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FIRST AMERICAN EXHIBITION IN ALMOST 25 YEARS TO FOCUS ON WORKS BY CLAUDE LORRAIN, ON VIEW MAY 27–AUGUST 12, 2007



Claude Lorrain, *Coast View with Aeneas and the Cumaean Sibyl*, 1673. Pen and brown ink with gray and gray-brown wash and white heightening on blue paper. Courtesy of The British Museum, London

Washington, DC – The art of one of France's greatest landscape draftsmen and painters, Claude Lorrain (1604/1605–1682), travels to the National Gallery of Art, when **Claude Lorrain—The Painter as Draftsman: Drawings from the British Museum** goes on view in the West Building, May 27 through August 12, 2007. The exhibition includes 80 drawings from the extensive and important holdings at the British Museum. In addition, a selection of paintings and etchings broadens the representation of Claude's achievement as an artist. Many of the works have never before been seen in the United States.

Claude was renowned for exquisitely balanced and composed landscapes that present a serene, timeless vision of nature. He laid

the groundwork for the development of ideal landscape painting in Europe—and later in America—influencing artists as great as J.M.W. Turner in 19th-century England.

Previous venues for this exhibition include the Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, October 14, 2006 through January 14, 2007, and the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, February 4 through April 29, 2007. The last major exhibition of Claude's art in the United States was presented nearly 25 years ago at the National Gallery of Art.

"Claude had an extraordinary ability to capture the natural world with a poetic wink," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "His works influenced many future artists and took nature one step further, making the beautiful even more beautiful."

Exhibition Sponsor

This exhibition at the National Gallery of Art is organized by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in association with the British Museum. It is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

The Artist

Claude Gellée became known early on as Claude Lorrain, for the region in France where he was born. He traveled to Italy, where he studied in Naples and Rome, notably with the landscape and perspective painter Agostino Tassi (1578–1644). Claude soon developed his own reputation as a painter of landscapes and seaports, which were celebrated for their strong impression of nature and their exquisite sensitivity to effects of light. Claude's naturalism derives from his almost daily excursions into the countryside around Rome, where he contemplated the light and made numerous drawings from nature; such drawings are richly represented in the exhibition. This close study of nature laid the basis for his oil paintings, executed back in his studio.

Claude's success reputedly led other artists to imitate his work, which may be why he began his *Liber Veritatis* (Book of Truth), an album of drawings that record his oil paintings and in many cases the

names of their buyers. The album could also have functioned as a catalogue of models to show future patrons. It was so carefully assembled that it clearly took on a greater meaning for Claude than as a mere catalogue of his works. Some of the greatest drawings from the album are in this exhibition.

The Exhibition

The exhibition is divided into six rooms, each featuring a particular theme. Visitors will first encounter drawings taken from nature, followed by seaports and shipwrecks, views of Tivoli and the Roman countryside, pastoral landscapes and Roman landmarks, biblical and mythological subjects, and late heroic landscapes.

The selection includes many of Claude's most beautiful drawings in a rich variety of media. The exhibition explores all aspects of his style and subject matter, from informal outdoor sketches of trees, rivers, and ruins, to formal presentation drawings and elaborate compositional designs for paintings.

Among the highlights are *A Study of an Oak Tree* (c. 1638), the surprisingly abstract view of *The Tiber from Monte Mario Looking Southeast* (c. 1640/1641), *A Grove of Pine Trees with a Ruined Tower* (1638/1639), and the many drawings from the *Liber Veritatis*, including the luminous *Coast View with Aeneas and the Cumaean Sibyl* (1673), which is drawn on rich blue paper.

The exhibition curators are Philip Conisbee, senior curator of European paintings and curator of French paintings, and Margaret Morgan Grasselli, curator and head of old master drawings.

Exhibition Catalogue

The exhibition catalogue, *Claude Lorrain—The Painter as Draftsman: Drawings from the British Museum*, written by Richard Rand, senior curator, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, is published in association with Yale University Press. It includes a foreword by Michael Conforti, director, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute; a preface by Antony Griffiths, keeper, department of prints and drawings, The British Museum; a biographical outline of Claude's life; an extensive bibliography; and a map of Rome during the time that Claude was in the region. The 228-page publication with 137

illustrations is currently available from the National Gallery of Art by phone at (202) 842-6002 or (800) 697-9350 (\$55.00 cloth, \$29.95 softcover).

Related Events

A special weekend lecture, *Claude Lorrain: A Quiet Revolutionary*, featuring Richard Rand, senior curator, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, is planned for July 1 at 2 p.m. in the East Building large auditorium. Gallery talks in the exhibition led by Gallery lecturers are scheduled for June 3, 5, 13, 17, 19, and 21 at noon; June 26 and 28 at 1:00 p.m.; and July 2 and 17 at noon; meet in the West Building Rotunda.

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden, located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets and Constitution Ave. NW are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrance of the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be left in the checkrooms at those entrances.

For the safety of the Gallery's visitors and collection of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 X 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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