

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## CONSERVATION AWARENESS TO BE SUBJECT OF SUNDAY LECTURE

WASHINGTON, D. C. April 30, 1984. Ross Merrill, Chief of Conservation, National Gallery of Art, will present a conservation lecture on Sunday, May 20, 1984 at 4pm in the Gallery's East Building auditorium. Mr. Merrill will define conservation, outline some of the problems which challenge the professional conservator today, and offer general information for the layman.

This lecture is one in a series being given nationwide, and has been organized by the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property. Funded by the National Museum Act, it is the first conservation overview to be offered to the public by the Institute. The purpose of the lectures is to raise public awareness by defining the role of conservation in this country, and by exploring the various types of conservation.

Mr. Merrill trained as a painter at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. He earned an M.A. degree from Oberlin College with training in the Inter-museum Conservation Laboratory. After graduation, he was head of the conservation department at the Cleveland Museum. In 1981 he joined the staff of the National Gallery of Art as Head of Painting Conservation and Assistant Chief of Conservation and in August, 1983 he became Chief of Conservation.

His lecture will focus on the scope of conservation services---examination, preservation, restoration and research---as they pertain to cultural materials in museums. (Other types of conservation include historic buildings, anthropological objects, libraries and archives, decorative and industrial arts.) Mr. Merrill will also explain the function of the conservator, the conservation scientist and the

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curator, their respective training and how they relate to one another in a museum environment.

In addition to a general introduction to conservation, Mr. Merrill will discuss (with slides) the restoration at the National Gallery of two paintings from the Gallery's permanent collection. One painting, Raphael's Small Cowper Madonna, on view at the Gallery in a recent exhibition marking the 500th anniversary of the artist's birth, was cleaned to reveal Raphael's original spatial conception as well as the subtlety and brilliance of his color. Watteau's Italian Comedians, one of the artist's most important paintings, has also been restored for a major exhibition of Watteau paintings and drawings which goes on view June 17, 1984 at the Gallery. The restoration has not only revealed much of the original color, it has also affirmed the attribution of the painting.

The Gallery's conservation department is among the finest and best equipped in the world and includes facilities to conserve paper, objects, paintings, textiles and frames. With the opening of the East Building, space on the Ground Floor of the West Building originally used for offices could be converted to exhibition space. These galleries opened to the public in February 1983. Mr. Merrill will describe some of the conservation problems which his department faced when planning the installation of over 2,000 objects in this area.

Conservation awareness lectures will also be given at the St. Louis Art Museum, the High Museum, Atlanta, the Kimbell Art Museum, Ft. Worth, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Please phone the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property at (202) 357-2295 for speakers and dates.

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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.