

Release Date: March 11, 2011

## Mary Beard to Present *The Twelve Caesars: Images of Power From Ancient Rome to Salvador Dalí* for the Sixtieth A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts at the National Gallery of Art, Washington



Mary Beard, professor of classics, University of Cambridge, and 60th A. W. Mellon Lecturer in the Fine Arts.

Washington, DC— Mary Beard, professor of classics, University of Cambridge, will present the **Sixtieth A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts** series, entitled ***The Twelve Caesars: Images of Power from Ancient Rome to Salvador Dalí***, this spring at the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

The series will include the following lectures:

*Julius Caesar: Inventing an Image*

March 27

*Heroes and Villains: In Miniatures, Marble, and Movies*

April 3

*Warts and All? Emperors Come Down to Earth*

April 10

*Caesar's Wife: Above Suspicion?*

April 17

*Dynasty: Collecting, Classifying, and Connoisseurship*

May 1

*Rough Work? Emperors Defaced and Destroyed*

May 8

All lectures take place Sunday afternoons at 2:00 p.m. in the East Building Auditorium. The programs are free and open to the public, and seating is first come, first served.

The Roman emperors—especially the first twelve, from the assassinated Julius Caesar to the monster Domitian—are the most frequently represented mortal men in the history of the West. From the ancient world until (almost) the present day, they have been recreated in marble, bronze, silver, and gold; in cameo, painting, and ceramic; in colossal size and in miniature; and more recently in movies and caricatures. And of course, hundreds of thousands of tiny imperial portraits flooded the Roman world on coins; for it was the Roman Empire that first systematically put images of rulers on its money.

*Twelve Caesars: Images of Power from Ancient Rome to Salvador Dalí* will explore the astonishing variety of ancient images of Roman emperors (from ancient cookie molds to those familiar arrays of look-alike portrait busts), and they will wonder how the individuals have been pinned down. How *do* we distinguish a Julius Caesar from a Domitian? And how did the Romans? But they will also explore the even more numerous modern images of these men (along with their wives, mistresses, boyfriends, and daughters), created by some of the world's most notable artists, from Mantegna through Titian, to Alma-Tadema and Dalí. Why did monarchs and potentates choose to cast themselves in the image of the Caesars? Most of them were said to be immoral,

despotic, and murderous, and several were themselves murdered in the name of liberty; they were hardly great examples to follow. The series will show just how striking and sometimes disturbing these images of ancient power still are, from the hints of luxury and excess they convey to the idea that any ineffectual modern politician is like a new emperor Nero—fiddling while Rome burns.

The Gallery's bookshop on the Concourse will offer a selection of publications by Beard, including *The Classics (A Brief Insight)* (with John Henderson, 2010), *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found* (2008), *The Roman Triumph* (2007), *The Colosseum* (2005), *The Parthenon* (2002, rev. ed. 2010), and *Classical Art: From Greece to Rome* (with John Henderson, 2001).

### **The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts**

The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts were established in 1949 to bring to the people of the United States the results of the best contemporary thought and scholarship bearing upon the subject of the fine arts. The program is named for Andrew W. Mellon, the founder of the National Gallery of Art, who gave the nation his art collection and funds to build the West Building, which opened to the public in 1941.

### **Mary Beard**

Mary Beard is professor of classics, University of Cambridge, and fellow of Newnham College, where she has taught for the last 25 years. She has written numerous books on the ancient world, which have been translated into more than a dozen languages. In 2008, *Pompeii: The Life of a Roman Town* (published by Harvard University Press under the title *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*) received the Wolfson History Prize. Her many articles range in topic from the social and cultural life of ancient Greece and Rome to the Victorian understanding of antiquity.

Beard is classics editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* and writes a blog, *A Don's Life*, a selection of which has been published in book form. She is also a regular advisor and contributor to radio and television programs on the ancient world. She is currently co-principal investigator for the Leverhulme Project "Abandoning the Past in Victorian Britain." Beard's academic achievement has been acknowledged with

election to fellow of the British Academy (2010) and the Society of Antiquaries (2007), and of the Archaeological Institute of America (2009), which made her corresponding member. She has delivered named lectures around the world. In 2008 Beard was Sather Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, where she gave a series of lectures on Roman laughter, one of her current research interests.

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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.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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