

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ACQUIRES SHEELER'S "CLASSIC LANDSCAPE," DOVE'S "MOON," AND THOMPSON'S "TREE"

GIFTS FROM MR. AND MRS. BARNEY A. EBSWORTH

WASHINGTON, D.C. — It was announced this week by Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art, that the Gallery has acquired from Mr. and Mrs. Barney Ebsworth of Saint Louis, Missouri, Charles Sheeler's Classic Landscape (1931), a masterpiece of precisionist painting; Arthur Dove's Moon (1935), an outstanding example of abstraction inspired by nature; and Bob Thompson's Tree (1962), a hallucinatory scene inspired by Goya, that is evocative of folk art and the artist's African heritage. The Ebsworth collection is considered to be one of the premier private holdings of American modernist art. Both paintings can be viewed in the exhibition Twentieth-Century American Art: The Ebsworth Collection, on view in the Gallery's East Building, March 5 through June 11, 2000.

"This is only the most recent example of how the Ebsworths have been steadfast friends of the Gallery, which has benefited especially from their keen interest in our twentieth-century American paintings," said Powell.

Sheeler (1883-1965) was a master of both painting and photography. Classic Landscape depicts a scene from the Ford Motor Company's River Rouge Plant near Detroit, which the artist had visited in 1927 on a photographic commission from the company. Sheeler called the subject "incomparably the most thrilling I have had to work with" and went on to produce several watercolor and oil paintings inspired by the River Rouge Plant. Classic Landscape is the best known of these and has been exhibited widely. It is a work of remarkable clarity and order, with extraneous details suppressed and the forms of buildings and other structures expressed as boldly simplified geometric forms. To Sheeler, this industrial scene was comparable to the highest architectural achievements of the classical past.

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Dove (1880-1946), a resourceful and imaginative individual and artist, was among the artists championed by renowned photographer and art dealer Alfred Stieglitz. After a highly experimental artistic phase in the 1920s and grinding poverty in the early 1930s, Dove returned to his family home in Geneva, New York. With support from collector Duncan Phillips, Dove entered a very productive period, during which he painted Moon. A tree covers the glowing moon with shades of brown, yellow, green, and red ranging in intensity from pale muddy tones to richly saturated hues. Painted with short, thinned, almost translucent brushstrokes over hues of different intensity, the surface appears luminous.

Thompson (1937-1966), an African American artist and Kentucky native, has been likened to a meteor for his brilliant but brief life in art. He received his formal art training at the University of Louisville and continued his career in New York City and Europe. He started out as an abstract painter, but later shifted to figurative expressionism. Tree, executed during his time in Paris in 1962, is a fauve-hued painting derived from Goya's fantastic and moralistic etchings, Los Caprichos (1799). Thompson morphed Goya's figures, except the angel, into primitive animalistic forms, emphasizing their bestiality and sexual violence.

Barney Ebsworth has been a member of the Gallery's Trustees' Council and co-chair of its Collectors Committee since 1996. In 1997 the Ebsworths gave the Gallery Or (1973), its first work by Pat Steir. In 1998 they funded the purchase of another painting by the same artist, the lyrically beautiful Curtain Waterfall (1991), and made a partial and promised gift of Georgia O'Keeffe's Black White and Blue (1930), one of the finest works from a rich period in her career.

Color reproductions of the paintings and descriptive entries are included in the exhibition catalogue published by the National Gallery of Art and Harry N. Abrams, Inc. The hardcover catalogue is available for \$49.95 and the softcover for \$39.95 at bookstores and the National Gallery of Art Shops. To order by phone call (301) 322-5900 or (800) 687-9350, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov.

The National Gallery of Art and Sculpture Garden, located on the National Mall between Third and Ninth Streets, N.W., is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free. For general information call (202) 737-4215, the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. To receive the Gallery's free bimonthly Calendar of Events, call (202) 842-6662.

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