

# High Renaissance masterpiece hangs in high desert

BY GERALDA MILLER  
gmiller@rgj.com

Mona Lisa isn't the only Italian diva to be painted by one of the great masters of High Renaissance.

Raffaello Sanzio's "La Donna Velata" ("The Woman with the Veil"), with her blushed cheeks, a thin strand of crinkled hair touching her face and eyes that appear to be watching you wherever you are in the room, has captivated many.

"There is something mysterious about her," said David Walker, executive director and CEO of the Nevada Museum of Art. "She's beautiful in not a conventional, beautiful way. Her gaze is soft. There's something going on in that gaze, I think, that is really amazing to me."

The masterpiece oil painting of Raphael, as he is commonly known, went on display Saturday at the Nevada Museum of Art. It hangs alone on a deep blue wall in the E.L. Wiegand Gallery through March 21.

"This piece is arguably the most important piece of artwork we've ever had in the museum, certainly the oldest — 500 years old," Walker said. "To see a High Renaissance master work here in Reno is really a once in a lifetime opportunity for the community at large."

Kathleen Yori of Reno agreed: She was waiting for the museum doors to open Saturday at 10 a.m.

"Raphael is one of my favorite painters," the retired McQueen High School art teacher said. "This is a wonderful opportunity. For most people here, it's a once-in-a-lifetime chance. Not too many people can get over to Italy and go through all the museums they have there. We should consider ourselves very fortunate."

As of 2 p.m. Saturday, 1,200 people had visited the museum, said Rachel Milon, museum spokeswoman. The museum gets 300 to 400 visitors on a normal Saturday. Visitors also were turned away from the lecture at the

## On display

Raphael's "The Woman with the Veil" is on display at the Nevada Museum of Art through March 21.

Interpretive materials and a video about the painting are shown at Arte ITALIA, Flint Street and California Avenue, Reno.

**HOURS:** Wednesday through Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Thursdays until 8 p.m.

**WHERE:** 160 West Liberty St., Reno.

**COST:** \$10 adults; \$8 students/seniors 60+; \$1 children 6 to 12 years; free, 5 and under.

**DETAILS:** 329-3333; www.nevadaart.org

## Rembrandt exhibit closes

An extensive collection of Rembrandt's etchings, including 130 of the artist's most celebrated prints, is on display through Jan. 17.

museum theater, which holds 185.

Although Emilie Kashtan does not know much about Raphael, she said she didn't hesitate to drive from Truckee to see the painting and listen to David Allan Brown, Renaissance scholar and curator of Italian painting at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., deliver the sold-out opening talk on the masterpiece.

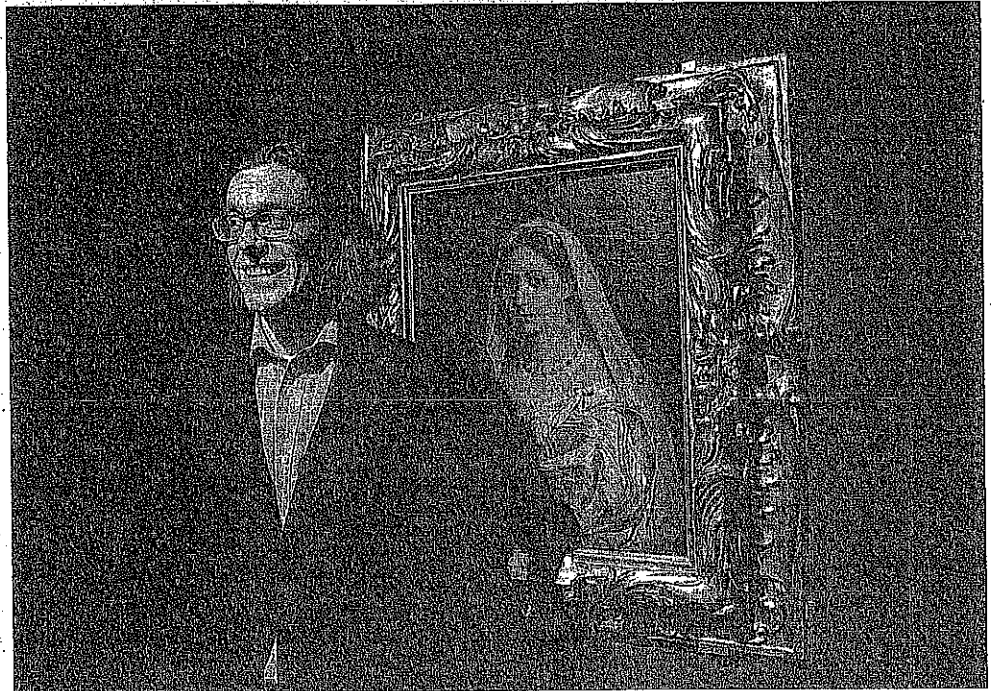
"This is a jewel to have that here," she said. "It was a no-brainer."

