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## First Tintoretto Retrospective in America Celebrates Venetian Master's 500th Birthday



Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Madonna of the Treasurers*, 1567, oil on canvas, overall: 221 × 521 cm (87 × 205 1/8 in.) , Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

Washington, DC—Jacopo Tintoretto (c. 1519–1594) was a formidable competitor during his lifetime to the Venetian painters Titian and Veronese, yet he slipped into secondary status in the ensuing centuries. Now, coinciding with the 500th anniversary of his birth, a landmark exhibition on view from March 24 through July 7, 2019, at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, reasserts his place as one of the greatest Italian painters of the 16th century. The first full-scale retrospective of the artist in America, ***Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice*** presents a complete overview of his work, thanks to many significant loans traveling to the U.S. for the first time. The exhibition is currently on view through January 6, 2019, at the Palazzo Ducale in Venice, where it serves as the centerpiece of citywide celebrations in Tintoretto's birthplace.

The Gallery's presentation comprises 46 paintings and ten drawings. The majority of the paintings are immense, stretching nine, ten, or even 16 feet in the case of *Paradiso (modello)* (c. 1583, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza). Other highlights of the exhibition are a gallery devoted to portraits, revealing that Tintoretto was one of the great portraitists of his day; a substantial group of works on loan from the Gallerie dell'Accademia and Palazzo Ducale; and a film with breathtaking views of the artist's paintings in their Venetian settings. Among the loans leaving Italy for the first time are four that have undergone major conservation projects recently, sponsored by the American nonprofit, Save Venice.

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One of those, *Saint Martial in Glory with Saint Peter and Saint Paul* (1549, Church of San Marziale) will be installed outside the exhibition in the West Building's Lobby B.

"The Gallery is honored to work with the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia and the Gallerie dell'Accademia to present the first full consideration of Tintoretto in America. Their partnership has made the impossible possible, and with this unprecedented exhibition, there will be no doubt of Tintoretto's place as one of the titans of Italian painting," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art, Washington. "We are fortunate to have a generous group of international loans—many making their first trip to the U.S.—join the Gallery's rich holdings of works by Tintoretto. The exhibition and its accompanying catalog, as well as the coinciding Online Edition, will add greatly to scholarship on Tintoretto, and more broadly, on Italian Renaissance painting."

## **Tintoretto 500**

Two additional exhibitions round out the Gallery's celebration of Tintoretto's achievements as a painter and draftsman, as well as exploring the influences and innovations of other great printmakers in Venice in the 16th century. [Drawing in Tintoretto's Venice](#) (March 24–June 9, 2019) offers new ideas about his artistic evolution, working procedure, and workshop practice in approximately 80 of the finest examples from some two dozen public and private collections. The exhibition is organized by the Morgan Library & Museum, New York, where it is on view through January 6, 2019. [Venetian Prints in the Time of Tintoretto](#) (March 24–June 9, 2019) will present some 30 prints, from critical sources for Tintoretto's artistic formation to striking graphic responses to the expressiveness of Tintoretto's style. Drawn principally from the Gallery's permanent collection, this exhibition can only be seen in Washington and includes etchings by Schiavone, superb engravings by Agostino Carracci, and Giuseppe Scolari's extraordinary woodcuts.

## **Exhibition Support**

The exhibition is made possible in part by The Exhibition Circle of the National Gallery of Art. Save Venice provided significant funding for conservation in support of the exhibition. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

## **Exhibition Organization and Curators**

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia with the special collaboration of the Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.

The exhibition curators are Tintoretto experts Robert Echols, independent scholar, and Frederick Ilichman, chair of the Art of Europe department and Mrs. Russell W. Baker Curator of Paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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## Exhibition Tour

Palazzo Ducale, Venice, September 7, 2018–January 6, 2019

National Gallery of Art, Washington, March 24–July 7, 2019

## Exhibition Highlights

Born in Venice around 1518/1519 as Jacopo Robusti, the artist adopted the nickname Tintoretto, or "the little dyer," identifying himself as the son of a dyer. While primarily self-taught, Tintoretto may have spent brief periods as an apprentice in Titian's workshop and as a painter decorating furniture. By 1538, documents indicate he was working as an artist with his own workshop. His earliest dated painting, *The Virgin and Child with Saints* (1540, private collection), appears in the exhibition's first gallery. While some records exist of early commissions for decorative works for façades and interiors (examples of the latter are on view in the exhibition), by the time of his *Self-Portrait* (c. 1546/1548, Philadelphia Museum of Art) he had yet to secure a major public commission. Nonetheless, Tintoretto was confident in his abilities and presented himself in his self-portrait as an intensely focused and bold challenger to the conservative tradition of Venetian painting. The painting is one of only two surviving self-portraits by the artist; the other, painted toward the end of his life, bookends the exhibition.

