

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART BROADCASTS TO ITALY AT OPENING OF EXHIBITION OF ITALIAN MASTERS

Today for the first time the voice of an Italian Ambassador to the United States will be heard by the Italian people when the program inaugurating the Exhibition of Italian Masters is broadcast from the galleries of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York City, Thursday, January 25, 1940, at 3:00 P.M. United States Eastern Standard Time, which will be 9:00 P.M. in Italy.

His Excellency Prince Ascanio Colonna, Italian Ambassador, will open the broadcast, speaking in Italian. He will be followed by Commendatore Eugenio Ventura, Responsible Trustee of the Royal Italian Government, who has had the masterpieces in his charge since they left Italy over a year ago. Professor Cesare Brandi, Delegate of the Italian Ministry of Education, will then speak. He and Commendatore Ventura will both make their speeches in Italian.

Nelson A. Rockefeller, President of the Museum of Modern Art, will make the concluding speech in English. His speech will then be read in translation by Mario Capelli who will also introduce the speakers. Mr. Capelli is a member of Columbia Broadcasting System's foreign staff.

The broadcast will be sent by the Columbia Broadcasting System by short wave over its International Station WCBX and rebroadcast throughout Italy by the EIAR, the Italian government's radio system.

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### INTRODUCTION BY MARIO CAPELLI, ITALIAN NEWSCASTER STATION WCBX, COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM

This is International Station WCBX of the Columbia Broadcasting System, whose microphones are now located in one of the spacious galleries of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Today, the 25th of January, 1940, is an important day for this metropolis, which, it is also good to remember, is the largest Italian city in the world. After their ocean crossing and another transcontinental journey which has taken them as far as the shores of the Pacific, the great works

of the Italian Masters of the Renaissance period pause now in this great city--its most welcome guests--before sailing back to Italy.

Today--in a few minutes, in fact --his Excellency the Italian Ambassador to the United States, who is accompanied here by the Royal Consul General Commendatore Gaetano Vecchiotti, will speak about this Exhibition of Italian Masters. He will be followed on the microphone by Commendatore Eugenio Ventura, Responsible Trustee of the Royal Italian Government, by Professor Cesare Brandi, Royal Supervisor of Galleries and Delegate of the Italian Ministry of National Education, and by Mr. Nelson A. Rockefeller, President of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Mr. Rockefeller will speak to you in English, and I shall afterwards read the translation of this speech in Italian.

The gallery where the inaugural ceremony is about to take place is devoted to Botticelli's Birth of Venus, which seems even more beautiful--as though all the eyes which have admired her since her arrival in America, had added some perceptible quality to her already divine perfection. The gallery from which we are speaking is rectangular in shape, approximately 80 square meters in area, and does not contain any other work except the wonderful Botticelli painting. The neutral color of its walls brings out the delicate colors of the picture which, superbly illuminated and protected by a plate of the clearest crystal, shines as a veritable jewel.

And now I have the honor of presenting to you His Excellency Prince Ascanio Colonna, Italian Ambassador to the United States.

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ADDRESS OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE ROYAL ITALIAN  
AMBASSADOR BROADCAST OVER STATION WCBX ON JANUARY  
25, 1940, ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION OF  
THE EXHIBITION OF ITALIAN MASTERS AT THE MUSEUM OF  
MODERN ART IN NEW YORK.

It is indeed with great pleasure that I have accepted to take part in the inauguration of this exhibition of Italian Masters in New York. In fact, not only does it give one pleasure to be present at any event whose object is a high expression of the human soul but also this is an occasion whereby the American people will be able to feel all the warm sympathy of my countrymen whose leader has allowed that such great artistic treasures should cross the ocean in order to

bring to these shores a peaceful and glorious message of Italian culture.

Both San Francisco and Chicago have proven how much this country has appreciated Mussolini's gesture, and Mr. Nelson Rockefeller is about to express the gratification of the Museum of Modern Art of the City of New York for this third display in the United States of these masterpieces.

I am sure that also New York will take part with enthusiasm in this artistic event which is, in fact, something more than a mere manifestation of art, because the highest expressions of genius have something to say to all human beings and though they may have their roots in one particular part of the world still it is true that they spread their flowering branches over all lands. I see, in fact, a special significance in this exhibition that, as an oasis of peace in this troubled world, shall bestow upon the great American public great and unforgettable emotions.

