

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D.C., October 8, 1960: John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today the opening of a special loan exhibition, ITALIAN DRAWINGS FROM FIVE CENTURIES, on Sunday October 9. The exhibition, which will remain on view in Washington through November 6, is one of the most important showings of Italian master drawings ever held in this country. It will celebrate the Centennial of the Unification of Italy.

The exhibition was organized by Dr. Giulia Sinibaldi, Director of the Print Room of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Dr. Sinibaldi has chosen 154 drawings by 85 outstanding artists, including Paolo Uccello, Benozzo Gozzoli, Antonio Pollaiuolo, Sandro Botticelli, Giovanni Bellini, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Pontormo, Parmigianino, Titian, Tintoretto, Bernini, Salvator Rosa, Tiepolo, Guardi, the Bibiena, and Canova. The drawings have been lent from Italian collections, both public and private, and none has ever before been exhibited in the United States. Museums in Milan, Bassano, Genoa, Turin, Parma, Venice, Naples, and Rome have generously participated, in addition to those in Florence.

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Among the earliest of the drawings is that of An Elephant and a Mouse, dating about 1400, an example of late Gothic draftsmanship, part of a notebook of drawings which were used as models by a miniaturist of the school of Giovannino de' Grassi. Among the outstanding 15th-century drawings are those of John the Baptist, by Pollaiuolo, which demonstrates the great interest in scientific anatomy characteristic of the Florentine realists of the Early Renaissance, and an Angel by Botticelli, the artist of whom Bernard Berenson wrote: "The same touch of the whimsical, the same dreamy grace, the same subtlety of refinement that we learn to love in his pictures, meet us once more in his sketches..." The High Renaissance is represented by the great triumvirate, Leonardo (Battle Studies, one of the many drawings done in preparation for the fresco, now lost, of the Battle of Anghiari), Raphael (Figures in Combat, probably a study after the Leonardo fresco just mentioned, which in Raphael's lifetime still ornamented the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence), and Michelangelo (Cloaked Male Figure, a fine example of the powerful drawing style of the great sculptor, architect and painter). The drawings of the leading Venetian masters include works by Bellini, Titian, Campagnola, and a superb Archer by Tintoretto, a study for one of his decorations in the Ducal Palace in Venice. There are a number of drawings from the Baroque period, including works by the Carracci, Guercino, Bernini, Guido Reni, and Salvator Rosa.

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Some of the most beautiful drawings are from the 18th century: sparkling landscapes and figure studies by artists such as Piazzetta (Head of a Boy with a Book, one of his most famous portraits); Guardi, famous for his views of his native Venice (Court of the Ridotto) as well as for imaginary landscapes; Tiepolo (Martyrdom of a Saint, which shows the incomparable flair of this outstanding draftsman and decorator); and several drawings by the Bibiena family, most imaginative of all the stage designers of the period (Scenographic View of the Grand Staircase of a Palace).

Dr. Sinibaldi, who prepared the illustrated catalogue for the exhibition and wrote its introduction, has accompanied the drawings to Washington, as has Dr. Maria Fossi Todorow of her staff, who assisted her in the preparations. After the exhibition leaves Washington, it will be circulated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, under the sponsorship of the Italian Embassy, to the following museums: The Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The National Gallery of Art will also open on October 9th new Graphic Arts Exhibition and Study Rooms. On display in the Exhibition Room will be a splendid group of manuscript illuminations (11th-15th century) from the Rosenwald Collection.

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