

*Here's the company you keep! And "Fo" " " will keep: Your new ones - the Palisiers who have your address, 7 year old one, Jeff*

## Art Museums

### Best

**Jacob van Ruisdael** (Fogg Art Museum)

**Thomas Eakins: Artist of Philadelphia** (Museum of Fine Arts)

**Drawings by Gianlorenzo Bernini** (Museum of Fine Arts)

**Design for Living: African Art in Boston Collections** (Carpenter Center)

**Marcantonio Raimondi** (Wellesley College Art Museum)

**Frank Stella: From Start to Finish** (Addison Gallery, Andover)

**Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Centennial Exhibition** (Fogg Art Museum)

**Flora Natapoff** (Brockton Art Museum)

**The Visionary Art of William Blake** (Fogg Art Museum)

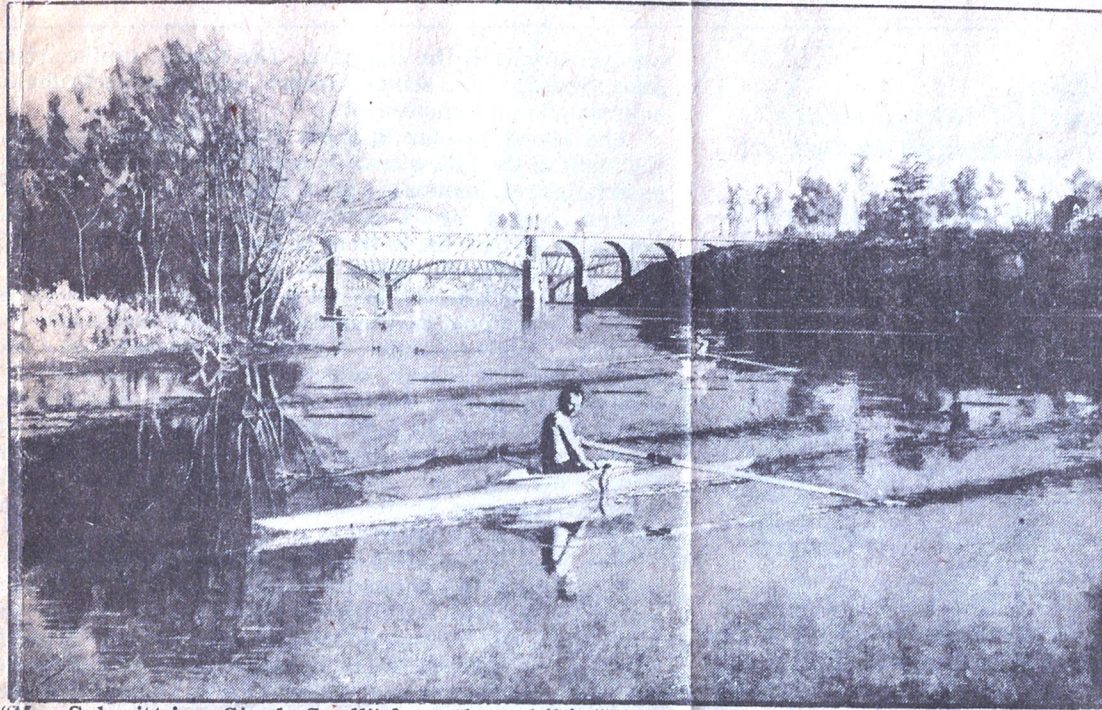
**Twentieth Century Art from the Judith Rothschild Collection** (Wellesley College Art Museum)

By Robert Taylor  
Globe Staff

No doubt the five worst major museum exhibitions exist. I didn't see them in 1982. They would have been useful to me on the grounds that sin is generally more dramatic than sensibility; but, in compensation at least, one can thereby cite the 10 best.

Four years of preparation went into the breathtaking Jacob van Ruisdael show at the Fogg, the first retrospective anywhere of the great 17th-century Dutch landscape painter. The impeccable choice of 56 oils, 30 drawings and all 13 etchings, involved 66 European and American museums as well as private holdings on the order of the Buckingham Palace Ruisdael.

After three centuries of changing taste, Ruisdael emerged not only as a precursor of romanticism's somber, exalted and meditative responses to nature - the standard interpretation - but in the scope provided here, as part of the first flight of Dutch painting, with Rembrandt, Hals and Vermeer.



"Max Schmitt in a Single Scull" from the exhibit "Thomas Eakins: Artist of Philadelphia" at the Museum of Fine Arts.

Combining the perspective drawings, the photographs, the masterly paintings, the genre studies, the equine sculpture and other facets of prodigious and prodigiously gifted artist, the Thomas Eakins exhibition at the MFA marked the first in-depth appearance of Eakins' work in Boston. "The Gross Clinic" of 1875, surely one of the highlights of all American painting, was included; and the total experience of the retrospective was often poignant in its revelation of a talent warring and winning over its limitations and the restrictions placed on it by society.

The Gianlorenzo Bernini at the MFA contained 80 drawings by the architect, playwright, theater designer and master of ceremonies for civic celebration, whose ultimate monument is the city of Rome. Drawing shows are additionally expressions of a private sensibility, owing to the intimate character of the medium, but Bernini's drawings - explorations of optical visual problems - relate to his architectural and sculptural achievements, and seek to involve the spectator at every turn.

Who would have suspected the Boston area contained so much vibrant African art? Selected

by Monni Adams, the Carpenter Center Design for Living display was handsomely mounted and lit, and its masks, tapestries, raffia garments, small carvings, thrones and fetishes testified both to the quality of African art and the way in which Africans used art to define themselves, their environment and the cosmos.

Marcantonio Raimondi revolutionized engraving, but never created a single original work of his own, so for generations after the Italian Renaissance, Marcantonio existed merely as a gatherer of other men's flowers. The sumptuous Wellesley show, which revealed how art can be made out of art, also demonstrated that he went beyond reproduction and produced personal and enduring creative statements.

When an artist has reached the eminence of Frank Stella, he is inevitably the target of detractors. But in the Addison Gallery exhibition of his recent work, selected by himself and not by a curator or critic, he revealed how possible it is for a successful artist to keep on producing original and serious work, regardless of the pressures of the marketplace and of celebrity. The qualities of Stella's mind inform his vision as intensely as ever.

The Dante Gabriel Rossetti exhibit at the Fogg provided a chance to encounter the poet-painter as his contemporaries viewed him. By the standards of today, Rossetti often seems bizarre; but here, despite his eccentricities, his sentimentalism, his flashiness, one could perceive why, in the complacency of a drab, dull industrial era, men and women looked to the artistry and idealism of Rossetti as to a torch in a swirling smog.

Flora Natapoff's mixed media pictures convey the gestures of cityscapes, the skewed turbulence of traffic, the off-center tilt of girders, using torn and cut-out papery shapes. At the Brockton Art Museum, her collage-paintings, for all the complexity of their parts, are organized on an ample scale with a formal but dynamic authority.

The size of the William Blake show at the Fogg - works from the final seven years of Blake's life, including the Job engravings and illustrations for Dante - enabled one to comprehend the majesty of Blake's vision, and the crisp, clear organization was a model of interaction between art and text.

The Judith Rothschild Collection at the Wellesley College Art Museum offered a welcome, and rare, opportunity to study several key cubists in the development of modernism, especially Juan Gris, seldom seen here. The collection, which portrays the spread of cubism as an international force, also had in it Mondrians, Gontcharovas and Picassos - an inspiring group.

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99

*P.S. I lunched w/ the Palisiers w/ Stanley. It's not mad to think that we're separate paths*