

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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ADVANCE FACT SHEET

Exhibition: The Splendor of Dresden: Five Centuries of Art Collecting,
an exhibition from the German Democratic Republic.

Itinerary: National Gallery of Art
June 1 through September 4, 1978

The Metropolitan Museum of Art
October 21 through January 13, 1979

California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco
February 18 through May 26, 1979

Concept: This unprecedented loan will be the first comprehensive exhibition illustrating the history of art collecting, with the focus on Dresden's 500-year history of acquiring rare, curious and beautiful objects. Dresden's dazzling growth as an artistic treasure house was concurrent with the beginnings of art collecting in Europe. The exhibition will be organized to illustrate both the evolution of collecting and the growth of the collections now housed in the museums of Dresden. In sixteenth-century Dresden the Elector of Saxony, Augustus I, filled his private Kunstammer, a room in the electoral palace, with a collection of artistic, technical, natural and scientific objects. Among these were paintings, bronze statuettes, carved ivories, shells, stones, tools, books, and fantastic rarities and curiosities. This collection of Augustus I mirrored the prevailing late-Medieval and Renaissance encyclopedic view of the world. In the eighteenth century Dresden became one of Europe's great cities, when under Augustus the Strong and Augustus III a second great period of collecting ensued. The newly enlarged collections were housed in a magnificent baroque art complex with specialized galleries. These included old master paintings, baroque sculpture and vast numbers of drawings and prints. Dresden's cultural life continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, enhanced by the German romantic and expressionist movements which flourished in its environs. The reorganization of the collections into public museums took place in the course of the nineteenth century.

Content: Included will be old master paintings, drawings and prints; Renaissance and baroque bronzes; highly decorated and jewelled

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arms and armor; objects of silver, gold and precious stones; vessels and utensils of rock crystal, pearl, ivory, coral, and rhinoceros horn set in richly chased and embossed gold mounts; rare oriental porcelains and extraordinary examples from the famed Meissen manufactory (such as the exotic white animal figures passionately loved by Augustus the Strong); antique sculpture rediscovered in the eighteenth century; paintings by Caspar David Friedrich and other nineteenth-century German romantics; and paintings and posters by members of the twentieth-century Die Brücke movement which developed in Dresden.

East Building

Opening:

This exhibition will celebrate the opening of the National Gallery of Art's East Building. It will be the first exhibition in the special exhibition galleries, which will be devoted to major international loan exhibitions, and will demonstrate the flexibility and capabilities of this space of more than 17,000 square feet. (Fact sheets on the East Building and information on exhibitions to be held elsewhere in the new building are also available.)

Lenders: The objects are being lent from the collections of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden:

Grünes Gewölbe
 Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister
 Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister
 Historisches Museum
 Kupferstich-Kabinett
 Porzellansammlungen
 Skulpturensammlungen
 Museum für Kunsthandwerk

Organizers: This exhibition has been jointly organized by the National Gallery of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Funding: The exhibition is being made possible through a grant from the International Business Machines Corporation, with additional funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Jr. Charitable Trust, the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Insurance: Federal indemnification granted by the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities up to the maximum allowable limit will cover the major part of the insurance costs.

Catalogue: A fully illustrated catalogue, produced by the Metropolitan under the curatorial direction of Olga Raggio, chairman of its European Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, contains a background essay on the history of collecting in Dresden by

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Joachim Menzhausen, the director of the Grünes Gewölbe, essays and entries by other Dresden scholars, and an introduction by Philippe de Montebello, acting director of the Metropolitan, Ian White, director of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, and Mr. Brown. A free guide prepared by the National Gallery will also accompany the exhibition.

Installation: Designed by the National Gallery in a form which can be reassembled in the spaces of the Metropolitan Museum and California Palace of the Legion of Honor. The design team, headed by Gaillard F. Ravenel of the Gallery's staff, spent many weeks in Dresden working with Dr. Menzhausen, project director for the exhibition, and other Dresden scholars.

Presentation: The exhibition will be presented in twelve sections. The entrance will feature two jousting knights in armor on caparisoned horses at the moment of impact, evocative of the festive tournaments enjoyed by the Court of Saxony into the eighteenth century.

