

Volunteers In Art Newsletter

La Velata

Unveiled at the Nevada Museum of Art

We have only one painting to consider here, but it is probably Raphael's crowning achievement in the field of portraiture.

Raphael was known in the 1500s as he is today for the beauty of the madonnas he painted. He often spoke of an ideal conception of beauty that he used in his earlier madonnas. While in Florence he perfected 'sfumato', that soft smoky transition between colors that was developed by Leonardo. In another nod to Leonardo, Raphael began to do his portraits in half-length, which shows the sitter's hands, instead of the old bust-length style. Once in Rome his portraits (and madonnas) reached a new level. They were no longer paintings of what people looked like. They were paintings that showed the inner essence of the sitter. Notable among these was the portrait of his friend Baldassare Castiglione, the painting that so impressed Rembrandt. The quiet direct gaze of the courtier, the soft colors and transitions, and the amazing fabrics – all worked together to set a new standard for portraiture.

The same year Raphael painted *La Velata*. Almost five hundred years later we can feel her warm gaze, and marvel at the perfectly modelled face and neck, the colors of her skin. We see her exactly as Raphael did. What amazing care he gave to her clothing! Julia Addison, a Victorian writer, felt that *La Velata* is holding her loose bodice with one hand, as if it were being removed. The texture of the flimsy gathered chemisette contrasts with the crisp damask of the slashed sleeve with its gold lining and trim, and with the long sheer veil. So much tender detail!

So who is she? Most people believe she is Raphael's long-time lover, his true love, Margherita Luti, also known as the 'Fornarina', (the baker's daughter). Raphael was engaged for years to Maria Bibbiena, a niece of a Cardinal, but this portrait is not of Maria. There is no doubt that Raphael was fond of women. Giorgio Vasari, his first biographer, felt that Raphael's early death came from an excess of romantic activity!

Raphael always put off his marriage to Maria. There is speculation that because of her uncle Cardinal Bibbiena, it would not have been wise politically for Raphael to break off the engagement. At any rate, Maria died in 1520 shortly before Raphael himself. In



Raphael (nee Raphael Sanzio), *La Donna Velata or La Velata (The Woman with the Veil)* detail, c. 1516. Oil on canvas, 32 x 24 inches. Collection of Istituti museale della Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino.

his will he specified that he should be buried with Maria at the Pantheon, but he also left an amount of money to Margherita. Several months after Raphael's death, a woman who called herself 'Margherita Luti, widow', entered the convent of S. Appollonia

Many critics believe that it is obvious from the depth of feeling in the portrait of *La Velata* that she was indeed Raphael's true love. A German scholar, Oskar Fischel, called it a "commission of his (Raphael's) own, in the midst of the great frescoes and orders for altarpieces.....a love-

Who is She?

Raphael's Woman with the Veil



La Donna Velata. Walking into the darkened room she immediately catches your eye.

A beautiful, dark haired, dark eyed woman who obviously is happy to see you and seems to have a secret she wants to share with you. The directness of her gaze rivets and intrigues you. The gentle warmth of her smile brings you to her side. As you come closer you are struck by the richness of her dress, luxurious folds of lustrous white damask trimmed in dark gold. The warmth of the colors enhance the glow of her skin and smile. You're sure this is a woman of wealth radiating confidence and dignity and respect, maybe it isn't you she's waiting for.

You notice the chemise off her shoulders, the partly open bodice, a wisp of hair curled over her brow. Obviously this is a woman waiting for her most intimate friend, maybe her lover. Who is she? Who is she waiting for? What is the meaning of the pearl in her hair? You may not know all the answers but you do know this is a woman who has captivated your emotions, a woman you want to spend more time with and become more intimate with. Come to the Nevada Museum of Art and meet the *Woman with the Veil*. Decide for yourself who she is and why Raphael painted her portrait with such loving care.

Bob Anderson

Achievement & Style

Raphael and the Renaissance

Art historians will forever argue about when the Renaissance began, and exactly what it was. They are all in agreement, however, about its culmination in the 'High Renaissance', a period beginning about 1495 and ending roughly with Raphael's death in 1520. The three stellar artists of the High Renaissance were Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael. (Michelangelo outlived Raphael by forty-four years, but the work of his later years changed in style and is not properly classified as 'Renaissance' but rather as Mannerism.)

