

National Gallery of Art News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 14, 1991

CONTACT: Ruth Kaplan
Deborah Ziska
(202) 842-6353

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART OPENS FIRST PUBLIC HIGH DEFINITION VIDEO THEATER IN NATION'S CAPITAL

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The National Gallery of Art will open the first permanent high definition video theater in the nation's capital on November 16 with daily presentations of "Masters of Illusion," produced in conjunction with the exhibition Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration. High definition video is an electronic imaging system that provides a sharper, higher fidelity picture than any previous electronic system.

The high definition video installation in the eighty-person theater of the National Gallery's East Building was made possible by Sony Corporation of America. The High Definition Video Theater at the Gallery is one of only several such facilities open to the public in the United States. The Gallery's system utilizes video laser discs that can sustain continual use without risk of damage, unlike film.

"The High Definition Video Theater is the latest example of how the National Gallery is expanding its educational programs and outreach with the use of new technologies," said J. Carter Brown, director, National Gallery of Art.

-more-

Other recent examples of how the Gallery is using new technology for education include development of high quality video discs, a new interactive video program, and a digitized image library containing works of art from the Gallery's American collection.

According to Neil Vander Dussen, vice-chairman, Sony Corporation of America, "This high definition installation provides the National Gallery of Art with the flexibility to explore the potential of this technology and its relationship to the arts. It will demonstrate the brilliance and clarity of high definition to some of the most discerning viewers in the country. Sony is proud to be associated with this project."

"Masters of Illusion," thirty minutes in length, is the first presentation in the Gallery's High Definition Video Theater. From November 16, 1991 through January 10, 1992 it will be shown continuously, Mondays through Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m., and on Fridays, from 3:00 to 7:30 p.m. Beginning November 30, the film will be shown on Saturdays from 3:00 to 7:30 p.m. The Gallery also plans to transfer 35mm films to high definition video and explore ways of showing works of art from its permanent collection and temporary exhibitions in the High Definition Video Theater.

"Masters of Illusion" takes viewers on a cinematic journey of the discovery of perspective and concepts of pictorial space. Made possible by the generous support of Canon U.S.A. and Canon Inc., the film reveals that the extraordinary special effects we are accustomed to seeing today, in films such as "Star Wars," are based on principles established more than five hundred years ago by Renaissance masters such as Brunelleschi, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, and Raphael.

"Masters of Illusion" was directed and produced by Harper Films, Inc., owned by Rick Harper. The winner of more than 150 awards, Harper, a collector and artist himself, has designed, produced, directed, and shot films all over the world for Disney productions, the National Gallery (Collecting America), and many others. The executive producer is Joseph J. Krakora, who is the Gallery's external affairs officer. James Burke, Great Britain's foremost commentator on science and technology, is the on-camera host. As an award-winning television personality, author, and educator, Burke becomes an imaginative part of the special effects in the film. The film also features a specially commissioned score by the award-winning composer William Kidd.

"Masters of Illusion" will be broadcast nationwide in early 1992. It will also be available in eight languages -- English, Japanese, Italian, French, Spanish, German, Russian, and Chinese -- for international distribution and for broadcast in Western Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

high definition theater . . . page four

Videocassettes of "Masters of Illusion" will be available for purchase through Home Vision and from the National Gallery bookstore. For information on ordering from the Gallery, call (301) 322-5900. The videocassette will also be available on a loan basis through the Gallery's extension programs, which provide films, videotapes, and audiovisual material free of charge to schools, colleges, universities, libraries, and other civic and cultural organizations throughout the country.

Videocassettes for loan to groups can be ordered from:

Department of Education Resources
Extension Programs Section
National Gallery of Art
Washington, D.C. 20565

Admission to the public presentations of "Masters of Illusion" in the High Definition Video Theatre is on a first-come, first-served basis. The National Gallery of Art and its events are open to the public free of charge. The Gallery, located at Fourth Street and Constitution Avenue, NW, is open every day of the year except Christmas and New Year's, Mondays through Saturdays, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and on Sundays, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration is also open until 8:00 p.m. on Friday evenings through January 12, 1992. Beginning November 30, Circa 1492 will also be open until 8:00 p.m. on Saturday evenings.