

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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## HOGARTH PAINTINGS FROM MELLON COLLECTION EXHIBITED AT NATIONAL GALLERY

WASHINGTON, D.C. January 27, 1971. An exhibition of 28 paintings by the eighteenth-century British artist, William Hogarth (1697-1764), lent by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, will be shown at the National Gallery of Art from February 12 through May 30. With the exception of the Tate Gallery's holding in London, the Mellon collection of Hogarth paintings is the most comprehensive anywhere in the world.

This will be the fourth in a series of exhibitions of works by British artists in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Mellon, the first three having been devoted to J.M.W. Turner, John Constable and Joseph Wright of Derby.

A fully-illustrated catalog of the exhibition (\$2.50) has been prepared and annotated by Ross Watson of the Gallery's staff. Mr. Watson was responsible for the three previous exhibitions of British paintings from the Mellon Collection.

Hogarth is considered the greatest illustrator of English social history of the eighteenth century. In recording various aspects of the people and the places of his time, he also satirized customs and manners in which he saw folly or corruption. Two characteristics of Hogarth's art, Mr. Watson writes, are part of a long tradition in

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English painting: the necessity that a picture have a story, and that it point to a moral.

The most important picture in the Mellon exhibition depicts a scene from act three of The Beggar's Opera (1729). This painting's dramatic subject and superbly staged composition reflect the artist's intense interest in the theater. The scene shows Lucy and Polly pleading with their fathers for the life of the hero Macheath, a highwayman, whom they both love. The vigorous and fluid brushwork in this picture shows the influence of the Rococo style, which was developing in Europe around 1720. Self-Portrait and Girl in a Plumed Hat also show Hogarth's delight in brushwork and surface texture.

A set of 12 paintings chosen for the exhibition illustrate the Hudibras series, Samuel Butler's satire on the Puritans. The Butler work, which had no great literary value, owed its immense popularity to the religious and political tensions of the time of Charles II when it was written.

The exhibition will include other portraits, conversation pieces (small-scale group portraits), and genre scenes, as well as a preliminary sketch for a proposed altarpiece, The Angel of Mercy, for London's Foundling Hospital.

Hogarth's lively scenes have literary counterparts in the novels of his friend, Henry Fielding, Mr. Watson has observed, and in Tom Jones Fielding makes several references to Hogarth and his paintings. The writer and artist had at least one aim in common: to elevate the comic genre.

Complementing the paintings will be an exhibition of Hogarth's graphic works, primarily from the Rosenwald collection of the

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National Gallery of Art. The 69 prints will include examples of all Hogarth's major series, such as The Harlot's Progress, The Rake's Progress, The Four Times of the Day, and Industry and Idleness. In his catalog to the Mellon paintings, Mr. Watson writes, "Hogarth is unique in eighteenth-century English art for the equal importance of his paintings and his engravings...his narrative pictures are painted to be engraved...Engravings brought Hogarth's work to a far wider public than his paintings could have, and this is still true today." Quotations and commentaries on the eighteenth-century social and political allusions will accompany the prints.

END

PRINTS BY WILLIAM HOGARTH FROM THE ROSENWALD COLLECTION

"Hogarth is typically English in the didactic nature of his satire. He is essentially a preacher and moralist, but a preacher from the stage of life, with spirit of the dramatist in the series of scenes which he often addressed to his audience."

Arthur M. Hind, A History of Engraving and Etching

This exhibition of forty-one prints by William Hogarth has been assembled to complement the paintings on view in Main Floor galleries 60 and 60A.

Hogarth's etchings and engravings are rich and dense, both visually and iconographically. Prints have often been so conceived and rendered as to require close and patient examination, and this approach is especially necessary (and rewarding) with Hogarth's works. Many were inspired by English literature and actual events of the time, and most are filled with a profusion of detail which enrich the basic themes.

The brief comments below are arranged to be read, following the installation, from your left to your right as you enter the gallery. The prints on the central stand are discussed at the end.

