

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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## ART FROM BRITAIN'S FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART IN 1989

WASHINGTON, DC, November 18, 1988 - A selection from the finest works in Britain's Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge will be shown at the National Gallery of Art in the exhibition, Treasures from the Fitzwilliam Museum: The Increase of Learning and Other Great Objects. More than 160 objects will be on view, including paintings by Titian, Guercino, Rubens, Hals, Van Dyck, Hogarth, Delacroix, Renoir, and Degas, and drawings by Rembrandt, Annibale Carracci, Tiepolo, William Blake, and Puvis de Chavannes. A selection of illuminated manuscripts, ceramics, coins and medals, bronzes, and decorative arts will also be shown. The exhibition, organized by the Fitzwilliam and the National Gallery, will be displayed in the National Gallery's East Building, March 19 through June 18, 1989. The exhibition and its national tour are made possible by Philip Morris Companies Inc.

"The Fitzwilliam Museum is perhaps Britain's pre-eminent small museum," said J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery of Art. "Like the British Museum, the Fitzwilliam addresses the history of culture in terms of the visual forms it has assumed, but it does so from the highly selective point of view of the collector-connoisseur. Works of art have been added to the museum's collection not only for the art historical information they reveal but for their beauty, excellent quality and rarity."

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The Fitzwilliam Museum was founded in 1816 by Richard, Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion, with a bequest to the University of Cambridge of prints, pictures, books, and manuscripts, "for the purpose of promoting the increase of learning and the other great objects of that noble Foundation." (The subtitle of the exhibition was taken from the preamble to the viscount's will.)

During its 172-year history the museum has grown to fulfill Viscount Fitzwilliam's initial vision. Enlarged by other bequests and gifts and by discriminating purchases, the Fitzwilliam reflects, in works of art and archaeology, the humane interests that are pursued in a great university. Over the years, diverse and significant purchases made in the tenure of two important scholar-directors of the Fitzwilliam, S. C. Cockerell and Michael Jaffé, have further enriched the collections so that the museum's holdings represent almost every medium and epoch in the history of art.

Among the outstanding paintings that will be presented in Treasures from the Fitzwilliam Museum are Titian's late masterpiece, Tarquin and Lucretia, Annibale Carracci's Magdalene in a Landscape, Guardi's Ridotto, Batoni's The Earl of Northampton, Van Dyck's Archbishop Laud, Hogarth's Before and After, Joseph Wright of Derby's Richard Fitzwilliam, Delacroix's Odalisque, Ford Madox-Brown's Last of England, and Renoir's Place Clichy.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue written by the staff of the Fitzwilliam Museum. Professor Sydney J. Freedberg, former chief curator, and Beverly Louise Brown, guest curator of southern baroque painting, have coordinated the exhibition at the National Gallery of Art.

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After leaving the National Gallery of Art the exhibition will be presented at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas (July 15 - Oct. 8, 1989), the National Academy of Design in New York (Nov. 5, 1989 - Jan. 28, 1990), the High Museum in Atlanta (Feb. 20 - May 6, 1990), and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (June 21 - Sept. 9, 1990).

Since 1958 Philip Morris Companies Inc. and its subsidiaries and affiliates around the world have contributed to more than 1,000 cultural organizations, programs and activities. Through its broad spectrum of sponsorship, Philip Morris promotes contemporary and minority visual and performing arts, as well as major international exhibitions and tours. Treasures from the Fitzwilliam Museum is the second exhibition to be supported by Philip Morris at the National Gallery; the first was The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent in 1987.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION about the exhibition, please contact Deborah Ziska, National Gallery of Art, (202) 842-6358. For information about Philip Morris Companies Inc. and its support of the exhibition, please contact David Resnicow, Arts and Communication Counsellors, 212/593-6333.

# *Treasures from the Fitzwilliam Museum*

## THE INCREASE OF LEARNING AND OTHER GREAT OBJECTS

EXHIBITION BACKGROUNDER

[c. 11-1988]

Treasures from the Fitzwilliam Museum:  
The Increase of Learning and Other Great Objects

National Gallery of Art  
March 19-June 18, 1989

"The station fly which first conveyed me to Trinity took the road, as I remember, which passed the Fitzwilliam Museum. It is a fine building, tho' in style by no means characteristic of University architecture. But for some odd reason I felt that it was the symbolic gateway into a new life: I was greatly moved and never pass it now without recalling something of that inexplicable thrill."

Lord Balfour  
Chapters of Autobiography (1930)

For hundreds of thousands of annual visitors, Cambridge University's Fitzwilliam Museum is one of the finest small museums in Europe. It houses treasures representing the work of artists and craftsmen of every genre, drawn worldwide from nearly every epoch of art history. Founded in 1816 with a generous bequest by Richard, seventh Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion, the museum's diverse collection has been enhanced with gifts, bequests, and discriminating purchases. Today it uniquely reflects the highly selective viewpoint of English collector-connoisseurs of the last two centuries.