Other early works on view in the first two galleries, such as *The Conversion of Saint Paul* (c. 1544, National Gallery of Art) and *Venus and Mars Surprised by Vulcan* (c. 1545/1546, Alte Pinakothek, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen), illustrate the artist's experiments with rich harmonizing colors, heavy application of paint, dramatic light and shadow, and energetic movement of figures. These elements would come together in his breakthrough work, *The Miracle of the Slave* (1548). Painted for the Sala Capitolare of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, a prestigious confraternity of laymen, it was Tintoretto's first major public commission and brought him a new level of success and fame. Commissions Tintoretto received following the success of *The Miracle of the Slave* are on view in the third gallery. Created for the now-demolished Santa Maria dell'Umiltà, *The Deposition of Christ* (c. 1562, Gallerie dell'Accademia), evokes the familiar biblical moment through a tangle of figures lit with the same stark contrast of light and shadow as seen in *The Miracle of the Slave*.

An exception to the chronological order of the exhibition is a gallery devoted solely to portraits. While Tintoretto was one of the most prolific portrait painters in the history of Italian art, this area of his work has been obscured by his more dynamic narrative paintings and discounted due to the many subpar portraits created by his workshop or followers but misattributed to the master himself. Works such as *Portrait of a Man with a Red Beard* (c. 1548, private collection), *Man with a Golden Chain* (c. 1560, Museo Nacional del Prado), and *Portrait of a Man with a White Beard* (c. 1555, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), stand out among Venetian portraiture of the era—posed against dark backgrounds, the subjects are adorned with minimal accessories or signifiers of status. Instead, the simplicity of the

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compositions brings the focus to the physical features of the subjects' hands and faces and their direct gazes, which are enhanced by exaggerated contrasts in lighting. Also on view in this section are two major examples of Tintoretto's group portraits: *The Madonna of the Treasurers* (1567, Gallerie dell'Accademia) and *Doge Alvise Mocenigo and Family before the Virgin and Child* (c. 1575, National Gallery of Art). On loan outside of Italy for the first time, *The Madonna of the Treasurers* is one of Tintoretto's most impressive contributions to the genre for its masterful combination of figures, vivid individual portraits, and dynamic brushwork, seen particularly in the crimson robes of the three treasurers.

Subsequent galleries feature additional commissions won by Tintoretto, including the most iconic of the surviving canvases created for the Scuola della Trinità, *The Creation of the Animals* (1550/by 1553, Gallerie dell'Accademia). *The Last Supper*, perhaps the greatest of Tintoretto's representations of the subject, was created in 1563/1564 for the Church of San Trovaso, which is sending this work to North America for the first time. The monumental canvas exemplifies Tintoretto's skill at depicting the human figure in energetic poses—each apostle twists, turns, gestures, or leans in a different direction. Another highlight of the exhibition is one of the two surviving *modelli* Tintoretto made in preparation for his most prominent commission, *Paradiso*. While still quite large, the *modello* is significantly smaller than the final work, which, stretching 23 feet high and 72 feet wide, is considered the largest old master oil painting in the world. The *modello* is the culmination of his studies of the human figure throughout his career—dozens of figures fill nearly every inch of the composition, each depicted in a unique pose.

One of the final galleries of the exhibition draws together mythological subjects, including *The Nine Muses* (c. 1578, The Royal Collection/Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II), *The Wedding of Ariadne and Bacchus* (1578, Palazzo Ducale), and *The Abduction of Helen* (c. 1576/1577, Museo Nacional del Prado). Another presents masterpieces of religious painting created toward the end of his life. All are on loan from the sites for which they were originally commissioned: *The Virgin Mary Reading* and *The Virgin Mary in Meditation* (c. 1582/1583, Sala Terrena, Scuola Grande di San Rocco), *The Entombment of Christ* (1594, Church of San Giorgio Maggiore), and *The Baptism of Christ* (c. 1580, Church of San Silvestro). These four are installed under the watchful eye of his late *Self-Portrait* (c. 1588, Musée du Louvre).

