

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VMFA presents *Hollar's Encyclopedic Eye: Prints from the Frank Raysor Collection*
More than 200 prints by 17th-century artist Wenceslaus Hollar to be featured in new exhibition

Richmond, Virginia—Celebrating one of the most remarkable and “modern” artists of the Baroque period, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts presents [*Hollar's Encyclopedic Eye: Prints from the Frank Raysor Collection*](#), an ambitious works on paper exhibition that will be on display in the Evans Court Exhibition Gallery from Feb. 2 to May 5, 2019. Curated by Dr. Mitchell Merling, VMFA’s former Paul Mellon curator and head of the department of European art and Dr. Colleen Yarger, VMFA’s curatorial assistant for European art and the Mellon collections and interim head of the department of European art, this exhibition of more than 200 works by this 17th-century master printmaker is drawn exclusively from the Frank Raysor Collection, a promised gift to VMFA. Raysor’s collection of nearly 2,500 prints and drawings by Wenceslaus Hollar rivals those held by the British Museum and the Queen’s Collection in London as well as the National Gallery in Prague and the Fischer Library at the University of Toronto.



Wenceslaus Hollar, Und., Wenceslaus Hollar (Bohemian, 1607–77), etching printed in black ink on laid paper. Promised gift of Frank Raysor.

Born to a noble family in Prague, Hollar was fortunate to learn the rudiments of printmaking at an early age. His aptitude for the art form led him to a lifelong practice of making prints—some of his prints serving as the only trace of lost drawings by Leonardo da Vinci and others. Hollar was retained by Thomas Howard, the Earl of Arundel in the early 1600s and documented many works in Arundel’s collection. The artist produced, on average, an astounding 55 etchings a year, and nearly 2,500 in his entire career. His prints range from the size of a postage stamp to more than three feet long, with one of the largest—a panorama of Prague—on view in this exhibition.

“This exhibition represents one of the most significant collections of Hollar prints in the world,” says VMFA Director Alex Nyerges. “We are delighted that visitors from across Virginia will have the opportunity to see life in 17th-century Europe through the eyes of Wenceslaus Hollar. None of this would be possible without the generous promised gift from VMFA’s longtime friend and patron Frank Raysor. We are exceedingly grateful for his continued support of our efforts to build a world class print collection at the museum.”

“I’ve been collecting works by Hollar for over 40 years,” says Raysor, “and my relationship with VMFA goes back to the fifth grade, when I took Saturday art classes there. It is thrilling to have my loves of Hollar and of VMFA come together in this carefully curated exhibition.”

As part of the culture of curiosity prevalent in Europe during Hollar’s time, the artist expressed interest in almost everything, including science, nature, historical events and geography, all of which are evident in his work. He lived through the Thirty Years’ War, the English Civil War, the overthrow of the monarchy with the rise of the republican Commonwealth and the Restoration, and was personally affected by these events. The exhibition is organized into five key sections to highlight the artist’s worldly experiences, beginning with an introduction to his life and continuing with works from his time in Prague, England and Antwerp. Visitors to the exhibition will also have the opportunity to learn more about the printmaking process, specifically Hollar’s focus on etching copper plates.

According to Yarger, “Hollar really catered his work to the art market, but through his work we can gain a better understanding of the things that were important in Europe at that time. Prints like these were a way to share information before the invention photography and before the internet. Citizens across Europe were able to see

representations of famous works through Hollar's prints even if they weren't able to see them in person. That remains the case today, since some of Hollar's prints—including his visual representations of works by Hans Holbein and Parmigianino—are the only existing examples of works that have been lost or destroyed. We thus owe an immense debt of gratitude to Hollar and are privileged to have the chance to share his remarkable work with our visitors.”

A companion exhibition at University of Richmond Museums, *The Printed World: Masterpieces of Seventeenth-Century European Printmaking*, will be on view from Feb. 3 to March 24, 2019. A fully illustrated catalogue will accompany the VMFA exhibition.

About the Frank Raysor Collection

Frank Raysor's promised gift of 10,000 prints, nearly 2,500 of which were created by Hollar, makes VMFA one of the world's five major Hollar repositories. For more than 40 years, Frank Raysor has collected important works on paper by Hollar, Charles Méryon, Félix Bracquemond and Sir Francis Seymour Haden, among others, spanning the 15th century to the present day. Named VMFA Collector of the Year in 2011, Raysor was recognized for his generous gift that will increase the museum's total number of objects by one third. In honor of this remarkable gift, the old VMFA library—which was replaced by the Margaret and Robert Freeman Library when the museum's McGlothlin wing opened 2010—was transformed into the Frank Raysor Center for the Study of Works on Paper and houses more than 15,000 works on paper. Over 100 works from the Frank Raysor Collection were previously on display at VMFA in 2011 in an exhibition entitled *A Celebration of Print: 500 Years of Graphic Art from the Frank Raysor Collection*.

Sponsorship Information

Organized by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, this exhibition is made possible through the generous promised gift of Frank Raysor. Additional sponsors include Mrs. Frances Massey Dulaney, Anna Kay Chandler, Larry J. Kohmescher, the family of Frank Raysor, Patricia R. St. Clair and an anonymous donor. Marketing support for Evans Court exhibitions is provided by the Charles G. Thalheimer Fund.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences, and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA's permanent holdings encompass nearly 40,000 artworks, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris, and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, and French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British sporting, and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan, and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened its doors to the public after a transformative expansion, the largest in its history.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.VMFA.museum.

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