

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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NATIONAL GALLERY ANNOUNCES NEW ACQUISITIONS
OF PAINTINGS BY MONET AND BRAQUE FROM COBERLY ESTATE

WASHINGTON, DC -- J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that the Gallery has acquired two major paintings, The Japanese Footbridge (1899) by French impressionist Claude Monet (1840-1926) and Harbor (1909) by French cubist painter Georges Braque (1882-1963). The Japanese Footbridge, on view in gallery 85 of the West Building, was a joint gift of Victoria Nebeker Coberly, in memory of her son John W. Mudd, and of Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg. Harbor, which can be seen in the twentieth-century collection on the upper level of the East Building, was a gift of Victoria Nebeker Coberly in memory of her son, John W. Mudd.

"We are immensely grateful to Victoria Coberly and to Walter and Lee Annenberg for these generous gifts," said J. Carter Brown, director, National Gallery of Art. "The Monet is a dazzlingly colorful and iconic evocation of his beloved garden,

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and is the Gallery's first example from Giverny, where the artist was to go on to paint such daring studies of waterlilies in that same pool. The Braque also represents a key moment in the artist's development, and, with the invention of cubism, a turning point in the history of art."

The Japanese Footbridge (32 x 40 inches), which is in excellent condition, has just been cleaned and restored to its original brilliance by the removal of a heavy layer of disfiguring synthetic varnish by National Gallery painting conservator Michael Swicklik. The footbridge, which Monet had built over his pond at Giverny, resembles those he had seen in prints by Japanese artists. It is executed in a range of greens and blues and dominates the garden scene in the painting. The surface of the water is filled with water lilies, as well as reflections of the footbridge and the surrounding green foliage.

The Japanese Footbridge series of eighteen paintings is one of the most important of the several groups of paintings devoted to individual subjects that Monet painted in the 1890s. Two of the Gallery's twenty-four Monets are from the Rouen Cathedral Façade series of 1894 (Chester Dale Collection) and three are from the Waterloo Bridge series of 1903-1904 (two from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon and one from the Chester Dale Collection).

The Japanese Footbridge series was a commercial and critical success that led to the renowned Water Lilies series of 1903-1907

and beyond to the large Water Lilies panels of the 1910s and 1920s.

Harbor (16 x 19 inches) is believed to have been inspired by the port of Le Havre, where Braque spent a month in the fall of 1909 fulfilling his military obligation. The painting, executed primarily in tones of ochre, gray, and turquoise, may have been done shortly thereafter in the artist's Paris studio.

Harbor represents a critical moment in the development of analytical cubism. It was painted when Braque was moving rapidly away from the transitional phase that reflects the profound influence of Cézanne and had begun to realize the more radical disintegration and dispersal characteristic of the works of 1909-1910. Harbor fills the gap in the Gallery's collection, whose five paintings by Braque donated by Chester Dale and one by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon were all produced later, either in the 1920s or the 1950s, and represent a variety of other styles, including synthetic cubism.

According to Charles S. Moffett, senior curator of paintings and curator of modern painting, National Gallery of Art, "The Japanese Footbridge is one of the very best Monets of its kind. Harbor is one of a handful of paintings that allows us to witness a critical moment during which cubism begins to emerge from its chrysalis. It is thoroughly characteristic of the most advanced pictorial language of its day and is a most beautiful work of art."

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