
THE FOUNDATION FOR ITALIAN ART & CULTURE AND CULTURAL COMMISSIONER OF THE REGION OF SICILY
TO HOLD GALA EVENT CELEBRATING OPENING OF ANTONELLO DA MESSINA EXHIBITION
AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK, DECEMBER 13

NEW YORK, NY, DECEMBER 2005 – New York-based **FOUNDATION FOR ITALIAN ART & CULTURE AND THE CULTURAL COMMISSIONER OF THE REGION OF SICILY**, headed by H.E. Alessandro Pagano, Cultural Commissioner of the Region of Sicily, will hold a celebratory black-tie dinner in honor of the Antonello da Messina exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York on Tuesday, December 13, 2005. The dinner was organized by the Foundation for Italian Art & Culture in New York and the Cultural Commissioner for the Sicilian Region. This event marks the first collaboration between FIAC and the Region of Sicily.

Distinguished guests will include: H.E. Mario Baccini, Italian Minister of Public Administration and The Hon. Bruce Cole, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, U.S.A.

The Foundation for Italian Art and Culture (FIAC) is a not-for-profit organization established in New York City in 2003. Its main purpose is to promote the knowledge and appreciation of the Italian cultural and artistic traditions from the classical period to modern times in the United States. The Foundation works in close collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Culture. In addition to sponsoring its own programs and exhibitions, and exchanges between American and Italian institutions, the Foundation acts as an intermediary between Italy and the United States to facilitate the implementation of programs.

Antonello da Messina (ca. 1430–1479) was one of the most groundbreaking and influential painters of the *quattrocento*. He was trained in the brilliant artistic climate of Naples during the rule of Alfonso of Aragon. He was long believed to be the first to use his mastery of the technique of oil painting in Italy. His trip to Venice was a landmark occasion, and made a lasting impact on the art of Giovanni Bellini and other Venetian painters. Antonello's portraits mark a new stage in the evolution of portraiture in Italy, with their superb descriptive powers and glimpses into the psychology of the sitter. No greater artist emerged from southern Italy in the 15th century.

Three masterpieces by the artist from Sicily will be on view at the Metropolitan, including the compelling *Virgin of the Annunciation* from the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palermo – a work whose haunting beauty and enigmatic character can only be compared to Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*.

The evening will feature a private viewing of these three works -- seen alongside the Metropolitan's two paintings by the artist, as well as a drawing attributed to him from the Museum's collection and a painting from a private collection -- followed by cocktails and a sit-down dinner in the Metropolitan Museum's Temple of Dendur in The Sackler Wing.

With special thanks to the Italian Cultural Institute and Foedus USA, Inc. for their collaboration

For more information, call (212) 826-9700 x160.