

# FRIENDS OF EUROPEAN ART NEWSLETTER

## *Fierce Reality: Italian Masters from Seventeenth Century Naples*

Steele Gallery

10 December 2006 to 4 March

*Fierce Reality* is the first major baroque exhibition in years to be organized by Phoenix Art Museum. The paintings coming to Phoenix were all made when Naples was a major art capital of southern Europe. The city was the seat of the Spanish viceroyalty that controlled all of south Italy. The paintings in this exhibition resulted from the epoch that followed—chronologically and stylistically—Caravaggio's two sojourns there at the outset of the seventeenth century (1607, 1609-1610).

Two and a half years ago, the Museum began negotiations with the Museums' Authority in Naples to create an exhibition of masterworks from the Golden Age of Neapolitan painting. Last year, two dozen FEA members were amazed by the beauty and power of these paintings while visiting Naples. This December, Naples comes to us in the form of this exhibition of fifty-two paintings.



Bold and imposing, these paintings embrace a highly naturalistic approach to their subjects. Saints and religious heroes, like Ribera's *Saint Andrew* (left) and Artemisia Gentileschi's *Judith and Holofernes* (right), are shown at life size, isolated and expressive, more like compelling portraits of saintliness than the narrative accounts of their lives found elsewhere. Still-lives are aggressively sensuous and more concerned with *trompe l'oeil* effects than the moralizing messages often found in Dutch ones of the period. Cataclysmic events in Naples prompted nearly immediate artistic responses, such as Mattia Preti's



designs for grand votive murals acknowledging the intercession of San Gennaro (the city's patron saint) and the Virgin Mary in saving Naples from the devastating plague of 1656. Mythological paintings by Giordano such as the *Sleeping Venus and Cupid Approached by a Satyr* (right) are opulent reinventions of the ideas found earlier in the work of Giorgione and the young Titian.



Friends of European Art is the proud sponsor of the catalogue to this exhibition and will host a cocktail reception in conjunction with a lecture at the museum on Neapolitan Golden Age painting by Jon Seydl, Associate Curator of Paintings at the Getty Museum, January 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Tom Loughman, Curator of European Art

### Photo credits

Left: Jusepe De Ribera, *Saint Andrew*, c.1618-1620, oil on canvas, 136 x 112 cm. Naples, Quadreria dei Gerolamini.

Top right: Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, c.1630, oil on canvas, 159 x 126 cm. Napoli, Museo di Capodimonte

Bottom right: Luca Giordano, *Sleeping Venus and Cupid Approached by a Satyr*, c.1656, oil on canvas, 133 x 187.5 cm. Geneva, Fondazione Neapolis.

## Letter from the President

What an exciting time to be President of Friends of European Art! As we enter our tenth year we can reflect on our organization's many accomplishments. The most recent of these include the lead gift of \$100,000 toward the acquisition of a glazed terracotta sculpture by Andrea della Robbia: *Aged Apostle*, circa 1490. The FEA Board also voted to contribute \$30,000 toward the publication of the exhibition catalogue for *Fierce Reality: Italian Masters from Seventeenth Century Naples*. These important contributions to Phoenix Art Museum are made possible by your generous support of Friends of European Art.



Our fall programs will commence on October 17 with a gallery walk lead by Tom Loughman to introduce the European gallery in its revised space. An optional dinner at Trente-Cinq, a Belgian bistro, will follow. On November 18, we will celebrate our new acquisition with a lecture by Professor Steve Bule on Andrea della Robbia and Italian Renaissance Sculpture. The program will include a gallery visit and an optional lunch overlooking Phoenix Art Museum's sculpture garden. November also marks the opening of the newly renovated Phoenix Art Museum.

Friends of European Art will soon have a new website, [www.FriendsofEuropeanArt.org](http://www.FriendsofEuropeanArt.org). Jennifer Wright has spent the summer working on this project, which will allow us to access FEA events and travel plans. We will notify you when the site is ready for use.

Terri Hardy will chair our fundraiser, *Carnivale*, on February 1. It promises to be a festive event!

Yes, exciting things are happening with Friends of European Art and I look forward to sharing them with you in the coming year.