So what does this term meaning 're-birth' say to us? Many feel that this period began with Giotto (1267-1337) who brought life to painting with figures who had weight, and movement and real emotion. And his contemporary Duccio, in Siena (1278-1319), changed traditional stylized Byzantine painting into an Italian Gothic form with movement and real narrative. But it wasn't until

prompted improvisation". Some say that since La Velata wears a veil as married Roman women did, that she could even be the new wife of his patron Agostino Chigi. Others say that he painted his love with a veil because they were married!

Whoever she was, Raphael used her face for the *Sistine Madonna* and for the *Madonna of the Chair*. In another portrait, *La Fornarina*, Raphael painted a woman who resembles *La Velata*. But here she wears nothing but a flimsy veil covering the lower half of her body. On her arm is a band with his name on it, and in her hair is a jeweled pearl ornament which appears to be the same jewel that *La Velata* wears. Recent cleaning has revealed a ring on her finger, setting off another round of speculation about the possibility that Raphael was secretly married to Margherita. It appears that no one will ever know the truth about *La Velata's* identity. But does it matter? A Victorian poet, William Allen Butler, wrote a long poem about *La Incognita (The Unknown One)*, another title often used then for *La Velata*. Here are the first few lines:

“Long has the summer sunlight shone
on the fair form, the quaint costume;
Yet, nameless still, she sits, unknown,
A lady in her youthful bloom.

Fairer for this! No shadows cast
Their blight upon her perfect lot,
Whate'er her future or her past
In this bright monument matters not.

La Velata remains a favorite at the art-filled Pitti Palace. It is such a privilege for us to be able to see her here, all by herself.

Raphael's influence has continued through the years. We know, of course, that he influenced Rembrandt. The ongoing delicious gossip about *La Velata/La Fornarina* inspired Ingres to do a painting showing Margherita Luti on Raphael's lap in front of an easel with the portrait of *La Fornarina*. Raphael was hugely popular in the Victorian era – much more so than his contemporaries, Leonardo and Michelangelo. The Victorians idolized him -Whittier, Browning, Butler, and Longfellow wrote poems about him, and engravings of Raphael's paintings were everywhere. Manet used figures taken directly from an engraving after Raphael for his famous *Dejeuner*. And Picasso revived the mystery by drawing Raphael and his lover, with the Pope watching, and Michelangelo under the bed!

For a large part of the Twentieth Century Raphael was marginalized, probably as a result of way too many bad reproductions of his work, along with renewed interest in Michelangelo and Leonardo. But in recent years there has been renewed scholarly respect and popular interest in his work. A drawing of Raphael's just sold at auction for the highest price ever paid for a work on paper.

Kathleen Durham

Beffi Triptych

Another Italian Treasure



Master of the Beffi Triptych, The Madonna and Child with Scenes from the Life of Christ and the Virgin (*The Beffi Triptych*), early 15th century. Tempera on panel. Museo Nazionale d'Abruzzo, L'Aquila.

On February 6, 2010 the NMA will unveil a rare early 15th Century altarpiece – the Beffi Triptych, on loan to us from the National Museum of Abruzzo, about sixty miles northeast of Rome. The city of L'Aquila suffered a devastating earthquake on April 6, 2009, which killed over 300 people and left thousands homeless. In gratitude for the aid sent immediately by the United States, the Italian government has loaned the triptych to three museums in the U.S. -- The National Gallery, The Getty, and the Nevada Museum of Art. What an honor to be one of those three!

The altarpiece consists of a main panel depicting the Virgin and Child, with side panels showing the Nativity and scenes from the life of the Virgin. It is a perfect example of Italian Gothic art, and is a rarity because all three panels are intact. So many of these fine altarpieces have been taken apart, and are housed separately in museums and private collections. The Beffi Triptych has also survived terrible earthquakes. In 1915, after a violent earthquake, it was removed from its original church in the small town of Beffi, and moved to the National Museum of Abruzzo, housed in a 16th Century fortress in nearby L'Aquila. That museum was terribly damaged in the 2009 earthquake. The altarpiece suffered only a few scratches, which have been repaired.

