

Norton Simon Museum For Immediate Release

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Serial Flirtations: Rotari's Muses

March 3–July 31, 2017

Pasadena, CA—The Norton Simon Museum presents an intimate exhibition examining Pietro Rotari (1707–1762), an illustrious Italian artist who found success and fortune in Vienna and beyond, ultimately becoming court painter to Empress Elizabeth of Russia. *Serial Flirtations: Rotari's Muses* brings together eight paintings from the Simon holdings attributed to Rotari and his studio, including his iconic *Young Girl Writing a Love Letter*. Six rarely displayed character studies, all of which were returned to the artist's family after his death in St. Petersburg and retained until the 1970s by the Cartolari family, his heirs, will be featured as a set. As a whole, the installation commemorates Rotari's inclination to summon his muses and celebrates the 310th anniversary of the artist's birth.



Young Girl Writing a Love Letter, c. 1755
Pietro Antonio Rotari (Italian, 1707-1762)
Oil on canvas, 33-3/8 x 27 in. (84.8 x 68.6 cm)
Norton Simon Art Foundation

Rotari began his career in his hometown of Verona. As he gained recognition, he traveled widely throughout Italy, studying the works of Venetian, Roman and Neapolitan artists. In these early years, he painted primarily religious and historical subjects. But by 1750, when he was called to Vienna to work for Empress Maria Theresa, and then Dresden, where he was summoned by King Augustus III, his attention would turn to painting bust-length portraits of elegant members of their courts. In 1755, Rotari was summoned by Empress Elizabeth of Russia to work in St. Petersburg, where he and his prolific studio would produce hundreds of depictions of young girls, all of them demonstrating varying degrees of emotion—subtle, but clearly legible. The painter's virtuosity for such work earned him great acclaim, both for his talents and his prodigious output.

Not until after Rotari's death were his works seen in the light of seriality. Sometimes hundreds of his paintings would be installed on one wall, from ceiling to floor, like a contact sheet of photographs from a modeling agency session. While some of his portraits in Dresden may already have been seen as tiles of a larger mosaic, Catherine II's purchase of 300 paintings by Rotari and his students for her "Cabinet of the Muses" at the Peterhof Palace and her other residences sealed Rotari's fame as a painter of character heads.

Serial Flirtations: Rotari's Muses is organized by Carol Togneri, Chief Curator at the Norton Simon Museum. In conjunction with the exhibition, Togneri will present the lecture *In Praise of Women: Pietro Rotari in Russia* on Saturday, March 18th at 4:00 p.m. Information is at www.nortonsimon.org/events.

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two temporary exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. **Hours:** The Museum is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from noon to 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed on Tuesday. **Admission:** General admission is \$12 for adults and \$9 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 5 to 8 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** Pasadena Transit stops directly in front of the Museum. Please visit www.pasadenatransit.net for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.

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