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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Washington, D. C.

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National Gallery of Art Reveals Plans for Interior
Design of New Government Structure.

Plans and specifications for the interior of the new National Gallery of Art, now under construction in Washington, call for a simplicity of design that will accentuate the grandeur of the huge marble structure being built to permanently house and exhibit invaluable art works of the nation.

Trustees of the National Gallery, in releasing today for the first time architectural plans for the interior of the edifice, emphasized that ample provision is being made not only for the present, but the future needs of the government.

Featured by an imposing rotunda beneath a dome supported by twenty-four great Ionic columns of brecciated Verde Imperial marble, giving a multicolored jeweled effect, the main gallery floor promises to be an architectural achievement both in tone quality and lighting effect.

Throughout the entire interior, which will be air-conditioned both for the comfort of visitors and the preservation of the art works contained therein, a soft-tinted marble

and stone motif will be adopted. There will be expansive marble stairways leading up from the ground floor on either side of the entrance lobby, marble floors, stone walls and arcades, while in each end of the principal wings on the main gallery floor, a garden court with plants and shrubbery growing around open pools will offer restful interludes in tours through the galleries. The two central corridors and the rotunda linking the two courts will have a length of 600 feet.

Opening off these corridors, which will be used as two of the principal galleries for sculpture, will be the exhibition rooms for paintings and smaller pieces of sculpture. These rooms will contain the collection of the late Andrew W. Mellon and such other acquisitions of paintings and sculpture as may come to the Gallery in the future from other collectors.

The building, said to be the largest marble structure in the world, is being erected near the Capitol on the Mall where Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues intersect.

The Mall, a great parkway designed by L'Enfant, famous French engineer of revolutionary war days, as a part of the original city plan for Washington, is on an axis between the Capitol building, the Washington Monument, and the Lincoln Memorial. Thus the National Gallery of Art will offer a dominant theme for the character of buildings which in time are expected to make it one of the most beautiful thoroughfares in the world.

The main entrance of the structure will be on the Mall side approached through a garden with two large stone fountains and up a flight of steps to the portico containing twenty rose-colored Tennessee marble columns, six feet in diameter and 48 feet high.

Entrance to the main gallery floor will be from this portico through an ornamental bronze door weighing several tons, 30 feet high and 15 feet wide, which can be opened and closed by remote control in case of emergency. Immediately in the foreground of the main entrance will be the central rotunda, 100 feet high, with coffered dome ceiling, and an oculus, through which light will stream down upon a marble fountain surmounted by the famous John of Bologna bronze figure of Mercury, acquired by Mr. Mellon from the Stroganoff collection in Rome.

Blending with the dark green columns and the gray-gold caps and bases of Istrian Nuage marble, the floors of the rotunda, as well as those of the gallery corridors, will be of gray-black velvet-toned marble with a mosaic border. Specifications for the walls of the rotunda and the central galleries call for soft-toned Alabama stone.

Opening off the rotunda on the main gallery floor are the East and West central galleries, which are in effect public corridors of large size, with smaller galleries opening from them and terminating on the two garden courts.

These garden courts, which are 76 feet by 106 feet with fountains in the center, are so situated that in whatever direction one chooses to go on the main gallery floor there will be found at the end a space given over to plants and shrubs and benches for the delight of the visitor.

Surrounding the garden areas in each of the two courts will be 16 monolithic Indiana stone columns, $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet in diameter and 26 feet high. Floors in the gardens will be of Tennessee and Missouri marble, while the walls will be of Indiana stone. Over the entire courts will be arched skylights giving sunlight to the areas and permitting the growing of flowers and plants.

Another entrance to the 785-foot long building will be on the Constitution Avenue side from the ground level, while still two others will be provided on the East and West ends of the structure. Each will have the same type of massive ornamental bronze door operated by remote control.

Expectations are that the Constitution Avenue entrance will be used the most since it lies on the ground level. From the entrance lobby here the main gallery floor is reached by elevators or marble stairways.

On the ground floor opening off the Constitution Avenue lobby directly under the main rotunda will be a central lobby, treated with stone and marble, which runs East and West and leading to a lecture hall and other exhibition spaces. Also on this

floor will be the general administrative and executive offices, together with the board room and art reference library to be established.

Special care has been taken in the design of the building to eliminate the necessity of the visitor retracing his or her steps in moving from one gallery to another.

Another interesting feature permits the blocking off of gallery areas which will not be needed until some years in the future, in keeping with the original conception to provide a National Gallery of Art of a size sufficient to meet the requirements of the nation for some time to come. One of the main objectives of the donor was to establish a national institution that would attract valuable gifts from other private collections held in the United States.

The plans for the exhibition galleries have taken into consideration the proper placing of different periods and schools of paintings and sculpture, thus permitting the arrangement of future acquisitions without disrupting the works of art as first installed. This necessitated a design for the structure in such manner as to eliminate as much as possible the use of supporting columns throughout the gallery area. Consequently galleries of any desired size may be opened as the need arises.

The entire main gallery floor will be provided with natural light by means of skylights. Decorations for the

galleries will be appropriate to the works of art exhibited, taking into account the period of the paintings and the sculpture found therein.

As a Trustee of The A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, charged with the responsibility for building the National Gallery, Paul Mellon, son of the donor of the munificent gift to the Government, is actively directing the construction of the new structure, now well under way. Manifesting the same zeal in the construction of the Gallery as shown by his father in acquiring one of the most important private collections of his time, it is Mr. Mellon's desire that the Gallery be developed as a contribution to the cultural advancement of the nation. The other trustees responsible for the building of the Gallery are David Bruce and Donald D. Shepard.

With ample space for formal landscaping treatment, the site of the building was approved by the Fine Arts Commission and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Recognizing the magnitude of the project, Congress in appropriating the government-owned site for the Gallery also reserved the square adjoining to the East, which will be developed in a manner to afford a beautiful vista of the building from the Capitol.

The cost of the building will be approximately \$15,000,000, which with the art collection and endowment to be provided will represent an estimated gift to the nation of \$70,000,000.

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