

PRESS RELEASE

# RESEARCHING RENI – A NEW SHINE FOR GUIDO RENI’S MASTERPIECE

**LIVE EVENT WITH RESEARCH INSIGHTS INTO THE CONSERVATION OF  
GUIDO RENI’S MASTERPIECE “CHRIST AT THE COLUMN” ON 12 JULY 2022 /  
PARTNERSHIP WITH BANK OF AMERICA’S ART CONSERVATION PROJECT**

**Frankfurt am Main, 20 June 2022.** One of the most celebrated artworks by the Italian Baroque painter Guido Reni (1575–1642) is currently in conservation at the Städel Museum. *Christ at the Column* (c. 1604) is a masterpiece by the star painter of the 17th century. The conservation is made possible through the support of funding through Bank of America’s Art Conservation Project. The conservation work sees the removal of old varnish from the painting along with retouching and overpainting that has taken place over the years.

The masterpiece will be presented to the public in a major exhibition dedicated to the rediscovery of the artist, at the Städel Museum in autumn 2022. Prior to that, the curator and the conservation department will be providing insight into the history of the artwork and the conservation process in an online presentation on Tuesday, 12 July 2022 at 4 pm CET. The online event will be broadcast live from the museum’s conservation department to the Städel’s YouTube-channel.

“The Städel Museum stands for excellence in the field of conservation and has successfully preserved a number of important works throughout its history, providing the public with an unadulterated view of them. Bank of America has supported us on various occasions for years, and we thank the bank for its partnership in conserving the painting for the upcoming major Städel exhibition, featuring the painter star of Italian Baroque, Guido Reni,” says Philipp Demandt, Director of the Städel Museum.

“The arts are not only but especially important in challenging times for building bridges,” emphasizes Armin von Falkenhayn, Country Executive Germany and Head of Corporate and Investment Banking in the DACH region at Bank of America. “We are delighted to be able to support crucial restoration work to

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protect and preserve the world's cultural heritage. Globally, Bank of America has now supported over 6,000 individual restorations in 39 countries. It is our honour to once again collaborate with the world-famous Städel Museum, which is our 9th restoration project in Germany and the 3rd at this institution. I am excited to see one of Guido Reni's most remarkable masterpieces come back to life."

Since 2010, Bank of America's Art Conservation Project has supported the conservation of more than 6,000 individual pieces including paintings, sculptures, and archaeological and architectural pieces of critical importance to cultural heritage and the history of art. More than 200 projects across 39 countries have been managed by not-for-profit cultural institutions that receive grant funding to conserve historically or culturally significant works of art that are in danger of deterioration.

The conservation of Guido Reni's painting *Christ at the Column* (c. 1604) will serve as a prelude to the Städel Museum's major exhibition "GUIDO RENI 'The Divine'" (23 November 2022 to 5 March 2023), organised in cooperation with the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid. Despised in the 19th century on account of the aesthetic preferences of that era, later relegated to the side-lines by the one-sided concentration on his rival Caravaggio, Reni today no longer occupies the place he deserves in the public consciousness. In his own day, he was one of Europe's most successful and most celebrated painters, sought after by such prominent patrons as the Borghese Pope Paul V, the Duke of Mantua and the Queen of England. Whether his subject matter was the Christian heaven or the world of classical mythology, Guido Reni was unmatched in his ability to translate the beauty of the divine into painting.

### **The Painting's Conservation**

The painting has already been on permanent display in the Gallery of Old Masters at the Städel Museum for several years. However, the aesthetic condition was poor: a yellowed layer of varnish, discoloured retouches, and old overpainting, inter alia, obscured the painting. As a result, the characteristic colouring and the spatiality of the original work has been lost.

The conservation work focuses mainly on the removal of these later interventions. It corrects previous treatments and enhances the painting's aesthetic as a whole. Apart from the mere conservation, further research and an in-depth scientific examination of *Christ at the Column* are being carried out,

leading to new art technological insights and a detailed re-evaluation of this masterpiece.

### **Details of the Online Event**

The conservation of Guido Reni's painting *Christ at the Column* is being carried out by Lilly Becker, Art-Technology and Conservation Paintings and Modern Sculpture, under the direction of Stephan Knobloch, Head of the department at the Städel Museum. Along with curator Bastian Eclercy they will be providing an in-depth at the conservation process on Tuesday, 12 July 2022 at 4 pm CET. Broadcast live from the Städel's conservation department, Stephan Knobloch will introduce the project, followed by a presentation by Lilly Becker about the principles of the conservation. Bastian Eclercy closes with the artwork's art-historical significance and an outlook to the forthcoming exhibition "GUIDO RENI 'The Divine'". The livestream will be available via the museum's YouTube channel, and there will be an opportunity to ask questions via live chat. The registration for this event can be done via the museum's [newsroom](#).

