



# Circa 1492

## *Art in the Age of Exploration*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF CORPORATIONS SUPPORT

### CIRCA 1492: ART IN THE AGE OF EXPLORATION

National Gallery of Art  
Washington

October 12, 1991-  
January 12, 1992

4th Street and Constitution  
Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20565  
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WASHINGTON, D.C., October 9, 1990 -- Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration, one of the most ambitious exhibitions ever undertaken by the National Gallery of Art, is made possible by a global consortium of equal partners. They are: Ameritech, The Nomura Securities Co., Ltd./The Mitsui Taiyo Kobe Bank, Ltd., and Republic National Bank of New York. The exhibition will be presented in Washington from October 12, 1991 through January 12, 1992 in the East Building.

"We are very pleased to have an international group of major corporations making a commitment to support Circa 1492 a year before it opens," said National Gallery director J. Carter Brown. "It is fitting that an exhibition that presents an image of the world at the dawn of a new era of communication and interdependence would be supported by telecommunications and financial services corporations that represent three regions of the world: North America, South America, and Asia. We are still working to put in place a final European partner."

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Circa 1492, one of the first of the many events and exhibitions which will commemorate the Columbus Quincentenary in 1992, will include more than 400 paintings, sculptures, drawings, maps, and other objects of art in a survey of the world's major civilizations that existed during Christopher Columbus' lifetime around the Mediterranean, West Africa, the Far East, and the Americas. The largest in scale of the Gallery's shows since Treasure Houses of Britain in 1985-1986, Circa 1492 will occupy some 30,000 square feet of exhibition space.

Circa 1492 will be the first exhibition at the National Gallery ever supported by Ameritech. One of the nation's leading information industry companies, Ameritech is the Chicago-based parent of the Bell companies serving Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin, and several other information-related companies. Ameritech was also the first to join the corporate consortium and made possible the early stages of research and organization of this complex undertaking.

"Ameritech is proud to support Circa 1492," said John A. Koten, president of the Ameritech Foundation. "Columbus' journeys to the New World five hundred years ago were a significant step toward today's 'global village' of instantaneous communication. We are on the threshold of another new era, the 'Information Age.' As a modern-day explorer of new frontiers in communications services and technologies, Ameritech is pleased to sponsor the National Gallery's celebration of an earlier age of exploration and discovery."

The Nomura Securities Co., Ltd., together with The Mitsui Taiyo Kobe Bank, Ltd., have joined the consortium as joint members. Nomura Securities, based in Tokyo and one of the world's major securities firms, was a member of the funding consortium for 1988-1989 National Gallery exhibition Japan: The Shaping of Daimyo Culture, 1185 - 1868.

"We are very pleased to return to the National Gallery and the nation's capital to help launch the first major exhibition honoring the quincentenary of Columbus' voyage to the Americas. The international message of this exhibition reflects our own business philosophy. We are a global institution with offices and operations worldwide and we are honored to be part of this cultural enterprise which will bring art produced five hundred years ago from civilizations around the world to the public," said Setsuya Tabuchi, chairman of the board, The Nomura Securities Co., Ltd.

The Mitsui Taiyo Kobe Bank, Ltd., also based in Tokyo, is one of the largest banks in the world. Circa 1492 is the first exhibition it has supported at the National Gallery of Art. "Mitsui Taiyo Kobe Bank is proud to be part of the Circa 1492 consortium. As a member of the international financial community, we are very pleased to be associated with this global exhibition celebrating the treasures of the age of exploration," said Yasuo Matsushita, chairman, The Mitsui Taiyo Kobe Bank, Ltd.

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Ameritech and Nomura Securities/ Mitsui Taiyo Kobe Bank are joined by Republic National Bank of New York, which has supported four other exhibitions at the National Gallery: An American Perspective: Nineteenth-Century Art from the Collection of Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr., 1981-1982; Renaissance Master Bronzes from the Collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 1986; Berthe Morisot: Impressionist, 1987; and Frans Hals, 1989.

