

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. August 31, 1961: John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today the opening of a special exhibition of 135 drawings and 8 etchings by the Venetian master, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696-1770), on September 17. The drawings are on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England, and the exhibition was organized under the supervision of the Museum's Director and Secretary, Sir Trenchard Cox. It comes to this country through the cooperation of the British Government, and is sponsored on its limited tour of the United States by His Excellency, the British Ambassador, Sir Harold Caccia.

The drawings and etchings included illustrate Tiepolo's wide range of activity from 1725-1762. Many of the drawings have been identified as studies for his important commissions to decorate palaces and villas throughout Europe or as studies for his etchings and oil paintings. The earliest ones have a somewhat labored, sculptural quality, characteristic of his work in this period.

Several drawings of the seventeen-thirties in the exhibition are studies for the frescoes of the Villa Loschi, now Zileri dal Verme, at Biron, near Vicenza. Like the frescoes, they are allegories, as the following titles indicate: Virtue Crowning Honor, Humility Disregarding Pride, and "Concordia Maritale." These drawings exhibit a fully developed and vivid style of drawing in pen and wash.

From the seventeen-forties, an important period in Tiepolo's work, there are drawings connected with his frescoes in the Palazzo Labia in Venice, done around 1745, also more than 24 drawings related to his two series of etchings, the Scherzi di Fantasia and the Capricci, which belong to this decade. The subject matter of the etchings is extremely varied; many are fantasies, and some really genre scenes. They are among the most personal expressions of Tiepolo's genius, since he was not doing them as a commission, and was, therefore, not bound by a prescribed iconographical program. His style of drawing has now become more fluid in outline, more summary in the use of wash, and has greater luminosity.

In the early seventeen-fifties, Tiepolo was occupied with the great frescoes for the Kaisersaal of the Prince-Bishop's Residenz at Würzburg. His drawing at this time shows a particular elan and vigor. Following the Würzburg triumph, he was at work at the Villa Valmarana

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near Vincenza in 1757. Drawings connected with these frescoes are more finished, but retain a spontaneous and suggestive quality. A drawing in the exhibition, A Peasant in Cloak and Tall Hat, may be compared with the peasant types at Valmarana.

The latest drawings in the exhibition are studies for the ceiling of the Throne Room of Charles III's Palace at Madrid, which occupied Tiepolo from 1762 to 1764 and was his last major work. They show how he was able to evoke form by the use of the pen alone.

Mr. Graham Reynolds, Keeper of the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Victoria and Albert Museum, has accompanied the exhibition to Washington. Mr. Reynolds contributed the introduction to the illustrated exhibition catalogue. The drawings will be on view in Washington through October 15, after which they will be circulated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service to the following museums: Worcester Art Museum (November 1-30); Houston Museum of Fine Arts (December 15-January 15, 1962); Los Angeles County Museum (February 1-28); and The Art Institute of Chicago (March 15-April 15).

End

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