

LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS  
ARRETEE AU 6.10.93

- Mde Françoise Baligand, Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai, France
- M. Pr. Hans Belting, Munich, Allemagne
- M. Knut Berg, Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo, Norvège
- Mlle Irène Bizot, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, France
- M. Alessandro Bettagno, Fondation Cini, Venise, Italie
- M. Per Bjurström, Stockholm, Suède
- M. Alf Boe, Oslo Kommune, Oslo, Norvège
- M. George Breeze, Cheltenham Art Gallery, Cheltenham, Angleterre
- Mde Görel Cavalli-Björkman, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Suède
- M. Marco Chiarini, Palazzo Pitti, Florence, Italie
- M. Timothy Clifford, National Gallery, Edinburgh, Ecosse
- M. Dirk de Vos, Musées de Bruges, Bruges, Belgique
- M. Theodor Enescu, Musée National, Bucarest, Roumanie
- Mde M. Rosa Figueiredo, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbonne
- M. Johann G. Von Hohenzollern, Bayerische Staatsgemälde sammlungen,  
Munich, Allemagne
- M. James Holloway, National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, Ecosse
- M. Robert Hoozee, Museum Voor Schone Kunsten, Gant, Belgique
- Mde Viviane Huchart, Musée de Picardie, Amiens, France
- Mde Aune Jääskinen, Museum of Foreign Art Sinebrychoff, Helsinki,  
Finlande
- Mde Catherine Johnston, National Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
- M. Konstanty Kalinowski, Muzeum Narodowego, Poznan, Pologne
- M. Jacques KuhnMunch, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes, France
- Mde Agnieszka Lawniczakowa, National Museum, Poznan, Pologne
- M. R. de Leeuw, Rijksmuseum Vincent Van Gogh, Amsterdam, Hollande
- M. Dewey Mosby, Picker Art Gallery (Colgate University), Hamilton, U.S.A
- M. Miklos Mojzer, Szépművészeti Muzeum, Budapest, Hongrie
- M. Henk Van Os, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Hollande

- . Mde Jane Rice, San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, U.S.A.
- Mlle Marie-José Salmon, Musée Départemental, Beauvais, France
- ~ Mde Birgitta Sandström, Zornsamlingarna, Mora, Suède
- ~ M. David H. Trapnell, International Centre for Wildlife Art, Gloucester, Angleterre

PROGRAM ICFA MEETING  
BUDAPEST, OCTOBER 13-16, 1993

Wednesday 13 : Arrival in Budapest

All meetings will be held in the Museum of Fine Arts

- Thursday 14 :
- 9.00 : Registration
  - 10.00 : Board meeting
  - 10.30-11.00 : General meeting of ICFA.  
Introduction : Miklos Mojzer  
Budapest, General Director of the Museum of Fine Arts.
  - 11.00-12.00 : Lecture : H. Van Os, Chairman  
Amsterdam, General Director of the Rijksmuseum,  
Introduction to the question of the Absolute Masterpiece : Rembrandt, The Nightwacht
  - 12.00-1.30pm : Lectures : F. Baligand, R. Hoozee, T. Clifford
  - 1.30-2.30 : Lunch
  - 2.30-4.00 : Plenary session  
: Lectures : G. Cavalli-Björkman, J. Rice, J. von Hohenzollern
  - 4.00-4.45 : Discussion and comments by Pr. Dr. Hans Belting
  - 5.00 : Reception given by Miklos Mojzer
- Friday 15 :
- Morning : Coach for Szentendre  
Museum and Lunch in Esztergom
  - Afternoon : Zsámbék (churchruins)
- Saturday 16 :
- 9.00-9.30 : General meeting of ICFA
  - 9.30-12.00 : The museums in front of civil wars and financial problems.  
Lectures : Th. Enescu, M. Chiarini,  
~~M. Piotrowski~~ and Alf Bøe
  - 12.00 : Conclusions of the meeting
  - 12.30-1.30pm : Lunch
  - 2.00 : Visit to Buda Castle, Budapest  
Historical Museum, Hungarian National Museum
  - 9.00 : Dinner, at Bierstube der Redoute/Vigado Söröző.
- Sunday 17 : Departure

