

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

111 South Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60603
t 312.443.3626 f 312.443.0193 www.artinstituteofchicago.org

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Erin Hogan
(312) 443-3664
ehogan@artic.edu

Chai Lee
(312) 443-3625
clee4@artic.edu

ART INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES ACQUISITION OF LUDOVICO CARRACCI PAINTING

The Vision of Saint Francis Enters Permanent Collection, On View in Gallery 212a

The Art Institute of Chicago is pleased to announce a major acquisition of an early 17th-century painting by **Ludovico Carracci**, *The Vision of Saint Francis* (c. 1602). The work, acquired by the Department of Medieval through Modern European Painting and Sculpture at the museum, is the first painting by Ludovico Carracci to enter the collection. While the museum does hold a generous amount of works on paper by Ludovico and his cousins Annibale and Agostino, generally recognized as the artists who transformed Italian painting at the turn of the 17th century, *The Vision of Saint Francis* is the first painting by a Carracci to become part of the Art Institute's permanent collection. This intimate, emotionally charged oil on copper painting, depicting a tender vision of Saint Francis, is on view in Gallery 212a at the museum.



“We are thrilled to add this singular example of 17th-century Bolognese painting to our permanent collection,” said Douglas Druick, Searle Chair of the Department of Medieval through Modern European Painting and Sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago. “Already at the Art Institute we are fortunate to possess many important works of Carracci’s contemporaries—from Guido Reni’s *Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist*, to Guercino’s *Entombment*, to Albani’s *Virgin and Child Adored by Saint Francis*. This stunning copper by Ludovico reveals the naturalistic

underpinnings of 17th-century Bolognese painting, thereby complementing and greatly enhancing our collection of early modern Italian art.”

Ludovico Carracci was born in Bologna in 1555 and received his early training in the Mannerist tradition. At age 22, he was admitted as a master painter in Bologna’s *Corporazioni dei Pittori* and traveled extensively throughout Italy to study the art produced in other cities. Upon his return, Ludovico and his cousins founded an academy of drawing (*Accademia degli Incamminati*), where the Carracci family executed drawings from live models and Ludovico served as the director. The Carracci family was largely responsible for transforming Bolognese painting from the staid and restricted Mannerist style of the latter part of the 16th century into the compelling blend of classicism inflected with naturalistic elements that would dominate 17th-century Italian painting. Thus the Carracci—with Ludovico, the eldest, at the helm—represent a revolutionary current in the history of art.

The Vision of Saint Francis is an exquisitely rendered oil on copper painting depicting a subject that was not represented in Italian painting until the last quarter of the 16th century. The scene comes from the medieval chronicles of Saint Francis and is divided into two parts: the heavenly realm, inhabited by the Virgin and putti who reside on and around substantive cloud formations, and the earthly sphere, composed of the kneeling Saint Francis and the Christ child in a carefully articulated naturalistic setting with a wide winged angel who emerges from the background of the terrestrial realm. Light pervades the picture in three beautifully realized modes: celestial light infuses the heavens with a warm glow; the moon sheds light on the nocturnal scene of Saint Francis; and the figures of Saint Francis, the Virgin, and the Christ child in turn radiate their own sacred light in the form of haloes.

The Vision of Saint Francis is one of 16 known paintings on copper by Ludovico Carracci, many of which are in private collections. As a result, the public has had little opportunity to view such a seminal work. With *The Vision of Saint Francis*, the Art Institute is now more fully able to tell the story of Italian painting, which in the 17th century moved away from Mannerism to a naturalistic and classical style that would dominate Italian painting into the 18th century.

IMAGE: Ludovico Carracci. *The Vision of Saint Francis*, c. 1602. Lacy Armour Fund.

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10:30 am–5:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

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10:30 am–5:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

TARGET FREE THURSDAY EVENINGS AFTER 5:00 pm

Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

ADMISSION

Adults \$18.00 Includes all special exhibitions and coat check

Children 14 and over, students, and seniors \$12.00 Includes all special exhibitions and coat check

Chicago residents receive a \$2.00 discount with proof of residency

Children under 14 always free

Members always free

Free Evenings are free to all. City of Chicago residents with Chicago Public Library cards can borrow a "Museum Passport" card from any library branch for free general admission to the nine members of Museums in the Park, including the Art Institute of Chicago.