We will have the unique pleasure of viewing this triptych as it would have been seen by its parishioners in its original church, Santa Maria del Ponte. We can imagine how it must have been when the side panels were opened, and the people could see the stories familiar to them done in rich colors and gleaming gold. In the corner of one panel is the donor, with different colored leggings. We don't know who that patron was, nor do we know the name of the artist, who is known simply as the Master of the Beffi Triptych.

What a wonderful development -- to have at the same time at our museum, examples of the very start of the Italian Renaissance, with this triptych, and of the very zenith of the High Renaissance, with Raphael's *La Velata*!

Kathleen Durham

the 1400s in Florence that these innovations flowered into an amazing period of growth in art and literature. In art, with Masaccio, Donatello, Lippi, Gozzoli, Botticelli, Fra Angelico, to name just a few, there was a new interest in naturalism, in perspective, in how to depict a figure in real space, and in the classical models of Greece and Rome. This period from 1420 to 1500 is generally known as the Early Renaissance.

So – Leonardo was born in 1452, Michelangelo in 1475, and Raphael in 1483 in Urbino. Raphael's father was a poet and painter and was connected to the court of Urbino. Both of Raphael's parents died when he was very young, and he was apprenticed as a teenager to Perugino, a painter of exquisite altarpieces. Raphael learned his style, as was the custom then, and executed many commissions with other painters and on his own. By the time he was seventeen, he was a master in his own right. In 1504 he moved to Florence, where he saw the work of Leonardo and Michelangelo. He must have known how difficult it would be to reach their levels of knowledge and powerful work. But he did just that. His career spanned only twenty years, but in that time he was able to assimilate the best of his contemporaries' work and form his own distinct style.



In 1508 he moved to Rome and began to work for Pope Julius II, painting the walls of the Vatican Stanze (rooms). The paintings on these walls are a testament to Raphael's achievement of perfect form and composition, the hallmarks of the High Renaissance. In these paintings one sees his ability to combine a large number of beautifully painted figures

harmoniously, in a believable space, so that it is as pleasing to view the entire composition as it is to examine the beautiful details. If he had done just one of these frescoes – The School of Athens, for example, it alone would have earned him the right to be named in the same breath as Leonardo and Michelangelo.

In the next twelve years, until his death at 37, he continued to do frescoes for the Popes, but was also a portrait painter, an architect, and an archaeologist. He had been given a Papal commission to restore Saint Peter's, and was also named archaeologist in charge of Roman excavations. And, unlike Leonardo and Michelangelo, he was able to transcend the position of artist as craftsman, and move freely as an equal in the Vatican court and social circles. He was apparently universally loved and appreciated. His first biographer, Giorgio Vasari, wrote: "As excellent as he was graceful, Raphael was modest and good...in Raphael the rarest qualities of the heart shone forth."

When he died in 1520, *The Transfiguration*, his last panel painting, was displayed at his funeral, and he was buried in the Pantheon, a signal honor.

Kathleen Durham

Docent's Choice

The Quilts of Gee's Bend

Stunning Textiles to Please the Modernist's Eye, the Sophisticated Collector of African Art or the American Crafter of the Quilting Bee Tradition

Gee's Bend is a tiny rural town in Alabama's Black Belt, so named for the dark, rich soil found there. Around it, the Alabama River makes a loop, surrounding the town on three sides, and when there were neither ferries or bridges, it was isolated from any population center. It was the rich soil and ample water so suitable for a good cotton crop that attracted planter Joseph Gee in the early 1800's. Ultimately, Gee moved on, leaving behind only his name, when plantation owner Mark Pettaway acquired the land in 1850 to settle a debt. He moved in from North Carolina and he brought some 100 slaves.

As time passed and the Civil War changed the economic patterns in the American South, the former slaves, now tenant farmers, formed their own small community. They worked the small parcels of land, many of which they were able to buy. They continued their quilt making, a West African tradition, through at least six generations. And as the families have evolved, so have their quilts, now recognized as striking, original, uniquely American works of art.

