

MEDIA CONTACTS

Amanda Hicks - ahicks@artic.edu - 312.443.7297
Wesley Julian - wjulian@artic.edu - 312.443.3758

EMBARGOED UNTIL:

June 30, 2016 – 12:00PMCT



THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO ACQUIRES NEWLY DISCOVERED HIGH RENAISSANCE PAINTING, *CHRIST CARRYING THE CROSS*, BY ITALIAN MASTER SEBASTIANO DEL PIOMBO

Contemporary of Titian and Follower of Michelangelo, Sebastiano del Piombo

Defined Excellence in 16th Century Painting in Rome

CHICAGO—The Art Institute of Chicago announced today the exciting acquisition of Sebastiano del Piombo's *Christ Carrying the Cross* (1515/1517) to strengthen its focused collection of Italian High Renaissance painting. The first major discovery of a work by Sebastiano in recent years, it was brought to light by Colnaghi, the renowned London-based art gallery, who facilitated its transition to the museum's world-class collection. It represents one of the most popular compositions by one of the most distinguished painters working in Rome in the first half of the 16th century. Celebrated by the founding voice of art history, Giorgio Vasari, and given major commissions by Pope Clement VII, Sebastiano was hailed both in his time and beyond as a master of inventive painting who reimagined the monumentality and power of Michelangelo's style, and the grace and balance of Raphael's.

“We couldn’t be more thrilled to have this rare and wonderful opportunity to bring such an important painting—our first by Sebastiano—into the Art Institute’s permanent collection,” shared Gloria Groom, Chair of European Painting and Sculpture and David and Mary Winton Green Curator. “This acquisition affirms that through the extraordinary support of our generous donors, we can take our reputation for excellence in collecting to the next level, and tell a more creative and complete story in the galleries that feels exciting and relevant to our thousands of visitors to the museum each day.”

Jorge Coll, CEO of Colnaghi offered, “It was very exciting to have discovered this lost work by such an important Renaissance master, and it is extremely satisfying to know that it now belongs in one of the most important and visited museums in the world. It is of the utmost importance for Nicolas (Cortés) and me as the new partners in Colnaghi that we continue the company’s long and storied tradition of placing important works of art in the world’s greatest museums. This painting was the subject of the first of our new series of publications called ‘Colnaghi Studies’ – catalogues written by leading scholars in order to shed light on lesser known artists and unknown works of art – and we hope that there will be many more works from the ‘Studies’ series that find such prestigious homes in the future.”

Sebastiano developed the innovative composition for *Christ Carrying the Cross* to heighten the emotional charge of the image. The painting’s dramatic visual impact comes through in the monumental figures and their poignant expressions, the powerful diagonals of the cross, the dynamic and sculptural effect of Christ’s drapery, and the luminous landscape background. The popularity of the composition led Sebastiano to paint several versions and variations of the subject—the Art Institute joins the Museo del Prado, Madrid; Hermitage, Saint Petersburg; and the Szépművészeti Museum, Budapest in sharing Sebastiano’s iconic invention with audiences from all over the world.

The painting, now on view in Gallery 205 within the Art Institute’s world-class collection of European Painting and Sculpture, offers visitors a new and exciting opportunity to understand a richer and more inclusive story of Renaissance art and is poised to educate and inspire our visitors for generations to come.

Image: Sebastiano del Piombo. *Christ Carrying the Cross*, 1515/1517. The Art Institute of Chicago. Lacy Armour, Ada Turnbull Hertle, Mary Swissler Oldberg Acquisition, Charles H. and Mary F. Worcester Collection funds; Wirt D. Walker Trust; Alyce and Edwin DeCosta and the Walter E. Heller Foundation Fund; Estate of Walter Aitken; Frederick W. Renshaw Acquisition, Marian and Samuel Klasstorner funds; Edward E. Ayer Fund in Memory of Charles L. Hutchinson; Lara T. Magnuson Acquisition, Director’s funds; Samuel A. Marx Purchase Fund for Major Acquisitions; Edward Johnson, Maurice D. Galleher Endowment, Simeon B. Williams, Capital Campaign General Acquisitions, Wentworth Greene Field Memorial, Samuel P. Avery, Morris L. Parker, Irving and June Seaman Endowment, and Betty Bell Spooner funds.

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About the Art Institute of Chicago (www.artic.edu)

The Art Institute of Chicago, founded in 1879, is a world-renowned art museum housing one of the largest permanent collections in the United States. An encyclopedic museum, the Art Institute collects, preserves, and interprets works in every medium from all cultures and historical periods. With a collection of approximately 300,000 art works and artifacts, the museum has particularly strong holdings in Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting, contemporary art, early 20th century European painting and sculpture, Japanese prints, and photography. The museum's 2009 addition, the Modern Wing, features the latest in green museum technology and 264,000 square feet dedicated to modern and contemporary art, photography, architecture and design, and new museum education facilities. In addition to displaying its permanent collection, the Art Institute mounts more than 30 special exhibitions per year and features lectures, gallery tours, and special performances on a daily basis.

About Colnaghi (www.colnaghi.com):

Founded in 1760, Colnaghi is one of the world's most renowned galleries and a leading destination for European Old Master paintings and sculpture. Colnaghi has a longstanding tradition of selling works of art to international museums and private collectors worldwide. In October 2015, Colnaghi entered a new chapter as Konrad Bernheimer, Chairman of the 255-year-old company, announced a merger with Coll & Cortés, a leading dealership specialised in Spanish sculpture and painting and arts from the Spanish-speaking world. Later this year, Colnaghi will relocate to a larger, custom-built gallery in St. James's, where they will present international Old Master paintings and sculptures in a fresh context suited to the 21st century. The company's celebrated and treasured library will sit at the heart of the building. The Coll & Cortés gallery in Madrid will continue to operate under that name.