

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
PRESS PREVIEW
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OLD MASTER DRAWINGS FROM THE ALBERTINA TO GO ON VIEW AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY

WASHINGTON, D.C. October 12, 1984. Seventy-five old master drawings -- including Albrecht Durer's Praying Hands -- from the world-famous collection of the Albertina in Vienna go on view at the National Gallery of Art in Washington from October 28, 1984 through January 13, 1985. The exhibition will then be seen at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York from March 8 through May 26, 1985. The Albertina, a former Austrian palace, houses one of the largest and richest collections of drawings in the world, an extraordinary assemblage of more than 50,000 works of art.

The exhibition, entitled Old Master Drawings from the Albertina and made possible by a grant from United Technologies Corporation, includes a selection of drawings by some of the greatest draftsmen of all time -- Michelangelo, Raphael, Dürer, Cranach, Bruegel, Rubens, Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Poussin, Claude, and Fragonard, among others. Most works have never before been seen in the United States. Dürer's Praying Hands has never been exhibited outside the Albertina.

As a collection of works of art on paper, the holdings of the Albertina cannot be on permanent view. Thus, an exhibition of these drawings outside Vienna affords a unique opportunity to view original works normally available only through private inspection at the Albertina.

The exhibition coincides with the bicentennial of political and economic relations between Austria and the United States. The honorary patron of the exhibition is H. E. Thomas Klestil, Austrian Ambassador to the United States. Announcement of the

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exhibition was made February 29, 1984 on the occasion of the state visit to the United States of the President of the Federal Republic of Austria, Rudolf Kirchsclaeger.

Preparations for the exhibition, which have been in progress for almost two decades, have been made by Ambassador Klestil; Dr. Wilhelm Schlag, Ministry of Science and Research; Walter Koschatzky, Director of the Albertina; J. Carter Brown, Director of the National Gallery of Art; Charles A. Ryskamp, Director of the Pierpont Morgan Library; Andrew Robison, Senior Curator of the National Gallery, who made the selection of drawings with Dr. Koschatzky; and Mrs. John A. Pope, President of the International Exhibitions Foundation, which organized the exhibition.

The drawings represent the great periods of art from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries. A wide range of subjects -- portraits, landscapes, religious and historical themes, figure studies and genre scenes -- reflect the work of fifty-four masters of the major schools of Italy, Germany, The Netherlands, and France. Among renowned and rare examples are, in addition to the Dürer Praying Hands, also that artist's Knight on Horseback and View of Antwerp Harbor, Hans Baldung Grien's Head of Saturn, Pieter Bruegel's Spring, Rembrandt's An Elephant, Rubens' The Assumption of the Virgin, Van Dyck's Portrait of Artus Wolfaert, Michelangelo's Seated Male Nude, Raphael's Seated Muse (Terpsichore), Claude's Tiber Landscape with Rocky Promontory, Watteau's Two Studies of a Young Woman, and Fragonard's Avenue of Cypresses at the Villa d'Este.

The Albertina collection was begun in 1769 by Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen (1738-1822) and his wife Marie Christine, the favorite daughter of the Empress Maria Theresa, and acquired its name in 1873 as a tribute to Duke Albert. The couple shared a deep interest in the arts, and collected graphic art -- drawings and prints -- of exceptional quality and on a scale that came to represent a vast fortune. The most significant event in the early development of the Albertina occurred in 1776 when the

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couple took possession of a collection which Count Giacomo Durazzo, Austria's emissary to Venice, had amassed at Albert's instigation. The collection was accompanied by a systematic concept for its expansion, the discorso preliminare, in which Durazzo set down principles that Albert followed in his ceaseless expansion of the collection (and which have held to this day). In 1796, Albert acquired the priceless collection of drawings from the Imperial Court Library. This included the large number of Dürer sheets acquired by the Emperor Rudolf II in the late sixteenth century. The Dürer drawings formed the nucleus of Duke Albert's collection, which continued to be maintained and expanded under Duke Albert's heirs.

After the First World War, the Republic of Austria assumed ownership of the Albertina. In 1920, the collection was joined with the larger Print Cabinet of the former Imperial Court Library, a merger that resulted in the present collection's huge size and extraordinary quality. The Albertina, in addition to its devotion to scholarly research and publication, continues to be committed to acquiring graphic art of the highest quality; its print and drawing collection extends to living artists.

Old Master Drawings from the Albertina is accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue, produced by United Technologies Corporation, in which each drawing is reproduced in color, and, wherever possible, actual size. It includes a history of the Albertina, written by Dr. Walter Koschatzky, and a scholarly analysis of each drawing.

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