

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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MASTER IMAGES FROM PHOTOGRAPHY'S FIRST CENTURY

AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, JUNE 19 - SEPTEMBER 11, 1994

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A grand array of master images from photography's first one hundred years (1839-1939) by such renowned artists as Julia Margaret Cameron and Mathew Brady as well as little-known practitioners is on view this summer at the National Gallery of Art. The exhibition The Waking Dream: Photography's First Century: Selections from the Gilman Paper Company Collection is located on the main floor of the National Gallery's West Building, June 19 through September 11, 1994.

Approximately 250 works, many of them rare or unique and all of exceptional quality, were culled from the more than 5,000 pieces in one of the world's finest collections of photography. Some twenty years ago Howard Gilman, chairman of the Gilman Paper Company, assisted by curator Pierre Apraxine, began to identify some of the finest examples of photography, including images by obscure and anonymous figures. "The Gilman Paper Company Collection is widely respected not only for its scope and depth but also for the superb quality and beauty of its holdings," said Earl

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A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "The outstanding images selected for this exhibition will give our visitors a greater appreciation of the art of photography."

The exhibition was organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, where it was on view in 1993. It was also presented later that year under the auspices of the Edinburgh International Festival in Scotland. Exhibition co-curators are Maria Morris Hambourg, head of the department of photographs at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Pierre Apraxine, consultant to The Metropolitan and curator of the Gilman Paper Company Collection. The exhibition in Washington is organized by Sarah Greenough, curator of photographs at the National Gallery, and Pierre Apraxine.

The Gallery will include six works not seen at the earlier exhibition in 1993. Among these are three new Ernest Benecke acquisitions to the Gilman Paper Company Collection: Autopsy of the First Crocodile on Board, Upper Egypt, 1852; The Dancers Wassilehet and Zbedeh, Upper Egypt, 1852; and Children from the Village of Kalabcheh, Nubia, 1852.

The Waking Dream is divided into six sections that concentrate on Britain, France, tours of the Mediterranean and Asia, America, the turn of the century, and the early modern period. The birth of photography is traced in a suite of seminal images by the inventor William Henry Fox Talbot. A portrait of Victorian Britain emerges through a wide sweep of images, among them photographs by Lewis Carroll (of, among others, Alice Liddell, for whom Alice in Wonderland was written), Roger Fenton's grand depictions of Gothic architecture, and Robert Howlett's documentation of the construction of the *Great Eastern*, the largest ship built during the nineteenth century.

In the second section, the exquisite taste and refinement of French photographers are reflected in rare, early photographs of Chartres and Saint-Cloud by Henri Le Secq and Henri Regnault, while the sensual pleasures and high artistic ambitions of the Second Empire unfold in the works of Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachon) and in the large, lush prints of Gustave Le Gray and Edouard Baldus.

The third section demonstrates how the Grand Tour of the continent was extended by British and French photographers to Spain, Egypt, the Near East, and beyond to India and Asia. In elephant folios and leather-bound albums, the ancient and the exotic are displayed as if for the armchair viewer. Photographs of newly excavated statues on the Acropolis, of Flaubert in Egypt, the Taj Mahal, and the King of Siam in both traditional and Western dress alternately evoke the excitement of discovery and the complex attitudes of the imperialist epoch.

The American section is rich in luminous daguerreotypes and powerful historical records of the Civil War, abolition, and the events following the assassination of President Lincoln. Portraits of Native Americans and majestic landscapes of the American West by Timothy O'Sullivan and Carleton Watkins depict the transformation of the American landscape that occurred in the late-nineteenth century.

The fifth section highlights the fin de siècle in western Europe and America. Moody landscapes and portraits of Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, and Vaslav Nijinsky emerge in painterly gum bichromate prints, rich platinum prints, and the newly arrived snapshot, creating a picture of the turn of the century that reveals a pursuit of the ephemeral, a fascination with dance, and an intense subjectivity.

The final section charts the stunning formal innovations of the period between

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the World Wars in bold, energetic images by such artists as Man Ray, El Lissitzky, and Moholy-Nagy, and in the more poised and timeless visions of Edward Weston, Charles Sheeler, and Walker Evans.

The Waking Dream is accompanied by a book of the same title, which won the 1994 Writing Award from the International Center for Photography. Published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the book is written by Maria Morris Hambourg and Pierre Apraxine, with Malcolm Daniel, Jeff L. Rosenheim, and Virginia Heckert, members of The Metropolitan's curatorial staff. It is available at the National Gallery of Art (\$57.50 hardcover) and is distributed by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York (408 pages, 196 plates, printed in tritone and color; 79 duotones). An exhibition brochure will be available to the public free of charge.

The title of the exhibition was taken from a line in John Keats' Ode to a Nightingale: "Was it a vision, or a waking dream?" According to Hambourg, the title suggests "the haunting power of photographs to commingle past and present, to suspend the world and the artist's experience of it in unique distillations."

The National Gallery is open to the public free of charge Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. For general information, call (202) 737-4215. For information regarding assistance for people with disabilities, call (202) 842-6690 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), (202) 842-6176.

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GILMAN PAPER COMPANY

The Gilman Paper Company was founded by my grandfather Isaac Gilman, in 1884. An immigrant from Russia, Isaac Gilman arrived alone at the age of ten in New York, where he was to make his way and realize his dream of freedom. Starting with capital of only a hundred dollars, he became a dealer in overissue newspapers, at the time reused as wrapping. In the years that followed, he built a fully integrated forest-products company supplying Kraft paper, paperboard, and lumber to worldwide markets, with an operating organization of over two thousand employees. Isaac Gilman and his son Charles, my father, who took over leadership of the company in 1944, devoted their lives to the development and growth of the company, initially in New York City, then in what would become Gilman, Vermont, and ultimately in southern Georgia and Florida, where the company's principal natural resources and manufacturing facilities are now located.

As a young man my grandfather was denied a proper education and easy access to culture. He was therefore particularly sensitive to the necessity of creating in his company an environment where people could enjoy the very advantages he had lacked but deemed essential. My father, besides instituting an active program of natural resource conservation, continued and expanded his father's policies to include health and medical research and the sponsorship of cultural and educational institutions. I, in my turn, have extended the concern of my predecessors to include the collecting of art, which I feel furthers my family's interest in conservation as well as my own. The concerns that most persistently draw my sympathy are the preservation of endangered species, the sustenance of the performing arts, and the collection of photography, of which so much has been lost through incomprehension and neglect.

I share with my generation a familiarity with the threats of global destruction, a heightened awareness of the fragility of life in all its forms, and a repeated acquaintance with history's potential for savage devastation. Against such a background, art collecting might seem to be a self-gratifying but meaningless hoarding if the collector were not sustained by the idea that he is only the transitory custodian of treasures it is his duty to preserve. He can be responsible to his personal pleasure only to the degree that he is able to share it with and preserve it for others. It is this idea that has informed the Gilman Paper Company Collection and that is the basis of this exhibition.

It is enormously gratifying to be able to share with the public the pleasures of the collector and a privilege to do so within the walls of the National Gallery of Art in the company of the finest masterpieces the country has to offer. In recent years the National Gallery of Art has done much to establish the art of photography within the national consciousness, and the Gilman Paper Company is proud to be associated with this endeavor.

Howard Gilman
Chairman
Gilman Paper Company