

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PRESS PREVIEW: Thursday, December 15, 1983
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

LEONARDO'S LAST SUPPER: BEFORE AND AFTER AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D.C. October 13, 1983. Leonardo da Vinci's mural of the Last Supper, called "the keystone of European art" by the late Kenneth Clark, is the subject of a scholarly exhibition opening in the National Gallery of Art's East Building on December 18, 1983. Honoring Leonardo on the 500th anniversary of his arrival in Milan, where the Last Supper was painted for the refectory of the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, the exhibition will remain on view through March 4, 1984.

An international scholarly symposium on the Last Supper and its restoration, organized by the National Gallery's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, will coincide with the opening of the exhibition.

This showing and the symposium are made possible by Olivetti Corporation, which has been underwriting the restoration of the mural. Olivetti also played a vital role in the conception and organization of the exhibition, which makes its only U.S. appearance at the National Gallery.

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Each section of this three-part presentation is based on a before and after theme. In the first part of the exhibition, organized by the Royal Library at Windsor, the artist's strikingly original conception of the subject is examined by means of his rare preparatory studies, selected from the collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. These include the magnificent series of studies for the heads of the apostles in the mural as well as other drawings made before the execution of the mural or in association with it. In the second part of the exhibition, the mural's impact on later European masters is revealed by a selection of works in various media made after the Last Supper, among them a remarkable series by Rembrandt.

The physical deterioration of the mural, which began soon after its completion in 1498, and the results of its current restoration, now underway in Milan, are illuminated in the third part of the exhibition by some forty photographs, including twenty full-scale Polaroid images. The large-format photographs were made directly from the painting, without the intervening steps of negatives or enlargements, using a special camera developed by Polaroid Corporation.

Accompanying the exhibition is an illustrated scholarly catalogue by Professor Carlo Pedretti of the University of California at Los Angeles, the leading authority on Leonardo's drawings and manuscripts. Works by other masters after the Last Supper are discussed in a separate catalogue, prepared

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by the National Gallery's curatorial staff. A brochure on the restoration of the Last Supper by Dr. David A. Brown, curator of Early Italian painting at the National Gallery, is also available.

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