

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

FOR RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D. C.

March 28, 1943

The Trustees of the National Gallery of Art have announced the gift from Mrs. Jesse Isidor Straus of a terra cotta group entitled La Surprise by Claude Michel, called Clodion. The gift is given in memory of her husband, the late Jesse Isidor Straus. Mr. Straus served as American Ambassador to France from March 16, 1933 to August 13, 1936.

Clodion's group is the quintessence of rococo art. A terra cotta, it preserves the animation, the alertness of movement only to be caught in quickly modeled clay. In spite of the fragility of the medium, the group is in perfect condition, a quality rare among Clodion's terra cottas.

La Surprise, which is signed, and dated 1799, is among the most famous groups designed by Clodion, and is reproduced in many books on French Eighteenth Century art. Its last public exhibition was at the great Centennial Exhibition of French Art held in Paris in 1900, but in the century and a half since it was executed, it has appeared several times in Paris sales - always arousing intense rivalry among collectors.

The group will be placed on exhibition when a suitable installation can be arranged.