On Feb. 6, an exhibition of their quilts will open at the Nevada Museum of Art. The event will be celebrated with an opening talk and demonstration by two of the Gee's Bend quilters at 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 5. On Feb. 6, there will be a quilting demonstration, and at 1 p.m. there is a second event called "Telling Stories, Sharing Quilts: The Lore of the Local Quilt." Finally, on Sunday, Feb. 7, there is a special quilters class with the women from Gee's Bend. This event is, unfortunately for late comers, sold out.

The Gee's Bend Quilts came to the attention of the art world in 2002 when the Tinwood Alliance of Atlanta, a non-profit organization, curated a collection of 70 quilts for an exhibit at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. The event was a sensation and received international acclaim. The show moved on to 12 city museums, among them the Whitney in New York, the Corcoran in Washington D.C. and the De Young in San Francisco. "Newsweek" and "Time" reviewed it. PBS and CBS brought the quilts to the attention of their television audiences. Media critics throughout the country praised it, one comparing the quilts to works by Henri Matisse or Paul Klee. Suddenly, the impoverished folks of little Gee's Bend were on the radar of textile collectors and art lovers throughout the country.

In 2003, some 50 women founded the Gee's Bend Quilter's Collective to market and sell their wares. And now, a second exhibit is on tour, sharing the skills and aesthetics of this unique art form with an even wider audience.

What can you expect when you visit the exhibit? The words "distinctive" and "bold" first come to mind. No, these aren't like that charming comforter that lay across the foot of grandma's bed. These quilts are explosions of

color; there are geometrics, just a little off kilter; there are oddments of strips and stripes patched with neither clash nor discord; there are tidy little triangles in outrageous combinations of color and pattern. You'll be surprised at the variety of fabrics in a single quilt. One may have cotton, corduroy, woolen twill and assorted polyesters stitched all together in a harmonious blend. In another there are circles and squares intermixed, reminiscent of, but not quite like, a 1970's Op Art poster. In some you will recognize improvised riffs on traditional American patterns, like the Log Cabin, Star or Wedding Ring.

In 1984, the American Quilters Society was formed with 1500 charter members. Their membership now numbers many thousands who enjoy the society's books, bimonthly magazine, workshops, shows, appraisals and appraiser certification program, instruction and marketing. But no one really knows how many quilters there actually are in the United States today. You can be sure that any within easy travel distance will be at the Nevada Museum of Art to see this exhibit. Won't you join them with art lovers, collectors and friends of the museum for this unusual show?

Joan Elder



Mary Lee Bendolph, *Strip Quilt*, 2003. Cotton and Wool, 90 x 79 inches. Collection of the Tinwood Alliance.

Art Bite

Community Hungry for Fashion and Fabrics of Italy

Art Bites, the half-hour mini-lectures the Nevada Museum of Art sponsors in conjunction with ongoing exhibits, are intimate affairs. Usually no more than eight or ten interested art lovers appear in the appropriate gallery for a brief, lunch-hour discussion on some aspect of a current show.

However, much to the delight of Colin Robertson, Curator of Education, who plans the Art Bites, some 140 enthusiastic listeners turned up for our most recent noon-time event, necessitating moving the crowd to the auditorium. The occasion was a fascinating presentation on Renaissance clothing and textiles by Jan Loverin, Curator of The Marjorie Russell Clothing and Textile Research Center at the Nevada State Museum in Carson City.



Pictured above, Colin Robertson, Curator of Education and Jan Loverin, Curator of The Marjorie Russell Clothing and Textile Research Center at the Nevada State Museum in Carson City wearing a stole woven in Venice.

Inspired by the gown worn by *La Velata* in the Raphael painting now on display in the E. L. Wiegand Gallery, Jan enchanted the crowd with comments on silks and linens, ancient weaving techniques, and speculation on the artist's choice of costume for his model.

Did you know that Renaissance women wore three garments? But our lady with the veil has only two -- she is missing her under dress, which was a fairly substantial garment worn over the chemise but beneath the lavish outer dress with its sumptuous sleeves. And have you heard of the sumptuary laws of the time that regulated

the minutie of dress for all classes, even the depth of the neckline that could be displayed? No cleavage there, since the chemise could be no lower than two inches below the collar bone. It seems, too, that the lady with the veil is missing the laces that should be clasping the dress over her bosom.

