

Luca Giordano (1634-1705)

The triumph of Neapolitan painting

14 November 2019 to 23 February 2020

PRESS RELEASE
October 2019



Petit Palais
Musée des Beaux-Arts
de la Ville de Paris

Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 6pm
Late opening Friday until 9pm

INFORMATIONS

www.petitpalais.paris.fr

From 14 November, the Petit Palais presents the first ever retrospective in France of works by the Neapolitan painter Luca Giordano (1634-1705), one of the most brilliant artists of the European 17th century. The exhibition highlights the exceptional virtuosity of this illustrious Seicento painter with nearly ninety works, monumental paintings and drawings, assembled thanks to exceptional loans from the Museo di Capodimonte, Naples, the main churches in Naples and numerous European institutions, including the Museo del Prado. Following the exhibition of works by the sculptor Vincenzo Gemito (1852-1929), this retrospective is part of the season that the Petit Palais is devoting to Naples this autumn in partnership with the Museo di Capodimonte.



Luca Giordano, *Ariadne abandoned (Ariana Abbandonata)*, 1675-1680, 203 x 246 cm, oil on canvas, Musée de Castelvecchio, Vérone, Italie

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Organised chronologically but also establishing comparisons with major paintings by other painters, the exhibition aims to bring fresh insights into the artist and to show how Giordano drew on the best aspects of the stylistic trends of his time to create those compositions that were so attractive to his century.

A pupil of Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652), who was Spanish by birth but Neapolitan by adoption, Giordano skilfully assimilated Ribera's tenebrism as he set out on his highly successful career, painting what were more or less pastiches of works by Raphael, Titian and Dürer. An educational stay in Rome in about 1653 brought him into contact with baroque modernity and the innovations of artists like Rubens and Pietro da Cortona. His ability to assimilate the innovations of his time as well as the masters of the past ensured that Giordano's work evolved steadily from naturalism to baroque dramatisations of unsurpassed exuberance.

He was soon recognized throughout the Italian peninsula, and received numerous commissions, producing nearly 5,000 paintings and frescoes, which earned him the nickname «Luca fa presto» (Luca the quick)! He was the painter par excellence of the churches of Naples, which are full of his altar paintings, a selection of which will be on display in the exhibition. The complex dramaturgy of these immense compositions is striking. They feature the saints of the Counter-Reformation as well as the patron saints of the city, notably San Gennaro (Saint Januarius). The huge painting of *San Gennaro Interceding for the Victims of the Plague* recalls the grim context of that period, which saw the largest city in southern Europe lose half its population to the plague of 1656.

The exhibition brings out the contrast between such tortured compositions as *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter* (Giordano's and Mattia Pretti's), *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* (by the same artists), the horrific *Apollo and Marsyas* (Giordano's and Ribera's) and, in a sensual register inherited from Titian, the languorous figures of *Venus*, *Ariadne Abandoned* and *Diana and Endymion*.

His reputation spread beyond Italy and, although he declined royal invitations to go to Paris, he moved to the court of Charles II of Spain in 1692, where he painted vast frescoes for the Cazón del Buen Retiro in Madrid, the Monasterio del Escorial, Toledo Cathedral, as well as other monuments. The exhibition reflects this major aspect of his work by offering visitors an immersive screening experience. Giordano returned to Naples in 1702 and died less than three years later, leaving his mark on a city where his works have fascinated successive generations from that day to this.

GENERAL CURATORS :

Christophe Leribault, Director of the Petit Palais

Sylvain Bellenger, Director of the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte

ACADEMIC CURATORS :

Stefano Causa, Professor at l'Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa, Naples

Patrizia Piscitello, Head of the Exhibition Department of Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte

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