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from

THE FRICK COLLECTION

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Comprehensive Collection of Landscape Oil Sketches on View for the First Time in the United States

A Brush with Nature: The Gere Collection of Landscape Oil Sketches

September 12 through November 12, 2000

New York audiences will have a unique opportunity this fall to see a remarkable collection of small-scale landscape oil sketches that are on public view for the first time. *A Brush with Nature: The Gere Collection of Landscape Oil Sketches* is on display at The Frick Collection from September 12 through November 12, 2000, the second stop in a tour that originated in 1999 at London's National Gallery amid critical acclaim. Created by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artists working out of doors, these *plein-air* sketches were painted quickly -- the artists often spent no more than two hours on a work -- and attempted to capture subtle atmospheric effects and the fleeting play of light. The pictures, many painted on paper, were not conceived of as finished works of arts, but offered an opportunity to test and sharpen skills. These sketches were rarely, if ever, exhibited during the painters' lifetimes, and were often kept in the studio for later consultation. Nonetheless, such works played a vital role in the visual training of generations of European artists, and by the end of the eighteenth century, the art of sketching in oil had become recognized by artists as a valid occupation in its own right. This exhibition represents an important milestone in the study and understanding of the painted oil sketch in the European tradition.

The collecting of these landscape oil sketches was pioneered by the distinguished art historians John and Charlotte Gere as recently as 1950, when they began to gather these intimate and compelling documents of artists at work. Today, this growing body of work represents one the most comprehensive collections of its type. The exhibition *A Brush with Nature: The Gere Collection of Landscape Oil Sketches* features sixty-eight works and is coordinated for The Frick Collection by Associate Curator Susan Grace

Galassi. Following the New York, the works go onto other venues, including The Dixon Gallery & Gardens, Memphis, Tennessee (April 8 through June 10, 2001), before returning to the National Gallery in London, where they will ultimately reside on long-term loan. Support for the exhibition in New York is provided, in part, through the generosity of the Fellows of The Frick Collection.

"This exhibition celebrates a remarkable private collection of a kind of painting that has been passionately admired by a band of enthusiasts for several decades, but which only in recent years has begun to attract wider appreciation," notes Neil MacGregor, Director of the National Gallery in the catalogue for the exhibition.

Although artists such as Rosa, Claude, and Rubens are known to have sketched in oils *en plein air* as early as the 1630s, few of their sketches survive. Aside from such isolated examples, the earliest sketches that have come down to us, notably those by the French painter Desportes, date from the 1700s. By the end of the eighteenth century, nonetheless, the art of sketching in oils had become fully recognized by artists.

Rome was the vital center of the tradition of oil sketch painting. Artists came from across Europe to the city to study the art of Antiquity and the High Renaissance. For training and inspiration, they visited great collections and copied masterpieces. At the same time, they visited the surrounding countryside to draw and paint the ruins of temples and aqueducts and to study the effect of changing light sweeping across the landscape. The practice of painting out of doors spread among communities of artists in their studios and at the picturesque gathering places they frequented.

ARTISTS REPRESENTED IN THE EXHIBITION

The majority of the works in the Gere Collection and in *A Brush with Nature* are scenic views of Italy painted by British, French, Italian, German, Belgian, and Scandinavian artists. The presentation features works by such admired figures as **Edouard Bertin** (1797-1871), **Giovanni Boldini** (1842-1931), **Giovanni-Battista Camuccini** (1819-1902), **Gilles-François-Joseph Closson** (1798-1842), **Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot** (1796-1875), **Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas** (1834-1917), **Simon Denis** (1755-1812), **Giuseppe De Nittis** (1846-1884), **Louis Gauffier** (1762-1801), **André Giroux** (1801-

1879), **François-Marius Granet** (1775-1849), **Thomas Jones** (1742-1803), **Frederic, Baron Leighton of Stretton** (1830-1896), and **Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes** (1750-1819).

