

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 511

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BALDUNG PRINTS AND DRAWINGS GO ON VIEW  
AT NATIONAL GALLERY JANUARY 25

WASHINGTON, D. C. January 19, 1981. A period of unprecedented creative energy and artistic expression in the German-speaking lands north of the Alps occurred in the first three decades of the 16th century during the social and political anxieties and disquiet of the Protestant Reformation. Dürer, Grünewald, Holbein and Cranach are widely known as major German artists of the time, but other important artists of this period have eluded the attention of many.

A loan exhibition of approximately 90 prints and drawings by Hans Baldung Grien (1484/5-1545), one of the least known yet most creative and versatile artists of the German Renaissance, will be on view at the National Gallery of Art January 25 through April 5, 1981. Baldung is an expressive and highly spirited draftsman and the most important artist to emerge from the circle of Dürer.

The full range of subject matter in Baldung's graphics, especially his prints, have never been subjected to a detailed analysis of style and iconography. Seven American and eleven European public and private collections have lent the finest impressions of Baldung's woodcuts and engravings and a rich sampling of his rare drawings. The selection for the exhibition represents the full range of his subject matter--his often morbid fascination with death, his interest in sorcery and witchcraft, his vision of women as predatory, the frustrations of erotic desire, the tragedy of the human condition, and his new interpretations of traditional religious subjects.

The exhibition was organized by Alan Shestack, director of the Yale

(more)

drawing of St. Christopher (1513) shows the saint forging the river in a dramatic struggle against the elements.

A group of three woodcuts, Wild Horses in a Wood (1534) depicts a herd of wild horses engaged in frenzied activity in a dark, wooded setting, for which no pictorial precedents appear to exist. The graphic style of the prints enhances the feeling of violent motion conveyed by the figures--the prints have the immediacy of pen drawings.

The latest works in the exhibition are a black chalk drawing and woodcut executed a year before Baldung's death, Bewitched Groom (c. 1544).

Among the outstanding drawings in the Gallery's exhibition are the Study Sheet with Head of Christ (c. 1505-7) and the Head of an Apostle (c. 1508). Like many German artists of his time, Baldung was a virtuoso draftsman for whom animated line was the most compelling and expressive artistic element. More than Dürer, Baldung seems to have found satisfaction in manipulating line for its own sake or to invest a figure with vital psychological presence. Other drawings include Head of a Young Woman with Lowered Glance (c. 1513-15), a virtuoso drawing presenting the ultimate refinement of Baldung's style of depicting women, and Head of a Bearded Man (1516), which was recently acquired by the Gallery and was unknown until it emerged on the London art market in 1973.

END

drawing of St. Christopher (1513) shows the saint forging the river in a dramatic struggle against the elements.

A group of three woodcuts, Wild Horses in a Wood (1534) depicts a herd of wild horses engaged in frenzied activity in a dark, wooded setting, for which no pictorial precedents appear to exist. The graphic style of the prints enhances the feeling of violent motion conveyed by the figures--the prints have the immediacy of pen drawings.

The latest works in the exhibition are a black chalk drawing and woodcut executed a year before Baldung's death, Bewitched Groom (c. 1544).

Among the outstanding drawings in the Gallery's exhibition are the Study Sheet with Head of Christ (c. 1505-7) and the Head of an Apostle (c. 1508). Like many German artists of his time, Baldung was a virtuoso draftsman for whom animated line was the most compelling and expressive artistic element. More than Dürer, Baldung seems to have found satisfaction in manipulating line for its own sake or to invest a figure with vital psychological presence. Other drawings include Head of a Young Woman with Lowered Glance (c. 1513-15), a virtuoso drawing presenting the ultimate refinement of Baldung's style of depicting women, and Head of a Bearded Man (1516), which was recently acquired by the Gallery and was unknown until it emerged on the London art market in 1973.

END