

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL GALLERY HOLDS MARY CASSATT RETROSPECTIVE

WASHINGTON, D.C. September 5, 1970. The largest exhibition of the work of Mary Cassatt, America's greatest Impressionist painter, goes on view at the National Gallery of Art on September 27. This will be the sixth in a series of National Gallery retrospective exhibitions honoring major American artists and the first in the series devoted to a woman. The exhibition will be shown only in Washington and will remain on view at the National Gallery through November 8.

A number of the works in the exhibition have never been shown in the United States before, and several rarely seen pictures have been lent by members of the Cassatt family.

The exhibition, comprising 100 oils, pastels, and graphics, was organized by the National Gallery under the curatorial supervision of E. John Bullard, Assistant to the Director. Mrs. Adelyn Breeskin, the pre-eminent authority on Cassatt, helped to select the pictures and wrote the introduction and notes to the catalog. Coinciding with the Gallery's exhibition is the appearance of Mrs.

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Breeskin's definitive work on the artist, Mary Cassatt: A Catalogue Raisonné of the Oils, Pastels, Watercolors, and Drawings, published by the Smithsonian Institution Press.

"Although Mary Cassatt, like Whistler and Sargent, was an expatriate and lived most of her life in Paris, where she was a member of the Impressionist group," says Mr. Bullard, "she was able to combine this foreign exposure with an inherent native quality which gives her work a distinctively American character. As she herself insisted, 'I am American . . . clearly and frankly American.'"

Mary Cassatt was born near Pittsburgh in 1844, but lived most of her life abroad, mainly in Paris. She enjoyed a close and mutually productive working relationship with Edgar Degas, who invited her in 1877 to exhibit with the Impressionists. After this her works appeared in three subsequent Impressionist exhibitions. Her first one-man show was held in 1891 at Durand-Ruel's, Paris.

Cassatt played a key role in introducing and promoting an appreciation of the Impressionists among American collectors, and was particularly influential in advising Mr. and Mrs. H.O. Havemeyer, whose great collection was bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1929.

In 1914 she had to stop painting due to increasing blindness, an affliction she shared with Degas. She died in 1926 at Château Beaufresne, her summer home outside Paris.

She shared Degas's interest in draughtsmanship, portraiture,

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and Japanese prints. "Throughout her career she limited her subjects to what she knew and understood thoroughly," Mrs. Breeskin writes, referring in particular to her depictions of children and mothers with their babies.

Little Girl in a Blue Armchair, the painting which Edgar Degas partly repainted for Cassatt in 1878, is one of three pictures lent to the exhibition by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, Upperville, Virginia.

"An effort has been made to include in this exhibition many of the sketches and unfinished pictures which particularly show the spontaneous and fresh quality which marks Cassatt's work," Mr. Bullard points out. Among these pictures is In the Meadow, lent by Mrs. William Coxe Wright of St. Davids, Pennsylvania.

Sketch of a Young Woman Picking Fruit, a rare oil study for the mural Modern Woman, which Cassatt painted for the Women's Building at the 1892 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, has been lent by Stephen Higgons of Paris. The mural, now lost, is known only through contemporary photographs and a few such studies as this one.

Mother and Daughter, Both Wearing Large Hats, lent by Mrs. J. Lee Johnson of Fort Worth, Texas, is representative of the final development of the artist's style.

A fully illustrated catalog of the exhibition, with 12 color plates, will be on sale at \$4.75. A special full color poster, using The Boating Party from the Chester Dale Collection at the National Gallery, has been printed in a limited edition by Mourlot Imprimeurs, and

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Paris, and is available for \$5.00 during the exhibition and \$10.00 afterward.

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For further information and photographs contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director, or Alison Luchs, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565, Area Code 202, 737-4215, ext. 224.