

Press Release



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GALILEO, MEDICI AND THE AGE OF ASTRONOMY **EXHIBIT COMES TO U.S.**

Special Exhibition Makes The Franklin Its Exclusive Home in 2009

Philadelphia, PA, May 14, 2008 – The Franklin, the most-visited museum in Pennsylvania and a Top Twenty most visited museum in the United States*, has announced that it will be hosting an exclusive world appearance of *Galileo, Medici and The Age of Astronomy*. The exhibit, timed to take place during the 400th anniversary of Galileo’s astronomical discoveries as well as the International Year of Astronomy, will explore the extraordinary effect that Galileo’s work, as well as that of other luminaries during the age of the Medicis, had on science and on the world.

The one-time only special exhibition at The Franklin is to be created exclusively in partnership with the Istituto e Museo di Storia della Scienza in Florence, Italy. The Franklin was chosen following hundreds of requests for loans of Galileo’s telescope during 2009, the fourth centennial celebration of his first use of a telescope for use in astronomical observation.

From April through September 2009, the exhibition adds its star power to Philadelphia’s premier location for astronomy and space exploration. The Franklin and Philadelphia will also be creating an ambitious series of programs centered on the exhibit’s concepts, from lectures and educational programs to special programming events in its famous Fels Planetarium. A number of other Philadelphia cultural institutions, joining in the planned city-wide celebration, will be announcing their participation in programming around the exhibit’s themes in the coming weeks.

The exhibition’s highlights include one of only two existing Galileo telescopes and scientific instruments. The exhibit showcases the father of astronomy’s accomplishments, his relationship to the Medicis, his discoveries, and his overall impact on astronomy. Galileo’s work will be featured alongside artifacts of the Medici family. This wealthy and powerful Florentine family ruled from the 15th to the 18th century, included two popes and many cardinals, and was known for its unparalleled advocacy and patronage of art and science.

“We are truly thrilled to be able to host this exhibit in Philadelphia,” said Dr. Dennis Wint, president and CEO of The Franklin Institute. *“This is first-time collaboration in science between our sister city Florence, and is an extraordinary partnership.”*

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Galileo's telescope will leave Italy for the first and perhaps only time, and we feel extremely fortunate to bring it, as well as parts of the Medicis' astounding collection of scientific artifacts, to our shores for a world exclusive."

"We are looking with great enthusiasm to the presentation of our exhibition in the prestigious Franklin Institute in Philadelphia," said Prof. Paolo Galluzzi, Director of the Istituto e Museo di Storia della Scienza in Florence. "It is a great opportunity for presenting the extraordinary level that scientific research achieved in Florence in the Age of Galileo as well as highlighting the Medicis' commitment to the promotion of science and technology. Visitors in Philadelphia will have the exclusive privilege to experience the tight relationship between science and art during the decades marking the emergence of a modern science, thanks to the decisive contribution of Galileo. The display of Galileo's original telescope—for the first time ever in the U.S.A.—well symbolizes the cooperative spirit between our sister cities and their cultural institutions."

The fascinating age of the Medicis will be explored in depth – an age when the patronage of the ruling Medici Grand Dukes created a burst of scientific knowledge with far-reaching implications. The exhibit will shed light on the union of art, science and political power that gave rise to Galileo's success. The Medicis were prolific collectors, and the exhibit will also be highlighted by an eclectic range of scientific instruments, along with an equally broad assortment of paintings, prints and manuscripts from organizations and regions of Italy. Visitors to The Franklin will be able to experience a rich portrait of their accomplishments, not only in astronomy, but in navigation, math, military and early machinery.

The Franklin has doubled its attendance in the last five years. Upgraded facilities, which range from a re-built *Giant Heart* to a 5,000 square foot store to blockbuster exhibits like *Titanic*, *BodyWorlds* and *Tut*, have generated unprecedented attention and audiences. The sum total economic impact to the Philadelphia region of the three blockbusters has been calculated to be over \$200 million. The museum is currently in a fundraising phase, and has already received \$27 million in funding, with a goal of raising \$60 million for an ambitious series of revitalization efforts. Changes include a renovated Benjamin Franklin Memorial and new ongoing programming and exhibits. Additionally, the museum recently announced plans for a building extension, which creates space for a signature neuroscience exhibit, featuring climate control capabilities and other features that will allow the museum to remain competitive in drawing blockbuster traveling exhibits to Philadelphia. To capitalize on the re-invigorated image of the museum, as well as leverage its core mission of inquiry, The Franklin recently introduced its tagline "Curious?" to cement public perceptions of The Franklin as a place for excitement, intrigue and just plain fun.

About The Franklin

Located in the heart of Philadelphia, The Franklin Institute is a renowned and innovative leader in the field of science and technology learning, as well as a dynamic center of activity. Pennsylvania's most visited museum, it is dedicated to creating a passion for science by offering new and exciting access to science and technology. One of only four cities in the U.S. chosen to host "*Tutankhamun and The Golden Age of Pharaohs*," The Franklin Institute has experienced tremendous growth over the past few years, welcoming over 1.75 million visitors in 2007. For more information: www.fi.edu.

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