

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH LANDSCAPES AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY

Washington, D.C., August 10, 1989 - An exhibition of forty-nine paintings by nineteenth-century American artist Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900) will open in the East Building of the National Gallery of Art on October 8, 1989. Frederic Edwin Church, the first exhibition in over twenty years devoted to the artist's most important works, will be on display through January 28, 1990, and will not travel. The show presents for the first time as a group Church's most famous large-scale paintings from the late 1850s, 1860s and 1870s, including Niagara (1857), Heart of the Andes (1859), Twilight in the Wilderness (1860), The Icebergs (1861), Cotopaxi (1862), Aurora Borealis (1865), Rainy Season in the Tropics (1866), Niagara Falls, from the American Side (1867), Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives (1870), and Morning in the Tropics (1877).

"Frederic Church's great landscapes inspire awe in us today just as they did when he introduced them to audiences in the mid-nineteenth century," said J. Carter Brown, National Gallery director. "We are delighted to be able to bring these masterpieces together for public viewing, especially as this has never been accomplished before, not even in the artist's own lifetime."

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Church, the son of a prosperous Connecticut businessman, began his artistic career in 1844 as an apprentice to Thomas Cole. Cole, America's first important landscape painter, was then at the height of his fame, but had never before accepted a pupil. He found the young artist exceptionally talented and deeply dedicated to learning the art of landscape painting. Church adopted Cole's technique of making quick pencil and oil sketches from nature and using them in composing large finished paintings in the studio. In 1845 Church made his professional debut, showing two works in the annual exhibition of New York's National Academy of Design. The following year, he exhibited Hooker and Company Journeying Through the Wilderness to Hartford in 1636, a painting depicting the founding of his native Hartford, that was a critical success.

Instead of touring Europe, as was customary for young American artists of the day, Church traveled widely in America, drawing inspiration from the natural environment of the Catskills, the Berkshires, New York State, Virginia, Kentucky, Vermont, the White Mountains, and Maine. Using sketches and studies created during his summer trips, Church would paint finished oil paintings, such as Home by the Lake (1852), in his New York studio during the winter months. Church never tired of painting the diverse beauty of the North American continent, which inspired some of his finest paintings, including the famous Niagara (1857) and Twilight in the Wilderness (1860).

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In 1853, Church traveled abroad for the first time, going not to the Old World, but to South America. Inspired by the writings of the great German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, who had praised the beauty of the tropics in his famous book Cosmos, Church toured and sketched in the Andes of Colombia and Ecuador. He used the fruits of this trip to create South American landscapes, such as La Magdalena (1854), that fascinated Americans with their depiction of an exotic, largely unknown world of luxuriant plants, towering waterfalls, and dramatic mountain chains and volcanoes. In 1857, Church made a second visit to Ecuador, seeking fresh inspiration. The result was a stunning series of large-scale tropical landscapes, beginning with Heart of the Andes in 1859, and including Cotopaxi (1862) and Rainy Season in the Tropics (1866), all of which celebrated the power and beauty of the New World scenery.

Church's major paintings were frequently exhibited individually, often in carefully controlled settings that enhanced their effect. Frederic Edwin Church will feature as its centerpiece an installation of Heart of the Andes inspired by its original display in New York City in 1859. The painting will be installed in a room by itself in a wooden structure reminiscent of its original large and highly ornate dark walnut frame. Deep side panels, designed to follow the lines of perspective in the painting, will encourage viewers today, just as in 1859, to imagine that they are actually gazing out a window at the Andes.

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Church's love of travel eventually led him to visit and sketch many parts of the world. A summer voyage to Newfoundland and Labrador in 1859 led to the creation of The Icebergs (1861), which was dramatically rediscovered in England in 1979 after having disappeared for a century. In 1865 he visited Jamaica, and two years later, Europe. The highlight of his stay in the Old World was a tour of the Near East, which inspired such major paintings as Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, Syria by the Sea (1873), and El Khasne, Petra (1874). Although Church continued to paint in the late 1870s and 1880s, his last fully successful masterpiece was Morning in the Tropics (1877), a South American river scene that presents a more introspective and mysterious vision of nature than that found in his earlier works.

