

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION OF ENGLISH DRAWINGS AND WATERCOLORS TO OPEN DECEMBER 13, 1987

Washington, D.C., December 1, 1987 - An exhibition featuring 60 English drawings and watercolors dating 1630-1850 from the National Gallery of Art's permanent collection will go on display in the West Building on December 13, 1987. Recent important donations and acquisitions, which will be seen for the first time, have made this survey of outstanding British works on paper possible. Organized by National Gallery Senior Curator Andrew Robison, English Drawings and Watercolors, 1630 - 1850 highlights a period that has been historically overlooked in the collections of the great schools of European drawings outside the British Isles.

The National Gallery's collection of English paintings has contained many masterpieces since its founding by Andrew Mellon. However, with the exception of a remarkable group of works by William Blake given by Lessing Rosenwald, the Gallery's finest British drawings have been acquired primarily in the past seven years. "We are indebted to the support of many individual friends, particularly Paul Mellon, and to the Circle of the National Gallery for the recent donations and museum purchases which have helped to build the Gallery's collection," said J. Carter Brown, Director of the National Gallery.

(more)

ENGLISH DRAWINGS AND WATERCOLORS 1630 - 1850

The exhibition begins with a brush drawing of the edge of a forest, made in England by Sir Anthony van Dyck, and the first section continues with drawings by other continental artists who worked in England in the 17th and early 18th centuries. Included in this section is the earliest known self-portrait by Sir Peter Lely, as well as a delicate watercolor of Cape Spartell by Wenceslaus Hollar. The next group of drawings shows styles of figures, compositions, and imaginative or constructed landscapes typical of the third quarter of the 18th century, including works by Thomas Gainsborough and Robert Adam.

The exhibition focuses attention on the growth of distinctively British landscape watercolors in the decades after 1770. Sensitive observation and portrayal of natural landscapes, combined with increasing refinement and freedom of technique, are seen developing in major works by such artists as Paul Sandby, John Robert Cozens, Thomas Girtin and John Constable. Also featuring portraiture, genre scenes, and religious subjects, the exhibition ends with the reappearance of a "grand" manner in the two different styles of William Blake and J.M.W. Turner.

English Drawings and Watercolors, 1630 - 1850 will be on view through March 13, 1988.