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Italy to Lend Prized Titian Painting to National Gallery of Art to Celebrate Commencement of EU Presidency



Titian, *Danaë* (1544–1545), oil on canvas, Capodimonte Museum, Naples. Courtesy of the Photography Department of the Superintendency of Cultural Heritage for the City and the Museums of Naples and the Royal Palace of Caserta/Luciano Basagni, Fabio Speranza

Washington, DC—One of the most sensual paintings of the Italian Renaissance—Titian's *Danaë* (1544–1545) from the Capodimonte Museum, Naples—will be on view July 1 through November 2, 2014, in the West Building, National Gallery of Art, Washington, to celebrate the commencement of Italy's presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU).

The *Danaë* is one of several examples of the genre of erotic mythologies in Western art popularized by Titian. Two other examples of this genre by Titian from the Gallery's permanent collection—*Venus with a Mirror* (c. 1555) and *Venus and Adonis* (c. 1560)—are also on view in the West Building, in gallery M-23.

"The richness of the Gallery's collection of Venetian 16th-century painting includes the largest holdings in the United States of works by Titian and his studio, with 13 paintings, eight prints, and two drawings," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are most grateful for the generosity of the Capodimonte Museum in Naples and are pleased to present the *Danaë* in such close proximity to other related works by Titian, celebrating the genius and legacy of one of the world's most influential painters."

"We are very pleased to continue our excellent cooperation with a prestigious institution such as the National Gallery in Washington on the occasion of the presentation of Titian's *Danaë*," said the Ambassador of Italy to the United States, Claudio Bisogniero. "We are particularly delighted that this exhibition will launch in the U.S. the Italian Presidency of the European Union, an important opportunity also to further strengthen the friendship between the two sides of the Atlantic."

"The Special Superintendency for Historic, Artistic and Ethno-anthropologic Properties of the City of Naples Museum Hub and the Palace of Caserta is particularly pleased to collaborate in this extraordinary event for promoting the excellence of Italian culture in the United States," said Fabrizio Vona, superintendent, Cultural Heritage for the City and the Museums of Naples and the Royal Palace of Caserta.

### Organization and Support

The exhibition of *Titian's Danaë from the Capodimonte Museum, Naples*, celebrates the occasion of [Italy's Presidency of the Council of the European Union from July 1 through December 31, 2014](#), and is part of [Italy in US](#). It is organized by the National Gallery of Art and the Embassy of Italy, Washington, together with the Capodimonte Museum, Naples, and the Superintendency of Cultural Heritage for the City and the Museums of Naples and the Royal Palace of Caserta. Generous support of the exhibition is provided by INTESA SANPAOLO bank. Additional support is provided by Berlucchi and Ferrero.

**Titian (c. 1488/90–1576)**

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In a career that spanned more than 70 years, Tiziano Vecellio (called Titian in English) was the greatest force in Venetian Renaissance painting. Born around 1490 in the town of Pieve di Cadore in the Italian Alps, Titian moved at an early age to Venice to study art. After training briefly with a mosaicist, he studied with Giovanni Bellini, the leading painter of his generation. Titian was influenced not only by Bellini's use of rich color but also by the pastoral and mythological scenes of fellow Bellini pupil Giorgione.

By 1510, Titian had established himself as an independent master and, after Bellini's death, he was appointed official painter to the Venetian Republic. Following a number of commissions for the courts of Ferrara, Mantua, and Urbino, Titian's fame spread internationally. His patrons included the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, Philip II of Spain, Francis I of France, and Pope Paul III.

Titian was a master in all painted genres. He produced dignified and insightful portraits, Madonnas of modesty and charm, playful mythological pictures, sensuous nudes, and meditative religious works. Titian died in 1576 and was buried in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, where his dramatic altarpiece, *The Assumption of the Virgin* (1516–1518), had been installed nearly 60 years before.

