

Mrs. Cairns (S.G.)

December 19, 1951

NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
WASHINGTON, D. C.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, December 20: David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today the gift of three paintings to the Gallery by the late Sam A. Lewisohn. They are Oarsmen at Chatou by Renoir, The Bathers by Gauguin, and Mending the Harness by Ryder.

"Mr. Lewisohn was a most discriminating collector," Mr. Finley said, "with a brilliant mind and a deep love and understanding of art, as reflected not only in his choice of paintings, but in his writings about art and artists. We are happy to have him represented in the collection of the National Gallery by the two beautiful French paintings by Renoir and Gauguin, and by the painting by Ryder, which gives to the Gallery a second example of the work of this distinguished American artist."

John Walker, Chief Curator of the National Gallery, in discussing these paintings remarked that Oarsmen at Chatou, painted in 1879, expressed the delight in everyday life which characterized the work of the Impressionist painters. "Renoir has shown his friend and patron, Monsieur Caillebotte, ready to embark for an outing on the Seine. It is as though we were witnessing a prelude to the picnic immortalized two years later in the famous canvas in the Phillips Memorial Gallery, where Monsieur Caillebotte also holds the center of the scene. During these years, 1879, 1880, and 1881," Mr. Walker continued, "Renoir developed to their utmost expression those theories of brilliant color, of swiftly flowing brushwork, and of the fusion of landscape and figures, which were the lasting contribution of Impressionism. Into this style of his own generation he also wove the debonair gaiety of Watteau. In some ways Oarsmen at Chatou suggests a 19th century version of The Embarkation for Cythera."

"To find that joyousness, which Renoir saw all around him, Gauguin turned to more primitive people," Mr. Walker observed. "The Bathers offers a glimpse of a Polynesian world far removed from the environs of Paris, which the Impressionists loved to paint. In this canvas, figures move in graceful symmetry against a background of tropical foliage to form flat arabesques, like the patterns on an Eastern textile. The painting was finished in 1897 when Gauguin, working at Tahiti, was at the height of his powers."

It would be hard to find a greater contrast to the two preceding canvases than the third picture bequeathed to the Gallery by Mr. Lewisohn. It is a painting by Albert Ryder of a farmer mending the harness of a hay cart stalled along a country road. The entire painting is executed in shades of brown. As Mr. Lewisohn himself has written, "With Ryder the rural scene in America and the salt of the seascape has almost an American tang." Unfortunately, Ryder's thick and varied impasto has often tended to crack and darken, the original glow to die away. But luckily the painting from the Lewisohn Collection is an exception. It is in a remarkable state of preservation when compared with most of Ryder's paintings. Mending the Harness will further enrich Washington's unique representation of the work of America's most poetic artist.

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