



## Online Press Kit

Release Date: September 9, 2010

### Press Release

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#### Audio:

*Arcimboldo, 1526-1593:  
Nature and Fantasy*

#### Press Event

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(27:51 min, 12.7mb)

[Rare Arcimboldo Painting  
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**ARCIMBOLDO'S FAMOUS PAINTINGS OF  
DELIGHTFULLY BIZARRE HEADS ARE ON VIEW  
TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE UNITED  
STATES AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART,  
SEPTEMBER 19, 2010–JANUARY 9, 2011**



**Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *Vertumnus*, c. 1590**  
oil on panel  
Skokloster Castle, Skokloster

Washington, DC—The bizarre yet scientifically accurate composite heads painted by Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526–1593) will be exhibited together for the first time in the United States, at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, from September 19, 2010 through January 9, 2011.

***Arcimboldo, 1526-1593: Nature and Fantasy*** includes 16 of the most spectacular of these paintings of heads composed of plants, animals, and other objects. They are joined by 32 additional works, such as drawings by Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer, small bronzes, illustrated books and manuscripts, and ceramics, to provide a context for Arcimboldo's inventions, revealing his debt to established traditions of physiognomic and nature studies.

***Arcimboldo, 1526-1593: Nature and Fantasy*** was selected in part

from a larger exhibition held at the Musée du Luxembourg, Paris, and the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, in 2008. After Washington, the exhibition will be on view at the Palazzo Reale, Milan—Arcimboldo's birthplace—from February 27 through May 8, 2011.

"From his own time as a court painter in 16th-century Prague and Vienna to his rediscovery by 20th-century surrealists, Arcimboldo has been famous for these extraordinary heads," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "The Gallery is honored to be the only institution in the United States to host this exhibition and we are thankful to the many lenders, both public and private."

### **Exhibition Support**

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The exhibition is made possible by Louisa and Robert Duemling.

It also is sponsored by Altria Group.

Additional support is provided by The Exhibition Circle of the National Gallery of Art.

It is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

The exhibition is part of *ITALY@150*, a series of activities in Washington, DC, and throughout the United States, that celebrate the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy and the long-lasting friendship between the two countries.

"Altria and its companies are pleased to partner with the National Gallery of Art to bring the Arcimboldo exhibition to U.S. audiences for the first time. We believe these whimsical works will spark the imagination of, and provide enjoyment for, many thousands of D.C. residents and visitors," said Bruce Gates, senior vice president, government affairs, Altria Group. Philip Morris and Altria Group Inc. have sponsored eight major exhibitions at the Gallery since 1987.

### **The Exhibition**

Painted singly or in a series, the heads are composed of imaginative combinations of fruits, vegetables, flowers, and other objects appropriate to the themes Arcimboldo depicted, such as the Four Seasons and the Four Elements (Earth, Air, Fire, and Water). Highlights of ***Arcimboldo, 1526–1593: Nature and Fantasy*** include the complete series of paintings of the Four Seasons (Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter) from the Louvre, two Seasons and two Elements

from the Kunsthistorisches Museum, as well as heads portraying various professions constructed from materials that signify those occupations. Also featured are several of the artist's so-called "reversible" paintings, such as *The Vegetable Gardener* (c. 1590), where a bowl of vegetables turned upside-down becomes the image of a gardener. In the exhibition space, mirrors are installed beneath these paintings so that visitors can experience the Arcimboldo effect.

Although he worked for some 25 years as a court artist for two emperors, painting portraits and making designs for costumes, pageants, and festivals for his patrons, Arcimboldo is best known for his paintings of composite heads. The meaning of the heads has been much debated. Contemporaries referred to them as *scherzi* (jokes), as they were intended to be clever and amusing. At the same time they contain serious investigations of nature. In addition, the complex imagery of the heads, the imperial patrons for whom they were made, and the clear propagandistic function they had, in the form of copies disseminated throughout Europe, suggest their role as political allegories.

Providing a context for Arcimboldo's paintings are *Helmet in the Form of a Dolphin Mask* (1540/1545) by the Milanese armorer Giovanni Paolo Negroli from the Gallery's own collection, as well as pieces of colored earthenware with nature motifs by Bernard Palissy. Two groups of drawings, selected from the Gallery's collection, offer further context: one represents nature studies, like Arcimboldo's, by artists such as Dürer, Joris Hoefnagel, Hans Hoffmann, and Jacopo Ligozzi; the second presents grotesque heads by Leonardo and his pupil Francesco Melzi, both Arcimboldo's predecessors in Milan.

