

Mrs. Cairns

NEWS RELEASE

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ITALIAN GIRL BY COROT
GIVEN TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 3: David E. Finley, Director, announced today that the National Gallery of Art has acquired an important painting by the French artist Corot (1796-1875) entitled, Italian Girl, the gift of the Avalon Foundation through the generosity of Mrs. Ailsa Mellon Bruce. The painting has been placed on exhibition in Gallery 76.

The painting measures just over 25 inches in height and nearly 22 inches in width, and is signed at the lower right. It was painted late in the artist's career, in 1872. In the authoritative work on Corot by Alfred Robaut, who knew the artist personally, this painting is described and reproduced (no. 2146). The author notes that the painting was "lightly retouched by Corot, especially in the background, at the time he delivered it to its purchaser, in 1874."

The picture is characteristic of the figure paintings of the last decade of the artist's long and productive life, when his subjects seem infused with a haunting melancholy. Here the heavily shadowed eyes gaze directly from the canvas with a brooding intensity. The figure itself is boldly geometric in its pyramidal composition, broken only by the angular left arm resting upon the horizontal table top. In comparison with the sharp outlines of earlier works, contours have been softened and made less distinct. In these mature works the rich, sensuous color is brushed on with deceptively casual facility. The pearly whites of the bodice contrast with the warm flesh tones of face and hands, while the apron with its variegated pattern of coral red and blue-greens is in lively juxtaposition to the lustrous black of the dress. Accents are provided by the yellow kerchief capping the raven hair, the large earrings and the necklace of white shells. The figure is placed against a background with the barest suggestion of leafy trees in the manner of those late woodland scenes which overshadowed, in popular appeal, the consummate artistry of Corot's figure paintings.

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