NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Vatican to host major conference on the arts

Dennis Coday | Nov. 13, 2009 NCR Today

A report from Francis X. Rocca of Religion News Service:

VATICAN CITY -- More than 250 distinguished artists from around the world will join Pope Benedict XVI in the Sistine Chapel on Saturday (Nov. 21), as part of the pope's effort to restore a historic ?alliance? between the church and the arts.

The prominent painters, sculptors, architects, writers, musicians, actors and dancers will hear a short program of sacred choral music by the 16th-century composer Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, as well as a lecture by the pope.

Daniel Libeskind, architect of the World Trade Center site reconstruction, and Oscar-winning composer Ennio Morricone are among the confirmed guests.

Italians dominate the guest list, acknowledged the event's organizer, Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, who noted the Vatican had not offered to pay travel expenses.

Schedule conflicts explain some notable absences, the Vatican said, including that of musician-humanitarian Bono of the group U2.

The event will mark 45 years since Pope Paul VI held a similar event in the Sistine Chapel, where he defended the liberty of artistic expression, and suggested the Catholic Church had not adequately appreciated modern movements in the arts.

Benedict has made reasserting the Christian roots of Western culture an important theme of his papacy, and addressed the topic in a lecture to French intellectual leaders in Paris in September 2008.

The pope has demonstrated relatively little interest in contemporary art or music. However, an album of his chants and prayers to the Virgin Mary, accompanied by original classical compositions, will be released later this month (Nov. 30) by Geffen Records, the label of Ashlee Simpson and Snoop Dog. Neither of those artists appears on the guest list for the Sistine Chapel event.

Source URL (retrieved on *03/27/2015 - 12:36*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/vatican-host-major-conference-arts