

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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Press Preview:

Thursday, December 6, 1984  
10am - 3pm

## MASTER PRINTS FROM WASHINGTON PRIVATE COLLECTIONS GOES ON VIEW AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D. C. November 29, 1984. Dürer, Rembrandt, Piranesi, Goya, Daumier, Whistler, Lautrec, Manet, Picasso and Kirchner are among the old master and modern artists whose prints go on view December 9, 1984 through March 3, 1985 in the National Gallery of Art's West Building Ground Floor print and drawing galleries.

Master Prints from Washington Private Collections surveys the history of graphic art from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries. It brings together for the first time at the National Gallery ninety of the finest prints from Washington private collections including fifty-four different lenders. The exhibition commemorates the twentieth anniversary of the Washington Print Club, one of the strongest private forces for the collecting and study of fine prints in the area.

Andrew Robison, the Gallery's Senior Curator and Curator of Prints and Drawings, organized the exhibition and selected the prints based on the highest quality of image, impression and condition, with some emphasis on unique and unusually important works, as well as the representation of a wide range of private collectors.

Mr. Robison has also written the exhibition brochure in which he recounts the long tradition of print collecting in Washington. Thus, as well as documenting this exhibition, the brochure provides the background for present Washington private collections.

One early Washington collector was Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. who as a young man began collecting old master and modern prints---an avocation which he found rewarding throughout his life. Justice Holmes frequently spent

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Saturdays visiting with dealers and fellow enthusiasts. As an undergraduate he wrote about Albrecht Dürer's 1514 Melancholia, a fine impression of which is on view as one of five Dürers in the exhibition. Mysterious and filled with emotion, this engraving invites interpretation but defies complete explanation. It is one of the greatest prints of all time.

Among the four extraordinary Rembrandts in the exhibition is a masterpiece of landscape, The Three Trees (1643, private collection). It, too, has an enigmatic quality created by a foreboding sky swirling above a broad Dutch landscape with three trees silhouetted on a lonely hilltop.

Representing early Italian prints are a fine chiaroscuro woodcut and a classic engraving by Agostino Carracci. The woodcut Presentation in the Temple (collection Lee G. Rubenstein), in tones of orange, is the earliest of many works printed in color in the exhibition. The Carracci St. Jerome (c. 1602, collection Stephen and Claudine Ostrow) is the artist's last print, a composition of careful hatching and contrasting tones giving the saint's body a modeled, sculptured quality. Also included is a special proof of The Hanging, an etching by Jacques Callot, (1633, private collection), a secular interpretation of the Crucifixion and one of the most interesting prints from The Miseries of War series.

Among the eighteenth-century prints is Giovanni Battista Piranesi's The Small Waterfall and Rapids at Tivoli, a working proof of the etching with black chalk additions by the artist (c. 1770, private collection). It is Piranesi's only pure landscape. This impression shows the artist's early vision of the work and his thoughts with regard to differences in form and light leading to the later published state of the etching.

Washington collectors have long loved the beautiful prints of nineteenth-century France, and many are in the exhibition. The early lithographs include two extraordinary rarities, Géricault's The Boxers (1818) and Manet's The Balloon (1862) both from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon. The great color prints start with Pissarro's sensitive Twilight with Haystacks (1879, private collection), actually

printed by Degas, and continue with works by Degas himself, by Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec's monumental lithographs, works by Bonnard and Buhot, and Mary Cassatt's charming and intimate drypoint with aquatint, Gathering Fruit (c. 1893, collection Adelyn D. Breeskin).

The twentieth-century French works are represented by the finest known impression of Picasso's first masterpiece in printmaking, The Frugal Repast (1904, private collection). They continue with further works by the school of Paris, and include an unusually strong group of fauvist and surrealist works.

Leading the modern Northern prints are works by James Ensor and Edward Munch. Munch's The Lonely One (1896, Epstein Collection) a color mezzotint and drypoint with added drawing by the artist, shows a beautiful young woman on the shore with her back to the viewer and evokes a sense of extreme moodiness and loneliness. Among the German expressionist prints on view is Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Three Bathers on the Rocks (1913, collection Ruth and Jacob Kainen). One of Kirchner's largest, rarest and most important prints from this period, the work is distinguished by its lightning-swift drawing and startling color combinations of blue and pink.

American prints have become distinctive of Washington collections. The first in this exhibition is a rare color proof of Whistler's lithograph The Broad Bridge (1878, collection John Overbeck) and Homer's masterpiece Eight Bells (1887, collection Lionel Epstein). The early twentieth century is represented by works of Sloan, Hopper, Davis, Benton, and George Bellows' The Murder of Edith Cavell (1918, collection Isabel A. Burgess).

Josef Albers' abstract woodcut High Up (1948, collection Anne Wall Thomas) leads to a selection of classic contemporary prints, and the exhibition concludes with two works from 1981: Richard Diebenkorn's Black Club (collection Joshua P. Smith) and Richard Estes' Vatican Restaurant (private collection).

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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.