

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON 25 DC • REpublic 7-4215 extension 247

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. September 29, 1961. On Sunday, October 8, the National Gallery of Art will open the third in its series of one-man shows honoring the greatest American artists. This year the show is A RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION OF THE WORK OF THOMAS EAKINS. Eakins (1844-1916), a subject of neglect and even scandal in his own day, is now recognized as one of the most significant Americans in the history of art. Previous honorees were George Bellows (in 1957) and Winslow Homer (in 1958/59).

Eakins' passionate devotion to realism - in the undraped nude, in surgical operations, in penetratingly frank portraits - earned him much scorn in his native Philadelphia. "Respectability in art is appalling," he once said. Art for him was a way of exploring objective truth. A mathematician and experimental physicist on the side, Eakins was as close to science as any artist since Leonardo da Vinci.

The exhibition comprises 103 items, including oil paintings, water colors, drawings, sculptures, preparatory models, and a selection of his photographs of motion. 57 sources have contributed to the show. A checklist of the lending institutions is attached.

Two works generally considered among Eakins' most important are The Gross Clinic and The Agnew Clinic. Both are in the exhibition. Each shows a famous Philadelphia surgeon pausing in the midst of an operation while his assistants busy themselves with the patient and medical students who are witnessing the operation appear in the background.

Such scenes were common to Eakins' experience, for in his youth he had supplemented his art studies with regular courses at Jefferson Medical College and had witnessed many operations and dissections, and had even done dissections himself. The understanding of anatomy this training gave him he felt invaluable to his painting, and he always recommended it to his students. Mathematics, especially as it related to perspective, was another science that interested him and which he felt to be an important tool for the artist. This demand in Eakins' nature to understand the scientific background of things he painted led Eakins to develop a camera that could record the various positions bodies assumed while in motion. This camera was essentially the principle of the modern motion picture camera.

(more)

The largest group of Eakins' work is portraiture, and in this category of painting many critics believe him to be the best artist that the United States has produced. He was not, however, a fashionable portraitist in his own time, for his interpretations of people were too frank and searching. For the most part his portraits were of friends and of professional people - teachers in many fields, musicians, athletes and his art students at the Pennsylvania Academy.

One of the best known of these is his portrait of the American poet, Walt Whitman, a warm admirer of Eakins long before appreciation of him was as widespread as it is today. "Eakins is not a painter"; Whitman once said, "he is a force."

The exhibition also includes many paintings by Eakins devoted to sports - rowing, hunting, sailing, boxing, wrestling. A tall man with a strong build, Eakins was always a firm believer in exercise. His sporting pictures are among his most widely admired works.

After the closing of the exhibition at the National Gallery of Art on November 12, the exhibition will be shown at The Art Institute of Chicago from December 1, 1961 through January 7, 1962, and at the Philadelphia Museum of Art from February 1 through March 18, 1962.

End

For photographs and further information contact: J. Carter Brown, National Gallery of Art, Washington 25, D.C. RE 7-4215, Ext. 248.

CHECKLIST OF INSTITUTIONS LENDING WORKS TO
A RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION OF THE WORK OF THOMAS EAKINS

Akron, Ohio	The Butler Institute of American Art
Andover, Mass.	Addison Gallery of American Art
Boston, Mass.	Museum of Fine Arts
Brooklyn, New York	The Brooklyn Museum
Buffalo, New York	The Albright Art Gallery
Chicago, Ill.	The Art Institute of Chicago
Cleveland, Ohio	The Cleveland Museum of Art
Columbus, Ohio	The Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts
Detroit, Michigan	The Detroit Institute of Arts
Fort Worth, Texas	Fort Worth Art Association
Lincoln, Nebraska	University of Nebraska (F. M. Hall Collection)
New York, N.Y.	National Academy of Design
Newark, N.J.	The Newark Museum
Philadelphia, Pa.	The Jefferson Medical College
Philadelphia, Pa.	The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts
Philadelphia, Pa.	Philadelphia Museum of Art
Los Angeles, Calif.	Los Angeles County Museum
Lynchburg, Virginia	Randolph-Macon Woman's College
New Haven, Conn.	Yale University Art Gallery
New York, N.Y.	The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Northampton, Mass.	Smith College Museum of Art
Paris, France	National Museum of Modern Art
Philadelphia, Pa.	University of Pennsylvania
Princeton, N.J.	The Art Museum, Princeton University
Providence, R. I.	Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design
St. Louis, Mo.	Washington University
Washington, D.C.	The Corcoran Gallery of Art
Washington, D.C.	The Medical Museum of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology
Washington, D.C.	National Gallery of Art
Washington, D.C.	The Phillips Collection
Wichita, Kansas	Wichita Art Museum (Roland P. Murdock Collection)
Worcester, Mass.	Worcester Art Museum

In addition, 26 private lenders have also made works available for the exhibition.