

## Getty Museum acquires a Rembrandt self-portrait and a Venice painting by Canaletto

LOS ANGELES, CA.- The J. Paul Getty Museum announced today the acquisition of two exceptional European paintings—a recently rediscovered self-portrait by one of the most celebrated painters in history, Rembrandt, and a light-filled view of the Grand Canal by Canaletto, Venice's most influential painter. "It is extraordinary to be adding two such rare and outstanding works to the collection at the same time, each of which will greatly enhance what are already highly distinguished areas of our paintings collection," said Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "The Getty Museum possesses the most significant collection of early Rembrandts in the United States, and if you had asked what addition would best cap it off, the answer would have been a self-portrait, which many regard as his greatest and most sustained achievement.



The Grand Canal in Venice from Palazzo Flangini to Campo San Marcuola, about 1738. Giovanni Antonio Canal, known as Canaletto (Italian, 1697–1768). Oil on canvas. 18 1/2 x 30 5/8 in. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

But the chances of finding such a work seemed negligible—until the rediscovery of this painting in 2007. It is unquestionably one of the most remarkable works of art to become available in recent memory." "The Canaletto likewise is a tremendous addition to our growing collection of Italian view paintings," Potts continued. "This view of the Grand Canal is one of the artist's finest achievements in his signature style, and is in such pristine condition that the sunlit scene positively glistens. It represents the artist at the height of his powers and demonstrates the assured brilliance with which he captured Venice's colorful pageant of villas, gondolas and bustling merchant life." Rembrandt Rembrandt Laughing, about 1628, by Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669) is an early self-portrait, depicting the artist—who would have been about 22—dressed as a soldier, in deep violet and brown clothes and sporting a gleaming steel gorget. The young man leans back, smiles broadly and catches the viewer's eye. His animated features are captured in this spontaneous moment of lively exchange with expressive, short brushstrokes. Painted on copper, this small oil (8 3/4 x 6 5/8 inches) bears the artist's monogram, "RHL," which combines his name with Leiden, the city in which he was born and worked at the time. It is very well preserved and Rembrandt's vigorous, assured technique has lost none of its immediacy. "Painted when Rembrandt was a young, newly independent artist, possibly the third self-portrait of his career, Rembrandt Laughing exemplifies his signature spirited, confident handling of paint and natural ability to convey emotion," explains Scott Schaefer, senior curator of paintings at the Getty Museum. "It is a measure of the artist's consummate skill that the dynamism of his pose and the act of laughing translates into a painting of tremendous visual impact, far exceeding its modest dimensions. It is destined to become one of the Getty's signature paintings." Considered the greatest painter of the Dutch Golden Age, Rembrandt possessed a brilliant technique and unrivaled ability to capture the drama of life. His exploratory interest in the human character was expressed not only through the interpretation of diverse mythological and historical subjects, but through an exceptional number of self-portraits, a genre he transformed. Ranging from informal studies to elaborate fantasies and distinguished likenesses, Rembrandt's self-portraits are among his most



lauded works. After centuries in private collections, this painting emerged on the market in 2007. Previously known only through print reproductions, it had been attributed to a contemporary of Rembrandt. Scholarly analysis and scientific testing, made possible once the painting entered the public sphere, led many experts, including leading members of the Rembrandt Research Project, to re-attribute the work to Rembrandt himself. It was exhibited to the public for the first time, as a Rembrandt, at the Rembrandthuis Museum in 2008. Notably, of the nearly 40 self-portraits he painted in his life, Rembrandt Laughing is the first in which he depicts himself in evocative costume. Rembrandt Laughing will be exhibited in the East Pavilion among the Museum's four Rembrandt paintings (*An Old Man in Military Costume*, 1630–31; *The Abduction of Europa*, 1632; *Daniel and Cyrus before the Idol Bel*, 1633; *Saint Bartholomew*, 1661) and Rembrandt's superb *Portrait of a Girl Wearing a Gold-Trimmed Cloak* of 1632 (on long-term loan from a private collection), and in proximity to other small-scale Dutch paintings on copper and panel. Canaletto In the 18th century, Giovanni Antonio Canal, called Canaletto (Italian, 1697-1768), was the leading star among Venetian painters. Canaletto's sensitivity to atmospheric effects, coupled with precise perspective and keenly observed portrayals of daily life in his native Venice made him the city's most sought-after painters, especially with British noblemen visiting Venice on the Grand Tour. As it does today, the Grand Canal defined Canaletto's Venice and his paintings of this iconic waterway still profoundly evoke the bustle and romance of the Italian city. For *The Grand Canal in Venice from Palazzo Flangini to Campo San Marcuola* (18 1/2 x 30 5/8 inches), Canaletto selected a scene in the upper reaches of the Grand Canal, near the entrance of the Cannaregio Canal, with the viewer placed on a vessel in the middle of the waterway. Palazzo Flangini, bathed in sunlight, anchors the composition at left. Next to it, the lantern crowning the dome of the church of San Geremia juts out above the pale, unadorned frontage of the Scuola dei Morti, followed by the gabled rectory of San Geremia. Trees and shrubbery appearing over a garden wall mark the corner of the Grand Canal and the Cannaregio Canal, which branches off to the left. Throughout the scene, people go about the daily business of Venice: from a balcony, a female figure surveys the canal, while a nobleman in a wig stands in the doorway of the palace, either about to board or having just alighted from a gondola moored at the steps. According to Schaefer, "The Grand Canal in Venice from Palazzo Flangini to Campo San Marcuola is among Canaletto's most refined and elegant works. The exceptional state of preservation of this canvas affords a rare opportunity to appreciate all the subtleties of Canaletto's highly finished treatment at the peak of his powers, from the meticulously rendered architecture to the sparkling light." The painting joins another painting by Canaletto in the Museum's collection, the *Roman View of the Arch of Constantine with the Colosseum*, 1742–45. The Museum also owns two drawings by Canaletto. The *Grand Canal in Venice from Palazzo Flangini to Campo San Marcuola* will be exhibited together with Francesco Guardi's (Italian, 1712–1793) *The Grand Canal in Venice with Palazzo Bembo*, c. 1768 (acquired by the Museum in 2005). As one of the very finest small-scale works of his early maturity, the Getty's Guardi occupies a similar position in that artist's oeuvre that the Grand Canal scene occupies in Canaletto's. Both depict the same stretch of the Grand Canal at the mouth of the Cannaregio Canal; Guardi's view looks west, Canaletto's east, with several of the same buildings appearing in both. The two paintings are currently on view at the Getty Center in the South Pavilion (S203) of the Museum.