And it is not without meaning that the masterpieces, which originate from our ancient churches, from our great museums, from our palaces with all their glorious memories, should be gathered, at the behest of the leader of Fascist Italy, in this city which is to be rightly considered <sup>as</sup> the most impressive accomplishment of the labor, the daring and the art of modern times.

This tie that is being thus established between the ancient and the modern, between the human genius of the glorious past and the dynamism of our hard times, cannot but give to men a stronger perception of their duties and a deeper sense of pride and responsibility in the defense of western civilization of which these masterpieces are amongst the highest expressions.

It is gratifying, of course, that in this Italy and America should be so close, as they have indeed always been since the very beginning of the history of this continent.

The long voyage that these pictures and statues had to make in order to come to the United States is probably their last one, and, therefore, in the future it will only be possible to admire them under those skies that have nourished the dream of their creators.

It pleases me to think that these portrayals of the life and faith of Italy, that have gazed upon so many human events during the course of centuries in their everlasting youth and perfected beauty,

should have been able, before returning forever to their Italian homes, to get acquainted with the American people and the American people with them. In fact, they have forged a new link between this country and Italy, that have already in common so many bonds of sympathy, of blood and of mutual interests.

I sincerely trust that, as Italy has sent to the American people, as her messengers, the works that are displayed in the Italian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair and the masterpieces that are gathered here, so will the United States give proof of her friendship and testimonial of her accomplishments by taking part in the Rome International Exhibition of 1942. Notwithstanding these difficult times, my country is striving to achieve this exhibition which shall commemorate 20 years of the life and struggle of Mussolini's Italy in a great Italian and universal display. All this at the wish of the Head of the Government who has given to his people, in this grave moment of history, the following motto:  
"WORK AND PRODUCE."

Tomorrow, in this great metropolis assembling the highest qualities of the American nation, the exhibition of Italian Art shall be open to the public. It will be a memorable meeting between two great countries. I hope that this meeting will be a milestone along the road on which the two nations will advance in friendship and community of spirit.

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SPEECH WHICH WILL BE DELIVERED BY  
COMMENDATORE EUGENIO VENTURA, RESPONSIBLE  
TRUSTEE OF THE ROYAL ITALIAN GOVERNMENT.

It may be affirmed with sincere conviction that the Italian Masterpieces sent to America by the Italian Government are in the most excellent state of preservation, thanks to the strict instructions imparted by the Direzione Generale delle Arti, which is the technical organization of His Excellency Minister Bottai.

And we must recognize the fact that the American authorities and, particularly, those who have been responsible for the organization of the various exhibitions, have fully appreciated the responsibility which has been thrust upon them by the Italian Government, and they have shown their complete understanding of this responsibility



by the effecient manner in which they have adhered to the pattern set out by His Excellency the Minister, in the handling of them.

In the past few months I have noted the ever-increasing enthusiasm of the American and Italian-American public for our magnificent art, and this is a tangible manifestation of their gratitude; the financial situation of many of those people would probably never have permitted them this unusual pleasure of viewing these Masterpieces, in which we take so much pride. The number of visitors who have had the opportunity of paying tribute to Italian genius, first in San Francisco, then in Chicago and finally in New York, runs into millions.

The American press has been lavish in its praise and has not failed to attribute the credit for the magnificent gesture of our Government to the high Authority who sanctioned these exhibitions.

It is a source of deep satisfaction to note that a country so young and strong, who cannot possibly have the age-old artistic tradition of Italy, having had a tangible vision of the beam which Italian genius has cast across the ages, has, through its enthusiasm, manifested its unconditional acknowledgment.

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SPEECH WHICH WILL BE DELIVERED BY  
PROFESSOR CESARE BRANDI, DELEGATE  
OF THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF NATIONAL  
EDUCATION

The excellent state of preservation of the masterpieces sent from Italy to America must be a source of gratification not only for the Italians but for all those who recognize in these eternal works of art, one of the greatest landmarks of modern civilization. It will be, furthermore, of great interest for the hundreds of people who will have the good fortune to visit the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York to see the wonderful installation which was made to display these masterpieces in the most modern building imaginable, equipped with all modern improvements, such as artificial lighting, equalized temperature, proper air-conditioning which very few other museums in the whole world are in a position to offer.

