

The Rosenwald Gift

The National Gallery of Art announced on March eighteenth the gift of the collection of over six thousand prints and many hundreds of drawings belonging to Lessing J. Rosenwald. This gift of the finest collection of graphic arts in private possession, will make the print room of the National Gallery one of the most important in the world.

During the last twenty years Mr. Rosenwald has searched the print markets of Europe and America for the great treasures he has now given to the Nation. His knowledge and discrimination have been rewarded by a number of extraordinarily valuable acquisitions. After the last war the print sales at Leipzig and Berlin offered unique opportunities; and the climax of Mr. Rosenwald's collecting during the twenties was the purchase in 1929 of most of the great Italian prints from the collection of the former King of Saxony, August Friedrich. Another brilliant acquisition was the Linnell Collections of works by William Blake. These prints and drawings, which once belonged to Blake's pupil and close friend, John Linnell, had been deposited in the British Museum for safe keeping, and it was assumed that they would remain there permanently. In 1937, however, the heirs decided to sell the collection, and Mr. Rosenwald seized the opportunity to bring this irreplaceable treasure to America

More recently, due to conditions in Europe, Mr. Rosenwald was able to acquire a unique collection of more than

three hundred of the earliest woodcuts. Though the existence of this collection was practically unknown until it came to America, it has since caused a sensation among scholars, for it contains examples of such importance and rarity that the National Gallery will become one of the centers for the study of the beginning of print making. Not only are these woodcuts interesting historically, but they also have a special appeal in their obvious sincerity, simple, direct storytelling, and unsophisticated coloring.

The beginning of engraving as well as of woodcutting is illustrated by rare and even unique prints in the Rosenwald gift. There is a splendid impression of the savage Battle of the Nudes by Antonio Pollaiuolo. Many of the prints by the greatest Italian engraver, Andrea Mantegna, and his School are included. The two outstanding German engravers of the fifteenth century, the Master E. S., and Martin Schongauer, are superbly represented. Among the prints by the Master E. S. is the Visitation, known only in this one example. The Schongauer collection is unsurpassed in America and contains seventy-one prints, among them magnificent impressions of the Flight into Egypt, the Angel of the Annunciation, and the celebrated Saint Sebastian which caused sensational bidding among collectors several years ago in New York. The rarest of print makers, the Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet, a singularly modern and original artist, is to be seen in this country only in a print in the Rosenwald Collection. His unusual style, almost like dry-point, is illustrated by an engraving of two apprentices wrestling, which is, moreover, one of the first prints to

show a scene taken from every day life. The first engraved self-portrait is also included in Mr. Rosenwald's gift-- the rare double portrait of Israhel van Meckenem and his wife.

The more familiar works of the later masters of engraving and etching are represented by exceptionally fine impressions. The Dürer collection which is of first quality includes all the capital pieces both in the engravings and woodcuts with the latter in early proofs. The same can also be said for the now rare prints of the precocious Dutchman, Lucas van Leyden. The hundred and fifty engravings by Nanteuil are especially noteworthy and are among the finest in existence. They were originally gathered together by Charles A. Petitjean, author of the definitive work on Nanteuil, whose collection Mr. Rosenwald purchased en bloc. Sixteen of the Van Dyck portrait etchings are to be seen in the rare proof state, and included also, are outstanding prints of the other great seventeenth century masters.

The core of the collection, however, is the great group of Rembrandt prints and drawings. The Widener and Mellon collections reveal Rembrandt's work as a painter in a way unique in this country--rivalling even the national collections of Holland. Now, with the addition of the Rosenwald Collection, Rembrandt as etcher and draughtsman, will be magnificently displayed at the National Gallery. There are, in the Rosenwald Collection, two hundred and thirty etchings by Rembrandt, and six drawings, including the famous early self-portrait in sanguine.

The Rosenwald Collection does not stop with the seventeenth century, but continues down to modern times; all the

painter-printmakers appearing in characteristic and fine examples. Among artists of the nineteenth century, three are unusually well represented, Daumier, Whistler, and Forain. Early states, rarities, and drawings supplement the more familiar proofs and give an opportunity to study the technique and development of each of these artists. Finally, appropriately enough, the collection has a number of examples of American and British print makers.

For the time being the Rosenwald Collection will remain in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, but selections from it will be constantly on exhibition at the National Gallery. The first of these exhibitions will open on April twenty-fifth.