### **Danaë (1544–1545)**

The loves of the gods were a favorite theme of Titian's princely patrons. During the course of his long career, he became the greatest and most influential interpreter of these amorous episodes, drawn from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and other literary texts.

A celebration of the recumbent female nude, the *Danaë* depicts the legendary maiden, in bed and about to receive Jupiter, the king of the gods. Lured by reports of her beauty, Jupiter appears to her in the guise of a shower of gold coins.

Commissioned by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, grandson of Pope Paul III, the painting was completed during a visit Titian made to Rome in 1545–1546. Wealthy and worldly, Alessandro Farnese was both a distinguished patron of the arts and a notorious womanizer with a mistress (a courtesan named Angela). At a time when ecclesiastics were under fire for their licentious and corrupt ways, it was prudent to transform an all-too-contemporary courtesan into a mythological figure whose nudity was sanctioned by classical precedent.

The *Danaë* was looted by German troops on behalf of Field Marshal Hermann Göring during the Second World War and was discovered afterward in the Austrian salt mine at Alt Aussee. The canvas was brought to the Munich Central Collecting Point by the so-called [Monuments Men](#) in 1945 and returned to the Italian government two years later.

This fall, the Gallery will present a lecture by Brigitte Daprà, director of exhibitions and loans, Superintendency of Cultural Heritage for the City and the Museums of Naples and the Royal Palace of Caserta, on the history of the *Danaë* during World War II.

### **History of the Farnese Collection**

The Capodimonte Museum in Naples began as a large family collection, assembled between the 16th and the 18th century by the Farnese family. The museum took on national status in 1957 and is now home to, among much else, a rich collection of Neapolitan paintings from the 14th to the 19th century, brought together from local churches, the collection of the Bourbon rulers of Naples, and contemporary works by artists from Alberto Burri to Andy Warhol.

The founder of the Farnese Collection was Alessandro Farnese (1468–1549), better remembered as Pope Paul III (1534–1549), who acquired and commissioned works from the greatest artists of the time. The collection is very extensive, spanning all of the arts. Of note are many revered masterpieces, including Michelangelo's cartoon for the *Cappella Paolina*, Raphael's *Moses before the Burning Bush*, Sebastiano del Piombo's *Madonna of the Veil*, Lorenzo Lotto's *Portrait of Bishop Bernardo de' Rossi*, and Annibale Carracci's *Hercules at the Crossroads*. There are 10 extraordinary paintings—including the *Danaë*—by Titian, whom the Farnese patronized while the artist was in Rome in 1545 and 1546.

### **Titian at the National Gallery of Art**

With the largest collection of Titian and his studio in the United States, the Gallery's holdings include 23 works—13 paintings, eight prints, and two drawings. Highlights from genres in which he excelled include the portraits *Ranuccio Farnese* (1542) and *Pietro Bembo* (1540), as well as the mythological *Feast of the Gods* (with Bellini) (1514/1529), *Venus with a Mirror* (c. 1555), and *Venus and Adonis* (c. 1560).

The presentation of *Danaë* in Washington marks its second appearance at the Gallery. In 1990 it was exhibited in a retrospective, *Titian, Prince of Painters*, in celebration of the 500th anniversary of the artist's birth. Since that time the painting has been cleaned and restored.

The Gallery has previously held seven exhibitions on Titian: *Titian and the Venetian Woodcut* (1976), *From Leonardo to Titian: Italian Renaissance Paintings from the Hermitage, Leningrad* (1979), *Master Drawings from Titian to Picasso: The Curtis O. Baer Collection* (1985), *Titian: The Flaying of Marsyas* (1986), *Titian's Saint Sebastian* (1987), *Titian, Prince of Painters* (1990), and *Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, and the Renaissance of Venetian Painting* (2006).

### **General Information**

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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 visit the Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt), Twitter at [www.twitter.com/ngadc](http://www.twitter.com/ngadc), and Instagram at <http://instagram.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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