Virtual Visit to the NSW Art Gallery





Bartolomeo di Giovanni

Italy, active c1475-1501

Saint John the Baptist 1475-1500

tempera, oil and gold on panel

Purchased 2005

The artist is recorded working as an assistant to Ghirlandaio in 1488 and is known to have collaborated with Botticelli. He was mainly a painter of small scale narrative pictures. This work is almost certainly the left wing from a triptych or larger altarpiece. It comes from the important British Victorian collection of Italian Renaissance paintings assembled by the Drury-Lowe family at Locko Park in Derbyshire.







Spring

c. 1480

"Tempera grassa" on wood Inventory 1890 no. 8360

While mystery continues to shroud the composition's overall significance, the painting is unquestionably a celebration of love, peace and prosperity. There are 138 different species of plant that have been identified, each one of which Botticelli has meticulously reproduced, possibly using a herbal. In the late 15th century the painting was housed in the palace in Florence belonging to Lorenzo the Magnificent's cousins.

Rehung thanks to the Friends of Florence Foundation using a donation from Michael and Sandy Collins







detto BOTTICELLI

1445-1510

The Birth of Venus

c. 1485

Tempera on canvas Inventory 1890 no. 878

The Birth of Venus captures the moment when the goddess of love and beauty, born of the sea foam and propelled by the winds, reaches the island of Cyprus. Botticelli sought his inspiration in the models of classical antiquity for Venus' modest pose as she attempts to cover her charms with her long blond hair.

The painting is known to have been hanging in the Medici Villa di Castello in 1550.

Rehung thanks to the Friends of Florence Foundation using a donation from Kent Thiry and Denise O'Leary



Sano di Pietro

Italy 1405-81

Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome, John the Baptist, Bernardino and Bartholomew 1450-81

gold leaf and tempera on poplar panel

Gift of John Fairfax and Sons Ltd 1971

This work was painted in Siena in a traditional and somewhat outmoded technique. The poplar panel was first primed with gesso before being gilded and tooled, and then painted using a medium of tempera (pigment bound with egg yolk). In the Christ Child's robe (and some other areas) paint has been applied over gold and scraped away in a technique known as sgraffito. The frame is modern; the original frame would have been an integral part of the object.



Francesco di Simone Ferrucci

Italy 1437-93

Madonna and Child c1480s

marble

Purchased 1971

Ferrucci was a pupil of Desiderio da Settignano and Andrea del Verrocchio. He may have worked as an assistant to Verrocchio in the 1470s (at approximately the time that Leonardo da Vinci was Verrocchio's apprentice). The serene figure of the Virgin is inherited from Desiderio while the naturalistic treatment of the slightly impish Christ Child seems dependent on Verrocchio. Holes in the marble suggest that the figures once had gilded metal haloes as well as those sculpted in relief.



Jacques Blanchard

France 1600-38

Mars and the vestal virgin c1637-38

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds resulting from a gift by James Fairfax AC and with the support of the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales 2007

The vestal virgin Rhea Silvia was discovered asleep in a wood by Mars, the God of War. The consequence was the birth of the twins Romulus and Remus, founders of Rome. This painting is one of the finest surviving examples of an artist famous in his day as the 'French Titian'. The sensuousness of Blanchard's art looks forward to that of Boucher in the eighteenth century.



Jan van Bijlert

Netherlands 1597/98?-1671

Girl with a flute c1630

oil on canvas

Purchased 1967

This work belongs to a period after Van Bijlert's return in 1624 to his native Utrecht after a stay in Rome, where in common with other Utrecht artists such as Honthorst and Ter Brugghen, he had been influenced by the work of Caravaggio. The picture had a pendant (present whereabouts unknown) of a cheerful young man tuning his lute. Music-making and musical accompaniment were frequently taken at the period as alluding to amorous activity.





Nicolò dell'Abate

Italy 1509-71

Portrait of a gentleman with a falcon

c1548-50

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales Foundation Purchase 1991

Dell'Abate is better known for the fresco decorations he completed for the French court at Fontainebleau where he moved in 1522. This painting is one of a small group of portraits dating from the period the artist was still working in his native Modena. It depicts a North Italian aristocrat whose haughty demeanour is emphasized by his averted gaze. His imposing body completely fills the canvas in a way typical of Italian Mannerist portraiture during the 1540s. The art of falconry, indicated here by the tethered bird of prey perched on the sitter's gloved hand, was a popular sport among the nobility of northern Italy.



Frans II Pourbus

Belgium 1569-1622

Portrait of a man c1610-20

oil on canvas

Purchased 1961

The fashion-conscious and certainly aristocratic sitter has not been identified. A clue might have been given by the medallion hanging at his side, but this appears to have been defaced and repainted. A highly successful court portrait painter Pourbus worked for the Gonzaga court at Mantua before settling in Paris in 1609. From the costume and hair style this work seems likely to date from his time in Paris.