Dresden--Images of a City: This first section sets the visual stage for the exhibition, recording the scene of this long history of art collecting--from the electoral capital in the Renaissance to a modern city. Views of Dresden by the eighteenth-century Venetian Bernardo Bellotto portray the city at its height of baroque glory, and panoramic views of nearby castles and the neighboring town of Meissen record the environs of Saxony's capital. In addition, there will be nineteenth- and twentieth-century views of Dresden, including the center panel of a triptych entitled "The Thousand-Year Reich" by Hans Grundig, a prescient view of the city destroyed by aerial bombing painted in 1936 as a protest to the rise of Nazism.

The Kunstkammer: A highly systematized and structured collection of artistic, scientific and technological items of interest, including both natural wonders and man-made objects, reflecting the late Medieval-Renaissance encyclopedic view of the world. It was first assembled in 1560 by Augustus I. Inventories and engravings have been used to reconstruct a Kunstkammer of more than 100 items, including decorative objects of silver and ivory, scientific instruments, tools, and paintings by Lucas Cranach, the Elder. The Dresden Kunstkammer no longer exists, but its former contents form the core of the collections of the museums in modern Dresden, and by its very presence it not only established the concept of art collecting in the Court of Saxony, but also illustrated the specific tastes of its electoral patrons.

The Armory: A selection of seventy examples of Renaissance armor reflecting the wealth of the Dresden armory and offering a unique opportunity to study the tastes of the Renaissance court will be on view. In the mid-1500s, armor was gathered systematically

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from various electoral castles and placed in the Armory under the supervision of a curator. Included in this section will be a complete suit of armor for both man and horse, a suit of armor for a boy, armor for jousting on foot, and parade, ceremonial and presentation armor. In addition, this section will include over 100 weapons, many elaborately decorated in silver, gold, enamel, ebony, ivory and gilded brass, collected by the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Electors. Oriental swords, brought to Dresden in 1683 as trophies in victorious battles with the Turks, will also be on view.

Court Festivities in Dresden under Augustus the Strong (1694-1733): This section introduces the four that follow, evoking the architectural and cultural background of the new approach to art collecting in Dresden which was ushered in by Augustus the Strong. This era in Dresden was characterized by brilliant jousting tournaments, exotic processions, temporary architectural structures, fireworks and theatrical and operatic performances. This section will recall the festive pageantry of the court through paintings, sculpture, watercolors, porcelain figures, furniture and other decorative arts. Augustus the Strong virtually rebuilt the city in the ornate baroque style-- his major architectural triumph being the Zwinger, which is the most famous of all the Dresden buildings. Designed as an orangerie and arena for staging the festivals, the Zwinger's great, open baroque court was embellished with rich sculptural decoration. Two sandstone allegorical putti from it are included in the exhibition. The pavilions of the Zwinger, which now house several of Dresden's museums, will be represented in a painting by Bernardo Bellotto conveying the aspect and character of this great structure. In addition, two of its sculptural gateways will be shown in photographic murals.

The Green Vaults: An important innovation of Augustus the Strong was the reorganization of the objects originally in the Kunstkammer into several collections. One of these formed the dazzling display of the Green Vaults, or "Grünes Gewölbe." Considered to be among the world's richest collections of gold and silver objects and precious stones, it also ranked as one of the most beautiful museum installations in the world. One of the vaulted rooms from the eighteenth-century installation of the Green Vaults, with green lacquered walls fitted with mirrors and individual brackets for the display of the silver-gilt treasures of Saxony, has been partially recreated for the exhibition. Among the 130 pieces from this collection will be the celebrated figure of a Moor carrying a tray of uncut emeralds from the New World, made in Dresden about 1724 by the sculptor Permoser and the famous court jeweler Dinglinger, and the forty-two-piece garniture of rose-cut diamonds, worn on formal occasions by the princes of Saxony. Severely damaged

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during World War II, the Green Vaults were reopened only two years ago in a spectacular new installation directed by Dr. Joachim Menzhausen. The National Gallery's installation is designed to convey the effect of baroque sumptuousness and splendor.

The Porcelain Collection: Augustus the Strong's passion for oriental porcelain resulted in a collection of more than 35,000 Chinese and Japanese examples, a collection that directly inspired attempts by the court alchemist Boettger to discover the formula for the true porcelain. Among the nearly 200 pieces in this section will be Japanese Arita and Chinese blue and white wares, including two of the famous "dragoon" vases. From the Meissen manufactory will be shown important early examples reflecting oriental influence as well as the figures, including large-scale depictions of animals and birds, that are a tour de force of porcelain sculpture.

