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Brescia The Renaissance in Northern Italy

**Moretto, Savoldo,
Moroni, Raphael,
Titian, Lotto**

2/06 - 28/08/2016

Brescia. The Renaissance in Northern Italy

Moretto – Savoldo – Moroni. Raphael – Titian – Lotto

2 June – 28 August 2016

The exhibition “Brescia. The Renaissance in Northern Italy” set to open in June at the National Museum in Warsaw brings together nearly 50 paintings by **masters of the Northern Italian Renaissance**: works on loan from the Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo in Brescia, from the Accademia Carrara in Bergamo and from Italian private collections alongside a number of canvases by masters of the Lombard/Venetian cinquecento from Polish collections. A standout work serving as both a complement to the other pieces and a key part of the exhibition in its own right is **Raphael’s (1483-1520) *Christ Blessing***. Raphael, the youngest member of the Italian Renaissance “big three” consisting of himself, Leonardo and Michelangelo, was considered a “divine” painter, his output becoming symbolic of the harmony in Renaissance art and a benchmark of painting perfection. The exhibition invites visitors to compare the work of this great master with the paintings of his contemporaries active in Northern Italy. The exhibition’s presentation, designed by the eminent theatre set designer **Boris Kudlička**, was envisioned by the exhibition’s creators as having a particularly significant role: to help visitors in identifying and understanding the sources and chief premises of Northern Italian Renaissance painting.

From the early 16th century, Venice and other cities of the Veneto and Lombardy regions waged a battle for the supremacy of their painting style – distinct yet still in the shadow of the Tuscan-Roman tradition. Inspiration drawn from the work of the three icons of Renaissance painting and the constant dialogue with them quickly brought magnificent results, with **Northern Italian painting growing to become one of the most original and fascinating phenomena in all of European art**. At the turn of the 16th century, the region saw the meeting and intermingling of a diverse range of artistic tendencies flowing in from Southern Italy and from the north of Europe. Rising to become important artistic centres were several cities within the Venice-controlled *terraferma*, i.e. dry land, such as Ferrara, Bergamo and Brescia, whose art drew equally upon the cultures of Milan and Venice. These cities became fertile ground for the interaction and eventual marriage of manifold artistic formulae. The richness of the Northern Italian masters’ colours, their fluid lines and their airy and vibrant compositions owe as much to the legacy of Leonardo as to the artistic environment of the Serenissima. The paintings gathered in the exhibition are above all **a tremendous homage to the great painting tradition of Lombardy**, in which the fundamental principle was *verosimiglianza* – faithfulness to the truth, and thus, **a commitment to the veracity of the rendered details**. With their conscientious observation of reality, balance and realism, as well as their potent expressiveness, artists like Vincenzo Foppa

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(c. 1430-1515/16), Romanino (1484/87-1560), Alessandro Bonvicino, called Moretto (c. 1498-1554) and Girolamo Savoldo (c. 1480/85-after 1548) plotted a course for new and unique explorations. These pursuits would find their fullest fruition in the work of Caravaggio, who, despite being active for most of his life in Rome and Southern Italy, was in fact a son of the fog-drenched plains of the Italian North. It was precisely to the Tenebrism (from the Latin *tenebrae* – darkness) so characteristic of 16th-century Lombardy that Caravaggio owes his high-contrast expressiveness and masterful illusion blurring the boundaries between the real and the imagined.

A real feast for the eyes awaits in the exhibition's selection of 16th-century portraits, many of which seldom travel beyond their native Italy. These are works which have no equals in all of painting history. Their pure poses, unambiguous gestures, and expressive facial features continue to enchant generation after generation of art lovers. Lombard portraiture masters keep all that is superfluous to a minimum, extracting the deepest character of the sitter. The **rich gallery of likenesses by Titian, Lotto, Moretto, Moroni, Savoldo, Tintoretto and the Cremona school masters** (Campi and Anguissola) demonstrates that these works represent a meticulous and very revealing study of the subjects' psyche as well as being a bold display of artistic virtuosity. The paintings of Savoldo, the most refined of the 16th-century Brescia painters, wonderfully reflect the diversity of textures in the glistening silks, supple wools and coarse stone; their exquisiteness consequently elevating them to the rank of nearly standalone motifs in the master's compositions. He made use of a rich range of colours while also employing some extraordinary lighting effects. At the National Museum in Warsaw, visitors will have the chance to view Savoldo's greatest masterpiece – the *Portrait of a Man with a Flute* from the Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo in Brescia.

The exhibition offers a broader look at the very phenomenon of the Northern Italian Renaissance by demonstrating the diversity of the era's artistic attitudes and the breathtaking richness of its stylistic and conceptual techniques, all the while noting the love for simplicity and order shared by the like-minded artists.

The exhibition is organised under the Honorary Patronage of the President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda and the President of the Republic of Italy Sergio Mattarella by the National Museum in Warsaw in partnership with Fondazione Brescia Musei and STart. The supplementary programme is organised in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Italy and the Italian Institute of Culture in Warsaw. The exhibition patrons are PKN Orlen and PKO Bank Polski. The exhibition partner is LOTTO.

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Exhibition curated by:

Joanna Kilian – curator of the Italian painting collection and a long-time member of the National Museum in Warsaw's research staff. Author of numerous publications and co-creator of many exhibitions, including *Transalpinum* and *Serenissima. The Light of Venice*. She curated the exhibition *Caravaggio. Masterpieces from the Vatican Pinacoteca*. In collaboration with Fausto Gozzi, she produced the 2013 exhibition *Guercino. The Triumph of the Baroque. Masterpieces from Cento, Rome and Polish Collections*, also designed by Boris Kudlička.

Exhibition designed by:

Boris Kudlička – in 1995, he began working with Teatr Wielki–National Opera in Warsaw as an assistant to Andrzej Kreutz-Majewski. In 1996, he started creating his own set designs, mainly for opera productions, working with Europe's leading directors. Since 1999, he has worked with Mariusz Trelński on a number of operas—including *Madame Butterfly*, *King Roger*, *Don Giovanni*, *Eugene Onegin*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Andrea Chénier*, *La Bohème*, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, *Boris Godunov*, *Iolanta*, *Bluebeard's Castle*, *Alek*, *La Traviata*, *Turandot*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Salome* and *Powder Her Face*—mainly for Teatr Wielki–National Opera in Warsaw but also for other prestigious operatic stages worldwide (in places like New York City, Frankfurt, Berlin, Tokyo, St. Petersburg, Washington, Los Angeles, Tel Aviv, Bratislava, Prague, Brussels and Valencia). Productions featuring his set designs have been shown at the opera festivals in Edinburgh, Hong Kong and Tokyo. He and Andrzej Kreutz-Majewski also collaborated on the design of the Polish pavilion for Expo 2000 in Hanover and on the interior design for the Polish pavilion at Expo 2010 in Shanghai (working with the WWAA architectural firm). Exhibition design occupies an important place in his work. He is a winner of many awards and distinctions.

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