

COLNAGHI

PRESS RELEASE

IN VINO VERITAS: THE VISUAL RHETORIC OF WINE

Colnaghi London— June 15, 2026 – July 31, 2026

Colnaghi London is pleased to present its forthcoming exhibition centred on the role of wine within the Western iconographic tradition. Structured across antiquity, the early modern revival of Bacchic imagery, and the development of still life, the display considers how wine is variously configured within a broader visual language concerned with excess, transformation, and the transience of sensory experience.

In Vino Veritas: The Visual Rhetoric of Wine foregrounds wine as a primary motif in the Western iconographic tradition. By juxtaposing archaeological material with Old Master paintings and sculptures, we trace a fundamental shift in European attitudes toward wine and its representation: from wine as a communal, ritualised tool to wine as a site of private, allegorical reflection.

The narrative opens with the material culture of the *symposium*. Here, Greek vessels such as the krater, kylix, and amphora are regarded as liturgical instruments and sophisticated carriers of meaning. This ritualised performance transitions during the Renaissance and Baroque into a Dionysian revival, tracing the metamorphosis of Bacchus from classical deity to a vehicle for exploring the "liminal" - the precarious line between civilised leisure and feral excess. Parodi's sculpture of Bacchus is presented alongside Van Dalen's painted Bacchus and Goya's *Sacrifice to Priapus*. Together, these works evoke the tradition of *paragone*, the longstanding dialogue between painting and sculpture.

The final section examines the development of the still life. In the Dutch *banketje*, Spanish *bodegón*, and Italian *natura morta*, wine is deconstructed into its constituent elements: the crystalline transparency of a *Roemer*, the bruised bloom of a vine, the smooth surface of the grapes. From the tonal restraint of Van Son to the warmer naturalism of Meléndez, these works carry a heavy symbolic subtext, functioning as ontological meditations on *Vanitas*, light, and the transience of the senses.

In bridging the material presence of the ancient vessel with the elegant artifice of Baroque and Neoclassical masterpieces, the exhibition aims to reclaim wine as a cornerstone of European visual rhetoric.

Exhibition Information

Title: *In Vino Veritas: The Visual Rhetoric of Wine*

Dates: June 15, 2026 – July 31, 2026

Location: Colnaghi, 26 Bury Street, London SW1Y 6AL, United Kingdom

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday 10am–6pm

Enquiries: press@colnaghi.com

Website: <https://www.colnaghi.com/>



Joris van Son (Antwerp 1623–1667), *A Still Life of a Swag of Fruit hanging before a stone Alcove containing a Roemer*, 1655, oil on canvas, 53.8 × 45.5 cm, signed and dated upper centre.



Luis Egidio Meléndez, *Still life with a plate of grapes, melons, and apples*, c. 1770, oil on canvas, 41.5 × 61.5 cm.



Jan van Dalem (Brussels, before 1610–after 1662), *Bacchus*, c. 1645, oil on canvas, 72 × 61 cm.



Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (Fuendetodos 1746–Bordeaux 1828), *Sacrifice to Priapus*, 1770–1771, oil on canvas, 40.4 × 30.3 cm.



Attributed to the Tyszkiewicz Painter, *Red-figure Amphora (Type C)*, Attic, c. 480 BC, terracotta, h. 41.6 cm.