

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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

FOR RELEASE:

FRIDAY a.m.  
July 28, 1972

## NATIONAL GALLERY ANNOUNCES RECENTLY ACQUIRED EQUESTRIAN PICTURE BY GÉRICAULT

WASHINGTON, D.C. July 26, 1972. A recent major acquisition, Trumpeters of Napoleon's Imperial Guard, painted between 1812 and 1814 by the French romantic artist, Théodore Géricault (1791-1824) was announced today by J. Carter Brown, Director of the National Gallery of Art.

Acquired for the National Gallery through the Chester Dale Fund, the painting depicts two mounted trumpeters and a mounted kettledrummer (timbalier) in brilliant full dress uniforms of the Second Regiment of Cheveau-légers-Lanciers /sic/ of Napoleon's Imperial Guard.

One of Europe's major exponents of romanticism, Géricault died at thirty-three. His paintings are rare with few left in private hands. The picture's shimmering surface and directness make it a splendid example of the artist's virtuosity.

The Second Regiment of Cheveau-légers-Lanciers /sic/ was made up largely of Polish lancers recruited in the Grand Duchy of Warsaw in 1812, just before Napoleon's invasion of Russia.

The central figure and the figure on the left wear the traditional Polish lancer cap or czapka with a white square top bound with red piping and bearing a tall white plume tipped with scarlet. Napoleon's cypher N surmounted by the imperial crown is visible at the front on a sunburst plate of brass.

The kettledrummer at the right wears the same headdress, but a different costume, consisting of a traditional Polish kaftan. The

(more)

sleeveless coat of scarlet is worn over wide Turkish trousers with short boots. Kettledrums were carried at either side of the horse, but the artist has chosen to leave this element out of his composition. The foreground figure sits on a dappled gray horse. The others appear to be on white mounts.

The painting was formerly in the collection of the Duc de Trévisé, widely known among scholars and other collectors as an important figure in the first Géricault revival in 1924. In 1937 the painting was shown in a comprehensive Géricault exhibition in Paris organized by the Duc de Trévisé and Pierre Dubaut, another major devotee and scholar. The picture was last exhibited in New York in 1938.

The National Gallery's new acquisition is the second Géricault to enter its collections. The first, a study of a nude male warrior, came to the Gallery in 1963 in the Chester Dale Collection.

The Chester Dale Fund, which has made possible the acquisition of Trumpeters of Napoleon's Imperial Guard, was created in 1965 under the bequest of the former President of the National Gallery for the purpose of making possible further acquisitions of French paintings. This is the second time that the fund has been used for a purchase. The first was in 1966 to acquire Arabs Skirmishing in the Mountains by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863).

END