

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

Information Officer, Deborah Ziska

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CONTACT: (202)842-6353
Nancy Starr, Publicist

RECENT ACQUISITIONS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY

INCLUDE RARE HOLBEIN AND DRAMATIC DUTCH PORTRAIT

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery of Art, has announced a series of recent acquisitions, including a bravura portrait of a standard bearer by Dutch master Johannes Verspronck (1606/1609-1662); a drawing by Hans Holbein the Younger (German, c. 1497-1543), one of only two authentic and unworked drawings by this artist in the United States; several fine etchings by Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606-1669); four early photographs by Charles Sheeler (American, 1883-1965); and seven paintings by Washington artist Jacob Kainen. In addition, two works acquired last September, including a German Renaissance triptych and a painting by seventeenth-century Dutch marine artist Simon de Vlieger, will go on view this spring at the Gallery.

"These outstanding acquisitions augment our holdings in many areas. In addition to a masterly painting by Verspronck, a contemporary of Frans Hals, the National Gallery has now acquired its first drawing by Holbein and its first photographs by Sheeler. The Gallery is very grateful to the donors on whose generosity we rely to expand our collection," said Powell.

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JOHANNES CORNELISZ VERSPRONCK

The dramatic, dashing portrait of Andries Stilte as a Standard Bearer (1640) was painted by Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck (1606/1609-1662), one of the foremost portraitists in Haarlem during the mid-seventeenth century. Although he may have trained with Frans Hals, Verspronck's portrait of a fashionably clad member of the Haarlem civic guard in full regalia is painted in a modulated and smooth manner with the face and materials rendered with great sensitivity and delight, particularly the delicate lace and luminous fabrics. The portrait was acquired with funds from the Patrons' Permanent Fund. It is on view on the ground floor of the West Building.

HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER AND MAJOR GERMAN DRAWINGS

The watercolor and gold miniature drawing of Tantalus (1535-1540) by Hans Holbein the Younger (German, c. 1497-1543) is the first Holbein drawing to be added to the Gallery's old master collection. It is believed to have been made originally as a design for jewelry for King Henry VIII during Holbein's second residence in England between 1532 and his death in 1543, and has been described as a miniature masterpiece, one of the most beautiful and perfectly finished of Holbein's designs for jewelry. However, because this particular drawing is heightened in gold, it may have been intended to be mounted and kept as a precious object in itself. The drawing was acquired with funds from the Patrons' Permanent Fund and the New Century Fund.

The Gallery has also received six major drawings by German artists of the late

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Gothic and Renaissance periods as a part of a gift of ten important old master drawings given by Dian and Andrea Woodner. The subjects range from one of the first independent landscape watercolors in German art to an exquisite miniature gouache portrait of Christian II, King of Denmark and Norway.

REMBRANDT

Selected from one of the greatest private collections of Rembrandt, that of Joseph Ritman in Amsterdam, three extremely fine and early impressions of the artist's moving etchings and drypoints were acquired by the Gallery. These include one of Rembrandt's early studies of brilliant light, A Man Shading His Eyes (1638-1639); one of his most tender portrayals of a mother and child, The Virgin and Child in the Clouds (1641); and one of his most sensitive yet complex compositions from the Old Testament, The Triumph of Mordecai (1641-1642). The works were acquired with funds provided by Robert Erburu and the Ahmanson Foundation.

JOHN CONSTABLE

Cloud study: stormy sunset (1821-1822) by the British painter John Constable (1796-1836) reveals a key aspect of the work of one of the greatest romantic landscape painters and is one of his approximately forty extant cloud studies. Among early nineteenth-century artists, John Constable was one of the most systematic students of the sky, distinguished by his keen awareness of the degree to which the cloud formations and atmospheric effects would determine the appearance of a naturalistic picture. This small oil, painted on paper laid on canvas, complements the

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National Gallery's collection of earlier sky studies and open-air painting by French artists Fragonard and Valenciennes. The painting is a gift from Louise Mellon in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.

CHARLES SHEELER

Four rare and subtly beautiful photographs by Charles Sheeler (American, 1883-1965) are the first by this famous artist to be added to the collection of the National Gallery of Art. Sheeler is one of the early modernists who, like Man Ray, Moholy-Nagy, and Rodchenko, successfully explored both painting and photography. The National Gallery's acquisitions were selected from Sheeler's first major body of photographs, and arguably his most important, the Doylestown series. Side of White Barn (1916-1917), and three photographs c. 1917 of the artist's home in Pennsylvania -- Doylestown House - Stairwell, Doylestown House - The Stove, and Doylestown House - Stairway with Chair -- were immediately hailed by Sheeler's contemporaries and have continued to be celebrated as among the most important accomplishments of early American modernism. They were acquired with funds from the New Century Fund.

JACOB KAINEN AND OTHER CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

The Gallery acquired a group of seven paintings by Jacob Kainen (American, b. 1909) including three gifts from the artist, Invasion (1936), Observer XIII (1974), and The Way XI (1979); two gifts from Ruth Cole Kainen, The Vulnerable (1954) and Crimson Nude (1961); and one gift from Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth S. Hitch, Foxfire I

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(1988). The seventh painting, Broken Arc (1994-1997), was purchased with funds from the New Century Fund. Spanning six decades of this esteemed American artist's career, these are the first paintings by Kainen to join his drawings and prints in the Gallery's collection, which now reflects a strong survey of Kainen's distinguished career.

Eleven drawings, a sketchbook containing twenty-four drawings, and two prints by Alex Katz (American, b. 1927), dating from the 1940s to 1990 to give an overview of the artist's work, were purchased with funds provided by Raphael and Jane Bernstein through their Parnassus Foundation.

Twenty-two drawings by fifteen artists have been given by Werner H. and Sarah-Ann Kramarsky. Of prime importance are two untitled sheets by Eva Hesse, one revealing the artist's ability to invest small size with great scale and clear sculptural allusions, the other a larger sheet showing her more expansive, painterly approach to abstract form.

EARLIER ACQUISITIONS TO GO ON DISPLAY

Acquired last September, Estuary at Dawn (c. 1640-1645) painted by Simon de Vlieger (1601-1653), the influential Dutch marine artist, will be on display in the exhibition A Collector's Cabinet (May 17 - August 9, 1998). This extraordinarily well-preserved painting reflects the artist's sensitivity to the atmospheric effects of the North Sea and captures the flavor of daily life along the Dutch coast. This acquisition was made possible by the Patrons' Permanent Fund and a Gift in memory of Kathrine Dulin Folger.

With the acquisition of The Raising of the Cross (c. 1480/1490), the National Gallery adds a vibrantly colored German Renaissance triptych to one of the great collections of

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German Renaissance paintings in the United States. The triptych, which will go on view March 4, West Building Gallery GN-1, was created in Nuremberg as Albrecht Dürer was becoming prominent, and portrays a subject rare in Europe until the late fifteenth century, the elevation of the body of Christ on the cross. Although the artist remains anonymous, the triptych shows evident relationships to the Nuremberg artists Michael Wolgemut and Hans Pleydenwurff. The triptych was acquired last September with funds from the Patrons' Permanent Fund.

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) weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at (202) 842-6176, or access the Gallery's web site at <http://www.nga.gov>

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