

Mr. Cairns

NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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WASHINGTON, October 7: David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that an important group of European paintings from the Gulbenkian Collection would be placed on view at the National Gallery on October 8th for an indefinite period. Mr. Finley expressed appreciation, on behalf of the Trustees and Officers of the Gallery, to Mr. Gulbenkian for sending to Washington so many treasures from the great collection of works of art which he has brought together over a period of many years. "His loan of distinguished examples of Egyptian sculpture, which he sent to the National Gallery two years ago, fills an important gap in the Gallery's collection of sculpture," Mr. Finley said. "His loan of eighteenth-century drawings adds greatly to the Gallery's resources in that field. And now he has sent many of his finest paintings, including rare and beautiful masterpieces which have not heretofore been seen in this country. It is a very generous gesture on Mr. Gulbenkian's part and one that will be deeply appreciated by the American people."

In commenting on the Gulbenkian Collection, John Walker, Chief Curator of the National Gallery of Art, stated that in his opinion it was one of the greatest collections formed in the twentieth century. The group of forty paintings sent to Washington represents only one part of a collection which includes many other pictures, sculpture, ancient coins, Near Eastern ceramics, manuscripts, eighteenth-century furniture, tapestries, and other types of art.

Thirty of the pictures to be shown at the National Gallery of Art were selected from Mr. Gulbenkian's Collection by Sir Kenneth Clark for an exhibition at the National Gallery in London where they remained on view, except during the war, from 1936 to 1950. Ten paintings were added later and, though also shown at the National Gallery in London, do not appear in the catalogue prepared for the original exhibition. When the pictures left England the London Times in an editorial said: "Important as are the examples of the great French impressionists, however, it is in the older masters that the greatest strength of Mr. Gulbenkian's collection lies. When the loan (which has since been considerably enlarged) was first seen in July, 1936, it caused great astonishment that a living collector should have been able to bring together so many paintings of such high quality and often of such notable provenance."

None of the paintings have been seen in America before except those which Mr. Gulbenkian acquired from American collectors, the most famous of which is probably the Boy Blowing Bubbles, by Manet, which once belonged to Mr. Adolphe Lewisohn of New York.

"Mr. Gulbenkian has acquired his paintings from some of the greatest public and private collections," Mr. Walker said. "He was one of the first private collectors to persuade the Soviet Government to sell a number of supreme treasures from the Hermitage Gallery in Leningrad. The jewel-like Annunciation, by Dierick Bouts, for example, was acquired from Russia in 1929, and the famous portrait of Helena Fourment, by Rubens, the noble Pallas Athena and the profound study of an Old Man Seated, by Rembrandt, which were among the masterpieces bought by Catherine the Great for her private Gallery, were added to the Gulbenkian Collection in 1930. Also from Russia come the two fascinating scenes in the Park of Versailles during the transformation of the gardens from the formal style of Le Nôtre to the Romantic fashion associated with England. These pictures were painted by Hubert Robert, who in 1778 held the title of Designer of the King's Gardens."

Another important painting from a European public collection is the Fête Galante, by Lancret, which was acquired by Frederick the Great of Prussia and was once to be seen in the Neues Palais, in Potsdam. Also Cupid and the Graces, which

was cited by Bürger a century ago as the supreme example of the clarity of Boucher's early style, once belonged to the founder of a famous public collection, Sir Richard Wallace.

Many of the eighteenth-century French paintings come from the various branches of the Rothschild family. Of these the most celebrated is probably a portrait of Duval de l'Épinoay by La Tour. When it was shown at the Salon of 1745, Duchesne wrote that it was "le roy des portraits de La Tour", and Mariette that it was "le triomphe de la peinture au pastel", judgments which are still accepted by connoisseurs.

The earliest pictures in the Gulbenkian loan are of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These include the Dierick Bouts already mentioned, a very beautiful example by the rare artist Stefan Lochner, and three Italian paintings, two from Venice by Cima and Carpaccio, and a Florentine portrait by Ghirlandaio, which Van Marle considered "among the most charming visions that have been preserved to us from the Quattrocento".

The latest paintings are from the nineteenth century in France and include works by Corot, Degas, Manet, Monet and Renoir. The painting by Renoir is a portrait of Madame Monet lying on a sofa, an enchanting study of the first wife of Monet, who was his model before they married and who shared with him hardship and penury.

"Mr. Gulbenkian himself selected his works of art only after long consideration," Mr. Walker said. "Connoisseurship

has been his consuming passion. Those who have known him only in the world of affairs, as one of the greatest oil magnates of our time, would be surprised to hear him comparing their business dealings to great or, as the case may be, to mediocre Italian paintings! In an extraordinary sense Mr. Gulbenkian's life is merged with his collection and his collection with his life."

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