

Selected Acquisitions of European Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987-1991

APART from Degas's *Dance class*, bequeathed to the Museum to cap an already incomparable collection of works by the artist, the pictures illustrated here were all purchased, and were acquired for their intrinsic beauty as well as to fill gaps. Thus the superb landscape by Rubens adds further variety to the portraits, sketches, and religious and mythological subjects in what is now the finest group of paintings by Rubens in America. Canaletto's pristine view of the Piazza S. Marco enters a collection otherwise rich in eighteenth-century Venetian paintings, but previously lacking an autograph work by this artist. The *Natoire* adds an unexpected note of religious sensibility to a wonderful series of eighteenth-century French portraits and genre scenes. The *Gericault* and *Delacroix* make a strong case for the Romantic movement, long overlooked by New York collectors who, to judge from what they have given the Museum, much preferred the Realism of Courbet and Manet. The *Romanino* rounds out the representation of Brescian paintings of the renaissance, while the *Giam-*

pietrino does the same for the school of Milan.

In a way, the Degas was destined for the Met. When it first came on the market, in 1898, it was shipped to New York for Mr and Mrs H.O. Havemeyer, upon whose collection the Museum's renowned holdings of Impressionist painting are based. Instead of buying it, however, the Havemeyers asked that it be offered to their next-door neighbour, Colonel Oliver Payne, in hopes that it would spur him on to collect modern French pictures. Though he bought it, he did not become a convert to French Impressionism. In the memoirs she wrote soon after her husband's death, Mrs Havemeyer records that he often urged her to 'get that picture back'. But the Colonel left it to his nephew, Harry Payne Bingham, who in turn bequeathed it to his widow through whose extraordinary generosity it has come to join the works by Degas that Mrs Havemeyer left to the Museum sixty-two years ago.

EVERETT FAHY



I. *A forest at dawn with a deer hunt*, by Peter Paul Rubens. Oak panel, composed of eight boards. 62.2 by 90.2 cm.

The first finished landscape by Rubens to find a home in America. Rubens probably painted it about 1635 and it remained in his possession until his death. After forming part of the collections of Reynolds and of the 1st Marquess of Lansdowne, it was bought in 1806 by Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, whose descendants sold it at Christie's in 1989. Purchased from Artemis Fine Arts Ltd. with gifts from many friends of the Museum (The Annenberg Foundation, Mrs Charles Wrightsman, Michael David-Weill, The Dillon Fund, Henry J. and Drue Heinz Foundation, Lola Kramarsky, Annette de la Renta, Mr and Mrs Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, The Vincent Astor Foundation and The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation Gifts; The Lesley and Emma Sheaffer Collection, Bequest of Emma A. Sheaffer, and Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, by exchange; Gift of George R. Hann, in memory of his mother, Annie Sykes Hann, by exchange; Gifts of George A. Hearn, George Blumenthal, George H. and Helen M. Richard and Mrs George A. Stern and Bequests of Helen Hay Whitney and John Henry Abegg and Anonymous Bequest, by exchange; supplemented by gifts and funds from friends of the Museum. 1990.196).



II. *H. Diana the huntress* by Giampictrino. Panel. 114 by 59.1 cm.

The design derives from Leonardo's lost *Leda and the swan* and may have been commissioned by a French patron. It is first recorded in 1881 when it was sold from the collection of Gustave Mailand in Paris. Purchased from Piero Corsini, Inc., with a generous gift from the Frank E. and Nancy M. Richardson Foundation (1989.21).

III. *The adoration of the shepherds, with St Catherine of Alexandria*, by Ludovico Cardi, called Cigoli. Signed with a monogram and dated 1599. 308 by 193 cm.

This large altar-piece by the father of Florentine baroque painting rounds out the Museum's collection of sixteenth-century Italian painting. Its provenance goes back only to 1954 when the Hon. Mrs Forbes Adams sold it at Sotheby's. A clue to its earlier history is the escutcheon on the fragmentary entablature at lower left. Purchased from Piero Corsini, Inc., with the assistance of the Gwynne Andrews Fund (1991.7).

IV. *Tobit burying the dead*, by Andrea di Lione. 127.6 by 174 cm.

The masterpiece of Andrea di Lione, a Neapolitan painter who had strong ties in Rome with Poussin and the Genoese painter Giovanni Battista Castiglione. From the mid-eighteenth century when it entered the Czernin collection until 1939 when Anthony Blunt published a fundamental study of Andrea di Lione, it was believed to have been painted by Poussin. Purchased from Channing Blake with the assistance of the Gwynne Andrews Fund (1989.225).



III.



IV.



V.

V. *The parable of the mote and the beam*, by Domenico Fetti. Wood, 60 by 43.2 cm. About 1621-22 Fetti painted thirteen parables of Christ for the Ducal Court at Mantua, most of which exist in multiple versions painted in Fetti's workshop or by later artists. This is the prime version of this particular composition. It is first recorded in 1746 at Althorp. The 8th Earl Spencer sold it in 1979 to Wildenstein & Co., Inc., from whom it was purchased with assistance from the Rogers Fund (1991.153).



