

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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NATIONAL GALLERY ACQUIRES THREE ITALIAN BAROQUE PAINTINGS

WASHINGTON - The National Gallery of Art has acquired three baroque paintings which will be included in the exhibition The Age of Correggio and the Carracci: Emilian Painting of the 16th and 17th Centuries (Dec. 19 - Feb. 16, 1987). The paintings are Joseph and Potiphar's Wife and its pendant Amnon and Tamar (1649-1650) by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, known as Guercino, and God the Father (c. 1650) by Francesco Albani.

"We are fortunate to have these important works added to the Gallery's collection of baroque paintings," said Sydney J. Freedberg, chief curator at the National Gallery. "These works represent each artist at his best, and it is especially gratifying to acquire them at a time when they may be shown together with other paintings by these artists in our coming great Emilian exhibition."

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Both Guercino and Albani were followers of the Carracci school. The Carracci reform, which introduced stylistic changes in painting around the year 1600, represents an important turning point in the history of Italian art.

Guercino is recognized as one of the greatest of the Carracci followers. The pair of Old Testament stories is a fine example of Guercino's late style, characterized by clarity of form and strong, luminous color. The first painting depicts Joseph repelling the advances of Potiphar's wife. In Amnon and Tamar, Amnon, one of the sons of King David, expels his half-sister Tamar from his bed after having raped her. These subjects are subtle interweavings of contradictory ideas of morality and eroticism, typical of the sophisticated mentality of the baroque period. The two works were originally commissioned as a pair by Signor Aurelio Zanoletti in 1649 and have remained together since their completion in 1650.

Francesco Albani joined the Carracci Academy in 1595. He worked with Annibale Carracci in Rome before returning to Bologna in 1617, where he began to specialize in idyllic landscapes and small devotional compositions. God the Father is an excellent example of his devotional paintings, lucid in its balanced design and brilliant in color, and in a remarkable state of preservation.

The acquisition of these three works will significantly increase the National Gallery's collection of baroque paintings, which prior to this included one Guercino, and no works by Albani.