

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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

CONTACT: Ruth Kaplan
Jennie Barbour
(202) 842-6353

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PAINTINGS BY AMERICAN ARTIST RAPHAELLE PEALE AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
First Exhibition Devoted to Raphaelle Peale's Still Lifes

WASHINGTON, August 12, 1988 - America's first great still-life painter, Raphaelle Peale (1774-1825), will be given an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art this fall. Raphaelle Peale Still Lifes will present 32 still-life paintings by an artist who is today recognized as one of the masters of the genre. This exhibition, organized by the National Gallery of Art and Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, is the first exhibition devoted to Peale's still lifes. It will be on view at the National Gallery of Art's East Building, October 16, 1988, through January 29, 1989, and at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, February 16 through April 16, 1989. The exhibition at the National Gallery and the Pennsylvania Academy has been generously supported by a major grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts. Additional funds to support its presentation at the National Gallery were provided by The Circle of the National Gallery of Art.

"Raphaelle Peale was a consummate painter of illusions and is considered the first professional still-life artist in America," said J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery of Art. "Peale's still lifes, in their refined and sensitive arrangements of everyday objects, are among the most beautiful paintings made in America and of immense importance in the history of American art."

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Of the approximately 150 still lifes Peale produced, only about 50 survive. This exhibition will present many of the best of these, including After the Bath, one of the masterpieces of trompe l'oeil illusionism, and Peale's most famous work. The exhibition will also include three works by Raphaelle's father, Charles Willson Peale, four works by his uncle, James Peale, and Rubens Peale with a Geranium by his brother, Rembrandt, suggesting the popularity of still life in the Peale family.

Raphaelle Peale was born in Annapolis, Maryland, on February 17, 1774, the eldest surviving son of Charles Willson Peale. Raised in the shadow of a man who in his day was one of the foremost portrait painters in America, Raphaelle Peale's personal and professional life was decisively shaped by his father's influence. He shared his father's range of scientific and mechanical interests, collaborating with him on several projects, and like him, became a painter.

Most of what is known of Raphaelle Peale's life is provided by family documents, chiefly letters written by his father. They reveal a deeply troubled man, afflicted by physical and mental suffering, domestic unhappiness, and artistic disappointment. "Raphaelle Peale's life was not a happy one," said Nicholai Cikovsky, Jr., curator of American art at the National Gallery and curator of the exhibition, "but it was bravely endured and redeemed by an artistic achievement that none of those who commented on it, often condescendingly, could equal."

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A fully illustrated catalogue, published by the National Gallery of Art, contains essays by Cikovsky, Linda Bantel, director of the museum of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and John Wilmerding, deputy director of the National Gallery of Art. The catalogue contains a compilation of texts and documents relating to Raphaelle Peale and a checklist of works Peale exhibited in his lifetime.

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