

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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

"THE SPLENDOR OF DRESDEN: FIVE CENTURIES OF ART COLLECTING,  
AN EXHIBITION FROM THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC"  
TO OPEN NEW WING OF NATIONAL GALLERY

An unprecedented loan from the museums of Dresden has been selected as the major inaugural exhibition in the new East Building of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., opening June 1st. "THE SPLENDOR OF DRESDEN: FIVE CENTURIES OF ART COLLECTING, An Exhibition from the German Democratic Republic" comprises more than seven hundred works of art collected and brought to Dresden from all over the world, in a wide variety of media: paintings, sculpture, jewelry, gold, silver, bronzes, porcelain, prints and drawings, armor and an array of brilliantly decorated baroque and rococo objects, both functional and purely decorative.

The exhibition, from the collections of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (State Museums of Dresden), has been organized jointly by the National Gallery of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

It is made possible through a grant from the IBM 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.

(more....)

The Splendor of Dresden is not presented as a collection of individually displayed treasures but rather serves to recapitulate the development of the modern museum as it took place in Dresden over a span of five hundred years. Thus, visitors will see a kunstkammer (closet of curiosities) of the sixteenth century which mingles natural and man-made objects in a single display; a seventeenth-century rustkammer (armory) for the finest ceremonial armor; a Green Vault, an eighteenth-century version of the old secret treasury of the Electors of Saxony, who ruled Dresden; and individual collections of porcelains, bronzes and old masters. Additionally, the visitor will encounter nineteenth and twentieth century art displayed much as it is seen in contemporary museums.

The development of the concept of the state museum in Dresden was a natural outgrowth of a passion for collecting demonstrated over hundreds of years by the rulers and wealthy merchants of that city. Under the Elector Augustus the Strong (1670-1733) and his son, Augustus III, a stream of treasures from all over the world poured into Dresden, then the capital of silver-rich Saxony. The effort assumed the proportions of a royal obsession, at times impoverishing the state's coffers, but the magnificent collection which eventually resulted is one of the great treasure-troves of the world.

The Dresden collections have extraordinary scope and variety in all areas; a partial list of the artists represented in the exhibition by paintings alone includes such masters as Rubens,

(more....)

Rembrandt, Durer, Cranach, Breughel, Holbein, Titian, Vermeer, Velasquez, Poussin, Bellotto, Watteau, Caspar David Friedrich, Tintoretto, Canaletto and many others. The work of a similarly large number of masters is seen in the Collection of Bronzes.

The Porcelain Collection contains exceedingly rare pieces from China and Japan; large, unique animals sculptured by Johann Joachim Kandler; and a representative array of porcelain produced at Meissen after the porcelain formula was discovered -- serendipitously -- by the court alchemist of Augustus the Strong.

Other highlights include two life-size jousting knights in armor, seated on armored horses; a suit of ceremonial armor for a small boy; a carved wooden Moor bearing a tray of uncut emeralds, created by the court sculpture and jeweller, Permoser and Dinglinger; a plain gold ring worn by Martin Luther; a forty-two piece garniture of rose diamonds from the Saxon crown jewels, the largest collection of perfect rose diamonds in the world.

Insurance for the exhibition, totalling more than eighty million dollars, is being provided in large part by the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities, which has provided indemnification up to the maximum allowable limit.

The exhibition will be on view at the National Gallery through September 4. It will then move to The Metropolitan Museum for a three-month stay beginning October 21, and in February, 1979, it will open at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco. The exhibition will close for return to the German Democratic Republic on May 26, 1979.