

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FIRST MAJOR EXHIBITION DEVOTED TO REMBRANDT'S LANDSCAPE

DRAWINGS AND PRINTS TO BE PRESENTED AT NATIONAL GALLERY

WASHINGTON, D.C., January 2, 1990 -- The first major exhibition devoted to the landscape drawings and prints by Rembrandt, one of the greatest artists who ever lived, will be presented in the East Building of the National Gallery of Art, March 11 - May 20, 1990. Rembrandt's Landscapes: Drawings and Prints will comprise of 97 works, including more than 50 drawings and all 26 of Rembrandt's landscape prints, some shown in more than one state. The National Gallery is the only venue for the exhibition.

"We are pleased to present this breathtaking selection of masterpieces by Rembrandt. This exhibition will introduce many visitors who may be more familiar with his spectacular paintings to his equally dazzling achievements as a draftsman and etcher and to his unique vision of landscape," said J. Carter Brown, director, National Gallery of Art.

Three of the drawings in the exhibition, A Canal between Bushes (c. 1645), View across the Amstel (c. 1640-1645), and View near Rapenburg (c. 1644-1646), will be lent by the National Institute of the Polish Academy of Science, Wroclaw, and have never been seen in the United States. Another highlight will be Rembrandt's copy after Titian, Mountainous Landscape with a Horse (c. 1652-1654), which will be shown together for the first time with the original drawing by Titian, Landscape with a Riderless Horse (1555-1565).

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Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn, born in 1606 in Leiden, dominated Holland's Golden Age of Painting. The exception to the rule in an age of specialization, Rembrandt produced historical works, portraits, scenes of everyday life, still lifes, and landscapes. However, he was first and foremost a figure painter. The Night Watch (1642), his revolutionary militia company portrait, is his best known work.

Although landscape was not Rembrandt's primary interest, his drawings and prints have endured as archetypes of Dutch landscape. He produced no more than eight landscape paintings, but from the late 1620s to about 1660 he executed landscape drawings and prints in the hundreds.

Today no less than in the seventeenth century, Rembrandt's drawings and prints set the highest standard for the naturalistic landscape. Both convey the look and feel of the Dutch countryside in a variety of ways, ranging from cursory yet evocative sketches such as Six's Bridge (1645) and Winter Landscape (c. 1648-1650), to complex, highly finished compositions, such as View of Diemen (c. 1650-1653). Rembrandt found beauty in Holland's humblest cottages as well as its majestic plains. The works in the exhibition reveal his deep understanding of all of the moods of the Dutch countryside.

Rembrandt's works on paper will be arranged thematically in five sections to show their integrated development. The first and largest section, Farmhouses and Cottages, traces the evolution of Rembrandt's most common theme from detailed descriptions of individual buildings to broader images of their environments that focus on capturing effects of light and weather. Works in Imaginary Landscapes reveal how the artist expanded his vision of landscape by placing commonplace subjects in imaginary settings.

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The third section, Architecture and Town Views shows how Rembrandt freely altered his subjects to suit his own preference for the historic over the contemporary. It traces Rembrandt's steps around his own neighborhood, and also unites four drawings from his travels to eastern Holland, including the masterpiece, The Singel at Amersfoort (c. 1648-1650), from the Musee du Louvre, Paris. The section, Along the Amstel and the IJ Rivers, follows with more expansive views around Amsterdam taken from along the water's edge. This group includes some of Rembrandt's greatest drawings, such as the views of the Amstel near the manor houses Kostverloren and Trompenburg, which range from chalk sketches to finished works in ink and wash.

The final section, Panoramas, will conclude the exhibition with some of Rembrandt's most transcendent images of the land, such as the print, The Goldweigher's Field (1651), from the National Gallery, and the related drawing, View of Haarlem with the Saxenburg Estate (c. 1651) from the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen in Rotterdam.

The exhibition is being organized for the National Gallery of Art by Cynthia Schneider, assistant professor of art history at Georgetown University. Margaret Morgan Grasselli, curator of old master drawings at the National Gallery, is the coordinator for the exhibition. The fully illustrated catalogue will include an introductory essay and comprehensive catalogue entries by Schneider; an essay on topography and farm buildings in Rembrandt's drawings by Boudewijn Bakker, Municipal Archives, Amsterdam; and a catalogue of watermarks appearing in some of the papers used by the artist for his landscape prints and an accompanying essay by Shelley Fletcher, National Gallery of Art, and Nancy Ash, Conservation Center for Artifacts and Historical Art, Philadelphia.

The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.