CATALOGUE ACCOMPANIES THE EXHIBITION

An illustrated catalogue with two introductory essays provides a background to the collection: Charlotte Gere's memoir charts its formation, while an essay by Christopher Riopelle, Curator of Nineteenth-century Painting at the National Gallery, traces the development of the *plein-air* oil sketch and its place in European painting. Catalogue entries are by Christopher Riopelle and Xavier Bray, Assistant Curator of the National Gallery. The book is available at the Museum Shop at The Frick Collection, reachable at (212) 288-0700, in softcover for \$25.00 and in hardcover for \$40.00.

ALSO ON VIEW THIS FALL

SIX PAINTINGS FROM THE FORMER COLLECTION OF MR. AND MRS. JOHN HAY WHITNEY ON LOAN FROM THE GREENTREE FOUNDATION

Now through July 29, 2001

THE DRAFTSMAN'S ART:

MASTER DRAWINGS FROM THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF SCOTLAND

December 12, 2000 through February 25, 2001

A survey of five centuries of draftsmanship by British, Dutch, Flemish, French, German, and Italian artists, this exhibition will bring together roughly eighty masterworks on paper -- comprising watercolor, chalk, oil, and silverpoint -- that highlight various schools and traditions throughout Europe and allow for comparisons among different generations from the same nationality. Spanning the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, *The Draftsman's Art* will include examples by masters such as Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Peter Paul Rubens, François Boucher, William Blake, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, and Georges Seurat, as well as by less prominent artists such as Giovanni Battista Lusieri and Ernest Hébert. Guest curator Michael Clarke's selection will feature drawings that are little known in the United States, providing a rare viewing opportunity. *The exhibition is organized by the American Federation of Arts and the National Gallery of Scotland.*

ABOUT THE FRICK COLLECTION

The Frick Collection features masterpieces of Western art from the early Renaissance through the late nineteenth century. Important works by Bellini, El Greco, Rembrandt, Titian, Turner, Vermeer, Whistler, and many others are housed in one of the great mansions remaining from the Gilded Age. These paintings are complemented by one of the world's finest collections of Renaissance bronzes and by French sculpture of the eighteenth century, in addition to outstanding furniture and decorative art works from the ateliers of Riesener, Lacroix, Boulle, Carlin, Gouthière, and Sèvres. Each year more than 250,000 visitors from New York, across America, and around the world come to the Collection at 1 East 70th Street, once the residence of Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919). Designed by Thomas Hastings of Carrère and Hastings and constructed in 1913-1914, the building was changed after Mrs. Frick's death in 1931, with alterations and additions made by the architect John Russell Pope. In 1935 the Collection opened to the public. A new Reception Hall, built in 1977, was designed by John Barrington Bayley, Harry van Dyke, and G. Frederick Poehler, as well as two temporary exhibition galleries. The Frick Collection also operates the Frick Art Reference Library at 10 East 71st Street, both a research library and a photoarchive. The Library is one of the world's great repositories for the documentation and study of Western art and has served the international art world for more than seventy-five years.

BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phones:

Collection (212) 288-0700

Library (212) 288-8700

Website: www.frick.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

Where: The Collection is located at 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue.

The Library is around the corner at 10 East 71st Street.

Museum Hours: 10am to 6pm Tuesdays through Saturdays, and from 1pm to 6pm Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, December 24, and December 25. Limited hours (1:00 to 6:00pm) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day.

Library Hours: 10am to 4:45pm, Monday through Friday; 9:30am to 12:45pm on Saturday.

Closed August and on Saturdays in June and July. Please call for holiday closure schedule.

Museum Admission: \$7, general public; \$5, students & senior citizens. See updated "Tour Information."

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection, and those under sixteen must be accompanied by an adult.

Library Admission: free.

Subway: #6 local (on Lexington Avenue) to 68th Street station

Bus: M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70th Street

Tour Information: now included in the price of admission is an Acoustiguide INFORM® Audio Tour of the permanent collection, provided by Acoustiguide. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Museum Shop: the shop closes at 5:45pm, and is open otherwise the same days and hours as the Museum.

Group Visits: Please call (212) 288-0700 for details and to make reservations.

Public Programs: A calendar of events is published regularly and is available upon request.

26, June 15, 2000 (updated September 6, 2000)

For further press information, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Communications Officer

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