

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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

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NATIONAL GALLERY EXHIBITION HONORS

ART COLLECTOR DR. RUTH B. BENEDICT

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The National Gallery of Art is presenting the exhibition A Discerning Eye: Prints & Drawings Given by Ruth B. Benedict as a tribute to the collector, a Washington physician who was dedicated to the appreciation and collecting of prints and drawings. The exhibition, which is on view in the West Building, February 13 through June 12, 1994, consists of seventy-eight prints and drawings by fifty-eight prominent European artists from the sixteenth through twentieth centuries, including such major artists as Rembrandt, Jacques Callot, Canaletto, Tiepolo, Francisco de Goya, Honoré Daumier, and Henry Moore. The works were selected from 143 works of art on paper that Benedict has given to the Gallery since 1974--64 up to the time of her death on October 2, 1993, and an additional 79 now bequeathed to the Gallery.

"Ruth Benedict was a long-time friend and donor of the

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National Gallery of Art," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are delighted to present this exhibition, which reveals Benedict's connoisseurship in the graphic arts. It is a fitting tribute to a knowledgeable and dedicated collector and supporter of the arts."

The exhibition was organized by Andrew Robison, Andrew W. Mellon Senior Curator, National Gallery of Art, who had known Benedict since the late 1960s. In his tribute to Benedict published in the winter 1993-1994 issue of The Washington Print Club Quarterly, Robison wrote, "Ruth's approach to particular works of art always had two features. She focused on quality; and she had an excellent eye, both for images and for impressions. She exercised the first not only on famous prints but also in choosing fine unique works in painting and drawing. And she had a particular sensitivity to the second, so characteristic of all great collectors of old master prints: which impression makes the work truly intense and moving?"

Dr. Benedict was born in Berlin in 1913, came to New York about 1920 and moved to Washington, D.C., in 1942, where she lived for fifty years and practiced medicine until she retired in 1982. She was a founding member, past president, and newsletter editor of the Washington Print Club. She helped organize and served as guest curator of the Night Prints exhibition at the National Gallery in 1983.

Reflecting Benedict's interest in the history of the

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graphic arts, the exhibition is arranged chronologically. Highlights include: an impressive range of allegorical and mythological woodcuts and engravings by Hendrik Goltzius and a variety of other mannerist artists; theatrically inspired prints by Jacques Callot and Stefano Della Bella; four rich impressions of etchings by Rembrandt; five aquatints by Francisco de Goya; color lithographs and aquatints by Edouard Vuillard, Jacques Villon, and Henri-Gabriel Ibels; and one of Henry Moore's finest drawings, a "shelter" drawing in ink, colored chalks, and watercolor.

According to Robison, Benedict's fascination with night prints and rich tonalities, the basis of her 1983 exhibition at the Gallery, is represented not only by Rembrandt and Goya but also by unusual dark works from Brustolon and Tiepolo, as well as romantic prints by Pierre Paul Prud'hon, Eugène Delacroix, Théodore Géricault, John Martin, and Rodolphe Bresdin. Her fondness for humor in prints, especially biting social and political satire, is seen in the prints by Cornelis Dusart, Honoré Daumier, and Jean Grandville, as well as Thomas Rowlandson's masterpiece Vauxhall Gardens.

National Gallery assistant curator of old master prints Gregory Jecmen assisted with the organization of the exhibition. An exhibition brochure, including an essay by Robison and a checklist of works in the show, will be available free of charge to visitors.

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Admission to the National Gallery is free of charge. The Gallery, located at Fourth Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W., is open Monday - Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., and Sunday, 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. For more information, call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176. For information regarding assistance for people with disabilities, call (202) 842-6690.

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