

Mrs. Thomas

NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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WASHINGTON, February 19: Further loans from the collection of Mr. C. S. Gulbenkian to the National Gallery of Art were announced today by the Director, David E. Finley. Mr. Finley said that in addition to the important and distinguished examples of Egyptian sculpture recently announced, Mr. Gulbenkian, at the request of the United States Government, has very generously sent to Washington for an indefinite period a part of his superb collection of French eighteenth century works of art. This loan will be on display, beginning Sunday, February 20, in a special gallery on the ground floor of the museum. "Thus the American public will have a further opportunity to appreciate the connoisseurship of this distinguished collector and to enjoy the beautiful and unique works of art which he has sent to Washington", Mr. Finley added.

The outstanding item in the group of books, all of which came from the Cortlandt Bishop Collection, is the famous edition of Molière's works, 1734, in six volumes in a contemporary red morocco binding. Describing these books, John Walker, Chief Curator of the Gallery, said that they contain five original sanguine drawings by François Boucher of characters in Molière's plays. Added at the beginning of Volume I are two interesting documents, one bearing the rare signature of Molière, the other a receipt filled out in manuscript by the widow of Molière, Armande-Grisinde Béjart.

"Mention should also be made", Mr. Walker said, "of an edition of Longus' Daphnis and Chloë", one of the most celebrated bindings of the eighteenth century, lent by Mr. Gulbenkian. It is signed with Monnier's name in four places. Of this famous family of bookbinders, it seems likely that the Longus binding was made by Jean Charles Henri Monnier, binder to the Duc d'Orleans. The fantastic design of the birds outlined in gold, and the perfection of the workmanship, make this one of the most inventive and exquisite examples of eighteenth century craftsmanship."

"Another important addition to Mr. Gulbenkian's collection of books is the copy of Tasso's La Gerusalemme Liberata, 1771, containing sixty-eight original drawings by Gravelot. Gravelot was among the most gifted and charming of eighteenth century illustrators, and these designs for Tasso show him at his best."

Mr. Gulbenkian has also sent to the National Gallery a set of three pieces of furniture from the collection of Baron Nathaniel de Rothschild designed by Charles Cressent (1685 - 1768). "Cressent was more than a designer of furniture", Mr. Walker continued, "he was also a sculptor. The two medal cabinets and the writing table are really a setting for their gilt bronze figures. Perhaps more than any French sculptor of the time Cressent, the great cabinet maker, captured the grace and charm of the paintings of his friend Watteau, and these examples of his inventiveness and craftsmanship from his middle and late periods show him at the peak of his achievement."

As additional decoration for the room in which these loans are being shown, Mr. Gulbenkian has lent a celebrated Syrian (Arabic) bottle of the fourteenth century. It is interesting to note how a work characteristic of the summit of sophisticated court life in the Near East harmonizes with the decorative arts of the equally sophisticated court of Louis Quinze. This is further proof that works of art of supremely high quality often compliment and enhance each other's beauty, though their creation may be widely separated in time and place."