The Bronzes: Augustus the Strong inherited from his Renaissance predecessors a rich collection of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century bronzes. When he dispersed the Kunstkammer in the 1720s, Augustus divided his bronzes between two of the newly formed galleries: the Green Vaults and the Cabinet of Antiquities. This section will present nine Italian and Northern bronzes from Dresden's collection of sculpture, including an important bronze figure of about 1490, the Laocoön by Francesco di Giorgio Martini.

The Old Masters Picture Gallery: The Picture Gallery of Dresden holds one of the most celebrated collections in Europe, reflecting the taste of the Court of Saxony. For example, the panel paintings by Lucas Cranach, the Elder were acquired during the era of the Kunstkammer, while the special interest of the principal collector Augustus III is represented by large baroque pictures and small seventeenth-century Dutch paintings. The selection of fifty paintings for the exhibition, distilled from this great collection, include many pictures being lent from The Index of National Treasures, a listing of works which are usually not permitted to travel. On view will be paintings by Dürer, Titian, Holbein, Tintoretto, Rubens, Poussin, van Dyck, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Ruisdael, Vermeer and Watteau, among others. The monumental painting, Quos Ego! by Rubens, painted to celebrate the triumphal entry of Ferdinand into Antwerp in 1635, will also be on view (at the National Gallery only, because of its size).

Dresden from Winckelmann to Gottfried Semper: This section documents the major shift of taste which overtook Dresden, as well as all of Europe, around the middle of the eighteenth century, with the spread of neo-classicism. The age of neo-classicism will be represented in this section by the full-length statue, Maiden, discovered at Herculaneum near Pompeii in 1711, and acquired in 1736 by Augustus III. It is one of the antique sculptures for

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which Dresden became famous and which was most admired by the early exponent of neo-classicism, Johann Joachim Winckelmann. The enthusiasm for classical antiquity which so inspired the leaders of the American Revolution finds its own expression in the marble bust of George Washington by the nineteenth-century Dresden sculptor Joseph II Hermann. Neo-classicism was accompanied and then followed by romanticism in Dresden, as elsewhere, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of the famous names of German Romanticism were associated with Dresden. At the same time, art became more accessible to the public when several of the princely galleries were reorganized as free museums. Paintings, engravings, drawings and photographs will illustrate the work of the great neo-renaissance architect Gottfried Semper, who designed the Royal Picture Gallery. Semper's ideas were most influential in the development of the nineteenth-century museological theory that paintings should be shown by themselves in a gallery open to the public.

Master Drawings from the Print Collection: Dresden's collection is encyclopedic in scope, ranging from the earliest woodcuts and Italian Renaissance drawings to contemporary American printmaking. Collecting began as early as the sixteenth-century era of the Kunstammer. In 1856 the prints and drawings were transferred from Augustus the Strong's Zwinger to Semper's newly constructed building, the Royal Picture Gallery. This section in the exhibition will concentrate on one aspect of the drawings collection which is particularly rich, that of the northern European schools. A selection of drawings ranging from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries have been lent, including examples by Cranach, Schongauer, Dürer, Grünewald, Breugel, Rembrandt and Rubens. Drawings and extraordinary landscape watercolors by Caspar David Friedrich, the early nineteenth-century German romantic painter, will also be on view and serve as a transition to the next section.

19th- and 20th-Century Paintings and 20th-Century Posters: In 1848, the Paintings Gallery of Modern Masters was founded in Dresden and dedicated to the collecting of contemporary Dresden artists. Later it was expanded to include German romantics, realists, impressionists, and twentieth-century painters. This selection of nineteenth-century paintings by German romantic painters highlights the work of Friedrich, who worked in Dresden. Other major exponents, whose landscapes reflect the romantic response to nature, are Carl Gustav Carus, Ernst Ferdinand Oehme and Johann Christian Clausen Dahl. The last section will dramatize the continued importance of Dresden as an art center in the twentieth century, offering a selection of works by artists of the expressionist Die Brücke movement, which flourished in Dresden from 1905 to 1913.

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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.