

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

Washington, D. C. November 10, 1968. Interior of Saint Peter's, Rome by Giovanni Paolo Panini (1691/92-1765) has been acquired by the National Gallery of Art, it was announced by Director John Walker. The painting was purchased through the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund.

This view of Saint Peter's was one of Panini's favorite subjects, for he painted the scene a number of times. It shows the arrival of Cardinal Melchior de Polignac, who was French Ambassador at the Vatican from 1724 to 1732. This large canvas (60-3/4 x 77-1/2 in.) must have been painted much later, at some time between 1746 and 1754, for Panini's view keeps abreast of additions made to Saint Peter's between those years. In this version the artist included, above the second door in the right aisle of Saint Peter's, the sarcophagus of Innocent XII showing the figures of Charity and Justice added in 1746. He did not show statues placed in the nave by Pope Benedict XIV in 1754.

Panini was exceptionally skilled in solving problems of complex perspective views such as this. As with his Interior of the Pantheon, which is also in the National Gallery, he utilized a vast interior as a stage set for diminutive, elegantly dressed people, who heighten the sense of monumental space.

The painting is on view in Gallery 37.

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Transparencies and black-and-white photos for publication on request.