## Raphael

Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti are the more recognizable artists of the High Renaissance period, from 1500-1525. However, scholars consider Raphael, whose paintings show he was influenced by these masters, as one of the top three painters of the period.

About 25 years old and the youngest of the High Renaissance masters, he was commissioned by Pope Julius II to paint frescoes in the Vatican. He also painted portraits before he died in 1520 at age 37.

"This certainly was one of



PHOTOS BY DAVID B. PARKER/RO

David Walker, the executive director and CEO of the Nevada Museum of Art, talks about Raphael's "The Woman with the Veil" at the museum on Wednesday. Below, Preparations were underway Wednesday in a room where a video will be shown at the "Veil" exhibit.

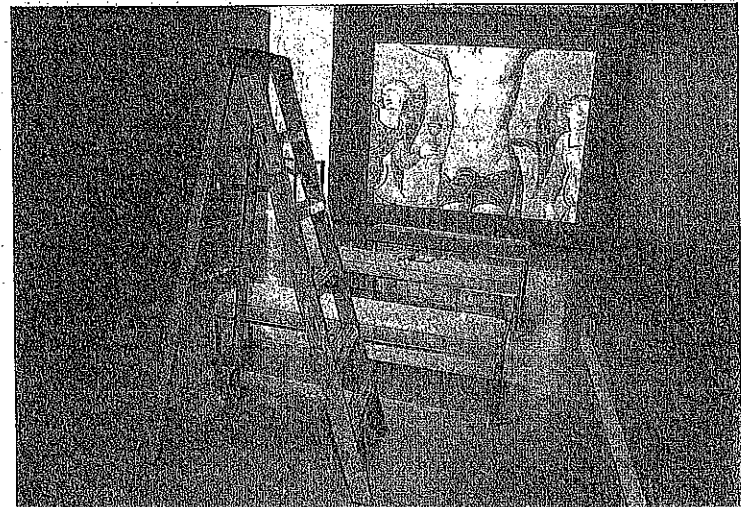
his personal works," Walker said of the subject of "The Woman with the Veil," a baker named Margherita Luti. "Scholars say that this was his mistress. I buy that." Raphael was known to be a philanderer.

## What's next

Walker said Reno is part of a three-city tour of the masterpiece, thanks to Arte ITALIA, a Reno organization that promotes Italian culture in Northern Nevada.

This painting traveled first to the Portland Art Museum. After Reno, it will go to Milwaukee before returning to the Pitti Palace in Florence, Italy.

"We're actually fortunate to have a museum that can qualify to house a piece of art of this value and magnitude," said Raymond "Skip" Avansino, chairman of the E. L. Wiegand Foundation and Arte ITALIA. "I think they



(the Italian government) respect the fact that Nevadans are making an effort to foster the wonderful attributes of Italian heritage. That is important to me as well."

Because of the relationships Avansino has built with the Foundation for Italian Art & Culture in New York and the Italian government, Walker said more is to come.

"This is the prototype," he said. "We expect that probably annually we'll do something pretty smashing like this. You'll be seeing more of this."