

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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## NATIONAL GALLERY INAUGURATES FOUR-LANGUAGE TOURING SYSTEM

Washington, D. C. March 17, 1968. With help from several Washington, D. C. embassies, the National Gallery of Art has placed into operation the only four-language touring service to be found in an American art museum.

The talks, on small "Acoustiguide" tape units, are French, German, Spanish, and English versions of Gallery Director John Walker's introductory tour to "20 Masterpieces at the National Gallery of Art."

"Despite a growing concern in this country over increasing tourist travel to Europe, too few American museums have shown solicitude for the million and a half foreign tourists who come to the United States each year," Mr. Walker said.

He expressed a conviction that the National Gallery's foreign language tours will add measurably to the enjoyment of many of these visitors.

The new talks for tourists are only the most recent consequence of Mr. Walker's efforts to make the National Gallery more

attractive to its growing world audience. Within the last three years, visitors from abroad--as well as "total immersion" language classes from this country--have asked for and received live tours in Italian, German, Spanish, and French. The official information booklet has been translated into Spanish, and the book National Gallery of Art, published in 1963 by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., is available in four languages. There are general publications and audio-visual aids based on National Gallery art in several other languages including Japanese.

The foreign language tapes took more than a year to complete. The most formidable barrier to surmount was Spanish because of its wide variety of accents and dialects. This version was finally translated and recorded by El Vizconde de Priego, Spain's cultural counselor in America, who lived for many years in South America. In the same way, the French and German translations were shown to appropriate embassy officials for approval before they were recorded.

Each translation begins: "I am speaking for John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art...." Then, with an Acoustiguide unit hanging lightly from a shoulder, the visitor is led by the tiny voice in his ear over a 45-minute trail that starts with a 15th-century Italian panel painting and concludes with one of the most famous French Impressionist pictures, A Girl with a Watering Can by Renoir. Along the way there are stops before such celebrated paintings and sculptures as Raphael's The Alba Madonna, Rembrandt's The Mill, and Donatello's The David of the Casa Martelli.

John Walker's narration is sprinkled with anecdotes from his own life. At The Adoration of the Magi by Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo Lippi, he relates how he helped to prove the 15th-century picture's dual authorship some 40 years ago while studying with art scholar Bernard Berenson in Florence. At another point he describes the hush in an auction room in New York just before his successful purchase of Fragonard's A Young Girl Reading for the National Gallery in 1961.

The Acoustiguide tour "20 Masterpieces at the National Gallery of Art" may be rented in the Rotunda for 25¢ for a single ear piece, or 35¢ for two.

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For photographs or press demonstrations of the system, contact William W. Morrison, Assistant to the Director, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565, Area Code 202, 737-4215, ext. 225.