Lord Fitzwilliam's bequest to Cambridge University of his fine art collections, library, and a capital sum of £90,000 was made "for the purpose of promoting the Increase of Learning and other great Objects of that Noble Foundation." Remaining faithful to his vision, the collections mirror the humane interests that are pursued at a great university such

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National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565 (202) 842-6353

March 19 - June 18, 1989

THE EXHIBITION IS MADE POSSIBLE BY PHILIP MORRIS COMPANIES INC.

as Cambridge. (The Fitzwilliam Museum is often described as "the jewel in the crown of Cambridge University.") Lord Fitzwilliam's bequest broke new ground and inspired a host of university art museums, including those at Princeton, Harvard, and Yale in the United States.

Lord Fitzwilliam was of Irish, English, Dutch, and Flemish ancestry. He was born in 1745 at Richmond, Surrey, the eldest of four sons of the sixth viscount and his wife, Catherine, daughter and co-heiress of Sir Matthew Decker. In 1761 he was admitted to Cambridge University as a "nobleman fellow-commoner" of Trinity Hall. His portrait, The Hon. Richard Fitzwilliam (1764, cat. 126), was painted by Joseph Wright of Derby as a gift for his private tutor, the Reverend Dr. Samuel Halifax, who later became bishop, successively, of Gloucester and St. Asaph.

Lord Fitzwilliam received his M.A. degree in 1764 and traveled to Paris, the first of many trips abroad. On this trip he took harpsichord lessons from Jacques Du Phly. He later became a Fellow of the Royal Society and one of the most scholarly and discerning of the great English virtuosi of the reign of George III. His Lettres et Pensées d'Atticus and several other essays written in French reveal a conservative but cosmopolitan outlook on the events of his time, including the violent upheavals of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

After his father died in 1776, Lord Fitzwilliam inherited large English and Irish estates. He later inherited Fitzwilliam House, a mansion on Richmond Green, with its collections, through his mother. He died unmarried, on February 5, 1816, in his London apartment at 31 Bond Street and was buried in the Decker-Fitzwilliam vault in the churchyard at Richmond. Upon the death of the ninth viscount in 1833, the family and the title died out.

The income from the capital of Lord Fitzwilliam's bequest was used in part for the construction of Fitzwilliam Museum, one of the last great public buildings erected in the classical style in England during the nineteenth century. A competition for the building design was won in 1834 by George Basevi (1794-1845), a young kinsman of Benjamin Disraeli, prime minister of Great Britain. Both the shell and the ornament of Basevi's building have been universally admired as his secular masterpiece. The foundation stone was laid in 1837 and the founder's collections were exhibited in temporary quarters until the museum was opened in 1848 on Trumpington Street on the ground bought from Peterhouse, the oldest college in Cambridge University.

The Founder's Collection, which, according to his will cannot be "removed from the museum, except in imminent danger from fire," includes 144 paintings. Among the Italian masterpieces are Titian's Venus and Cupid with a Lute-player and Paolo Veronese's Hermes, Herse, and Aglauros. While Lord Fitzwilliam had a predilection for Italian art, especially Venetian Renaissance paintings, about half his paintings were Dutch or Flemish. Among the prints in the bequest are a collection of Rembrandt etchings, which were unsurpassed in England at that time. Lord Fitzwilliam's library, containing some ten thousand volumes, includes a rare series of 15th-century Parisian Books of Hours, colored by hand. The celebrated music collection includes autograph and printed compositions by Handel and manuscripts by Mozart, Stravinsky, and Britten.

Since Lord Fitzwilliam's bequest, the museum's collections have been shaped primarily by gifts and bequests from hundreds of individuals or groups, which have not all had a connection to Cambridge University. Up to ten percent of the Museum's acquisitions have been made with income from special outside funds, as designated by the Syndicate, the management

committee of the Fitzwilliam. In 1909, S. C. Cockerell, the Fitzwilliam's fifth director, founded the Friends of the Fitzwilliam, the first organization of its kind in Britain, to raise money to enable the museum director to enhance the collections through special purchases.

The collections cover the following subjects: Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities, Greek and Roman antiquities, coins and medals, medieval manuscripts, paintings, drawings, watercolors and miniatures, prints, pottery, porcelain and glass, textiles, arms and armour, medieval and renaissance works of art, pewter, silver, furniture, early printed books, illustrated books, bindings, autograph and printed music, literary autographs, and a working library of some 22,000 volumes.

