ROBERT SIMON FINE ART

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RENAISSANCE NUN RECEIVES ONE-WOMAN SHOW IN NEW YORK

"SUOR PLAUTILLA NELLI: LA PRIMA" TO OPEN AT ROBERT SIMON FINE ART

On View 19 October – 25 November 2026

NEW YORK –
Plautilla Nelli, an imaginative Dominican nun and the first Florentine woman to achieve fame as a painter, is the subject of a monographic exhibition—the first devoted to her outside of her native city—at the Upper East Side gallery of Robert Simon Fine Art. Opening 19 October, "Suor Plautilla Nelli: *La Prima*" will feature fourteen paintings and one drawing by or directly connected with the workshop she established at the Convent of Santa Caterina in Cafaggio, located across the piazza from the Monastery of San Marco in Florence.

Heralded by Giorgio Vasari in his *Lives of the Artists* as "the first" among contemporary women painters—giving the exhibition its title—Nelli has been the subject of recent scholarly attention and restoration initiatives in Italy, as well as a 2017 exhibition at the Uffizi. She was a devotee of the radical preacher Savonarola, but her works are infused with a quiet piety and elegance. Her large ecclesiastic paintings remain in Florence (notably in the Uffizi, Santa Maria Novella, and San Marco), but the bulk of her output were small devotional paintings for Florentine families and individual nuns in her convent. These form the core of the exhibition on view.

"This is very much a passion project for me," commented Robert Simon. "I have been involved in the study of women artists of the Renaissance and Baroque periods since my days in graduate school and have handled several paintings by Nelli over the years. I hope that presenting these together with newly identified works by the artist will encourage further study of this worthy and enterprising artist, whose life is only minimally documented but whom we have come to know and esteem from the legacy of her art."

Among the paintings on view are *Christ and the Virgin Mary Interceding with God the Father*, one of only three signed works by Nelli; her *Portrait of Girolamo Savonarola*; and several variant compositions featuring the *Madonna and Child* with attendant saints.

A 110-page color catalogue, edited by Gallery Director Dominic Ferrante, includes essays from international scholars on the artist, catalogue entries for each work in the exhibition, and a study of the artist's materials and technique as revealed by technical imaging and analyses of the paintings on view.

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About Robert Simon Fine Art:
Located steps from the Metropolitan Museum of Art at 22 East 80th Street, 4th Floor, Robert Simon Fine Art specializes in Old Master paintings, drawings, and sculpture. This exhibition follows others devoted to the Bolognese female artist Elisabetta Sirani and the Neapolitan painter Luca Giordano. Previous exhibitions have been devoted to women artists, to works by and of people of color, to Old Testament imagery, Venetian painting, and Spanish Colonial art. Gallery hours are 10AM-5PM, Monday to Friday.

For Further Information Contact:
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Illustrations
High Resolution Images of the Paintings Below are Available Here:
https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/9qchv0p0xixqz9mlxxztx/AAjo-ipTQdMK2STKSE-ANAw?rlkey=kedwr86jzeh8x5du3qf286smn&st=juo1xkt7&dl=0



Suor Plautilla Nelli (Florence, 1524–1588)
Madonna and Child with Saints Joseph, John the Baptist, Catherine of Alexandria, and Ursula
Oil on panel
18 ½ x 15 ½ inches (46.9 x 39.4 cm), original dimensions
19 ⅝ x 15 ⅜ inches (49.8 x 39.1 cm), with added strips



Suor Plautilla Nelli (Florence, 1524–1588)
Christ and the Virgin Interceding with God the Father on Behalf of Two Women and a Young Girl
Signed, lower left: *ORATE PITTORA*
Oil on panel
36 ½ x 28 ⅛ inches (92.7 x 71.4 cm)



Suor Plautilla Nelli (Florence, 1524–1588)
Portrait of Fra Girolamo Savonarola
Oil on canvas
24 ½ x 18 ⅝ inches (62.2 x 47.3 cm)