## Exhibition Catalog

Available in both English and Italian, a fully illustrated catalog accompanying the exhibition, copublished by the Gallery and Yale University Press, includes a range of essays by the curators and other leading scholars as well as new research and scientific studies of Tintoretto's work. Featuring over 200 color illustrations, the 336-page catalog is available in hardcover in English and Italian at [shop.nga.gov](http://shop.nga.gov), or by calling (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; faxing (202) 789-3047; or emailing [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

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## Exhibition Film

Created for the exhibition, this 30-minute film narrated by Stanley Tucci surveys the career and times of Tintoretto, and includes original footage of the monumental paintings by the artist that remain in situ in the churches and palaces of Venice. A 15-minute version will be on view in the exhibition; the full film will be shown in the West Building Lecture Hall in alternation with a 7-minute film on the artist's paintings for the Scuola Grande di San Marco. Both films are available on a free-loan basis through the department of education by visiting [nga.gov/education/teachers/video.html](http://nga.gov/education/teachers/video.html). A DVD that pairs the original English version with an Italian version is also available for purchase at [shop.nga.gov](http://shop.nga.gov), or by calling (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; faxing (202) 789-3047; or emailing [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov). The film was made possible by the HRH Foundation.

## Related Programs

### Lecture

*Introduction to the Exhibition – Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice*

March 24, 2:00 p.m.

East Building Auditorium

Robert Echols, independent scholar, and Frederick Ilchman, chair of the Art of Europe department and Mrs. Russell W. Baker Curator of Paintings, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. A signing of the exhibition catalog follows.

### Concert

*Tomb Sonnets*

Parthenia with Ryland Angel, countertenor

March 17, 3:30 p.m.

West Building, West Garden Court

In celebration of the 500th anniversary of Tintoretto's birth, Parthenia and guest vocalist Ryland Angel offer sublime works for voice and viols by Italian Renaissance masters from the age of the sonnet. Composers include Luca Marenzio, Philippe Verdelot, Jacques Arcadelt, Cipriano de Rore, Girolamo Frescobaldi, and Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli—uncle and nephew whose composing skills were honed in Venice and defined the era's style. The program also features Martin Kennedy's song cycle, *Tomb Sonnets* (2014), for viol consort and countertenor, which explores poetic studies of death and burial in sonnets by Petrarch, Keats, and Longfellow.

## 16th-Century Italian Paintings Online Edition

In anticipation of *Tintoretto: Artist of Renaissance Venice*, the Gallery will launch an Online Edition of 16th-century Italian paintings, beginning with entries on works by Titian, Tintoretto, and Paolo Veronese from the Gallery's permanent collection. Compiled by Robert Echols, exhibition co-curator,

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and Peter Humfrey, emeritus professor in the School of Art History at the University of Saint Andrews, entries incorporate new technical and conservation information, explore questions of authorship, and delve deeper into highlights by each artist. Supplemented by artist biographies, bibliographies, exhibition histories, and provenance, the entries are essential reading for scholars and students of Italian painting.

NGA Online Editions provide free and open access to featured collections and include introductions by curators, illustrated scholarly entries (each preceded by a short overview), biographies of the artists, technical summaries, a complement of related essays, and rich media. Additional features include a customized reading environment where users can view scholarly text alongside images, notes, and comparative figures; an image-comparison tool that enables users to view primary and comparative images side by side or explore technical images via overlay and cross-fading techniques; and enhanced search capabilities. This Online Edition follows an earlier online volume focused on 13th- and 14th-century Italian paintings, and print volumes on 15th-, 17th-, and 18th-century Italian paintings.

**Press Contact:**

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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:

Department of Communications

National Gallery of Art

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### PRESS KIT

#### **Exhibition Press Release**

[Exhibition Checklist](#) (PDF 207 kb)

Related Exhibition Press Releases:

[Venetian Prints in the Time of Tintoretto](#)

[Drawing in Tintoretto's Venice](#)

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### ONLINE RESOURCES

#### **Exhibition Page**

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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)

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