

# CRANACH. THE OTHER RENAISSANCE

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From 15 October 2010 to 13 February 2011, the Galleria Borghese is offering the Italian public, for the first time, the figure and works of Lucas Cranach the Elder. Together with Albrecht Dürer, he was the greatest exponent of the revitalised German painting of the 16th century.

The exhibition is promoted by the Special Superintendence for the Historical, Artistic and Ethno-anthropological Heritage and Museums of Rome directed by Rossella Vodret, organised by MondoMostre and made possible thanks to the support of ENEL and Kinder Ferrero. *Cranach. The Other Renaissance* is curated by Prof. Bernard Aikema, art historian and one of the leading scholars of German and European Renaissance art, and by Anna Coliva, Director of the Galleria Borghese.

In art history, Lucas Cranach (1472-1553) is perhaps best known as Luther's friend and partisan, a witness at his wedding and someone with whom he laid the foundations of a Protestant iconology. But Cranach, court painter to Frederick the Wise of Saxony for fifty years and head of a large and busy workshop in the city of Wittenberg, also introduced other subjects to German painting. There was the new image of the nude, the erotic, as well as humanistic themes and a particularly incisive and innovative portraiture. Classical subjects had a new, "non-classical", fascinating, sensual, and brilliantly painted look. Cranach was an exponent of "another Renaissance", different from the classicism theorised and practiced by his great contemporary and competitor Albrecht Dürer, and also different from the Italian Renaissance. He was a court artist, but in an innovative way, able to define a completely new and highly attractive formal language.

The exhibition aims to provide an overview of the work of the Renaissance painter, court artist and innovator, tied to Flemish traditions, but also contaminated by Italian figurative innovations. The Galleria Borghese presents about 45 of Cranach's most significant works from the largest European and American public collections – some away from their home galleries for the first time, while ten woodcuts show Cranach's incredible virtuosity and inventiveness in the graphic medium.

The Roman exhibition aims to examine more deeply an open question, namely the relationship between Cranach's work and the Italian Renaissance art of the era. While it is clear, on the one hand, that Cranach's work evolved in a fundamentally different way, almost antithetical to the classical "Italian" norm, on the other hand, there is an undeniable iconographic and semantic convergence between the rendering of some of Cranach's subjects and those of Italian painters such as Bartolomeo Veneto, Francesco Francia, Bacciacca, Perugino, Vincenzo Catena, Palma il Vecchio, Andrea Solario, Lorenzo Lotto and Jacopo de' Barbari, his predecessor as painter at the court of Frederick the Wise. The 'epoch-making' meeting in Augsburg in 1550 between Titian, the greatest portrait painter of the Hapsburgs, and Cranach, court painter to no fewer than three successive electors of Saxony, emphasises the differences rather than the similarities, but invites further consideration of the portraiture concepts of the two masters.

Some examples illustrating the complex dialectical relationships, so to speak, between Cranach and the Italian painting world are exhibited next to important paintings from the Galleria Borghese collection, while a number of other comparative works come from other collections, both in Italy and abroad (Lorenzo Lotto, Cima da Conegliano, Titian).

The exhibition strives to offer an overview of Lucas Cranach's varied artistic career, with important innovations in terms of critical and contextual interpretations. In this regard, in addition to the curators, the collaboration of some of the leading international experts in the field has been ensured in the preparation of the catalogue. Rather than a chronological order, the structure of the exhibition and catalogue follow a typological and thematic scheme, divided into six sections: The Court Artist; The Faces of People; The Power of Women; Faith; Female Sensuality; The Prints.

The catalogue is published by 24 ORE CULTURA – Gruppo 24 ORE