

## Giovanni Battista Moroni

### The Sackler Wing

25 October 2014 – 25 January 2015

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This exhibition of outstanding works by Giovanni Battista Moroni (c.1520-1579), widely regarded as one of the greatest painters of the sixteenth century, will be the first comprehensive survey of his oeuvre to be held in the UK. In the autumn of 2014, the Royal Academy of Arts will gather a selection of over 40 works to present Moroni not only as a distinctive portraitist but also as a fine religious painter, a role for which he is lesser known. For the first time, a number of altarpieces from the churches of the Diocese of Bergamo, northern Italy, will be displayed alongside examples of Moroni's portraiture, chronologically charting his rise to the summit of Italian sixteenth-century painting. From works influenced by Lotto and Moroni's master Moretto, to later commissions earned as the leading painter of Bergamo, *Giovanni Battista Moroni* will offer viewers the chance to discover Moroni as an unsung genius of the Renaissance.

Moroni captured the exact likeness, character and inner life of his sitters with rare penetrating insight. His portraiture, singular not only for its unprecedented realism but also its psychological depth and immediacy, was in many ways ahead of his time. Preempting the work of Caravaggio, Moroni came to be widely collected in the nineteenth century, including *Portrait of a Lady* (c.1556-60) and *A Knight with a Jousting Helmet* (c.1556), purchased by the National Gallery, London, in 1876. Moroni's portraits depict members of the society in which he lived, a cast of compelling Renaissance characters whose lives played out the feuds and family dramas of a pro-Spanish aristocracy living under the Republic of Venice in the mid-sixteenth century. With a selection to establish Moroni as one of the major specialists in the genre, his portraits reveal an enamel-like brightness, a clarity of design and a touch of realism which is in contrast to the adorned portraiture of his contemporary Titian.

Although Moroni's name was linked to Bergamo, he also lived and worked in the nearby towns of Brescia, Trent and Albino. Working in a city without a leading court, Moroni's sitters span a surprisingly wide social spectrum; his clientèle, unique at the time, comprised intellectuals, professionals, state officers and artisans. His famous portrait of *The Tailor* (1565-1570), one of the highlights of this exhibition, is the first known portrait of a man depicted whilst undertaking manual labour. In capturing the world around him, Moroni's works also offer a vivid record of the fashions and fortunes of Bergamo, revealing changes in costume as the colourful silks of the portraits of *Isotta Brembati* (c.1555) and *Gian Gerolamo Grumelli* (c.1560), yield to the more sombre styles of the Spanish fashion, seen in the portrait of *Pietro Secco Suardo* (1563).

Moroni's religious paintings were completed in accordance with the principles of the Counter-Reformation and the Council of Trent (1545-1563). In these, a worshipper is often depicted as a witness to the sacred scene, as demonstrated by *The Last Supper* (c.1566-1569). The pastoral visit of the religious reformer Cardinal Charles Borromeo to the Diocese of Bergamo in 1575 prompted the churches of the region to commission many new religious paintings, and Moroni as the leading painter produced several art works for public devotion, including the altarpiece painting *Saint Gotthard Enthroned with Saint Lawrence and Saint Catherine of Alexandria* (c.1575). The selection of Moroni's religious works will also include examples of paintings intended for private devotion, such as *A Gentleman in Adoration before the Baptism of Christ* (c.1555-1560).

The exhibition will be a definitive survey of Moroni's output and includes many of his greatest masterpieces. It will reveal an artist who has perhaps gone unrecognised as an exceptional painter and a master of the Renaissance.

### **Organisation**

*Giovanni Battista Moroni* has been organised by the Royal Academy of Arts, London. The exhibition has been curated by Simone Facchinetti, Curator of the Museo Adriano Bernareggi in Bergamo, and Arturo Galansino, Curator at the Royal Academy of Arts.

### **Catalogue**

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated and scholarly catalogue with contributions from Simone Facchinetti and Arturo Galansino.

### **Dates and Opening Hours**

**Press View:** Tuesday 21 October, 10am – 2pm  
Open to public: Saturday 25 October 2014 – Sunday 25 January 2015  
10am – 6pm daily (last admission 5.30pm)  
Fridays until 10pm (last admission 9.30pm)

### **Admission**

£13.50 full price (including Gift Aid donation); concessions available; children under 16 and Friends of the RA go free.

### **Tickets**

Tickets for *Giovanni Battista Moroni* are available daily at the RA or online at [www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk). Group bookings: Groups of 10+ are asked to book in advance. Telephone 020 7300 8027 or email [adultgroups@royalacademy.org.uk](mailto:adultgroups@royalacademy.org.uk).

### **Images**

Publicity images for *Giovanni Battista Moroni* can be obtained from Picselect, the Press Association's image service for press use. Please register at [www.picselect.com](http://www.picselect.com) and once registered go to the Royal Academy folder in the Arts section of Picselect.

## **Social Media**

Join the discussion about the exhibition online at:

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