

Mr. Cairns

February 11, 1950

NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

FOR RELEASE: Sunday papers,  
February 12, 1950

WASHINGTON, February 11: David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announces the gift of a rare painting representing the Madonna and Child Enthroned, Byzantine School, XIII Century, bequeathed to the Gallery by the late Mrs. Otto Kahn of New York.

Painted on wood panel by a Greek artist who worked perhaps at Constantinople or in Italy, it is so closely related in style to another painting of the same subject in the Mellon Collection of the National Gallery of Art that some critics have suggested that they are by the same hand. Until 1920 both panels were in a convent in Calahorra, Aragon, Spain, where they had evidently been for centuries. Writing of the unknown author of these two pictures, Bernhard Berenson said that he knew of "nothing before Giotto, in Italy, to be compared with the beauty of form and color, and with the perfect technique of this painter."

National Gallery of Art

The Madonna, who holds the Child on her left arm, is seated on an elaborately carved and painted wooden throne, her feet resting upon a low footstool. Her dark blue cloak hangs in graceful folds heavily accented in gold according to the Byzantine conventional treatment of drapery. The Christ Child, whose right hand is raised in a gesture of blessing while his left grasps a scroll, is clothed in a scarlet robe similarly heightened with gilding. In the upper portion of the panel are two circular medallions with busts of angels clad in jeweled vestments, each bearing an orb and scepter. The sumptuous decorative effect of the picture is further enhanced by the gold background.

# # #