

June 4, 1947

NEWS RELEASE

National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, D. C.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, June 4: David E. Finley, Director, announces the opening of an exhibition of chiaroscuro woodcuts, lent anonymously, at the National Gallery of Art on Sunday, June 8th. It is the first time that a large exhibition of chiaroscuro prints will have been shown in Washington. This outstanding collection, which was formed over a long period of years, includes examples of color printed woodcuts from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, many of them now of exceptional rarity.

The chiaroscuro process was invented in Germany in the early years of the sixteenth century. The artist, by the superimposition of several blocks, produced colored prints which were in imitation of dark pen drawings on colored paper. Examples of the first period in Germany are two rare prints, one called the Lovers Surprised by Death, by Hans Burgkmair, and the other an impression of the Beautiful Virgin of Ratisbon, by Albrecht Altdorfer.

One section of the exhibition is devoted to the prints of an Italian, Ugo da Carpi, who in 1516 claimed protection from the Doge and Senate of Venice for his own invention of a chiaroscuro process. His followers, Niccolo Vicentino and Antonio da Trento, are also well represented. The black outline characteristic of the German cuts was not used by the Italian school. Instead, designs by Raphael, Titian and Parmigianino were freely interpreted in tone blocks where the gradation of color becomes an essential part of the composition.

The work done in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century includes examples of the prints by Hendrik Goltzius and the Bloemaerts.

Chiaroscuro prints were also popular in the eighteenth century, when there was a revival of the art. The exhibition includes the work of the Venetian, Antonio Maria Zanetti, the French Le Sueur, who copied with great success the drawings in the famous collection of the Comte de Caylus, and a number of prints by the English artists, Arthur Pond, Charles Knapton and John Skippe.

The exhibition will continue through September 15.

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