

Press Release – September 2023

Moretti Fine Art opens new gallery in Paris with exhibition of the rediscovered masterpiece *Moses* by Guercino



Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, called Il Guercino
Moses, Oil on canvas, 72 x 63 cm

Moretti Fine Art, a renowned Old Master Paintings and Sculpture dealership founded by Fabrizio Moretti, will open its new Paris gallery on 14 September with an exhibition of the rediscovered masterpiece *Moses* by Italian Baroque Master Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (1591–1666), known as Guercino.

The masterpiece was sold at auction in Paris in late 2022 misattributed to an anonymous follower of Guido Reni belonging to the 17th-century Bolognese School. Following extensive provenance research and restoration, Moretti Fine Art has established this stirring representation of the Old Testament figure of Moses is an early masterpiece by Guercino. A supreme colourist and master draughtsman, Guercino became the most important painter in Bologna following the death of Guido Reni and is today considered one of the leading figures of the Italian Baroque period.

Moses is a masterpiece of Guercino's *prima maniera* – used to describe the paintings he produced in Cento outside Bologna before a sojourn to Rome in 1621-23 – and is datable to about 1618-19, a time in which the young Guercino was greatly in demand producing altarpieces for churches in Cento as well as easel paintings for an ever-growing private clientele. The light, fluid and painterly touch in Guercino's *Moses* may be compared to that in his *King David*, datable to a year or two earlier (c. 1617-18, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen) and the *Head of an Old Man* (c. 1619-20, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), which shares *Moses*'s tightly cropped bust-length format. Guercino appears to have used the same model for the painting as the figure of Elijah in *Elijah fed by Ravens* (1620, National Gallery, London), likely using a tracing or cartoon of Moses's head for the figure of Elijah, reversing it in the process and turning it slightly.

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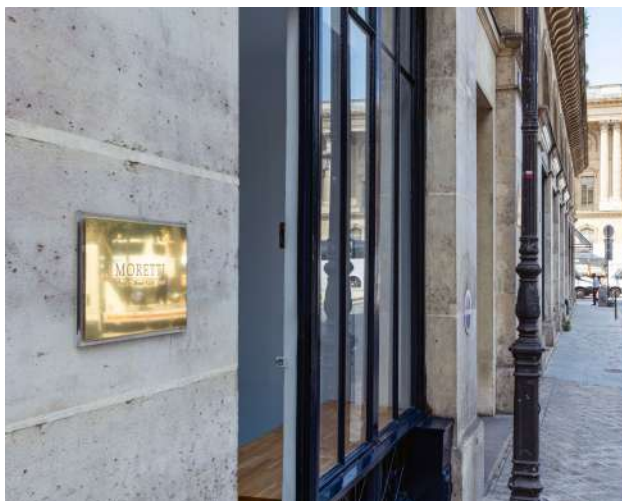
Moses is first recorded in 1624, in the eminent collection of Cardinal Alessandro d'Este (1568–1624) in Rome, a patron of Guercino who almost certainly knew him during the period the painter resided in the city 1621–23. Although this period post-dates the execution of *Moses*, Guercino may have sold or given the painting to the cardinal to strengthen ties with him and his family. Indeed, from 1630 for a period spanning two decades, Guercino enjoyed the patronage and support of the Este in the form of the duke Francesco I d'Este (1610–1658), the cardinal's nephew. Following the death of Cardinal Alessandro d'Este, the painting entered the renowned Este ducal collections in Modena and remained there until the Napoleonic era, whereupon it was taken to France during the Napoleonic occupation of the Duchy of Modena (1796–97) and all trace of the painting was lost. Prior to its rediscovery, Guercino's *Moses* was known through seventeenth-century painted copies, a drawing and engravings, all of which attest to the work's art historical significance.

Fabrizio Moretti said: "The discovery of this work constitutes one of the most important additions to Guercino's œuvre in recent years and adds to our understanding of his early maturity, a period considered by many to be his greatest for the dynamism, vigour and spontaneity demonstrated in his paintings. We are delighted to be opening our new gallery with an exhibition of this hugely significant masterpiece that perfectly reflects both our specialism in Italian Old Master paintings and our deep connections to France having been rediscovered here in Paris."

New gallery in Paris

Paris becomes the third current gallery location for Moretti Fine Art alongside London and Monaco. Located on the ground floor of the historic address 1 Place du Louvre, the gallery is led by Giulia Giustiniani, an Italian art historian and old master specialist who joins Moretti Fine Art as Director from Eric Turquin having lived and worked in Paris since 2012.

The building dates to Baron Haussmann's design for the area in the 1850s, and Moretti Fine Art have overseen a sensitive renovation of the gallery space. The result is a unique combination of traditional heritage exterior with a sleek and modern interior purpose-designed for its use as a gallery and well suited to the clientele of curators and high-level collectors seeking a discreet approach and museum-quality environment for viewing works.



