

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Washington, D. C.

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New National Gallery of Art, now under construction
in Washington, to be one of the most
magnificent buildings in the
country.

Destined to be one of the most beautiful structures of its kind in the world, a huge marble building, 785 feet long, is rapidly taking form along the principal parade ground of the nation's capital.

Latest of the series of great government edifices that have been erected on the triangular tract between Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues in recent years, the imposing new structure will be the permanent home of the National Gallery of Art, where priceless works of art which have been donated to the government will be housed and offered for public exhibition.

An elaborate twenty-foot model of the magnificent building, which will represent a cost of \$15,000,000, has just been placed on display at the National Museum in Washington. A faithful replica of the building, it shows the structure in precise and accurate detail as it will look after completion, with a finished landscaped setting of the site on the Mall immediately opposite the point where Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues cross.

Designed by one of the foremost American architects, the late John Russell Pope, the building is the munificent gift to the nation of the late Andrew W. Mellon, of Pittsburgh, secretary of the treasury under three former administrations and one time ambassador to London. In it will be some of the most famous works of art in the world -- priceless paintings and sculpture collected by Mr. Mellon during his life and donated by him to the Government as the foundation for a great national gallery, equal in importance and beauty to similar institutions of Europe.

Since Mr. Pope's death the architectural work has been carried on by his successors, Otto R. Eggers and Daniel P. Higgins, while the model itself was executed by Charles G. Peters, of New York.

Emphasizing the solemn dignity and simplicity of architectural grandeur which characterize the design of the structure, the model will be a subject of particular interest to architectural students and artisans, illustrating the extensive use today of models in the study of design. It is, in fact, something more than a mere miniature reproduction of the building as it will appear when completed; actually, it is an important tool used in its creation.

The length of the building, scheduled to be the largest marble structure in the world, will about equal the height of the Woolworth Building in New York. A total of 500,000 square feet of floor space is provided for in the plans, of which some 238,000 square feet will be reserved for exhibition.

Upwards of 800 car loads of rose-white Tennessee marble will go into the exterior walls alone -- if placed in a straight line, this wall, 90 feet high, would be half a mile long. Some 350 men have been engaged in cutting the marble in seven quarries near Knoxville since September, 1937. Probably in no building constructed in this country has greater care been exercised in the gradation of color of each individual block and in the precision of setting each piece of stone in the structure. The lower courses in the building are of a delicate rose pink, blending imperceptibly into nearly pure white at the top.

The ground floor of the huge building will be given over to a number of smaller galleries, a library of art, an auditorium for lectures and assemblages, together with the necessary administrative offices.

The main gallery floor, an architectural achievement of the first magnitude, will be featured by a magnificent rotunda 100 feet in diameter and 100 feet high from floor to dome, supported by twenty-four great columns of dark green marble,

Another unusual feature of the main gallery floor will be two garden courts, one in each of the two principal wings, with plants growing around open pools. These have been planned to provide restful interludes on the tour of visitors through the extensive galleries.

Representing a gift by Mr. Mellon to the nation of more than \$70,000,000, measured in the cost of the building, the works of art donated and the endowment provided, the National Gallery is

administered as a bureau of the Smithsonian Institution by a board of trustees composed of the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, who serves as chairman; the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, all ex officio members; together with five general trustees: Paul Mellon, David Bruce, Donald D. Shepard, Duncan Phillips, and F. Lamot Belin. David E. Finley, of Washington, D. C., is the director of the Gallery; Harry A. McBride, of Pontiac, Michigan, has been appointed administrator, and John Walker, of Pittsburgh, curator.

Providing the nation with a national gallery of which it may well be proud and designed to make the national capital the logical art center of the country, the first works to be placed on exhibition will be the Mellon collection, described by one of our most noted art critics, Royal Cortissoz, as a "collection of the loftiest distinction" with a high level that is never lowered in a pilgrimage through the paintings and sculpture of the old masters represented.

While there are 150 pieces in the Mellon collection alone, one of the major objectives of the founder of the National Gallery was to create an institution that would be sure to attract other valuable private collections held in this country -- thus bringing together under one roof many of the world-famous works of art that have found their way to the United States through the initiative of individual art lovers. In that way an important and lasting contribution to the cultural advancement of the nation was visualized.

Even from the start, however, most of the great masters will be represented by examples of their finest work. There are, for instance, three highly prized Raphaels in the Mellon group, among them the famous Madonna of the House of Alba, acquired from the Hermitage collection at Leningrad along with other priceless pieces.

Botticelli is represented by no less than four invaluable paintings, including one of the greatest of all, the marvelous Adoration of the Magi, also from the Hermitage, which critics have long acclaimed for its dazzling design and color.

There is a very noteworthy Duccio, a Fra Angelico, two Masaccios, and a renowned Jan van Eyck. Rembrandt, one of the most prolific of the old masters, is represented with eight canvasses, while the collection also includes outstanding works of such great artists as Titian, Vermeer, Frans Hals, Goya, Velasquez, and El Greco. Moreover, famous American painters are represented by fine examples of the work of Copley, West, and Gilbert Stuart.

The National Gallery will include also some of the greatest examples of Renaissance sculpture, purchased by Mr. Mellon from the prized collection of the late Gustave Dreyfus. Future gifts and acquisitions are destined to make the new institution one of the foremost galleries in the world, it is believed.

Construction of the great marble building is progressing rapidly despite the unusual care and precision employed in every detail. Present plans call for its completion in time for the formal opening in the early autumn of 1940.