

NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
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John Walker, Director, announced today that the National Gallery of Art has acquired for its permanent collection a masterpiece by Goya, the full-length, life-size portrait of Victor Guey, which, through the courtesy of the heirs of J. Horace Harding, has been on loan at the Gallery since 1946. It has now been purchased from funds derived from the bequest of the late William Nelson Cromwell.

It is remarkable that a painter with Goya's interest in penetrating, uncompromising analysis of character, with his biting satire and his bitter denunciation of the evils of his time should have been able to turn, when occasion offered, to an unsurpassably fascinating and sympathetic interpretation of childhood. The child in the portrait now acquired for the Gallery was, like most of the grown-ups who sat to Goya, a member of the aristocracy. His uncle, likewise painted by Goya, was General Nicolas Guey, and the little boy was himself page to Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain when, in 1810, at the age of six, he posed for this portrait, dressed in the costume of his office.

When Goya painted the queen, for example, in all her rich regalia, he could not resist emphasizing, almost to the point of caricature, the contrast between the splendor of the high office and the insignificance of the pretentious incumbent. When he painted Victor Guye, he recorded the unspoiled frankness of a child, who stands looking up from his book, quite unconscious of the superiority attested by the elaboration of gold-braided costume.

Until about 1913 the picture remained in the sitter's family. Since then it has been shown in a number of important exhibitions. It now hangs in Gallery 61 of the National Gallery of Art.

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