

For release:

The office of Mr. Samuel H. Kress in New York made public the following exchange of letters between the President and Mr. Kress regarding the gift of the Kress Collection to the National Gallery of Art.

THE WHITE HOUSE

July 7, 1939.

My dear Mr. Kress:

Your decision to present to the people of the United States your priceless art collection is in keeping with the broad spirit of the Congress in establishing the National Gallery of Art, primarily as the home of the Mellon Collection. It has been the hope of those who have the welfare of the National Gallery at heart that other private gifts would supplement the treasures included in Mr. Mellon's Collection.

I am, therefore, most grateful for your letter of July 1st, in which you embody a letter to the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Art, setting forth the generous terms of your proposed gift. Not only are the treasures you plan to bestow on the Nation incalculable in value and in interest, but in their bestowal you are giving an example which may well be followed by others of our countrymen, who have in their stewardship art treasures which also happily might find a home in the National Gallery.

I feel that your proposed donation is a decided step in the realization of the true purpose of the National Gallery.

Very sincerely, *yours*

(Signed) Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Samuel H. Kress, Esq.,
1020 Fifth Avenue,
New York, New York.

SAMUEL H. KRESS
Ten Twenty Fifth Avenue
New York

July 1, 1939

My dear Mr. President:

Recalling the interest which you expressed in art in our country when I called on you several years ago, I am writing to inform you, regretting that I cannot do so personally, that I am arranging to give to the National Gallery of Art in Washington for its official opening, my collection of Italian paintings and sculpture, which conclusion I arrived at after various conversations with representatives of the Gallery for over a year.

This will require the removal of practically all the paintings from my home, making of course, a great change there but I feel that any loss in that way will be compensated by the knowledge that my collection of Italian paintings and sculpture, into which I have put much time and great investment, will have found a permanent home.

Believing this would be of interest to you I am adding the following formal letter to the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Art:

"To the Board of Trustees
of the National Gallery of Art,
Washington, D. C.

Gentlemen:

Over a period of many years, I have quietly acquired a collection of paintings and sculpture, particularly works of art representative of the Italian School, with the object of some day donating my collection to the public for exhibition and study in our country. Besides bringing from Europe as many as I could, I have made great effort to keep in this country paintings and sculpture that would otherwise very probably have been returned to Europe and have become permanently part of the great European galleries. I have done this in order that my Italian collection might include as many works as possible of the great Italian masters.

"The collection includes important works of many of the outstanding masters of the Italian School, such as Giotto, Duccio, Simone Martini, Sassetta, Matteo di Giovanni, Nerroccio, Fra Angelico, Masolino, Perugino, Filippo Lippi, Piero di Cosimo, Ghirlandaio, Gentile da Fabriano, Cossa, Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto and others; also sculpture by Desiderio da Settignano, Luca and Andrea della Robbia, Verrocchio, Rossellino, Benedetto da Maiano, Amadeo, Sansovino, and others.

"I have followed with interest the establishment of the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the construction of the great edifice there to house the Nation's works of art. I have also noted with pleasure the nation-wide interest exhibited in this Gallery, established by the late Andrew W. Mellon and dedicated to the encouragement and development of the study of the fine arts.

"Because the Gallery and the works of art which it will contain will be for the benefit of all the people of the United States and will be accessible to so many citizens of this and other countries visiting our National Capital, it seems most suitable that others should contribute to the Collection being formed there; and it is my wish, therefore, that the works of art which I have acquired should become part of the National Gallery Collection and be exhibited in the gallery building now being erected in Washington. Realizing what it would mean to the Gallery at its opening, I decided some months ago that if the arrangements of the gift were satisfactory I would give up the pleasure of having possession of the collection in my home, and arrange to consummate the gift so that rooms may be prepared for the placing of the objects of art for the opening of the Gallery."

I am sorry not to have had the opportunity to advise you in person of the above but feel that you would like to know about it immediately the gift was consummated.

With best wishes and highest regards,

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Samuel H. Kress

Honorable Franklin D. Roosevelt,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.