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Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione Prints and Drawings On View January 29 to July 8, 2012, at the National Gallery of Art; First Exhibition to Explore the Italian Master's Inventions and Legacy



Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, *Alexander at the Tomb of Cyrus*, 1645/1650
brush with oil paint heightened with white gouache
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Edward E. MacCrone Fund

Washington, DC—An exhibition at the National Gallery of Art will showcase its rich holdings of works on paper by the Italian baroque master Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione (1609–1664), as well as works by his contemporaries and followers. On view in the Gallery's West Building from January 29 to July 8, 2012, ***The Baroque Genius of Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione*** suggests, for the first time, the complex sources of his style such as Rembrandt van Rijn and Claude Lorrain, as well as its importance for later artists, from Giambattista Piranesi and the Tiepolo family to Antoine Watteau and François Boucher.

The exhibition includes approximately 80 works, most from the Gallery's collection; many recently acquired and never before exhibited. The last exhibition in the United States to survey Castiglione's works on paper took place at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1971.

"Castiglione was perhaps the most complex and far-reaching interpreter of the baroque, and we are delighted to present this novel examination of his style through the essential form of his prints and drawings," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "At the same time, *The Baroque Genius* offers a striking demonstration of the breadth and depth of the Gallery's collection of old master prints and drawings."

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

Organized according to themes and concerns in his work—biblical processions, the memory of the antique, mythical revelry, the Flight into Egypt, mysterious burials, fantastic heads, radiant Nativities, and experimental techniques—the exhibition presents Castiglione's works and comparative examples side by side, underscoring the serial aspect of his creativity. This thematic organization makes clear his concern with continuous and creative variation on the same theme. At the same time, each section includes examples from traditions and by artists that influenced Castiglione's approach to a theme, as well as later works that were in turn inspired by him. This demonstrates the exceptional number and range of his sources, while suggesting his significance in the history of art.

Although born, trained, and active in Genoa, Castiglione worked for long periods in other Italian centers, notably Rome. His paintings were relatively few in subject but so varied that their identification can be elusive. At first combining the diverse styles in his native city, he steadily incorporated every major current of the baroque: the lyrical design fashionable in the previous century, the genre subjects of Netherlandish engravings, the exuberance of Peter Paul Rubens, the intellectual concerns of Nicolas Poussin, the sensitive observation of Rembrandt, and the visionary ecstasy of Gianlorenzo Bernini. Simultaneously repertory and individual, his style transcended all conventional categories, tremendously influencing artists in the following century—from Boucher and Jean-Honoré Fragonard to the Tiepolo family and Piranesi.

Prints and drawings were primary forms of expression for Castiglione. His passion for experiment was best served by the small scale, directness, and rapid execution of these media. For a painter of his stature they represent an unusually large part of his activity. The graphic arts were also the area of Castiglione's most remarkable creativity: his drawings with brush and oil on paper defined the possibilities of the technique, his etchings were the finest of any native Italian of the period, and his monotypes—unique images transferred from a plain surface to paper—were the first in history.

Woodner Collection Gift

On the occasion of the exhibition, Dian Woodner has given the Gallery an exquisite oil-on-paper drawing by Castiglione, *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (1650/1655). Owing to its large scale and superb quality, this work forms the centerpiece of a section of the exhibition dedicated to the artist's exploration of the theme of the Nativity.

This work is an example of Castiglione's drawings in oil paint on paper, a technique known before Castiglione but taken by him to new formal and expressive heights. These virtuoso works are among the most celebrated of the Italian baroque. The Adoration of the Shepherds or Magi is one of the artist's most frequent and influential subjects. The Woodner drawing epitomizes Castiglione's style in the mid-1650s, which combines his elegant figure style and earthy naturalism with dynamic movement and dramatic emotional intensity.

Prints, Drawings, and Illustrated Books at the National Gallery of Art

The National Gallery's collection of prints, drawings, and illustrated books in the department of prints and drawings consists of more than 100,000 Western European and American works on paper and vellum, dating from the 11th century to the present day. Because works on paper are highly susceptible to overexposure to light, they can be exhibited only for short periods. For that reason, the Gallery maintains a schedule of changing exhibitions drawn from its own collection or on loan from other institutions and private individuals. Drawings and prints not on view may be seen by appointment by calling (202) 842-6380.

Curator

The exhibition curator is Jonathan Bober, curator and head of the department of old master prints, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

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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.

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