

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Matthew Paton

+44 20 7389 2965

mpaton@christies.com



Giovanni Paolo Panini (1691-1765)
The Lottery in Piazza di Montecitorio, Rome
Signed and dated 1747
Oil on canvas 41.3/8 x 65 in.

London - The sale of *The Lottery in Piazza di Montecitorio*, a masterpiece by Giovanni Paolo Panini (1691/2-1765), has been negotiated to the nation by Christie's. The National Gallery, with the assistance of a grant from the National Arts Collection Fund, contributed to the cost of the picture because its value, as agreed by the Museums, Archives and Libraries Council on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport for the purpose of the offer in lieu, significantly exceeded the offerors' tax liabilities.

The Lottery in the Piazza di Montecitorio is little-known, yet one of the finest paintings ever executed by Panini, who worked for illustrious Italian as well as major French and English patrons and is considered the greatest of Roman *vedutiste*. The most impressive non-Venetian 18th century topographical work in the United Kingdom, it shows a lottery being drawn in the Piazza di Montecitorio, Rome. Lotteries were held in a number of Italian cities, notably Venice, but were banned in Rome until 1731 when Pope Clement XI, forced by financial problems, agreed to their introduction. Ninety poor widows were selected to benefit from the nine annual draws, the residue being devoted to religious causes selected by the Pope. From February 1743 until 1870, draws were held on the balcony of the Curia Innocenziana, now known as the Palazzo di Montecitorio, which dominates Panini's composition.

An inscription for the drawing of this picture, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, establishes that it was commissioned by Domenico Orsini, 12th Duca di Gravina (1719-1789), heir of his uncle Vincenzo Maria, Pope Benedict XIII, from whom he succeeded to the dukedom in 1730. While the picture follows the Metropolitan drawing very closely in topography, it differs radically in the arrangement and detail of the figures. The attention and care that the artist took with these figures is highlighted by the survival of

numerous drawings related to the picture which show how carefully Panini built up the composition.

The picture was acquired in Italy in the 19th century by Prince Schouvaloff and inherited by his daughter Countess Benckendorff, wife of the last Imperial Russian ambassador to Britain, who brought it to London. It has been in a private English collection since 1937. Nothing of the calibre of this work by the artist has been offered on the open market in recent decades.

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Notes to Editors:

- The auction record price for the artist was established by Christie's on 7th July 2004 when *Interior of Saint Peter's Rome, looking west towards the tomb of St. Peter* and *Interior of San Paolo fuori le Mura, Rome* sold for £2,357,250.