

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SIX MAJOR GORKY PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS

ACQUIRED BY NATIONAL GALLERY

WASHINGTON, D. C. June 5, 1979. Three paintings and three drawings by Arshile Gorky (1904-1948), one of the most important American artists of the twentieth century, have recently been acquired by the National Gallery of Art, bringing to the Gallery the most representative Gorky holdings in a public institution.

The three paintings are Portrait of the Artist and His Mother, One Year the Milkweed, and Organization. The three drawings are Drawing for Portrait of the Artist and His Mother, Untitled (Squared Study for The Plow and the Song), and Nighttime, Enigma, and Nostalgia. All six were acquired through the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund.

The works will go on view this week on the upper level of the East Building together with the Gallery's large grisaille drawing of The Plow and the Song, acquired in 1971 through the Avalon Fund, and Self-portrait, an anonymous loan. Also on view in this reinstallation of the upper level galleries will be works by Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Gris, a sculpture gallery of Brancusi and Giacometti, and galleries of Rothkos, and other post-war American artists including Pollock, de Kooning, Louis, Motherwell, Stella and Noland.

Portrait of the Artist and His Mother (1926-36), referred to by one

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critic as "one of the rare masterpieces of modern portraiture," and the preparatory drawing for it, are inspired by a photograph taken in Gorky's native Armenia in 1912, when the artist was eight years old. A tender and warm portrayal of the artist and his mother, the portrait reveals one of the most subtle and poetic uses of color in the artist's oeuvre. Gorky's introspective gaze imbues this work with a psychological intensity and a haunting nostalgia. A later version of the double portrait is in the Whitney Museum. The Gallery's drawing for the portrait is the most complete of the several preparatory studies Gorky made.

One Year the Milkweed (1944) is an example of Gorky's passionate study of nature, which inspired some of his richest and most colorful works. Although the visual source of the milkweed can be detected, Gorky draws primarily from memory and feelings about his subject. One Year the Milkweed reveals an exotic sense of color and a technique exploited for all its sensuous qualities.

Organization (c. 1934-36) is considered one of the most colorful and fully realized works of the artist's mid-1930s style. It is the culminating work of these years, when the artist was strongly influenced by Picasso and Cézanne.

Untitled (Squared Study for The Plow and the Song) (c. 1944) is one of Gorky's major landscape studies. Gorky made numerous such drawings inspired by his visits in the mid-1940s to his wife's family farm in Virginia, where he was reminded of his native Armenia. This drawing,

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incorporating his inventive interpretations of plant and animal forms, was squared for transfer to a larger scale and led to one of the artist's most important late series of paintings, The Plow and the Song.

Nighttime, Enigma, and Nostalgia (c. 1932-34) is the culminating drawing of a series that ultimately led to a painting of the same title. One of the dominant themes of Gorky's early years, he made more variations on this motif than any other in his career.

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