

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D. C., April 7, 1963. John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that The Lute Player, by the Italian baroque painter Orazio Gentileschi (c.1565-1639), has been acquired as the first purchase from a fund established by Mrs. Mellon Bruce of New York for the acquisition of works of art for the National Gallery.

Mrs. Bruce is the daughter of Mr. Andrew W. Mellon, the founder of the Gallery. The painting has been in the collection of the Princes of Liechtenstein from 1697 until the present. It will be given a special exhibition in Lobby D starting today, Sunday, April 7.

"This is an acquisition of major importance," Mr. Walker said. "The luminosity, the rendering of textures, and a particular haunting quality have made this one of the most famous of baroque paintings. We cannot be grateful enough to Mrs. Bruce for this extremely generous gift."

The painting, 4 feet 8-1/2 inches high by 4 feet 4-5/8 inches wide, portrays a seated girl in a white blouse and a golden dress putting her ear to a lute to tune it. On a table, covered in green velvet, lie three other instruments and some open music.

Gentileschi (pronounced Gent-il-ESki) was the principal painter in the circle of Caravaggio. The Lute Player was considered to be by Caravaggio in catalogues of the Liechtenstein collection up to 1927. However, the bill for the purchase of the painting by Prince Johann Adam von Liechtenstein, dated June 3, 1697, survives, and lists the picture correctly as by Orazio Gentileschi.

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Gentileschi is particularly famous for his magical realization of textures, foreshadowing the achievements in Holland of Vermeer and Ter Borch. The Italian critic Longhi has called him "the most marvelous tailor and weaver who ever worked among the painters." It was perhaps to Gentileschi, who sat to van Dyck in Genoa, that van Dyck owed his extraordinary ability in painting satins, as can be seen in so many of van Dyck's Genoese portraits now in the National Gallery of Art.

Gentileschi was born in Pisa about 1565, but of Florentine ancestry, and he always considered himself a Florentine. By 1585 he had moved to Rome, where he was one of the first to understand the then revolutionary vision of Caravaggio, and stayed there until 1621. Subsequently, after sojourns in Genoa, France, and probably the Netherlands, he went to England in 1626, where he was to spend the rest of his life as court painter to King Charles I.

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