The entire floor of the Museum devoted to the Italian Exhibition has been completely re-arranged and carefully planned for each of the paintings. As a result the background colors do

not only possess the necessary shadings completely suitable to the works exhibited, but the walls themselves have been arranged with special partitions so as to surround each work with a suitable amount of space. In this manner has been carried out an experiment in Museum installation such as has never been accomplished before with works of such great artistic importance. The effects obtained are remarkable. This experiment demonstrates once more beyond any possible doubt the independent power and the actual life of a work of art: the ancient and the modern molded in an immediate unity of vision. The theories of His Excellency Bottai, which eliminate any line of demarcation between ancient and modern art, have been carried out in the most scrupulous and complete manner in this exhibition of ancient Italian art in the most modern museum of the most modern city of America. I do not believe that I am mistaken in foreseeing the gratitude of those who will thus see confirmed for everyone with indisputable evidence the necessity of reuniting the past with the present in the actuality of a precise historic consciousness of art.

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SPEECH WHICH WILL BE DELIVERED BY  
NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER, PRESIDENT OF  
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

As President of the Museum of Modern Art I take great pleasure in opening the Exhibition of Italian Masters in the presence of His Excellency the Royal Italian Ambassador, Prince Ascanio Colonna.

The Italian people should not regret having temporarily deprived themselves of these masterpieces. They are being received with tremendous enthusiasm and real appreciation all over this country and they bring to us a clearer understanding of your great Italian culture.

The Raphael Madonna, the Botticelli Venus, and the Michelangelo Madonna are already known to some of us through our travels, but to many Americans these great paintings have been known only through reproductions. Now the masterpieces themselves are here. Thousands of visitors a day have come to admire them in San Francisco and Chicago. We expect many more thousands to see them in New York.

The empty spaces on the walls of some of the most important Italian museums bear witness to the generosity of the Italian Government and of the Italian people who, for moral and spiritual reasons, were willing to deprive themselves for more than a year of works of such great value. Our thanks go in particular to those cities from which these masterpieces have come: Rome, Florence, Naples, Venice, Turin, Modena, Bergamo, Palermo, Rovigo, Milan, Udine, Vicenza.

Through these works of art the influence of the Italian Renaissance has never ceased. The paintings and sculpture of Raphael, Botticelli, Donatello, Michelangelo and other supreme Italian masters before me here in the Museum of Modern Art in New York City give proof of the strength and vigor of the Italian Renaissance which beautified and revitalized every aspect of the life of that period in Italy.

In the same way, we of the 20th century can make our surroundings more enjoyable not only by perfecting those things which we use in our daily lives but also by enhancing their beauty. Perhaps if we follow the ideals of the Renaissance a new and great art may rise out of the 20th century just as the art of Raphael and Michelangelo flowered during the Italian Renaissance.

These are the objectives of the Museum of Modern Art -- to encourage not only the beauty in painting and sculpture but the beauty to be found in architecture, in the products of our industries, in the motion picture, and in the many other phases of our modern civilization. The interests of our Museum are not limited to the works of any one nation. It is our purpose to show the public the best that the world has to offer.

We must come to know and understand the best of our own times in order that it may be utilized to the full. For instance, the special glass used in the windows of this Museum which let in such a fine clear white light while keeping out the heat and cold as well as those rays of the sun which are harmful to works of art, is a new product from Italy. This glass has been used by us in our Museum for the first time in America.

The encouragement Italy has given to modern architecture has been followed with great interest by our Museum because we consider that modern architectural forms are best adapted to the needs of life today. In this connection we have shown and published examples of modern Italian architecture.

Our own building is modern and on its walls these Italian masterpieces look fresh and alive. As we stand here they seem to unite symbolically the past with the present and re-affirm the cultural bonds which have existed since the days of Columbus between your country and ours.

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Closing - Mr. Capelli

We now bring to a close this program which has been broadcast to you from a gallery of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City by Columbia Broadcasting System through the medium of its International Station WCBX. In the course of today's ceremony the following have spoken: His Excellency Ascanio Colonna, the Italian Ambassador to the United States; Commendatore Eugenio Ventura, Responsible Trustee of the Royal Italian Government; Professor Cesare Brandi, Royal Supervisor of Galleries and Delegate of the Italian Ministry of National Education; and Mr. Nelson A. Rockefeller, President of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, who has opened the Exhibition of Italian Masters.

Beginning tomorrow these galleries will be open to the public, and it is expected that the attendance will be even greater than that at San Francisco and Chicago, where these works were before coming to New York. This Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art will remain open through March 24, after which date the great masterpieces will go back to their permanent homes in Italy.

Up to that time, however, the great canvases, the marbles and the bronzes of our supreme artists will continue to make of these galleries a corner of Italian soil and by their presence give a testimonial of Italy's glory and of its greatest victories.

We now return you to our studios in New York City. This is the Columbia Broadcasting System.