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# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# HIGH MUSEUM OF ART BRINGS LUCA DELLA ROBBIA'S MARBLE CANTORIA PANELS TO THE U.S. FOR THE FIRST TIME

Exhibition to be presented with live and recorded performances based on music originally heard in Italy's Florence Cathedral

**ATLANTA, Dec. 30, 2013** – In October 2014, three marble panels from Italian sculptor Luca della Robbia's famed organ loft created for Florence Cathedral will travel to the U.S. for the first time for "Make A Joyful Noise": Renaissance Art and Music at Florence Cathedral at the High Museum of Art.

The High's exhibition will place these panels in the musical environment for which they were originally created by displaying them with other musical objects, including hand-decorated choir books from the cathedral and a lectern designed to hold them. The exhibition will be on view at the High from Oct. 25, 2014 to Jan. 11, 2015.

Luca della Robbia began his Cantoria, originally designed as an organ loft but later used to hold choir singers, for the Cathedral of Florence in 1431. He worked for seven years on the project, eventually producing 10 exquisitely detailed panels that depict the celebratory text of Psalm 150. Luca focused his marble interpretation of the Psalm on jubilant children singing, playing instruments and frolicking to music.

Research conducted in preparation for the High's exhibition has produced a new chronology for the order in which Luca created the panels, uncovering a progression from simple instruments and cautious carving in the early panels to spectacularly nuanced facial expressions and musical representations in the final panels. Payment records show that the Cantoria's commissioners recognized Luca's achievement, increasing his compensation during the course of the project.

Two years into the project, fellow Italian sculptor Donatello was commissioned to create another organ loft with the explicit direction that his work be of equal or better quality than Luca's. Luca's compensation per panel remained higher than Donatello's, however, indicating the esteem with which his work was held. In 1688 the panels were taken down from the walls of Florence Cathedral, eventually finding their current home at the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence. Only one of the panels has ever left Italy, and none have traveled to the U.S.

In addition to three panels from the Cantoria, the High's exhibition will include several contextualizing musical pieces, including a walnut lectern used to hold choir books at the Florence Baptistery and three choir books that were used in the cathedral.

The High is planning an extensive music program to accompany "Make a Joyful Noise." Music from the choir books featured in the exhibition will be performed on the accompanying audio tour. In addition, live concerts and recitals by professional singers and musicians, church choirs, school groups, and others will be held in an adjoining gallery, further exploring the relationship

between the visual and performing arts. The High's neighbor, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, will provide assistance to the Museum as it develops this aspect of the exhibition.

"By reuniting Luca della Robbia's panels with the musical environment for which they were created, we are developing an exhibition that needs to be heard as well as seen," said Gary Radke, guest curator for the exhibition and dean's professor of the humanities at Syracuse University. "Displaying the panels side by side shows how Luca's style and technique evolved during the course of the commission. Most people know Luca for his later colorful work in glazed terracotta, often featuring lavish representations of fruits and vegetables. On the Cantoria we see him paying similar, close attention to intricate musical instruments and actual musical performance but in the much more challenging medium of marble. Viewers to this exhibition will marvel at these details."

"The High has a long tradition of bringing great works of art from around the world to Atlanta, and we are thrilled to continue that with this exhibition," said Michael E. Shapiro, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr. director of the High. "Luca della Robbia's stunning Cantoria was created to be surrounded by music, and we are happy to have the opportunity to return the Cantoria to that setting. We look forward to partnering with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra to bring our audiences a multisensory experience that celebrates art in its many forms."

### **Exhibition Organization & Support**

"Make a Joyful Noise": Renaissance Art and Music at Florence Cathedral is organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, in collaboration with the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore. The exhibition is made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. Funding for the conservation of the Cantoria has been provided by Friends of Florence.

#### About Luca della Robbia

Luca della Robbia was born in Florence, Italy around 1400 and lived in his family's home until his death in 1482. The Cantoria is Luca's first documented commission, though there is evidence that he worked for Lorenzo Ghiberti on the initial stages of the Gates of Paradise. He may also have apprenticed with Nanni di Banco and possibly worked in Donatello's shop. His Cantoria attracted attention from both humanist writers and connoisseurs, leading him to receive other significant commissions for the cathedral complex, including marble reliefs for the Campanile, glazed terracotta lunettes over the sacristy doors, and a set of bronze doors under his Cantoria. Luca also worked for the powerful Pazzi and Medici families, for whom he provided much work in glazed terracotta, a medium he invented and popularized.

#### **High Museum of Art**

The High is the leading art museum in the southeastern U.S. With more than 13,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. This year, the High celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Stent Family Wing, designed by architect Richard Meier. For more information about the High, visit <a href="high.org">high.org</a>.

## The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is ranked among the top four arts centers in the nation. The Woodruff is unique in that it combines four visual and performing arts divisions on one campus as one not-for-profit organization. Opened in 1968, the Woodruff Arts Center is home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art and Young Audiences. To learn more about the Woodruff Arts Center, please visit <a href="www.woodruffcenter.org">www.woodruffcenter.org</a>.

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