

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Washington, D. C. February 2, 1967. John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today the acquisition of two rare wood-panel paintings of the Flemish and Dutch Schools, both pictures exhibited for the first time in this country. The acquisitions, Portrait of a Banker by Jan Gossaert, called "Mabuse" (c.1478-1533/36) and A Scene on the Ice by Hendrick Avercamp (1585-1634), were made through the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund. (They are on exhibition in Lobby B on the Gallery's Main Floor.)

The Gossaert portrait, which measures 25 by 18-3/4 inches, dates from about 1530. Until recently it was in the collection of the Marquess of Lansdowne in whose family it was recorded as early as 1884.

Jakob Rosenberg, Kress Professor-in-Residence at the National Gallery and authority on Northern painting, describes this painting of a man seated at his desk as "a great portrait

of the Northern Renaissance, notable for its incisive characterization, magnificent modeling, and brilliant coloring. It is a late work, executed when Gossaert's coloristic splendor was at its height."

Gossaert's sitter would appear to have been a banker rather than the merchant he has also been called. The banker's "attributes", aside from the usual desk supplies, are there: the coins, the scales, and the notebook. Above him hang two batches of papers, the one on the left inscribed "alrehande missiven" (miscellaneous letters), and the other "alrehande minuten" (miscellaneous drafts of letters sent). Between them hangs a dagger, at that time a symbol of lower nobility. The ring on the banker's index finger bears the initials IS, which prompted the Belgian art historian Leo van Puyvelde to identify the sitter with Jeronimus Sandelin, "seigneur of Herenthout" in Zeeland where Gossaert lived at the time. Later Sandelin was appointed collector of taxes.

Gossaert was born about 1478 in a village south of Brussels called Maubeuge, hence the epithet "Mabuse". He is considered one of the leading artists of the early Renaissance in the Netherlands, at the time when Dürer and Holbein were so prominent in Germany. His Portrait of a Banker may have enjoyed a degree of fame in its own time; there is an old copy of it in the John G. Johnson Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

The Gallery's other acquisition, A Scene on the Ice by Hendrick Avercamp, dates nearly a hundred years later, or about

1625, in the artist's middle, and finest, period. A winter landscape, with skaters, hockey players, sleds, and sleigh, is a typical subject of the Dutch master who was one of the early landscape painters of the 17th century. Hendrick Avercamp, called "de Stomme van Kampen" (the Mute of Kampen, for he was deaf and dumb), worked in this peaceful town on the eastern side of the Zuider Zee for most of his life. He specialized in winter scenes, depicting with a special charm the varied activities of the townspeople on their frozen canals.

A Scene on the Ice, which measures 15-1/2 x 30-3/8 inches, is inscribed with Avercamp's monogram HA. It comes from a private Dutch collection--from which it was borrowed for several exhibitions held in the Netherlands--and is recorded as having been in the Hermitage Collection at Leningrad.

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