"We are a United States bank with interests and holdings in Europe, the Far East, and Latin America. The increasingly global scope of our business interests parallels the exciting range of visual imagery explored in this exhibition," said Walter H. Weiner, chairman of the board and chief executive officer, Republic National Bank of New York.

[October 9, 1990]

# National Gallery of Art

*Washington, D.C.*

## CIRCA 1492: ART IN THE AGE OF EXPLORATION

*National Gallery of Art -- Washington, D.C.  
October 12, 1991 -- January 12, 1992*

### I. Europe and the Mediterranean World

The focus of this section will be the Mediterranean basin and the culture in which Columbus developed. Beginning with a survey of medieval Europe's knowledge of and speculations about the East, the section will investigate the major political forces surrounding the Mediterranean in Columbus' age -- Portugal, Spain, the Italian maritime cities of Genoa and Venice, the kingdoms of western Africa, and the Islamic empires -- and the principal intellectual and spiritual currents of the period.

- A. Distant Worlds
- B. Secular Power and the Realm of the Spirit
  - 1. Portugal and the Sea Route South
  - 2. African Kingdoms
  - 3. Spain in the Age of Ferdinand and Isabella
  - 4. The Maritime Cities
  - 5. Islamic Empires
- C. The Measure of All Things
  - 1. Measuring and Mapping
  - 2. The Rationalization of Space
  - 3. The Human Figure
  - 4. Leonardo and Dürer

### II. Toward Cathay

The visitor will follow the route east to China that Columbus proposed in his "Enterprise of the Indies," surveying the civilizations of eastern Asia as they existed in the later fifteenth century.

- A. Japan: the Muromachi Period
- B. Korea: the Early Yi Dynasty
- C. China: the Ming Dynasty
- D. India and the Himalayas

### III. The Americas

The visitor will follow Columbus to the New World he actually reached. The section will present the principal cultures of the Americas, centering on those lands that first came into contact with the Europeans.

- A. First Contacts: the Antilles, Florida and Brazil
- B. The Aztec Empire: Realm of the Smoking Mirror
- C. The Incas and their Empire
- D. Between the Empires: the Lands of Gold

## **I. Europe and the Mediterranean World**

The focus of this section will be the Mediterranean basin and the culture in which Columbus developed. Beginning with a survey of medieval Europe's knowledge of and speculations about the East, the section will investigate the major political powers surrounding the Mediterranean in Columbus' age -- Portugal, Spain, the Italian maritime cities of Genoa and Venice, the kingdoms of western Africa, and the Islamic empires -- and the principal intellectual and spiritual currents of the period.

### **A. Distant Worlds**

This section will focus on late medieval Europe and its fascination with the exotic, including both fabulous views of the East and actual Asian objects that reached Europe through overland trade routes.

### **B. Secular Power and the Realm of the Spirit**

#### **1. Portugal and the Sea Route South**

This section will present Portugal during the period of exploration, from Henry the Navigator's expeditions down the African coast to Vasco de Gama's arrival in India.

#### **2. African Kingdoms**

This section will present west African masterpieces in bronze and terracotta dating from the later fifteenth century, as well as early ivories created for trade with Europe.

#### **3. Spain in the Age of Ferdinand and Isabella**

The focus of this section will be Spain during the reigns of Ferdinand and Isabella and of the early Charles V, presenting objects commissioned by or belonging to the *Reyes Católicos* and works of religious art that attest to the spiritual fervor of the times, a major stimulus to the voyages of exploration.

#### **4. The Maritime Cities**

This section will survey the major trading cities of Italy and will include views of the Islamic East seen through the eyes of Northern Italian artists.

#### **5. Islamic Empires**

This section will include the empires in Turkey, Egypt and western Persia, sentinels at the gateway to the East and rivals of the Europeans for Mediterranean dominance.

### **C. The Measure of All Things**

#### **1. Measuring and Mapping**

This section will focus on the sciences in Columbus' age, including astronomy and cartography, through a selection of instruments and maps.

