

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ANNOUNCES

RECENTLY ACQUIRED AMERICAN PAINTINGS

WASHINGTON, D. C. February 5, 1979. Three important nineteenth-century paintings by American artists Eastman Johnson (1824-1906), Francis William Edmonds (1806-1863) and Thomas Wilmer Dewing (1851-1938) acquired by the National Gallery of Art during the past year are now on view in the West Building's American galleries.

Johnson's The Brown Family (1869), one of the artist's finest works, was purchased with funds given by the late David E. Finley, the Gallery's first Director, and his wife, the late Margaret Eustis Finley. Edmonds' The Bashful Cousin (c. 1842) and Dewing's Lady with a Lute (1886), gifts of Frederick Sturges, Jr., and Dr. and Mrs. Walter Timme respectively, are the first works by these artists to enter the Gallery's collections.

The Brown Family by Johnson and The Bashful Cousin by Edmonds, both installed in gallery 65, are major examples of American genre art of the mid-nineteenth century.

Eastman Johnson's The Brown Family offers not only a fine interior scene, but an excellent psychological study of the sitters and the interaction between them. It reflects the genre style at its best. Intended as a memento of a home on University Place which the family was soon to leave for a new house on Park Avenue, the painting portrays New York merchant banker James Brown in the interior of this home with

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his second wife, Eliza Maria Coe, and their grandson, William Adams Brown. Mr. Brown's regard for his grandson and Mrs. Brown's gaze toward her husband make a quietly powerful statement of familial relationship. The group sits in a parlor, some of the stylish Renaissance Revival details of which were to be dismantled shortly and reinstalled in their new Park Avenue residence.

Edmonds' The Bashful Cousin is for that artist an unusually large painting close in style to the work of W. S. Mount, Edmonds' better-known contemporary. Completed shortly after Edmonds' return from studying Old Master paintings in Europe, it demonstrates in its subject matter, setting, composition and tonalities the influence of Dutch genre painters, as well as the prevailing nineteenth-century Jacksonian spirit of the "common man." The setting is that of a modest household, the details of which demonstrate Edmonds' superb draftsmanship.

Dewing became known especially for his delicate and poetic paintings of women seated alone in vaguely defined, fin de siècle interiors. His Lady with a Lute, on view in gallery 69, is perhaps the earliest of his paintings in which the woman is presented in profile. The highly finished enamel-like surface of the painting is characteristic of Dewing's early renderings, and the pose, the woman's Renaissance dress and the inclusion of a lute are motifs found in several of his subsequent works.

Dewing is considered the most original artist in the late nineteenth century American impressionist group known as The Ten. He greatly

admired the work of James McNeill Whistler, whose famous painting entitled The Artist's Mother was shown in New York in 1882, four years before Lady with a Lute was completed. The Gallery's new acquisition reflects Whistler's formal arrangements, single coloristic atmosphere, musical allusions and the compression of space into a nearly abstract surface design.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION or photographs contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director (Information Officer), or Mary Dyer, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565 area code 202 737-4215, ext. 224.