



Exhibition

Maarten van Heemskerck e il fascino di Roma. Percorsi visivi della Città Eterna

The Allure of Rome. A visual journey through drawings by Maarten van Heemskerck and other artists, original antiquities, and photographic documentation

Rome, February 20, 2026

Press conference: Monday, March 2, 11 a.m., Palazzo Poli

From March 3 to June 7, 2026, the **Istituto Centrale per la Grafica (ICG)** will present the exhibition ***Maarten van Heemskerck e il fascino di Roma. Percorsi visivi della Città Eterna at Palazzo Poli***.

The exhibition focuses on unique drawings from the sketchbook of Dutch artist **Maarten van Heemskerck (1498–1574)**, the result of his creative exploration of the city of Rome and its immeasurable cultural heritage. The exhibition is the result of an international collaboration between the **ICG**, the **Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History**, and the **Kupferstichkabinett (Museum of Prints and Drawings) of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin** ([link](#)).

With this exhibition, part of Van Heemskerck's sketchbook returns to the place of its creation for the first time in almost 500 years. The Kupferstichkabinett has provided 32 of the recently restored sheets for the exhibition. Van Heemskerck's sketchbook was his constant companion on his journey of discovery through Rome. In it he documented his studies of Roman ruins and ancient sculptures and drew breathtaking views of the Eternal City. The exhibition contextualizes these drawings by paring them with early 16th-century travel guidebooks and historical photographs, on loan from the Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome. In addition, they are accompanied by ancient sculptures from the collection of Rome's Musei Capitolini and over sixty other drawings, prints, printing plates, and archival photographs from the ICG's holdings.

Curated by **Tatjana Bartsch (Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History)**, **Rita Bernini (ICG)**, and **Giorgio Marini (ICG)**, the exhibition presents a spectacular visual repertoire of views of 16th-century Rome through Van Heemskerck's drawn studies. Like few other testimonies, they offer a privileged insight into the fascination that the city and its ancient and modern works of art exerted on artists and visitors. Van Heemskerck's drawings are among the first modern examples of a systematic pictorial representation of Rome and testify to a remarkable balance between direct observation, topographical precision, and artistic creativity. In them, antiquity becomes a living model and starting point for new artistic experiments.

"This is a unique opportunity to see not only the spectacular and newly restored Berlin drawings, but also numerous other works of art, some antiquities, travel guides from Van Heemskerck's time, and historical photographs of Rome. They enable the historical contextualization of the drawings and invite comparative viewing: this brings to life a centuries-old dialogue between monument and image, and between physical presence and graphic representation." | Tatjana Bartsch (Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History)

The exhibition concludes with a montage of Italian and international film sequences paying homage to Rome. Complementing Van Heemskerck's drawings, they show the city as a visual laboratory of modernity, in which images, myths, and stories are interwoven and constantly recreated. Hardly any other city manages to continually regenerate its symbolic power of expression and captivate generation

after generation. The exhibition is supported by the **Italian Ministry of Culture** and the **Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands** and is under the patronage of the **Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany**.

Publications:

Maarten van Heemskerck e il fascino di Roma. Percorsi visivi della Città Eterna, exhibition catalogue, ed. by Tatjana Bartsch, Rita Bernini and Giorgio Marini, with the collaboration of Julia Cosima Hagge and Eleonora Magli, Genua 2026, Sagep Editori.

[Maarten van Heemskerck. The Roman Sketchbook \(Faksimile\)](#), ed. by Tatjana Bartsch and Christien Melzer, Berlin 2024, Hatje Cantz.

[Tatjana Bartsch, Maarten van Heemskerck. Römische Studien zwischen Sachlichkeit und Imagination](#), München 2019, Hirmer Verlag.

Loans from the Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History:

- Four historical travel guides to the city of Rome from the library's rare book collection
- A historical map of Rome from 1555 from the art collection (Ugo Pinard, 16th century)
- 17 historical photographs from the photographic collection
- Nine contemporary photographs of Rome by Enrico Fontolan (Bibliotheca Hertziana)

Loans from the Kupferstichkabinett:

- 32 drawings from Maarten van Heemskerck's Roman sketchbook (created between 1532 and 1536/37)

Online collection of the Berlin exhibition [The Allure of Rome: Maarten van Heemskerck draws the city](#) (2024)

Maarten van Heemskerck and the Fascination of Rome. Visual Journeys through the Eternal City

Istituto Centrale per la Grafica, Palazzo Poli, Via Poli 54, Rome

Opening hours: March 3 – June 7, 2026 | Tuesday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., last admission at 6 p.m. |

www.istitutocentraleperlagrafica.cultura.gov.it

The **[Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte](#)** (link) promotes research in the field of Italian and global art and architectural history. The institute supports the training of outstanding researchers and makes the excellent resources of its library and photographic collection available to international scholars.

Contact

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