

NEWS RELEASE

National Gallery of Art
Washington, D. C.

RELEASE:

Immediate

WASHINGTON, February 16: ^{HH} David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that the Gallery has opened an additional room of paintings on the main exhibition floor.

Along with several masterpieces from the Mellon and Chester Dale Collections, which have heretofore been exhibited at the Gallery, the new room will show four superb eighteenth-century landscapes, two by Canaletto, loaned by Mrs. Cary Grant, of Beverly Hills, California, and two, a Canaletto and a Guardi, which were included in the original gift to the Gallery made by Mr. Joseph E. Widener. These four paintings have just been brought to Washington, and are now being shown for the first time.

According to John Walker, Chief Curator of the National Gallery of Art, "Mrs. Grant's paintings are among the largest canvases executed by Canaletto and illustrate brilliantly the endless pageantry that marked the declining years of the Venetian Republic. They indicate how Venice, having lost its position as a world power, became in the eighteenth century, what it has been ever since, the pleasure resort of Europe. One landscape loaned by Mrs. Grant shows a fete at the entrance to the Grand Canal with the massive architecture of the Customs House framing the composition on the left and the middle distance filled with that marvelous group of buildings which together form one of the world's most beautiful waterfronts, the Bacino di San Marco."

"The second scene represents a more unusual subject, the court of the Ducal Palace. The court is filled with a long procession of the Venetian nobility richly apparelled in honor of the arrival of a Papal Legate. Few works display more vividly Canaletto's specific gifts: his ability to render deep space, not only through perspective, but also through subtle variations of tone, and his skill in organizing a complex mass of detail with amazing truth to the facts of vision."

"The landscape by Canaletto from the Widener Collection," Mr. Walker added, "though smaller, is also exceptionally fine in quality. It represents the Piazza San Zanipolo and forms an interesting contrast to the treatment of the same scene by Guardi in the Kress Collection at the National Gallery."

"The fourth of the landscapes now shown for the first time in the National Gallery, the Guardi View of the Rialto, from the Widener Collection, also offers an opportunity to compare the work of Canaletto and that of his great rival. Guardi's sketchy handling, his nervous touch, give a more instantaneous effect than was achieved by Canaletto, particularly in suggesting people in movement. Guardi's technique is wonderfully suited to interpret the strange, aqueous life of Venice, for his scenes are as impalpable and fleeting as images reflected in water.

Both Canaletto and Guardi learned much from the Renaissance masters. The Finding of Moses by Paolo Veronese from the Mellon Collection, which hangs on the same wall with the Guardi and Canaletto from the Widener Collection, proves that the great tradition of Venetian painting lingered on in the afterglow of the late eighteenth century. The Spanish paintings shown in the same room indicate the wide dissemination of Venetian influence."

The new gallery of Venetian and Spanish painting will be open indefinitely.