*Kathey Plenge*

480-948-0406

Rplenge@cox.net

## Carnivale

A celebration of the winter season exhibitions at  
Phoenix Art Museum

*Rembrandt and the Golden Age of Dutch Art:  
Treasures from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam*

*Fierce Reality: Italian Masters from Seventeenth  
Century Naples*

6pm – 9pm, Thursday, February 1, 2007

Featuring special tours of the exhibitions, 17<sup>th</sup> century inspired food and drink, strolling entertainers and a silent auction. Masks requested. Proceeds from this event will benefit acquisitions of European art for Phoenix Art Museum.



*Abraham Mignon (1640-1679)*

**Still life with fruit and oysters (c. 1660-1679)**

*oil on canvas*

*Rijksmuseum Amsterdam*

**Launching soon!**

**[www.FriendsofEuropeanArt.org](http://www.FriendsofEuropeanArt.org)**

## *FEA Calendar of Events*

### Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup>

**6:00p Gallery Walk**

Join Tom Loughman to view the revised European Gallery space and to hear plans for the future.

**7:00p Dinner at Trente-Cinq Belgian Bistro**

2333 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street at Sheridan

\$45 per person      RSVP to Susan Glava at 480-585-7572

### Saturday, November 11<sup>th</sup> – Sunday, November 12<sup>th</sup>

**Grand Opening Weekend of the new museum spaces**

Check your museum magazine for details

### Saturday, November 18<sup>th</sup>

**12:00p Luncheon**

Be among the first to experience Phoenix Art Museum's Dorrance Sculpture Garden with lunch on the Grossman Terrace.

\$25 per person      RSVP to Susan Glava at 480-585-7572

**1:00p Lecture**

“Andrea della Robbia and Italian Renaissance Sculpture” by Professor Steven C. Bule, Utah Valley State University. No Reservations required

### Friday, December 8<sup>th</sup> - Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>

**Opening Weekend: *Fierce Reality: Italian Masters from Seventeen Century Naples***

Steele Gallery, Phoenix Art Museum

### Tuesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>

**6:00p Reception for FEA members**

**7:00p Lecture**

Join Jon Seydl, Associate Curator, Paintings, J. Paul Getty Museum, for a lecture on Neapolitan painting.

### Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>

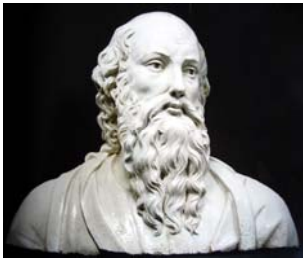
**Opening Weekend: *Rembrandt and the Golden Age of Dutch Art: Treasures from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam***

Katz Wing, Phoenix Art Museum

## Recent Acquisition: *Aged Apostle Saint c. 1490* Andrea della Robbia

This life-size bust was modeled by the hands of Andrea della Robbia, one of the most important sculptors of Renaissance Florence. The object was previously in one of the most prestigious collections of Medieval and Renaissance sculpture, that of the nineteenth-century Parisian architect Émile Gavet.

Andrea was born in Florence in 1435 and was apprenticed to his uncle Luca (1400-1482), the marble sculptor responsible for the choir boxes of the Florentine cathedral (1431-1435) and the first great member of that family to apply the new stylistic language of Renaissance sculpture to the centuries-old technique of glazed terracotta. He matriculated in the Florentine sculptor's guild in 1458 and worked for his uncle for the next three decades. Andrea's work rightly assumed its place as the most prized of all the della Robbia clan excepting his brilliant uncle, Luca.



This *Aged Apostle Saint* (left) is a true masterwork that exemplifies the age in which it was born. The della Robbia family and its shop made—from the 1460s and up through the late 1500s—unique pieces and multiples in glazed terracotta, the latter by using a mold. This bust bears all the markings of a uniquely sculpted piece especially in the individuality of each facial form. In the hollow reverse, one can see the traces of the fingertips of the artist in the fired clay. Such craftsmanship is exclusively found in hand-modeled examples of della Robbia sculpture; the so-called “squeeze” multiples

lack the graceful transitions and appear much more hard-edged and sterile. Also, the shop made multi-colored and white-on-white sculpture, plaques and high reliefs. This sculpture stands out as an exceptional figural work, executed nearly in the round, with finely-worked details and life-like three-dimensionality.

The addition of this sculpture to the collection of Phoenix Art Museum marks the arrival of a capital work by one of the great masters of Renaissance sculpture—a work that complements the collection of paintings. This sculpture provides a powerful anchor in the gallery, creating both the visual drama and greater sense of context that our collection and its audiences deserve.

