

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BICENTENNIAL GIFT FROM VERSAILLES FOUNDATION

PRESENTED TO NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D.C. May 12, 1976. An important marble bust of Louis XVI by eighteenth-century French royal sculptor Simon-Louis Boizot has been acquired by the National Gallery of Art as a gift from the Versailles Foundation.

Gerald Van der Kemp, chief curator of Versailles, presented the bust May 12 in a ceremony participated in by the donor of the bust to Versailles, Dierckx de Casterlé. Mr. Van der Kemp explained that the gift was in celebration of the Bicentennial of American independence, which had been supported by Louis XVI's ships and troops, and in gratitude for American contributions to the restoration of Versailles. The famous seventeenth-and eighteenth-century royal palace near Paris is now one of the most heavily visited museums in Europe.

The brief ceremony took place in gallery 55, which displays eighteenth-century French paintings, sculpture and furniture from the Gallery's collections. The bust is to be

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installed with three earlier busts of French royal personages by Coysevox and Prou in Lobby C on the Main Floor.

The bust was initially given to Versailles by Belgian collector Dierckx de Casterlé, who came to Washington for the ceremony. As Versailles already owned the other version of the bust it was decided to present this replica, probably produced for another royal or noble patron, to the National Gallery.

Boizot was commissioned by Marie-Antoinette in 1777 to make busts of both the King and of her brother, Joseph II of Austria, who was then visiting at Versailles. The Gallery's version displays considerable additional refinement of surface ornamentation than does the original, and is representative of early neo-classical portrait style in eighteenth-century France. Louis XVI is shown wearing the Golden Fleece, the most famous knightly order of Europe, held by virtue of his high military status as king.

The bust is the first likeness to enter the Gallery's collections of the man who was King of France at the time of the American Revolution.

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Boizot (French School, 1743-1809) held the coveted Prix de Rome at the French Academy from 1765 to 1770. His royal commissions quickly followed his return to France, with projects at Fontainbleau and the Palais Bourbon in 1772. In 1774 he began more than a decade of work at the Sèvres porcelain factory, and from 1773 to 1806 regularly exhibited in the Salon. In 1778 he became a member of the prestigious Académie Royale.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION or photographs contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director, or Pamela Jenkinson, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565, area code 202, 737-4215, ext. 224.

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An important marble bust of Louis XVI has been given to the National Gallery of Art in celebration of the Bicentennial of American independence. The presentation, to be made by Gerald Van der Kemp, chief curator of Versailles, will be held on Wednesday, May 12 at 12 noon in gallery 55 on the Main Floor.

Press coverage premitted. Please contact the Gallery's Information Office, 737-4215, ext. 224