### **The Painting's Significance**

After training in his native Bologna, Guido Reni moved to Rome, the melting pot of artistic innovation from all over Europe, in 1601. In the Eternal City he soon entered in rivalry with Caravaggio. Within a period of only several years he altered his style and "transformed himself into Caravaggio", as his early biographer Carlo Cesare Malvasia (1678) put it. That means, Reni programmatically and selectively imitated aspects of Caravaggio's art, above all the latter's famous *chiaroscuro*. However, even in this "naturalistic" period, he never gave up his obsession with elegance and beauty.

The painting *Christ at the Column* (c. 1604) is probably Reni's first work in this new style. God's son is standing at the column with his head bowed. He steps out of the darkness into the light and faces his fate, waiting for the blows of the henchmen. Christ is tied to the Column of the Flagellation – almost a "portrait" of the famous relic revered to the present day in the Roman Basilica of Santa Prassede. And it was this monastery's guesthouse where Reni lived in those years, working for cardinals like Paolo Emilio Sfondrati and Antonio Maria Gallo. Yet the painter does not depict the Flagellation in the traditional way as a narrative including the henchmen. Instead, he directs the viewer's attention to the figure of Christ alone, his ambiguous feelings in this moment, his strength and his faith.

The Städel Museum's exhibition "GUIDO RENI 'The Divine'" will devote an entire section to Reni's engagement with Caravaggio and juxtapose the Frankfurt canvas to other masterpieces by his hand from the same period for the first time. Visitors will be able to directly compare the restored painting with *The Martyrdom of Saint Catherine* (c. 1606; Albenga, Museo Diocesano), *David with the Head of Goliath* (c. 1605/06; Orléans, Musée des Beaux-Arts) and several other works. Art-historical research by the curator of the exhibition and Head of Italian, French and Spanish Paintings before 1800, Bastian Eclercy, is accompanying the conservation project, and the results will be presented in an extensive entry in the catalogue.

### **Bank of America's Art Conservation Projects**

The painting by Guido Reni is one of 23 selected Art Conservation Projects funded by Bank of America through its Art Conservation Project 2021. The project has already enabled two restoration collaborations with the Städel Museum in Germany.

The Bank of America Art Conservation Project is a key demonstration of Bank of America's arts support worldwide. Through the Art Conservation Project, as well as programs like Museums on Us<sup>®</sup>, loaning exhibitions through the Art in Our Communities program, the Masterpiece Moment video series and sponsorships and grants, Bank of America supports a wide range of both local and world-class organisations. The company's programs are designed to have a positive impact on economies and societies throughout the world and help create greater cultural understanding. Through steadfast and strategic support, Bank of America has become one of the world's leading corporate supporters of the arts. Please find more information about the Art Conservation Project [here](#).

#### **Details of the artwork:**

Guido Reni (1575–1642)  
Christ at the Column, c. 1604  
Oil on Canvas, 192.7 x 114.4 cm  
Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

#### **Online Event:**

Researching Reni – Conservation of Guido Reni's masterpiece "Christ at the Column"  
Tuesday, 12 July 2022 at 4 pm CET  
Livestream on the Städel Museum's YouTube-channel  
Registration via the Städel Museum's [newsroom](#)  
With Dr Bastian Eclercy (Head of Italian, French and Spanish Paintings before 1800, Städel Museum), Stephan Knobloch (Head of Art Technology and Conservation – Paintings and Modern Sculptures, Städel Museum), Lilly Becker (Art Technology and Conservation – Paintings and Modern Sculptures, Städel Museum)



**Exhibition:**

GUIDO RENI "The Divine"

23 November 2022 to 5 March 2023

An exhibition by the Städel Museum in cooperation with the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

**Curator:** Dr Bastian Eclercy (Head of Italian, French and Spanish Paintings before 1800, Städel Museum)

**Sponsored by:** Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain gGmbH, Städelscher Museums-Verein e.V.

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**Städel Blog:** More stories and background information on the collection and the special exhibitions are available at [blog.staedelmuseum.de](http://blog.staedelmuseum.de) / Don't miss any articles, [blog.staedelmuseum.de/blog-abonnieren](http://blog.staedelmuseum.de/blog-abonnieren)