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THE ART NEWSPAPER

Galleria Borghese launches Caravaggio research centre—with a little help from Fendi

Roman museum aims to become the primary reference for scholarship on the artist

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Saint Jerome (around 1605), one of three works by Caravaggio going on tour from the Galleria Borghese in Rome Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo - Galleria Borghese

Rome's Galleria Borghese is launching a three-year partnership with the Italian luxury goods brand Fendi to create an international study centre dedicated to Caravaggio. The museum inside a 17th-century villa is one of 20 leading Italian institutions, including the Gallerie degli Uffizi in Florence and Museo di Capodimonte in Naples, that gained financial independence from central government in 2015, allowing them to cultivate private funders for the first time.

Fendi has emerged as a prominent cultural patron in the Italian capital in recent years, spending €10m on initiatives such as restoring the Trevi Fountain and other historic fountains, and opening an exhibition space in its headquarters, the refurbished Fascist-era Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana in the EUR district. The Rome-based fashion house is to give the Galleria Borghese around €1.3m to establish the new research centre and support a touring display of Caravaggio paintings drawn from the museum's collection.

The nascent Caravaggio Research Institute will be based at the museum and aims to create the most comprehensive online database of the artist's works, including provenance information, exhibition and conservation history and diagnostic reports. The institute's relationship with existing studies on the artist and with other research centres and databases is yet to be defined. But it will have support from an advisory board that includes some of the most important experts in Caravaggio studies, according to a spokeswoman.

The initiative “seeks to reintroduce within museums the most advanced research to make them producers of culture and not mere producers of blockbuster exhibitions”, says the Galleria Borghese's director, Anna Coliva, in a statement.

To promote the project, the museum is sending three of the six works by Caravaggio in its collection on tour: *Boy with a Basket of Fruit* (around 1593-94), *Saint Jerome* (around 1605) and *David with the Head of Goliath* (around 1610). The show will open on 21 November at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles (until 18 February 2018), before travelling to other museums in the US and East Asia.

“It is increasingly a fundamental—as well as moral—value for Fendi to promote, support and export Italian art in the world,” says the brand's chief executive, Pietro Beccari.

Fendi will also sponsor the Galleria Borghese's survey exhibition of the 17th-century sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini, which opens tomorrow (1 November-4 February 2018) and celebrates the 20th anniversary of the museum's reopening in June 1997. The Intesa Sanpaolo bank is providing additional support.