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Galileo arrives at The Franklin

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 By Lisa Thomas-Laury

THE FRANKLIN - April 1, 2009 (WPVI) -- The Franklin is celebrating the life and works of one of the world's greatest minds with a new exhibit.

Galileo, the Medici and the Age of Astronomy, opens to visitors on Saturday.

There were hundreds of requests from museums around the world for this exhibit, but The Franklin was chosen to house it, during the 400th anniversary of Galileo's astronomical discoveries.

"People at that time actually were very, very well educated and had incredible skills," Derrick Pitts, Chief Astronomer at The Franklin and U.S. spokesman for the global celebration, said.

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Lisa Thomas-Laury joined WPVI on February 20, 1978, as noon co-anchor and reporter....

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by the Medici dynasty and the Father of Astronomy.

"It was Galileo that began to push us into the future with his use of the telescope," Pitt said.

When we visited, Galileo's telescope was being moved from its display case. Throughout history, scientists had never been 100-percent sure he made it.

"But just recently the director of the museum in Italy discovered on this [telescope], a label that has Galileo's handwriting on it and that proves conclusively that this telescope was not only made by Galileo, but probably used by Galileo," Pitts said.

The astronomer's work helped create an explosion of scientific knowledge, in the 1600's, which produced an astrolabe, an ancient form of a star chart.

"This device is something that people would carry with them so that they could tell what time sunrise would be [and] what stars would rise when," Pitts said.

The armillary sphere is the 3-D version of the astrolabe.

There is Michaelanelo's compass and one for military surveyors, with a double use, for the map and as a weapon.

There's a calculator from the early 1600's and intricate thermometers, including a frog-shaped one for body temperature.

"It would be strapped on a wrist with the head of the frog pointed upward and the little balls that were immersed in alcohol would rise depending on the temperature," Pitts said.

More than one 100 artifacts from two prominent museums in Florence, Italy are on display at the Franklin.

Again, the exhibit opens Saturday morning at 9:30.

TICKET INFORMATION:

Galileo, the Medici and the Age of Astronomy ticket pricing at The Franklin follows:

Single Tickets (Daytime, 9:30 a.m. 5:00 p.m.)

Adults: \$20.75

Senior, student, military (with ID): \$19.75

Children ages 4-11: \$14.00

Show runs through September 7, 2009.

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