

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
WASHINGTON, D. C.

FOR RELEASE
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David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that the Board of Trustees had accepted the gift of two important paintings, The White Girl and L'Andalouse by James Abbot McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), from the Harris Whittemore Collection. The gift was made by the J. H. Whittemore Company, Harris Whittemore, Jr., President, of Naugatuck, Connecticut.

These paintings, which have been at the National Gallery on loan, add two outstanding works to the Gallery's growing collection of masterpieces by great American artists. Both are full length portraits, and each is a superlative example, one of Whistler's early and the other of his later periods. They have been, for many years, among the most famous works of art in the Harris Whittemore Collection. That collection was formed by the late Mr. Harris Whittemore during the last decade of the Nineteenth and the early years of the Twentieth Centuries. Mr. Whittemore was a collector, not only of works by Whistler but also by Mary Cassatt, who was a friend of the family and painted several family portraits. He was a pioneer in bringing to this country the finest examples of French Impressionist painting.

Mr. Whittemore had met Whistler in Paris in 1892, and afterward, on his return to this country in 1896, bought The White Girl which was then, as now, one of the most famous of all Whistler's works. Finished in 1862, this portrait has been shown in many important exhibitions. The model who posed for the picture was "Jo" - Joanna Heffernan, an Irish woman of striking beauty and keen intelligence, who is portrayed in many of Whistler's early works. She also posed for Courbet. The painting was first exhibited in 1863 in a place of honor at the revolutionary Salon des Refusés along with Manet's Déjeuner sur l'Herbe and other early Impressionist paintings. Zola writes that the portrait was ridiculed by the crowd, but it was well received by many art critics, one of whom termed it a "Symphony in White." This phrase Whistler subsequently used as a title for a number of his compositions in which white predominates. The White Girl is the first important expression of Whistler's characteristic interest in tonal harmonies; and in the choice and handling of white as the dominant note, it is an extraordinary achievement.

L'Andalouse, one of Whistler's finest full length portraits, was painted some thirty years later than The White Girl. The subject is Mrs. Charles Whibley, née Ethel Birnie Philip, Whistler's sister-in-law. After the death of his wife in 1896, the artist lived with his mother-in-law, and her daughters,

Rosalind and Ethel (Mrs. Whibley), who nursed him during the lingering illness of his last years. The present painting dates from this period and was first exhibited in 1900.

Just as The White Girl is characteristic of Whistler's early style, L'Andalouse reveals the shadowy forms of his paintings of the eighties and nineties. Whistler defended the quiet coloring of his late portraits in an interesting letter in which he says, "Could the people be induced to turn their eyes but for a moment upon their fellow creatures as they pass in the gallery they might be made dimly to perceive how little they resemble the impudent images on the walls! how quiet in color they are ! how grey! how low in tone'." L'Andalouse is one of the most felicitous demonstrations of Whistler's theory of subdued color and adumbrated form.