

For Release:

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GEORGE CATLIN EXHIBITION OPENING ON SEPT. 25 AT SID RICHARDSON MUSEUM

Catlin was America's most influential 19th century painter of American Indians; paintings on loan from the National Gallery of Art illustrate the cultures of American Indians living west of the Mississippi in the 1830s; famous book and portfolios by Catlin on loan from a private collection

FORT WORTH, Texas – The Sid Richardson Museum will present “Take Two: George Catlin Revisits the West” from Thursday, Sept. 25, 2014, through Sunday, May 31, 2015.

Driven by his lifelong mission to create a record of all Indian cultures in the Americas for future generations, George Catlin (1796-1872) was America's most influential 19th century painter of American Indians. He completed more than 1,100 paintings and drawings of everyday life of Indians that included buffalo hunts, dances, games, amusements, rituals, portraits, and religious ceremonies.

The 17 paintings in the exhibition portraying eight American Indian tribes are from Catlin's Cartoon Collection on loan from the Paul Mellon Collection at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. A rare Deluxe edition of the most famous book published in the 19th century on the American Indian, Catlin's “Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians,” and two of Catlin's American Indian portfolios will be on loan from a private collection.

“Buffalo Hunt,” a bronze sculpture by Charles M. Russell (1824-1926), modeled in 1905 (cast # unknown, ca.1928), will also be on loan from a private collection. Both Russell and Catlin returned to the theme of the buffalo, and particularly buffalo hunts, repeatedly in their art.

Admission is free to the museum, which is open daily except for major holidays at 309 Main Street in Sundance Square in downtown Fort Worth. For information, go to www.sidrichardsonmuseum.org, or call 817.332.6554.

“We are delighted that our first loan exhibition from the National Gallery of Art features a selection from George Catlin's Cartoon Collection,” said Mary Burke, director of the Sid Richardson Museum. “Thirteen of the works have never been exhibited in Texas.”

“Catlin's art is a natural fit for our museum, since Charles Russell and Frederic Remington, two of the most prominent artists in our permanent collection, also devoted themselves to Western themes, with a great awareness of what was unfolding in the West during their lifetime,” said Burke. “Catlin, who recorded the cultural life of the Native Americans he encountered on his travels west of the Mississippi in the 1830s, painted anticipating a time in the future when the manners and customs of the American Indian would be lost. Remington and Russell, who depicted life in the post-Civil War American West, painted with a sense of nostalgia for a West that was then passing or had already passed.”

“The National Gallery of Art is very pleased to join with The Sid Richardson Museum in presenting an important group of paintings by George Catlin, one of the first artists to record the appearance and customs of Native Americans living in the West,” said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. “We are especially pleased that the paintings will remain on view through the school year, providing many opportunities for educational programming.”

The guest curator for “Take Two” is Brian W. Dippie, Ph.D., professor emeritus of history at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. Dr. Dippie is a specialist in the history of Western American art and has published extensively on George Catlin.

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“We are indebted to Dr. Dippie for his insightful selection of paintings for the exhibition,” said Burke. “His depth of knowledge of Catlin and Western American art is boundless.”

“Catlin was the most influential American Indian painter of the 19th century,” Dr. Dippie said, “because he showed Indian life in Indian country—not just portraits, but in fact scenes of buffalo hunts, village life, dances, and amusements—that he had witnessed. He was a participant-observer. His claim on the public’s attention was his conviction that Indian cultures were vanishing and would be known by future generations only through the visual record he was preserving. He had hoped to acquaint the world with the features and customs of a noble but dying race through paintings, prose and lectures that would serve as their monument after civilization had eradicated every other trace of their existence. His pictorial history is the most complete collection of paintings that show Native American cultures in the West in the 1830s. There is no body of artistic images of the Indians comparable to Catlin’s in terms of being early and influential because of his exhibitions and books.”

Catlin visited 48 Indian tribes in the 1830s and completed some 500 paintings known as the Indian Gallery. He had to forfeit the Indian Gallery to industrialist Joseph Harrison in 1852 to pay off his creditors. He then started working on what became known as his second Indian Gallery, which he referred to as his Cartoon Collection, explaining that the paintings were preliminary.

The title of this exhibition, “Take Two: George Catlin Revisits the West,” refers to Catlin’s recreation of his first Indian Gallery. Relying on his memory of experiences with the American Indians in the 1830s, he drew from images in his first Indian Gallery, adding new subjects during the 1850s and 1860s, until he completed his second Indian Gallery of more than 600 paintings.

