

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

JUDGMENT OF PARIS

ACQUIRED BY NATIONAL GALLERY

Washington, D. C. April 13, 1969. After 200 years of obscurity, a major painting by the foremost landscape painter of seventeenth-century France, Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), has been acquired by the National Gallery of Art. The Judgment of Paris, a large (44-1/4" x 58-7/8") canvas, last recorded at an auction in 1748, was purchased through the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund. It is now on view in Lobby D.

According to the Claude authority Marcel Roethlisberger the painting is "a masterpiece...one of the major works of his mature phase."

The painting illustrates the episode that led to the Trojan War. The Trojan prince Paris, sent away to be a shepherd after a prophecy that he would bring ruin upon his city, is called upon here to decide which of three jealous goddesses, Venus, Juno, or Minerva, deserves a golden apple marked "for the fairest." Each goddess bribes Paris to judge in her favor. Juno, standing with her peacock at her side and raising her arm in a commanding gesture, offers him the

dominion of Europe and Asia. Minerva, seated with her spear and helmet, pledges Trojan supremacy over the Greeks; but it is Venus' promise to give Paris the most beautiful woman in the world that was to win the golden apple. The Goddess of Love and Beauty, seen here with winged Cupid, led Paris to the fair Helen, Queen of Sparta. It was Paris' abducting her to Troy that launched the "thousand ships" of the Greeks against the Trojans.

Apparently painted in 1645/46 for the Marquis of Fontenay, then French Ambassador in Rome, The Judgment of Paris was recorded in France around 1720 and again in 1748. It later passed to England where it reappeared three years ago. After inspecting it in 1966, Roethlisberger stated that the figures in the landscape are by Claude's own hand, unlike some of those in the artist's earlier scenes which were added by a specialist. He noted they "...are larger than in many other paintings and are among his finest."

The National Gallery acquisition corresponds with drawing number 94 in Liber Veritatis, a collection of drawings compiled by Claude to establish a permanent record of his work.

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Black-and-white photographs and color transparencies are available from William W. Morrison, Assistant to the Director, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565, Area Code 202, 737-4215.



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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

TITLE: The Judgment of Paris, 1645/46  
(44-1/4 x 58-7/8 in.)

ARTIST: Claude Lorrain  
(French, 1600-1682)

PLEASE CREDIT: National Gallery of Art  
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

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