

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS PREVIEW:  
Tuesday, July 23, 1985  
10am - 1pm

MASTER DRAWINGS FROM TITIAN TO PICASSO:  
THE CURTIS O. BAER COLLECTION  
TO PREMIERE AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D. C. June 27, 1985. From the Curtis O. Baer Collection, one hundred drawings spanning the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries by such artists as Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt, Watteau, David, Degas, and Picasso have been selected to go on view July 28 through October 6, 1985 in the National Gallery of Art's print and drawing galleries (West Building Ground Floor). It is the first extensive public showing of the collection in almost thirty years.

The Baer Collection, comprised of over two hundred works, is considered to be one of the finest drawing collections still in private hands. Curtis Baer (1898-1976), an active businessman who always loved drawings, began collecting in Germany in the 1940s. He acquired the majority of his collection in the United States and Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. After a partnership in a New York import-export firm, he taught art history, wrote, and arranged loan exhibitions at Vassar College. Mr. Baer believed that a collector should not follow a rigid plan, but rather allow the collection to grow of its own accord based solely upon judgments of quality. The diversity of the Baer collection reflects his approach.

Organized by the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, the selection of drawings was made over a four-year period by Eric M. Zafran, curator of European art at the High Museum before becoming curator of Renaissance and baroque art at the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore; and Andrew Robison, senior curator and curator of the National Gallery's department of graphic arts working in conjunction with George Baer, Curtis

(MORE)

Baer's son. Mr. Zafran has been responsible for the administrative organization of the exhibition and has also written the fully illustrated exhibition catalogue.

The exhibition is presented in four sections: Italian, fifteenth to eighteenth centuries; German, Flemish, and Dutch, sixteenth to eighteenth centuries; French, sixteenth to nineteenth centuries; and Modern European.

Among the Italian works that will be on view is Agostino Carracci's red chalk drawing, Head of a Woman (c. 1600). Carracci's intensive modeling endows the head with a forceful yet timeless quality reminiscent of antique portrait busts. Another exceptional drawing from the Italian group is A Young Man Embracing a Girl (c. 1743) by Giovanni Battista Piazzetta. Piazzetta's tender conception is reinforced by his technical mastery of chalk and white heightening, animating the figures and creating convincing textures.

Curtis Baer was especially fond of landscapes. One of the most extraordinary from his collection is Jacob van Ruisdael's The Ruined Cottage (c. early 1650s), in black chalk and gray wash. Of all the seventeenth-century Dutch landscape artists, Ruisdael was most concerned with conveying the forces of nature. In this drawing, a dilapidated cottage symbolizes the transience of life and the futility of human efforts.

The Matchmaker, (c. 1640) by Rembrandt van Rijn, in pen and bistre wash, depicts a man and woman conversing at a table. Rembrandt forces the viewer's attention on the interaction of the subjects by his characteristic handling of light: the two figures are bathed in light, partially surrounded by shadows and shading.

Portrait of Thirius de Pautizel (c. 1795) by Jacques-Louis David may have been inspired by antique coins and medals. The artist's subtle modeling in wash adds warmth and atmosphere to a work of great strength.

Two nineteenth-century French artists, Camille Pissarro and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, are represented in the exhibition by landscape drawings characteristic

of the Barbizon school. Pissarro met Corot in 1855 and was influenced by Corot's love of simple views treated in a straightforward manner. Pissarro's drawing, View of La Varenne (c. 1863), is a graceful depiction of tall trees and the river Marne. Corot's Clump of Trees in Civita Castellana (1826), a drawing of isolated sections of rocks and trees, demonstrates the artist's interest in depicting natural growth and his delicate handling of light.

Three drawings by Edgar Degas are included in the exhibition: Vesuvius (c. 1856), a rare, highly finished landscape study of remarkable delicacy; Studies of a Female Nude (1856-1858), an example of Degas' finished, early style; and Backview of a Horse (c. early 1860s), apparently one of three preparatory drawings for Degas' first major racing painting, Race Horses (1869-1872; Musée d'Orsay, Paris).

Other impressionist drawings are Edouard Manet's Mme. Edouard Manet (1880), which demonstrates the artist's ability to suggest color and form with just a few strokes. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's Monkey (1880) is representative of the artist's sketchbooks in the late 1870s and early 1880s, which were filled with witty line studies of various animals and caricatures.

Paul Cézanne's The Unmade Bed (c. 1865) is a drawing made in the artist's own room. At this time, Cézanne often drew small details of his everyday surroundings. This drawing demonstrates Cézanne's philosophy: "Drawing and painting are not different things. To the degree that one paints, one draws. The more the color becomes harmonious, the more the line becomes precise."

Pablo Picasso's Two Men Contemplating a Bust of a Woman's Head (1931), from his classical period, demonstrates Picasso's economy of line, and Henri Matisse's Head of a Young Woman (1919) is extraordinary because of its uncluttered composition. Matisse said of his drawings and their subjects: "My line drawing is the purest and most direct translation of my emotion."

After the Washington showing, the exhibition will be seen at the Indianapolis Museum of Art (January 14 - March 2, 1986); The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida (March 27 - May 11, 1986); The High Museum of Art, Atlanta (May 31 - August 24, 1986); the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore (September 17 - November 2, 1986), and The Frederick S. Wight Gallery of the University of California at Los Angeles (November 30 - January 11, 1987).

END