

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The National Gallery of Art announced today that two noted paintings by the great American artist, John Singleton Copley, have been presented to the Gallery by Mrs. Gordon Dexter of Boston, and have been placed on exhibition.

Both are distinguished examples of the painter's later work, done after he had left this country to live in England. They came to America from the Lyndhurst Sale of the mid-nineteenth century. The earlier of the two is the imposing "Red Cross Knight", in which Copley represented his three children as characters from Spenser's "Faërie Queene". Painted about 1789, this large and important work will be a fitting companion for Copley's famous group-portrait of his family, painted about fourteen years earlier and now on loan at the National Gallery.

In the "Red Cross Knight", Copley's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, later Mrs. Gardiner Greene of Boston, is portrayed as Faith, and his younger daughter, Mary, who lived to be ninety-five but was never married, is represented as Hope. The Red Cross Knight, "ycladd in mighty armes" and wearing "on his brest a bloudie crosse", is John Singleton Copley the younger, later to become famous as Lord Lyndhurst, three times Lord Chancellor of England. Copley's "Red Cross Knight" early achieved a high reputation. An engraving was made after it, and John Quincy Adams honored it in a poem, which opened with the lines:

"On Copley's canvas, just and true,  
Our Spenser's happy thought is given."

Somewhat later is the second picture of the Dexter gift, Copley's "Portrait of Sir Robert Graham," another illustrious Englishman. Sir Robert, who served as Attorney General to the Prince of Wales, as a King's Counsel, Baron of the Exchequer, and finally as member of the Privy Council, is pictured in his scarlet and ermine robes of office. The portrait was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1804, and is an accomplished example of Copley's late work in England.