MINUTES OF A BOARD MEETING OF ICFA  
HELD AT BUDAPEST FINE ARTS MUSEUM ON 14 OCTOBER 1993

Present :

H. Van Os (President)	J. Kuhn munch (Secretary)
Maria Rosa Figueiredo	A. Bettagno
C. Johnston	J. Holloway
Görel Cavalli-Björkman	I. Bizot
G. Von Hohenzollern	S. Sachs
F. Baligand (Treasurer)	K. Berg

The new President, H. Van Os, thanks our host Dr Miklos Mojzer, director of the Budapest Fine Arts Museum for his hospitality and Mr. Jacques Kuhn munch, Secretary for the preparation of this meeting, the first one held in a former east country.

Then the list of the colleagues willing to be voters-members of ICFA is examined. There are few candidates ; only 6 of them are maintained. In spite of the 471 members ( voting and non-voting), this committee must have new members and the Secretary asks his colleagues to act in that way.

The President reminds the programm of this meeting ; the place of the 94's meeting is evoked. After a conciliation, the U.S.A. are chosen and more specially Boston, Hartford. Financial supports will be asked so as evereybody may act.

End of the meeting.

MINUTES OF A PLENARY SESSION OF ICFA HELD AT BUDAPEST  
FINE ARTS MUSEUM ON 14 OCTOBER

Present :

S. Sachs	: Detroit	K. Berg	: Oslo
A. Boe	: Oslo	F. Baligand	: Douai
K. Kalinowski	: Poznan	J. Kuhn munch	: Valenciennes
D. Trapnell	: Gloucester	G. Breeze	: Cheltenham
Th. Enescu	: Bucarest	H. Van Os	: Amsterdam
G. Cavalli-Björkman	: Stockholm	D. De Vos	: Bruges
R. Hoozee	: Gand	M. Chiarini	: Florence
P. Bjürström	: Stockholm	J. Rice	: San Diego
J. Holloway	: Edinborough	R. de Leuw	: Amsterdam
T. Clifford	: Edinborough	H. Belting	: Munich
G. Von Hohenzollern	: Munich	A. Lawniczakowa	: Poznan
Mde Poupeiza	: Bucarest	A. Bettagno	: Venise
V. Huchard	: Amiens	C. Johnston	: Ottawa
M. R. Figueiredo	: Lisbonne	D.F. Mosby	: Hamilton
B. Sandström	: Mora	I. Bizot	: Paris
A. Jääskinen	: Helsinki	M.J. Salmon	: Beauvais

The President welcomes every member of the Committee and thanks Dr. Miklos Mojzer for his welcoming. This later, after some cheerful words, reports the changes in the 15th october trips. H. Van Os reminds the programm of this meeting : the notion of absolute masterpiece, and the troubles linked to the riots and civil wars in the museum. At last A. Boe will speak of the japanese mecens.

Then H. Van Os introduces Hans Belting, art criticism, who will follow our works and will synthetize the debate. The Rembrandt's Nightwatch kept in Rijksmuseum, was the base of the President's speach :

The Rijksmuseum was meant to be a shrine for Rembrandt's Nightwatch. The gallery of honor is a cathedral interior with the Nightwatch as its high altarpiece. In 1885 the construction of the museum was finished. Only twenty years later the Nightwatch was moved to an additional building because, there, the light was much better. Although the light was undoubtedly better, this new location was considered to be totally wrong : one had moved the national high altarpiece to the sacristy. The Nightwatch came back in the "Cathedral interior" but was hung in a different place. Tracing the history of the manipulation of this masterpiece up till the present day, one is able to disclose many aspects of Dutch nationalism. Although the hatred of modernists against neo-gothic architecture played an important role in the history of the presentation of the Nightwatch. My predecessor Simon Levie decided to bring the Nightwatch back to its original location. However, he did not just reconstruct its nineteenth century environment. The architect Wim Quist did it away with nearly all the decorative elements presenting the gallery of honor in its bare structure. He "calvinised" so to speak the shrine of the Nightwatch and transformed the catholic cathedral into an ascetic structure "à la Saenredam". The gallery of honor can be considered as an early example of postmodernism inspired by respect for the original staging of a masterpiece.

