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First Monographic Exhibition on Prominent French Artist Hubert Robert Presented by National Gallery of Art, Washington



Hubert Robert, *The Landing Place*, 1788
oil on canvas. The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Richard T. Crane

Washington, DC—Celebrated for the fundamental role he played in promoting the architectural capriccio, Hubert Robert combined famous monuments of antiquity and modernity in unexpected ways to create strikingly new and imaginative city scenes and landscapes. On view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, from June 26 through October 2, 2016, **Hubert Robert, 1733–1808** is the first monographic exhibition in the United States on the artist as well as the first exhibition to survey his achievements as both a painter and a draftsman.

More than 100 paintings and works on paper showcase his talents: he was a masterly landscape painter, a gifted and prolific draftsman, an engaging printmaker, and an acute chronicler of some of the major events of the day. The recipient of important royal and aristocratic commissions, including many from Russia, Robert was also the first Keeper of Paintings at the Musée du Louvre.

Dubbed "Robert des ruines" by the great critic and encyclopedist Denis Diderot, Robert was renowned during his era as one of France's most prominent artists.

"Because of Robert's longevity and enormous public popularity, he is mentioned in all standard reference texts on the 18th century. However, no catalogue raisonné of either his paintings or his drawings has been written. Robert's overall production was far richer and more varied than has generally been recognized on this side of the Atlantic and we are delighted that this project will bring new recognition to an artist whose importance in his own time was considerable and whose artistic range and accomplishments deserve to be better known," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

Prior to this exhibition, the last monographic exhibition on Hubert Robert in France was in 1933 on the 200th anniversary of his birth.

Exhibition Organization and Support

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the Musée du Louvre, Paris, where it was on view from March 9 through May 30, 2016.

The exhibition is made possible through the leadership support of the Leonard and Elaine Silverstein Family Foundation. Additional funding is provided by The Exhibition Circle of the National Gallery of Art. It is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Exhibition Organization

Hubert Robert, 1733–1808 is installed in chronological sections that correspond to key periods in his life: Robert's 11 years in Rome; his official

successes and major commissions after his return to Paris in 1765, including his work as a garden designer; new themes inspired by his personal experience of Paris, including scenes of urban construction and destruction; the French Revolution and his own imprisonment; and his post-revolutionary involvement with the creation of the new museum of art in the Louvre.

Hubert Robert, 1733-1808

Hubert Robert was one of the 18th century's most successful artists, and his career is paradigmatic of the pleasures and vicissitudes of his era. Born in Paris, he studied painting in Italy (1754–1765) as a protégé of the duc de Choiseul, who helped him obtain a special entrée to the French Academy in Rome, normally reserved only for winners of the prestigious Prix de Rome. There, Robert refined his artistic practice through direct study of Rome's architectural wonders, parks, and gardens. The content and style of his Roman output largely reflect an emulation of contemporary artistic models and peers (Piranesi and Panini), but Robert also perfected works for which he is best known: depictions of ruins and monuments in which the past and present mingle in striking and unexpected ways.

Upon his return to Paris—where his scenes of ruins shown in the Salons inspired Diderot's lavish praise—Robert established himself as one of the most sought after artists of his day, producing large-scale painted decors and designing garden landscapes and decorative objects for the royal family and its entourage. Robert also enjoyed access to prominent intellectual and artistic circles: he was a close friend of the painter Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun and a favorite of Madame Geoffrin—one of the leading female intellectuals of the French Enlightenment.

His work later addresses the demise of this glittering and decadent society, first in ominous scenes of conflagration and disaster of the late 1780s, then in accurate, unblinking representations of vandalism of royalist monuments and his own imprisonment during the Revolution. Upon his release, Robert spent the rest of his life reworking his favorite theme—the conflation of contemporary life and the distant past—through a series of meditative variations on the Grande Galerie of the new Musée du Louvre, where he served as curator until his death in 1808.

Exhibition Curators, Catalog, and Related Activities

For this jointly organized exhibition, the curatorial team was led by Guillaume Faroult, senior curator of French paintings of the 18th century and of British and American paintings, Musée du Louvre, Département des Peintures; Margaret Morgan Grasselli, curator and head of the department of old master drawings, National Gallery of Art; and Yuriko Jackall, assistant curator of French paintings, National Gallery of Art.

Published in association with Lund Humphries, the accompanying catalog richly illuminates Robert's outstanding accomplishments as an artist and his lasting contributions to French visual culture. The most comprehensive source in English of information on Robert and his art to date, the catalog includes five scholarly essays and a biographical chronology as well as new documentation and archival material. Contributors include Faroult; Grasselli; Jackall; Joseph Baillio, a scholar concentrating on French art of the 17th through the 19th century; and Catherine Voiriot, a researcher at the Musée du Louvre, Département des Objets d'Art. The 296-page hardcover catalog is available at <http://shop.nga.gov/>; call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail mailorder@nga.gov.

Lecture and Book Signing

Introducing Hubert Robert

June 26 at 2:00

East Building Auditorium

Grasselli, curator and head of the department of old master drawings, and Jackall, assistant curator of French paintings, National Gallery of Art.

Gallery Talks

Hubert Robert, 1733–1808 (60 mins.). David Gariff: July 5, 7, 13, 15 and August 5, 19, 25, 30, 31 at 1:00; Diane Arkin: August 2–4, 9, 11, 16–18 at 2:00 (wb)

Press Contact:

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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 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 visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt, Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc, and Instagram at <http://instagram.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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Exhibition Press Release

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[Wall Text](#) (PDF 2 mb)

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Exhibition Page:

[Hubert Robert, 1733-1808](#)

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Questions from members of the media may be directed to the Department of Communications at (202) 842-6353 or pressinfo@nga.gov

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