

EUROPEAN ACCLAIM FOR GALLERY EXHIBITION TOUR

Drawings by old masters from the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Canada that returned last month from a tour of Europe, which included exhibitions at the Louvre in Paris, the Uffizi in Florence and the Colnaghi gallery in London, were seen in May at the National Gallery.

The exhibition, part of the National Gallery's international program, undertaken as a joint project with the Cultural Affairs Division of the Department of External Affairs, has had a success far beyond the expectations of its organizers. In France, Jean Bouret wrote in *Les Lettres Françaises* that "the whole collection is so rich that there could be good reason for jealousy; but how can one feel jealous of these pleasant Canadians, so full of fervent feeling?"

"The drawings steadily acquired for Canada's National Gallery are of consistently fine quality and reflect breadth of view as well as discriminating judgment," wrote William Gaunt in *The Times* of London. "Preference has often been given to drawings that show minor masters at their best instead of those that would only indifferently represent great men."

This was echoed by Roberto Coppini in *Avanti* of Rome when he spoke of the "exceptional quality of the drawings, even when by minor artists", and by Jean Dalevèze in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*: "The interest of this beautiful art group, which includes remarkable works of art, lies in the very quality of each piece."

WIDE INTEREST

The works cover a period from circa 1450 to the mid-twentieth century, ranging from a parchment leaf of a Florentine picture chronicle to a charcoal drawing of a seated dancer by Matisse. Each institution made a personal, and somewhat different, selection of the works they felt to be of particular interest to the

scholar and to the public. The rarity of important nineteenth and early twentieth century works in public collections in Italy, for instance, emphasized the importance of the exhibition at the Gabinetto dei disegni degli Uffizi (entitled there *Da Dürer a Picasso*) and art critics from as far away as Rome and Milan, travelled to Florence to review the exhibition. An article in the *Avvenire* of Milan started: "Exhibitions such as these make history."

There was equally widespread interest in Paris in the large number of fine twentieth century drawings in the exhibition (entitled there *De Raphaël à Picasso*), which was reflected by Pierre Schneider in *l'Express*: "Picasso, Matisse, Henry Moore, Paul Klee, all hanging on the walls of the Louvre — it's not a dream but a reality, owing to the 80 drawings of the National Gallery of Canada."

A FIRST FOR CANADA

Critics in all three countries commented on the general inaccessibility for Europeans of the great works of European art which now form part of North American collections, and many urged their readers not to miss the opportunity of seeing this selection from the most important Canadian collection of drawings. It was, in fact, the first time that part of Canada's national collections has been seen outside the country and it was the first time that the Louvre has exhibited works from another museum in its Cabinet des Dessins.

The exhibition was organized as a tribute to Kathleen M. Fenwick, the recently-retired Curator of Prints and Drawings at the National Gallery of Canada, who is primarily responsible for the collection as it is today.

(Four of the works included in the National Gallery exhibition tour of Europe are shown on the opposite page.)