### **Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526–1593)**

Giuseppe Arcimboldo was born in Milan in 1526, the son of a painter named Biagio, and was active there before moving to Vienna, the seat of the Holy Roman Empire, in 1562. He was appointed court painter and portraitist to Maximilian II, who became emperor in 1564. After the emperor's death in 1576, Arcimboldo was retained by Maximilian's son and successor, Rudolf II. When the imperial residence was moved from Vienna to Prague in 1583, the artist emigrated there as well.

In 1585 he began petitioning to return to his homeland, a request that was granted in 1587. Arcimboldo, then 61 years old, returned to Milan, though he had not yet been released from his service to Rudolf II. The artist continued working on paintings for the emperor as well as on other commissions, and in 1592 Rudolf II appointed him a Palatine count. Arcimboldo died the following year.

### **Curators and Related Publications**

The exhibition is curated by Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, curator of Italian Renaissance painting, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, who organized the previous exhibitions in Paris and Vienna. It is coordinated at the National Gallery of Art by David Alan Brown, curator, and Gretchen Hirschauer, associate curator, both in the department of Italian and Spanish paintings.

The English version of the 320-page exhibition catalogue from Paris and Vienna, edited by Ferino-Pagden and published by Skira, is available for purchase in the Gallery Shops. To order, please visit <http://shop.nga.gov/>; call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

### **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 at 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. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site 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 <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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Altria Group is the parent company of Philip Morris USA, U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company, and John Middleton. Altria also owns Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, Philip Morris Capital Corporation, and has a continuing economic and voting interest in SABMiller. For more than fifty years, Altria Group has strongly supported both the performing and visual arts. We champion organizations that inspire and reflect the qualities we value in our business operations – creativity, diversity, excellence and innovation.

As part of an overall commitment to support programs that create vibrant and engaging communities, Altria supports arts initiatives in Washington, D.C., Richmond, Virginia, and other regions where our companies operate. Included among our focus are select major exhibition sponsorships that bring thought-provoking, world-class cultural experiences to our communities.

We believe *Arcimboldo, 1526-1593: Nature and Fantasy* to be just such an experience. Inspiring in its representation of the transformative power of human imagination, the exhibition at once challenges and invites the viewer to re-imagine the human facial form. Though Arcimboldo's humorous composite portraits may have presaged the visual puzzles offered by more modern figures such as M.C. Escher or Chuck Close, in their beauty and playfulness these works stand strongly and memorably on their own.

In helping to bring *Arcimboldo: Nature and Fantasy* to our nation's capital in 2010, Altria Group is honored to sponsor the first Arcimboldo exhibition ever presented in the United States. We are grateful to the National Gallery of Art for making this wonderful exhibition possible and for sharing it with us.





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## NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART PLANS A WIDE RANGE OF ACTIVITIES TO CELEBRATE ARCIMBOLDO, 1526–1593: NATURE AND FANTASY

**Includes Colossal Sculpture Inspired by Arcimboldo by Philip Haas and Documentary Film Narrated by Isabella Rossellini**



**Philip Haas, *Winter (After Arcimboldo)*, 2010,**

pigmented and painted fiberglass

Courtesy of Sonnabend Gallery

Photo by Rob Shelley © 2010 National Gallery of Art, Washington

[\(click here to order this image\)](#)

Washington, DC—A dynamic array of programs, a special installation, and a documentary film are planned in conjunction with the first exhibition in the United States of the bizarre yet scientifically accurate allegorical composite heads painted by Giuseppe Arcimboldo. Lectures, films, gallery talks, and concerts explore the allegorical paintings of Arcimboldo, his role as court painter, and the age in which he worked.

***Arcimboldo, 1526-1593: Nature and Fantasy*** is on view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, from September 19, 2010 through January 9, 2011. After Washington, the exhibition will be on view at the

Palazzo Reale, Milan—Arcimboldo's birthplace—from February 27 through May 8, 2011.

