

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ANNOUNCES MAJOR ACQUISITIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. December 28, 1982. Eight important American and French paintings--by Bellows, Eakins, Whistler, Hopper, Cross, Derain, and Douanier Rousseau--have been given to the National Gallery of Art from the private collection of John Hay Whitney, the late publisher and diplomat and a Trustee of the National Gallery from 1961 to 1979. J. Carter Brown, Director of the National Gallery, made the announcement today following a special meeting of the Board of Trustees.

The paintings are Club Night by Bellows; Baby at Play by Eakins; Wapping on Thames by Whistler; Cape Cod Evening by Hopper; Coast Near Antibes by Cross; Charing Cross Bridge, London and Mountains at Collioure by Derain; and Tropical Forest with Monkeys by Rousseau. These were acquired by the Gallery, from a charitable trust established by Mr. Whitney during his lifetime.

Mr. Brown also announced a donation from the same trust of two million dollars to the Gallery's Patrons' Permanent Fund for

(more)

future acquisitions, and expressed the Board of Trustees' gratitude for Mr. Whitney's great generosity.

In addition to the Whitney gifts, Mr. Brown announced another important acquisition at the meeting, Ball at the Opera (1873) by Edouard Manet, currently on view in the Gallery's special exhibition Manet and Modern Paris through March 6. It is a bequest of the late Mrs. Horace Havemeyer in memory of her mother-in-law, Louisine W. Havemeyer. Mr. Brown described these acquisitions as "enormously welcome.... What a Christmas for the National Gallery." The Havemeyer Manet has been exhibited at the National Gallery of Art since 1976 as an anonymous loan. Ball at the Opera is an unusual composition, depicting a carnival ball at the old opera house, and is unlike any other work in the Gallery's holdings.

The four American paintings from the Whitney gift include some landmark pictures. Club Night, painted in 1907, is the first in a series of six oils that George Bellows executed on the boxing theme and was recently on view in the Gallery's popular exhibition on that subject. This painting captures all the action and drama of the prize fight ring and ranks among the best of Bellows' efforts in this genre. Club Night is a significant addition to the Gallery's strong Bellows collection of works from all periods of his career and joins another important boxing canvas, Both Members of This Club (1909).

An extraordinarily powerful work by Thomas Eakins,

(m o r e)

Baby at Play (1876) depicts the artist's two and a half year old niece in the backyard of the family home in Philadelphia. It is the most successful of the 1870s portraits that Eakins painted of his family at home after his return from Europe. Baby at Play is remarkable in its monumentality and, considering the subject, suprisingly unsentimental.

James Abbott McNeill Whistler's Wapping on Thames (1861-1864), an unusual and early painting by one of the most important artists of the nineteenth century, is also an important addition. The combination of genre, portrait, and landscape elements in a single work appears in no other paintings by the artist. The picture was painted from an inn on the Thames river looking toward the warehouses of Wapping. The red-haired woman seated on the balcony is Joanna Heffernan, Whistler's mistress and model and the subject of the National Gallery's The White Girl. The bearded man beside her is the French artist Alphonse Legros.

Cape Cod Evening (1939), the first painting by Edward Hopper to enter the National Gallery of Art collection, conveys the introspective mood typical of so much of the artist's work. According to Hopper, this ostensibly realistic setting is "no exact transcription of a place, but pieced together from sketches and mental impressions of things in the vicinity." Much of Hopper's time was spent in South Truro, on Cape Cod, where he most often painted lighthouses and old Victorian homes under varying conditions of light.

(m o r e)

The four French paintings all make important contributions to the Gallery's holdings. Both Andre Derain paintings are key examples from the artist's participation in the movement identified with "Les Fauves", so-called because a critic identified the colorful works of Derain, Matisse, Vlaminck, and others with "wild beasts." Mountains at Collioure was painted in 1905 when Derain first worked with Matisse in that small mediterranean port, and represents his full use of the Fauve palette of intense hues and contrasting colors. Charing Cross Bridge, London, comes from a series of cityscapes of London which Derain painted on commission for the dealer Ambrose Vollard, in response to the highly successful views of the same city recently completed by Claude Monet.

"Although the Gallery has many fine works by Matisse," noted Director Brown, "we have virtually nothing in our collection from the Fauve period by Matisse or any of the other artists of the group. The two Whitney Derains mark a major step toward representing a movement that was as important to color in the twentieth century as cubism was to abstract structure." The gift adds depth to the Gallery's collection of twelve other paintings by Derain, all from his later monochromatic and cubist period.

Henri Rousseau, a self-taught master eluding classification, delighted in creating vivid exotic scenes, for which he found his models in the Paris zoo and botanical gardens. Tropical Forest with Monkeys is one of his masterpieces from his late and best period.

(more)

Coast Near Antibes by Henri-Edmond Cross, a major follower of Seurat, is painted with brilliant dots of pigment and helps to enhance the Gallery's limited examples of works by the neo-impressionists.

Mr. Whitney who died earlier this year was Ambassador to the Court of St. James from 1957 to 1961 and the publisher of the New York Herald Tribune and the International Herald Tribune. As a Trustee of the Gallery Mr. Whitney served as Vice President of the Gallery until 1979, when he resigned from the Board because of illness. He has also been a member of each of three standing committees of the Board from the outset of his service and, from its inception in January 1970, of the Building Committee which was responsible for the planning, design, and construction of the Gallery's East Building.

The Whitney paintings will be put on view over the coming months, beginning with the Eakins, now to be seen in the American painting galleries in the West Building, and the Rousseau which will be on display in the impressionist and post-impressionist galleries in the West Building from the third week in January. The two Derains will be put on view in the East Building when the galleries on the upper level are reinstalled in February.

END

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION or photographs contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director (Information Officer), Carolyn Amiot or Marla Price, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565, (202) 842-6353.