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THE FRICK COLLECTION

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STUNNING AND UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO VIEW ALLEGORIES BY VERONESE TOGETHER

Veronese's Allegories: Virtue, Love, and Exploration in Renaissance Venice

April 11, 2006, through July 16, 2006



Paolo Veronese, *The Choice Between Virtue and Vice*, c. 1565, oil on canvas, 219 x 169.5 cm, The Frick Collection, New York

This exhibition—the first in this country since 1988 devoted to the work of the Venetian Renaissance artist Paolo Veronese (c. 1528–1588)—explores a particular aspect of the artist's production by bringing together all five of the large-scale allegory paintings that are owned by American museums. The Frick Collection's canvases, *The Choice Between Virtue and Vice* and *Wisdom and Strength*, inspired this dossier exhibition. Joining these masterworks are three others on special loan to the institution: *Venus and Mars United by Love* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and *Allegory of Navigation with an Astrolabe* and *Allegory of Navigation with a Cross-Staff* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art). Installed in the Oval Room, these grandly scaled theatrical canvases will surround the viewer with sumptuously costumed, sensuous figures and provide the opportunity to view closely the vibrant brushwork and vivid colors that are the hallmarks of Veronese's mature style. Together, these five works will demonstrate Veronese's masterful ability to convey messages and ideas through allegorical devices. Comparing these paintings for the first time in an exhibition also challenges long-held assumptions about the works' dating, original commissions, and meanings. These are issues discussed in the exhibition's accompanying illustrated full-color catalogue that traces the history of the paintings, the different interpretations of their iconography, and their place within the artist's oeuvre. *Veronese's Allegories: Virtue, Love, and Exploration in Renaissance Venice* is being coordinated for the Frick by Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow Xavier F. Salomon in conjunction with Associate Curator Denise Allen. Major funding for the presentation has been provided by The Christian Humann

Foundation. Additional support has been provided by The Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation, Hester Diamond, The Helen Clay Frick Foundation, and the Fellows of The Frick Collection. The publication is made possible, in part, by Lawrence and Julie Salander.

Comments Chief Curator Colin B. Bailey, “The Veronese dossier exhibition will kick off an exciting group of presentations devoted to Italian art at the Frick in 2006. It provides visitors with an opportunity to focus on two of the grandest works in the Collection, which have been cleaned for this occasion and have undergone extensive technical examination. Our Mellon Fellow Xavier F. Salomon has done an exemplary job in discussing these paintings from various perspectives in his catalogue text, the most complete summary to date of scholarship on these works.” In October, the Frick presents *Cimabue and Early Devotional Painting* and *Domenico Tiepolo: A New Testament*.

OUTLANDISH, MAJESTIC, ORNATE, CHEERFUL

Paolo Veronese was born in Verona, but his fame is inextricably linked to the nearby city of Venice, where he moved in the early 1550s. During his prolific and highly successful career, Veronese produced more than three hundred works, ranging from complex fresco decorations of villas and palaces to large-scale altarpieces, smaller devotional paintings, portraits, and mythological, historical, and allegorical paintings in different formats. Throughout his life, Veronese was involved at different stages in the decoration of the Ducal Palace and of the church of San Sebastiano in Venice, both of which are considered among his masterpieces. Of the several villas he decorated, the most celebrated—and the only surviving example—is the Villa Barbaro at Maser, frescoed around 1560 with complex allegorical figures. Known for his grandiose and opulent pictures, Veronese was admired for his “outlandish and majestic Gods, grave characters, matrons full of graces and charm, kings dressed in rich adornments, the diversity of draperies, various military spoils, ornate architecture, cheerful plants, beautiful animals and many of these curiosities,” as the art historian Carlo Ridolfi wrote in 1648.

TRACING THE HISTORY OF FOUR ASSOCIATED WORKS: QUESTIONS RAISED

The Frick’s *Wisdom and Strength* (right) and *The Choice between Virtue and Vice* (see front page) present the viewer with subject matter that is meant to promote virtuous living, while *Venus and Mars United by Love* in The Metropolitan Museum of Art presents the all-conquering power of love. The three paintings, together with a fourth, *Hermes, Herse, and Aglauros* (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge), traveled together for centuries, and their presence in many highly distinguished collections makes them important for the history of collecting and display. They are first recorded together in Emperor Rudolf II’s inventory of the Castle of Prague in 1621. After the 1648 sack of Prague, they were taken by the conquering Swedes to



Paolo Veronese, *Wisdom and Strength*, c. 1565, oil on canvas, 214.6 x 167 cm, The Frick Collection, New York

Stockholm, where they entered the collection of Queen Christina of Sweden. After her abdication and conversion to Catholicism, she took the paintings with her to Rome. They subsequently passed through the collections of Cardinal Azzolini, the Odescalchi family, and the Duc d'Orléans, after which they went separate ways. *Venus and Mars United by Love* (below) was purchased by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1910, while the other two paintings—having been in Thomas Hope's collection in London—entered The Frick Collection in 1912. Owing to loan restrictions on the Fitzwilliam painting, the work cannot travel; therefore, this exhibition reunites three of the four canvases for the first time in more than two hundred years.