#### **2. The Rationalization of Space**

This section will survey the development of linear perspective in the early Renaissance, from its geometrical underpinnings to the creation of realistic space in pictures, both interiors and landscapes.

### 3. The Human Figure

This section will examine the achievements of the Renaissance in the portrayal of the nude as a vehicle for artistic expression.

### 4. Leonardo and Dürer

This section will present Leonardo and Dürer as the quintessential artist-scientists of the Renaissance, whose wide-ranging interests in the phenomena of the natural world symbolize the breadth of the period's quest for knowledge.

## II. Toward Cathay

The visitor will follow the route east to China that Columbus proposed in his "Enterprise of the Indies," surveying the civilizations of eastern Asia as they existed in the later fifteenth century.

### A. Japan: the Muromachi Period

This section will examine Japan during the fascinating period of upheaval that marked the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, as the society recovered from the devastating effects of the Onin War (1467-1477) and embarked on a crucial period of cultural development. The middle years of the Muromachi period were particularly rich for the development of the visual arts, and this section will survey Japanese painting in some detail, both the traditional styles and the "new" painting influenced by Korea and the Chinese mainland. Special emphasis will be placed on the masterpieces of Sesshu Toyo, the Zen monk who became the greatest painter of the period and a critical figure in cultural relations with China. Important examples of the decorative arts will also be featured, including the haunting masks created for the Noh drama and treasured ceramics reflecting the new "Tea Taste" ethos.

### B. Korea: the Early Yi Dynasty

Korea will emerge, in this section, as a major force in the history of art and science, the fiercely independent defender of one of the world's oldest cultural traditions and an important mediator between the civilizations of China and Japan. The section will include major examples of Korean painting and ceramics, as well as a selection of printed books from a country that had perfected the art of printing from movable type long before Gutenberg.

### C. China: the Ming Dynasty

This section will focus on the reigns of the Ch'eng-hua, Hung-chih, and Cheng-te emperors of the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when China was the world's oldest, largest and richest society, whose command of science and technology was well in advance of western Europe's. Special emphasis will be placed on the splendors of the Imperial court, including a presentation of monumental paintings created for the Imperial palace. The section on painting will emphasize the great variety of styles that characterized the

period and highlight the works of the leading master Shên Chou, a figure whose seminal importance in China parallels that of Sesshu in Japan. The presentation of the decorative arts will include sculpture, enamel, lacquer, jade, and furniture, and will focus on the technological achievements of Chinese porcelain manufacture.

**D. India and the Himalayas**

Beginning with a look at the vigorous Buddhist traditions in the Himalayas, this section will focus on India at a transitional phase in her history, when Hinduism yielded to Islam as the dominant cultural force. It will conclude with the arrival of the Portuguese in India and the establishment of direct commercial links to Western Europe.

**III. The Americas**

The visitor will follow Columbus to the New World he actually reached. The section will present the principal cultures of the Americas, centering on those lands that first came into contact with the Europeans.

**A. First Contacts: the Antilles, Florida and Brazil**

This section will survey several of the earliest cultures to have come into contact with the Europeans. It will begin with the Tainos, the inhabitants of the islands which Columbus reached on his first voyage, documenting their elusive culture with objects excavated in Hispaniola and with rare and dramatic Kunstammer pieces that reached European collections as early as the sixteenth century. It will also examine the Woodlands Indians in the southeastern United States, as well as the Tupinamba of Brazil, celebrated for their featherwork, who appear in the earliest European representations of the inhabitants of the Americas. The section will conclude with a group of fascinating European images attesting to the first contacts with America, including two 1493 editions of Columbus' letter to Ferdinand and Isabella and the illustrations to Vespucci's sensational accounts of South American cannibalism, as well as serious attempts to understand the American cultures.

**B. The Aztec Empire: Realm of the Smoking Mirror**

This section will explore the highly developed civilization of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, as it existed at the time of the Conquest. With the help of rare original screenfold codices and monumental works of sculpture, it will examine in detail the Aztecs' religious thought and cosmology. Other works, closely identified with the figure of the ruler, will convey the splendor of the Aztec monarchy. The section will also document early European attempts to comprehend Aztec culture, through a selection of post-Conquest codices written in Mexico.