### ***Winter (After Arcimboldo)* by Philip Haas**

As visitors ascend the stairs to the Mezzanine in the East Building they will encounter *Winter (After Arcimboldo)* (2010), a colossal 15-foot-tall, fiberglass sculpture by American artist and filmmaker Philip Haas (b. 1954). It is inspired by Arcimboldo's painting *Winter* (1563), which is on loan to the exhibition from the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Paying tribute to Arcimboldo's exuberant designs for court festivals in Renaissance Vienna and Prague, Haas has created at once a commentary on Arcimboldo's style and a work of art in its own right. A puzzle of natural forms—composed of a human head of bark, branches, twigs, moss, fungi, vines, and ivy—the object is both bizarre and expressive. Completed in time for **Arcimboldo, 1526–1593: Nature and Fantasy**, the sculpture will travel to the Gardens of Versailles, the Palazzo Reale in Milan, and the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

In 2009, Haas' series of film installations—*Butchers, Dragons, Gods & Skeletons*—for the Kimbell Art Museum in Ft. Worth was inspired by masterpieces in their permanent collection. Retrospectives of his art films have been held at the Tate Britain, the Centre Georges Pompidou, Lincoln Center, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the National Gallery of Art. His feature film, *Angels & Insects*, set in Victorian England, was nominated for an Academy Award®. Over the last several years, Haas has had two one-man shows of paintings and film installations at the Sonnabend Gallery in New York.

### **Documentary Film**

Narrated by Isabella Rossellini, this documentary film produced by the National Gallery of Art combines original footage of the artist's native Milan and the Habsburg palaces of Vienna and Prague with images of Arcimboldo's work as a court painter, designer of festivals, and chronicler of the natural world. The film airs on WETA-TV Arlington Cable Channel 26 September 5 at 2:30 p.m., September 13 at 5:30 p.m., September 27 at 10:30 p.m., and September 28 at 4:30 p.m. This film was made possible by the HRH Foundation. Running time: 30 minutes.

A short version of the film is shown continuously in a theater adjacent to the exhibition. The film is shown in the East Building Small Auditorium, Monday–Friday, from 12:00 to closing (with exceptions), and in the East Building Auditorium on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays at 11:30.



### **Sunday Lecture**

Admission is free of charge with seating on a first-come, first-served basis. See the full schedule of lectures at the Gallery at <http://www.nga.gov/programs/lectures/>.

#### ***Arcimboldo: Lombard Painter between Leonardo and Caravaggio***

Sunday, September 19, 2:00 p.m.

Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, curator of Italian Renaissance art,  
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Book signing of *Arcimboldo: 1526–1593* follows.

East Building Auditorium

### **Concerts**

Admission is free of charge with seating on a first-come, first-served basis. Learn more about concerts at the Gallery at <http://www.nga.gov/programs/music/index.shtm>.

#### **Quaver**

Wednesday, November 17, 12:10 p.m.

Music by Dalla Casa, Lasso, Ligeti, and other composers

Presented in honor of *Arcimboldo, 1526–1593: Nature and Fantasy*

West Building Lecture Hall

#### **National Gallery of Art Chamber Players**

Wednesday, November 24, 12:10 p.m.

Renaissance Italian Music

Presented in honor of *Arcimboldo, 1526–1593: Nature and Fantasy*

East Building Auditorium

### **Gallery Talks**

Regular public tours of the exhibition will be given by the adult programs department of the education division. For additional times and topics, please consult the bimonthly calendar of events or the Gallery Talks section of the National Gallery of Art Web site at <http://www.nga.gov/programs/galtalks/>.

#### ***Arcimboldo, 1526–1593: Nature and Fantasy***

September 24, 27; October 9, 10, 14; November 14, 16, 18; and  
December 3, 11, 12, and 20 at noon September 28, 30 and October 2,  
6, 8 at 1:00 p.m.

November 17, 19 at 2:00 p.m.

East Building Ground Level, Information Desk

Lecturers J. Russell Sale and Eric Denker lead 50-minute tours of the exhibition

### **Exhibition Booklet**

Written by Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, guest curator and curator of Italian painting, Kunsthistorisches, Vienna, with contributions from the departments of exhibition programs and Italian paintings, the illustrated booklet summarizes Arcimboldo's career and contains a checklist of all the works of art in the exhibition. The booklet is available free-of-charge at the entrance to the exhibition.

### **Gallery Shops**

The English version of the 320-page exhibition catalogue from Paris and Vienna, written by Ferino-Pagden and published by Skira, is available for purchase in the Gallery Shops. To order, please visit <http://shop.nga.gov/>; call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

All programs take place in the East Building Auditorium unless otherwise noted. Admission to the Gallery and its programs and exhibitions is free of charge. Seating for programs is on a first-come, first-served basis.

### **Exhibition Information**

#### ***Arcimboldo, 1526–1593: Nature and Fantasy***

Bizarre yet scientifically accurate, the allegorical composite heads painted by Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526-1593) are featured in their first appearance together in the United States. Additional works, including drawings by Leonardo and Dürer, small bronzes, illustrated books and manuscripts, and ceramics, will provide a context for Arcimboldo's inventions.

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