



OUT OF RESPECT FOR THE MEMORY OF
SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL, THE SPECIAL
OPENING OF THE JOHN WHITE EXHIBITION
ON JANUARY 30, WILL BE CANCELLED.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. January 31, 1965. John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced the opening today of an exhibition of the watercolor drawings of John White, Sir Walter Raleigh's artist-recorder on his expeditions to North Carolina in the 16th century. The pictures are believed to be the earliest surviving eye-witness record of aboriginal life and of the flora and fauna in North America. The exhibition is on loan from the British Museum and consists of the single surviving set of 75 original drawings in watercolor by White, 28 plates by Theodor de Bry engraved after White's drawings, several early 17th-century copies of his drawings, and two drawings by White's contemporary, Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues. The exhibition will be shown in the Central Gallery on the ground floor through February 22.

This is the first time these drawings have been allowed to leave the British Museum since they were acquired in 1866.

Little is definitely known about John White; not even the dates of his birth and death. His pictures of Eskimo life indicate that he was probably on Sir Martin Frobisher's second expedition to Baffin Island in 1577. There is also evidence that he was on a reconnaissance of the Carolina Outer Banks in 1584. History does record that he was an active collaborator with Raleigh at least as early as 1585/86, in the attempt to establish a permanent settlement in what was then known as Virginia and is now North Carolina. This collaboration eventually forged a permanent and tragic link between

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John White and the New World. In 1587 he was appointed by Raleigh to lead the expedition that founded the colony on Roanoke Island, now known as the "Lost Colony". Later when he was in England trying to obtain supplies, the colony vanished without a trace. Among the vanished colonists were White's daughter, her husband and his granddaughter, Virginia Dare, the first English child born in America.

Besides serving as an historical record of English colonization, the drawings include the earliest scientific illustrations of the natural life of the New World and insights into the tribal customs and way of life of the Algonkian tribes.

The exhibition includes drawings of plantain or banana plants, pineapples, reptiles, insects, and the flamingo, all done at the time of the Bahama voyage. Most of the Indian drawings were made on the expedition with Sir Richard Grenville in July of 1585. The Village of Secoton, a detailed representation of an Indian village with houses of pole and mat construction, clearly shows details of Indian life in those days: the method of planting corn, the manner in which they ate, danced, and prayed and the interior arrangement of their living quarters. Two other drawings, Indian Charnal House and Indians Dancing Round a Circle of Posts, are representations of tribal rituals, done in a simple, direct technique, with an accurate and observing eye for the significant detail.

Mr. Paul Hulton, Assistant Keeper of the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum has accompanied the exhibition to Washington and will lecture on the drawings on January 31 at 4 p.m. in the auditorium.

After the exhibition leaves the National Gallery of Art it will be at the North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh (February 26-March 14),

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and The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City (March 17-April 5).

A catalogue to the exhibition, with an introduction by Mr. Hulton, consisting of 54 pages, with one color plate and 40 half-tone illustrations, is available from the National Gallery of Art for \$2.00.

End

Black-and-white glossy photographs available on loan for publication from Mrs. Marjorie Czyzak, 737-4215, ext. 247.