

DIRECT FROM ITALY

New museum offers exclusive exhibit

BY GREG WAXBERG
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To coincide with the opening of its new location, the Mississippi Museum of Art will host an exhibit direct from Italy that is designed specifically for Jackson. "Between God and Man: Angels in Italian Art" opens on Saturday and runs through Dec. 30.

Many of the works have never left Italy. They are on loan from the Uffizi Gallery and Pitti Palace, among more than 70 collections and museums in Florence, Venice and Rome. They will return to Italy after the exhibit.

"We knew we wanted a spectacular exhibition to open our new museum facility," Robin Dietrick, curator of exhibitions, said.

She and other members of the staff, including Director Betsy Bradley and Deputy Director for Programs Dan Piersol, traveled to Italy last December to meet with organizers and historians. Among them was Dr. Francesco Buranelli, director general of the Vatican Museums.

"We targeted Dr. Buranelli to be our guest curator, and there were two other art historians who helped pull the exhibition together by identifying various museums in Italy and finding these works," Piersol said. "We saw some things that we were looking for, and they ran many, many things by us. We relied on them."

The exhibit ranges from the fifth century B.C. to the 20th century, with more than 130 objects encompassing ancient earthenware, gilt wood, bronze and marble sculptures, oil paintings, temperas, stone mosaics and stained glass.

The Renaissance is represented by such painters as Titian, Fra Filippo Lippi and Donatello. The public also will see works by Giovanni Tiepolo (known for frescoes), Late Baroque sculptor Pietro Bracci, Baroque painter Francesco Solimena, sculptor Mario Ceroli and painter and sculptor Sandro Chia.



Bradley compares this exhibit to "Angels from the Vatican," which was featured at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York approximately 20 years ago.

"We thought that a similar exhibition would attract a broad audience of people to the museum and fulfill the expectations of the audiences built by the international exhibitions previously held in this building," she said.

Piersol believes that angels are a major part of the exhibit's mass appeal.

"Everyone is interested in the idea of angels," he said. "There are people who are looking for religious content. There are people who are looking for a historical content. People have their favorite painters who are Renaissance masters, and we have loads of those."

He also points out that the emphasis on the development and nature of angels distinguishes this exhibit from other displays of Italian art that have been seen in the United States.

When asked about famous works in the exhibit, Dietrick responds with one in particular.

"The signature piece is Filippo Lippi's *Annunciation*, which illustrates one of the best-known encounters with angels — the moment Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary her important role in the life of the savior."

DETAILS

- (601) 960-1515, (866) 843-9278 or www.msmuseum-mart.org
- The museum is at 380 South Lamar St.
- A walkthrough of the exhibit by Dan Piersol will take place at noon and 3 p.m. Saturday.
- Prices, with audio tour included:
 - \$12 for adults.
 - \$10 for adults over 60.
 - \$6 for ages 6 through college.
 - Free for museum members and children under 6.