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The J. Paul Getty Museum presents *The Lure of Italy: Artists' Views*

On View May 9 – July 30, 2017
at the J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center



A View of the Bay of Naples, Looking Southwest from the Pizzofalcone towards Capo di Posilippo (1791). Giovanni Battista Lusieri (Italian, about 1755 – 1821). Watercolor, gouache, graphite, and pen and ink on six sheets of paper. Unframed: 101.8 x 271.9 cm (40 1/16 x 107 1/16 in.); Unframed: 120 x 290.2 x 7.3 cm (47 1/4 x 114 1/4 x 2 7/8 in.). The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES – For centuries, Italy has fascinated travelers and artists alike. From the crumbling ruins of ancient Rome to the crystal-clear light of Venice, artists have found inspiration not only in the cities but also in the countryside and in Italy's rich history and culture. *The Lure of Italy: Artists' Views*, on view May 9 through July 30, 2017, explores the numerous ways Italy's topography, history, and culture have motivated artists to create works of extraordinary beauty and resonance. The exhibition, selected from the Getty Museum's permanent collection of drawings and watercolors, includes several important recent acquisitions, including works by Francesco Guardi and Richard Parkes Bonington.

"For many, Italy represented – and still represents today – a stunningly lush treasure of scenic wonder, with picturesque ancient sculptures, historic buildings, and dramatic landscapes," says Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "This exhibition bears witness to the long-standing love affair that artists have had with the country of Italy."

Italy – a collection of city-states until unification in the 1800s – has captured the imagination of artists for centuries, yet interest in the country peaked in the 1700s, when the region became a prime destination for wealthy travelers embarking on the Grand Tour from England,

France, the Netherlands, Germany, and beyond. Artists journeying with them or working for them used pencil, ink, and watercolor to capture celebrated views and preserve vivid memories, creating works that encapsulate the essence and spirit of Italy.

Italian natives such as Guardi, Canaletto, and Giovanni Battista Lusieri responded to the tourist demand for souvenirs by crafting their own masterpieces. Guardi's *A Regatta on the Grand Canal* (about 1778), a recent acquisition for the Getty, conveys with freshness and spontaneity the lively atmosphere of the annual gondola race (*regatta*) in Venice. The finish line is at left and spectators crowd the balconies of the nearby Palazzo Balbi, while the water bustles with decorated gondolas.



Riva degli Schiavoni, from near San Biagio, Venice (1826). Richard Parkes Bonington (British, 1802 - 1828). Watercolor over graphite, heightened with opaque watercolor. 18.4 x 17.1 cm (7 ¼ x 6 ¾ in.). The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

Further south, the Bay of Naples was another favorite destination of Grand Tourists. Lusieri's huge, nearly nine-foot wide panorama, *A View of the Bay of Naples* (about 1791) is meticulously executed in tiny detail with watercolor. It was painted over a period of two years from the residence of Sir William Hamilton, the British envoy to the court of Naples, who commissioned it for his London home. The view looks towards the Capo di Posillipo and the so-called grotto there, a feat of ancient-Roman engineering.

Other highlights include sketches of enchanting sites with plunging perspectives through the rich Italian countryside, *capriccio* scenes caught between fantasy and reality, studies of ancient ruins, Roman landmarks and lauded works of art, and views of the most picturesque and awe-inspiring sights that Italy has to offer.

During his only visit to Venice, two years prior to his death at age 25 from tuberculosis, Richard Parkes Bonington made numerous pencil sketches and a handful of oil and watercolor studies of the city. The jewel-like *Riva degli Schiavoni, from near San Biagio, Venice* (1826) emphasizes his renowned ability to capture the effects of calm water and dramatic cloud formations in watercolor. This match of subject and media helped to make the magical atmosphere of the city the real subject of his work. "The extraordinary character of Italian cityscapes and landscapes pushed artists to the limits of their potential," says Julian Brooks, senior curator of drawings and curator of the exhibition. "To render them effectively, the choices of media and technique became crucial."

This exhibition is presented in conjunction with *Eyewitness Views: Making History in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (May 9 –July 30, 2017) on view in the Special Exhibitions Pavilion at the J. Paul Getty Museum.

The Lure of Italy: Artists' Views is curated by Julian Brooks, senior curator of drawings at the J. Paul Getty Museum, with the assistance of Annie Correll, graduate intern in the Department of Drawings. The exhibition is on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center from

May 9 through July 30, 2017. A richly illustrated gift book, *The Lure of Italy: Artists' Views*, published by the Getty complements the exhibition.

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The J. Paul Getty Museum collects Greek and Roman antiquities, European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculpture and decorative arts to 1900, as well as photographs from around the world to the present day. The Museum's mission is to display and interpret its collections, and present important loan exhibitions and publications for the enjoyment and education of visitors locally and internationally. This is supported by an active program of research, conservation, and public programs that seek to deepen our knowledge of and connection of works of art.

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