

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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MASTERPIECES OF AMERICAN NAIVE PAINTING

TO OPEN AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Washington, D. C. June 8, 1969. General George Washington on White Charger (Jack); an early farming community's Flax-Scutching Bee; and wild beasts of the jungle in The Peaceable Kingdom.

These scenes by unschooled artists typify a matchless collection of 2600 early American paintings acquired during the past quarter of a century by Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch. On Friday (June 13), their most celebrated acquisitions of American naive painting go on summer exhibition at the National Gallery of Art.

Of the 111 paintings selected, 34 have been given to the National Gallery, including The Cornell Farm by Edward Hicks, The Sargent Family by an unknown artist, and Family Portrait by Ralph E. W. Earl, who was artist-in-residence for Andrew Jackson. Fourteen have been given to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and nine are from the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Reception of General Louis Kossuth at New York City, December 24, 1850 by E. Percel is in the Museum of the City of New York.

In announcing the exhibition, John Walker, Director of the National Gallery, said: "Everyone interested in art owes a debt

to Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch. They have assembled the most extensive and important collection of American naive paintings ever brought together. This in itself is a remarkable achievement. But of still greater significance, they have rescued numerous canvases and panels that were rapidly deteriorating and would soon have vanished completely."

After World War II, when the Garbisches began acquiring American art for "Pokety," their summer home in Cambridge, Maryland, it was not generally understood that the fledgling United States had produced a style of painting of its own, one that owed little to the conventions of European art. In farmhouses, shops, and old country homes they sought paintings by American "primitives," a term that refers to the artist's naive vision, simple technique, and lack of academic training.

As the collection grew, the Garbisches lent pictures for a series of important exhibitions which have been seen in Europe as well as on this continent. These exhibitions, and the extensive catalogues that accompany them, are chiefly responsible for increased world-wide interest in this aspect of our native art. The present gathering has been shown at the Grand Palais, Paris; Amerika House, Berlin; Palazzo Collicola, the Festival of Two Worlds, Spoleto; Royal Academy of Arts, London; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; Cason del Buen Ritiro, Madrid; Palacio de la Virreina, Barcelona; and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Few groups of artists have remained as anonymous as America's 18th- and 19th-century naive painters. Of the 111

pictures in the exhibition almost half are by unknowns, and only brief biographical information has been discovered for most of the 29 known painters. For many of these early limmers, painting pictures was only one of several skills. George Washington Mark, for example, who painted Dismal Swamp in the exhibition, decorated chairs, and Edward Hicks was a Quaker preacher and sign painter.

After Labor Day, "American Naive Painting of the 18th and 19th Centuries; 111 Masterpieces from the Collection of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch" will travel under the sponsorship of the American Federation of Arts to the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, the Museum of Fine Arts of Houston, and the United States Military Academy Library, West Point, New York. A fully illustrated catalogue with a preface by Lloyd Goodrich accompanies the exhibition.

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