

# National Gallery of Art

## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 30, 1995

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### MARC CHAGALL'S FANCIFUL EARLY GRAPHIC WORKS

### SHOWCASED AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART JULY 2 - DECEMBER 31

Washington, D.C. -- The National Gallery's collection of works on paper by Marc Chagall will be highlighted in the exhibition Marc Chagall's Early Prints and Drawings: From Gerhard and Marianne Pinkus and Other National Gallery Collections in the Gallery's West Building from July 2 through December 31, 1995. Recent donations from the Pinkuses and from Evelyn Stefansson Nef have significantly enhanced the Gallery's collection. This concise show presents 54 of Chagall's graphic works from 1910 through 1930, long considered to be his finest period.

Marc Chagall (1887-1985) left his native Russia in 1910 and made his first prints in Berlin and Paris during the 1920s. Their subject, like that of his paintings and drawings, was a poetic mixture of autobiographical elements, Russian and Jewish folklore, and an invented fantasy world. In addition to 47 prints representing Chagall's initiatives in woodcut, lithography, and etching, the exhibition includes four drawings made between 1910 and 1917, and three illustrated books.

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Chagall ventured into printmaking while in Berlin in 1922-1923. He began by making woodcuts and lithographs issued mostly in small editions of 20 to 35. Some works were printed in only three or four examples and have become exceedingly rare, such as Man and Cat on a Roof and the whimsical Boots, both represented in the Gerhard and Marianne Pinkus collection and on view in the exhibition.

Also on view are selections from Chagall's highly revered etched series of the 1920s: My Life, in which the artist evoked memories of his early years in Russia; Dead Souls, a clever interpretation of Nikolai Gogol's classic novel of the same title; and La Fontaine's Fables, commissioned by the French publisher Ambroise Vollard who clearly recognized Chagall's natural bent for fables. All of these early prints are distinguished by the artist's witty style and many affirm his assimilation of European avant-garde movements such as cubism.

"This exhibition offers an opportunity to study a facet of Chagall's work in depth, during a period when the artist was at the peak of his ingenuity," said Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery. "This focused look at his early prints and drawings should offer a new perspective on both the artist and the position of his work in twentieth-century art."

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Much of the exhibition is drawn from the extraordinary early Chagall prints collected by Gerhard and Marianne Pinkus over more than four decades. Among these outstanding works are Acrobat with a Violin, a 1924 print in which a rather portly acrobat precariously balances on the scroll of a violin, and Self-Portrait with a Grimace (1924-1925), one of several self-portraits in the exhibition, in which the artist portrays himself at age 37 wearing a riotous, satyr-like smile. Prints from the Gallery's Rosenwald Collection also are included, along with two gouaches from the collection of Evelyn Stefansson Nef, her spectacular gift in honor of the Gallery's fiftieth anniversary, Féla and Odilon, and the highly festive work Purim.

The National Gallery of Art, located at Fourth Street and Constitution Avenue, NW, is open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. For general information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at (202) 842-6176. For information on visitor services, call (202) 842-6690, weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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