

## PRESS RELEASE



### ***Hercules at the Court of Omphale* by Hans Cranach**

**The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs sponsors the restoration project**

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Madrid, 22 April 2013

Reinhard Silberberg, the German Ambassador to Spain, and Evelio Acevedo, the Director General of the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, today signed the agreement for the restoration project of Hans Cranach's painting *Hercules at the Court of Omphale* (1537), which will be sponsored by the Heritage Programme of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The work of Hans Cranach (Wittenberg, ca.1513 – Bologna, 1537), son of Lucas Cranach the Elder, is characterised by its meticulous style and by the artist's interest in detail and a precise brushstroke, resulting in paintings that seem to be almost drawn. With the aim of learning in detail about his technique and in response to the present need to restore this oil on panel from the Museum's Permanent Collection, the Museum is now embarking on this research and restoration project.

The panel has various problems with regard to its protective layer due to the oxidisation of the varnish over the years. As a result, it is difficult to gain a full appreciation of the subtle details and

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**Hans Cranach.** *Hercules at the Court of Omphale*, 1537. Oil on panel. 57.5 x 85.3 cm.  
Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.



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Madrid



original quality of the painting. The craquelure, which is a natural fracturing of the different paint layers applied to the panel, also reveals instabilities in some areas. In addition, old areas of retouching applied at some point after the original creation of the work have altered the colour over time and its present appearance no longer conforms to the original one. Lastly, the state of the wooden panel needs to be urgently assessed as during an earlier restoration a structure of vertically and horizontally aligned reinforcing wooden bars was applied to the reverse with the aim of giving the panel greater stability.

Before proceeding with the actual restoration, technical studies will be carried out. These will involve micro-photographs, infra-red photography, ultraviolet photography and X-radiographs, which will allow for detailed knowledge of both the materials used and the artist's technique and will thus provide all the necessary information regarding the work's present state in order to undertake the restoration process in a completely safe manner.

Furthermore, and in conjunction with the painting's restoration, the Museum will carry out a long-term, preventative conservation project, installing the work in a climate-controlled box that will minimise risks produced by changes of relative humidity and temperature and thus avoid to the greatest extent possible any movement of the wooden panel which could result in associated movement of the paint layers.

The subject of Cranach's painting was a popular one at the time of the work's creation and is also of notable relevance today, as indicated by the fact that it has been the subject of various academic studies. Hercules, the great Greek hero and symbol of strength and virility, is obliged to carry out tasks normally undertaken by women in a clear shift in gender roles: Omphale thus assumes the masculine role and Hercules, blinded by passion and enslaved to her, the female one. This reflection on the change of roles and on gender stereotypes will give a broader perspective to the activities that accompany the process of the painting's restoration.

The technical study will be completed in approximately 2 months while the restoration is scheduled to be completed in a period of 4 to 6 months. During that time a microsite and videos to be shown in the Museum's Main Hall will allow interested visitors to follow the restoration process. After its completion an exhibition display will present the entire process and the results obtained.

**For more information and images, please contact:**

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