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One of the Most Valuable Paintings in the World by One of the Most Important Artists of All Time – Caravaggio’s *Supper at Emmaus* – Arrives in Hong Kong Exhibition Opens at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center

(Hong Kong, March 11, 2014) For the first time in Asia, one of the most valuable and important paintings in the world, the *Supper at Emmaus* (1605-1606) by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, goes on display from tomorrow until April 13, for one month only at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center.

The centerpiece of ***The Hong Kong Jockey Club Presents: Light and Shadows – Caravaggio • The Italian Baroque Master*** is highlighted in the exhibition and generously funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust. It is also co-organized by the Consulate General of Italy in Hong Kong, which proposed this initiative and made possible the loan of this National Treasure from the Pinacoteca di Brera Museum in Milan to Hong Kong.

A haunting Baroque masterpiece, the *Supper at Emmaus* was painted during a dark period in the artist’s life when he was exiled after committing an act of manslaughter, and depicts Jesus Christ revealing himself to his disciples following his resurrection, in the town of Emmaus. The painting is one of the few still existing works by the Italian Baroque master and has an insured value at HK\$660million / Euro60 million for the exhibition.

Due to the value of the *Supper at Emmaus*, security has been tight for the painting. Italian armed security supervised the move of the painting from the Brera Museum to the airport. For its journey to Hong Kong, the painting travelled with a personal courier in a secured compartment on board the aircraft. On arrival in Hong Kong, a team of armed guards met the painting as it was inspected at customs before it was transferred into an armored vehicle, for its journey to the Asia Society Hong Kong Center.

To protect the painting during the exhibition, the *Supper at Emmaus* is being kept in a secured climate-controlled glass cabinet with a constant temperature of 22 degrees Celsius and humidity of 55%. This will enable audiences to see the painting up close without damaging it.

Organized around the themes of shadows, theatricality, mystery and realism, *Light and Shadows – Caravaggio • The Italian Baroque Master* also features contemporary works by four Hong Kong artists—*Chow Chun-fai, So Hing-keung, Tsing Kin-wah and Wucius Wong* – to illustrate how the revolutionary techniques found in Caravaggio’s paintings have been adopted centuries later. The exhibition is curated by Professor Frank Vigneron of the Department of Fine Arts, the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Speaking at the exhibition opening, Mrs Carrie Lam, Chief Secretary for Administration, said, “We are thrilled that the Italian masterpiece, *Supper at Emmaus* by Caravaggio, is brought to Hong Kong. The exhibition, which also features contemporary works created by Hong Kong artists and educational activities, will showcase the creativity of our local talents and enhance the local community’s ability in art appreciation. We look forward to more opportunities of cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and Italy in the future.”

S. Alice Mong, Executive Director of the Asia Society Hong Kong Center added, “This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see one of the most famous paintings in the world, right here in Hong Kong. With the generous donation from the Hong Kong Jockey Club, we are able to make this exhibition accessible to everyone with free admission to all. Already over 8000 free tickets have been taken up by the public, and schools and community groups have expressed enthusiasm in registering for visits to the exhibition.”

The donation by The Hong Kong Jockey Club has also made it possible for the Asia Society Hong Kong Center to open 7 days a week during the exhibition period as well as providing free exhibition materials, audio guides and docent-guided tours to help visitors navigate through the exhibition. A 6-month Italian arts and cultural program also complements the exhibition to further public interest in and generate knowledge about Caravaggio and the Italian arts.

Highlighting The Hong Kong Jockey Club’s support for arts and cultural programmes, Club Chairman T. Brian Stevenson said of the exhibition, “It will expand interest in the great Caravaggio’s work to a broader Asian audience and, I hope, foster greater appreciation of Baroque and Italian art in general.” He added that the Jockey Club was a keen supporter of bringing masterpieces of art to Hong Kong from all across the world, since the Club believed it offered the local community wonderful opportunities to view, appreciate and learn from these famous works of art effectively on home turf.

Alessandra Schiavo, Consul-General of Italy in Hong Kong added, “The Consulate General of Italy in Hong Kong, with the support of the Italian Cultural Institute, proposed this project to Asia Society Hong Kong Center and The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust to promote stronger bridges of friendship between Hong Kong and Italy, with the firm belief that the growing demand for art in this great city deserves to be satisfied with a wider cultural offer, to which Italy is willing to contribute by sharing its huge artistic heritage”.

As crowds are expected at the exhibition, visitors are urged to get their tickets in advance of the opening to ensure entry either at Pacific Place until March 16 or at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center. To cope with increased visitors, the Asia Society Gallery will extend its opening hours to 7 days a week, operate with extended opening hours from 11am to 9pm daily*.

Thanks to the initiative and support of the Consulate General of Italy in Hong Kong and Macau and the Italian Cultural Institute that have made the exhibition possible, in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism and Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan.

*During the exhibition period, last admission is 8pm to Asia Society Hong Kong Center and 8:30pm to Asia Society Gallery.

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About Asia Society

Founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller 3rd in New York as a not-for-profit, non-government educational organization, The Asia Society is a leading educational organization dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among peoples, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the United States in a global context.

Asia Society Hong Kong Center

As one of the eleven centers of The Asia Society, Asia Society Hong Kong Center (the “Hong Kong Center”) was established in 1990 by a group of Hong Kong community leaders, led by Sir Q.W. Lee, the honorary chairman of Hang Seng Bank. As the leading regional knowledge-based platform for furthering the understanding of the countries and cultures of Asia and global issues that impact the region, Asia Society Hong Kong Center boasts extensive regional and international networks of leaders and scholars, and recognized expertise in business and policy, arts and culture, and educational programming for a wide range of audiences. In February 2012, the Hong Kong Center established its new permanent home in Admiralty, Hong Kong.

About Asia Society Gallery (Former Magazine A)

Built between 1863 and 1868, Asia Society Gallery is the oldest building in the Former Explosives Magazine, the historic fabric and features of this imposing structure have been thoughtfully restored and adapted for use as a modern exhibition space of international museum standard. Asia Society Gallery brings together established artists and aspiring talent who share a commitment to promoting Asian arts and culture, and to bringing the best and culturally inspiring in visual arts to the Hong Kong public.

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About Consulate General of Italy in Hong Kong

The Consulate General of Italy in Hong Kong is not only involved in providing consular services and in enhancing economic and commercial bilateral relations, but, together with the Italian Cultural Institute (which opened in October 2011), it is deeply committed to the promotion and expansion of the cultural bridges between Italy and Hong Kong and of the friendship and dialogue between the two communities through a series of concerts, art events, books, seminars and more, like the recent exhibition of Botticelli's Venus and the launch of the book "500 years of Italians in Hong Kong and Macau".

About the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has donated an average of more than HK\$1.3 billion to the community every year over the past decade by way of its own major initiatives and donations, supporting the projects of over 100 charitable groups and organizations each year. These encompass four major areas, namely Community Services, Education and Training, Medical and Health, and Sports, Recreation and Culture. In 2012/13, the total approved charitable donations were close to HK\$1,950 million, an increase of 12.8% over the previous year. The approved donations will benefit 160 charities and community projects.

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