

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

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RECENT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ACQUISITIONS INCLUDE IMPORTANT WORKS BY REMBRANDT VAN RIJN, ROMARE BEARDEN, AND ROBERT RYMAN

Washington, D.C – Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery of Art, today announced acquisitions recently approved by the Gallery's board of trustees. Among the works are a Northern Renaissance panel painting by an unknown German artist known only as the Master of the Death of St. Nicholas of Münster; a 15th-century German bible; a group of etchings by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669); two paintings by Robert Ryman (b.1930); a collage by Romare Bearden (1914-1988); and two large collections of 20th-century photographs.

"It is a pleasure to announce such outstanding acquisitions spanning six centuries that will greatly enhance our collection," said Earl A. Powell III, director. "The Gallery is very grateful for the continuing generosity of its donors."

PAINTINGS

Acquisitions include eight paintings dating from 1470 to 2000. The earliest work, Calvary (c.1470–1480), is a masterpiece by an unidentified German artist known only as The Master of the Death of St. Nicholas of Münster. It depicts the crucifixion of Christ and exemplifies the evolution of the genre of "multifigured calvaries" that originated in the late Middle Ages. Paintings from the 17th and 19th centuries include Still Life with Fruit (1675), a luminous, small work by Dutch artist Jacob van Walscapelle (1644–1727), and The Grand Canal (1826–1827) by English painter Richard Parkes Bonington (1802–1828).

Among the 20th-century works acquired by the Gallery are two paintings by Robert Ryman (b. 1930), one of the foremost artists of his generation. Although the Gallery has works by Ryman in other media, these will be the first of his paintings to be added to the collection. Untitled (1961) is an outstanding early work that shows the introduction of white paint as the primary vehicle for his exploration of the craft and philosophy of painting. Untitled (1965–1966) belongs to a classic group of paintings that are known collectively as the "Winsor" series, named for the brand of paint used in the works. Acquired from the artist, both works are rare in that they are large-scale works from the period.

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Tomorrow I May Be Far Away (1967) is a masterful collage on canvas by Romare Bearden, one of the preeminent African-American artists of the 20th century. Its subject is memory, and it recalls rural Mecklenberg, North Carolina, the artist's birthplace. This work will be shown in the Gallery's exhibition The Art of Romare Bearden, 1911–1988, scheduled to open in the fall of 2003.

Other notable newly acquired paintings include Rocky Inlet, Monhegan (1909) by Rockwell Kent, a promised gift of David and Joan Maxwell; Corn and Winter Wheat (1948) by Thomas Hart Benton, a promised gift of Helen Henderson; and Wall of Light Tara (2000) by Sean Scully, a gift of John and Judith Hannan, New York.

DRAWINGS

A black chalk and watercolor drawing, Panoramic Landscape Along the Rhine (1640s) by Dutch artist Aelbert Cuyp (1620–1691), was acquired by the Gallery and will be included in the exhibition of the artist's works at the Gallery from October 7, 2001 to January 13, 2002. Additional drawings added to the collection include A Youth Carrying Sticks (1591–1593) by Bartolomeo Cesi, a promised gift of Diane A. Nixon; Ecce Homo (c.1625–1630) by Peter Paul Rubens, a gift of the estate of Alice Kaplan; a major baroque drawing by Domenico Maria Canuti, Hercules as a Herm (c. 1669); two 18th-century Austrian drawings, Paul Troger's imposing red chalk River God (c. 1720) and Joseph Anton Koch's light-filled Roman Campagna with an Ancient Fountain (1795–1800); Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's amusing black chalk Monkey Playing on his Back (1880), a gift of Evelyn Stefansson Nef; Portrait of a Lady (c. 1910) by Gwen John, a promised gift of Roy and Cecily Langdale Davis in honor of Stefanie Maison; two drawings by Romare Bearden, Le Jazz (c.1967), given by Allen Skeens, and The Street (1977), given by Werner Kramarsky; and a collage by Christo, Wrapped Trees, Project for the Fondation Beyeler and Berower Park, Switzerland (1998), a gift of Dorothy and Herbert Vogel.

PRINTS

Two exceptional etchings by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) are among the new acquisitions. One of the finest known impressions of The Great Jewish Bride (1635), an imposing but also tender image from his early career, portrays his young wife Saskia posed as a figure from history. The Goldweaver (1639), the last of Rembrandt's highly pictorial etchings, depicts the tax collector, Jan Uytenbogaert (a friend of his and a patron of the arts), at his counting table receiving payments. This second etching is a very rare artist's proof that survives in only a few impressions, where certain features are barely indicated while others are carefully developed.

Additional acquisitions and gifts include a monumental early woodcut of The Deluge (c.1580) by Andrea Andreani; four outstanding etchings by Félix Buhot from the 1880s, including extremely rare impressions in color, promised gifts of Helena Gunnarsson; a cubist etching Table d'échecs (1920) by Jacques Villon, a gift of Aaron Fleischman; and 14 works by 14 major contemporary artists, 1971–2001, donated by Gemini G.E.L.

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RARE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

The newest addition to the Gallery's collection of early printed books is a rare and exquisite German Bible (1483), with 108 woodcuts, printed in Nuremberg by Anton Koberger. This giant two-volume bible was used by Albrecht Dürer to formulate his own images of biblical stories. This particular copy is colored by hand with added gold highlights, and in superb condition, still in its original Nuremberg bindings. It is a gift of Robert Erburu and an anonymous donor.

Additional major illustrated books include an anonymous gift of a second German Bible, printed in Frankfurt in 1570, with 144 woodcuts by Jost Amman and other artists; an apparently unique copy of Friedrich Beuther's 1824 book on stage designs with color aquatints; and a rare complete set of Charles Hullmandell's early lithographs Twenty-four Views of Italy (1818), both gifts of Mrs. Mark J. Millard.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The Joshua Smith Collection of 197 photographs, five portfolios, two bound volumes, and one sculpture by 82 American and European photographers of the 20th-century, has been acquired by the Gallery. The collection focuses on works made from the 1940s through the late 1970s and is remarkable for its breadth, depth, and quality. The strength of the collection lies in its holdings of rare, vintage prints of the so-called New York School of photographers who worked shortly before and during World War II. It also contains rare examples of European photographers who worked after the war and an excellent survey of American photographs from the 1960s and 1970s.

Seventy-six silver gelatin photographs by Ilse Bing, and one assemblage, were given to the Gallery as a gift of the Ilse Bing Wolff Estate. Bing was a German-born American photographer widely celebrated for her photographs made in Paris and New York in the 1930s.

NATIONAL GALLERY INFORMATION

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden, located on the National Mall between Third and Ninth Streets, NW, are open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Sculpture Garden is open until 7 p.m. daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Admission is free. For general information, call (202) 737-4215; Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176; or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov.

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