

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART PRESENTS

AMERICAN ART VEDEDISC, FIRST TO USE DIGITAL IMAGES

Washington, D.C. -- A new laser videodisc, American Art from the National Gallery of Art--the largest digital imaging project developed by an American art museum--has been published by the National Gallery of Art, Earl A. Powell III, director, announced today. The videodisc is a compendium of more than 2,600 works of art, representing virtually all of the Gallery's collections of American paintings and sculpture as well as a large number of drawings, watercolors, and prints.

Production of the videodisc was funded by a grant from The Annenberg Foundation. The grant also provided for a gift of 2,500 copies to be distributed to educational organizations in every state, U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia.

"This important grant from The Annenberg Foundation has enabled us to bring this vast new archive of American art to educators and students of all ages across the country," said Powell. "The pictures and information offer almost limitless opportunities to learn about American art and the imagery of our national heritage. Production and distribution of the videodisc demonstrate the Gallery's ongoing commitment to provide access to our resources for people throughout the nation."

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Nearly 700 educators have been awarded videodiscs following a nationwide competition in which entrants designed an educational program using the videodisc. In addition, every member of Congress was invited to designate an educational organization in each district or state to receive a copy. Another 500 recipients were identified by state supervisors of art, social studies, language arts, and instructional technology. Copies have been donated as well to nearly 300 members of the Technology Leadership Network, a group of school districts in the vanguard of technology in education. Videodisc recipients include school systems, universities, museums, and instructional media centers serving students at all levels and in varied curricula.

Approximately half the images on the new laserdisc are of paintings by American artists, ranging from Gilbert Stuart to Mary Cassatt and Jackson Pollock. There are also 160 images of sculpture by artists such as Alexander Calder and Martin Puryear. Among more than 1,000 works on paper are drawings, watercolors, prints, and renderings from the Index of American Design, the WPA project that recorded American decorative arts.

Full-frame images of the works of art are accompanied by explanatory text and an average of two details. In all, more than 12,000 frames are presented, along with a printed index. An introduction in full motion, narrated by Earl A. Powell III, presents an overview of the Gallery's American collections.

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The twelve-inch videodisc, similar to a large CD, is designed for use on optical laser videodisc players. Random access capability permits images and details to be shown rapidly and in any sequence. Because the laserdisc system is based on digital images, the clarity and resolution are extremely high, yielding details superior in quality to video images.

The laser videodisc was produced by the Gallery's education division. Ruth R. Perlin, head of the department of education resources, was director and producer. American Art from the National Gallery of Art is the second videodisc produced by the Gallery. The first, National Gallery of Art, published in 1983, was another pioneering effort as the first videodisc on a museum collection.

Both are available through the Gallery's extension programs distribution system, which circulates educational resources on a free-loan basis to educational audiences across the United States. Educators interested in borrowing a copy should write to: Department of Education Resources, Extension Programs Section, National Gallery of Art, 4th Street & Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20565. Telephone: (202) 842-6273.

American Art from the National Gallery of Art is also available for purchase at \$99.95 in the National Gallery's bookshops and through mail order by calling (301) 322-5900. The original National Gallery of Art videodisc is also available through the same sources for \$100.

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