

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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** PRESS PREVIEW
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MASTER DRAWINGS FROM THE WOODNER COLLECTION
AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D.C. September 1, 1983. From the collection of Ian Woodner, one of the most important holdings in the United States, seventy-seven old master and modern drawings including works by Correggio, Cellini, Raphael, Bruegel, Rembrandt, Boucher, Goya, Redon, Seurat and Matisse have been chosen to go on view December 18, 1983 through February 26, 1984 in the National Gallery of Art's West Building Ground Floor galleries.

The drawings have been selected to give a sense of the diversity and beauty of the Woodner collection. There are preparatory studies for paintings and sculpture, designs relating to the theater, opera and ballet, as well as manuscript illustrations.

Mr. Woodner's keen interest in the beginnings of Western drawing and its evolution from the fourteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries is reflected in his drawings which represent many styles, media, and schools: Italian, German and Swiss, Dutch and Flemish, French and Spanish.

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Among the exceptional early Italian works on view, Studies of St. Francis Kneeling and other Figures, by Taddeo Gaddi (c. 1300), represents a transition from the flat Byzantine style to the more three-dimensional quality of later drawings. Another exceptional drawing, Satyr, by Benvenuto Cellini, is one of the most important sixteenth-century drawings in American private collections. It is one of the very few extant drawings by Cellini and is notable for its goldsmith-like precision and refinement of detail.

The collecting of drawings by artists began in earnest in the sixteenth century. Albrecht Dürer signed and dated many of his drawings thereby establishing a historical reference. He was one of the first artists to receive payment for his drawings, primarily for portraits which he did in the Netherlands. The Woodner Collection includes a beautiful finished color gouache of a bird's Wing attributed to Dürer. In Italy, Michelangelo made presentation drawings, works unrelated to his paintings, which he gave to friends. Michelangelo's biographer, Giorgio Vasari, the artist and architect, was the first to create a collection of drawings in the modern sense. By the end of the sixteenth century, collecting became the domain of collectors and artists alike.

In the tradition of these great artist-collectors, Ian Woodner studied architecture and is an active artist, taking inspiration from Odilon Redon whose paintings, pastels and drawings are in his collection.

One of the Redon drawings in the exhibition has an

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especially enigmatic quality created by the artist's extraordinary handling of charcoal and his unusual combinations of subject matter. In Cactus Man (1880s), for example, a man's face emerges from a cactus --- imagery thought to represent Christ -- with the spikes of the cactus representing the crown of thorns. A second Redon is a portrayal of the Greek Cynic philosopher, Diogenes (c. 1890). A lantern reflecting the subject's face provides a dramatic source of light in a field of soft tones of gray and black.

Also on view from the late nineteenth century are three conté crayon drawings by Georges Seurat. They demonstrate the evolution of Seurat's style as a draftsman during the mature years of his career.

Henri Matisse considered line drawing "the purest and most direct translation of [his] emotion." His Seated Woman (1940) executed in charcoal on off-white paper, has a vital and rhythmic animation. Picasso's Neapolitan Woman with a Fish (1919), in contrast, is monumental, drawn in a refined, classical style.

Among the seventeenth-century drawings is Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione's Adoration of the Shepherds (c.1650-1660), one of the finest examples of Castiglione's draftsmanship in America. The artist's personal technique of drawing with a brush dipped in coarsely ground pigment mixed with linseed oil creates a painterly quality. The rich reddish brown tones combined with the cool blues and grays serve to enhance the frieze-like composition.

Also on view is Rembrandt's The Parable of the Publican

and the Pharisee (c. 1647). Rembrandt did approximately 1400 drawings of which one third portray narrative subjects. He used narrative drawings to experiment with compositional structure and as a vehicle to explore the psychological meaning of his subjects.

The exhibition was organized by George Goldner, Curator of Drawings and Head of the Photo Archive at the J. Paul Getty Museum in collaboration with Andrew Robison, Curator Department of Prints and Drawings and Senior Curator at the National Gallery of Art; Edmund Pillsbury, Director of the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas; and Konrad Oberhuber of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University. The exhibition also is being seen at the Getty, the Kimbell and the Fogg Museums. A fully-illustrated catalogue by Mr. Goldner accompanies the exhibition.

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