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Seven Centuries from the Woodner Collections Celebrated at National Gallery of Art, March 12–July 16, 2017



Benvenuto Cellini, *A Satyr*, 1544/1545  
pen and brown ink with brown wash over black chalk on laid paper; laid down, with framing line in brown ink  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Woodner Collection, Patrons' Permanent Fund

Washington, DC—Ian Woodner assembled an extraordinary collection of over 1,000 old master and modern drawings, making him one of the 20th century's most important collectors. More than 150 works from his collection now reside at the National Gallery of Art in Washington. While Ian Woodner gave some works himself in the 1980s, the majority have been donated by his daughters, Dian and Andrea. His daughters have also made other gifts and have pledged works from their personal collections. *The Woodner Collections: Master Drawings from Seven Centuries* brings together for the first time the best of Ian Woodner's collection with some of the works given and promised by Dian and Andrea Woodner. More than 100 major works of art will be on view in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art from March 12 through July 16, 2017.

"Ian Woodner's appreciation of a wide range of types and styles of drawings led him to form a collection of extraordinary breadth and depth that spans centuries," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "The Gallery is deeply grateful for the generosity of the Woodner family and the continued support of Dian and Andrea Woodner."

#### Exhibition Organization and Support

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

#### Exhibition Highlights

*The Woodner Collections* includes some 100 drawings dating from the 14th to the 20th century executed by outstanding draftsmen such as Leonardo da Vinci, Albrecht Dürer, Raphael, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Edgar Degas, and Pablo Picasso, among many others. Two highlights in the exhibition are Ian Woodner's greatest acquisitions, known as his "crown jewels": Giorgio Vasari's *Libro de' Disegni* (sheets probably 1480–1504 and after 1524) and *A Satyr* (1544/1545) by Benvenuto Cellini. Vasari's *Libro de' Disegni* consists of ten drawings by the Renaissance masters Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, and Raffaellino del Garbo arranged harmoniously on both sides of the sheet. It is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful and impressive of the few pages surviving intact. Cellini's monumental nude is a finished study of a bronze sculpture designed to stand at the entrance to the French royal palace at Fontainebleau.

"Included in the exhibition are many impressive works by well-known artists, all acquired by the Woodner family with an intrepid spirit and exquisite taste. A visit to the exhibition will offer a remarkable journey through many facets of European draftsmanship, revealing the broadly diverse ways the artists responded to their individual worlds and expressed their unique creativity," said Margaret Morgan Grasselli, curator and head of the department of old master drawings, National Gallery of Art.

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The earliest works in the exhibition are two rare sheets from the 14th century: a page from a model book by an unknown Austrian artist, and the other, attributed to the Paduan painter Altichiero da Zevio, shows a band of knights in armor storming a medieval castle. Nearly half of the exhibition is devoted to works from the 15th and 16th centuries, including drawings by Raphael, Leonardo, and Albrecht Dürer. The most important figure in German Renaissance art, Dürer is represented by an outstanding group of five drawings: four figurative works and one vividly colored book illumination, *A Pastoral Landscape with Shepherds Playing a Viola and Panpipes* (1496/1497). Leonardo's petite *Grotesque Head of an Old Woman* (1489/1490) is both touching and comical. The study of *Eight Apostles* (c. 1514), a fragment of a preparatory drawing for a tapestry cartoon, shows the classical rhythms and expressive qualities that are typical of the "divine" Raphael. By contrast, a rare study by Pieter Bruegel the Elder humorously depicts a musician tipping precariously on a three-legged stool. It combines the artist's lively pen strokes with a keen eye for pose and expression and captures both the boisterous spirit and the clumsy charm of the peasants that populate so many of Bruegel's compositions.

