

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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

PRESS-TV-RADIO ADVISORY

A press briefing covering both public and press arrangements for the National Gallery of Art's eighteenth-century fireworks event the first week of June will be held at the Gallery on Monday, May 24 at 10:30 a.m.

The period pyrotechnic display, which will take place one week later, Tuesday evening, June 1, (or June 2 in case of rain) will mark the opening of the Gallery's major Bicentennial exhibition, The Eye of Thomas Jefferson.

Questions from the public regarding seating, time, parking, transportation and the program itself have been coming into the Gallery since the announcement of the fireworks spectacle the first week of April.

Press queries have also been numerous, and special concerns have been expressed.

To handle both public and press questions, members of the working press are invited to meet with us on May 24.

J. Carter Brown, Director of the Gallery, and W. Howard Adams, organizer of the exhibition, will answer questions in addition to giving a statement. Also attending will be Patrick Bracco, designer of the fireworks, and Kenneth B. Dresser, special consultant to the Gallery for the event.

The fireworks have been made possible through the generosity of The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation and

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with the cooperation of the National Park Service.

The theme of the feu d'artifice, an extension of the exhibition itself, will be "The Triumph of Reason and Order over Chaos and War." Music of the period will be performed by the National Gallery Orchestra. The event will include a full-scale recreation of the facade of Monticello. A variety of explosives in chemicals known in the eighteenth century will be used.

The Gallery's spectacle is based on research and designs by Mr. Bracco, a French art historian who spent a year documenting the style and content of the fireworks in Jefferson's day.

Mr. Bracco has been working with the French fireworks firm of Ruggieri, who were producing similar displays in their own public park while Jefferson was living in Paris as U. S. Minister to France. In his famous "Head-and-Heart" letter to his English friend, Mrs. Cosway, Jefferson recalls his delight in visiting Ruggieri's well-known amusement park. Fireworks in Jefferson's day were looked upon as a visual art form, in company with painting, sculpture, architecture and landscape design, all of which Jefferson was deeply involved in throughout his life.

The Gallery's exhibition, The Eye of Thomas Jefferson, will be on view to the public from June 5 through September 6.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION 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