After evoking the constant problem of the notion of absolute masterpiece, often considered as the best representative of national art, each colleague had to introduce the masterpiece of their museum or at least the one they consider as such.

Robert Hoozee speaks first :

He discussed some aspects of the presence of an absolute masterpiece within the context of a medium sized museum.

"Christ Carrying the Cross" one of two paintings by Hieronymus Bosch in the museum of Ghent is widely reproduced and discussed as an exceptional composition. Apart from its art historical meaning this work appeals in many different ways to the general public, for instance as a religious work, as a "proto-cubist" enigma, etc. The museum must make the work accessible for this variety in the public interest, and should at the same time try to preserve the original devotional context in which the work originated.

The precise function of this work is not known. We ignore for whom or for what kind of environment it was made. It was bought from an English private collection in 1902 by the "Friends of the Museum" and given to the museum in the same year. When the panel underwent a thorough restoration in the 1950ies this process was supervised by an international committee, indicating that the importance of the painting surpassed the mere responsibility of the present owner, albeit a museum.

At this moment the panel is presented amidst other works of the same period with no particular emphasis on the work. There may be other ways to present the painting and to attract special attention to it. Solemn isolation of this one work in a special room is one solution, but it may destroy intimate contact which is now possible.

Jane Rice reports the history of Juan Sanchez Cotan still life kept in the San Diego Museum of Art "Quince, cabbage, melon, cucumber" one of the few documented still life of the artist. The composition showing only fruit and vegetable was an innovation. Living at the same period as Greco, Sanchez Cotan appears to be a novator in this piece painted around 1603 and which pendant is at Grenada. The San Diego's painted would come from Joseph Bonaparte's collection who would have confiscated it from the royal spanish collections. After this historical report, Jane Rice introduces this masterpiece in the museographic context of her museum.

Then, we talk about more general ideas with Tim Clifford's speach. Our friend asks at one the question : "is there an absolute masterpiece ? What idea can we have ?". Each great museum has got his : The Louvre with Mona Lisa, the Borghese Villa with Bernini, The Prado and his Velasquez. If the Art history admitts them as masterpiece, the idea of an absolute masterpiece varies according to the period. Thanks to Marcel Proust, a topographic painting "the Delft view" from Vermeer has become a world known masterpiece. Added to this touristic, archeological, economical reasons false our judgment. Then a subjective notion appears which doesn't satisfy anybody but the modern spirit of today sometimes lacking of critical sense when real selection notions are kept away.

Then Johann Georg Von Hohenzollern and Görel Cavalli Björkman gave us the following texts (cf. Annexes).

At last, Hans Belting synthetized the several speeches :

He addresses the topic of the masterpiece as it exists today, in a historical fashion. He is about to write a book on the subject which will cover the last two centuries. Accordingly, his talk was dedicated to the same period, beginning with the opening of the Louvre and ending with present days' movies. The museum, from the very beginning, was reserved for the cult of famous masterpieces, and at the same time resisted their independence from matters of chronology and art history. The shift from the art scene to the general public contributed to a wild growth of the absolute value of the classical work of art to which the poets and writers contributed on their part. The masterpiece soon symbolized old art and therefore was attacked by the avant-garde artists who first tried to emulate the masterpiece and then declared its further production impossible.

Today, the masterpiece is a target of memory and serves to define a category of works of art which underlie a number of definitions, such as :

- created by a famous artist
- owner of a famous history
- original of countless copies
- the big treasure of a museum
- a picture with a secret
- a painting with a disputed kontext and finally
- our last hope in the eternal life of art.

X X X

Our thoughts, after being interrupted by a day's trip in the prestigious hungarian sites to Danube, Zsambék, Esztergom, Visegrad and Szentendre, started again on the 16th of october by Marco Chiarini and Theodore Enescu's speechs. They gave thought about the Florence explosions felony and the Rumania events.

