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Prints of La Verna Explore Franciscan Imagery at the National Gallery of Art, February 25 through July 8, 2018



Cosmè Tura, *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, 1470s  
miniature on vellum  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection

Washington, DC—One of the most innovative Italian books of the early baroque period, the *Descrizione del Sacro Monte della Verna*, published in 1612, illustrates the experiences of Saint Francis and the buildings of the Franciscan community at La Verna. Drawing from the Gallery's rich holdings of works with Franciscan imagery, ***Heavenly Earth: Images of Saint Francis at La Verna*** contextualizes this publication alongside some 30 traditional representations from the late 15th through the mid-18th century. ***Heavenly Earth*** will be on view on the ground floor of the West Building from February 25 through July 8, 2018.

"We are very fortunate to have two copies of the first edition of the *Descrizione del Sacro Monte della Verna*," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "This exhibition offers a special opportunity to share outstanding prints depicting Franciscan themes from the permanent collection as well as from the Kirk Edward Long Collection."

In September 1224, in the wilderness of La Verna, a mountain in the Casentino Valley in Tuscany, Francis of Assisi began a 40-day fast and contemplation of Christ's Passion, during which he prayed to share in Christ's suffering. The legendary answer was a fiery, six-winged seraph enfolding the figure of a man on a cross. When the seraph departed, Francis's body was imprinted with the crucifixion wounds of Christ, which the friar bore for the remaining two years of his life. Francis's mystical union and unprecedented stigmatization on La Verna was a critical event in Western spirituality and proved to be the effective birth of modern monasticism. La Verna is an active monastery today and is the second most holy site for the Franciscan Order, after Assisi.

#### Exhibition Organization and Support

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

#### Exhibition Highlights

On view in the exhibition will be two first-edition copies of the *Descrizione del Sacro Monte della Verna*, acquired by the Gallery in 2012 and 2013. In 1608, Brother Lino Moroni invited the head of the Florentine Accademia del Disegno and gifted draftsman and painter Jacopo Ligozzi to illustrate not just Francis's experiences on the mountain but also the area's topography and the buildings of the Franciscan community established there. The resulting work, the *Descrizione del Sacro Monte della Verna* (1612), combined meticulous observation and unique vantage points in a set of 22 illustrations, which were then engraved by Raffaello Schiaminossi and Domenico Falcini. Five of the engravings include overslips—paper tabs showing the contemporary topography that, when lifted, reveal an earlier view of the landscape.

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Other highlights in the exhibition include early works such as the refined miniature leaf *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata* (1470s) by Cosmè Tura as well as anonymous woodcuts, which demonstrate the variety of early artistic interpretations of the stigmatization. Later prints after paintings by Federico Barocci and Peter Paul Rubens incorporate specific visual details of the event based on accounts published in *I Fioretti di San Francesco* and its appended *Considerazione*, translated into Italian in 1477. Although the majority of works feature Saint Francis receiving the stigmata at La Verna, the exhibition also includes a range of Franciscan iconographic themes popular in the Counter-Reformation, such as the saint's rapt prayers in the wilderness, his devotion to the Madonna and child, and the Pardon of Assisi.

### Exhibition Curator

The exhibition is curated by Ginger Hammer, assistant curator, department of old master prints, National Gallery of Art.

### Related Activities

#### Film

*Heavenly Earth*

April 1

East Building Auditorium

Italian filmmakers have created radically different interpretations of stories from the life of Saint Francis of Assisi for the screen. Three of the best-known of these are screened side-by-side in conjunction with the exhibition: *Flowers of Saint Francis* (Roberto Rossellini, 1950), *Francis of Assisi* (Liliana Cavani, 1966), and *Uccellacci e uccellini* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1966).

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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 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:

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