



Release Date: August 14, 2017

Michel Sittow Exhibition Celebrates Estonian Master of Early Netherlandish Art at National Gallery of Art, January 28–May 13, 2018



Michel Sittow, *Mary Rose Tudor (1496–1533), Sister of Henry VIII of England*, c. 1514, oil on panel  
Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, Gemäldegalerie, KHM—Museumsverband

Washington, DC—Considered Estonia's greatest Renaissance artist, Michel Sittow (c. 1469–1525) was sought after by the renowned European courts of his day, including those of King Ferdinand of Aragón and Queen Isabella of Castile, Philip the Handsome, Margaret of Austria, and Christian II of Denmark. In celebration of the centennial of the establishment of the Republic of Estonia, ***Michel Sittow: Estonian Painter at the Courts of Renaissance Europe*** provides an exceptional opportunity to examine the rare and masterful works attributed to Sittow. The exhibition explores the artist's possible collaboration with Juan de Flandes (1460–1519), his relationship with his Netherlandish contemporaries, and the influence of his likely teacher, Hans Memling (active c. 1465–1494).

***Michel Sittow***, the first monographic exhibition of the artist, features some 20 works and brings together most of the artist's 13 known paintings. The exhibition will be on view from January 28 through May 13, 2018, in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and from June 8 through September 16, 2018, at the Art Museum of Estonia, Tallinn, where it will be on view at the Kumu Art Museum.

"The first monographic exhibition of Sittow's work, ***Michel Sittow: Estonian Painter at the Courts of Renaissance Europe*** offers an opportunity to celebrate one of the masters of Early Netherlandish art," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art, Washington. "We are grateful to our partner, the Art Museum of Estonia, and their team at the Kumu Art Museum, where the exhibition will be on view, as well as to public and private collections in the United States and Europe that have generously lent to this exhibition."

#### Organization and Support

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the Art Museum of Estonia, Tallinn.

#### Exhibition Highlights

***Michel Sittow: Estonian Painter at the Courts of Renaissance Europe*** is the first monographic exhibition devoted to the artist and provides an opportunity for a systematic technical investigation of the works attributed to him. The exhibition includes some 20 paintings from American and European collections, including 13 paintings by Sittow, as well as works by Juan de Flandes, Hans Memling, and Jan Gossaert that provide a context for understanding Sittow's achievement.

Among the highlights are *The Assumption of the Virgin* (c. 1500/1504, National Gallery of Art) and *The Ascension of Christ* (c. 1500/1504, private collection), the only two securely documented works by Sittow. Commissioned by Queen Isabella of Castile, they were among 47 panels of an altarpiece dedicated to the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary. After Isabella's death in 1504, 32 of these panels, including these two and *The Temptation*

---

of Christ (c. 1500/1504, National Gallery of Art) by Juan de Flandes, entered the collection of Archduchess Margaret of Austria. Depicting Sittow's mastery of color and delicate atmospheric effects, *The Assumption of the Virgin* has three known copies, and is recognized as an influential source for Joachim Patinir's *Assumption of the Virgin* (c. 1500–1520, Philadelphia Museum of Art).

Also included is the *Portrait of the Danish King Christian II* (1514/1515, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen), one of the few works by Sittow that is both firmly dated and in which the sitter's identity is confirmed; x-rays reveal another portrait, possibly of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, underneath the painting, demonstrating Sittow's reuse of panels. The exhibition also reunites two panels originally hinged together to form the devotional diptych—*Madonna and Child* (c. 1515/1518, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) and *Portrait of Diego de Guevara* (?) (c. 1515/1518, National Gallery of Art). Other highlights include *Portrait of a Man* (c. 1510, Mauritshuis, The Hague), as well as two portraits linked to the Tudor court in England: *Catherine of Aragon as the Magdalene* (c. 1515, Detroit Institute of Arts), and *Mary Rose Tudor (1496–1533), Sister of Henry VIII of England* (c. 1514, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), previously known as a portrait of Catherine of Aragón, and recently re-identified as the youngest sister of Henry VIII.

### **Michel Sittow (1469–1525)**

Michel Sittow was born in the Hanseatic port city of Reval, now Tallinn, in Estonia and probably received his earliest training from his father, also a painter and sculptor. Sittow moved to Bruges in 1484 where he presumably apprenticed under Hans Memling, that city's leading painter. Memling's influence can be seen in Sittow's Madonnas and portraits. Sittow did not register as a master with the Bruges guild and his whereabouts are unknown before 1492 when he entered the service of Queen Isabella of Castile, where he was prized as a portrait painter.

