

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS PREVIEW:
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GODS, SAINTS AND HEROES GO

ON VIEW AT NATIONAL GALLERY NOVEMBER 2

WASHINGTON, D. C. October 2, 1980. Gods, saints and heroes are the focus of a major exhibition of 17th-century Dutch history paintings opening this November at the National Gallery of Art. The exhibition will then travel to The Detroit Institute of Arts and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Paintings of biblical, mythological and allegorical scenes were referred to in the 17th century as history paintings. Theorists of the time regarded history painting as the highest achievement of art. However, this aspect of Dutch painting has been neglected for well over a century.

Modern critics have emphasized the remarkably naturalistic qualities of Dutch art and the degree to which Dutch culture differed from that in other countries. Although these history paintings exhibit the same realism found in Dutch landscapes, still lifes, and portraits, they demonstrate a far more international and intellectual aspect of Dutch culture than previously recognized.

Such narrative themes and abstract concepts challenged painter's imaginative powers and compositional abilities. Private individuals

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and public officials, furthermore, viewed history paintings as reminders of past glories or as examples of high moral and ethical standards.

The exhibition, Gods, Saints and Heroes: Dutch Painting in the Age of Rembrandt, which will be on view at the National Gallery November 2 through January 4, 1981, has been organized by The Detroit Institute of Arts. It will be shown in Detroit from February 16 through April 19, 1981, and in Amsterdam from May 18 through July 19, 1981.

The exhibition will be on view in the oak-panelled galleries (43-51) of the West Building to accommodate the many large-scale pictures in it. A selection of the Dutch and Flemish paintings that normally hang in these galleries will be temporarily re-installed on the mezzanine and upper levels of the East Building.

Eighty-five paintings have been selected from European and American public and private collections for the exhibition. Included will be masterpieces from council chambers of Dutch town halls that have never before been part of a major exhibition, and five major works by Rembrandt, including Belshazzar's Feast and The Denial of St. Peter. Other artists represented will be Jan Vermeer, Hendrick Ter Brugghen, Jan Steen, Hendrick Goltzius, Pieter Lastman, Abraham Bloemaert, Jan Lievens, Frans Post, Nicolaes Berchem, Jan de Bray, Gerard Lairesse and Aert de Gelder.

The concept for the exhibition has come about through the collaboration of an international group of scholars. This committee consists of: Albert Blankert, The Hague; Beatrijs Brenninkmeyer-de Rooij, The Hague; Christopher Brown, National Gallery, London; Susan Donahue Kuretsky, Vassar College; Dewey F. Mosby, The Detroit Institute of Arts; Pieter van Thiel, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; and Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., curator of Dutch painting at the National Gallery of Art.

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A catalogue will be published by the National Gallery and will include essays by an international team of scholars on important aspects of Dutch history painting. After a general introduction discussing the role of history painting in the 17th century, the catalogue presents essays on religious history painting, mythological themes, and paintings for royal palaces and public buildings. Short essays on the role of history painting within the various schools of Dutch painting are also included, thus placing the entries on individual paintings in a broader context. The catalogue also includes an extensive bibliography. Each painting will be illustrated; 312 pages, 16 color plates. An edition of the catalogue in Dutch will be published by the Rijksmuseum.

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines was responsible for major transportation for the exhibition.

This exhibition was organized with the aid of a grant to The Detroit Institute of Arts from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D. C., a Federal agency.

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