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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART SHOWCASES FINEST WORKS ON PAPER IN "SIX CENTURIES OF PRINTS AND DRAWINGS: RECENT ACQUISITIONS" NOVEMBER 14, 2004-June 5, 2005



Jusepe de Ribera

The Drunken Silenus, 1628

etching, sheet, cut within platemark: 27.2 x 35.3 cm (10 11/16 x 13 7/8)

Patrons' Permanent Fund, 2004

Washington, DC--Some of the finest works of art on paper acquired in the past five years for the National Gallery of Art's renowned collection of prints and drawings are on view in the West Building from November 14, 2004, through June 5, 2005. On public view for the first time at the Gallery are 136 works, ranging in time from the earliest German drawing on paper to come to America, *Christ Kneeling in Prayer* (c. 1425), to

etchings by Glenn Ligon from the 1990s.

The National Gallery of Art's collection of graphic art includes drawings, watercolors, pastels, artist's prints of all types, and rare illustrated books. Consisting of over 60,000 prints, 30,000 drawings, and 2,000 rare illustrated books, the collection ranges from the 12th century to the present, including European and American art from all major periods and schools.

With the support of numerous donors throughout this country and Europe, the Gallery adds an average of about a thousand works of graphic art each year. Because of their number, and the light sensitivity of works on paper, the extensive collection can only be exhibited on a selective basis. **Six Centuries of Prints and Drawings: Recent Acquisitions** thus offers a rare opportunity to see outstanding and unique works by masters of the past and present.

The Exhibition

Recent acquisitions are frequently included in shows relating to specific collectors, artists, or themes. This exhibition contains a broader selection of the finest works of art on paper acquired by the National Gallery over the past five years. Shown here for the first time since the Gallery acquired them, the works are arranged through five galleries, beginning with the earliest, a drawing made around 1400, and continuing chronologically through the Renaissance and baroque periods to the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Renaissance

In recent years the National Gallery of Art has been fortunate to acquire a number of outstanding 15th-century works, beginning with two of the earliest European drawings on paper, an Italian *Standing Apostle* (c. 1400), and *Christ Kneeling in Prayer* (c. 1425), apparently the earliest German drawing on paper in any collection outside Europe. Another outstanding example is the German *Sanctus Bernhardinus* (1450-1475), the finest surviving impression of the earliest realistic portrait print.

The engraving *Battle of Naked Men* (1460s), by Andrea Mantegna or his school, is a

major monument in the Renaissance revival of interest in the human body. Modeled after a lost cartoon by Antonio del Pollaiuolo, this rare work was a precedent for further studies of the nude by Pollaiuolo, Leonardo, and Michelangelo. Once part of the legendary collection of the Dukes of Devonshire at Chatsworth, *Battle of Naked Men* is also the earliest known engraving created on such a large scale that it was clearly meant to be displayed and viewed like a painting.

Among the major illustrated books on view is the first edition of **Peregrinatio in terram sanctam** by Bernhard von Breidenbach (published by Erhard Reuwich, Mainz, 1486). It represents a number of firsts: it is the first printed book with illustrations by a major painter, the Dutch artist Erhard Reuwich (the Housebook Master); the first printed travel book with illustrations; it contains the first realistic print of a specific building (the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem); the views include the first fold-outs in any printed book; and its enormous fold-out view of Venice was for centuries the most accurate perspective of the city.

Baroque and Rococo

The exhibition includes an excellent group of prints and drawings from the late 16th century by the major Dutch mannerist artist Jacques de Gheyn, as well as a unique set of five artist's proofs of Cherubino Alberti's engravings *The Rape of the Sabine Women*, printed as a long frieze on golden satin for presentation to the powerful Barberini family in Rome.

