

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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19TH-CENTURY AMERICAN ART EXHIBITION

OPENS AT NATIONAL GALLERY OCTOBER 4

WASHINGTON, D.C. September 21, 1981. An American Perspective: Nineteenth-Century Art from the Collection of Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr., an exhibition of one of the finest private holdings of nineteenth-century American art opens in the National Gallery of Art's East Building on October 4. It includes over 90 paintings, drawings, watercolors, pastels and 11 pieces of neoclassical sculpture in marble and bronze.

After January 31, 1982, the exhibition will travel to the Amon Carter Museum (March 19 - May 23, 1982), Fort Worth, Texas, and to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (July 6 - September 26, 1982). The exhibition follows the highly acclaimed "American Light" exhibition, and is second in a series organized by John Wilmerding, Curator of American Art and senior curator at the National Gallery.

This exhibition is supported by a generous contribution from Republic National Bank of New York, Trade Development Bank, Geneva, and Banco Safra, S.A. Brazil.

The exhibition, representing the academic tradition in American Art of the nineteenth-century, reflects a variety of styles and subject matter and vividly depicts American life and nature. There are objects from almost every decade, with a concentration of the Victorian influence in paintings executed in the 1860's and 1870's. There are examples of some of our foremost artists as well as a number of long-neglected and little-known names. The Ganz collection includes

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paintings in-depth by J.G. Brown, Seymour Guy, Sanford Gifford, Hiram Powers, and Martin Johnson Heade.

One pre-nineteenth century painting is John Singleton Copley's preparatory sketch (1776-1777) for the National Gallery of Art's painting, The Copley Family.

There are three categories of subject matter in the exhibition: the largest being figure and genre; and smaller groups of landscapes and still lifes.

The genre paintings document the lives of everyday people at work and at play. For example, John Singer Sargent's Sulphur Match (1882), sensuous in technique and subject, shows a dashing man lighting a cigarette for a flirtatious young girl wearing a vivid red scarf. In contrast, a country school mistress is forcefully but quietly and simply portrayed in subtle earth tones in Winslow Homer's watercolor Blackboard (1877), one in his country school series. Pre-dating by ten years Winslow Homer's paintings on a similar theme, John George Brown's Resting in the Woods (1866), shows a pensive girl leaning against a tree. Brown's innovative use of sunlight on her vibrant pink dress is an example of his accomplished skill with light and textures.

The sanctity of children and the warmth of family relationships are Victorian themes common in the genre paintings by John George Brown, Seymour Joseph Guy, Lilly Martin Spencer, Edward Lamson Henry and Eastman Johnson. Portraits include the figural still lifes of Thomas Sully's double portrait of Misses Mary and Emily McEuen (1823) and Charles Loring Elliott's arresting self-portrait (c. 1850).

Luminism, the painting of natural light, was a favorite style of many mid nineteenth-century artists and is prevalent in a number of the Ganz paintings. The grandeur of America's scenery is captured in detail in Albert Bierstadt's Yosemite Valley (1866); Jasper Cropsey's Niagara Falls (1860); and David Johnson's Natural Bridge (1860). There are eight oil sketches by Sanford Robinson Gifford which illustrate attention to minute detail and nuances of sunlight.

The still lifes demonstrate both European influences and American charac-

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teristics. The Dutch tradition is seen in Severin Roesen's Flower Still Life with Bird's Nest (1853) where familiar everyday things are recorded with scientific accuracy, sensitivity to detail, coloring and a porcelain-like surface. Also included are the later nineteenth-century trompe l'oeil paintings by William Harnett and John F. Peto. Raphaelle Peale's A Dessert (1814) and John F. Francis' Still Life: Yellow Apples and Chestnuts Spilling from a Basket (1856) show a similarity in subject matter, but a difference in style. While Peale's style is precise and balanced, his surfaces smooth, Francis paints more vigorously with rougher textures.

The neoclassic sculptures reflect the emergence of the Greek revival style in many American decorative arts and architecture at mid-century. Their subjects are mythological, historical, or religious. One of the most important pieces of sculpture in the collection is Joseph Mozier's figure of a water nymph, Undine (c. 1867). The artist's execution of her veil is one of the most notable American examples of see-through illusionism. By Hiram Powers, the bust of Proserpine (1844), goddess of agriculture, held a special interest for an agrarian America. The Clasped Hands of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1853) by Harriet Hosmer, symbolizes the Brownings' devotion for each other and their close relationship with the artist. A second sculpture by Harriet Hosmer is the whimsical Puck (after 1854) from A Midsummer Night's Dream.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with 48 color plates and essays by Mr. Wilmerding on still lifes, Linda Ayres, assistant curator of American Art, on figure painting, and Earl A. Powell, III, director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, on landscapes.

The installation, evoking a nineteenth-century ambiance, was designed by Gaillard Ravenel, Elroy Quenroe, and John Wilmerding with Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION or photographs contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director (Information Officer) or Carolyn Engel, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565, area code 202, 842-6353.