Paolo Veronese, *Venus and Mars United by Love*, 1570s, oil on canvas, 205.7 x 161 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

In 1913 the art historian Von Hadeln first proposed that the four paintings had been created as a coherent cycle for Emperor Rudolf II. The subsequent discovery of a document from 1567 in which the antiquarian Jacopo Strada listed the Frick paintings among possible acquisitions for Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria disproved this theory. It now seems unlikely that the four paintings were conceived as a series. Recent technical examination seems to indicate that even the two Frick paintings, always considered a pair in their own right, might in fact be two independent pictures. The three paintings in the exhibition, however, all share a similar vision.

WORKS FROM LOS ANGELES PRESENT ALLEGORY IN ANOTHER FORMAT

While these three paintings focus on topics such as virtue and love and represent them with multiple figures depicted on large canvases, the two allegories of navigation on loan from

the Los Angeles County Museum of Art present monumental individual figures isolated against an architectural background, holding nautical instruments. Possibly identifiable with historical characters, these two allegories were probably part of a set of four paintings representing different types of navigation. In a city such as Venice, with its strong seafaring interests, these pictures might have decorated the palace of an admiral or merchant or the seat of a maritime or mercantile public office. Unfortunately, their provenance—from a Scottish collection in the nineteenth century—provides little information about their original commission and destination.



Paolo Veronese, *Allegory of Navigation with an Astrolabe*, c. 1565, oil on canvas, 206 x 117 cm, Los Angeles County Museum of Art



Paolo Veronese, *Allegory of Navigation with a Cross-Staff*, c. 1565, oil on canvas, 206 x 117 cm, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

ANTICIPATION OF OPPORTUNITY TO DRAW FRESH CONCLUSIONS

Not only is the precise meaning of all five canvases unclear—as is the case with most of Veronese’s allegorical paintings—but issues such as their original commission and dating are also problematic. The patrons who commissioned these five works are unknown, although they were probably prominent members of the Venetian aristocracy. The Frick paintings can be dated to around 1565, thanks to documentary evidence, and the Los Angeles allegories are usually dated about that time. The painting from The Metropolitan Museum of Art is usually dated to the 1570s. In presenting these works together, the Frick’ exhibition will allow a side-by-side comparison of the paintings for the first time, inspiring new insights on dating and other points of discussion.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated publication that features a foreword by Chief Curator Colin B. Bailey as well as an essay by Andrew W. Mellon Fellow Xavier F. Salomon. *Veronese’s Allegories: Virtue, Love, and Exploration in Renaissance Venice* includes an extensive bibliography of references to the five canvases as well as the most complete review to date of the provenance material for these works. The softcover publication will be available in the Museum Shop of the Frick, on the institution’s Web site (www.frick.org), and by phone (212) 288-0700.

ABOUT THE FRICK COLLECTION AND FRICK ART REFERENCE LIBRARY

Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919), the coke and steel industrialist, philanthropist, and art collector, left his New York residence and his remarkable collection of Western paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts to the public “for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a gallery of art, [and] of encouraging and developing the study of fine arts and of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects.” Designed and built for Mr. Frick in 1913 and 1914 by Thomas Hastings of Carrère and Hastings, the mansion provides a grand domestic setting reminiscent of the noble houses of Europe for the masterworks from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century that it contains. Of special note are paintings by Bellini, Constable, Corot, Fragonard, Gainsborough, Goya, El Greco, Holbein, Ingres, Manet, Monet, Rembrandt, Renoir, Titian, Turner, Velázquez, Vermeer, Veronese, Whistler, and other masters. Mr. Frick’s superb examples of French eighteenth-century furniture, Italian Renaissance bronzes, and Limoges enamels bring a special ambience to the galleries, while the interior and exterior gardens and the amenities created since the founder’s time in the 1930s and 1970s contribute to the serenity of the visitor’s experience.

Renowned also for its small, focused exhibitions and for its highly regarded concert series and lectures, The Frick Collection also operates the Frick Art Reference Library, founded by Henry Clay Frick’s daughter, Miss Helen Clay Frick, located in an adjoining building at 10 East 71st Street. Both a research library and a photo archive, the Frick Art Reference Library is one of the world’s great repositories of documents for the study of Western art. It has served the international art world for more than seventy-five years.

BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: (212) 288-0700

Website: www.frick.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

Where: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue.

Hours: open six days a week: 10am to 6pm on Tuesdays through Saturdays; 11am to 5pm on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (11am to 5pm) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day.

Admission: \$15; senior citizens \$10; students \$5; "pay as you wish" on Sundays from 11am to 1pm

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection, and those under sixteen must be accompanied by an adult.

Subway: #6 local (on Lexington Avenue) to 68th Street station; **Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70th Street

Tour Information: included in the price of admission is an Acoustiguide INFORM® Audio Tour of the permanent collection, provided by Acoustiguide. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Museum Shop: the shop is open the same days as the Museum, closing fifteen minutes before the institution.

Group Visits: Please call (212) 288-0700 for details and to make reservations.

Public Programs: A calendar of events is published regularly and is available upon request.

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For further press information, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Manager of Media Relations & Marketing, or Geetha Natarajan, Media Relations & Marketing Coordinator

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