Sir Peter Paul Rubens

Belgium 1577-1640

Self-portrait 1623

oil on canvas

Kindly lent by the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

One of two self-portraits painted by Rubens in 1623: the other is in the British Royal Collection. This version was painted for Rubens's friend, the French scholar Peiresc. The artist shows himself in full court dress the image of a man who began life as a courtier and whose skill and learning earned him privileged access to the potentates of Europe. When it was engraved in 1630 this became the official image of Europe's most successful painter.



Sir Peter Paul Rubens

Belgium 1577-1640

The presentation in the temple

c1632-33

oil on oak panel

The Estate of James O Fairfax

Rubens painted this oil panel to serve as a model for an engraving by Paulus Pontius in 1638. A companion picture The Visitation, is now in the Narodni Galerie, Prague.

Both compositions relate to earlier renditions of the same themes which formed the wings of the large triptych,

Descent from the Cross, painted for the Antwerp

Cathedral in 1612–14. The grouping of the central figures is similar in pose but less crowded than in the Antwerp

Presentation, whereas the peripheral figures of the present work are new inventions.



Ary de Vois

Utrecht 1632/35 - Leiden 1680

The merry fiddler 1660-80

This slovenly drinker holds a fiddle.
Could he be a travelling musician, who has squandered the money he just earned at the inn? This kind of scene would have struck people as comical, but would also have been admired: details such as the full glass and the hand with dirty fingernails testify to Ary de Vois' talent for representing texture.



Jacob Ochtervelt

Rotterdam 1634 - Amsterdam 1682

The players 1665-70

of 17th-century life. Here, a young boy plays a hurdy-gurdy to the accompaniment of his older companion on the bagpipes. The setting is a refined interior; the adults of the household instruct the little girl to offer a coin for the entertainment – a lesson in the virtue of charity.



Gerard Dou

Leiden 1613 - Leiden 1675

Old woman reading c1631-32

This painting is done with incredible precision. Gerard Dou perfectly evokes the textures of the woman's skin, the soft fur trim of her clothing and also the Bible in her hands. It is so detailed that even the page can be identified: the book is open at Luke 19, to a passage about giving goods to the poor – perhaps a fitting lesson for the richly dressed woman. Dou was one of the best-paid artists in the Netherlands around 1650.

oil on panel

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam AH Hoekwater Bequest, The Hogue, 1912

Str. America



Jan de Bray

Haarlem 1626/28 - Amsterdam 1697

Judith and Holofernes 1659

According to the apocryphal Bible story, the beautiful young widow Judith managed to slay the army commander Holofernes while he slept, and so saved her city. Painters usually portray the beheading itself or the moment right after, with all of the horrors this entails. But not Jan de Bray; he painted the resolute Judith raising the sword, while her maidservant looks on tensely.

oil on canvas

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam Purchased 1908

SK-A-2353



Aelbert Jansz van der Schoor

Utrecht before 1603 – Utrecht after 1672

Vanitas still life c1660-65

Displayed here like precious objects are six human skulls, a jaw and some bones, all depicted from a different angle. This still life reminds us of our mortality. To underscore this message, Aelbert Jansz van der Schoor included yet a few more vanitas symbols: an hourglass, a nearly burnt-down candle, and two roses that will soon wither and lose their beauty.

oil on canvas Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam Purchased 1886

SK-A-1342



Pieter Claesz

Berchem 1597/98 - Haarlem 1660

Vanitas still life with the Spinario 1628

We seem to be peeking into a painter's workshop, for all manner of artists' attributes are visible. Along with a sketchbook and a palette with paintbrushes is a plaster cast of the famous classical sculpture *Lo Spinario* ('the thorn-puller'). Other objects, however, like the timepiece and the human skull and bones, make it clear that the painting's central theme is the passing of time.

oil on panel Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam Purchased 1958

