

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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

CONTACT: Katie Ziglar
Elizabeth Kimball
(202) 842-6353

** Press preview Wednesday, March 1, 1989

DRAWINGS FROM NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA COMING TO WASHINGTON

Washington, DC, February 1, 1989 -- A major show of 92 drawings from the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, will open at the National Gallery of Art in Washington on March 5, 1989. The exhibition, Master Drawings from the National Gallery of Canada, is jointly organized by the National Gallery of Art and the National Gallery of Canada, and is the first collaborative endeavor between the two institutions. The exhibition is made possible through the support of Canada's Belzberg family.

The survey of master drawings from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries will celebrate the completion of two major Canadian architectural projects: the new National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa and the Canadian Chancery in Washington, located across the street from the National Gallery of Art. Only a few of the drawings in the show have ever been on view in the United States.

"Works on paper cannot be seen continuously even in their own museums, and I'll wager even those familiar with the wonderful holdings of our sister National Gallery in Ottawa will be surprised by the quality and range of the collection," said J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery. "We are delighted that these treasures can help celebrate both the wonderful new museum building in Ottawa and the gallery's new neighbor across Pennsylvania Avenue."

(more)

Master Drawings from the National Gallery of Canada, which opened at the Vancouver Art Gallery last fall and is on view through February 12, 1989 at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, features examples of the best of European draftsmanship. Arranged chronologically, the show begins with an important mid-fifteenth-century Italian drawing in brilliant colors. Highlights include works by Dürer, Rubens, Ingres, Goya, and West. Drawings from France and England, the two countries that ruled Canadian territories, are especially well represented. Among these are colorful works by Turner, Palmer, and Martin. A notable watercolor by the British artist Thomas Davies, View on the River La Puce near Quebec in Canada, 1792, explores the Canadian landscape. The show concludes with landscapes by Cézanne and Van Gogh.

"Master Drawings was the brainchild of our former ambassador to the United States, Allan Gotlieb. He wanted to celebrate the opening of the chancery and our new gallery with an exhibition from Canada to the United States. Mr. Gotlieb, and his successor Derek Burney, are eloquent in their support of the arts, and I look forward to our continued collaboration," said Shirley Thomson, director of the National Gallery of Canada.

Speaking on behalf of the Belzberg family, Samuel Belzberg said, "We are very pleased to participate in sharing the finest examples of Canada's national collection of works on paper with the National Gallery of Art and our American friends."

The National Gallery of Canada had its beginning in 1880, when the Canadian Governor-General, the Marquess of Lorne -- a son-in-law of Queen Victoria -- opened the first exhibition of the fledgling Royal Canadian Academy, and at the same time announced the opening of the National Gallery of Canada. Academicians were required to donate their academy pieces to the new gallery, which formed the basis of the collection. The gallery was formally established by an Act of Parliament in 1913.

The drawings collection of the Canadian National Gallery began to take shape early in the twentieth century, and received a decisive boost in 1911 when the museum purchased a collection of seventeen superb old master drawings. On the eve of the incorporation of the gallery in 1913, the government-sponsored acquisition of a major group of works of mid-nineteenth century French art established the acquisitions policy that has brought the collection to its current holding of over 1,200 sheets. Master Drawings from the National Gallery of Canada displays many of the finest works in the collection.

The exhibition, which will remain on view in Washington through May 21, 1989, was coordinated in Ottawa by Douglas Schoenherr, associate curator of European prints and drawings at the National Gallery of Canada, and is coordinated in Washington by Diane De Grazia, National Gallery of Art curator of Italian drawings. The selection of drawings in the show was made by Mimi Cazort, curator of prints and drawings, Mr. Schoenherr, and Rosemarie Tovell, associate curator of Canadian prints and drawings, National Gallery of Canada, and Ms. De Grazia. The exhibition catalogue, produced by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, contains contributions by the curators and a group of Canadian scholars.