



A BEQUEST OF BARON MICHELE LAZZARONI  
A QUESTIONABLE CHOICE OF THE ACADEMY OF SAN LUCA IN THE EARLY  
TWENTIETH CENTURY

On 18th May 2017 the National Academy of San Luca will participate in International Museum Day, supported by the ICOM, dedicated, for the 2017 edition, to the theme “Museums and controversial stories. Narrating the unspeakable in the Museums”.

Accepting the invite to illustrate controversial memories of its own history, The National Academy of San Luca extracts some of the paintings from its own depository in order to tell the events connected to baron Michele Lazzaroni and to his bequest to the Roman institution (1934). The paintings that will be exposed are: *The Virgin Mary with Child and Saint John the Baptist (Madonna con Bambino e San Giovannino)* from Florentine School, *The Virgin Mary with Child (Madonna con Bambino)* from Venetian School and *Portrait of a Noblewoman (Ritratto di nobildonna)* attributed by Bronzino. The event is addressed not only to a specialized public but also to whoever is interested in the topic of forgeries in history of art.

The exhibition of the three “controversial” paintings from the Lazzaroni bequest, displayed on the first floor of the Palazzo Carpegna, will be open to the spectators from 10 a.m; guided tours to illustrate the whole event and the recent studies on the paintings are scheduled at 10 am, 12 am, 3 pm, 5 pm.

In line with the spirit of collaboration between institutions and museum professionals supported by ICOM, the initiative avails itself of the technical contribution of non-destructive testing laboratory and archaeometry of Sapienza University of Rome, which has been engaged for several years in diagnostic campaigns for Lazzaroni’s bequest.

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, baron Lazzaroni took an active part in a phenomenon which nowadays is defined as the falsification of ancient art. Despite the authentic passion for art as an artist, collector and art writer, Lazzaroni was the author of the restoration works, which were at the edge of counterfeiting, applied to hundreds of artworks which were sold to American collectors and museums. In 1934 the baron – an honorary academic since 1890 – in his final will imparted to the roman institution the possibility to chose ten paintings from his collection.

The choice made by most eminent experts of the time period- Federico Hermanin, the supervisor of Galleries of Rome, Pietro Toesca, the professor of Renaissance art and Gustavo Giovannoni, the President of the Academy- rose during the twentieth century many doubts about the authenticity of some artworks. A suggested theme offers an occasion even for the Academy to confront inconvenient aspects of its own past in order to establish a consideration about reasons that encouraged the commissioners to chose the pieces of art in spite of their profound historical and artistic knowledge.

The initiative is coordinated by Valentina Oodrah (Accademia Nazionale di san Luca) and Lucilla Pronti (Sapienza UNiversità di Roma).

**ACCADEMIA NAZIONALE DI SAN LUCA**

Roma, piazza dell'Accademia di San Luca 77 | tel. 06.6798850 06.6798848 | [www.accademiasanluca.eu](http://www.accademiasanluca.eu)