

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE September 25, 2019

NOTRE DAME, IN. -- The Snite Museum of Art is pleased to announce an extraordinary long-term loan from the Cummins Family Collection of the painting *St. Paul the Hermit* by Jusepe de Ribera (b. 1588- d. 1656).

On the occasion of announcing the loan, Dr. Joseph Antenucci Becherer, Director of the Museum, said, "The significance of this long-term loan to the Museum cannot be overstated."

Recognized as one of the greatest Baroque masters, Ribera was born in Jativa, near Valencia, in Spain. He left Spain for Italy as a young man and was active there for most of his career. Known as "lo Spagnoletto" (The Little Spanish One), Ribera lived and worked in Parma, Rome, and Naples. He is recorded as living in Rome by 1612, and is viewed as one of the artists drawn to, and influenced by, Caravaggio and his followers. His extreme version of Caravaggio's naturalism can be seen in his use of strongly contrasting light and shadows, his brooding figures depicted with raw realism.

Art historian Tomaso Montanari has described the softer and lighter style that emerged following Ribera's activity in Parma around 1614—a style showing indebtedness to the work of Annibale Carracci and Guido Reni. It is this period around 1615, just before Ribera's move to Naples, that Montanari dates *St. Paul the Hermit*. Montanari characterizes the painting as indicative of the artist's style in precisely those years after a sojourn to Emilia-Romagna and before the artist's departure for Naples where his style became more strictly codified.

According to legend, St. Paul the First Hermit was born in Egypt. During the persecution of Decius (A.D. 250) he left for the desert where he remained a hermit for ninety years. After the saint had lived in solitude for twenty-one years, a raven began to bring him a half loaf of bread each day. The loaf and three dates, nourishment from the desert palm tree, are prominently displayed in the foreground of the painting. The saint grasps an upturned skull with his sunburned hands as he looks up and to the right, his gray beard and the tired skin of his torso indicative of his advanced age. These motifs—the haggard depiction of an elderly bearded ascetic, the remarkably natural portrayal of the skull, and the isolation and devotion of the subject—were to become hallmarks of Ribera's work. Here they are contrasted with a distant, almost romantic landscape of a dark blue sky looming over a rocky promontory.

"Ribera's half-length portrait of a saint is a stunning example of Counter-Reformation devotional art popular in the seventeenth century, and it richly complements the University's collection of Italian religious narratives," said Cheryl Snay, Curator of European Art at the Snite Museum of Art. "Moreover, the artist's emphatic naturalism and dramatic tension make it as compelling now as it was four centuries ago."

MEDIA CONTACT: If you would like high-resolution images or in-depth information, please contact Gina Costa, Marketing and Public Relations Manager, (574) 631-4720, gcosta@nd.edu

About The Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame

Considered one of the finest university art museums in America, the Snite Museum's permanent collection contains over 25,000 works that represent many cultures and periods of world art history. Exceptional holdings include the Jack and Alfrieda Feddersen Collection of Rembrandt Etchings, the Noah L. and Muriel S. Butkin Collection of 19th-Century French Art, the John D. Reilly Collection of Old Master and 19th-Century Drawings, the Janos Scholz Collection of 19th-Century European Photographs, the Mr. and Mrs. Russell G. Ashbaugh Jr., Collection of Meštrović Sculpture and Drawings, the George Rickey Sculpture Archive, and the Virginia A. Marten Collection of 18th-Century Decorative Arts. Other collection strengths include Olmec and Mesoamerican art, 20th-century art, and Native American art.

Sculpture is displayed in the Mary Loretto and Terrence J. Dillon Courtyard and in The Charles B. Hayes Family Sculpture Park.

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Hours:
Tuesday–Friday, 10: a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Thursday evening until 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, noon–5:00 p.m.

Closed Sunday, Monday, and major holidays.

Admission is free

Directions: nd.edu/visitors/directions



Caption for image of painting:
Jusepe de Ribera (called “lo Spagnoletto”), Spanish, 1591-1652
St. Paul the Hermit, ca. 1614-1615
Oil on canvas
34 ³/₄ x 29 inches (87.5 x 73.5 cm)
Image courtesy of the Cummins Family Collection

