

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

RECENT ACQUISITION

Benjamin West
American, 1738-1820
The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, 1791
Oil on canvas, 73 9/16 x 109 1/2 inches
Avalon Fund and Patrons' Permanent Fund

The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise was purchased in London on February 21, 1989 by the National Gallery of Art with income from the Avalon Fund and the Patrons' Permanent Fund. The recently rediscovered Benjamin West painting, unknown for more than one hundred and fifty years except for an oil sketch, is one of the major paintings of the American painter's romantic phase. The painting represents West's late style with a particular magnitude and magnificence.

West's Expulsion is of particular historical significance because it was the first of his series of paintings on the theme of "Revealed Religion" commissioned by George III for the Royal Chapel at Windsor Castle, a project that solicited much of West's creative energy in the 1790s.

The Gallery owns several paintings by Benjamin West, the two most important of which are the portrait, Colonel Guy Johnson, and the history painting, The Battle of La Hogue, both painted in the 1770s. The Gallery's new Expulsion is the first picture from West's important late career to enter the collection. Only some twelve of West's large late paintings are represented in American public collections.

-more-

west acquisition . . . page two

West greatly influenced the major artistic directions of the late eighteenth century. He was born in 1738 near Philadelphia. Although he painted a number of pictures in America, had a lifelong sympathy with his native land, and was a model of artistic success to a succession of such American artists as Charles Willson Peale, John Singleton Copley, Gilbert Stuart, and John Trumbull, his artistic career took place abroad. In 1760 he went to Italy, and three years later to England, where he stayed for the remainder of his life.

West's fame and influence derived chiefly from his innovative paintings of ancient, modern, and Biblical history, at first in the modern neoclassical style he learned in Italy, and later in a more painterly, colorful, and expressive mode that was an important precursor of high romantic painting.

West's Expulsion is of particular historical significance because it was the first of his series of paintings on the theme of "Revealed Religion" commissioned by George III for the Royal Chapel at Windsor Castle, a project that solicited much of West's creative energy in the 1790s.

-end-

FOR MORE INFORMATION

CONTACT: Ruth Kaplan

Deborah Ziska

(202) 842-6353