

# National Gallery of Art

## NEWS RELEASE

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### NATIONAL GALLERY RECEIVES MAJOR DONATIONS FROM HEINEMANN ESTATE AND PATRONS' PERMANENT FUND

The National Gallery of Art has received generous donations including three major paintings by Peter Paul Rubens, Giovanni Cariani, and Edgar Degas, plus a fourth painting and a group of drawings by Giovanni Battista Piazzetta from the collection of the late Lore and Rudolf Heinemann. The Gallery has also acquired a major painting by Jacopo da Ponte, called Jacopo Bassano, made possible by the Patrons' Permanent Fund, an endowed fund established for the acquisition of art.

In addition to the paintings and drawings, Mrs. Heinemann, who shared her husband's passion for art, left certain assets jointly to the National Gallery of Art and The Pierpont Morgan Library with the request that they be sold at auction and the proceeds used to create the Lore and Rudolf Heinemann Fund for curatorial and scholarly travel and research and conservation of fourteenth- to nineteenth-century paintings and drawings.

"These gifts from the Heinemanns and the Patrons' Permanent Fund are outstanding additions to the Gallery's permanent collection and we are extremely pleased to be able to have the public enjoy these works of art by great masters," said

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Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

Included in the Heinemann bequest are an outstanding Renaissance Venetian masterpiece, A Concert, c. 1518-20, by Cariani; a Baroque oil sketch, David and Abigail, 1630, by Rubens; an eighteenth-century Venetian painting and several drawings by Piazzetta; and an important early work, Alexander and Bucephalus, 1861-1862, by Degas that reflect the Heinemanns' breadth of taste and culture and their love of the Old Masters as well as classic modern art.

### RUBENS

Rubens was an artist who, through carefully considered compositions and expressive gestures, could capture the essence of the biblical narratives that were so often the focus of his works. The freely executed yet highly finished oil sketch on panel of The Meeting of David and Abigail, which he made as a preliminary study for a large painting now in The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California, represents the emotional meeting of two Old Testament figures, David and Abigail (1 Samuel 25:2-35).

This beautiful work is the first Rubens oil sketch from the 1630s in the National Gallery's collection. The airy treatment of the scene, the light touch and delicate coloring, as well as the expressive faces and gestures make this painting one of Rubens' most appealing works.

### CARIANI

Reproduced on the cover of the standard monograph on Cariani, A Concert is widely regarded as the artist's greatest masterpiece, filled with mystery as well as

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intense realism. Born c. 1485 near the town of Bergamo in North Italy, Cariani was trained in Venice in Giovanni Bellini's workshop and then in the circle of Giorgione. He was further influenced by Titian. The theme and warm color of Cariani's picture show the impact of his Venetian training. Cariani's Venetian sitters and details in the painting, such as the lute and the stunning red and pink hat worn by the musician set off against a gray background are interpreted in his own highly realistic manner.

### PIAZZETTA

The outstanding and moving drawing of Saint Stephen is one of the finest religious works on paper by the important eighteenth-century Venetian painter and draftsman Piazzetta, particularly notable for the martyr's convincing physical reality and the delicacy of psychological insight. The artist made many such bust-length studies of men, women, and children, usually in black and white chalk as here. Young Man in A Broad Hat is a fine example of the artist's secular or genre heads, which were immensely popular during his lifetime and among the first drawings to be framed and hung like paintings on the wall by collectors. In addition to those two drawings, Mrs. Heinemann also left to the Gallery a moving and sensitive Piazzetta painting of St. Margaret of Cortona, plus three more drawings by Piazzetta and the most important artists in his school.

### DEGAS

Although Degas' paintings of dancers and race horses are justly renowned, his early historical compositions are far less known, due in large part to their extreme

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rarity. The large and ambitious painting, Alexander and Bucephalus, is one of a handful of history paintings that the aspiring young artist produced. The subject was drawn from Plutarch's Lives in which Bucephalus was to become the favorite horse of Alexander the Great. In its heroic style, classically inspired subject, and carefully bridled movement, the painting reveals Degas' debt to the Italian Renaissance masters and Eugène Delacroix. The painting with its subtle brushwork and restrained palette was never exhibited during Degas' lifetime and remained in his possession at the time of his death. It is only the second historical painting by Degas to be exhibited in an American museum and will be in the Gallery's upcoming exhibition, Degas at the Races, April 12 - July 12, 1998. The painting is currently in the West Building Main Floor Gallery #89.

#### BASSANO

Bassano's large painting, The Miraculous Draught of Fishes, 1545, is a major addition to the Gallery's Renaissance Venetian collection. The large painting was commissioned according to Bassano's account book in April 1545 by the Venetian governor of the artist's native town of Bassano, Pietro Pizzamano. The patron returned to Venice later that same year, taking his picture with him. The strong aesthetic appeal of the painting lies in the brilliantly contrasting hues of rose red, ochre, and green, set off against the broad expanse of blue water. Bassano's close-up figure composition has an almost vertiginous effect.

The National Gallery of Art, located on Constitution Avenue between Third and

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Seventh Streets, N.W., is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free. For general information, call (202) 737-4215, the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at (202) 842-6176, or access the Gallery's Web site at <http://www.nga.gov>.