

NEWS RELEASE

National Gallery of Art
Washington, D. C.

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WASHINGTON, November 24: An important acquisition for the collection of American painting at the National Gallery of Art, announced today by David E. Finley, Director, is the portrait of Miss Elizabeth Ridgely, sometimes called The Lady with a Harp, by Thomas Sully.

"Through the generosity of Mrs. Georg Vetlesen of New York," Mr. Finley said, "this superb portrait, generally recognized as outstanding by connoisseurs and students of American painting, has been added to the National Gallery of Art, after having been in the possession of the Ridgely family of Hampton, Maryland, for over a century."

John Walker, Chief Curator of the National Gallery of Art, pointed out that this full-length standing portrait was painted in 1818, being begun on May 1st and finished on May 21st of that year, when the subject was only fifteen years of age.

"The Lady with a Harp," Mr. Walker said, "shows the influence of Sir Thomas Lawrence, whom Sully had met on his first trip to London in 1809. Though nothing by the English painter reveals a greater elegance or distinction of bearing, Sully's interpretation of his subject is simpler and his painting devoid of that ostentatious brushwork which characterized Lawrence's style. Particularly attractive is the distant landscape in the background, a glimpse of nature rare in Sully's work."

The portrait has been frequently exhibited, and appeared at the Survey of American Painting at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh (1940), and in the exhibition of 250 Years of Painting in Maryland, at the Baltimore Museum of Art (1945). It will now hang with the other American paintings in the National Gallery, a worthy challenge to the great full-length portraits of the English School.

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