The recent explosion which occurred in Florence in the vicinity of the Galleria degli Uffizi and the two which followed in Rome, causing serious damage to San Giorgio in Velabro and St John Lateran, represent a new form of terrorism involving not only civilians and their places of work but directed also at works of art. The car-bomb which exploded behind the Uffizi building seems to have had this precise scope, even though the violence of the explosion caused the death of five persons and completely disrupted the homes, offices and shops of an entire street. Without going into the reasons for these terrorist attacks in Florence and Rome, our concern is to discover ways of preventing further disasters of this kind. The first problem naturally involves the protection of areas surrounding the most important monuments and museums (which are inevitably those most likely to attract attacks of this kind). Here one is faced with almost insurmountable difficulties insofar as the buildings which house most major Italian museums are not only in themselves historical edifices but nearly always situated in the city centre. The case in point involving the Uffizi shows how difficult it would be to create a structural defence around the building. An alternative would be to have a patrol constantly guarding the building night and day, but this solution also presents problems. Certain precautions might, to some extent, help to diminish the damage caused by explosions of this kind : the presence of bullet-proof glass covering the surface of may paintings prevented damage from the shattered glass of skylights and windows and might have saved the three painting (two painting by Honthorst and one by Manfredi), whose painted surface disintegrated as a result of the enormous pressure caused by the explosion. However, one must conclude that there is little one can do to discourage or foresee this kind of terrorist action, which may also be connected in some way with the war in Jugoslavia during which numerous historical and artistic buildings have been involved in destructive attacks.

The Bucarest Fine Arts Museum keeps more than 120 000 objects. It has suffered from the financial restrictions of the communism for several long years. On the 22nd-24th of December 89, some important events occured in Bucarest. It's the beginning of the Government defeat : some uncontrolled people of the Securitate enters the rooms and shoot everywhere and so in the crowd gathered on the Palace Place. The guns of the army answer back, shooting on the Museum, while the Securitate set on fire two XVII century's tapestries. The most important one is the fire of the painting restauration studio (25 paintings are destroyed). The library, the Medieval Art Department office and all the documentation were ruined. And over 200 paintings were shot though by bullets and shells. The museum was ruined. The long and expensive restauration are going to be undertaken by west European countries (France, Germany, Holland) and U.S.A. We only have now to rebuilt and hope for better days.



All the museums haven't the same problems. Alf Boe, Director for now 16 years of the Munch Museum in Oslo, keeps a number of exceptionnal masterpieces of this artist. This museum has been recently modernized and some exhibitions have been presented in Tokyo invited by the mecene Idemitsu. Three paintings are lent every year during 15 years in 3 different museums. The paintings are exhibited with stamps. The money obtained goes to a research institute. In spite of this gain, the museum is still looking for new financial partners.

Our meeting ends with this report. Françoise Baligand will give, for the last time, the financial report. The credit account is 19 995,61 FF. Viviane Huchard is elected treasurer. H. Van Os announces the next meeting will take place in Boston and Hartford at the end of october 94 with private museum visits. We will have to call for donation funds so that a larger number of participants may attend to it. Françoise Baligand proposes to work on the non-located masterpieces (triptics volets, documented masterpieces kept in private collections or disappeared after the wars). A publication with files will be dealt to the members of our Committee and to the searchers.

Before ending the meeting, the Chairman reminds that the french members are invited in 95 to come to the North France (Amiens, Lille, Douai, Valenciennes). This proposition is totally agreed.

Everybody promises to meet again next year.

Jacques KUHNMUNCH

Secretary of ICFA

P.S. : Concerning Th. Enescu and the Bucarest Fine Arts Museum, see the joined petition following his suspension.

