

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

## NEWS RELEASE

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### NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART DISTRIBUTES NEW KENNETH CLARK FILM SERIES ON MODERN PAINTING

WASHINGTON, D.C. Pioneers of Modern Painting, the new six-part film series written and narrated by Kenneth Clark, is now being distributed by the National Gallery of Art. The series covers the life and work of six leading artists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Édouard Manet, Paul Cézanne, Claude Monet, Georges Seurat, Henri Rousseau, and Edvard Munch.

Through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the series is distributed without charge by the National Gallery's Extension Service to colleges and universities with enrollments under 2,000. Participating schools must co-sponsor the series with a local museum, library, or cultural center for showing to the general public at no charge. This program follows the pattern of the Extension Service's distribution of Civilisation which has now been viewed on more than 600 campuses and their adjacent communities.

Pioneers of Modern Painting has been shown daily at the National Gallery since its U.S. premiere there in May 1972. A 45-minute color film has been devoted to each of the six artists whom Lord Clark considers to be "the pioneers of what we still call modern painting."

Most of the series was filmed in France, with the exception of Edvard Munch which was photographed in Norway, the artist's native country. Lord Clark has not relied, however, solely on the paintings in those localities. Thirteen of the works discussed in the series are hanging in the National Gallery of Art in Washington. Others are in

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museums and private collections all over the world.

Lord Clark's son, Colin Clark, producer of Pioneers of Modern Painting, has been a television producer since 1956. This is his first joint venture with his father.

Édouard Manet (1832-1883) is the first of the series. As Lord Clark explains, "Modern painting has been a revolutionary movement, a breakaway, and Manet, strange as it seems to us, was considered the first revolutionary. There had been rebels before, but they had always found some form of official support. Manet was the first artist to be positively persecuted by the Establishment." In this film, Lord Clark also fully explores Manet's relationship with Claude Monet and other impressionists.

Five of the paintings discussed in the film on Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) hang in the National Gallery of Art. Lord Clark frankly admits, "I've been writing about him and talking about him for over forty years, and I've never come anywhere near to saying what I feel, or putting into words what I know to be the real essence of his greatness." Nevertheless, Lord Clark manages to take the viewer on a fascinating tour through the life and works of this great painter.

One of the founders of the impressionist school of painting is the subject of the third film in the series, Claude Monet (1840-1926). The rivalry between Monet and Manet is covered, but is only a small portion of the many aspects the narrative on Monet. This film is a delight of color and light, as Lord Clark explores Monet's representations of nature.

Unlike the other painters in this series, little is known about the character and private life of the pointillist Georges Seurat (1859-1891), the subject of the fourth film. His life was short and he left little to reveal his private nature, except for his paintings. Lord Clark concentrates principally on Seurat's

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method of work, subject matter, scientific approach to painting, and relationship to his cultural background and era.

In the fifth film, Henri Rousseau (1844-1901), Lord Clark takes up a slightly different point of view than the other films in the series. Unlike other artists, Rousseau had no professional training and did not begin painting until he was 41 years old. He is included in Pioneers of Modern Painting because Lord Clark feels that this century has come to believe that many qualities, such as imagination and a sense of color, are more important than skill of hand alone. Rousseau was able to retain a simplicity of bold design and natural harmonious color.

In Edvard Munch (1863-1944), Lord Clark explores the works of one of the early leaders of a movement known as expressionism. Munch's life was surrounded by sickness and death. His paintings and drawings reveal the emotions of these personal experiences. He went through periods when he worked in the impressionist style, but from 1892 until his death his work concentrated on the search for visual symbols of ideas or states of mind. Munch's pictorial achievements in this emotional approach to painting established him as one of the pioneers of modern painting.

College presidents, rather than art history or humanities departments, are asked to sponsor the program in order to emphasize its availability to the whole student body. Each college will receive the films in sequence, one a week. There will be two showings of each; one for the college and one for the local community. It is anticipated the Pioneers of Modern Painting series will be seen by 400,000 to 500,000 people per year.

The National Gallery's Extension Service, which offers a variety of free education materials and information especially designed for loan to schools, civic groups and museums, currently distributes

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Civilisation under a similar policy made possible with a generous matching grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Xerox Corporation.

Lord Clark has had a long and distinguished career in art, serving as director of the National Gallery, London (1934-45), Slade Professor of Fine Arts, Oxford University (1946-50 and 1961-62), chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain (1953-60). He is the author of numerous books on art. Among his many honors is the National Gallery of Art's Medal for Distinguished Service to Education in Art for the Civilisation series.

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