

NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

REpublic 7-4215 - ext. 247

FOR RELEASE: Sunday Papers
November 23, 1958

WINSLOW HOMER - A RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION

Washington, D. C., November 22: In tribute to Winslow Homer (1836-1910), one of the masters of American painting, the National Gallery of Art on November 23 will open a major retrospective exhibition of his works. The show comprising 242 items will run through January 4, and will then be moved to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York for its only other hanging.

"This is our second one-man show in honor of a leading American painter," said John Walker, Director of the National Gallery, who has supervised the planning of the exhibit.

"The first, in 1957, was devoted to George Bellows. In collecting this truly representative group of Homer's works for a special showing, we are following out a long-range plan for a series of exhibitions honoring the masters of American painting."

Members of the National Gallery staff have spent two years planning the show and assembling the material for it. Among the 242 items at the opening November 23, there will be 77 oil paintings and 106 water colors, as well as prints and drawings.

(more)

Three oil paintings from the National Gallery's own collection will be included. Other works by Homer have been loaned by 52 private collectors and 49 museums, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cleveland Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

The catalogue will contain 2 color plates and 101 black and white illustrations, and will have a foreword by John Walker, and an introductory essay, "The Orientation of an American Painter: Winslow Homer in Paris - 1867," by Albert Ten Eyck Gardner.

Winslow Homer was born in 1836 into a middle class Boston mercantile family which had settled originally in New England in the mid-17th century. Largely self-taught, he began his career as an apprentice to a Boston lithographer at the age of eighteen, but he left the job in 1857 to become a free-lance magazine illustrator. Later in life he remarked: "From the time that I took my nose off that lithographic stone, I have had no master; and never shall have any."

This Yankee individualism was characteristic of Homer, and became more pronounced as he grew older. He never married, and, although he was one of the few American artists of his time to make a good living from his art, he never frequented fashionable society as did Whistler (1834-1903), for example, but preferred independence and even isolation, so that he could concentrate on his work. Typical of him was the summer he spent in 1880 on tiny Ten Pound Island in the middle of

(more)

Gloucester Harbor, with only the lighthouse keeper and his wife for company, rowing to the mainland only when he had to have materials.

Yet no other painter has been more devoted to the visual facts of America. He has left us accurate pictures of the farms and countryside, of beach and resort life, of the coast, the sea and the mountains, and of sports. He was the great illustrator of the Civil War. His work for Harper's Weekly took him to the Front several times, and he has provided our best pictorial record apart from early photographs of that turbulent period.

It is not surprising that the life of such a recluse was rather uneventful after the end of the War. He visited France in 1867, spent the 1870's (with New York City as his headquarters) painting scenes of rural and seaside life, went to England in 1881-1882, then settled in Prout's Neck, Maine, where he lived the rest of his life. From Prout's Neck he journeyed to the Adirondacks to paint landscapes and hunting and fishing pictures. He spent winter vacations in Florida, Bermuda, the Bahamas and Cuba, where he did his famous water colors of those then exotic and distant places. He died in his own house in Prout's Neck in 1910.

Homer was far more, however, than just a reporter of his period and country. Albert Ten Eyck Gardner, Associate Curator of American Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, states:

(more)

"Though Homer's career spans almost exactly the years of the Victorian era, it is impossible to think of him as a Victorian painter; he was, and in some mysterious way, he remains a modern painter in the same way that Manet, Monet, Degas remain moderns.... With the passage of time, Homer's reputation seems ever to increase and his pictures still deliver their message with undiminished vitality."

* * * * *