

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Of Heaven and Earth: 500 Years of Italian Painting from
Glasgow Museums***
presented at the Vancouver Art Gallery



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A media preview will take place at 9:00am, Thursday, June 11 at the Vancouver Art Gallery (750 Hornby St.).
Media attending are requested to RSVP to Debra Zhou (dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca).

June 2, 2015, Vancouver, BC – The Vancouver Art Gallery welcomes some of the greatest names in European art with the opening of ***Of Heaven and Earth: 500 Years of Italian Painting from Glasgow Museums*** on **Friday, June 12**. Tracing the Golden Age of Italian painting from the late 14th century to the late 19th century, this exhibition features masterpieces by extraordinary artists such as Sandro Botticelli, Giovanni Bellini, Titian, the Cavaliere d'Arpino (Giuseppe Cesari), Francesco Guardi, Domenichino and Salvator Rosa, presenting artworks produced in the principal artistic centres of Italy, such as Rome, Milan, Bologna, Florence, Siena, Naples and Venice. Subjects of the paintings include saints and religious figures, as well as scenes of Roman and Italian history. *Of Heaven and Earth* provides a rare opportunity for visitors to experience the breadth and sheer beauty of works by many iconic artists who helped achieve international acclaim for Italian art.

“Of Heaven and Earth is an unprecedented exhibition that showcases this extraordinary collection of Italian painting, which is one of the finest civic collections in the UK, from Glasgow Museums,” said Kathleen S. Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “We are delighted to offer a rare opportunity for our visitors to witness and appreciate the sheer beauty of these Italian masterpieces in the coming months.”

For much of the last 500 years, Italian painting has been one of the driving forces in European art. Arranged chronologically, the exhibition is divided into five sections, beginning with Niccolò di Buonaccorso's *St. Lawrence* (c. 1370–75); with its gold-leaf background and two-dimensional representation, it provides an excellent example of 14th century Siennese tradition. In comparison, Sandro Botticelli's *Annunciation* (c. 1490–95) demonstrates how masters of the 15th century employed more sculptural forms and a greater sense of perspective with the transition from the late Middle Ages to the Renaissance.

Under the influence of the High Renaissance, early 16th century painters reached a tremendous command over representation of nature as well as a fluency in figuration. One of this period's great visionaries, Titian, developed a mastery of colour that can already be seen in his early painting *Christ and the Adulteress* (c. 1508–10). Late-century Mannerism is also well represented in this section, with works showing a characteristic elongation of the figures and the use of somewhat acidic colours.

The 17th century Baroque period was dominated by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, whose dramatic influence is seen in the remarkable painting *Salome* (c. 1681–85) by Carlo Dolci. The contrast between the gruesome head of St. John the Baptist and the demure delicacy of Salome gives the image a visual frisson. The beginnings of independent landscape painting are also seen here in the two magnificent canvases by Salvator Rosa, which—beyond their religious subjects—present studies of what became known as sublime landscape.

Artists of the 18th century engaged with allegorical and mythological subjects due to continued interest in the classical past. In addition, British patrons on their Grand Tour through Italy instigated a demand for *vedute* (view) paintings, such as Francesco Guardi's masterful *View of San Giorgio Maggiore* (c. 1760). This growing diversification of art patronage led to a depiction of a wider range of subjects beyond the religious, imagery which had predominated in earlier periods.

The exhibition closes with a selection of outstanding 19th century works showing the popularity of patriotic and genre scenes in the new open market. The neo-classical period is evidenced in two austere canvases with frieze-like compositions by Vincenzo Camuccini. The pomp of history painting was gradually displaced with the dawn of the modern era and a growing interest in Realism. The final work in the exhibition is Antonio Mancini's depiction of *The Sulky Boy* (1886), which presents a contemporary genre scene under the influence of French Impressionism, providing a stark contrast to what came before.

Special event

Tuesday, July 28, 7pm, in the Gallery

Virtue & Vice: Women in Italian Art by Dr. Efrat El-Hanany

This lecture takes a deeper look at the striking representations of women in the exhibition, showing how such figures as the exemplary Virgin Mary, the sensual Salome, the repentant Mary Magdalene and the triumphant Galatea have served to shape the social roles of women in past centuries.

About the American Federation of Arts

The **American Federation of Arts (AFA)** is the leader in traveling exhibitions internationally. A nonprofit institution founded in 1909, the AFA is dedicated to enriching the public's experience and understanding of the visual arts through organizing and touring art exhibitions for presentation in museums around the world, publishing exhibition catalogues featuring important scholarly research, and developing educational programs.

Of Heaven and Earth: 500 Years of Italian Painting from Glasgow Museums is organized by the American Federation of Arts and Glasgow Museums.

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Presenting Sponsor:



Organized by the American Federation of Arts and Glasgow Museums.



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Additional funding for the exhibition tour to the Vancouver Art Gallery is provided by d'Amico Società di Navigazione, with the assistance of the Consulate General of Italy in Vancouver.



Image Credits:

(left) Cavaliere d'Arpino (Giuseppe Cesari), *Archangel Michael and the Rebel Angels*, c. 1592–93, oil on copper, Glasgow Museums; Bequeathed by Archibald McLellan, 1856 (153), © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, Courtesy American Federation of Arts

(middle) Sandro Botticelli (and possibly assistant), *The Annunciation*, c. 1490-95, oil, tempera and gold leaf on walnut panel, Glasgow Museums; Bequeathed by Archibald McLellan, 1856 (174) © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

(right) Carlo Dolci, *Salome*, c. 1681-85, oil on canvas, Purchased by Glasgow Museums through JC Robinson, 1883 (656), © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, Courtesy American Federation of Arts

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Images are available upon request.

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About the **Vancouver Art Gallery**: The Vancouver Art Gallery is a not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts. We thank everyone for their continuing generosity.