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NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
WASHINGTON, D. C.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, December 15: David E. Finley, Director, announces the opening on December 17th, at the National Gallery of Art, of a special exhibition called Vollard, Connoisseur. The exhibition is made up of prints from the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection in the National Gallery of Art.

Ambroise Vollard, son of a French colonial, was born on the island of Reunion in the Indian Ocean in 1867. As a young man he went to Paris to study law, but after a time, he became a picture dealer. His shop in the Rue Laffitte became celebrated because of his exhibitions of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings.

Vollard's major preoccupation all his life, however, was the publication of fine illustrated books and portfolios of contemporary prints. Although he allowed himself to be guided as to the choice of artists, his ideas, when it came to actual publication, were very definite. The books were to be issued in accordance with the long French tradition of craftsmanship. The albums of prints were to contain the work of artists who were not engravers by profession, but rather primarily painters and sculptors.

Vollard was also a voracious man and a vain one. He contracted for and planned many more projects than he could possibly ever finish. The portraits of himself, which he commissioned from Cezanne, Forain, Renoir, Rouault and Picasso, testify to his egotism. But his life coincided with one of the great periods of French art. From the exhibition at the National Gallery his personal taste can be better understood and judged. Three of the few prints which Cezanne made, and which were issued by Vollard, are represented in the exhibition. Redon and Renoir were his especial favorites. Three large bays are devoted to the lithographs and etchings of these two artists which were published by Vollard.

He was also one of the first to recognize the special charm of the colored lithographs of Bonnard and Vuillard. Unappreciated when they first appeared in 1899, these prints are now recognized as the highest development of French colored lithography. After the turn of the century Vollard became interested in the work of Picasso. The early series of the Saltimbanques came out in 1913 with his imprint. The relationship of Picasso and Vollard continued until the latter's death in 1939.

Also included in the exhibition are a number of rare prints by Dufy, Bonnard and Roussel, which were never formally published. There are also a few unusual prints which came from the private collection of Vollard, for example, the large monotype by Degas of the Ballet Master.

The exhibition will remain open until February 5th.

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