

## *Representing the Law in the Most Serene Republic: Images of Authority from Renaissance Venice*



*September 20 through December 15, 2016*

*Rare Book Exhibition Gallery, Lillian Goldman Law Library, Yale Law School, New Haven, CT*

The Venetian Republic, a prosperous and powerful state in Renaissance Europe, cultivated a mythical image of stability, liberty, and beauty. This image-making is celebrated in a new Yale Law Library exhibition, "**Representing the Law in the Most Serene Republic: Images of Authority from Renaissance Venice**," on view from September 20 through December 15, 2016.

Drawing primarily on the outstanding collection of Italian law books in the Yale Law Library's Rare Book Collection, the exhibition features 25 objects of remarkable splendor and historical significance. These include illuminated manuscripts, illustrated books, prints, drawings, coins, and medals, eight of which are on loan from the Yale University Art Gallery and three reproduced from an exceptional Renaissance album of watercolors in the Beinecke Library.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Venice played a central role in the political and economic affairs of Europe, ruling an empire that extended from northern Italy, down the Adriatic, to the eastern Mediterranean. By the year 1500, Venice could claim that it had been a sovereign republic for more than a millennium. Indeed, the city was so highly esteemed for its stable government, selfless leaders, and free citizens that it came to be known as "La Serenissima," the Most Serene Republic.

The exhibition introduces the significant offices and symbols of the Venetian state, and explains how laws were crafted, debated, publicized, and broken. Its protagonists are the doge and highest magistrates of Venice, the governors appointed to rule the Republic's territories, the lawmakers in the Senate, and the lawbreakers consigned to prison or the galleys—all of them illustrated in finely executed illuminations, drawings, prints, and numismatic portraits.

The exhibition is curated by Christopher Platts (History of Art, Yale University) and Michael Widener (Rare Book Librarian, Yale Law Library).



**“Representing the Law in the Most Serene Republic”** is on view daily through December 15, 2016, in the Rare Book Exhibition Gallery, located on Level L2 of the Lillian Goldman Law Library, Yale Law School (127 Wall Street, New Haven, CT). The exhibition is accompanied by an online exhibition <<http://www.flickr.com/photos/yalelawlibrary/sets/72157636845012106>>, a catalogue <<http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/itsta/7/>>, and periodic excerpts in the Yale Law Library Rare Books Blog, <<http://library.law.yale.edu/blogs/rare-books>>.

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