

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. July 11, 1963. John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today the opening of an exhibition of Modern Prints and Illustrated Books from the Rosenwald Collection, on Sunday, July 14. The exhibition, which will take place in the Central Gallery on the Ground Floor, will run through Labor Day, September 2.

It is the first exhibition ever held at the Gallery to show illustrated books, an important art form of our day that is beginning to attain widespread recognition. 65 books will be on view, accompanied by 158 prints by the same artists that contributed to the books displayed.

The exhibition documents an artistic revolution that has occurred only in the last six or seven decades. Developing mainly in France, where artists of the first rank gradually overcame the prejudice that regarded book illustration as a minor art, the practice of publishing original prints in books has grown to remarkable proportions. Some of the greatest artists of recent years have been involved, from Manet and Toulouse-Lautrec, to Picasso, Rouault, Matisse, Chagall, Miró and Braque.

All of the books are published in limited editions. Some have texts illustrated by an artist; in some cases, the artist has written the text himself; and in others the prints are printed unbound in suites, with little text beyond a title page.

The establishment of the new art form has been largely the result of the imaginative efforts of publishers, such as Ambroise Vollard, the dealer friend of Cézanne and champion of the Post-Impressionists. A strong factor in the growth of the production of fine illustrated books has been a new market among a widening circle of collectors and connoisseurs.

All of the prints and books in the exhibition come from the collection of Mr. Lessing J. Rosenwald, of Jenkintown, Pennsylvania. The books have been given by Mr. Rosenwald to the Library of Congress, which has graciously lent them for this exhibition.

The scope of the exhibition extends to the present day with the magnificent book L'Ordre des oiseaux published last year with color etchings by Georges Braque and a text by Washingtonian Saint-John Perse.

Other recent works in the show are Picasso's bullfighting illustrations for the Tauromachia, published in 1959, and Miró's illustrated

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edition of À Toute Épreuve, 1958, by the French poet Paul Eluard, which critic James Thrall Soby has called "one of the most triumphant feats of book illustration in our century." Of it the artist wrote: "I have made some trials which have allowed me to see what it was to make a book and not merely to illustrate it. Illustration is always a secondary matter. The important thing is that a book must have all the dignity of a sculpture carved in marble."

The show begins with some of the early masterpieces of book illustration, of which one of the most important is Manet's illustrated edition of The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe, published in Paris in 1875 with a French translation by the poet Stéphane Mallarmé.

Another epoch-making early modern illustrated book is also in the show, Verlaine's Parallèlement, with delicate pink illustrations by Bonnard that mix freely with the printed text. It was the first book published by Vollard. The last, Rouault's great Passion, published in 1939, the year of Vollard's death, is also in the exhibition.

Toulouse-Lautrec's illustrated book on Yvette Guilbert, the celebrated Paris café singer, is also on view, together with a note to Lautrec from Yvette Guilbert on one of her cards, and correspondence between the artist and the author of the text, Gustave Geffroy.

Classics of English book illustration are also shown, notably the Kelmscott Chaucer, designed by William Morris and illustrated by the pre-Raphaelite Burne-Jones, and The Pierrot of the Minute, illustrated by one of the most influential of all English book illustrators, Aubrey Beardsley.

Other classics of modern illustrated books on view are Kandinsky's Klänge of 1913, consisting of pictures and poems, both by the artist; Chagall's edition of Gogol's Dead Souls, on which he worked from 1923-1937 but which was not published until 1948; and the only illustrated book by the architect Le Corbusier, Poème de l'angle droit, 1955, with a text by the author in his own handwriting reproduced in facsimile.

Among other artists represented are the Spaniard Salvador Dali; the Germans Barlach, Corinth, and Marcks; the Italian de Chirico; and the Frenchmen Redon, Matisse, Forain, Maillol, Dufy, Despiau, Arp, Masson, Villon, Léger, de la Fresnaye, Derain, Vuillard and Vlaminck. Of particular interest among the prints are the series of color separations, exhibited together with their final prints. For example, four separate proofs accompany the Rouault Juggler, and no less than seven color proofs show the evolution of a luminous Chagall plate for Tales from the Arabian Nights, one of the first books with original prints published

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in the United States.

The exhibition was arranged by Mr. Richard Field of the National Gallery of Art Department of Graphic Arts.

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