Whether these effects are intended to be erotic, or merely the choice of the artist for the visual effect he sought, we'll never know. But learning a bit more about her finery from Jan's talk adds another layer of mystery to the stunning model in Raphael's painting.

Joan Elder



VIA Council Board Positions Available

We have some openings on the Volunteers In Art Council, the volunteers' elected body that oversees the various volunteer activities, organizes the Arts and Flowers luncheon and volunteer recognition. The VIA Council meetings are monthly on the second Wednesday of the month at 4 PM. Nominations should be submitted by February 12, 2010.

Treasurer: A two year term beginning July 2010. The current treasurer, Helen O'Brien has agreed to stand again.

Secretary: A two year term beginning July 2010. The current secretary, Heather De Angeli has agreed to stand again.

Administration Committee Chair: An appointed position. The administration chair heads up the administration volunteers. The primary duty of this chair is to organize monthly membership mailings in conjunction with the staff membership coordinator, Julie Tausch. The chair also assists with recording volunteer time and distribution of hours pins, and with other clerical work as needed.

Please contact Rosalind at rosalind.bedell@nevadaart.org or at 329-3333 x252 if you are interested in or would like to nominate a volunteer for the following positions.

A Special Thanks

Arts & Flowers Update

The annual Arts & Flowers luncheon was held on Thursday, November 5, 2009. Even during these challenging economic times, we had a very successful event, selling about 460 seats and raising almost \$23,000. The proceeds will be used in 2010 to support volunteer events and recognition, sponsor *A Survey of Gee's Bend Quilts Exhibition*, and purchase art for the museum's permanent collection.

Lucy Walker, with the help of Nancy Kelly, did an outstanding job of coordinating silent auction and raffle donations from more than 60 donors, which raised almost \$5,000.

Barbara Marsh outdid herself by securing 14 new artists! These new artists were joined by 11 artists who have displayed and sold their work at previous Arts & Flowers luncheons. Some of the featured artwork ranged from several types of jewelry, to unique handbags and fused glass. And of course, Marge Russell was back with her wonderful Santas.



Corporate sponsor, Southwest Airlines and Artist, Marge Russell's Santas displayed at Arts & Flowers '09



Table setting for Arts & Flowers 2009

The success of the event is made possible by many volunteers who set up for the event, sell raffle tickets, and take phone reservations, among many other things. Special thanks to Lynda Buhlig, Lucy Walker, Nancy Kelly, Bob Anderson, Judy Mayhew, and Barbara Marsh for all of their extra work.

Even more special thanks to all the staff who also work extra hard making the event a success, especially Amanda Rookey and Arlene Feola.

And finally, a special thanks to our corporate sponsors: Southwest Airlines, Digiprint, YOUmicrospa, and Harrah's Hotel & Casino and the following volunteers: Bob Anderson, Loretta Baughman, Ellen Beckman, Lynda Buhlig, Heather DeAngeli, Ragna Delong, JoAnn Elston, Dianna Filkin, Carole Fischer, Carolyn Fricke, Ross Heppe, Val Hylin, Molly Ivans, Nancy Kelly, Judy Mayhew, Debbie McMahon, Helga Miller, Lynn Newhall, Helen O'Brien, Sandra Raas, Lucy Walker and Susan Fountain for their generous support.

Dawn Lawrence



Volunteer Appreciation Day

THURSDAY, APRIL 8TH

Lunch with Staff

Afternoon Lecture

Art Class

Evening Reception

New Staff Members

Welcome Bob Gabrielli



Welcome Bob Gabrielli our Director of Corporations, Foundations and Government Relations.

After a brief stint as a radio reporter, Bob has worked in the non-profit field for more than 25 years. The bulk of those years were spent working in communications and development at the University of Nevada, Reno. Bob worked as a grant writer and major gifts officer at Renown Health System in the Foundation before he took a development position with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northern Nevada in 2006. Bob was named the Director of Corporate, Foundation and Government Relations at the Nevada Museum of Art this past October.

