

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON 25 DC • REpublic 7-4215 extension 247

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. August 30, 1961: John Walker, Director, today announced the acquisition of two decorative canvases by the French artist, Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), for the National Gallery of Art. The two paintings, Girl with a Basket of Fish and Girl with a Basket of Oranges, are the gift of the late William Robertson Coe of New York.

Dating from about 1889, the two pictures are identical in size. Each shows a young peasant girl in a landscape, carrying a basket. They are painted with the glowing colors characteristic of the great Impressionist painter.

"These paintings," Mr. Walker said, "were intended to be seen together. They represent the effort of the artist to revive decorative painting in France at a time when it had almost ceased to exist."

In both figures there is a strong emphasis on careful drawing which recalls Renoir's attempt during the 1880's to simplify and strengthen his forms. "At this time," added Mr. Walker, "Renoir felt he had reached the end of Impressionism. After his Italian trip, early in the decade, he submitted himself to the self-discipline of contour drawing. But he could not repress his charm and spontaneity. The result was a combination of solid drawing and vivid color, decisive in the emergence of Renoir's last and most monumental period."

The pair were once owned by Renoir's close friend and patron Durand-Ruel.

The addition of the Girl with a Basket of Fish and the Girl with a Basket of Oranges to the National Gallery's rich collection of Renoir paintings, makes it possible to examine an important transitional phase in the artist's career.

End

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