A HARLOT'S PROGRESS 1732

These six prints constitute one of Hogarth's earliest morality series. An instant success, it was immediately pirated by other artists who issued copies, hoping to capitalize on Hogarth's fame. (Such pirating led to the passage by Parliament of the copyright law of 1735 which protected artists).

Hogarth traces in narrative manner the arrival in London of the country girl, "Moll Hackabout," her subsequent activity as a prostitute, and her inevitable downfall. The last print of the series shows her funeral.

In the first plate, Moll, who has just stepped off a stage-coach, is approached by Mother Needham, a notorious historical madam of a brothel in Park Place. In the doorway lurks Colonel Charteris, a gentleman by birth who was infamous in London as a gambler, speculator and seducer of women. The old clergyman, who should protect the innocent girl, ignores her. The dead goose in the basket alludes to her inevitable fate. Throughout the series, Hogarth has enriched his narrative by the inclusion of "props." For example, in plate 2, the Old Testament paintings on the wall relate to the Jew whose mistress Moll had become; he will deal out stern justice to her when he discovers she has another lover (shown in the background).

Hogarth followed his success with this series by issuing A Rake's Progress in 1735, also exhibited here.

CREDULITY, SUPERSTITION AND FANATICISM 1762

This print is Hogarth's new version of the unpublished Enthusiasm Delineated which he redesigned on the advice of a friend. His friend had pointed out that some viewers might think Hogarth's satire was aimed at religion per se and not at the "preposterous masquerade habit in which it has been frequently disguised."

Here the artist focused intently on the perversion of religion by superstition.

JOHN WILKES 1763

Wilkes (1727-97) was an English political leader who, after many vicissitudes, eventually became Lord Mayor of London (1774). In his periodical, the North Briton, Wilkes had attacked both Hogarth and George III. The artist sketched him at Westminster during one of Wilkes' appearances before the Chief Justice. Although he was extremely popular with the people, Hogarth presented him in a sharply satirical manner.

THE ROYAL COCKPIT 1759

The cockfight is shown taking place in the Royal Cockpit, built by Charles II, in Birdcage Walk, St. James' Park. Cockfighting was the favorite sport of all social classes, and Hogarth carefully included a cross-section of humanity in the print. It has been suggested that the central figure is a parody of Leonardo's Christ in his Last Supper; identified as a peer, Lord Bertie, he is shown isolated from the other gamblers by his rank and by the fact that he is blind. Each of the figures acts independently of the others, fired by the fanatical intensity of his own actions. In addition to commenting on men's behavior, Hogarth focused attention on the brutal, barbarous nature of the sport.

SIMON, LORD LOVAT 1746

Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat, a Scot and a scurrilous character, was beheaded on April 9, 1747, for acts associated with attempts to restore the Stuarts to the monarchy. Hogarth sketched him in August, 1746, at St. Albans, where Lovat had stopped on his way to trial in London. By the time the print was published, Lovat was incarcerated in the Tower. Public demand for the print was enormous; more than 2500 were sold in a short time. Lovat's intriguing nature and devious personality are pungently captured in the portrait.

### A RAKE'S PROGRESS 1735

This series of eight prints, like A Harlot's Progress, follows the gradual but inevitable downfall of a fictitious character aptly named "Tom Rakewell". He is presented as a member of the wealthy bourgeoisie who attempts to imitate the life of an aristocratic rake. The series begins with his abandonment of a girl he had made pregnant and follows him through episodes of increasing debauchery and degradation. In plate 5 the rake marries an ugly, old, rich woman. In plate 6 he is shown enraged and wigless after having gambled away his wife's fortune. Plate 7 follows him to debtors' prison, where his wife adds to his torment by harrassing him. Plate 8 ends his story: he is now confined to a madhouse, manacled and raving, but comforted by the ever faithful girl he had seduced.