“This second take on his subjects is important in understanding his circumstances and in understanding the enlarged record of the American Indian that he provided,” said Dippie. “The two goals of the exhibition are to illuminate the guiding principles behind Catlin’s entire enterprise and to focus on Southern Plains subjects with a Texas twist.”

The exhibition includes the Caddo, Comanche and Kiowa tribes (Texas tribes that Catlin encountered in the Arkansas Territory) and the Cheyenne, Mandan, Ojibwa, Pawnee and Sioux Plains Indian tribes.

About George Catlin and the Indian Galleries

George Catlin (1796-1872) was a self-taught, self-supporting and self-motivated artist, author, showman, promoter, entrepreneur, and ethnographer. Born in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., and trained in the law, he chose art instead. Having the foresight in the 1830s that American Indian cultures were vanishing, he made it his lifelong mission to create a record of all native life in the Americas for future generations.

Catlin’s First Indian Gallery

He painted 500 Native American portraits and scenes of everyday life of 48 Indian tribes—buffalo hunts, dances, games, amusements, rituals, and religious ceremonies—that he witnessed on summer excursions in 1832, 1834, 1835 and 1836. The prolific painter was tireless in publicizing his work; he continually sent letters of his travels to be published in newspapers, and he gave lectures showing Indian costumes and artifacts.

He thought his Indian Gallery deserved government patronage. But when he failed to persuade Congress to buy his paintings, Catlin left America at the end of 1839 to find a new audience and new prospects abroad. He would not return until 1871.

Despite the promise of a French king’s commission for Catlin’s La Salle Expedition series, he was unable to find a patron and faced bankruptcy in 1852. Joseph Harrison, a Philadelphia

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industrialist, paid Catlin's debts and held the first Indian Gallery as collateral. Catlin was never able to retrieve the Indian Gallery.

Catlin's Second Indian Gallery

Alleged to have traveled extensively to a number of countries principally in South America from 1854 to 1860, he then settled in Brussels, Belgium. From 1860 to 1870, he completed a second Indian Gallery, which he called the Cartoon Collection. He called these oil paintings "cartoons," explaining that they were yet unfinished. Relying on his memory of experiences with the American Indians in the 1830s, he drew from images in his first Indian Gallery, adding new subjects from the 1850s to the 1860s. Of the estimated 600 cartoons that he painted, there are 351 in the Mellon Collection, 17 of which are presented in "Take Two."

Catlin exhibited the Cartoon Collection in 1870, first in Brussels, then in New York and Washington, D.C., where, in bad health and nearly deaf, he died in 1872.

Catlin's Astonishing Visual Legacy

Although Catlin never secured government patronage, his dream of creating a comprehensive visual record of native life in the Americas was nearly fulfilled after his death. In 1879, Joseph Harrison's widow donated the first Indian Gallery, more than 500 paintings, to the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. In 1912, Catlin's heirs sold the Cartoon Collection to the American Museum of Natural History in New York. In 1965, the late Paul Mellon, philanthropist and board member of the National Gallery of Art, purchased works in the Cartoon Collection offered for sale by the American Museum of Natural History. Of the paintings that he purchased, he donated 351 to the National Gallery of Art, located just a few blocks from the Smithsonian.

About the Paintings in "Take Two"

Catlin completed the paintings in "Take Two" between 1861 and 1869, with the exception of the painting from the La Salle series, "Expedition Encamped on a Texas Prairie. April 1686," which he completed between 1847 and 1848. Instead of painting with oil on canvas as in his first Indian Gallery and the La Salle series, Catlin painted the cartoons with oil on card stock, which he mounted on paperboard. For easier handling during his travels, he painted a border or oval around the perimeter of many of his paintings in lieu of using an actual frame. Just as the cartoons were similar in size, the framing device also served to unify the paintings as a grouping for gallery presentations.

Plains Indian tribes that Catlin visited in the Arkansas Territory include Caddo, Comanche and Kiowa; other Western Indian tribes include the Cheyenne, Mandan, Ojibwa, Pawnee and Sioux. The paintings are grouped by tribe or subject.

- "Catlin Feasted by the Mandan Chief," George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 133: The author feasted in the wigwam of Mah-to-toh-pa, the war chief of the Mandans, dining on a roast rib of buffalo and pemican.) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 ¼ x 24 9/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection

Catlin wanted the world to know that his was the eye behind the art and that he had played a role as participant-observer in every painting, whether he appeared in it or not.