Today's Fitzwilliam Museum has come a long way from the place described in Victorian guidebooks as a disordered collection in which masterpieces were hung next to curiosities such as models of the Taj Mahal and boxes of Indian crabs. Systematic development of the collections began under Sidney Colvin, the museum's first director, appointed in 1876. The transformation continued under one of the museum's great scholar-directors, S. C. Cockerell, who once remarked, "I found it a pig sty [sic], and I turned it into a palace."

In 1912, C. B. Marlay, one of the Fitzwilliam's chief benefactors, bequeathed a large collection and the money to house it. This bequest allowed Cockerell to build the first extension and rearrange the museum in a fashion taken for granted today, but considered revolutionary then. The pictures were rehung in a single or double line, the antiquities were ordered in a logical sequence, and upper galleries were transformed by the addition of oriental carpets and antique furniture. The resulting impression is of the public apartments of a stately British home.

Between 1893 and 1917, Charles Fairfax Murray, one of the

Fitzwilliam Museum's most discriminating and then anonymous donors, gave a diverse collection of art treasures and antiquities, including a number of pre-Raphaelite works (cat. 145). The most important painting he gave was Titian's late masterpiece, painted for Philip II of Spain, Tarquin and Lucretia (c. 1568-1571, cat. 65).

Many of the objects have interesting histories. The Recumbent Horse (17th century, cat. 73), a black and gray jade sculpture from the important Oscar Raphael bequest, was regarded by the Chinese as a sacred object. It is said to have stood, along with two other animal sculptures (also now owned by the Fitzwilliam), in the Winter Palace in Peking. At the time of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, the sculptures were removed with many other objects to the garden of the British Legation. Two days later they were bought by a Chinese official, who afterward exchanged them for some jewels. The new owner, a Mr. Williamson, later brought the sculptures to England.

During the last thirty years, sections of the collections have been further enlarged and transformed. This activity has put them in the top rank by international standards, according to the museum's current scholar-director, Michael Jaffé. Recent and important acquisitions include ancient Greek terracotta figures, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European bronzes (cat. 40), Dutch drawings (cats. 58, 60, 84), and two French impressionist paintings: Pierre Auguste Renoir's La Place Clichy (c. 1880, cat. 161) and Edgar Degas' Au Café (c. 1876-1877, cat. 160).

In the 172 years since Lord Fitzwilliam's bequest, the Fitzwilliam Museum has grown to fulfill the founder's noble intention. Its future growth depends on the continuing generosity of connoisseur-collectors, the support of the public, and the discerning eye of its curatorial staff, syndicate, and friends.

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# Treasures from the Fitzwilliam Museum

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THE INCREASE OF LEARNING AND OTHER GREAT OBJECTS

## EXHIBITION FACT SHEET

Exhibition Title:

TREASURES FROM THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM:  
The Increase of Learning and Other Great Objects

Location:

East Building  
National Gallery of Art  
Fourth Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

Dates:

March 19-June 18, 1989

Organizers:

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, England  
National Gallery of Art, Washington

Description:

A selection of more than 160 objects from the Fitzwilliam Museum including paintings by Titian, Guercino, Rubens, Hals, Van Dyck, Hogarth, Delacroix, Renoir, and Degas, drawings by Rembrandt, Annibale Carracci, Tiepolo, William Blake, Puvis de Chavannes, and Modigliani, illuminated manuscripts, ceramics, coins and medals, sculpture, and decorative arts. The objects reflect the discerning eye of the British collector-connoisseur over the last two centuries.

Coordinators at National Gallery of Art:

Professor Sydney J. Freedberg, chief curator emeritus  
Beverly Louise Brown, guest curator of southern baroque painting

Support:

The exhibition and its national tour have been made possible by Philip Morris Companies Inc.

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Museum Description:

The Fitzwilliam Museum was founded in 1816 by Richard, seventh Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion, with a bequest to the University of Cambridge of prints, pictures, books, and manuscripts, "for the purpose of promoting the Increase of Learning and other great Objects of that Noble Foundation." During its 172-year history the museum's collections have been enlarged by other bequests and by discriminating purchases of works of art and archaeology that reflect the humane interests that are pursued in a great university. The museum's holdings represent almost every medium and epoch in the history of art. The Fitzwilliam is one of the oldest public museums in England.

Exhibition Catalogue:

Title: Treasures from the Fitzwilliam - "the Increase of Learning and other great Objects of that Noble Foundation"  
Written by the staff of the Fitzwilliam Museum, with an introductory essay by Michael Jaffé, museum director. More than 190 pages. All 161 catalogue entries illustrated in color. Eleven black and white photographs. Publisher: Cambridge University Press

National Tour after the National Gallery of Art:

Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth  
July 15-October 8, 1989

National Academy of Design, New York  
November 5, 1989-January 28, 1990

High Museum of Art, Atlanta  
February 20-May 6, 1990

Los Angeles County Museum of Art  
June 21-September 9, 1990

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