A 1978 journalism graduate of the University of Nevada, Bob is active in the community serving on committees at the university, the Community Foundation of Western Nevada, Reno Little Theater and March of Dimes. The Reno native is married and has one daughter. Bob can be reached at 329-3333 ext. 234 or by e-mail bob.gabrielli@nevadaart.org

Museum Hours

MUSEUM GALLERY & STORE

Wednesday – Sunday 10 AM to 5 PM

Thursdays 10 AM to 8 PM

Galleries and Store are closed Monday & Tuesday and National Holidays

LIBRARY

Wednesday – Sunday 11 AM to 2 PM

1st Thursday 5 to 7 PM

CAFÉ MUSÉE

Wednesday – Sunday 11 AM – 2:30 PM

Closed Monday & Tuesday

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

Tuesday – Friday 9 AM to 5 PM

Museum News

Dates & Updates

- The next **Art Break** is scheduled for Saturday, February 20th at 11:30 AM. This docent-led tour for volunteers only, will feature the *A Survey of Gee's Bend Quilts*. Lunch and discussion to follow.
- **Art Bite Series:** Fridays, 12-12:30 PM. February 12th UNR Professor Kevin Stevens will present *Italy in the Age of Raphael*. February 19th will feature *Framing in the Sixteenth Century*. On March 12th, Julie Silber will discuss *A Survey of Gee's Bend Quilts*. Members \$4, Nonmembers \$5. Seating is based on a first come, first served basis.
- This winter's **First Thursdays** will take place 5-7 PM February 4th will feature *Milton Merlos*, formerly of Sol Jibe and March 4th hosts the *Rick Costa Band*.
- **Sunday Jazz Brunch** on February 21st welcomes the *Jim Garavanta Trio* and March 21st presents the *Collin Ross Band*. \$5-\$15, A la carte brunch menu from Café Musée.
- **Taste of Gee's Bend Dinner** Thursday, March 25th 5-8 PM Join us for dinner as we celebrate the history and culture of Gee's Bend, Alabama. \$34.50 for Members/\$44.50 Nonmembers. Dinner fee includes admission to the Museum.
- **"Nobody"** A quirky comedy about personal discovery, presented in the Wayne & Miriam Prim Theatre. Thursday, March 18th 6-8 PM. \$5. Rated PG-13.
- Middle & High School students! Don't miss the 2nd annual **Teen Art Night**. Friday, March 26th. 7-10 PM Admission \$5.



Nevada Museum of Art Staff

David Walker, Executive Director and CEO, ext. 229

Scott Bates, A/V Technician, ext. 113
Rosalind Bedell, H.R. and Volunteer Director, ext. 252
Jackie Clay, Gift Shop Manager, ext. 106
Linda Dierks, Vice President of Advancement, ext. 332
Arlene Feola, Controller, ext. 231
Erik Flippo, Designer, ext. 263
Sara Frantz, Registrar, ext. 258
Bob Gabrielli, Director of Corporations, Foundations
and Gov't Relations, ext. 234
Nancy Hansford, Sales Assistant, ext. 107
Vic Hopner, Director of Operations, ext. 114
Connie Howard, Grant Writer, ext. 230
Jen Ishimatsu, E.L. Cord Museum School Dir., ext. 260
Sara Kennedy, Mgr. Special Events/Rental Prg., ext. 225
Katie Lewis, Curatorial Asst./Exhib. Coord., ext. 259
Chris Martin, Preparator, ext. 256

Rachel Milon, Director of Comm. and Marketing, ext. 228
Claire Munoz, School Services and Outreach Mgr., ext. 253
Amy Oppio, Deputy Director, ext. 251
Colin Robertson, Curator of Education, ext. 254
Amanda Rookey, Associate Director of Museum
Advancement, ext. 232
Julie Tausch, Membership Coordinator, ext. 265
Ann Wolfe, Curator of Exhibitions & Collections, ext. 255

Admissions Desk, ext. 100
Café Musée, ext. 147
Gift Shop, ext. 107
Founders Room, ext. 317
Library, ext. 204
Security Office, ext. 113

Nevada Museum of Art Phone Number 775-329-3333

This newsletter is edited and produced by Gosia Clark and Cami Welsh-Griffith. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.
Please contact us at contact@nmavolunteersinart.org

Volunteers in Art
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