

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASETHE COLLECTIONS OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
WASHINGTON

The National Gallery will open to the public on March 18, 1941. For the first time, the Mellon Collection, deeded to the Nation in 1937, and the Kress Collection, given in 1939, will be shown. Both collections are devoted exclusively to painting and sculpture. The Mellon Collection covers the principal European schools from about the year 1200 to the early XIX Century, and includes also a number of early American portraits. The Kress Collection exhibits only Italian painting and sculpture and illustrates the complete development of the Italian schools from the early XIII Century in Florence, Siena, and Rome to the last creative moment in Venice at the end of the XVIII Century.

While these two great collections will occupy a large number of galleries, ample space has been left for future development. Mr. Joseph E. Widener has recently announced that the Widener Collection is destined for the National Gallery and it is expected that other gifts will soon be added to the National Collection. Even at the present time, the collections in scope and quality will make the National Gallery one of the richest treasure houses of art in the world.

The paintings and sculpture given to the Nation by Mr. Kress and Mr. Mellon have been acquired from some of

the most famous private collections abroad; the Dreyfus Collection in Paris, the Barberini Collection in Rome, the Benson Collection in London, the Giovanelli Collection in Venice, to mention only a few. Not only have private collections yielded their treasures, but many of the works of art now belonging to the National Gallery have been acquired from state museums in Europe, among them the Hermitage Gallery in Leningrad, the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin, and the Alte Pinakothek in Munich.

At the opening, Italian art will be represented as in few museums in the world. Starting with the two patriarchs of Italian painting, Duccio, the leading artist of Siena, and Giotto, the founder of the Florentine School, the evolution of Italian painting during four of the most creative centuries in the history of the world can be traced at the National Gallery. The spirit of scientific investigation and the new realism which began in Florence in the XV Century are represented by a massive Madonna and Child by Masaccio, and by a series of intensely realistic portraits by Domenico Veneziano, Antonio Pollaiuolo and others. The gradual infusion of grace and charm into the sternly scientific spirit of the first half of the XV Century can be seen in two lovely Madonnas by Domenico Veneziano and Baldovinetti. As the century comes to an end, a fitting climax is reached in a series of paintings by Botticelli, which includes a Madonna,

still strongly influenced by his master, Filippo Lippi; the famous Adoration of the Magi of the Hermitage Gallery, Leningrad, probably executed during Botticelli's middle period when he was decorating the Sistine Chapel in Rome; and ending with a Crucifixion and a Madonna painted at the close of the artist's life.

Outside of Florence, the XV Century is illustrated by the great Umbrian masters, Gentile da Fabriano, Signorelli, Perugino and Pintoricchio among others; and in the north by Jacopo Bellini, Mantegna, Pisanello and by a series of masterpieces by the Ferrarese painters Francesco del Cossa, Ercole Roberti and Cosimo Tura.

The Golden Age of the Renaissance, in the early years of the XVI Century, is splendidly represented by three paintings by Raphael---the Alba Madonna, and the St. George and the Dragon, from the Hermitage Gallery, Leningrad, and the Niccolini-Cowper Madonna. It is interesting to note that Duke Guidobaldo of Urbino, on whom the Order of the Garter had been conferred, sent the panel of St. George and the Dragon as a gift to Henry VII of England.

The other summit of Italian painting of the XVI Century, the Venetian School, will be richly illustrated at the National Gallery. Giorgione, the founder of the movement which revolutionized painting by the new pictorial use of light and color, will be represented in the Kress Collection by the Allendale Adoration, generally accepted as among

the most beautiful examples of the art of landscape surviving from the Renaissance. Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione's great contemporary, will be shown by eleven examples of his work, both portraits and devotional paintings, and Carpaccio, the outstanding master of narrative painting in the Venetian School, will be seen in eight important paintings.

From Giorgione, Giovanni Bellini and Carpaccio, the long development of Venetian art can be traced through the sumptuous portraits and figure subjects by Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese, to the rococo style of the XVIII Century and the final twilight glow of Guardi, Canaletto and Tiepolo.

Sculpture as well as painting of the Italian Renaissance will be exhibited. From the point of view of quality, if not of quantity, the collection of sculpture of the National Gallery will begin to rival the Louvre, Victoria-Albert Museum, and the Kaiser Friedrich Museum. Donatello, the greatest sculptor of the XV Century, will be seen in several works, among them a Madonna and Child in the Mellon Collection which came from the Goldman Collection, and a bust of St. John the Baptist, formerly in the Dreyfus Collection. The other Florentine masters of the next generation, Desiderio da Settignano, whose bust possibly of Isotta da Rimini in the Kress Collection is one of the great masterpieces of XV Century portraiture; Antonio

Rossellino and Mino da Fiesole will all be shown. Verrocchio, the master of Leonardo da Vinci, and the sculptor of the equestrian statue of Colleoni, will be represented by several works, of which the bust of Giuliano de' Medici is outstanding. From a later period there will be two monumental bronzes by Jacopo Sansovino, which will decorate the West Sculpture Hall; and in the rotunda, a specially designed fountain will be surmounted by one of three casts, generally considered the originals of Giovanni Bologna's famous Mercury.

