

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FOR RELEASE:  
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WASHINGTON, D.C., February 26, 1961: The National Gallery of Art has acquired a masterpiece by the great French Impressionist artist, Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), John Walker, Director, announced today. The painting, a portrait of Madame Henriot, has been presented to the National Gallery by the Adele R. Levy Fund, Inc.

"This superb painting is one of the most important single acquisitions ever to come to the National Gallery," said Mr. Walker. It has rarely been exhibited since it was acquired some twenty years ago by Dr. David M. Levy and the late Mrs. Levy of New York.

Painted about 1876, Madame Henriot is one of Renoir's most exquisite portraits. The sitter, a lovely young actress of the Comédie Française, is shown half-length, looking directly forward. She wears a low-cut, diaphanous white gown and a blue-white band around her neck. The delicate color harmonies of skin, clothes and background are ivory, white and blue-green, contrasting with a mass of rich golden-brown hair and dark lustrous eyes. So ethereal is the result that one critic has written that it "seems to be merely breathed upon the canvas."

Madame Henriot is an example of Renoir's art at a time when his powers had fully matured, yet before he had attained any popular or financial success. It shows him still very much a revolutionary for his time, dissolving forms in atmosphere, using light colors

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with scarcely any shadows, and omitting most of the details customarily found in portrait painting. Choosing his models from among friends like Madame Henriot, whom he painted often, he was free to experiment in this manner. In itself the portrait is a luminous example of the great artist working with his most congenial subject matter, and in conjunction with the other magnificent Renoirs on exhibition in the National Gallery, it becomes possible to grasp more fully the breadth of the development of one of the most important modern artists.

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