Annex

## The absolute masterpiece - Alte Pinakothek München

In contrary to other great museums the Alte Pinakothek in Munich owns no painting which we could declare to be an absolute masterpiece. The Dresden Gallery has the Sixtina by Raphael, the Berlin Gallery in Dahlem "the Man with the Golden Helmet" formerly by Rembrandt, the Louvre the Mona Lisa, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam the Nightwatch etc. The Alte Pinakothek owns very many famous paintings among them the "Columba" altarpiece by Rogier van der Weyden, the Madonna Tempi by Raphael, the "Four Apostles" by Dürer, the "Battle of Alexander" by Albrecht Altdorfer, the "Honeysuckle-Bower", the "Battle of the Amazones" or the "Last Judgement" by Rubens and among many others the "Erasmus and Maurice" altarpiece by Matthias Grünewald. It is one of the outstanding masterpieces of the Early German school painted by Grünewald, whose real name was probably Mathis Neithardt Gothardt, or perhaps Mathis Neithard, called Gothardt. No artist amongst Dürers contemporaries has given such far-reaching speculation due to his largely unknown biography as Grünewald. The artist retreats behind his work in an almost medieval manner. From 1516 to 1526 he worked for Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg, Prince Elector and Archbishop of Mainz, Chancellor of the Holy Empire. The Erasmus-Maurice Altar entered the collection in Munich by the secularisation of the properties of the electors and archbishops of Mainz as a work by Albrecht Dürer. This was no wonder, because Grünewald as an artist was completely unknown in the beginning of the 19th century. Even if the era of Dürer and Grünewald is known as the age of Dürer, in some respects, the painterly quality of his work is superior to Dürer. Grünewalds sense of colour was far more developed and discriminated in a quite different way from that of Dürer, whose art was governed first and foremost by graphic concepts.

This panel formed part of the new altar furnishings for the collegiate church of St. Maurice and St. Mary Magdalen in Halle on the river Saale that Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg commissioned some time prior to 1525. Many other altars from different painters among them Lucas Cranach and his school have been placed at the

same time in the whole church. Most of them are conserved in the gallery of the Aschaffenburg castle which is under the administration of the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen. The panel presents the two saints Erasmus and Maurice together. The first was bishop of Antioch during the persecution of the Christians under Diocletian. His attribute is the windlass with which he was disembowled and martyred. Maurice was the leader of the Thebian Legion. A meeting between these two men, who both lived around 300 a.Chr., is not documented either in their biographies or in legend. There is thus something to be said for interpreting this painting as a depiction of Erasmus relieving Maurice the victorious leader of the Thebian Legion. The Erasmus cult, which was instigated by Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg, and the revival of the veneration of St. Maurice in Halle are now regarded by scholars as having provided the motive behind the commissioning of this panel. As far as we know Albrecht took care of every detail in all the paintings and works of art commissioned for Halle. Grünewalds contemporaries would have noticed that the artist portrayed St. Erasmus with the physiognomy of the ruling prince of the church, the chancellor of the Holy Empire at that time, Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg. Brother of the Elector Joachim I. Nestor of Brandenburg, Albrecht was one of the most powerful personalities in the Empire. His favourite residence was the Moritzburg in Halle. As a result of the advanced reformation in Magdeburg and Halle he changed his designated place of burial in 1540 from the Collegiate church in Halle to the cathedral of Mainz. This is the reason for the many works of art from Albrechts collection in Aschaffenburg castle, the summer residence of the Electors and Archbishops of Mainz. The crests of the bishoprics of Mainz, Magdeburg and Halberstadt conspicuously placed at his feet underline his important position in the Empire.

Albrecht has erected 1520 a silver statue of St. Maurice in the Collegiate church of Halle which resembles very much to the figure of the saint in the panel. Most probably Grünewald copied this statue for his painting. As recent research from Ulrich Steinmann has attempted to prove, there are probably allusions to contemporary events in this picture. The figure of Maurice, who

was also the patron of the Holy Empire, bears a victors laurels. He can be interpreted as an allusion to the highest representative of the Empire, Emperor Charles V., who had apparently worn the same equestrian armour on the statue and in the painting on the occasion of his entry into Aachen for his coronation as King in October 1520. Following a tradition he has given the armour to the city of Halle. Thus Charles V. in the figure of St. Maurice, is recieved by Albrecht, the Primate of the Empire, who had placed his personal influence behind the election of the Emperor, and who appears here in the form of St. Erasmus, the patron saint of the princeley house of Hohenzollern-Brandenburg. This magnificent picture is a homage to Charles V. who had emerged victorius from the election and who had hastened from distant Spain to Germany for his coronation. The other theories about the representation are not convincing: The meeting between the two Saints; the "Conversion of Maurice by Erasmus"; the "Christianing of Maurice by Erasmus"; the "Allegorie on the introduction of the cult of St. Maurice in Halle". After Louis Réau the two saints are "comme la personification de deux temperaments: Le Flegmatique et le Sanguin".

