

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FDR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. April 19, 1961: Three exceptionally important British paintings have been given to America's National Gallery of Art by the Trustees of the Fuller Foundation in memory of its founder, the late Governor Alvan T. Fuller of Massachusetts, it was announced today by Mr. John Walker, Director of the National Gallery. They will be put on special exhibition on Saturday, May 13 in Lobby D, just off the Gallery's East Garden Court.

The three pictures are: The Dogana and Santa Maria della Salute, Venice by Turner, Master John Heathcote by Gainsborough, and John Musters by Reynolds. The gift consolidated United States pre-eminence among all national collections outside of England in the field of British art.

Former Governor Fuller (1878-1958) began his career of public service in Washington, where he was a Congressman from Malden, Massachusetts, from 1917-1921. He was one of the three men in the United States elected to Congress as an Independent.

In the succeeding years he was elected Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts on the Republican ticket for two terms, followed by two terms as Governor. He pursued his avocation of art collecting with uncommon energy, becoming a familiar figure not only at the great art dealers of London and Paris, but in the auction rooms as well. Governor Fuller's impressive collection was last shown in a memorial exhibition at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in March of 1959.

The Dogana and Santa Maria della Salute, Venice by Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) is a magnificent late work, painted in 1843. It demonstrates brilliantly Turner's experimental fusion of color and form, so admired by the French Impressionists, and startlingly close to much of contemporary painting.

The nation's new Turner is one of the three views of Venice exhibited in 1843 which the modern scholar A.J. Finberg has written "mark the culmination of oil painting of Turner's later manner." "The Dogana and Salute," Finberg writes further, "is the most serene, the noblest and most powerful of all Turner's Venetian paintings."

The picture is a view of Venice from the entrance to the Grand Canal, bathed in gold and red reflections. Gondolas are pulled up to a wharf in the foreground. Across the water, behind the Dogana or customs house with its characteristic cupola, the white domes of the church of Santa Maria della Salute float above the mist.

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The addition of this picture to the seven Turners already in the National Gallery gives Washington the greatest collection of Turner oils in any museum outside of England.

Master John Heathcote by Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), with its sensitive feeling and virtuosø brushwork, is reminiscent in its appeal of Gainsborough's celebrated "Blue Boy", bought in 1921 by Henry E. Huntington from Lord Duveen for \$620,000, and now in the Huntington Library in California.

The National Gallery's new Gainsborough was executed between 1770 and 1774, towards the end of the artist's stay at Bath, an elegant 18th-century watering place. An early biographer of Gainsborough relates that the other children of Mrs. Heathcote had died in an epidemic. She begged the artist to paint this portrait; but at first he refused. On seeing the child, however, brought to him in a simple white dress, Gainsborough found him so attractive that he consented.

The dress in which Master Heathcote is represented was worn at that period by younger children of both sexes. Tied around the waist with an enormous blue sash, the little boy holds a bunch of wild-flowers in his hand. The picture is one of the most winning renditions of childhood ever created.

The third picture in the Fuller Foundation's gift is a full-length standing portrait, life-size, by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792). The subject is Squire Musters of Nottingham, known in his day as the "king of gentlemen huntsmen."

Set in an open field, with a low horizon and a towering expanse of English sky, it typifies the sturdy portraiture that made the first president of the Royal Academy the most influential British artist of his time.

There is now no representation of the "Golden Age" of British painting in any of the great national galleries of continental Europe, including the Soviet Union, that can rival the national collection of the United States. Turner, for example, is unrepresented in the fabulously rich collection of the Hermitage in Leningrad. When the British Government sent a survey exhibition of English painting to Russia recently, a member of the Hermitage staff reported with amusement the stir caused among viewers by Turner's innovations.

The comparative lack of British art in the magnificent national galleries of continental Europe is the result primarily of the dates at which most of their collections have been formed. The greatest

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part of these treasures go back directly to the princes and emperors who collected them from the Middle Ages on. Until the 18th Century great paintings by British artists did not exist, and it was not until the 1920's that they received widespread recognition outside of Great Britain, and that primarily in America.

Mr. Alvan T. Fuller, Jr., President of the Fuller Foundation, has written to Mr. Walker his interest in "the opportunity there is for people from all over America to visit the National Gallery and see (its) priceless collection." In presenting the three masterworks to the nation in memory of his father, he wrote: "We felt it only fitting that a proper memorial to him be established at the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, where his public service began."

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Photographs, and a limited number of color transparencies, available on request through: J. Carter Brown, National Gallery of Art, Washington 25, D.C. REpublic 7-4215 - Ext. 248.