

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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VENICE ETCHINGS BY CANALETTO AND WHISTLER
ON VIEW AT NATIONAL GALLERY

WASHINGTON, D.C. Venetian Views, Etchings by Canaletto and Whistler, a selection of thirty-eight prints from the National Gallery of Art's collections, have gone on exhibition at the Gallery. The etchings, which are installed in the Corridor Gallery, ground floor, will remain on view through October.

The unusual combination of Canaletto and Whistler, master etchers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, offers the opportunity to see Venice and the charm that city evokes through each artists' eyes. The exhibition has been organized and installed by H. Diane Russell, Acting Curator of the Gallery's Graphic Arts Department.

Canaletto, one of the most important and famous artists of the eighteenth century, made few etchings. Only thirty-four separate prints are known. Although they exist today in unique or very rare impressions, the quality of his works rank him as a master printmaker of his century. The sixteen Canaletto etchings in the National Gallery's W. G. Russell Allen Collection demonstrate the artist's sophistication and sensitive handling of the medium.

(more)

His etchings, unlike his paintings, are often imaginary views of Venice or combinations of reality and fantasy.

Unlike Canaletto, James Abbott McNeill Whistler was a prolific printmaker. A master etcher of the nineteenth century, Whistler's prints of Venice, mostly done in the early 1880s, are among his most highly regarded. The twenty-two prints on view by this American artist are from the Gallery's J. Watson Webb Collection, given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer. They are characteristic of Whistler's belief that the aim of the artist was not to imitate nature. His prints, for instance, do not depict famous landmarks nor are they accurately descriptive. Rather they recall the ambient light of Venice through subtle tonal relationships. For this his prints were often criticized as "unfinished".

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