He is known to have collaborated with Juan de Flandes on the series of small panels depicting the lives of Christ and the Virgin for Queen Isabella. He remained in Isabella's service until her death in 1504, but was apparently absent from Spain after late 1502. Suggestions that he visited the courts of Margaret of Austria and Henry VII of England shortly after 1502 remain unsubstantiated, although he was certainly in Brabant at the end of 1505 or early in 1506, working for Duke Philip the Handsome. Sittow returned to Reval in 1506 to settle his inheritance and remained there, receiving membership in the artists' guild late in 1507 and marrying in 1509. He was called away from Reval in 1514 to paint the portrait of Christian II of Denmark, the future husband of Margaret of Austria's niece, Isabella. Sittow then began a second, shorter period of service at the court of Margaret of Austria and her nephew, the future Emperor Charles V, in the Netherlands. This was interrupted by a brief trip to Spain to negotiate the salary still owed him. By July 13, 1518, when he married again, Sittow was back in Reval. He lived there, a prosperous and respected citizen, until his death in late December 1525.

### **Curators and Catalog**

The exhibition is curated by John Oliver Hand, curator of Northern Renaissance paintings, National Gallery of Art, Washington, and Greta Koppel, curator of Dutch and Flemish art, Art Museum of Estonia, Tallinn.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog featuring essays by Hand and Koppel as well as by Anu Mänd, Institute of History, Archaeology and Art History, Tallinn University; Till-Holger Borchert, Musea Brugge, Belgium; Ariane van Suchtelen, Mauritshuis, The Netherlands; and Matthias Weniger, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich. The hardcover catalog is available for purchase in the Gallery Shops at [shop.nga.gov](http://shop.nga.gov); (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002 (phone); (202) 789-3047 (fax); or [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

### **Press Contact:**

Laurie Tylec, (202) 842-6355 or [l-tylec@nga.gov](mailto:l-tylec@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 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), Twitter at [www.twitter.com/ngadc](http://www.twitter.com/ngadc), and Instagram at <http://instagram.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.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

Department of Communications  
National Gallery of Art  
2000B South Club Drive  
Landover, MD 20785  
phone: (202) 842-6353  
e-mail: [pressinfo@nga.gov](mailto:pressinfo@nga.gov)

---

---

Anabeth Guthrie  
Chief of Communications  
(202) 842-6804  
[a-guthrie@nga.gov](mailto:a-guthrie@nga.gov)

#### **Subscribe to Our E-mail Newsletters**

Stay up to date with the National Gallery of Art by [subscribing to our e-mail newsletters](#): Web, educators, family programs, fellowships/internships, films, lectures, music programs, and teen programs. Select as many updates as you wish to receive. To edit your subscriber information, please go to our [subscription management page](#).

---

#### AVAILABLE PRESS IMAGES

##### **Order Exhibition Press Images**

To order publicity images: Click on the link above and designate your desired images using the checkbox below each thumbnail. Please include your name and contact information, press affiliation, deadline for receiving images, the date of publication, and a brief description of the kind of press coverage planned.

---

#### PRESS KIT

##### **Exhibition Press Release**

[Exhibition Checklist](#) (PDF 212 kb)

---

#### ONLINE RESOURCES

[Exhibition Page](#)

---

#### PRESS CONTACT

Laurie Tylec  
(202) 842-6355  
[l-tylec@nga.gov](mailto:l-tylec@nga.gov)

---

Questions from members of the media may be directed to the Department of Communications at (202) 842-6353 or [pressinfo@nga.gov](mailto:pressinfo@nga.gov)

The public may call (202) 737-4215 or visit [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov) for more information about the [National Gallery of Art](#).

#### RSS (NEWS FEED)

[http://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/press/rss/press\\_feed.xml](http://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/press/rss/press_feed.xml)

#### NGA NEWSLETTERS:

Stay up to date with the National Gallery of Art by [subscribing to our e-mail newsletters](#): Web, educators, family programs, fellowships/internships, films, lectures, music programs, and teen programs. Select as many updates as you wish to receive. To edit your subscriber information, please go to our [subscription management page](#).

---

