

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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LEONARDO TO VAN GOGH:

MASTER DRAWINGS FROM BUDAPEST

FIRST U.S. SHOWING AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D. C. April 15, 1985. A major collaborative effort between Eastern European and American museums has made possible an exhibition of treasures never before seen in this country. Drawings by, among others, Dürer, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Watteau, and Van Gogh, that have never before been seen outside of Hungary, will be included in the one hundred drawings from the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts by eighty-six masters from the fifteenth to the late nineteenth centuries which will go on view May 12 through July 14, 1985 in the National Gallery of Art's West Building Ground Floor galleries.

This exhibition represents the largest number of works from Budapest ever to be loaned as a group. The selection of drawings shows the breadth of the Budapest graphics holdings, and emphasizes the early Italian, German, and Netherlandish schools, which are more rarely seen in American collections, but it also includes major Italian and French works of art as well.

The Budapest Museum of Fine Arts is the largest public museum of European art in Hungary and encompasses all areas of art history (except the decorative arts) from the classical period to the twentieth century. The museum's drawing and print cabinets, considered to be among the greatest in the world, contain a collection of more than 90,000 prints and some 8,000 drawings. Few museums have riches comparable to those in the Esterhazy bequest, which forms the nucleus of the Budapest collection. The exhibition has been supported by a grant from Occidental Petroleum Corporation and has received an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Three handsome sheets by Albrecht Dürer have been chosen for the exhibition. Lancer on Horseback (1502), a drawing that is full of life and motion, reflects the master's

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interest in proportions of animals. Saint Anne with Virgin and Child (1515), a preparatory drawing for a window in the Sebaldus Church in Nuremburg, shows a group of three expressive figures whose careful, even execution indicates that it shows the mature stage of the design. Various Sounds (1515), a sheet of sketches depicting animals and other creatures playing musical instruments, was probably prepared for one of the decorative projects ordered by Emperor Maximilian.

Other works representing the German school include Christ with the Instruments of Torture and a Donor (1503-1504) and a design for a small glass panel both by Hans Baldung Grien; Saint George (c. 1505) executed by Lucas Cranach the Elder during his tenure as court painter to Frederick the Wise; and landscapes by Wolf Hüber and Albrecht Altdorfer.

Among the sheets from the Dutch and Flemish schools are three Rembrandt drawings. Dutch Farmhouse (c. 1636) is a work whose painterly quality represents the peak of the artist's expressive powers. Female Nude (c. 1646) demonstrates the integration of atmosphere and environment within a single figure, a technique characteristic of Rembrandt and other Dutch artists in general.

Rembrandt married in 1634 and after the birth of his own children, he often depicted maternal themes, drawing mothers with their children in everyday scenes. Woman with Crying Child and Dog (c. 1630s) is one such drawing, and sensitively expresses a mother's protective feelings for her child.

There are three Leonardo da Vinci drawings in the exhibition, among them two studies of warriors' heads, thought to be cartoons for the Palazzo Vecchio fresco (never completed) of the Battle of Anghiari, commemorating the Florentines' victory over the Milanese in 1440. There are also sheets of Studies of Horses' Legs, that may have been executed for the equestrian monument of Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan. The timing of the exhibition was designed purposely to overlap with the exhibition of drawings of horses by Leonardo from Windsor Castle, so that these sheets could be seen together for the first time.

Also from the Italian school are two drawings by Raphael: Study for the Figure of Venus, a graceful female nude thought to have been drawn from a live model; Project for a

Festive Decoration; and Sketches for the Disputa. Sheets by Correggio, Parmigianino, the Carracci, Castiglione, and Tiepolo are also included.

Two very early drawings that will be on view are Scene from a Knightly Tale (c. 1400) by an anonymous Bolognese master, one of the museum's earliest and most beautiful drawings, and Madonna and the Christ Child, a rare compositional sketch by Bartolomeo Montagna datable to the late fifteenth century.

From the French school there is a chalk drawing of two seated women and a drapery study by Jean-Antoine Watteau (possibly a study for one of the famous Embarkation for Cythera paintings). It reflects Watteau's interest in clothing and costumes and his extraordinary ability to depict the quality, texture, and folds of fabric. Also on view are sheets by Poussin, Delacroix, and Daumier. Modern masters are represented as well: Vincent van Gogh's The Winter Garden in Nuenen (1884), a dramatic winter landscape; Jean-François Millet's Motherly Attentions (1855-1857); Georges Seurat's Vagabond (1883), a black-and-white drawing executed in conté crayon, which is rich in tonalities; and Paul Cézanne's Provence Landscape (1900), a watercolor that reflects Cézanne's balance of color, drawing, tonality, and form.

After the preliminary agreement was negotiated in Budapest by the directors of the Washington and Chicago museums, J. Carter Brown and James N. Wood, Terez Gerszi, curator of prints and drawings in Budapest, worked with Andrew Robison, senior curator and curator of the Gallery's prints and drawings department and Suzanne Folds McCullagh of The Art Institute of Chicago to select the sheets for the exhibition. After the Washington premiere, the exhibition travels to The Art Institute of Chicago (July 27 through September 22, 1985) and to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (October 10 through December 8, 1985). Terez Gerszi and her staff have written the fully illustrated exhibition catalogue. Diane DeGrazia, the Gallery's curator of Italian Drawings, is coordinating the Washington showing.

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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. (202) 842-6353.