Among the small group of works by the 17th-century artists, Rembrandt's evocative *View of Houtewael near the Sint Anthoniespoort* (c. 1650) demonstrates his remarkable ability to express space, light, and atmosphere with an economy of means. The 18th century is particularly rich in examples by many French and Venetian artists, including François Boucher, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, and Jean-Honoré Fragonard. A more emotional tone is struck in a drawing of *Satan Defying the Powers of Heaven* by the Swiss-Anglo artist Henry Fuseli and in two enigmatic compositions by the great Spaniard, Francisco de Goya.

The 19th-century drawings include three elegant works by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and the eerie, powerful image *Cactus Man* (1881) by French symbolist Odilon Redon, one of Woodner's favorite artists. Several works from the 20th century close the exhibition: three masterly drawings by the young Pablo Picasso, *Two Fashionable Women* (1900), a blue-period *Head of a Woman* (c. 1903), and a cubist *Standing Nude* (summer 1910); an imposing study of a female nude by Georges Braque (1927); and three drawings by Louise Bourgeois, including *M is for Mother* (1998), a drawing of a large, red letter M that conveys not only maternal comfort but also maternal control.

### **Ian Woodner (1903–1990)**

Born in New York City in 1903 to Polish immigrant parents, Ian Woodner studied architecture at the University of Minnesota and continued his studies with a scholarship to the Graduate School of Architecture at Harvard University. By 1944 his architectural success led him to open a real estate development firm: the Jonathan Woodner Company.

Woodner's prosperous real estate ventures allowed him to pursue his lifelong interest in the arts, evident at an early age by the remarkable watercolors and drawings he produced. During the 1940s Woodner began to buy and sell minor impressionist paintings and Cycladic figurines, and for a short time he owned an art gallery on Madison Avenue in New York. By the mid-1950s he had developed a penchant for old master drawings, and he spent the next several decades, until his death in 1990, collecting them extensively. Woodner took advantage of several unusual opportunities that arose from the sale of important European collections, including 71 drawings from Chatsworth House in England that were auctioned by Christie's in 1984. Upon his death, the stewardship of the collection, including more than one thousand drawings, passed to his daughters Dian and Andrea Woodner, who placed 145 works on deposit at the National Gallery of Art in 1991. Since then, they have given nearly all of those drawings to the Gallery and continue to make generous gifts of their own. They have also pledged to give works from their personal collections.

### **Exhibition Curator**

The exhibition was organized by Margaret Morgan Grasselli, curator and head of the department of old master drawings, National Gallery of Art.

### **Press Contact:**

Laurie Tylec, (202) 842-6355 or [ltylec@nga.gov](mailto:ltylec@nga.gov)

### **General Information**

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and 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 visit the Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](https://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt), Twitter at [www.twitter.com/ngadc](https://www.twitter.com/ngadc), and Instagram at <http://instagram.com/ngadc>.

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For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

Department of Communications  
National Gallery of Art  
2000B South Club Drive

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Landover, MD 20785  
phone: (202) 842-6353  
e-mail: [pressinfo@nga.gov](mailto:pressinfo@nga.gov)

Anabeth Guthrie  
Chief of Communications  
(202) 842-6804  
[a-guthrie@nga.gov](mailto:a-guthrie@nga.gov)

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### CURATOR BIOGRAPHY

#### Margaret Morgan Grasselli

Curator of Old Master Drawings  
National Gallery of Art, Washington

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### ONLINE RESOURCES

#### *Master Drawings from the Woodner Collection*

December 18, 1983 – May 6, 1984

#### *The Touch of the Artist: Master Drawings from the Woodner Collections*

October 1, 1995 – January 28, 1996

#### *Master Drawings from the Woodner Collections*

April 30, 2006 – January 2, 2007

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### PRESS CONTACT

Laurie Tylec  
(202) 842-6355  
[l-tylec@nga.gov](mailto:l-tylec@nga.gov)

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Questions from members of the media may be directed to the Department of Communications at (202) 842-6353 or [pressinfo@nga.gov](mailto:pressinfo@nga.gov)

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