The juxtaposition of the two saints is particulary fascinating, contrasted even in the colour of their skins. This is achieved with the utmost sensibility for surface treatment and for rich colour values. The painting has been worked up on colour alone in an almost impressionist manner.

The painting still brises the medieval spirit of the great primitive german altarpieces from the 15th century and is in the same time a masterpiece of the german renaissance (which never really existed). The Four Apostles by Albrecht Dürer and the Erasmus and Maurice altar are probably the two most important monumental paintings in german art history. Even if the Grünewald altar never had the fame like the Sixtina or the Mona Lisa, it is regarding its history, its iconography and its importance for german art history, one of the most important masterpieces not only in the Alte Pinakothek.

Dr. Johann Georg Prinz von Hohenzollern

### Juan Sánchez Cotán

Spanish, 1560-1627

*Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber*, c. 1602

Oil on canvas

27 1/8 x 33 1/4 inches (69 x 84.5 cm)

Gift of Anne R. and Amy Putnam

1945:43

**Q***uince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber* is one of the most famous Spanish works of art in the United States. It is one of a small number of documented still lifes by the seventeenth-century still-life painter Juan Sánchez Cotán. At the time this picture was painted, still-life elements only appeared as decoration in paintings usually depicting religious or classical stories. This composition, which shows only fruits and vegetables, was a daring innovation. Sánchez Cotán would have been a leading figure in the avant-garde of his day and was a contemporary of El Greco.

*Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber* was painted in Toledo, Spain, sometime before 1603. At that time Toledo was the religious and intellectual capital of Spain. The picture is first mentioned in an inventory associated with the will Sánchez Cotán made prior to entering a Carthusian monastery. He became a lay brother in the charterhouse at Granada in 1603. It has been suggested that the austerity of Sánchez Cotán's still lifes is in some way associated with his religious calling. Whatever the connection it is certainly true that the Carthusians practiced contemplation and self-denial.

The subject is a small collection of fruit and vegetables arranged in a window setting, possibly a *cantarrera*, or "cooling space," in a Spanish house. The hanging fruit may look strange to modern eyes but in Spain at that time this was a common way of preserving produce from pests. All of the produce is ordinary, but Sánchez Cotán carefully considers the composition of his still life, arranging the fruits and vegetables in a precise curve that moves both vertically and horizontally. Descending objects project

successively outward until the cucumber, which extends over the ledge, seems to thrust forward into the viewer's space.

Another still life by Sánchez Cotán, in the Museum de Bellas Artes, Granada, might be considered a pendant to the San Diego Museum of Art piece, since it completes the curve begun in *Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber*. Yet another in the Art Institute of Chicago repeats the San Diego Museum of Art composition exactly but adds to the space four suspended birds, including a large duck and a partridge.

The San Diego Museum of Art painting has had an interesting history since its first mention in the inventory of 1603. In 1809 it seems to have been a part of a group of paintings confiscated from the Spanish Royal Collection by the French under the command of Joseph Bonaparte. When Joseph Bonaparte fled Spain in 1813 he took with him 1,500 wagon loads of booty. In 1815 he moved to New Jersey under the assumed name, "Comte de Survilliers," and a year later had a collection of some 200 paintings he had taken from Spain sent to him. Three years later in 1818 the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts displayed a work by Juan Sánchez Cotán entitled *Still Life-Quince, Cabbage, Melon, & C* [sic]. In 1844 Joseph Bonaparte died, and the following year, when his grandson began to sell off paintings belonging to the estate, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts again displayed a still life by Sánchez Cotán that was said to be for sale. After that time the painting disappeared for an entire century until it reappeared and was purchased by Anne R. and Amy Putnam for the San Diego Museum of Art.

H.W.

Annexes.

Jörel Cavalli, Björkman.

### A Masterpiece

Trying to choose one picture from Nationalmuseum, Stockholm I will consider three criteria:

- 1) The artistic quality of the picture
- 2) The national and historical significance of the picture.
- 3) The public appeal of the picture

Nationalmuseum has its strength in three areas, Netherlandish art of the 17th century, French art of the 18th century and Swedish art from the Renaissance onwards.

