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**TWO MASTERPIECES BY HENDRICK TER BRUGGHEN
SHOWCASED IN *LARGER THAN LIFE: TER
BRUGGHEN'S SAINT SEBASTIAN TENDED BY IRENE*
AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART**

Hendrick ter Brugghen, *Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene*, 1625, oil on canvas
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio, R. T. Miller, Jr. Fund, 1953

The National Gallery of Art welcomes the Allen Memorial Art Museum of Oberlin College's *Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene* (1625) by Hendrick ter Brugghen. The painting will be the focal point of ***Larger Than Life: Ter Brugghen's Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene***, a focus installation celebrating two of Ter Brugghen's most luminous and lyrical compositions, on view from January 21 through May 15, 2011. It comes to the Gallery after being on view at The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, from September 11, 2010 to January 16, 2011.

Hailed as Ter Brugghen's masterwork, *Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene* will grace the walls of the West Building's Dutch and Flemish galleries (Main Floor, Gallery 44), along with the Gallery's magnificent *Bagpipe Player* (1624), also by Ter Brugghen. Although these paintings belong to different genres, they reveal the sure fluidity of brush, exquisite color

harmonies, and sophisticated compositional orchestration for which the artist is renowned.

Hendrick ter Brugghen

Ter Brugghen (1588–1629) presumably studied with the Utrecht master Abraham Bloemaert (1556–1661), from whom he learned the fundamentals of painting. Around 1607 he journeyed to Italy to supplement his education, and while in Rome encountered the vivid dramas and theatrical light effects of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610). Caravaggio's innovative stylistic vocabulary exerted a profound influence on Ter Brugghen. He adopted the Italian's theatrical figures and lighting and became one of the leading Dutch Caravaggists upon his return to Utrecht in 1614.

Acclaimed for the boldness of his images and for the subtle tonalities with which he modeled his forms, Ter Brugghen created biblical and mythological scenes as well as genre paintings, often with figures playing musical instruments. His broad style, markedly different from the detailed realism of most Dutch painting of his day, allowed him to develop a great sense of dignity and grandeur in his figures. Peter Paul Rubens admired these qualities when he visited Ter Brugghen in Utrecht in 1627 and decreed that the artist was the only "real painter" he had met in the Netherlands.

Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene

Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene depicts an episode from the life of Sebastian, a third-century Roman soldier. After refusing to renounce Christianity he was bound to a tree and shot by archers. Irene and her maidservant rescued him, removed the arrows from his flesh, and nursed his wounds. The painting's emotional force results largely from Sebastian's monumental form, but also from Ter Brugghen's skillful orchestration of color and light. The glowing light he cast across the scene gently illuminates Sebastian's near-death pallor and accents Irene's kindly face as she gazes toward the arrows she tenderly removes from Sebastian's side.

The circumstances prompting the creation of this work are not certain. It is probable that Ter Brugghen painted it for a hospital in Utrecht. Saint Sebastian was commonly invoked against the plague, and *Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene* dates to 1625—near the start of an eight-year epidemic that ravaged the city. Irene was a Christian exemplar of benevolence and virtue, and her example of compassion and piety would have been particularly appropriate for such a setting.

Bagpipe Player

Painted a year before the Oberlin painting, *Bagpipe Player* was acquired by the National Gallery of Art in 2009. Ter Brugghen's ability to impart a sense of dignity to his figures is particularly evident in this famous painting, despite the fact that bagpipes were associated with the lower class in his time. The silhouetted profile of the figure, his larger-than-life scale, and the broad patterns created by his instrument and clothing are all important components that make this a powerful and memorable image.

Bagpipe Player—recently restituted to the heirs of Dr. Herbert von Klemperer by the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne, Germany—was sold through auction by Sotheby's in New York and later purchased by the National Gallery of Art.

This exhibition was organized by the National Gallery of Art.

The exhibition is made possible by the generous support of Michael A. Glass.

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. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at <http://www.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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