

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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

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CONTACT: Deborah Ziska
Anne Diamonstein
(202) 842-6353

COMPREHENSIVE EXHIBITION OF WORKS BY JOHN MARIN

TO BE PRESENTED BY NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D.C., August 28, 1989 - The first comprehensive exhibition in twenty years to examine the art of John Marin, one of the most important twentieth-century American painters, will be presented in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art, January 28 - April 15, 1990. Selections and Transformations: The Art of John Marin will include approximately 125 oil paintings, watercolors, drawings, and etchings, representing the extensive body of work by Marin that is central to an understanding of American modernism. The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art and will not travel.

"As the home of the John Marin Archive, formed by the magnificent donations from Mr. and Mrs. John Marin, Jr., in 1986 and 1987, and gifts from several earlier donors, the National Gallery is especially pleased to present this exhibition celebrating Marin's distinguished career. His art is both distinctively beautiful and intellectually challenging," said J. Carter Brown, director, National Gallery of Art.

In addition to significant loans from public and private collections throughout the United States, many of the works in the exhibition have been drawn from the Gallery's Marin holdings, one of the premier collections of his work in the world.

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Works chosen from the Gallery's holdings include selections from sixteen of Marin's sketchbooks, given by the Marins in 1986 and 1987 along with more than four hundred drawings and watercolors, several oil paintings, personal correspondence, and research materials. Other works from the Gallery's holdings to be exhibited are Echo Lake, Franconia Range, White Mountain Country (1927), and Storm over Taos (1930), from a 1949 gift made by American painter Georgia O'Keeffe of three watercolors from the Alfred Stieglitz Collection; and Woolworth Building, No. 28 (1912) and Woolworth Building, No. 31 (1912), part of a 1967 gift from Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer including a group of Woolworth Building watercolors that brought Marin great acclaim in 1913.

John Marin was born in Rutherford, New Jersey, on December 23, 1870. After art studies at Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, he traveled to Europe, where he displayed extraordinary skill in creating etchings and watercolors. After his return to the United States in 1910, Marin became a central figure in the circle of photographer Alfred Stieglitz, who is well known for introducing modernist art to the American public.

When he died in 1953, Marin had produced well over three thousand works in a wide variety of media. His art was touched by the most exciting currents of the early 1900s, among them, cubism and futurism. With unique insight he had evolved from a devotee of American painter James McNeill Whistler's delicate vision into a dynamic abstractionist.

Marin was voted the most popular painter in the United States by a 1948 "Look" magazine survey of museum directors, curators, and art critics. Although his prominence diminished somewhat in the decades following his death, his work has always been appreciated by artists. As the end of the twentieth century approaches, the clarity and complexity of his art have been attracting renewed interest and admiration among collectors.

The works in the exhibition, selected by Ruth E. Fine, curator of modern prints and drawings at the National Gallery of Art, will illuminate Marin's manner and methods of choosing images from nature and transforming them, showing how discoveries in one medium led to changes in another. The first section of the show, "Marin as an Etcher," provides an overview of the artist's subjects. Etchings such as Downtown Synthesis, No. 3 (1925), reveal him to be one of the most daring artists of his time. The etchings will be followed by six thematic groupings of oil paintings, watercolors, and drawings: "Europe and the Return to America," "The Urban Landscape," "Maine: Where Land and Water Meet," "New England and New Mexico," "The Sea," and "The Late Calligraphic Works."

Although the Woolworth Building and other New York landmarks were important subjects for Marin, as seen in the oil painting Sailboat, Brooklyn Bridge, New York Skyline (1934), he also maintained a lifelong fascination with the Maine landscape, later including the seascape. This interest is reflected in many of the works in the exhibition, such as the watercolor Sunset, Maine Coast (1919), and the oil painting The Written Sea (1952).

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Ms. Fine wrote John Marin, the publication that will accompany the exhibition. The book will be copublished in 1990 by the National Gallery of Art and Abbeville Press, Inc. It contains information drawn from previously untapped family archives, photographs of the artist at work, excerpts of Marin's writings, and 300 illustrations, 175 in color, showing all of the works in the exhibition.

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