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**Documentary Film**

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Release Date: October 13, 2008

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**POMPEII AND THE ROMAN VILLA EXHIBITION  
DOCUMENTARY FILM NARRATED BY SIR DEREK  
JACOBI, PRODUCED BY NATIONAL GALLERY OF  
ART, WASHINGTON**

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Washington, DC –The explosion of artistic activity on the Bay of Naples that began in the first century BC is the subject of a new documentary film accompanying the exhibition *Pompeii and the Roman Villa: Art and Culture around the Bay of Naples*, on view at the National Gallery of Art, October 19, 2008, through March 22, 2009. Narrated by the award-winning actor Sir Derek Jacobi, star of the landmark series *I, Claudius*, and produced by the National Gallery of Art, the film explores life in the opulent villas along the Bay of Naples and houses in the nearby towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and the arts created for their inhabitants. The film was made possible by the HRH Foundation.

*Pompeii and the Roman Villa* will be screened at the Gallery from October 19, 2008, to March 22, 2009, in two locations: the East Building Small Auditorium, Mondays to Fridays, noon–3:00 p.m., Saturdays, noon–5:00 p.m., and Sundays, noon–6:00 p.m., with minor exceptions; and the East Building Auditorium, Sundays, Tuesdays, and Fridays at 11:30 a.m., with minor exceptions.

A 30-minute DVD will be available for \$19.95 through the [National Gallery of Art Shops](#). To order the DVD, call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

### The Film

Before the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 AD, the Bay of Naples was the most fashionable destination for vacationing Roman emperors, senators, aristocrats, and other members of the elite. Artists flocked to the region to create frescoes, sculpture, and elegant objects in gold, silver, and glass to adorn the villas. Many of the painters, sculptors, jewelers, and silversmiths would also have found patrons

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among residents of Pompeii and Herculaneum who emulated the artistic tastes of the villa owners.

The documentary opens with footage of the works in the exhibition and of sites in Pompeii and Stabiae, including sweeping vistas of the bay. Digital simulations created by Capware of the lavishly decorated interiors in Pompeii and in the seaside villas prior to the eruption reveal the extraordinarily rich artistic and cultural surroundings enjoyed by the inhabitants. Footage of the J. Paul Getty Museum (the "Getty Villa") in Los Angeles, modeled after the Villa dei Papiri in Herculaneum, gives a sense of the original context of several works of sculpture that are included in the exhibition.

Clips of Hollywood films depict the opulent Roman lifestyle, as, for example, seen in Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* (1960), and the terror of the volcanic eruption in 79 AD, illustrated in two versions of *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1913 and 1935), based on Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1834 novel. Modern-day footage of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius is also included, shot during World War II in 1944.

The film concludes with the story of the discovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum from the 18th century onward.

DVD bonus materials include: highlights of works of art from the exhibition; 19th-century photographs of Pompeii by Giorgio Sommer; interviews with prominent Italian archaeologists, 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 a photo gallery from the film shoot in Pompeii and the Bay of Naples.

### The Exhibition

***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 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.

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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.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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