



Eni: an extraordinary exhibition from the Louvre Museum at Palazzo Marino

The Adoration of the Shepherds and St. Joseph the carpenter

San Donato Milanese (Milan), 25 November 2011 - For the first time in Italy, [The adoration of the Shepherds](#) by [Georges de La Tour](#) will be shown together with one of the most famous masterpieces by the painter from Lorraine, [St Joseph the Carpenter](#), in the now annual exhibition at [Palazzo Marino](#) organised by Eni in collaboration with the City Council of Milan and the [Louvre Museum](#). The two extraordinary works of art by one of the most fascinating painters of the 1600s, known to many as the "French Caravaggio", will be exhibited in Milan in the Sala Alessi of Palazzo Marino, with free admission to the public from 26th November 2011 to 8th January 2012.

The exhibition, curated by Valeria Merlini and Daniela Storti, returns this year thanks to the partnership between Eni and the Louvre Museum, which is making some of its most important works of art available for the event. This year, the works of one of the most evocative and mysterious artists from the 1600s in France will be shown to a public who have now been following this event in Milan for some years. Although his name may be less well known to the public than other "stars" of historical painting, when given the chance to see these two artworks you immediately feel as if you have always known them, thanks to their capacity to penetrate the sensibility of the observer.

Existing documents tell us very little about the life of the painter from Lorraine. His training still remains a mystery, as does the rest of his life. It is believed that he made a visit to Italy during which he may have compared his own work to that of the great [Caravaggio](#), who is always referred to in any critical analysis of his work. *The Adoration of the Shepherds* entered the

Louvre's collections in 1926, after Hermann Voss attributed it to La Tour. In 1915, this great German art historian saved the artist from the oblivion into which he had fallen.

The theme of the adoration of the shepherds by night became popular outside Italy in the early 1500s with the famous [Correggio's Adoration of the Shepherds](#), which was stored at Dresden and nicknamed *The Night*. In the magical atmosphere evoked by the paintings of Georges de La Tour, the Franco-Flemish style plays an extremely important role in the intimate and domestic feeling of the scene. In the perhaps better known painting of *St. Joseph the Carpenter*, the warm light diffused from a candle held by Jesus, as he lovingly looks at the face of his father working, creates a night time atmosphere which was a common theme of the Nordic painting tradition of the time. In the image, the touching father-son relationship also prompts several observations on the iconography surrounding the devotion for the Saint, for the Child, and for the Cross – brought to mind by the wood on which Joseph kneels - which is in keeping with many religious texts of the time. From a technical point of view, perhaps this painting also represents the best expression of the body of "candlelight" paintings by La Tour. The candle, brought to the eye of the observer by the transparent hand of the Child, lights up his young face which therefore becomes the real source of light in the intimate and familiar scene, giving it a spiritual feeling.

The public can admire these two exceptionally important artworks in a dedicated setting: rational in terms of the distribution of space and sophisticated in the choice of materials. Elisabetta Greci's design project was born from a series of conceptual and aesthetic ideas that are largely connected to the classic iconography of the Nativity, to the Nordic architecture that was familiar to the Master painter and to the simplicity and "humble naturalness" that befits both subjects of the two masterpieces. She has therefore chosen a sculptural and linear "architecture" that is evocative due to its size and interior decoration, using traditional and natural materials. The exhibition space, composed of a large wave-shaped dividing wall, plastered with lime and clay, and old wood flooring - an organism "suspended" in the Sala Alessi – is made up of surfaces that are conceptually "simple" and which allow the atmosphere of the space to be enriched with lighting effects. The viewing of the artworks, which are traditionally placed in opposite display cases to allow their history and cultural context to be enjoyed at close quarters, is supported by various videos and aided by the

presence of art historians and restorers in the room who casually guide the visitors and answer their questions and queries. In the video room, the public has the chance to learn more about certain aspects of the mysterious story of the great painter from Lorraine who had fallen into oblivion for centuries and in the last few years has become the subject of important new critical studies.

A varied spectrum of points of view is made available and is useful in enriching our perception of the era from which both of these two paintings derive. This is also thanks to the help of the expert scientists featured in the catalogue edited by [Skira](#). The exhibition aims to encourage a lively and enthusiastic debate between the art historians attending, and the public who are following this Christmas event at the Palazzo Marino, which this year celebrates four years since its foundation. For this year's event, particular attention is given to schools to which Eni is dedicating a project of educational workshops and has prepared different learning tools and materials in various formats (videos, texts, images) that are useful for teachers' lessons in the classroom and can also be accessed through the website <http://www.eniscuola.net/en/>. In addition, as was the case last year, there will be meetings held, with free admission, in the new conference room at Palazzo Marino on the theme of father-son relationships. This year's subject is strongly inspired by the fascination that is provoked by the gaze between St. Joseph and the Child Jesus in the painting on show at the exhibition.

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