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THREE "LOST" GERMAN PAINTINGS

TO BE SHOWN AT NATIONAL GALLERY

Washington, D. C. ^[1967] January 8, 1966. Three paintings, stolen from a German museum shortly after the first world war, will be exhibited at the National Gallery of Art before they are returned to Germany by an act of Congress.

They are Self-Portrait by Rembrandt van Ryn (1606-1669), Portrait of a Man by Gerard Ter Borch (1617-1681), and Portrait of a Young Woman by Johann Tischbein (1751-1829). They will be on view from January 13 through February 28 (in Lobby D).

The theft occurred almost half a century ago, in 1922, when the pictures were cut from their frames and taken from the Weimar Museum by two German soldiers. There is no record of their whereabouts for a dozen years after that. Then they appeared in this country in the possession of an Ohio man who thought they were copies and kept them in his attic. In 1938 his wife came upon the paintings and in 1945 took them to the Dayton Art Institute where they were almost instantly recognized.

A year later the Department of Justice claimed them as enemy property and sent them to the National Gallery for safekeeping.

This past year Congress enacted legislation which allows the United States to transfer the pictures to the Federal Republic of Germany. They will be held in trust for the Weimar Museum, which is in East Germany. By agreement, the paintings will be shown at the National Gallery of Art for the artistic and cultural benefit of the American people before they are returned. Under the terms of the old law, the pictures would have been sold by the Attorney General at public auction with the proceeds transferred to the Treasury Department for deposit to a war claims fund.

Of chief interest among the three pictures is the Rembrandt self-portrait -- the most familiar face in all art. The Dutch master painted some 60 of these self-portraits, creating an unparalleled pictorial document of his physical and psychic evolution from youth to old age. The Weimar self-portrait was painted at about the mid-way point in Rembrandt's life, when he was 37. It is signed and dated 1643.

According to Dr. Jakob Rosenberg, Kress Professor-in-Residence at the National Gallery, Germany will be regaining a "fine authentic Rembrandt self-portrait of special value and interest." Dr. Rosenberg, who is author of a well-known study of Rembrandt's life and work, explained that the Weimar picture was painted in a year that followed two important events in Rembrandt's life -- the death of his wife and the

completion of what is considered his most famous painting, the Night Watch.

"With Saskia dead and his popularity no longer on the ascent, Rembrandt now appears with an older, more solemn expression," Dr. Rosenberg observed. "This luminous and shadowy painting can be seen as a harbinger of the later, often tragic self-portraits."

All three of the Weimar pictures were treated for damage and framed by the National Gallery after they were brought to Washington. Most of the damage they sustained is traced to the fact that they had been kept rolled for several decades.

Gerard Ter Borch, who painted the Portrait of a Man, was a young contemporary of Rembrandt's. His pictures today are highly prized examples of the renowned Dutch school of so-called "genre" painters of that century. Johann Tischbein, who painted the Portrait of a Young Woman, was a successful 18th century member of a large family of German artists. He is best known for a 1787 portrait of Goethe in the Campagna, now in the Frankfurt Museum.

Black-and-white photographs and color transparencies on loan for purposes of publication are available from William W. Morrison, Assistant to the Director, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565, Area Code 202, 737-4215, ext. 225.