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***THE DARKER SIDE OF LIGHT REVEALS THE ARTS
OF PRIVACY ON VIEW AT THE NATIONAL
GALLERY OF ART
OCTOBER 1, 2009, THROUGH JANUARY 18, 2010***

**Anders Zorn*****An Irish Girl, 1894***

etching

National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection

Washington, DC—The private worlds of late 19th-century Paris, London, and Berlin are reflected in some 120 beguiling, often enigmatic prints, drawings, illustrated books, and small sculptures in ***The Darker Side of Light: Arts of Privacy, 1850–1900***. On view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in the West Building, from October 1, 2009, through January 18, 2010, the exhibition reveals a late romantic sensibility, an art for collectors who kept their prints and drawings under wraps, compiled in albums and portfolios; who

stored bronze medals in cabinets; or set a statuette on a table in the stillness of the library.

The Darker Side of Light also explores the intellectual pursuits and techniques of artists whose works share the dark naturalism and rebelliousness of the writings of Charles Baudelaire and Edgar Allan Poe, among other literary figures of the time.

"This exhibition offers the public an opportunity to see a far less familiar repertoire of late 19th-century art," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "It is drawn primarily from the Gallery's own substantial collection of prints, drawings, and sculptures. The National Gallery is also grateful to private collectors and public institutions who loaned their exceptional works."

The Darker Side of Light has been organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Previously on view at the Hammer Museum, at the University of California, Los Angeles, from April 5 through June 28, 2009, the exhibition will continue from Washington to be seen at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago, from February 11 through June 10, 2010.

The Arts of Privacy in the Late 19th Century

Although the art of this period is most often associated with impressionism—a celebration of the open air and the café-concert, evoking the pleasures of the landscape and the radiance of Paris, city of light—there is another side to the story. That is, an art of sober contemplation, of *recherché*, often poetic and melancholy subject matter that explores an altogether different dimension of human experience.

Due to the fact that they tended to be stored away and viewed discreetly on chosen occasions, prints in particular encouraged the investigation of suggestive, sometimes disturbing themes, including complex states of mind and expressions of deep social tension: opium dreams, the obsessions of a lover, the abject despair of an impending suicide, meditations on violence, the fear of death. In turn, the print medium drew the attention of many artistic camps that saw it as an ideal medium for experimentation—academic painters, realists, impressionists, and symbolists alike.

Etching societies were formed with the idea of publishing prints in order to cultivate and improve the tastes of the urban bourgeoisie. Partly as a result of such organized efforts there were many independent dealers and book shops in Paris, London, Berlin, and elsewhere that sold such prints as well as drawings and small sculptures by artists of various schools.

Through the medium of prints, artists such as Mary Cassatt, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Edgar Degas, Edouard Manet, Victor Hugo, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Adolph Menzel, Charles Meryon, Edvard Munch, Odilon Redon, James McNeill Whistler, and Anders Zorn became more widely known, and the often radical and exploratory aspects of their art found a public.

This exhibition focuses on works of art that were not recommended for display in the parlor, sometimes because they were unsuitable, but mainly because they were meant for private contemplation much as one would approach a book of verse or a novel. The desire for private aesthetic experience and the art made to satisfy it constitute an important chapter in a long history of collecting as a secluded endeavor.

The Exhibition

Through eight themes—possession, nature, the city, creatures, reverie, obsession, abjection, violence, and death— ***The Darker Side of Light*** reveals highly engaging, often mysterious and beautiful works, mainly from France and Germany, but also Britain, Belgium, Switzerland, the United States, Sweden and Norway. A few examples include:

Possession: *Sagot's Lithography Gallery* (1898) is Georges Bottini's witty depiction of a well-dressed woman looking disapprovingly at a lithograph of a prostitute displayed in a window of the renowned publisher's shop.

Nature: An accomplished painter, Adolph Appian devoted his life's work to often darkly moody landscapes, from the forest of Fontainebleau to the area near his home in Crémieu in southeastern France, seen in the etching *At Valromey* (1868).

The City: In *Cholera in Paris* (1865), by François Nicolas Chiffart,

the artist evokes the devastation of the 1849 cholera epidemic—the second of two major outbreaks in Paris during the 19th century—which resulted in 20,000 deaths.

Creatures: Félix Bracquemond, among the most celebrated masters of etching in the period, was an animal specialist whose images range from the conventional to the unnerving, seen in *The Moles (Les taupes)* (1854).

Reverie: Albert Besnard made two quirkily innovative etchings on the theme of female reverie: *The Cup of Tea* (1887) and *In the Embers* (1887), where the emotional states of the women depicted are subtly evoked through complex etching techniques.

Obsession: The bizarre and fanciful elements in the work of symbolist Max Klinger come to life in *Abduction (Entführung)* (1878/1880), from a suite of dreamlike etchings involving a lover's fixation on a lost glove.

Abjection: Inspired by the social depravity she saw around her, and particularly the plight of women, Käthe Kollwitz's work expressed empathy for the less fortunate, such as the alarming depiction of despair in *Woman with Dead Child (Frau mit totem Kind)* (1903).

Violence: In his etchings, the Belgian symbolist James Ensor vehemently rejected the conventions of academic art and expressed his sense of impending disaster in a highly individual and fantastic way, as seen in *The Exterminating Angel* (1889).

Death: *Civil War* (1871) by Edouard Manet commemorates with blunt realism the victims of the Paris Commune of 1871, a popular uprising against the provisional French government immediately following the disastrous Franco-Prussian War.

Additional works include books such as Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven (Le Corbeau)* (1875), translated by Stéphane Mallarmé with ten transfer lithographs by Edouard Manet, and sculptures by Auguste Rodin and Alexandre-Louis-Marie Charpentier, among others.

Curator, Catalogue, and Lecture

Peter Parshall, curator of old master prints, National Gallery of Art, is

curator of the exhibition. Co-published by the National Gallery of Art in association with Lund Humphries, the exhibition catalogue features essays on late 19th-century art and collecting by S. Hollis Clayson, Northwestern University; Christiane Hertel, Bryn Mawr College; Peter Parshall; and Nicholas Penny, National Gallery, London. The 160-page hardcover catalogue features 90 color illustrations and retails for \$50.00, and is currently available for purchase in the Gallery Shops. To order, call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail mailorder@nga.gov.

On Sunday, October 4, 2009, at 2:00 p.m., Parshall will deliver the lecture "*The Darker Side of Light: Prints and Privacy in the Nineteenth Century*" and sign copies of the exhibition catalogue.

Four concerts honoring *The Darker Side of Light* explore the theme of symbolism: The Poulenc Trio (September 27 at 6:30 p.m.), the National Gallery Wind Quintet (October 7 at 12:10 p.m.), the Chiara String Quartet (October 14 at 12:10 p.m.), and the National Gallery Piano Trio (October 18 at 6:30 p.m.).

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 at 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. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering the East and West Buildings. 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 x 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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