- "Mandan War Chief with His Favorite Wife," George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 30) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 ¼ x 24 5/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection

This family portrait features Máh-to-tóh-pa, or Four Bears, in his full regalia.

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- “The Cheyenne Brothers Starting on Their Fall Hunt,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 410) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 1/8 x 24 7/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection
- “The Cheyenne Brothers Returning from Their Fall Hunt,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 411: a historical event of 1832). Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 3.16 x 24 7/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection

These two allegorical paintings of a family setting are paired in a before-and- after sequence to illustrate the impending doom of the Indians by the diseases and corrupting influences, such as alcohol, introduced by European settlers and commerce.

- “A Cheyenne Warrior Resting His Horse,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 195) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 3/8 x 24 1/8 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection

This painting speaks to the importance of the horse to all the Plains tribes. "If Indians feared horses initially," a historian of the Spanish empire in America observed, "they quickly came to covet and acquire them as a source of food, a means of transportation, a trade item, and as symbols of status and power." Horses transformed Plains Indian warfare.

- “Four Kiowa Indians,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 69) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 7/16 x 24 15/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection
Catlin considered Kiowas “a much more elegant race” than other Plains tribes.
- “Comanche Horsemanship,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 196) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 3/4 x 24 13/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection
- “Sham Fight of the Comanches”, George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 138) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 5/8 x 24 1/8 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection

The Comanches, Catlin wrote, were "one of the most powerful and hostile tribes in North America, inhabiting the western parts of Texas and the Mexican provinces...; entirely wild and predatory in their habits; the most expert and effective lancers and horsemen on the continent." Their horsemanship and their training for war were inseparable, he observed, and they could throw “themselves on the side of their horses, while at full speed, to evade their enemies' arrows—a most wonderful feat."

- “The Scalper Scalped—Pawnees and Cheyennes,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 273) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 1/8 x 24 7/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection
- “Encampment of Pawnee Indians at Sunset,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 283) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 ½ x 24 ¾ in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection

The Pawnees, Catlin wrote in 1840, were "a wild and very warlike tribe," occupying the country watered by the river Platte, from the Missouri to the Rocky Mountains. With the Cheyenne and Pawnees often at odds, clashes and scalpings were common. Perhaps the devastating toll smallpox had taken on the Pawnee population served for Catlin as a powerful example of the fate awaiting all the Western tribes. “Encampment” has a hushed twilight quality in contrast to the violent action in “The Scalper Scalped.”

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- “Caddoe Indians Gathering Wild Strawberries,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 318) Oil

on card mounted on paperboard, 18 7/16 x 28 3/4 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection

The Caddo Indians, one of the Texas tribes Catlin encountered in the Oklahoma Territory, were “agriculturists first and foremost.” They planted and raised crops of corn, beans, and squash. This painting captures the essence of their culture.

- “American Pasturage—Prairies of the Platte,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 308) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 1/2 x 24 5/8 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection
- “Buffalo Chase—Bulls Protecting the Calves,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 153) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 1/2 x 25 1/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection
- “Catlin and Two Companions Shooting Buffalo,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 150) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 1/16 x 24 11/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection
- “Buffalo Lancing in the Snow Drifts—Sioux,” George Catlin (1796-1872) , (Cartoon No. 263) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 1/16 x 25 1/8 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection

Catlin returned to the theme of buffalo, and particularly buffalo hunts, repeatedly in his art, showing hunters from almost every Western tribe pursuing what was, quite simply, their staff of life. Buffalo provided clothing, shelter, utensils, and all the other necessities for Plains Indian survival.

- “Nine Ojibbeway Indians in London,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 59) Oil on card mounted on paperboard, 18 3/8 x 24 9/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection

Beginning in 1843, Catlin toured Britain and the Continent with three troupes of Indians. It furthered his cause, but his involvement in exhibiting the Indians remains controversial. The display of Ojibwas dancing, chanting, orating, and demonstrating scalping techniques tarnished his reputation as a serious advocate for Indian causes.

- “Expedition Encamped on a Texas Prairie. April 1686,” George Catlin (1796-1872), (Cartoon No. 446) Oil on canvas, 14 7/8 x 22 3/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection

From the La Salle series, this painting shows Catlin’s creativity in his attempt to secure patronage in 1846 from the king of France, Louis-Philippe. Catlin prepared 27 canvas paintings showing how he imagined Sieur de La Salle’s Expedition of the Mississippi River in the 1680s. He painted them in hopes of securing the patronage of the king, but his plan failed because the king was forced off the throne in the Revolution of 1848.

