, the most exciting phase of the Renaissance in Venice, when the old Bellini (d. 1516), Giorgione (d. 1510), young Titian, Sebastiano Luciani, later called del Piombo (active in the city until 1511), and Jacopo Negretti, known as Palma Vecchio (d. 1528), were all working side by side. While celebrating the achievements of Bellini and his most famous pupils, the exhibition also presents more conservative masters, like Cima da Conegliano and Vincenzo Catena, and it includes other artists, like Lorenzo Lotto, who worked, though not exclusively, in Venice at the time.

In early 16th-century Venice, artists turned to new subjects drawn from classical antiquity and developed new styles and new techniques to represent them. Provocative subject matter and virtuoso displays of skill were appreciated by a new kind of sophisticated patron. A highlight of the exhibition will be the presentation of Titian's *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (1522–1524), and Bellini and Titian's *Feast of the Gods*

(1514 and 1529), paintings that once hung together in the Duke of Ferrara's study, considered the most beautiful room in Renaissance Italy.

The exhibition emphasizes the artists' innovative treatments of several new pictorial themes, outlined below, and demonstrates how religious painting, still dominant, was transformed. It also explores how ideas about music, love, and time pervade the art of the period.

**The pastoral landscape.** The pastoral landscape, with its Arcadian motifs of nymphs, shepherds, and shady groves, became a quintessentially Venetian mode of painting. The exhibition includes the epitome of the genre, Titian's *Concert Champetre*. The development of the pastoral extended to religious painting, with Christian or biblical figures or narratives vividly portrayed in idyllic settings. In one of many illuminating juxtapositions in the exhibition, one can compare Bellini's *Virgin with the Blessing Child* (1510) and Titian's *Virgin and Child ("Gypsy Madonna")* (c. 1511); Titian has shifted his figures off the central axis to emphasize the landscape view. Also on view is Giorgione's version of the *Adoration of the Shepherds ("Allendale Nativity")* (c. 1500), which employs elements of the pastoral and was much admired: the exhibition includes three variants on this work.

**The female nude and eroticism.** Given that images of women of any sort were rare in Venetian painting, the introduction of nudes or partially clothed figures in early 16th-century paintings was truly revolutionary. In the exhibition, Giorgione's famous "*Laura*" (1506), which launched the new genre, is presented with Titian's *Flora* (c. 1520) for the first time. Titian's portrait became a model for the "Belle Donne" of other artists, such as Palma Vecchio. Even to this day, it is not known whether these images of women are idealized portraits of actual women or images of ideal female beauty.

**Male portraits.** Giorgione and his circle introduced a new kind of idealized portrait, in which an individual was shown in the guise of a lover, poet, musician, or soldier. Called "action" portraits, these works depict young men acting out roles, as in *Portrait of a Poet* (c. 1520) by Palma Vecchio or *Man in Armor* (c. 1511/1512) by Sebastiano del Piombo. Beyond single portraits, there are double and triple portraits of men together, as in Titian's *Concert* (c. 1511/1512) and Cariani's *Concert* (c. 1518). The exhibition

ends with Titian's *Man with a Glove* (c. 1523/1524), whose realism breaks with Giorgione's poetic idealization.

### **Conservation Science Reveals Venetian Painters' Methods**

Because modern technologies have revolutionized our understanding of the methods of the Venetian painters, the exhibition will include a room devoted to conservation studies of Venetian paintings, undertaken by Elke Oberthaler of the Kunsthistorisches Museum and Elizabeth Walmsley of the National Gallery of Art, including x-radiographs and infrared images of several works on view. Similarly, the exhibition catalogue includes new studies of the Venetians' painting methods and materials.

Early 16th-century Venetian paintings were among the first to be studied using x-rays, which revealed pentimenti, or changes of mind, as the artists worked out their compositions. More recently, infrared reflectography has qualified Vasari's claim that Venetian artists did not draw, by exposing the underdrawings lying beneath the surfaces of their paintings. On view will be a new infrared reflectogram of Giorgione's *Three Philosophers* (c. 1506) that reveals insights into the artist's creative process, a complex method of continuous revision. Similarly, an x-radiograph of Titian's *Gypsy Madonna* shows how the artist changed his characterization of the Virgin.

In the exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Art conservation scientist Barbara Berrie and art historian Louisa C. Matthew of Union College present their research findings about the famous "Venetian palette" and its extraordinary luminosity. The Venetian glass industry, centered on the island Murano in the Venetian lagoon, flourished in the late 15th century. According to Matthew and Berrie, painters obtained pigments of superior quality from "color sellers," and added pulverized glass to lend added brilliance to the hues in their pictures.

### **Curators, Catalogue, and Related Activities**

The exhibition curators are David Alan Brown, curator of Italian paintings at the National Gallery of Art, and Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, curator of Italian Renaissance paintings at the Kunsthistorisches Museum. In addition to the curators, an outstanding group of specialists in Venetian Renaissance art have contributed to the catalogue, including

Jaynie Anderson, University of Melbourne; Deborah Howard, Cambridge University; Peter Humfrey, University of St Andrews; and Mauro Lucco, Università degli Studi di Bologna. The fully illustrated catalogue will be published in English, German, and Italian. Early support for planning and research for the exhibition was provided by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

A public symposium entitled "Reconsidering Venetian Renaissance Painting" will feature illustrated lectures by noted scholars and a panel discussion with the exhibition organizers on Saturday, September 16, 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Sunday, September 17, 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. The symposium will be held in the East Building Auditorium. This symposium is organized by the National Gallery of Art in conjunction with The Solow Art and Architecture Foundation.

The National Gallery of Art is planning a full program of related lectures, tours, and concerts, to be announced.

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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 along 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. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit [www.nga.gov/renovation](http://www.nga.gov/renovation) (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>).

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/ngadc](http://twitter.com/ngadc).

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. 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 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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