

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D. C.

There will be a special pre-view for the Press on Thursday, February 9, and Friday, February 10, 1956 - between the hours of 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. You are cordially invited to attend. Please come to the office of the Assistant Director, Macgill James, Room 64C.

Long

NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
WASHINGTON, D. C.

REpublic 7-4215 - ext. 245

FOR RELEASE: Sunday Papers
February 19, 1956

WASHINGTON, February 18: David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that an important group of 70 paintings and 24 pieces of sculpture, which has been acquired in the last five years by the late Mr. Samuel H. Kress and by Mr. Rush H. Kress and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, has been sent to the National Gallery on loan and will be placed on public exhibition on Sunday, March 18th.

This exhibition has been arranged as part of the celebration of the Fifteenth Anniversary of the opening of the National Gallery of Art, which took place on March 17, 1941. Many of the works of art in this exhibition may later be offered to the Gallery as gifts, to become part of the Samuel H. Kress Collection.

In this group are many masterpieces of Italian art, such as the beautiful Madonna and Child by Ghirlandaio, two of Titian's greatest portraits, Doge Andrea Gritti, and Admiral Vincenzo Capello, Tintoretto's Conversion of St. Paul, and outstanding works by Veronese, and El Greco. Especially interesting is a ceiling painting by Titian, the only work of its kind outside of Venice. A room is being arranged so that this painting may be seen on a ceiling as originally intended.

The German paintings in the loan exhibition are no less extraordinary than the Italian. They include such rare Primitives as the Master of Saint Veronica and the Master of the Saint Bartholomew Altar, and later masters such as Baldung Grien, Cranach, and Holbein. The greatest of the German acquisitions, the Small Crucifixion by Mathis Grünewald is, from the point of view of rarity and emotional intensity, the outstanding German painting in America. A contemporary of Dürer, Grünewald surpassed him in expressive power.

Especially notable are the French paintings. These include one of the two signed works by François Clouet. It has been thought to represent Diane de Poitiers in her bath. A curator of the Louvre has recently described this panel as "one of the chief masterpieces of French Art." There are also a number of remarkable paintings from the eighteenth century, among them Watteau's Ceres or Summer. Of the four paintings of the seasons which the youthful Watteau executed for the dining room of Pierre Crozat's mansion in Paris, this alone

has survived. Two other decorative paintings of great beauty are the large canvases by Fragonard, which are considered the most impressive compositions he ever attempted.

Remarkable also are four eighteenth-century French portraits. The earliest, by Nattier, is of the Baron de la Mosson, an amateur naturalist and a representative figure of the Age of Reason. It was shown in the Salon of 1746, and was judged Nattier's outstanding masterpiece in this, one of his most important exhibitions. The next in date is a portrait of the painter, Hubert Robert, by his friend, Fragonard. It is a gay, cheerful painting. Here there is no indication of the coming Revolution. When the Revolution came, it seems to have affected even human physiognomy, judging from another important Kress acquisition, David's portrait of his wife, who gazes at the spectator with hard and calculating eyes. David himself was the Talleyrand of painters. Nothing could be more flattering than his likeness of Napoleon, which was lent last summer by the Kress Foundation to the Paris exhibition, "Salute to France," and is one of the great masterpieces in the present exhibition. Curiously enough, the portrait was commissioned by a Scottish peer, the Duke of Hamilton.

In the field of sculpture the new Kress loans bring to this country one of the most important groups of Italian Gothic and Renaissance sculpture to cross the ocean. Outstanding are the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Annunciate by Nino Pisano, two life-size polychromed wood figures wonderfully preserved.

Six smaller Gothic figures and a Renaissance relief by Benedetto da Maiano come from the Liechtenstein Collection. From a later period is a bronze candlestick in the form of a winged figure. It is attributed to Francesco di Giorgio and was formerly in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin. Two busts by Alessandro Vittoria also come from a European museum, in this case the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. Another great masterpiece is the bust by Bernini from the Barberini Collection.

