

ISABELLA
STEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM

ADVANCE EXHIBITION RELEASE

“Modeling Devotion:
Terracotta Sculpture of the Italian Renaissance”

*Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, presents exhibition of terracotta sculpture,
an intriguing art form of the Italian Renaissance*



Matteo Civitate: *Virgin and Child*, ca. 1480
Painted terracotta, height 99 cm



Giovanni della Robbia, *Lamentation of Christ*, ca. 1515
glazed terracotta, height 250 cm. Long Gallery

On view February 25 through May 23, 2010

Organized by Alan Chong, William and Lia Poorvu Curator of the Collection, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

BOSTON, MA | JANUARY 29, 2010 • In Italy during the Renaissance (around 1400 to 1600), an innovative form of sculpture was developed using fine clay that was shaped and modeled before being fired in a kiln. Called terracotta in Italian (meaning baked earth), this type of sculpture has often been overlooked in favor of sculpture carved in marble or cast in bronze. The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum presents a new exhibition called *Modeling Devotion*, highlighting terracotta works from the collection.

The freedom and detailing possible with terracotta allowed artists to capture emotions and psychological expressiveness. Moreover, terracotta sculptures of the Renaissance were almost always painted or glazed in naturalistic colors. Figures were often life-sized, three-dimensional, and fully colored, giving terracotta sculpture a remarkable immediacy. For large works consisting of several figures, each figure was often fired separately and then the whole assembled for painting. If a sculpture was to be painted, it would be covered with a type of plaster (called gesso) and then entirely painted. If a sculpture was to be glazed, it was first coated with white glaze onto which colors were applied, each color often fired separately. In Florence, Luca della Robbia and his family perfected a type of opaque glaze of pure white which set off brilliant colors.

Isabella Gardner acquired several terracotta sculptures, including large multi-figured compositions. In both religious scenes meant to inspire the faithful, as well as in portraits that recorded individual likeness, the naturalism of colored terracotta works conveyed emotions with great power.



Giovanni de Fondulis, *Deposition of Christ and Carlotta of Lusignano*, ca. 1480
Details of the Virgin and Christ. Painted terracotta, height 104 cm

Modeling Devotion presents works by Matteo Civitale; Giovanni de Fondulis; Benedetto da Maiano; the Workshop of Andrea della Robbia; Giovanni Bastianini; Giovanni della Robbia; and the Workshop of Lorenzo Ghiberti. *Modeling Devotion* is on view at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum from February 25 to May 23, 2010.

The exhibition has been made possible in part by the Sherman Fairchild Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The Gardner Museum receives operating support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

EXHIBITION PROGRAMS • Exhibition programs offer more ways to engage in art and ideas at the Gardner. Explore themes with scholars or drop by the gallery for talks on weekend afternoons.

Special Exhibition Gallery Talks

Saturdays and Sundays at 12:00pm (*Free with museum admission*)

Modeling Devotion: A Closer Look

Wednesday, March 10, 2010, 1:30–5pm (*Tickets: \$65 General Public; \$45 Members, Students, & Seniors*)

This special afternoon program will include focus talks on terracotta sculpture from the Italian Renaissance along with active looking and small group discussions in the galleries. Join Alan Chong, *William and Lia Poorvu Curator of the Collection*, Valentine Talland, *Senior Objects Conservator*, and Marietta Cambareri, *Curator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, along with other museum staff for an afternoon of learning and discovery. A reception in The Gardner Café will follow.

1:30-3pm: Focus Talks by Marietta Cambareri, Valentine Talland, and Alan Chong

3-4pm: Group Discussion in the Galleries

4-5pm: Dessert and coffee in The Gardner Café

ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM • 280 The Fenway Boston MA 02115 • Tue.-Sun., 11 am-5 pm • admission: Adults \$12; Seniors \$10; Students \$5; Free for members, children under 18, everyone on his/her birthday, and all named "Isabella" • "After Hours" admission: Adults \$12; Seniors \$10; Students \$5; Free for members, • \$2 off admission with a same-day Museum of Fine Arts, Boston • Info Line: 617.566.1401 • Box Office: 617.278.5156 • www.gardnermuseum.org • Modeled after a 15th-century Venetian palazzo surrounding a courtyard garden, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum houses one of the most remarkable art collections in the world, featuring works by Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Raphael, Degas and Sargent. Visit us online to learn more about our special exhibitions, concerts, innovative arts education programs, and evening events.

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PRESS PREVIEW • WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24 • 9:00 TO 10:30 AM • Please join museum Director Anne Hawley and exhibition curator Alan Chong for an exclusive press preview of the exhibition and reception on Wednesday, February 24th from 9:00 to 10:30 am. FREE parking is available at the MFA garage for media guests with advance notice. Please RSVP to 617.278.5107 or karmstrong@isgm.org.

PRESS KIT • A full press kit on the exhibition, including images, wall text, and additional information will be available in early February.