SK-A-3930



Paul Bril

Belgium, Italy c1554-1626

A wooded landscape with a bridge and sportsmen at the edge of a river

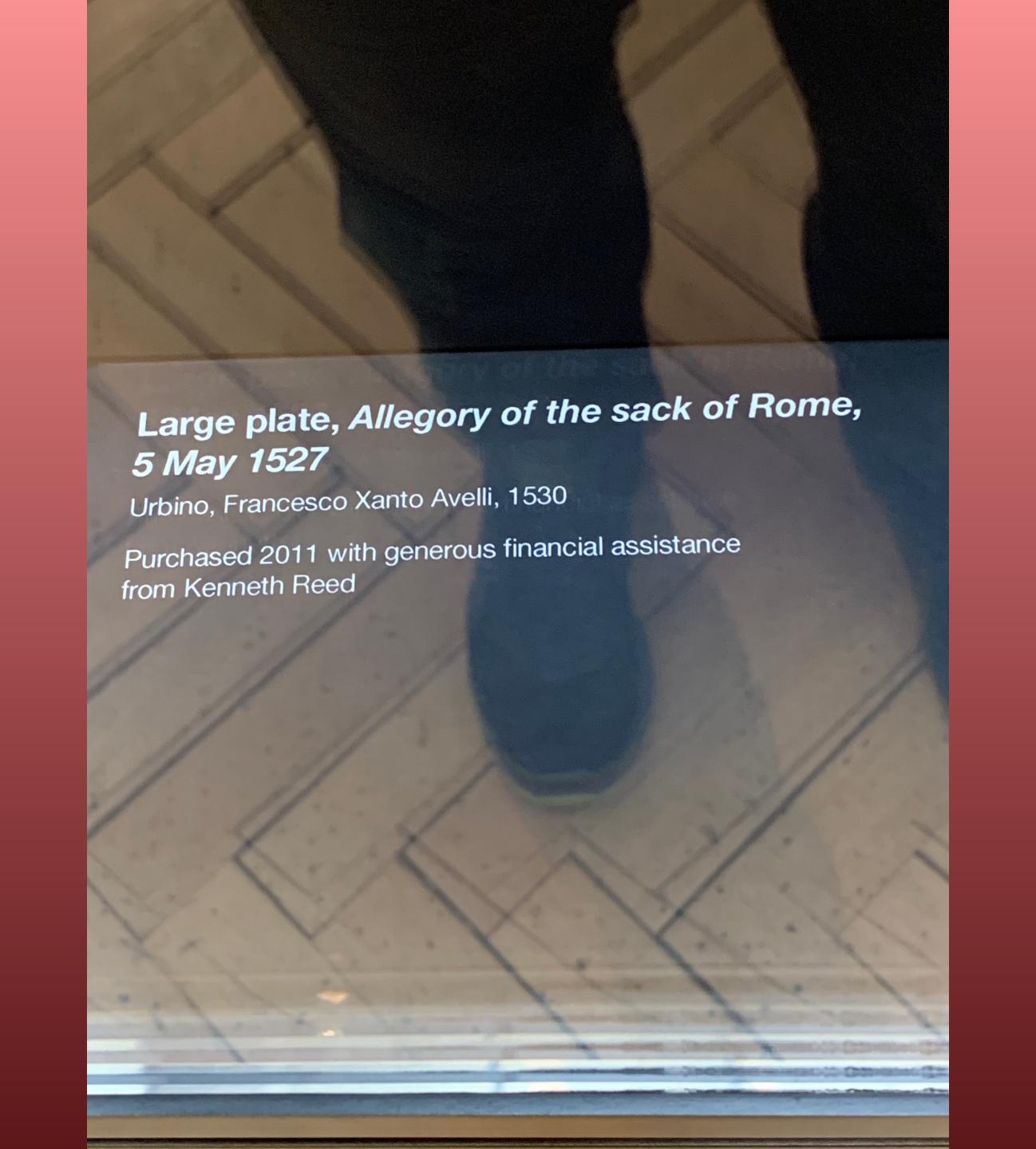
c1595

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds provided by the Sinclair-Gillies Fund and Sam Hughes Fund 1998

Paul Bril was an Antwerp artist who from 1576 made his career in Rome as one of the first landscape specialists. According to a label on the back, this work still hung in the 18th century in an unidentified Roman palace in the 'second antechamber next to the gallery overlooking the courtyard'. Like most landscapes paintings at this date the picture would have performed a decorative function, to which its extravagantly contrived and colourful composition was well suited.





This remarkable object is one of the most impressive of all surviving examples of Italian renaissance maiolica. With its composition of 26 figures it possibly ranks as the most ambitious pictorial treatment of a ceramic object produced anywhere in the world to that date. It is significant that the ceramic painter has not copied the work of another artist, but has invented his own (highly topical) composition.

The sack of Rome was the world-shattering terrorist event of the renaissance period. On the reverse of this plate the artist refers to '5 May' as we might '9/11'. On the front he gives the year, 1527, in which German troops sacked and pillaged the Holy City forcing the Pope into humiliating imprisonment in his own Castel Sant'Angelo. Coming on top of the attacks of Martin Luther, the event spelt the end of an era in Christendom.

Xanto disputes with Nicola da Urbino the title of the greatest of maiolica painters. While Nicola is sometimes called the Raphael of maiolica, Xanto has been compared with Michelangelo. His vigorous, crowded composition, with its distortions of scale and space, shares something of the tortured language of Michelangelo's iconic *Last Judgement* begun just six years after this plate was painted.

This is the first of Xanto's works fully inscribed on the back with the artist's name, the date and an extended description of the subject. Although the allegory is elusive, the figures of Bacchus and Venus must refer to the drunkenness and lasciviousness of the Holy City. On the right St Peter, Christ's vicar and the first Pope, stands precariously on an orb. The stability of the Christian world is under threat.

I di quito di margio La ci 8 Spani T col fanor di Ginnon envaro I Borna alber pierro & Bacco nelle mani Franko, And: Rouis.

On 5 May, with the favour of Juno, the landsknechts and Spaniards entered Rome and held Peter and Bacchus at their mercy

History

Francesco Xanto Avelli of Rovigo painted it in Urbino

1530