Another feature of the March 17th exhibition will be the new installation of the Dreyfus Bronze Collection, which was acquired by the Kress Foundation some years ago. This is one of the two largest collections in the world of Renaissance medals, plaquettes, and small bronzes. A very beautiful installation has been arranged in three rooms specially prepared for this exhibit on the ground floor.

As in the case of paintings, the Kress Foundation has acquired important French sculpture. There is a statue of Louis XIV by Martin Desjardins and busts of Monseigneur Le Grand Dauphin by Coysevox and the Duc de Bourgogne by an unknown French sculptor of the first half of the eighteenth century.

Outstanding is the portrait of Cagliostro by Houdon, a recent gift to the Gallery from the Kress Foundation and not heretofore exhibited. An engraving after the bust was used by Carlyle for his description of Cagliostro, who had, as the Scottish historian said, "the most perfect quack face produced by the eighteenth century."

Of the recent gifts from the Kress Foundation some were temporarily exhibited on loan in 1951; others have been acquired since that time and have never previously been shown at the Gallery. The latter numbering 13 gifts will be temporarily grouped together for the March exhibition in Gallery 41 before being permanently installed with the earlier donations in the Kress Collection. Included in this group are two famous Florentine paintings: a portrait by Botticelli of Giuliano de' Medici, in many ways his greatest portrait, and the Dreyfus Madonna which has been ascribed by many critics to Leonardo da Vinci. Another important work from the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Rebecca at the Well by Paolo Veronese, is also included. Other paintings not previously shown are by Cimabue, Paolo Veneziano, Altdorfer, Zurbarán, and Van Dyck.

In addition there will be placed on exhibition on March 17 a group of paintings and sculpture which has been acquired by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation in recent years and has been given to the National Gallery since 1951. This great gift includes 99 paintings and 22 pieces of sculpture, many of which were shown for a short time at the Tenth Anniversary celebration in 1951. These works of art have now been installed permanently in the rooms occupied by the Kress Collection.

Among them is the beautiful tondo of The Nativity by Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo Lippi, acquired by the Kress Foundation from the Cook Collection in England, the Benozzo Gozzoli

Dance of Salome, a Botticelli Madonna and Child, two paintings by Mantegna, works by Bellini, Titian, Tintoretto, and Tiepolo. Among the greatest of these Italian paintings is the Holy Family from the Benson Collection which was catalogued in 1951 as Venetian School (possibly Giorgione). After studies made possible by the Giorgione exhibition in Venice last summer, the consensus of critical opinion now is that this exquisite panel is by the hand of Giorgione himself.

There are also important examples of Spanish and French Primitives such as the two panels by the Master of the Retable of the Reyes Católicos and the two panels by the Master of Saint Gilles. Among the German paintings are two important works by Albrecht Dürer. The Flemish fifteenth and sixteenth century pictures are also notable and include works by Petrus Christus, Memling, Mabuse, van Orley, Bosch, and Bruegel.

This group of gifts from the Kress Foundation is especially remarkable in the field of seventeenth and eighteenth century French painting. Beginning with canvases by Poussin and Claude, there are works by Philippe de Champagne, Louis Le Nain, Bourdon, Lancret, Chardin, Hubert Robert, and ending chronologically with two remarkable works by Ingres, one of a portrait of Henri Marcotte and the other a view of Pope Pius VII in the Sistine Chapel.

The Gallery's collection of sculpture has also been enriched. A great masterpiece is the free-standing marble Tabernacle by Desiderio da Settignano from the Alphons de

Rothschild Collection. Among the Italian pieces is a bust of Charles V by Leone Leoni. Other important works are an Apollo by Candido and Thetis by the School of Bernini. The gifts from the Kress Foundation of French sculpture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are outstanding. These include magnificent statues by Robert Le Lorrain, Bouchardon, Pajou, Clodion, Tassaert, and Falconet. The National Gallery's collection in this field is now one of the most important outside France.

* * * * *

NOTE: Photographs of any works of art mentioned in this release, desired for reproduction, are available on request.