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Venetian Drawings from Renaissance through 19th Century

National Gallery of Art, Washington

April 30–October 1, 2006



Francesco Zuccarelli

A Boy Smiling, c 1748

chalk, 20.5 x 15.6 cm

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 1987.10.1

Washington, DC—More than 130 drawings, watercolors, and pastels from the National Gallery's outstanding collection survey some of the best works by Venetian artists from the Renaissance through the 19th century. **The Poetry of Light: Venetian Drawings from the National Gallery of Art** confirms that Venice produced some of the finest

artists in history and demonstrates the widespread influence of this enchanting Italian city. The exhibition will be on view on the Ground Floor of the West Building from April 30 through October 1, 2006.

“The National Gallery of Art is delighted to have this opportunity to display superb drawings produced by Venetian artists. This exhibition will be a natural complement to our upcoming paintings exhibition **Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, and the Renaissance of Venetian Painting**,” said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. “We are deeply grateful to the numerous donors whose generosity has made it possible for the National Gallery to build an excellent collection of Venetian drawings.”

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The Exhibition

The exhibition begins with exceedingly rare drawings by the foremost masters of the late 15th century: Andrea Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini, and Vittore Carpaccio. After the turn of the 16th century, Venetian art showed a new softness of light and a mysterious relationship between man and nature, appearing in drawings by Giorgione, Lorenzo Lotto, Titian, and Domenico Campagnola. Venetian devotion to powerful ranges of color is clear in the finest surviving drawing by Sebastiano del Piombo. One of the earliest surviving European drawings in multiple colored chalks, by Jacopo Bassano, highlights the selection of works from the late-16th century, and it is followed by drawings by Paolo Veronese, Jacopo Tintoretto, and Paolo Farinati.

The second great flowering of Venetian drawings in the 18th century is represented by a wide variety of works by the major figure painters. The delicate rococo style of such artists as Sebastiano Ricci, Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini, and Rosalba Carriera is balanced by the earthy strength of Giovanni Battista Piazzetta's famous studies of ordinary people, some of the first European drawings to be framed and hung like paintings on collector's walls. The greatest Venetian draftsman of all, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, is shown with a complete range of his pen and wash drawings, suffused with brilliant light from his creamy white Venetian paper.

A special room of landscapes, beginning with colorful gouaches by Marco Ricci and

Francesco Zuccarelli, includes views of Venetian canals, lagoons, and palaces by Canaletto and Francesco Guardi as well as the powerful architectural renderings and fantasies by Giovanni Battista Piranesi.

The final section of the exhibition shows how Venetian art in the 19th century continued to affect European art in two primary ways. First, as they had in the previous century, native Venetian artists in the 19th century traveled abroad and spread new ideas, now of neoclassicism, in drawings for architecture and stage design. Second, foreign artists continued to come to Venice to admire her artistic treasures. They found an additional treasure: the evocatively preserved city itself. Its brilliant light and transparent shadows were marvels of atmosphere, important to both romanticism and impressionism.

Beyond the works in this exhibition, additional Venetian drawings will be on view in the West Building in the exhibition **Master Drawings from the Woodner Collections**. Others not currently on view may be seen weekdays in the East Building Print Study Room; please call (202) 842-6380 for arrangements.

Exhibition Curators and Gallery Talks

The curator of the exhibition is Andrew Robison, senior curator of prints and drawings. Robison has organized numerous exhibitions for the National Gallery, including **Six Centuries of Prints and Drawings: Recent Acquisitions** (2004–2005), **A Century of Drawing: Works on Paper from Degas to LeWitt** (2001–2002), and **The Glory of Venice: Art in the Eighteenth Century** (1994–1995).

National Gallery of Art lecturer Philip Leonard will lead a Gallery Talk, **The Poetry of Light: Venetian Drawings from the National Gallery of Art**, on June 6, 8, 10, 13, and 15, at 12 noon. Meet at the Rotunda in the West Building.

National Gallery of Art lecturer David Gariff will lead a Gallery Talk, **Venetian Views: The Art of Canaletto, Bellotto, and Guardi**, on June 21, 25, 27, and 29, at 1:00 p.m. Meet at the Rotunda in the West Building.

Information about the exhibition and links to related activities can be found on the

Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov/exhibitions/venetianinfo.htm

(<http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/venetianinfo.htm>) .

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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>) .

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. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at 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.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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