

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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## EXHIBITION OF EUROPEAN LITHOGRAPHY AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, June 27, 1988 - An exhibition devoted to the early years of lithography, the printing process that revolutionized printmaking, is now on view in the National Gallery of Art's West Building, through Sept. 4. Important works from the National Gallery's permanent collection and special loans from the collections of Mr. Leonard B. Schlosser and Mr. and Mrs. David P. Tunick, are on display in Drawings on Stone: Early European Lithography. The show presents 67 works that trace lithographic printmaking from its invention near the close of the 18th century through its acceptance as a valid means of artistic expression in the early years of the 19th century. The exhibition is made possible by a grant from Maxwell Communication Corporation.

"Lithography has been the single most important printmaking technique for contemporary American artists," according to Andrew Robison, senior curator at the National Gallery of Art. "This exhibition demonstrates the fascinating origins of this technique, which was actually invented to multiply texts. The direct and autograph qualities of lithography quickly appealed to artists of the early 19th century, who adapted and transformed it into one of the greatest means of creative printmaking. Goya, Gericault, and Delacroix made some of their finest works of art in this new technique, and almost all of those works can be seen in this exhibition."

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Between 1796 and 1798 a Bavarian printer, Aloys Senefelder, invented the printing process that became known as lithography. Senefelder developed a method of printing from a flat surface that utilized the natural incompatibility of grease and water. He chose finely grained Bavarian limestone as the support for an image drawn with a greasy crayon, or with a pen and greasy ink called tusche. After moistening the limestone surface with water, Senefelder found that printer's ink adhered to the drawn marks but not to the stone. No longer were printmakers limited to incising lines into the surfaces of metal or wood plates. With the new process it became necessary only to draw on the stone and treat it with gum Arabic to prepare it for printing. Lithography became the first completely new printing technique to be developed in more than three centuries.

The National Gallery of Art's permanent collection includes many fine examples of early lithography, many of which are on view in this exhibition. Among the most important works are Goya's four prints, known collectively as the Bulls of Bordeaux. Although the prints were conceived near the end of the artist's life, they indicate that Goya had nevertheless developed a complete mastery of the medium. As is true with virtually all the prints in this exhibition, the Goya set is presented in early impressions of superb quality.

The Swiss painter Henry Fuseli is represented by two important works, The Rape of Ganymede (1804) and A Woman Sitting by the Window (1802). Another outstanding and very early work is Angel of the Resurrection (1801), by the American artist Benjamin West. Other major and rare works in the show are Gericault's Return from Russia (1818) and Boxers (1818), and Delacroix's Lion of Atlas (1829), Royal Tiger (1829) and Wild Horse Coming out of the Water (1828).

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An essay on the history of lithography by exhibition curator, Lynn Gould, is available, free of charge, at the exhibition. The National Gallery is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and on Sundays from 12:00 noon to 9:00 p.m. These special summer hours will be in effect for the duration of the exhibition.

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