Hors concours in the Netherlandish collection is without any doubt Rembrandt's *Claudius Civilis*. One problem is, however, that the picture still officially belongs to the Royal Academy of Art.

An equivalent role in the French collection plays *The Triumph of Venus* by François Boucher which also symbolizes the close cultural ties that existed between France and Sweden in the 18th century.

To find one picture in the Swedish collection which is quite outstanding is more difficult. The artistic development in Sweden had two peaks, one during the second half of the 18th century, one at the end of the 19th. The most beloved Swedish picture might be Anders Zorn's *Midsummer Dance* which has its nostalgic associations to every Swede. But there are many options.

By mere coincidence the Nationalmuseum houses three pictures of utmost national importance for three countries:

Rembrandt's *Claudius Civilis* for the Netherlands  
Goya's *Spain, Time and History* for Spain and  
Pilo's *The Coronation of Gustavus III* for Sweden.

*Claudius Civilis*' importance is unquestionable. It depicts the oath made by the Batavians to rise against the Romans a parallel to the struggle for the liberty of the Netherlands and originally ordered for the town hall of Amsterdam. The history of Goya's picture is unfortunately unknown but it seems to commemorate the first democratic constitution of Spain in 1812. The constitution was painted in an insignificant little book that Spain holds in her right hand. Pilo's coronation of Gustavus III is to some extent a political document, ordered in 1777, five years after the coronation and begun in 1782, ten years after the event depicted. In 1772 the king had staged a bloodless revolution transferring the power to the king from the parliament. The political message was controversial and in 1792 the King was murdered by a representative of the opposition. The picture was never finished but is still one of the most important works of Swedish 18th century art.

In a Dutch Museum Rembrandt's *Claudius Civilis* would certainly have been chosen the Masterpiece of the museum as well as the Goya would have been in a Spanish. Although the *Coronation of Gustavus III* is executed by Sweden's most important painter of the 18th century the picture is met with more respect than esteem. It does not have the immediate appeal we are talking about here.

Turning to the third criterion, the public appeal of a picture a number of non artistic and non historical factors are of great importance.

It is obvious that a portrait of a sweet young girl or lady has great advantages. And she might preferably be a little mysterious. Mona Lisa is a good example. For Stockholm The Kitchen Maid by Rembrandt is a reliably cover-girl.

The question is however, if she is not outstripped by The Lady with the veil, or as she is described in an old inventory- a one-eyed female. This painting is executed by Alexander Roslin, a Swedish portrait painter spending most of his life in Paris, member of the French Academy of art and married to a charming young French woman, a painter herself. In Paris Roslin acted as a characteristic official portrait painter who knew how to flatter his models and who excelled in painting all expensive fabrics. His favourite model was his wife and this portrait The Lady with the veil from 1768 is by far his most successful painting. The painting belonged since the 18th century to a private collection, the Österby collection and it was discovered when it was lent to the museum for a large 18th century exhibition in 1942. Three years later it was given to the museum. It was on the cover of the Rococo catalogue in Munich some years ago and is now poster for the exhibition Le Soleil et l'Etoile du Nord to be shown at Grand Palais in Paris.

If I now make Roslin's lady my choice it is not, however, only because of its appeal to the public. Returning to my first criterion, the quality, it cannot of course compare with works by great international artists as Rembrandt, Rubens, Poussin or Watteau. On the other hand I feel that it would be relevant to choose a work by an exceptional Swedish artist and preferably one with an international appeal.

Roslin obviously takes pleasure in showing off his ability to give an illusion of rustling silk that contrasts against the soft sensual, half hidden face of the woman. The face liberates itself from a dark surrounding and our interest is concentrated to her visible eye, placed exactly on the counter-line of the picture. Her smile has a melancholic touch which intrigues the beholder and grants it an almost literary quality.

Characteristic of the painting, despite its sensuality, was the Nordic cool of which Diderot often accused Roslin. The Lady with the veil is unique in its kind; There are French and Italian influences but they are disciplined by the Swedish temperament.

Scrutinizing the national and historical significance of the picture may result in the same. The portrait has definitely a significance for my museum as a symbol of the close ties between France and Sweden in one of the most flowering periods of Swedish culture.