VI.

VII. *The Expulsion from Paradise*, by Charles Joseph Natoire. Signed and dated 1740. Oil on copper. 67.9 by 50.2 cm. Painted as a pendant to an *Adam and Eve before the Fall* by his teacher François Le Moyne (known only from an engraving), this exceptionally well-preserved cabinet picture was shown at the Salon of 1740. Acquired from Stair Sainty Matthiesen with the assistance of several donors and purchase funds (Mr and Mrs Frank E. Richardson III, George T. Delacorte, Jr and Mr and Mrs Henry J. Heinz II Gifts; Victor Wilbour Memorial, Marquand and The Alfred N. Punnett Endowment Funds; and The Edward Joseph Gallagher III Memorial Collection, Edward J. Gallagher Jr Bequest. 1987.279).

VIII. *Piazza S. Marco: looking east along the central line*, by Canaletto. 68.8 by 112.4 cm. This is Canaletto's earliest painting of the piazza to show the white geometric design of Andrea Tirali's pavement, which was completed in 1723. A larger canvas in the Thyssen collection shows the piazza only partly paved with stone. Purchased in 1988 from Newhouse Galleries and Alex Wengraf Ltd. with a generous contribution from Mrs Charles Wrightsman (1988.162).

VI. *The Flagellation* and (on the reverse) *The Madonna of Mercy*, by Girolamo Romanino. Tempera and oil (?) on canvas. 180 by 120.7 cm. This was painted as a banner to be carried in processions by an unidentified Franciscan confraternity. It probably was executed c.1540, shortly after Romanino completed his frescoes at Pisogne. Purchased from Giacomo Algranti with the proceeds from the sale of an anonymous bequest (1989.86).



VII.



VIII.



IX.

IX. *Evening: landscape with an aqueduct*, by Théodore Géricault. 250.2 by 219.7 cm.

One of a set of three heroic landscapes of the Times of Day, painted in the summer of 1818, immediately before Géricault began the *Raft of the Medusa*. In winter 1990 it was reunited in a special exhibition with *Morning* (Neue Pinakothek, Munich) and *Noon* (Musée du Petit Palais, Paris) together with related drawings and prints. Bought at Sotheby's sale in New York, on 1st June 1989, with proceeds from the sale of a painting by Renoir given to the Museum by James A. Moffett, 2nd, in memory of George M. Moffett (1989.183).

X. *Porte de la Reine at Aigues-Mortes*, by Jean-Frédéric Bazille. Signed and dated 1867. 80.6 by 99.7 cm.

One of three views that Bazille painted of the walled town of Aigues-Mortes, near Montpellier. The two others, now in Montpellier and Washington, are panoramic views of the town. This unconventional composition shows Bazille's preference for dramatic contrasts of light and shadow. Purchased at Christie's auction in London, on 27th June 1988, with proceeds from the sale of nineteenth-century French paintings given to the Museum by Raymonde Paul, in memory of her brother, C. Michael Paul (1988.221).



X.

XI. *Valdemar Hjarthvar K bke (1813-1893), the artist's brother*, by Christen K bke. 53.7 by 46.4 cm.

Probably painted in 1838, not long before the artist began a two-year stay in Italy. It is one of the very few Danish paintings in the United States. Purchased in London from Daniel Katz and Timothy Bathurst (1990.233).



XI.

XII. *The Natchez*, by Eug ne Delacroix. Signed. 90.2 by 116.8 cm.

In October 1822 Delacroix wrote in his journal that he wished to paint this scene of American Indians from Chateaubriand's *Atala*. He laid in the composition the following year, but seems not to have actually painted it until shortly before it was shown in the Salon of 1835. Purchased at Christie's sale in New York, on 14th November 1989, with proceeds from the sale of nineteenth-century French paintings (Gifts of George N. and Helen M. Richard and Mr and Mrs Charles S. McVeigh, by exchange, and The Lesley and Emma Sheaffer Collection, Bequest of Emma A. Sheaffer, by exchange. 1989.328).



XII.



XIII. *The dance class*, by Edgar Degas. Signed. 82.6 by 76.2 cm.

For decades specialists have wrangled over the differences between this picture and its almost identical twin in the Musée d'Orsay. X-radiographs and preparatory drawings prove that the Orsay version was the one started as a commission for Jean-Baptiste Faure in 1873. After much work, Degas set it aside, wishing to make substantial changes in the design. As Faure was impatient for his picture, Degas made the present version which he delivered in 1875. The following year he reworked the canvas now in the Orsay. Faure's version – achieved in one inspired undertaking – was bequeathed to the Museum by Mrs Harry Payne Bingham in 1986 (1987.47.1).