



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**RARE WORK BY ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI ACQUIRED BY  
WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART**

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art—America’s oldest public art museum—has acquired a rare self-portrait by Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi, one of the most recognized and sought-after artists of all time. “Self-Portrait as a Lute Player” (1616-18) was purchased using funds from the recently established Charles H. Schwartz Fund for European Art, and is the first painting by a female artist of the Baroque period to enter the museum’s permanent collection. This painting—alongside masterpieces by Fra Angelico, Caravaggio and Artemisia’s father Orazio Gentileschi, up to 19th- and 20th-century works by Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir—will be a centerpiece of the 2015 reinstallation of the museum’s European collections in the Morgan Memorial Building following a five-year renovation.

A mere three, uncontested self-portraits by the artist are known to exist worldwide; being that two of them are allegories, “Self-Portrait as a Lute Player” is the only true self-portrait that remains. The artist rendered herself about 25 years old, engaging directly with the viewer while her nimble fingers suggest she is actually playing the instrument. Trained by her father Orazio, Artemisia’s remarkable painting technique rivals other masters of her day. The highly accomplished treatment of light washing over her skin, the intricate gold embroidery on her opulent blue costume and the delicate folds of her turban demonstrate Gentileschi’s mastery of detail and color. Perhaps the most astonishing quality of the work is its intimacy—“Self-Portrait as a Lute Player” gives the viewer the closest possible impression of the artist’s presence, whose ambiguous expression hints at a more complex meaning.

“We are thrilled that Artemisia Gentileschi’s stunning masterpiece is the first work to be acquired with monies from the Charles H. Schwartz Fund. It would have previously been impossible for us to purchase this superlative painting without our magnificent new gift from Mr. Schwartz,” said Susan L. Talbott, Director and C.E.O. of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art. “In adding this

jewel to our collection the Wadsworth becomes the first museum in New England to offer a glimpse of this distinguished artist's vision.”

The Charles H. Schwartz Fund was recently established through a bequest from Schwartz, a former museum member. This \$9.6 million gift is the largest bequest received by the museum in its history, and supports expanding the museum's collection of English and European works of art from the 18th century and earlier.

Born in Rome in 1593, Gentileschi grew to be regarded as one of the most refined and bold painters of her generation, and was the first woman to become a member of the famous Accademia di Arte del Disegno in Florence. Gentileschi drew on the harrowing experience of her rape at age 18, spending her career painting strong heroines and bloody stories. Her gripping works depict complex compositions with biblical and mythological narratives, and her subjects are often clad in sumptuous costumes and beautified by sensuous light and shadow effects. Her themes, paired with her distinct style, have made her one of the most powerfully expressive woman painters in history.

With this landmark purchase the Wadsworth adds to its robust collection of Baroque works by the likes of Caravaggio, Orazio Gentileschi, Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, Salvator Rosa and Francisco de Zurbarán.

“The quality and scope of our Baroque paintings makes the Wadsworth one of the leading institutions in the United States,” said Oliver Tostmann, Susan Morse Hilles Curator of European Paintings, Sculptures and Drawings. “Artemisia Gentileschi's breathtaking self-portrait rounds out the collection by adding an exceptional female perspective to what was inarguably a male-dominated era.”

“Self-Portrait as a Lute Player” depicts the artist during a decisive point in her career. Having arrived in Florence, she would have needed the support of powerful patrons; by portraying herself as a highly cultivated artist—wearing luxurious clothes and enchanting the viewer with her mastery of the lute—she would have appealed to the tastes of elite Florentine circles. The painting was possibly a commission by Grand Duke Cosimo II de' Medici, an avid patron of Gentileschi, and was recorded in the Medici collection as early as 1638. Lost to notice until rediscovered in a private collection in 1998, the painting was then exhibited in major Gentileschi shows around the world, and was recently made available through Christie's New York.

“We at Christie's are absolutely delighted with this outcome,” said Nicholas Hall, Co-Chairman, Old Master & 19th Century Art, Christie's New York. “We are very proud that this one-of-a-kind treasure is going to such a prestigious institution, and look forward to seeing Artemisia's gaze from the walls of the Wadsworth for years to come.”

“Self-Portrait as a Lute Player” will have its public debut at the Wadsworth as part of the reopening of the historic Morgan Memorial Building in 2015. A special preview of the painting will be offered to the Society of Daniel Wadsworth—the museum’s premier membership group—later this spring. For information on joining the Society of Daniel Wadsworth, visit [thewadsworth.org/support/membership](http://thewadsworth.org/support/membership).

### **About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art**

Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest public art museum in the United States. The museum’s nearly 50,000 works of art span 5,000 years, from Greek and Roman antiquities to the first museum collection of American contemporary art. The museum’s five connected buildings—representing architectural styles from Gothic Revival to modern International Style—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Connecticut. Hours: Wed – Fri: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Sat & Sun: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; First Thursdays: 11 a.m. – 8 p.m. Admission: \$5 – 10; discounts for members, students and seniors. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: [thewadsworth.org](http://thewadsworth.org).

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