

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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COPLEY'S PORTRAIT OF EPES SARGENT AND MANET'S TRAGEDIAN GIVEN TO NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Washington, D. C., September 5: The National Gallery of Art has been given two paintings, the PORTRAIT OF EPES SARGENT by J. S. Copley, and THE TRAGEDIAN by Édouard Manet, John Walker, Director, announced today.

Mr. Walker stated that the painting by Copley (1738-1815) of the prominent Massachusetts citizen is one of the artist's finest American portraits. For several years on loan from Mr. Arnold W. Knauth II, a direct descendant of the sitter, the painting has now been given to the National Gallery by the Avalon Foundation.

Born in Gloucester in 1690, Epes Sargent entered Harvard College in 1708, but left at the end of his junior year to go into business in his home town. Here he became a prosperous merchant and shipowner, and town official in many capacities. At the time of his second marriage, in 1744, he moved to his wife's mansion in Salem where he remained until his death in 1762. It was here presumably that he was painted by Copley at the age of approxi-

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mately 70 years. Among the descendants of Epes Sargent is the internationally well-known portraitist, John Singer Sargent.

Copley's portrait of Epes Sargent is one of the most distinguished paintings done in Eighteenth-Century America. It combines realism and idealization as is not infrequently the case in Colonial portraiture, and is the more remarkable in that the artist was at the time a youth of some twenty-two years, of necessity a more or less self-trained artist, and practicing in a country without a significant art tradition. In addition to this portrait of Epes Sargent, Copley also painted members of the next two generations of Sargents.

The second of the paintings added to the collections of the National Gallery of Art is THE TRAGEDIAN by the French nineteenth-century artist Édouard Manet (1832-1883). It has been given to the Gallery by the late Edith Stuyvesant Gerry.

THE TRAGEDIAN was painted in 1866. It is a full-length portrait of the French Shakespearean actor Philibert Rouvière (1809-1865) in Hamlet, which he made popular in France by many appearances after its translation by Alexandre Dumas in 1847. According to one of Manet's biographers, other models posed for the legs and hands of this portrait after Rouvière's death in 1865. In its pose and use of blacks and grays the painting shows the

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influence upon Manet of the Spanish seventeenth-century artist Velázquez. But Manet went beyond his predecessor in suggesting the effects of stage lighting on the face and hands of Rouvière.

It is well known that Manet's contemporaries did not sympathize with his realistic daring, and THE TRAGEDIAN was rejected by the Paris Salon jury of 1866 and sent back to the artist. When George W. Vanderbilt bought this picture in 1902 it was a daring acquisition because Manet had few admirers at the time. For many years THE TRAGEDIAN adorned the walls of Mr. Vanderbilt's mansion "Biltmore" near Asheville, North Carolina. It has been bequeathed to the Nation by his widow.

"It is fitting that this important painting should come to the National Gallery of Art," Mr. Walker stated "where the public may benefit by the foresight of this pioneer American collector of Manet's paintings. Mrs. Edith Stuyvesant Gerry's bequest commemorates the collecting activities of a famous American family."

The addition of THE TRAGEDIAN to the extensive group of Manet paintings on exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, makes Washington one of the major centers where this great artist's development may be studied and appreciated.

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