

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

PRESS PREVIEW DATE

November 12, 1997

Information Officer, Deborah Ziska

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 4, 1997

CONTACT: (202) 842-6353

Nancy Starr, Publicist

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART PRESENTS

MAJOR AND RECENT ACQUISITIONS IN EXHIBITION

EXPLORING HOW A COLLECTION IS BUILT

Outstanding and intriguing works acquired by the National Gallery of Art in the past three years will be presented in an exhibition exploring the topic of "Building a Collection." The show will be on view November 16, 1997, through April 19, 1998, in the East Building. Some 140 works, ranging from the Renaissance to the present, include a variety of media, such as Rembrandt's original copperplate used to produce one of his outstanding late etchings; major drawings by George Bellows, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Giovanni Battista Piazzetta, and Giovanni Battista Piranesi; rare artists' proofs of prints by Félix-Hilaire Buhot, Pablo Picasso, and Giovanni Battista Tiepolo; an outstanding series of German drawings and watercolors from the mannerist, baroque, and romantic periods; vintage photographs by André Kertész and William Henry Fox Talbot; and stunning watercolors by Charles Demuth, Edward Hopper, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Charles Sheeler.

-more-

collection...page 2

"Unlike previous exhibitions, Building a Collection explores the variety of ways artistic interest and quality determine National Gallery of Art acquisitions and how they relate to those already in our superb collection of some 91,000 works on paper," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

The exhibition begins with specific pairs and triplets of works that illustrate why the Gallery acquires particular examples and how they relate to others already in the collection. These include Rembrandt's etching and drypoint, Abraham Entertaining the Angels (1656), installed next to the recently discovered copperplate that appears to be his only plate that survives unworn and unreworke. Other works presented are Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's rare working proof and two etchings of Seated Youth Leaning against an Urn (1740/1743); three variations of Edouard Manet's Polichinelle (1874), the first color lithograph by a major artist; and the sketch as well as the final version of one of Pierre Bonnard's finest drawings, A Promenade in Fancy Hats, (1891/1893).

The second room includes works by artists who have not previously been represented in the Gallery's collection of works on paper, such as André Kertész' photographs, Shadows of the Eiffel Tower (1929) and Clock of the Académie Française, Paris (1929 - 1932); El Lissitzky's lithograph, Wendingen (1921); Claude Monet's drawing, The Luncheon on the Grass (c. 1865); and Domenico Fossati's scene of a Venetian festival in 1782.

The third section shows how the National Gallery strengthens holdings of artists' works already in the collection as exemplified by the recent acquisitions of a

-more-

collection...page 3

variety of fine drawings by major artists Giovanni Battista Piazzetta, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, and George Bellows. Shown side-by-side with the drawings already in the collection, the new Piazzettas include the very moving Saint Stephen (later 1730s), perhaps his finest surviving head of a religious subject. The Gallery's recent acquisition of several Piranesi masterworks includes two of his most bizarre designs using ancient motifs as well as a study for his famous series of views of Rome, The "Canopus" of the Villa Adriana at Tivoli, 1776, which have greatly strengthened the world's finest single collection of this artist's prints and illustrated books. Also in this section is George Bellows' double-sided masterwork, Street Fight (1907) with its verso pastel Society Ball (1907), which provides a new centerpiece for the Gallery's considerable holdings of this artist.

The next room shows how works of particular artists already represented in the Gallery's collection have been strengthened with the acquisition of prints and photographs. The newest acquisitions by pioneering photographer William Henry Fox Talbot, An Ancient Door in Magdalen College, Oxford (1843), and The Boulevards of Paris (1843), are shown along with two of the first Talbots in the Gallery's collection. One of the most fascinating nineteenth-century French printmakers, Félix-Hilaire Buhot, is seen in eight new acquisitions of extraordinary quality, and comparisons show how they enhance the Gallery's similar prints in a wide variety of ways. The recent acquisition of unpublished proofs and runs of rare state changes clearly show the great twentieth-century artist Pablo Picasso's distinctive and creative variations in printmaking. For

-more-

collection...page 4

example, three successive artist's proofs of Blind Minotaur Led Through the Night (1934), the most important print in the "Suite Vollard," show Picasso's unique facility with new techniques as well as his continuing changes in the meaning of the image.

The fifth gallery explores how the Gallery fills gaps in the collection by adding new general fields. The example shown is German drawings from the mannerist, baroque, romantic, and realist periods. Joseph Heintz the Elder's monumental Fall of Phaeton (c. 1590), Johann Georg von Dillis' Waterfalls in a Mountain Forest (1797), and Käthe Kollwitz's early pastel Self-Portrait (1898/1900) are among recent additions to the Gallery's survey of German draftsmanship, which may now be considered the finest outside Europe.

The final section illustrates how the Gallery strengthens general fields in the collection. In one example, classic modern American masterworks in color have been greatly strengthened by Georgia O'Keeffe's Nude Series III (1917), Charles Demuth's Zinnias and a Blue Dish with Lemons (1924), Edward Hopper's Haskell's House (1924), and Charles Sheeler's Interior (1940), among others.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

An illustrated catalogue, Building a Collection, by Andrew Robison, Mellon Senior Curator, National Gallery of Art, accompanies the exhibition. It is available for \$9.95 (soft-bound) at the Gallery Shops. To order using a credit card, call (301) 322-5900 or (800) 697-9350, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., or visit the Gallery's web site and make your purchase at <http://www.nga.gov>.

-more-

collection...page 5

TO SEE WORKS ON PAPER NOT ON VIEW

Because of their sensitivity to light, works on paper are not kept on view except during temporary exhibitions like this one. To see other works on paper by important artists ranging from Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer to the present day, call 202/842-6392 for an appointment to view them in the Gallery's public study rooms.

The National Gallery of Art, located on Constitution Avenue between Third and Seventh Streets, N.W., is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free. For general information, call (202) 737-4215, the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at <http://www.nga.gov>.

###