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## Master Sculptures from the Robert H. Smith Collection on View at the National Gallery of Art, January 27 through May 4, 2008



Antonio Susini after a model by Giovanni Bologna (active 1572, died 1624)  
*Venus Drying Herself* (Cesarini Venus), late sixteenth or early seventeenth century  
bronze  
Robert H. Smith Collection

Washington, DC – An outstanding collection of Renaissance statuettes will go on view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in **Bronze and Boxwood: Renaissance Masterpieces from the Robert H. Smith Collection**, January 27 through May 4, 2008 in the West Building, main floor galleries 74 and 75. In addition to 46 beautiful bronze sculptures, this exhibition will include eight exceptional objects carved out of

boxwood and ivory, which are similar in size to the bronzes and may be closely related to them.

The Robert H. Smith Collection, one of the most important private collections of bronze sculpture, was last on view at the National Gallery of Art in 2002 for the opening of the new Sculpture Galleries. This new exhibition includes more than a dozen works acquired since that time, including four great masterpieces by Giambologna, Antico, and Giovanni Francesco Susini.

"We are very fortunate to have an important collector such as Robert H. Smith make his outstanding sculptures available to Gallery visitors," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "Over the years, not only has Smith donated major works to our collection, but he has also provided vital leadership in his former role as Gallery president."

### **Exhibition Support**

The exhibition is sponsored by The Exhibition Circle of the National Gallery of Art.

### **The Exhibition**

The Robert H. Smith Collection comprises exceptionally fine works by major contemporaries and successors of Michelangelo, including many by the renowned sculptor Giambologna (1529–1608). In this exhibition, two significant additions to the collection by Giambologna will be on view: a superb cast of his *Cesarini Venus* (late 16th or early 17th century), which was once in the French royal collection, and the finest and earliest version of his famous *Birdcatcher* (late 16th century).

Other works on view will include:

*Seated Nymph* (1503) may be the most exquisite of all the bronzes made in the early 16th century by the celebrated goldsmith and sculptor Antico (c. 1460–1528). The rich color of this bronze is enhanced by gilded drapery and silvered eyes.

*David with the Head of Goliath* (c. 1625–1630) by Giovanni Francesco Susini (1585–c. 1653), like many of the works in the collection, looks remarkable from any angle or

position. Giovanni Francesco Susini is the nephew of Giambologna's bronze founder, Antonio Susini (active 1580–1624).

A group of eight dramatic boxwood and ivory carvings, the majority of them by the great German sculptor Leonhard Kern (1588–1662), expands the focus of the exhibition. In 17th-century Europe, carvers had greater access to ivory, but also used pear, cherry, and other hard woods, which had a color close to that of bronze sculpture.

While many of the works on view draw from antiquity for their subject matter, most are equally indebted to the Renaissance: existing materials were used in innovative ways to incorporate new visual language. Due to its malleability and strength, bronze allowed for more vibrant compositions, especially when compared to marble, the most common medium used by the ancients. Because classical statues were rarely unearthed whole, artists who copied them inevitably applied a more contemporary sensibility to complete their version.

### **Curator and Related Activities**

The exhibition curator is Nicholas Penny, senior curator of sculpture and decorative arts. Penny was co-curator of the 2007 exhibition *Desiderio da Settignano: Sculptor of Renaissance Florence*.

Gallery tours of the exhibition are scheduled for January 27, 29, 30, and February 4, 6, 12, 15, 20, 26, and 28. Tours will meet at 1 p.m. in the West Building Rotunda.

On Sunday, January 27, Nicholas Penny; Karen Serres, Robert H. Smith Research Curator; Dylan Smith, Robert H. Smith research conservator; and Shelley Sturman, senior conservator and head of object conservation will present *Modeling, Carving, Casting, Finishing: Four Aspects of the Works in Bronze, Boxwood, and Ivory Exhibited in the Robert H. Smith Collection*. The program will begin at 2 p.m. in the East Building Auditorium.

On Monday, January 28, Eike Schmidt, associate curator, J. Paul Getty Museum, will present *Bodies in Boxwood and Ivory by Leonhard Kern, Master of German Baroque Sculpture*. The lecture will take place at 12:10 p.m. and 1:10 p.m. in the East Building

Small Auditorium.

On Monday, February 25, Karen Serres will present *Artists as Collectors of Small Sculpture 1500–1700*. The lecture will be offered at 12:10 p.m. and 1:10 p.m. in the East Building Small Auditorium.

All programs will be free and open to the public unless noted otherwise.

### **The Collector and the National Gallery of Art**

Robert H. Smith, now trustee emeritus, was president of the National Gallery of Art from 1993 until 2003. Over the years, he has amassed a stellar collection of Renaissance bronzes, which were lent for the opening of the Sculpture Galleries in 2002.

He became the first chairman of the Gallery's newly formed Trustees' Council, a national advisory body to the Board of Trustees, in 1982. In 1985 he joined the board as a trustee upon the retirement of Paul Mellon, and in 1993 he succeeded John R. Stevenson as president. After serving on the campaign committee for the Gallery's Patrons' Permanent Fund, in 1986 he became founding co-chair, with Katharine Graham, of The Circle, the Gallery's annual membership group. He subsequently chaired the 50th Anniversary Gift Committee.

Recently he chaired the New Century Fund campaign. Smith and his wife Clarice, who reside in the Washington, D.C. area, have supported numerous initiatives, such as staff development and scholarly endeavors. Among their gifts of art are drawings by such masters as François Boucher (1703–1770), Canaletto (1697–1768), Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (1727–1804), and Pablo Picasso (1881–1973).

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## General Information

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 along 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. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit [www.nga.gov/renovation](http://www.nga.gov/renovation) (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/ngadc](http://twitter.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.

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