The exhibition has been selected by Franklin Kelly, curator of collections at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, a former curator in the department of American art at the National Gallery. It has been coordinated at the National Gallery by Nicolai Cikovsky, curator of American art. A fully illustrated catalogue on the exhibition published by the National Gallery, and to be distributed by the Smithsonian Institution Press, contains essays on Church's art by Mr. Kelly; on Church and nineteenth-century science by Professor Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard University; and on Olana, Church's great home on the Hudson River, by James Ryan, site manager of Olana State Historic Site.

National Gallery of Art

Washington, D.C.

FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH checklist

- * color transparency available
- o black and white photograph available

- 1. Hooker and Company Journeying through the Wilderness from Plymouth to Hartford, in 1636, 1846
*o oil on canvas, 40 1/4 x 60 3/16 in.
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut

- 2. Storm in the Mountains, 1847
o oil on canvas, 29 7/8 x 24 7/8 in.
The Cleveland Museum of Art, gift of various donors by exchange and Purchase from the J.H. Wade Fund

- 3. Scene on the Catskill Creek, New York, 1847
oil on canvas, 21 1/2 x 29 3/4 in.
Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, Hagerstown, Maryland

- 4. Morning, 1848
oil on canvas, 18 x 24 in.
Albany Institute of History and Art, Gift of Catherine Gansevoort Lansing

- 5. To the Memory of Cole, 1848
* oil on canvas, 32 x 49 in.
Des Moines Women's Club, Hoyt Sherman Place, Des Moines, Iowa

- 6. New England Landscape (Evening After a Storm), 1849
oil on canvas, 25 1/8 x 36 1/4 in.
Courtesy Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas

- 7. Above the Clouds at Sunrise, 1849
*o oil on canvas, 27 1/4 x 40 1/4 in.
The Warner Collection of Gulf States Paper Corp., Tuscaloosa, Alabama

- 8. West Rock, New Haven, 1849
*o oil on canvas, 26 1/2 x 40 in.
The New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, Connecticut

- 9. Ira Mountain, Vermont, 1849-1850
oil on canvas, 40 5/8 x 61 5/8 in.
Olana State Historic Site, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

10. Twilight, "Short arbiter 'twixt day and night," 1850
oil on canvas, 32 1/4 x 48 in.
The Newark Museum
11. Beacon, off Mount Desert Island, 1851
oil on canvas, 31 x 46 in.
Private Collection
12. New England Scenery, 1851
o oil on canvas, 36 x 53 in.
George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum, Springfield,
Massachusetts
13. The Wreck, 1852
oil on canvas, 30 x 46 in.
The Parthenon, Nashville, Tennessee
14. Grand Manan Island, Bay of Fundy, 1852
oil on canvas, 21 3/16 x 31 5/16 in.
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, Gallery Fund
15. Coast Scene, c. 1852
oil on canvas, 20 x 30 in.
Private Collection
16. The Natural Bridge, Virginia, 1852
oil on canvas, 28 x 23 in.
Bayly Art Museum at the University of Virginia,
Charlottesville, Virginia
17. Home by the Lake, 1852
* oil on canvas, 31 7/8 x 48 1/4 in.
Collection of Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr.
18. Mount Ktaadn (Katahdin), 1853
oil on canvas, 36 1/4 x 55 1/4 in.
Yale University Art Gallery, Stanley B. Resor Fund
19. A Country Home, 1854
oil on canvas, 32 x 50 in.
Seattle Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Paul C. Carmichael
20. The Cordilleras: Sunrise, 1854
oil on canvas, 28 1/2 x 43 in.
Courtesy of Alexander Gallery, New York, New York
21. La Magdalena (Scene on the Magdalena), 1854
*o oil on canvas, 28 x 42 in.
National Academy of Design, New York, New York
22. Tamaca Palms, 1854
oil on canvas, 27 3/4 x 36 1/2 in.
The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of
William Wilson Corcoran