### ***Like a super sized matryoshka with its colorful nesting dolls, Russia reveals one surprise after another. (Fodor's)***

The FEA travel committee, with guidance from Tom Loughman, presents FEA members an enlightening and adventurous trip to Russia. Sound interesting? You bet. This trip will be “feet on the ground” allowing enough time to explore the cultural highlights of Moscow and St Petersburg. Dates for travel are May 8 to May 18, 2007.

Wonder what we will do for ten days? A professional escort will lead the group to the Pushkin Museum, the Kremlin, Serguiv Posad Monastery, the Tretyakov Gallery and several more stops. You say you don't know what all these places are? How exciting. And that's just Moscow. Day five we travel by train to St Petersburg. Here you gain bragging rights when we see the Hermitage, the medieval village of Novgorod, Catherine the Great's palace and the Church of the Spilled Blood.

Elaine Cohen, Travel Committee

## *From the Curator . . .*

So much is happening at the Museum as we prepare to open this November the Heather and Michael D. Greenbaum Lobby, the Dorrance Sculpture Garden, and the Ellen and Howard C. Katz Wing for Modern Art. Some things are finished; others nearing completion. The emerging Museum complex is a series of stunning architectural spaces that will complement and provocatively showcase our collections and exhibitions.

The Museum will inaugurate the new spaces with a series of special events early in the month. On two consecutive evenings, Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, the Museum will be open to all members for an open house reception from 3 to 8pm. Other events include the gala opening, known simply as “the party” on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and the first public weekend, the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. Certainly it will be a week of ample celebrations!

One development that immediately affected the European galleries was the departure of the Fashion Design Gallery on the Museum’s second floor at the end of August. At the beginning of September, I installed some works of art that have not been on view in years within the European galleries, including a fine sixteenth-century portrait by Franz Pourbus, a selection of engravings by Jacobus Houbraken after famous English portraits by van Dyck and others, three of our best Rembrandt etchings, and the two paintings by Jan Miense Molenaer (*Touch and Hearing*) from his 1630 series on the five senses. On Tuesday evening, October 17<sup>th</sup>, I’ll be leading a walk through the galleries to talk with you about some of these works of art and other reinstallation plans for the coming months.

On November 18<sup>th</sup>, FEA is sponsoring an important luncheon and lecture in celebration of the European collection’s recent acquisition of a major sculpture by the Florentine Renaissance master Andrea della Robbia. That acquisition—made possible in large part by major financial support from Friends of European Art and over thirty of its members—is among the most daring European acquisitions the Museum has ever made. It is the first major work of Italian Renaissance sculpture to enter an Arizona museum collection. The luncheon is to be held on the patio of the new sculpture garden and will feature a lecture by an eminent scholar of Italian Renaissance sculpture, Steven Bule. It will be a delightful afternoon: a moment to thank those responsible for funding the purchase and an event to herald this important addition to the collection.

The Museum will open a major loan exhibition of baroque masterworks from the Golden Age of Neapolitan painting, *Fierce Reality: Italian Masters from Seventeenth Century Naples*, on December 10<sup>th</sup>. Major support for the catalogue that accompanies the exhibition comes from Friends of European Art—thank you! We organized this exhibition with partners in Italy, foremost the Ministry of Culture’s Superintendent for Neapolitan Museums and the staff of the Museo di Capodimonte—the largest and finest museum in the great royal capital of Naples. It is the perfect complement to the exhibition we open in late January, *Rembrandt and the Golden Age of Dutch Art: Treasures from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam*.

I hope to see you all often during this exciting fall. There is a lot to enjoy. Don’t be a stranger.

*Tom*

**Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup>**  
**6:00p European Gallery walk with Tom Loughman**  
**7:00p Dinner at Trente-Cinq**

Trente-Cinq, owned by Chef Lionel Geuskens, offers traditional Belgian cuisine. Although the mailing indicates chicken, beef or lamb, this will not be your usual fare. A better description to help you make a choice is:

***Carbonade Flamande:*** Beef, apples & prunes braised in a dark Belgian beer. Served with roasted tournee potatoes.

***Bouchee a la reine:*** Puff pastry filled with a chicken and mushroom veloute. Served with tournee potatoes.

***Lamb shank a la marocaine:*** Braised lamb shank served with couscous and topped with a vegetable ragout.

Cost for the dinner is \$45

RSVP to Susan Galva at 480-585-7572

Friends of European Art  
Phoenix Art Museum  
1625 N. Central Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85004

