

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FOR RELEASE:

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ROOSEVELT ESCHER PRINT COLLECTION GIVEN TO NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D. C. February 12, 1974. A gift of the world's largest private collection of prints by the late Dutch print-maker M. C. Escher is being made to the National Gallery of Art by Cornelius van Schaak Roosevelt, a Washington, D. C. collector and a friend of Escher's for nearly twenty years.

Impressions of over two-thirds of Escher's prints are to be included in the gift, which was announced today by J. Carter Brown, Director of the National Gallery. Mr. Brown said that a selection of the prints would go on view this summer in conjunction with a major acquisitions exhibition of prints and drawings ranging from the fourteenth century to the present and acquired by gift or purchase over the past three years.

Mr. Roosevelt's gift, joining the Gallery's present holdings in the Rosenwald Collection, will produce the most important Escher study collection outside the artist's own bequest to The Hague.

Mr. Roosevelt's gift includes many of Escher's rare early works. Accompanying his gift of prints are donations of several pieces of sculpture by Escher, a library, and extensive archives relating to the artist and his work.

Elaborating on the reasons for his gift to the National Gallery, Mr. Roosevelt explained that he is intensely interested in the Gallery's development of new study and research facilities and its growing involvement in twentieth-century art.

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Much of Escher's work has been reproduced and written about during the past decade, initially as a movement attracting distinguished art historians, mathematicians, scientists, sociologists, other artists, and students alike. An exhibition of Escher's prints from the Rosenwald Collection, held at the National Gallery in July, 1972, attracted a record crowd of over seven thousand visitors on the opening day. The exhibition also included ten works from the Roosevelt Collection.

Escher's precise and meticulous works, principally in woodcut, wood-engraving, lithograph, and mezzotint, reflect the artist's extraordinary concern with the ambiguities of visual perception and space. Among his well-known prints are Metamorphosis, House of Stairs, Ascending and Descending, and Reptiles, all of which express the artist's fascination with optically baffling spatial relationships, and Hand With Reflecting Sphere, a self-portrait in a silver globe. Many of Escher's prints were adopted as symbols by the 1960s youth cult and were reproduced widely on psychedelic colored posters and T-shirts.

Escher (1898-1972) was born in Leeuwarden, Holland. He subsequently lived and worked in Rome for ten years, then in Switzerland and Belgium; in 1941 he settled again in Holland in a small village near Amsterdam. His last work, a large color woodcut, Ringsnakes, was completed in 1969.

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