

DRAFT RELEASE

Washington, D.C. November 23, 1971. Three new acquisitions ranging in scope from Northern Renaissance masters to an important black American artist were announced today by J. Carter Brown, Director of the National Gallery of Art. The announcement follows the quarterly meeting of the Gallery's Board of Trustees.

The acquisitions, made possible by funds provided by the late Ailsa Mellon Bruce, include The Unlikely Lovers, a dramatic satire created by Quentin Massys, founder of the 16th-century Antwerp School in Flemish painting; Joos de Momper's early 17th-century Landscape with a Vista through a Grotto, the Gallery's first representative example of a period that saw the burgeoning of landscape painting in Northern Europe; and an early 20th-century landscape painting, The Seine, by Henry O. Tanner, a black American expatriot and former student of Thomas Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. The three paintings are on view on the Main Floor in galleries ----, ----, and ----, respectively.

The Unlikely Lovers, formerly in the collection of the Countess Pourtalès in Paris, was painted by Quentin Massys (1465/66-1530) around the year 1600. Massys is apparently the first painter to describe the traditional Flemish subject of a lecherous old man seeking the favors of a coy maiden in terms of Leonardesque caricature. The work, an oil on panel measuring 16 1/2 x 24 1/2 inches, gains additional significance as a secular painting by an artist who worked principally in the religious idiom of his 15th-century Flemish predecessors.

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Landscape with a Vista Through a Grotto is an oil on panel by Joos de Momper (1564-1635), a noted Flemish landscapist and, after 1611, Dean of the Antwerp Guild of painters. As a landscape it combines the Bruegel tradition of spacious beauty and radiant warmth with the artist's own vision of Alpine scenery. Painted about 1600 and formerly in a private Belgian collection, the panel is 20 x 20 inches.

An oil on canvas measuring 9 x 12 1/2 inches and dated 1902, Henry O. Tanner's The Seine comes from a private American collection. An American expatriot who worked primarily in France after 1891, Tanner (1859-1937) exhibited in several of the Salons des Artistes Français in Paris, winning the enthusiastic acclaim of French art critics. In the Salon of 1897 he received a third-class medal for his Raising of Lazarus, a painting subsequently purchased by the French Government for exhibition at the Luxembourg Gallery.

The Seine is particularly noteworthy as a landscape by an artist whose oeuvre is largely Biblical in inspiration and reflects Henry O. Tanner's passion for what Carroll Greene terms "the elusive mystical element in life." Noted for his interest in the effect of light on color and in the contrast of areas of light and dark, Tanner subtly blends a hazy purple silhouette of boat and dockside (the Trocadère) into a misty expanse of pink which is at once water and, highlighted with transparent flecks of yellow, sunset sky. In this way, his style closely resembles the tonalism so intimately associated with Whistler.

In The Unlikely Lovers, Quentin Massys has chosen for his subject a well-known motif in Flemish iconography. The theme of ill-matched lovers is particularly associated with

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the workshop of Lucas Cranach where it was generally treated as a pair of paintings: one panel would illustrate an aging lecher and a clever maiden; another, an amorous crone and an innocent youth. In the case of Massys, there is no evidence for a companion-piece illustrating the latter.

Massys has created a work deliberately replete with contrasts and polarities: two large half-length figures colorfully arrayed in contrasting shades of red and green are placed side-by-side against a dark ground. Grinning lust (right) meets the fleeting laughter of a young girl (left); the confidence of the lecher vies with the confidence of the maiden who filches his purse; and the silly old fool juxtaposes the smirking fool who receives the lifted purse and recedes into the murky background (extreme left).

The ingenious robbery is no less complicated than the masterful composition which Massys invents to support it: the complicated interlocking of arms and gestures symbolizes both venal love and the intertwining arms of avarice and lechery. Massys preserves the anti-classical elements of the ugly and the grotesque characteristic of northern schools; but, for the first time in the history of Netherlandish painting, he presents his characters as caricatures patterned after Leonardo's own drawings of grotesque heads. Further signs of Leonardo's influence are present in a softening of outlines and hint of chiaroscuro.

Landscape with a Vista through a Grotto serves to illustrate the artist's predilection for splashing water, jutting rocks and escarpments, tiny foliage and meandering paths. His style springs from bold and sometimes random brush strokes; boldly contrasting areas of light and dark, in this case a dark cavernous foreground which melts into the luminous and

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illusory space stretching beyond the entrance of the grotto; and subtle color gradations of brown, icy blue, pale yellow, and white.

Massys is best known for two large altar pieces painted in Antwerp between 1507 and 1511: The Holy Kinship, known as ^{the} St. Anne Altarpiece and commissioned for the Church of St.-Pierre in Louvain in 1507, and now in the Musée Royaux des Beaux Arts in Brussels; and the triptych of The Deposition commissioned in 1508 for a chapel in Antwerp Cathedral, and now in the collection of the Musée Royal des Beaux Arts in Antwerp.

The de Momper landscape joins three earlier Flemish landscapes in the Gallery: The Martyrdom of St. Catherine and The Temptation of St. Anthony by Pieter Bruegel, the Elder; and The Flight into Egypt by a follower of Joachim Patinir active between 1515 and 1524.

As a work by a major black American artist, The Seine joins ^{the Gallery's} The Westwood Children by Joshua Johnston, a black American artist painting in the early 19th century.

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