On view are outstanding impressions of 17th-century etchings by Rembrandt van Rijn, Jusepe de Ribera, and Claude Lorrain. Eighteenth-century etchings include major examples by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, among them an artist's proof of his large *Aqueduct of Nero* (1775), with a handwritten title, before revisions in the image and the inclusion of an engraved caption and signature. Among the notable 18th-century drawings are Giuseppe Benucci's giant presentation drawing of alternative architectural illusions for the ceiling of the Ognissanti church in Florence (c. 1769), and Giacomo Quarenghi's powerful view of *The Piazza of Saint Peter's Seen Through an Arch of the Basilica* (1770s).

Recently the Gallery acquired over 100 of the finest British mezzotints from 1680 to 1832, and several are on view, including John Dixon's *A Tigress* (1772), after George Stubbs, the finest known impression of what is frequently called the greatest mezzotint ever made.

Nineteenth Century

In the past five years the Gallery has found many opportunities to add major landscape watercolors by British, French, and German artists from the late 18th and 19th centuries. On view are Paul Sandby's masterpiece of light and color, *Dawn in Luton Park* (1763/1765), as well as other British watercolors by Thomas Jones, Thomas Girtin, and Francis Danby.

In addition to drawings by Théodore Rousseau and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, the Swiss and French works include several monumental exhibition watercolors: *The Waterfalls at Tivoli* (c. 1790) by Louis Ducros, *Fishing Boats Tossed Before a Storm* (c. 1840) by Eugène Isabey, and *An Ancient Pine Forest with a Mountain Stream* (1847), by Alexandre Calame.

Besides the great German Romantic lithograph by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *A Gothic Church in an Oak Grove* (c. 1810), the outstanding German and Austrian watercolors and gouaches include Joseph Anton Koch's *The Roman Campagna with an Ancient Fountain* (1795-1805), Adolph Menzel's *The Interior of the Jacobskirche at Innsbruck* (1872), and Rudolf von Alt's luminous view of *The Piazza San Marco* (1874).

Among the 19th-century figurative works are Edvard Munch's large and powerfully colored drawing *In Man's Brain* (c. 1897), and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's enchanting sketch of *A Monkey Playing on His Back* (1880).

Twentieth Century

An extraordinary impression of Picasso's early masterpiece, *The Frugal Repast* (1904), printed in dark blue-green ink, opens the 20th-century selection. The artistic ferment of the early century is evident in an important cubist drawing by Maurice de Vlaminck, a futurist collage by Carlo Carrá, and Georgia O'Keeffe's subtly abstract

watercolor *Blue Hill No. 1* (1916).

The Gallery's strength in classic modern German art has been enhanced by the addition of, among others, Ludwig Meidner's powerful lithograph *Self-Portrait* (1920), Paul Klee's intricate late gouache *Die Schale des Herzen* [Chalice of the Heart] (1937), as well as two subtly romantic landscapes, Christian Rohlf's tempera *Mists Over the Lake* (1934), and Otto Dix's large pen drawing *Sächsische Landschaft* [Saxon Landscape] (1938).

Among examples of postwar American art in the exhibition are a major abstract drawing by Myron Stout, a fine series of drawings and watercolors by Robert Motherwell and Richard Diebenkorn, and a unique impression of an early color woodcut by Louise Nevelson. Contemporary works from both sides of the Atlantic include a moving collage by Hannelore Baron as well as important prints by Roy Lichtenstein, Anton Heyboer, and Glenn Ligon. The exhibition concludes with the complete set of Brice Marden's first portfolio of etchings, *Ten Days* (1971), and a group of Matthias Mansen's 1987 variations on his self-portrait, which portrays him at work in his studio.

Curators and Related Activities

Curator for the exhibition is Andrew Robison, senior curator of prints and drawings, with the assistance of Judith Brodie, curator of modern prints and drawings, Margaret Morgan Grasselli, curator of old master drawings, and Peter Parshall, curator of old master prints.

In addition to special exhibitions, the Gallery's new acquisitions of works of art on paper, along with the entire permanent collection, are always available to the public every weekday in the Print Study Rooms (call 202-842-6380 for arrangements).

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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.

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