
PRESS RELEASE

**The sacred and the profane.
17th Century Masterpieces in the collections of Italian banks**

The art exhibition will be one of the main cultural events of the year 2009 in Luxemburg. It will be launched by the President of the Italian Republic and the Grand Duke of Luxemburg on 4 February 2009. The exhibition, the only one of its kind, will be open to the public in Luxemburg from 6 February to 17 May 2009 at the prestigious Musée national d'histoire et d'art.

The coordinators intended the exhibition to be a time to appreciate and share Italian culture, and an occasion to let the public become acquainted with the rich heritage of the collections belonging to Italian banks. The event is the result of a mutual understanding between the governments of the two countries, Italy and Luxemburg, on the occasion of a visit that emphasized the deeply rooted historic and cultural relations existing between the two countries. Along these lines, ever since the summer of 2007, the Italian Embassy and the Italian Institute of Culture have worked closely with the Italian Banking Association (ABI) and the Director of the Musée national d'histoire et d'art, in order to promote this important event. The Italian Embassy, the Italian Institute of Culture, the Musée national d'histoire et d'art, and ABI have joined forces to bring together sixty paintings representing one of the periods that was the most productive and of highest splendour for Italian figurative art: the period encompassing the end of the 16th Century to the first half of the 18th Century. It was a period of great magnificence, which, owing to the patronage of the arts from important families who enjoyed the taste for beauty and to the acknowledgement of the significant role of art, witnessed the development of the phenomenon of collecting art work, thus supporting and enhancing a new figurative culture.

The masterpieces exhibited, all of which come from Italian banks, are a living testimony to the great appreciation and attention that the sector has always had for art and culture. This awareness was directly passed down from the tradition of great Renaissance bankers, especially from Genoa and Florence, and at present is rekindled by the great efforts of banks not only to recover, preserve, and protect Italian art and cultural heritage, but also to allow scholars and the public at large to benefit from the wonderful masterpieces that are kept in their collections.

The exhibition will be jointly directed by Ms. Anna Lo Bianca, Director of the Gallery of ancient art paintings in Palazzo Barberini, and Mr. Michel Polfer, Director of the Musée

national d'histoire et d'art; a comprehensive catalogue published by Silvana Editoriale will also be available. "The sacred and the profane" ("Tra sacro e profano") will be an exceptional event: the exhibition will unfold down the gallery of a stately home, opening with a number of oversized masterpieces, which will provide a stunning visual effect, capable of bringing us back to the opulence of Renaissance palaces, and the taste of collectors of that time.

The journey through "The sacred and the profane" will unfold in five sections: great altarpieces and the power of myth, sacred tales, precursors and protagonists, moral allegories, faces of history, and between painting and poetry (ut pictura poesis), which will be connected by a common interpretation documenting the comparison between sacred and profane objects, in perfect equilibrium between ancient wisdom and devotional practices; but also between iconographic and stylistics continuity aimed at spreading the religious message and a ground-breaking journey that will spark profound transformations in the artistic language.

The ideal aristocratic gallery setting will host masterpieces, all coming from Italian banks: Banca Antonveneta, Banca Carige, Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena, Banca Popolare dell'Emilia Romagna, Banca Popolare di Sondrio, Banca Popolare di Vicenza, Banco Popolare, BNL, Cariprato, Carispaq, Credem, Credito Valtellinese, Dexia Crediop, Fondo Pensioni del Gruppo Sanpalolo Imi, Intesa Sanpaolo, UBI Banca Carime, UBI Banca Regionale Europea, UniCredit Group, and the Italian Banking Association. Some of the protagonists of this fortunate pictorial season are: Francesco Albani, Gioachino Assereto, Giovanni Bilivert, Simone Cantarini, Ludovico Carracci, Bernardo Cavallino, Battistello Caracciolo, Bartolomeo Cavarozzi, Cerano, Luca Giordano, Guercino, Francesco Maffei, Rutilio Manetti, Carlo Maratta, Orbetto, Paolo Gerolamo Piola, Mattia Preti, Guido Reni, Francesco Solimena, Spadarino, Alessandro Tiarini.

16 January 2009

Musée national d'histoire et d'art
Marché-aux-Poissons
L- 2345 Luxembourg

Opening hours:

From Tuesday to Sunday: from 10 am to 5 pm

Thursday: evening hours from 5 pm to 8 pm (free entrance)

Closed on: Mondays

Admission tickets to the museum: 5 euros each

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