

NEWS RELEASE

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John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announces the opening, on March 16 at 3 p.m., of the second exhibition of American Primitive Paintings from the collection of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch to be held in the National Gallery. This exhibition includes more than 100 oil paintings dating from the beginning of the 18th century to the latter part of the 19th century, none of which has been exhibited before in the Gallery. Of especial interest is a group of 9 paintings by Edward Hicks (1780-1849), the celebrated Quaker painter. Among other artists represented are: Benjamin West, who painted portraits in Philadelphia and New York in his early years and later, in 1763, settled in London, where he became President of the Royal Academy in 1792; Joseph Badger (1708-1765) whose simple, straightforward portraits of his New England contemporaries contrast with the facile elegance of the British school; and Winthrop Chandler (1747-1790), the limner of Connecticut, the majority of whose sitters were members of his own family or neighbors from nearby towns. As might be expected, many of the paintings in the exhibition are by unknown painters.



In his preface to the fully illustrated catalogue of the exhibition Director John Walker states that "Colonel and Mrs. Garbisch's tireless search for the flashes of genius, for the significant achievements of the artists we designate as primitive, has brought together in Washington an unequaled representation in their field of art. We can see the earliest examples in portraits by the limners of the early 18th century; then follows an increasing production from the period of the Revolution; and last comes the great output which marked the heyday of the primitive, when, during the first half of the 19th century, stimulated by a feeling of cultural independence, these brilliant artisans plied their trade in towns and villages throughout the country."

The first exhibition of American Primitive Paintings from the Garbisch Collection was held three years ago, in 1954. At that time a number of paintings were given to the Gallery by Colonel and Mrs. Garbisch. Mr. Walker observed then that the Collection "represents an authentic and important part of our national heritage."

Mr. Walker concludes his preface to the catalogue of the present exhibition as follows: "It is a goal of the National Gallery of Art to have an unrivaled collection of American painting. The attainment of this goal has been brought closer to realization by the generosity of Colonel and Mrs. Garbisch. The Gallery would like to express its gratitude to these two distinguished connoisseurs, who have spent so many years of their lives in the study and acquisition of the work of our most indigenous artists."

The exhibition will close on April 28.