**C. The Incas and their Empire**

This section will center on the civilization of the Incas, creators of the greatest of the New World empires in the Andes. It will also include two cultures linked to the empire, the Chimú of northern Peru and the Manteño of Ecuador.

**D. Between the Continents: the Lands of Gold**

This section will concentrate on a group of flourishing chiefdoms in Costa Rica and Colombia that were never subjugated by either of the empires -- the Diquis, the Sinu, the Tairona, the Popoyan and the Muisca -- celebrated as the creators of some of the finest works in gold produced in pre-Columbian America.



# National Gallery of Art

Washington, D.C.

## Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration

Contributing Scholars as of October 9, 1990\*

### GENERAL:

Dr. Daniel Boorstin, Librarian of Congress Emeritus, Washington, D.C.

Professor John Elliott, Oxford University, Oxford, England.

### EUROPE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD:

Professor Martin Kemp, St. Andrews University, St. Andrews, Scotland.

*Rational Space: Vision, Mathematics and the Man-made Environment*  
*Leonardo and Dürer: the Universal Vision*

Professor Jean Michel Massing, Cambridge University, Cambridge, England.

*Distant Worlds: the Medieval Spirit*  
*Dürer's Quest for the Exotic*

Professor David Woodward, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

*The Image of the Spherical Earth*

Dr. Francis Maddison, Museum of the History of Science, Oxford University, Oxford, England.

*Navigation: the Medieval Heritage and the Portuguese Contribution*

Professor Paolo Galluzzi, Istituto e Museo di Storia della Scienza, Florence, Italy.  
(Scientific Instruments)

Professor Ezio Bassani, Università Internazionale dell'Arte, Florence, Italy.

*Africa in the Renaissance*

Dr. Frank Willett, Hunterian Museum, Glasgow, Scotland.

(Benin and Ife)

Professor Luis de Albuquerque, University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal.

*Portugal in the Age of the Discoveries*

Dr. José Teixeira, Museum of Evora, Evora, Portugal.

(Portugal)

Professor Jonathan Brown, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, New York.

(Spain)

Professor Richard Kagan, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.

*The Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella*

Professor Juan J. Martín González, University of Valladolid, Valladolid, Spain.

(Spanish Sculpture)

Dr. Suzanne Stratton, Spanish Institute, New York.

(Spain)

Professor Julian Raby, Oriental Institute, Oxford, England.

*'Grand Seigneur' and 'Gran Suldán' in the Art of Renaissance Italy*

Dr. Michael Rogers, British Museum, London, England.

*'The Gorgeous East': Trade and Tribute in the Islamic Empires*

#### TOWARDS CATHAY:

Dr. Sherman E. Lee, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and former Director of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

(Japan, Korea, China)

Professor Howard Rogers, Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan.

(China)

Professor Emeritus Frederick Mote, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey.

(Chinese History)

Dr. James Ulak, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

(Japan)

Professor Martin Collcutt, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey.

(Japanese History)

Professor Stuart Cary Welch, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

(India)

#### AMERICAS:

Professor Michael Coe, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

*The Aztec Empire: Realm of the Smoking Mirror*

Professor Irving Rouse, New Haven, Connecticut.

*The Antilles: Land of the Taínos*

Dr. Elizabeth Benson, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.

(Peru)

Professor Craig Morris, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

*Strength in Diversity: the Inca at the Time of the Conquest*

Professor Warwick Bray, University of London, London, England.

*Between the Empires: the Lands of Gold*

Dr. Clemencia Plazas, Museo del Oro, Bogotá, Colombia.

(Colombia)

Dr. Ana-Maria Falchetti, Museo del Oro, Bogotá, Colombia.

(Colombia)

Dr. Michael Snarskis, San José, Costa Rica.

(Costa Rica)

\* Catalogue essays are noted where titles have been finalized. Areas of specialization are indicated within parentheses.