Additional Highlights of Exhibition

To widen the audience for his advocacy of the American Indian, Catlin sought to publicize his work through books, portfolios and letters to the newspapers. A few notes follow about his famous book and other rare publications on loan from a private collection.

- “Catlin’s North American Indian Portfolio. Hunting Scenes and Amusements of the Rocky Mountains and Prairies of America. From Drawings and Notes of the Author, Made During Eight Years’ Travel Amongst Forty-Eight of the Wildest and Most Remote Tribes of Savages in North America.” London: The Author, ca. 1844. Private collection.

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Catlin self-published the first two issues of the “North American Indian Portfolio” simultaneously. Both editions are now very rare. This is the second issue.

- “Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians...Written During Eight Years’ Travel (1832-1839) Amongst the Wildest Tribes of Indians in North America...With...Illustrations, Carefully Engraved from His Original Paintings.” London: Published for the Author. Printed by Tosswill and Myers, 1841. Private collection.

“Letters and Notes,” the most famous book in the 19th century on the American Indian in terms of successive editions, is still in print and online. This is the Deluxe issue of the tenth edition. In a positive review published in the 1841 “Edinburgh Review” of Catlin’s classic account of his travels in the West, the reviewer wrote in part “...we strongly recommend (Catlin’s work)...to the perusal of all who wish to make themselves acquainted with a singular race of men, and system of manners, fast disappearing from the face of the earth; and which have nowhere else been so fully, and curiously, and graphically described.”

- “Illustrations of the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians with letters and notes written during eight years of travel and adventure among the wildest and most remarkable tribes now existing...” London: J.E. Adlard for Henry G. Bohn, 1866. Private collection.

The Deluxe issue of the tenth edition is one of 12 copies with the plates printed in outline and entirely colored by hand: the famous “bespoke” edition.

- “Catlin’s North American Indian Portfolio. Hunting Scenes and Amusements of the Rocky Mountains and Prairies of America. From Drawings and Notes of the Author, Made During Eight Years’ Travel Amongst Forty-Eight of the Wildest and Most Remote Tribes of Savages in North America.” London: Chatto & Windus, ca 1875. Private collection.

This issue, featuring 31 plates, is much rarer than any of the 25-plate issues that were done earlier. It includes the original list of plates, which is often not in most copies. The first lithograph was drawn on stone by Catlin.

About Brian W. Dippie, Ph.D., Guest Curator

Brian W. Dippie, Ph.D., professor emeritus of history at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, is a specialist in the history of Western American art and has published extensively on George Catlin, Frederic Remington, and Charles M. Russell, including “Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage” (1990) and “Green Fields and Red Men” in “George Catlin and His Indian Gallery” (2003). He received the C. M. Russell Museum’s Heritage Award for 2014.

About the National Gallery of Art

The National Gallery of Art, located in the nation’s capital, is one of the world’s preeminent art museums. It was created in 1937 by a joint resolution of Congress accepting the gift of Andrew W. Mellon, the founder of the Gallery. The Gallery’s collection includes some 130,000 works that trace the development of European and American art from the Renaissance to the present. For more information, please visit www.nga.gov.

About the Sid Richardson Museum

Admission is free to the museum, which is open daily except for major holidays. Established in 1982, the museum features paintings of the late 19th- and early 20th-century American West by Frederic Remington, Charles M. Russell and other artists of the era, amassed by the legendary Texas oilman and philanthropist, Sid W. Richardson (1891-1959). The museum is considered to have one of the most significant private collections of Remington and Russell in the United States. Other painters

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in the collection include works by other "old masters" of Western art: Oscar E. Berninghaus – a founding member of the Taos Society of Artists, Peter Moran, Charles Schreyvogel, Frank Tenney Johnson, William R. Leigh, Edwin W. Deming, Gilbert Gaul, and Charles F. Browne. The museum is

funded and managed by the Sid W. Richardson Foundation.

The museum offers free docent-guided tours to the public every Tuesday and Saturday at 2:00 p.m. and by appointment. On the Second Saturday of each month at 3 p.m., the gallery tour is followed by a live performance of a docent portrayed as Nancy Cooper Russell, wife of Charles M. Russell, telling stories about his career.

For information, go to www.sidrichardsonmuseum.org, or call 817.332.6554.

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