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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART IS SOLE U.S. VENUE FOR FIRST COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF FRENCH GENRE PAINTING, OCTOBER 12, 2003-JANUARY 11, 2004



Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin

The House of Cards, c. 1737

oil on canvas, 82.2 x 66 cm (32 3/8 x 26)

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Washington, DC--The National Gallery of Art will be the only U.S. venue for the first large-scale survey of French genre painting--scenes from daily life, real and imagined--by such 18th-century masters as Jean-Antoine Watteau, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, Jean-Baptiste Greuze, François Boucher, and Louis-Léopold Boilly. On view in the West Building October 12, 2003 through January 11, 2004, **The Age of Watteau, Chardin, and Fragonard: Masterpieces of French**

Genre Painting will include works never before exhibited in this country and will offer an unprecedented opportunity to see some of these artists' finest works in proximity to each other.

The 18th century was a period of vast political, economic, and social change in France, as the moral principles of the Enlightenment took hold and radically transformed the structures of society. Mirroring the contemporary realities of French culture, French genre paintings were part of the great ideological shift in thought and art, away from the religious and monarchical values of 17th-century French society towards the ideals of the Enlightenment.

"This exhibition charts the transformations of an art that formed a constantly changing mirror of Parisian social life and culture," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are grateful to the Florence Gould Foundation, our museum partners, and the lenders for their support in bringing to the public such an important opportunity to view and reconsider French genre painting."

Exhibition Organization, Tour, and Support

The exhibition has been organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie. It will be on view in Ottawa through September 7, 2003, and at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, February 8 through May 9, 2004. The exhibition was made possible by The Florence Gould Foundation. It is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

The Exhibition

Influenced by 17th-century Dutch and Flemish art, French genre painting demonstrated a compelling vitality, ultimately surpassing that of the officially sanctioned history painting that prevailed in France at the beginning of the 18th century. The exhibition is organized thematically and chronologically. Its more than 100 master works--some on loan from France, Germany, England, and Russia--span the entire 18th century, from the last years of Louis XIV to the French Revolution, and reveal Enlightenment ideals of the family, the education of children, the importance of love, and the sheer delight in

painting.

Highlights include **Jean-Antoine Watteau's** (1684 -1721) fêtes galantes ("gallant parties") of the elite such as *Venetian Pleasures* (c.1718 -1719) and scenes of ideal family life, as in his follower **Nicholas Lancret's** (1690 -1743) *A Lady in a Garden Taking Coffee with Some Children* (c. 1738); **Jean-Baptiste- Siméon Chardin's** (1699 -1779) exquisitely dignified narratives of children and servants, such as *The Return from the Market* (1738); and such hugely popular family dramas as **Jean-Baptiste Greuze's** (1725 -1805) *The Marriage Contract* (1761). Other highlights are the flirtatious, erotic *liaisons dangereuses* of **Jean-Honoré Fragonard** (1732 -1806), such as *The Stolen Kiss* (c. 1786-1788); **François Boucher's** (1703 -1770) celebration of his sheer delight in the material world in *Presumed Portrait of Madame Boucher* (1743); **Etienne Aubry's** (1745 -1781) *Paternal Love* (c. 1775), commending the engagement of both parents in raising their children, in accord with the latest Enlightenment ideas; and **Louis-Léopold Boilly's** (1761-1845) scenes of contemporary Paris.

Curators and Catalogue

Philip Conisbee, senior curator of European paintings and curator of French paintings at the National Gallery of Art, is the curator of the Washington exhibition, in collaboration with Colin B. Bailey, chief curator, The Frick Collection, and former chief curator, National Gallery of Canada; and Thomas W. Gaehtgens, director, Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, Paris, and professor at the Freie Universität Berlin.

The richly illustrated exhibition catalogue, produced by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, includes a curators' preface; essays by Colin Bailey, Thomas Gaehtgens, Barbara Gaehtgens, Marianne Roland Michel, and Martin Schieder; entries on 113 works; and a complete listing of genre paintings shown at the Paris Salons from 1699 to 1789. It will be available from the National Gallery of Art shops, by phone at (202) 842-6002 or (800) 697-9350, and online at www.nga.gov (<http://www.nga.gov/home.htm>) .

Companion Exhibition

Colorful Impressions: The Printmaking Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France (<http://www.nga.gov/press/exh/201/index.shtm>) will be on view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, from October 26, 2003 through February 16, 2004. Celebrating one of the most innovative periods in the history of color printmaking, the exhibition presents some 115 French 18th-century color prints, all very fine impressions, including prints after works by Boucher, Watteau, Fragonard, Robert, and Boilly, among others.

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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 along 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. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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