For Immediate Release

From Italian velvets to Spanish landscapes, six new acquisitions at Minneapolis Institute of Art contribute to the breadth and depth of Mia’s collection

June 4, 2024

MINNEAPOLIS — The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) has acquired six new works, adding to the museum’s extensive European and pre-Modern American art holdings, while diversifying further with artists and artworks that bring different approaches to their medium. These six works are: a rare pair of Italian velvet panels, dating from c. 1575-1600; Pier Francesco Mola’s Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata; Saint Francis Praying in a Landscape (c. 1650-55), painted on marble and, after almost 400 years, reunited with its preparatory drawing; Ramón Tusquets y Maignon’s The Harvest, Roman Countryside (1871); and Lockwood de Forest’s Lone Felucca at Dusk near Roda along the Nile (c. 1876) along with its accompanying study sketch.

“These extraordinary acquisitions showcase the incredible skill and creativity of artists across time and place, while providing our visitors the opportunity to explore the fascinating connections and exchanges between cultures,” said Matthew Welch, Mia’s Mary Ingebrand-Pohlad Deputy Director and Chief Curator. “From the exquisite craftsmanship of the Italian velvet panels, which bear the influence of Ottoman design, to the evocative landscapes of Ramón Tusquets y Maignon and Lockwood de Forest, these works invite us to contemplate the ways in which art transcends boundaries and enriches our understanding of the world. Together with Pier Francesco Mola’s hauntingly beautiful depiction of Saint Francis, these masterpieces greatly enhance our collections.”

About these new acquisitions:

Pier Francesco Mola’s (1612-1666) Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata (c. 1650-55) is an unusual work for being painted on marble, but it exemplifies the artist’s mastery of devotional scenes and lush landscapes. Mola, a Swiss-born artist active in Italy, was known for his religious paintings and skillful brush drawings. His family moved from Coldrerio to Rome when he was a young boy, and he trained under the renowned Cavaliere d’Arpino before spending extended periods in northern Italy, where he was influenced by the works of the well-regarded painters Francesco Albani and Guercino. The most successful period of Mola’s career was after his return to Rome in 1647, when he received a number of major religious and fresco commissions from the papal family while continuing to produce highly prized cabinet pictures.

This painting, and its related preparatory drawing, Saint Francis Praying in a Landscape (c. 1650), offer a rare opportunity to reunite two related works that have been separated for nearly 400 years. The painting has an illustrious provenance,
For Immediate Release

coming from the Barberini collection in Rome—the seventh painting from this important collection to be acquired by Mia, along with one sculpture and nine tapestries. Mola’s spare and focused drawing explores the essential details of the composition, underscoring the emotion of the scene. When he started the painting, Mola rethought Francis’s pose—and depicts the presence of the divine with a burst of light breaking through the cloudy sky to touch the saint, both metaphorically as a vision and physically with the stigmata. The artist skillfully exploited the golden undertones of the marble to emphasize the mystical quality of the scene.

Ramón Tusquets y Maignon’s (1837-1904) The Harvest, Roman Countryside (1871) is an iconic work in the artist’s oeuvre, exemplifying his deep fascination with the daily lives of laborers in the rural communities surrounding Rome. The painting was exhibited at the 1871 Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes in Madrid, where it received significant praise from critics who attributed Tusquets’ success to his Spanish artistic heritage and his profound understanding of Italian culture and art. Of particular note to critics of the time were the artist’s use of color, and the diaphanous light and soft atmosphere of the composition as a whole.

A Spanish-born artist who spent the majority of his career in Italy, Tusquets immersed himself in the Roman countryside during the 1870s. But despite living in Italy since 1865, Tusquets maintained strong ties to his native Spain, regularly sending works to be exhibited in Barcelona and Madrid—as was the case with this painting—and cultivating relationships with Spanish collectors of the day, which helped ensure both his visibility and his importance among the artists of the period.

The rare pair of Italian velvet panels, dating from c. 1575-1600, acquired by Mia are exceptional representations of the highpoint in 16th-century Italian textile production. Crafted from rich piled silk and precious metal thread, these types of textiles were highly sought after across Europe and the Ottoman Empire. The bold design of these Italian velvet panels, featuring large pomegranates set within a vibrant latticework of stylized flowers, reflects the direct influence of Ottoman textiles. However, the Italian aesthetic is evident in the unusual choice of an elegant icy blue for the ogival forms and the recurring crown motif. At the same time, the exceptional condition of these velvet panels—with their shimmering gilded metal thread and lush crimson velvet surface—creates a captivating depth and shadow that rivals any painting in its wall presence and opulence.

The centers of velvet production in Italy during this period were Venice, Florence, Genoa, and Milan, and their exquisite creations were not only exported throughout Europe but also to the Ottoman court. The mutual admiration between Italian and Ottoman weavers led to a fascinating exchange of styles and techniques, resulting in sophisticated works that fuse their traditions in new and original ways. Highlighting this interrelationship, Mia’s collection includes a magnificent Ottoman textile panel that will complement this pair of Italian panels, with similar crimson velvet woven with silver-gilt thread, and that dates to the late 16th century.

Lockwood de Forest’s (1850-1932) Lone Felucca at Dusk near Roda along the Nile (c. 1876) and its accompanying study drawing provide an important opportunity to explore the artist’s creative process and his fascination with capturing the changing colors of the landscape. De Forest was born into a prominent New York family and as a young man was mentored by Frederic Church, a central painter in the Hudson River School. After traveling extensively through Italy, the Middle East, North Africa, and India, de Forest moved away from painting to become an important and influential interior and furniture designer—and returning to painting again later in his life.
For Immediate Release

The painted sketch, created on January 7, 1876, perfectly matches de Forest’s diary description of his first-hand impression of the changing colors in the landscape as seen from the boat he was traveling in along the Nile. The sky dominates the composition, immersed in warm pink tones applied with fast and imprecise brushstrokes. The subsequent studio painting presents a more refined composition, with a single vertical element, a sailboat on the left, providing a sense of scale to the scene otherwise marked by horizontal elements: a large sand dune and a strip of vegetation at the banks of the river. The colors of the sky are reflected in the calm waters of the river, adding a nostalgic feeling to the composition, and underscore his commitment to capturing the ephemeral beauty of the landscapes he encountered during his travels.

Press Contacts

PAVE Communications & Consulting
Sascha D. Freudenheim
sascha@paveconsult.com
+1 917 544 6057

About the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Home to more than 100,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest art collections in the country—from all corners of the globe, and from ancient to contemporary—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

For more information, call +1 612 870 3000 or visit arts Mia.org

Lone Felucca at Dusk near Roda along the Nile Lockwood de Forest, c. 187. Oil on canvas. Gift of funds from Siri and Bob Marshall 2024.1.1.