Images of Moretti Fine Art Paris; ©Artcento/Simoneperolari/2023

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Place du Louvre is a square immediately to the east of the Palais du Louvre in Paris. To the south is the Quai du Louvre and beyond that is the River Seine. Situated in front of Europe's most visited museum and next to an historic auction house Remy Lefur, other illustrious neighbours of the new gallery include the Samaritaine and the LVMH district, the Bourse de Commerce - Pinault Collection, the Centre Pompidou and the future Cartier Foundation.

Fabrizio Moretti said: "The choice of location for the new gallery is both strategic and emotional. There is a strong collector base in the city as well as world-class cultural institutions with whom we have regular dealings. We wanted to find a space that was intimate enough to allow us to stay close to the galleries and auction houses and Place du Louvre seemed the perfect spot."

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Press Contact

Matthew Brown | matthew@sam-talbot.com | +44 (0) 7989 446557

About Moretti Fine Art

The Galleria Moretti was founded in 1999 by Fabrizio Moretti at the age of 22 in the heart of Florence and immediately distinguished itself with a specialisation in Italian Old Master paintings. From then on, art historians of international importance have collaborated on numerous projects curated by the gallery.

Moretti Fine Art opened in London in 2005 and soon became a point of reference for collectors who seek a confidential and discreet approach. In December 2011, the gallery moved to St James's, in the nucleus of the London's international art market. The gallery closed its previous London space in 2019 to focus on the building project for its new home at 12-13 Duke St., which opened in July 2022.

Over the years, Moretti Fine Art has sold artworks to some of the world's most important museums including Gallerie degli Uffizi, Galleria dell'Accademia, Museo di San Marco, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, J. Paul Getty Museum, Louvre, Louvre Abu Dhabi and the National Gallery in London.

In addition to the galleries in Florence and London, Fabrizio Moretti opened a new exhibition space at the Park Palace in the Principality of Monaco in 2017. In October 2022, Ward Moretti opened at 12 Duke Street, focusing primarily on high quality 19th- and 20th-century artworks from the Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Modern and Post-War periods, in partnership with Emma Ward, former Managing Director of Dickinson Gallery.

The latest Moretti Fine Art gallery will open in Paris at 1 Place du Louvre on 14 September 2023.

About Fabrizio Moretti

Born in Prato, Italy, in 1976, Fabrizio Moretti graduated in Humanities from the University of Florence and opened Galleria Moretti in the city in 1999 at the age of 22. In addition to the galleries in Florence and London, Moretti opened a new exhibition space at the Park Palace in the Principality of Monaco in 2017.

MORETTI

Moretti has served on the Executive Committee of both TEFAF and Frieze Masters. Since 2014, he has been Chairman of the Biennale Internazionale dell'Antiquariato di Firenze, and in 2015 he temporarily installed works by Jeff Koons in piazza della Signoria and Palazzo Vecchio as part of the Biennale programme. In 2016, he became a member of the Paintings Council at the J. Paul Getty Museum di Los Angeles. In 2017, Urs Fischer created a sculpture called *Marsupiale* representing the figure of Fabrizio Moretti that was installed in piazza della Signoria in Florence. In 2019, Moretti was appointed to the Scientific Committee of the Gallerie degli Uffizi in Florence and the Nouveau Musée in Monaco dedicated an exhibition to his collection titled *Step by step. Visions of an Art Dealer's Collection* that demonstrated Moretti's passion for modern and contemporary art as well as Old Masters. The exhibition included several major artists such as Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Alighiero Boetti, Guido Cagnacci, Jacopo Carucci, known as Pontormo, George Condo, Thierry De Cordier, Pedro de Mena y Medrano, Andrea and Giovanni della Robbia, Lucio Fontana, Wade Guyton, Martin Kippenberger, Jannis Kounellis, Jan Lievens, Glenn Ligon, Albert Oehlen, Richard Prince, Guido Reni, Gerhard Richter, Jenny Saville and Bartolomeo Vivarini.

His several honours include the title of *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Art et des Lettres* bestowed by the French Minister of Culture in 2004 and the *Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite Culturel* awarded by the Princess of Hanover in 2019. In 2015, he received *The Keys to the Municipality of Florence* from the mayor Dario Nardella. Moretti has donated several artworks to international museums as Galleria dell'Accademia and Gallerie degli Uffizi in Firenze, The Metropolitan Museum in New York, The Los Angeles County Museum. A project close to Moretti's heart is the Fondazione Fabrizio Moretti, a charity dedicated to the support of disabled people. The first project, that will be open from September, is the construction of a centre dedicated to children and the effects of hippotherapy in his hometown of Prato, Italy.