

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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PRESS PREVIEW

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAURICE PRENDERGAST MONOTYPES TO GO ON VIEW
AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D.C. January 11, 1985. Monotypes by Maurice Prendergast from the Terra Museum of American Art goes on view at the National Gallery of Art from January 27 through April 14, 1985 on the Ground Level of the East Building. This turn-of-the-century American artist was one of the finest and most prolific creators of monotypes in the history of art. Fifty-five prints -- among the most beautiful work Prendergast did in any medium -- have been selected from the Daniel J. Terra Collection of the Terra Museum of American Art in Evanston, Illinois.

Monotypes are unique impressions on paper of a design which has been painted on a smooth surface such as glass or copper. Maurice Prendergast described concisely the process by which he created a monotype: "Paint on copper in oils, wiping parts to be white. When picture suits you, place on it a Japanese paper and either press in a press or rub with a spoon till it pleases you." Unlike other forms of printmaking, which permit many copies to be made, the monotype process allows for only one to, at the most, three copies or "pulls." Each pull is different, growing fainter as the process is repeated.

Maurice Prendergast is believed to have created approximately 200 monotypes between 1891 and 1902. Of the 151 that have survived, fifty-five -- more than one-third of the artist's known output -- are in the Daniel J. Terra Collection

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of the Terra Museum of American Art. All fifty-five are on view at the National Gallery.

Maurice Prendergast was born in Newfoundland in 1859, but was raised in Boston, Massachusetts where he spent a good portion of his adult life. He made his first trip abroad to England in 1886 at the age of 27 and probably went to Paris for a brief time. He returned to Paris in 1891 and studied at the Academie Julian where he may have learned the monotype technique. He made further trips abroad to Italy and again to France. The places where he lived and traveled had a strong influence on his art and are reflected repeatedly in his works.

Maurice Prendergast's monotypes celebrate holidays, picnics, the circus, afternoons in the park, strolls along boulevards, beach parties and life's other leisurely occasions. The details of his works are children, balloons, horses, parasols and umbrellas, women in long and wind-swept dresses.

Such works as Red Haired Lady with Hat, Green Dress, and Lady with Umbrella are subjects often portrayed by the artist -- a woman standing alone silhouetted against a plain background. These monotypes, in their composition and in the use of an elaborate monogram as a design element, reflect a Japanese influence in Prendergast's prints, one which can be seen in the work of other Western artists of this time.

Such works as Primrose Hill and Street Scene depict another favorite Prendergast subject -- an architectural backdrop with figures of people in the foreground. Prendergast also chose scenes from the circus for his monotypes; however this subject is unique to the monotypes and does not appear in any of his other works. Circus Scene with Horse and Bareback Rider are two works on this theme.

Telegraph Hill is Prendergast's largest monotype (14" x 14 3/8") and also his most colorful with a palette of reds, greens, blues, whites, yellows, and browns. Venice, Venetian Court, and Venetian Well all reflect his experience of Italy. Monte Pincio (The Pincian Hill) is a view of a fashionable promenade in Rome.

This exhibition is companion to a recent Prendergast acquisition by the National Gallery -- St. Mark's, Venice, a pencil and watercolor done by Maurice Prendergast in 1898. The work is the gift of the artist's sister-in-law, Mrs. Charles Prendergast. The artist's brother, Charles, well-known in his own right for his frames and decorative panels, carved the frame for this work. St. Mark's, Venice will go on view on February 3, 1985 in the Ground Floor Prints and Drawings Galleries of the West Building.

The scholarly catalogue for the exhibition has been written by Cecily Langdale and is fully illustrated with color plates which capture the delicacy of Prendergast's colors. John Wilmerding, Deputy Director of the National Gallery, has written the foreword to the catalogue. David Sokol, Acting Director of the Terra Museum of American Art, is coordinator of the exhibition for the Terra Museum. Nicolai Cikovsky, Curator of American Art, is coordinating curator for the National Gallery.

In 1985, the exhibition will travel to the Terra Museum of American Art; the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth; and the Williams College Museum of Art. Additional sites are planned for the exhibition through 1987.

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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.