REMBRANDT ETCHINGS
Selections from The Carnegie Museum of Art
September 17 - October 22, 1995

OPENING RECEPTION: 2 - 4 P.M., SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

NORMAN -- The exhibition, "REMBRANDT ETCHINGS: Selections from The Carnegie Museum of Art" will be presented at The University of Oklahoma's Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, 410 W. Boyd St., September 17th through October 22nd. A public opening reception for the exhibition is scheduled from 2 - 4 p.m. on Sunday, September 17th. The exhibition is organized by The American Federation of Arts and the Carnegie Museum of Art. The exhibition program of The American Federation of Arts is supported in part by the J. Carter Brown Fund for Exhibitions established by the AFA in 1992. The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art is the final site of the exhibition's national tour, with local support provided by Liberty Bank.

Selected by guest curator Dr. Kahren Arbittman, Director of the Palmer Museum of Art at The Pennsylvania State University, the 51 etchings represent Rembrandt's graphic achievements in both depth of subject matter and quality. Rembrandt almost single-handedly elevated etching to an art form worthy of universal acclaim by producing approximately 290 masterful etchings that explored the expressive potential of the then relatively new medium.

"The Rembrandt exhibition is a unique and very special event. It is a chance of a lifetime opportunity for Oklahomans to take time to see the art work of one of the most important and influential artists in the history of art," said Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art Director, Thomas R. Toperzer. He went on to say that it was an honor for the Museum of Art to have been selected as a location for the exhibition's limited national tour. To extend the honor to President David L. Boren's inauguration, the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art is providing an accompanying exhibition, "THE INAUGURAL EXHIBITION OF DAVID L. BOREN: 13th President of the University of Oklahoma," which offers works of art selected by the Director, reflecting the excellence of the Museum of Art's Permanent Collection.

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In the exhibition, “REMBRANDT ETCHINGS: Selections from The Carnegie Museum of Art,” the landscapes, portraits, religious and mythological scenes, as well as the genre subjects from different stages of Rembrandt's career offer the viewer an opportunity to appreciate the artist's development as a printmaker. This exhibition includes outstanding impressions of his two greatest works, The Hundred Guilder Print and The Three Crosses which exemplify the height of his artistic achievement.

The majority of the works in this exhibition were collected by Charles J. Rosenbloom, whose gift to The Carnegie Museum of Art forms the nucleus of its old master print collection. As a collector, Rosenbloom concentrated on the finest printmakers of all eras and appears to have favored etching above other media.

Rembrandt, a consummate draftsman of thousands of drawings, was attracted to the process of etching because it offers spontaneity by drawing directly through a resin-covered surface of a copper plate. Acid is used to cut the lines into the plate. Rembrandt’s mastery of the medium is apparent in his technical inventiveness and stylistic finesse.

Using the etching needle like a paintbrush or pen, Rembrandt created lines that flowed in varying thickness across his plates. Beyond the traditional techniques of hatching and cross-hatching, Rembrandt used dashes, scratches and flecks to create texture and tone. He also experimented with the darkness of his line to achieve tonal variation. The artist immersed some of his drawn lines for longer periods in the acid bath; these more deeply “bitten” lines held more ink and printed more darkly. In addition, he explored the effects of drypoint, an etching technique used to create velvety black textures and impenetrable shadows. The artist’s innovative combination of etching, drypoint and occasionally even engraving on a single plate, gave his compositions a pictorial quality never before seen in a printed work.

Rembrandt could have easily devoted his career to etching portraits, landscapes, genre scenes or any other specialties preferred by the majority of seventeenth-century Dutch patrons, but he consciously chose a different path which included, what was to him, the highest form of art: histories - work that depicted mythological, historical and/or religious subjects.

Over the five decades of his artistic career, Rembrandt altered his graphic style to reflect his changing artistic objectives. His first accomplished etchings from the early 1630s illustrate his virtuosity through minute details and rapid assimilation of exuberant Baroque compositions with dazzling lighting effects. By the end of the decade, Rembrandt’s mastery of the medium eased his dependence on this flamboyant style.

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In the 1640s, Rembrandt's etched forms became simpler, until by 1650, the curvilinear forms yielded completely to stable, block-like structures. His style evolved into harmonious, balanced compositions organized into receding parallel layers with an emphasis on overall structure. In most cases, the later etchings are smaller in format, sparer in detail and focus on the interrelationship of a handful of protagonists. In his last works, Rembrandt used emphatic lines to capture the spirituality of a religious scene or the personality of a sitter. The artist became more concerned with the psychological states of his Biblical and historical character capturing, as never before or since, the phenomenon of human interaction with the divine.

The exhibitions and reception are free and open to the public. The Museum of Art is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; Thursdays 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays 12 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. (Game days: 10 a.m. to kickoff.) Free parking passes, usable in the reserved spaces on the north ends of the Parrington (north) Oval, can be obtained at the museum's security desk. For further information or to make arrangements for group tours, please call (405) 325-3272. Accommodation on the basis of disability can be made by calling (405) 325-3272.