### INDUSTRY AND IDLENESS 1747

The announcement for this series reads: "This Day is publish'd, Price 12s. Design'd and engrav'd by Mr. Hogarth, TWELVE Prints, call'd INDUSTRY and IDLENESS: Shewing the Advantages attending the former, and the miserable Effects of the latter, in the different Fortunes of two APPRENTICES." Paulson \*has suggested that Hogarth's idea for the series may have come from Eastward Hoe, an Elizabethan comedy by Chapman, Marston and Jonson. It is thought that Hogarth's friend, the Rev. Arnold King, chose the scriptural passages which appear in cartouches. As with the series devoted to the Harlot and the Rake, Industry and Idleness is narrative in approach, rich in content and moralistic in intent.

### THE FOUR TIMES OF DAY 1738

Three of the four prints from the series are exhibited here. Morning is set in Covent Garden, with a portion of Inigo Jones' facade of St. Paul's visible. More prominently placed is "Tom King's Coffee House," a notorious tavern located near a brothel. In the background of Noon one sees St. Giles'-in-the-Fields, contrasted with the tavern at the left. Pious and affected church-goers appear at the right, while lusty and gluttonous figures are on the left. Night shows a London street near Charing Cross. The signs included advertise brothels, taverns and a barber-surgeon. Each of the works captures the variety and coarseness of life in London.

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\*Among the many studies of Hogarth's life and art are those by A.M. Hind (1913), F.D. Klingender (1945), F. Antal (1962), and R. Paulson (1970).

GULIELMUS HOGARTH 1749

Hogarth depicts himself with his dog, Trump, books and a palette, the latter allusions to his erudition and profession. He gazes directly out at the viewer, calm and serious, the image of controlled self-esteem; his attitude is reinforced by the Latinizing of his first name, a touch at once dignified and affected. Hogarth subsequently used the work as a frontispiece for bound volumes of his prints.

THE FIVE ORDERS OF PERIWIGS 1761

The Five Orders of Periwigs is a parody of the cult of Vitruvius, whose adherents sought to establish laws of composition and canons of beauty through the measurement of antique columns and sculptures. Hogarth has applied their approach to contemporary hair styles. He composed this print at the time when the publication of James Stuart's and Nicholas Revett's volumes, The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated, had been announced. Hogarth's "orders of periwigs" are based on the five orders of architecture (Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Composite.) and a sixth, the hairdressing of women.

THE BENCH 1758

The judges are shown sitting in the Court of the King's Bench, the Court of Common Pleas. The judge in the center is identified by his costume as the Lord Chief Justice. Paulson has suggested that the inscription, which seeks to distinguish between "character" and "caricature" may be compared with Fielding's preface to Joseph Andrews (1742), where similar distinctions were made in regard to fiction. He also sees a similarity between the satire of the image and Fielding's satirical attacks on corrupt judges.

FOUR PRINTS OF AN ELECTION 1755-58

From Hogarth's series of four, three are exhibited here. Their execution was stimulated by the Oxfordshire election of 1754. "Although this was historically a last upsurge of Jacobitism, it was also a much discussed example of the chaos that follows from the ambitious man's trying to win the support of a mass of people to gain power." (R. Paulson) While each of the prints is exceedingly complex in its allusions to contemporary persons and events, there is a clear general emphasis on blatant acts of bribery, frenetic political activity, and persons of disreputable character.

CROWNS, MITRES, MACES, ETC. 1754

This print celebrates the passage of "Hogarth's Act", the copyright law of 1735 which prohibited unscrupulous persons from pirating the published compositions of artists. It

also functioned as a subscription ticket for Hogarth's Four Prints of an Election. As Paulson has pointed out, the image shows the royal crown as a sun shedding its rays upon coronets, the Chancellor's great seal, the Cap of Liberty, and other symbols.

TIME SMOKING A PICTURE 1761

Issued as a subscription ticket for another print, this etching and mezzotint attacks would-be connoisseurs (one of Hogarth's favorite nemeses) and those painters of the past whose works appear extremely dark in coloration. As Paulson has noted, "Hogarth says in effect that Time is not a beautifier but a destroyer."