

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • REpublic 7-4215 extension 248

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WASHINGTON, D.C. November 29, 1964. John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that the Gallery has acquired an outstanding example of the early work of Peter Paul Rubens through the Andrew Mellon Fund.

The double profile portrait is unique in Rubens' known work. It represents the Roman Emperor Tiberius (14-37 A.D.) and his first wife, Vipsania Agrippina. The picture epitomizes Rubens' admiration for the ideals of ancient classical art and his deep interest in Roman history.

Mr. Walker said of the painting: "In spite of the classical, static quality of the subject, the characteristic Baroque spirit of Rubens is clearly evident in the rhythmic design of the picture and the sense of exuberant strength that it conveys. The brushwork in certain passages, such as Agrippina's hair, makes this small painting a particularly notable example of the brilliance and energy of Rubens' autograph paint handling."

Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), diplomat, collector, scholar, and the greatest Flemish artist of the 17th century, painted Tiberius and Agrippina probably between 1612-15, or a few years after his return to Antwerp from Rome.

It is clear that he planned the picture originally as only an idealized female portrait and then himself added the male profile portrait, enlarging the original panel on two sides. An ancient Roman cameo was doubtless the inspiration of the profile portraits. It is recorded that Rubens as well as other Antwerp collectors owned antique cameos.

The painting, on oak panel, measures 26-1/4" high by 22-1/2" wide. It was formerly in the Liechtenstein Collection, having been acquired in 1710 by Prince Adam Andreas Liechtenstein. The first printed catalogue of the Liechtenstein Gallery, written in Italian and published in 1767, lists this painting (number 507) as "Two heads in profile, that is the effigies of Tiberius, and Agrippina his wife, painted by Peter Paul Rubens."

The painting is on special exhibition in Lobby "D" on the Main Floor.

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Black-and-white photographs and color transparencies available from Marjorie Czyzak, 737-4215, ext. 247.