23. Tequendama Falls, near Bogotá, New Grenada, 1854
*o oil on canvas, 64 x 40 in.
Cincinnati Art Museum, The Edwin and Virginia Irwin Memorial
24. Cotopaxi, 1855
o oil on canvas, 28 x 42 1/8 in.
National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,
Gift of Mrs. Frank R. McCoy
25. The Andes of Ecuador, 1855
*o oil on canvas, 48 x 75 in.
Reynolda House, Museum of American Art, Winston-Salem, North
Carolina
26. In the Tropics, 1856
oil on canvas on panel, 25 1/4 x 36 1/4 in.
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia, The
Glasgow Fund
27. Twilight (Sunset), 1856
* oil on canvas, 16 1/4 x 24 1/4 in.
Albany Institute of History and Art, Gift of Beatrice Palmer
28. Sunset, 1856
o oil on canvas, 24 x 36 in.
Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, New York
29. View of Cotopaxi, 1857
oil on canvas, 24 1/2 x 36 1/2 in.
The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Jennette Hamlin
in Memory of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Dana Webster
30. Niagara, 1857
o oil on canvas, 42 1/2 x 90 1/2 in.
The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
31. Twilight (Catskill Mountain), c. 1856-1858
oil on canvas, 24 x 36 in.
Private Collection
32. Cayambe, 1858
* oil on canvas, 30 x 48 in.
The New York Historical Society, New York, The Robert L.
Stuart Collection, on permanent loan from The New York
Public Library
33. Heart of the Andes, 1859
* oil on canvas, 66 1/8 x 119 1/4 in.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Mrs. David Dows
34. Twilight in the Wilderness, 1860
*o oil on canvas, 40 x 64 in.
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Mr. and Mrs. William H. Marlatt
Fund

35. The Icebergs, 1861
 *o oil on canvas, 64 1/4 x 112 1/4 in.
 Dallas Museum of Art, anonymous gift
36. Cotopaxi, 1862
 *o oil on canvas, 48 x 85 in.
 The Detroit Institute of Arts, Founders Society Purchase
 with funds from Mr. and Mrs. Richard A. Manoogian, Robert H.
 Tannahill Foundation Fund, Gibbs-Williams Fund, Dexter M.
 Ferry, Jr. Fund and Beatrice W. Rogers Fund
37. Coast Scene, Mount Desert, 1863
 *o oil on canvas, 36 x 48 1/4 in.
 Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, Bequest of Mrs.
 Clara Hinton Gould
38. Rainy Season in the Tropics, 1866
 * oil on canvas, 56 1/4 x 84 3/16 in.
 The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Mildred Anna
 Williams Collection
39. Aurora Borealis, 1865
 *o oil on canvas, 56 1/8 x 83 1/2 in.
 National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,
 Gift of Eleanor Blodgett
40. Niagara Falls, from the American Side, 1867
 oil on canvas, 102 1/2 x 91 in.
 National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh
41. Scene in the Andes, c. 1863-1867
 oil on canvas, 38 x 48 in.
 Private Collection
42. The Vale of St. Thomas, Jamaica, 1867
 o oil on canvas, 48 5/16 x 84 5/8 in.
 Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, The Elizabeth
 Hart Jarvis Colt Collection
43. The After Glow, c. 1867
 o* oil on canvas, 31 1/4 x 48 3/4 in.
 Olana State Historic Site, New York State Office of Parks,
 Recreation and Historic Preservation
44. Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, 1870
 * oil on canvas, 54 x 84 in.
 The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, Gift
 of The Enid and Crosby Kemper Foundation
45. The Parthenon, 1871
 * oil on canvas, 44 1/2 x 72 5/8 in.
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Maria De
 Witt Jesup, from the collection of her husband, Morris K.
 Jesup, 1914

46. El Khasné, Petra, 1874
*o oil on canvas, 60 1/2 x 50 1/4 in.
Olana State Historic Site, New York State Office of Parks,
Recreation and Historic Preservation
47. Syria by the Sea, 1873
*o oil on canvas, 56 x 85 in.
The Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of Mrs. James F. Joy
48. Tropical Scenery, 1873
*o oil on canvas, 31 x 48 1/2 in.
Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, Delaware, Gift of the
Friends of Art
49. Morning in the Tropics, 1877
*o oil on canvas, 54 3/8 x 84 1/8 in.
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of Avalon
Foundation

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