

# National Gallery of Art

## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 23, 1996

Press contact: (202) 842-6353  
Information Officer, Deborah Ziska  
Exhibition Publicist, Ann Greer

### A NEW SPIRIT IN LANDSCAPE PAINTING

#### IN THE LIGHT OF ITALY: COROT AND EARLY OPEN-AIR PAINTING

#### OPENS AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ON MAY 26

Washington, D.C. -- The first major exhibition to explore the work of two generations of European artists who broke new ground in landscape painting between 1780 and 1840 will be on view at the National Gallery of Art, West Building, May 26 through September 2, 1996. In the Light of Italy: Corot and Early Open-Air Painting will feature 130 paintings and oil sketches by 48 artists, most notably Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, one of the greatest landscape painters of the nineteenth century, as well as works by Carl Blechen, Johan Christian Dahl, Simon Denis, Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg, François-Marius Granet, Thomas Jones, and Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes.

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and The Brooklyn Museum, where it will be on view October 11, 1996 - January 12, 1997, in association with the Saint Louis Art Museum, where it will be on view February 21 - May 18, 1997. The exhibition is made possible by a grant from The Florence Gould Foundation. It is supported by an indemnity

-more-

corot...page 2

from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

In the Light of Italy coincides with the bicentennial Corot exhibition organized by the Louvre, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the National Gallery of Canada.

"Through the generosity of The Florence Gould Foundation, the National Gallery is pleased to present the work of early open-air artists, who created paintings that are wonderful in their own right as well as exciting forerunners to impressionism and photography," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

"Mrs. Gould was an outstanding collector with a particular interest in nineteenth-century art, so we are delighted to help make this exhibition possible," said John R. Young, president, The Florence Gould Foundation. "We are also pleased that it will introduce many viewers to a less familiar, but wonderful, period of European painting."

The paintings in the exhibition come from museums and private collections throughout Europe, the United States, and Japan, and represent artists from Germany, England, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Norway, and Sweden. The works were made for private study and exhibit different degrees of finish; most remained virtually unknown and were not publicly exhibited until their "discovery" in the twentieth century. They chronicle the development of the open-air tradition from its origins in the work of British and French artists in the 1780s to its high point

-more-

corot...page 3

in the works of Corot in the 1820s.

The artists were drawn to Italy, especially to Rome and Naples and their environs, by the rich historical, literary, and artistic traditions embodied in the Italian landscape since ancient times. Their aim was to respond as immediately as possible to the scene before them and to avoid conventional ways of seeing. Their work foreshadowed the qualities of impressionism and the compositional innovations of photography.

Corot is represented by twenty of his finest works made during his first visit to Italy between 1825 and 1828. They include his oil sketches, such as The Tiber Near Rome and View of the Roman Campagna, as well as more highly finished pictures -- which may have been partially executed in the studio -- including his carefully meditated pendants, View of St. Peter's and the Castel Sant'Angelo and Island of San Bartolommeo.

The coordinating curators for the exhibition are Philip Conisbee, curator of French paintings at the National Gallery of Art; Sarah Faunce, curator of European painting and sculpture at The Brooklyn Museum; and Jeremy Strick, curator of modern art at the Saint Louis Art Museum. Guest curator is Peter Galassi, chief curator of the department of photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

A fully illustrated catalogue, containing entries on each artist and essays written by the exhibition curators and Vincent Pomarède of the Louvre, explores the cultural, historical, and

corot...page 4

theoretical background of open-air painting. It will be distributed by Yale University Press. The catalogue may be purchased for \$27.00 (softcover) or \$50.00 (hardcover) and may be ordered from the Gallery by calling (301) 322-5900.

The National Gallery of Art, located on Constitution Avenue between Third and Seventh Streets, NW, is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free. For general information call (202) 737-4215, or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at (202) 842-6176. For information on visitor services call (202) 842-6690.

# # #