

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

Washington, D. C. November 2, 1967. The National Gallery of Art will be the subject of a color special Friday, Nov. 17 (10-11 p.m. NYT), on the NBC Television Network.

Lou Hazam, whose prize-winning television documentaries include "Michelangelo: the Last Giant" and "Vincent van Gogh: A Self-Portrait," wrote the script and produced the hour-long program. Tom Priestley, who directed the distinguished television program "The Louvre," also directed this film. Actor Robert Culp was selected to narrate the script.

According to Mr. Hazam, this first effort by commercial TV to transmit a comprehensive account of an American art museum and its collection is aimed at those viewers "who may never have had the opportunity to walk through this outstanding gallery. We hope to provide them with a chance to enjoy and savor its treasures almost as if they were actually visiting it themselves."

"The TV viewer," Mr. Hazam said, "will march through the ages--from the oldest painting at the National Gallery, a Byzantine Madonna of the 13th century, on through the religious masterpieces of the Italian and Flemish schools, the great Dutch painters, the British and American portrait and landscape artists, the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists and finally into the art of our century ending with Picasso."

"Paintings hang silently from gallery walls," he said, "and naturally do not move to accomodate the fact that our medium happens to be the motion picture. To help balance this, we have planned live sequences designed to animate the art and to bring a new dimension to the works of art."

For example, at the start of the program the camera reveals the National Gallery Orchestra under the direction of Richard Bales as it plays for the opening of a special exhibition of Gilbert Stuart paintings. From here the camera moves on to the American collection.

John Walker, Director of the National Gallery, conducts the viewer on a tour of great paintings of women, such as Diane de Poitiers by Clouet, and Madame Moitessier by Ingres.

The Gallery's resident restorer, Francis Sullivan, discusses some secrets of paintings as revealed by X-ray examination.

The National Gallery painting that receives the most attention is of course the Leonardo da Vinci portrait of Ginevra de'Benci, the only generally acknowledged Leonardo in America. A camera was set up before this recent acquisition and NBC reporters invited the comments of the public as it crowded past.

Another of the animated features deals with unusual aspects of paintings in the Gallery: pictures within pictures, for instance, and a postcard-size St. George and the Dragon, painstakingly painted by the Flemish artist Rogier van der Weyden, so small it is exhibited behind a magnifying glass.

Finally, there is an imaginative sequence at night when the National Gallery's paintings are left to themselves. Portraits "talk," exchanging the perhaps once-spoken thoughts of their subjects and thereby revealing fascinating historical facts.

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