

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS PREVIEW: TUESDAY
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10 a.m. to 12 noon

UNUSUAL BICENTENNIAL FEATURE
PRESENTED AT NATIONAL GALLERY

WASHINGTON, D.C. November 24, 1975. As the National Gallery of Art's kick-off to the U. S. Bicentennial, The European Vision of America, a special international loan exhibition evoking the continually changing image of the Americas in European minds from Columbus's first voyage to the mid nineteenth century, will open at the Gallery December 7.

The installation of The European Vision of America recalls the densely hung Wunderkammern of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Displayed in an area of approximately 15,000 square feet, a highly diverse selection of about 350 works of art, including paintings, furniture, small sculpture, porcelains, tapestries, early maps, hand-colored engravings and silver and gold work, focuses on the European image of the New World, which encompassed the two continents known as "America."

The selection of objects, from private and public collections in more than a dozen European countries as well as Canada and the United States, took several years of research and was made by Hugh Honour, British art historian and guest curator.

The exhibition, organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art

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in cooperation with the National Gallery and the Réunion des Musées Nationaux de France, will be on view at the Gallery through February 15, 1976. It will also be shown at the Cleveland Museum and the Grand Palais in Paris.

One of the outstanding works in the exhibition is a four-and-a-half-foot allegorical figure of America cast in silver from the New World. The figure was made in 1695 and is studded with hundreds of diamonds and emeralds. It is being lent by the Primatial Cathedral of Toledo, Spain. This sparsely clad figure, with a tiara of plumed feathers resting on her head and her hands holding a bow and arrow, sits majestically atop an intricately engraved globe depicting the Americas. This well-known personification is also represented in European architecture and domestic furnishings--including a set of Beauvais tapestries and chair coverings, both on view in the exhibition.

The installation was designed by the Gallery's exhibition design department. The works of art are hung thematically, beginning with the discovery of the Americas, conveyed through early images of the Indian, maps, illustrations of plant life and books concerning the New World. Among other themes are the realization of America as a separate hemisphere, shown through the use of American motifs such as the new-found and exotic flora and fauna, and the assimilation of America in European minds, presented through allegories and the depiction of the Indian as the "noble savage."

After the Revolutionary War, the reconsideration of America by Europeans is conveyed in more realistic portrayals of the

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North American Indian (the fantastic images were now transferred to South America), the romantic depiction of Columbus and the Indian, scenes of majestic landscapes and thriving cities, and the struggle for abolition of slavery. Climaxing the exhibition is a model of Bertholdi's image, given by France, of the Statue of Liberty.

Mr. Honour has written a fully illustrated catalogue to accompany the exhibition as well as a book on the subject, entitled The New Golden-Land: The European Vision of America from the Discoveries to the Present Time, to be published by Pantheon in December.

The Gallery's Bicentennial celebrations will continue through the Fall of 1976. The Eye of Thomas Jefferson, the largest and most complex exhibition ever to be mounted by the National Gallery and opening June 5, will be the next special feature.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION or photographs contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director, or Pamela Jenkinson, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565, area code 202, 737-4215, ext. 224.