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ZANABAZAR

at Galleria Borghese:
from Mongolia to the Global Baroque

January 20 – February 22, 2026

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From 20 January to 22 February 2026, the Galleria Borghese, in collaboration with the Asian Art Museum of Turin, will host **two extraordinary works by the Mongolian artist Zanabazar**, proposing an unprecedented dialogue between East and West under the banner of the “global Baroque.”

In the century of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the unrivalled genius of European Baroque—sculptor, painter, and architect, whose ideal home is today the Galleria Borghese thanks to the patronage of Cardinal Scipione Borghese—Asia, too, saw the rise of a figure of comparable stature. Zanabazar (1635–1723).

Born in the heart of the Asian steppe, within one of the largest empires ever built by humankind, Eshidorji belonged to the noble lineage of Genghis Khaan. Renowned under his **spiritual name, Zanabazar** was recognized as *Öndör Gegeen*, “His Holiness the Enlightened One”, the first *Khutuktu Jetsundamba*, the highest religious authority of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia, venerated as the **reincarnation of one of the five hundred original disciples of the Buddha**.

A spiritual leader of exceptional charisma, Zanabazar was also a brilliant linguist and, above all, **the greatest Mongolian sculptor of the early modern age**. To him and his disciples we owe works profoundly inspired by travels and periods of study in Tibetan monasteries, revered as sacred objects in places of worship and in the temples he founded throughout Mongolia. Among these, the **representations of Tara** stand out for their **extraordinary aesthetic quality**, feminine manifestations of the Buddha, divinities associated with protection, liberation, and the inner states of being.

Zanabazar succeeded in disseminating Buddhism in Mongolia on an unprecedented scale, making it accessible to ordinary worshippers. His aim was to create sculptures capable of speaking directly to the eye and the soul—natural, harmonious forms, “warm to the gaze,” as the Mongols would describe them.

Bernini and Zanabazar left an indelible mark on their respective cultures—one in Europe, the other in Asia. Both inaugurated new artistic languages, developing innovative visions and original methods to reinterpret traditional themes and subjects, creating models that would profoundly influence subsequent generations. Two distant worlds, united by a single creative force capable of changing the course of art history.

The two works on display—a refined **Green Tara** and a bronze **sculptural self-portrait of Zanabazar enthroned**—come from the Chinggis Khaan National Museum and are presented to the public within an unprecedented context of dialogue and comparison. **For the first time, works by this artist reach Europe**; for the first time in history, visitors to a Western museum can experience these presences and their **aesthetic and formal contiguity with our artistic heritage**, bearing witness to a new and fertile encounter.

The project ideally stems from the exhibition *Global Baroque. The World in*





Rome in the Age of Bernini (4 April–13 July 2025), realized in collaboration with the Scuderie del Quirinale and curated by Francesca Cappelletti and Francesco Freddolini. That exhibition highlighted the **profoundly transcultural character of seventeenth-century Rome**, shaped by commercial exchanges, diplomatic relations, and the travels of artists and religious figures, revealing a dense network of connections that anticipated contemporary globalization.

Building on this insight, the Galleria Borghese has developed **a project without precedent**, exploring the **complexity of relationships between figures and artefacts seemingly distant in historical, geographical, and technical terms, yet surprisingly close in creative spirit** and in their capacity to shape the future of the arts in these two remote regions of the world. This, too—and above all—is the spirit of the “global Baroque.”

For the public, this represents **a unique opportunity: to admire works usually kept tens of thousands of kilometres apart, brought together for the first time as expressions of a shared historical moment.**



MUSEI ITALIANI



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