Two other fountains in the garden courts will display XVII Century French sculpture. One fountain was executed by Legros the other by Tubi, and both formed part of the decoration of the Gardens of Versailles. In the east Sculpture Hall leading to the XVIII and XIX Century painting galleries there will be monumental marble urns by Clodion, one of the leading French sculptors of the XVIII Century.

Painting outside of Italy, though more restricted in the number of examples, will nevertheless be well illustrated. The Flemish School will be represented by its founder Jan van Eyck, who is traditionally considered the discoverer of oil painting. His Annunciation, which once hung in the Hermitage Gallery, Leningrad, is one of the great treasures brought to this country by Mr. Mellon. The development of Flemish painting can be seen in a hauntingly lovely Portrait of a Lady by Rogier van der Weyden;

in a jewel-like Adoration of the Shepherds by Petrus Christus, and in the tranquil Rest on the Flight into Egypt by Gerard David, which once formed a part of the Morgan Collection.

After the temporary eclipse of Flemish painting in the XVI Century, the most significant northern school was to be found in Germany. German painting at the National Gallery will be represented by a very strong portrait attributed to ["]Durer, and by two portraits by Hans Holbein the Younger, one of Sir Brian Tuke, who was instrumental in bringing Holbein to England, and the other of the short-lived Edward VI, which was painted as a New Year's gift for his father Henry VIII. In the XVII Century, art flourished again in Flanders in the persons of Rubens and Van Dyck. Rubens is to be seen in a portrait of his first wife Isabella Brant, and Van Dyck by several of his greatest portraits, dating from his Flemish, Genoese and English periods. Of the Van Dyck portraits, the two outstanding masterpieces are the Marchesa Balbi and Lord Philip Wharton. The latter once belonged to the famous collector and statesman Sir Robert Walpole, and was acquired for the Hermitage Gallery by Catherine the Great.

In the XVII Century, the Dutch were also leaders in the field of painting. The greatest genius of the Dutch School, Rembrandt, is to be seen in nine paintings, illustrating the range of his development, from the heroic

portrait of a Polish Nobleman of 1637 to the profound tragedy of the Self-portrait of 1659. Next to Rembrandt, the most famous Dutch painter of the time was probably Frans Hals, and his incisive characterizations and expressive brush work are revealed in six portraits. The rapidity of Hals' painting contrasts with the methodical and exact craft of the rarest of Dutch masters, Jan Vermeer of Delft, whose three portraits are among the most exquisite treasures in the Mellon Collection. Landscape as well as portraiture was a favorite form of art in Holland and this phase of painting is well represented by Hobbema and Cuyp.

Spain was another country which reached its zenith in painting in the XVII Century. At the beginning of the century, El Greco was the recognized leader. Two compositions, St. Martin and the Beggar, and St. Ildefonso illustrate El Greco's style which has had such a profound effect on modern painting. It is interesting to note that the St. Ildefonso belonged first to Jean Francois Millet and then to Edgar Degas, two of the leaders of French art in the XIX Century.

After El Greco's death, Spanish painting was soon dominated by Velazquez, whose lofty genius is to be seen in three paintings at the National Gallery--The Needlewoman, and two portraits--one of them the original study for the portrait of Innocent X in the Doria Gallery in Rome.

In the XVIII Century, Spain produced one last painter of genius, Francesco Goya. Two portraits show the range of his style. The earliest, the Marquesa de Pontejos, reveals the sly wit and gaiety of the XVIII Century, while the portrait of Senora Sabasa Garcia has the mysterious and slightly melancholy beauty which marks it as part of the romantic movement of the XIX Century.

Apart from Italy, France and England were the important centers of XVIII Century painting. The French School contains a fine "fete-galante", LaCamargo Dancing, by Lancret, which belonged to Frederick the Great of Prussia. Another great painter of the time, Chardin, is represented by versions of his House of Cards and of The Young Governess.

Several galleries will be devoted to the XVIII Century British School. Sir Joshua Reynolds will be seen in the fresh and sparkling portrait of Lady Caroline Howard and in two full lengths, one of Lady Elizabeth Delme, the other of Lady Elizabeth Compton. Gainsborough, Reynolds' great rival, is represented by a number of canvases, among them one of his rare landscapes, and also by full length portraits of two of the most renowned beauties of the day, the Duchess of Devonshire and Mrs. Sheridan. Other portraits by Romney and Lawrence display this cosmopolitan world at the end of the century, while Scottish society, simpler and more rustic, is illustrated in three portraits by Raeburn. The two leading English landscape painters,

Constable and Turner, are also included in the Mellon Collection.

The American School of the XVIII Century, in spite of its close dependence on British painting, so well illustrated in West's portrait of Colonel Guy Johnson, nevertheless reveals its own native realism. This is especially apparent in several of the portraits by Stuart, among them the well known Mrs. Richard Yates acquired by Mr. Mellon with other American portraits in the Clarke Collection.

The Mellon Collection also includes probably the most famous XVIII Century American group-portrait, the large Washington Family by Savage. It was from this painting that Savage made the well known engraving, copies of which are to be seen in so many American homes.

In installing this varied array of schools and modes of painting, every effort has been made to provide harmonious and appropriate background. Plaster, with travertine trim, has been used for the Early Italian paintings; a brocade background for the later Italians. The Dutch paintings have been hung against oak paneling, and the French, Spanish and British XVIII Century Schools have been installed in painted, paneled rooms.

An abundance of light is assured by large areas of glass in the ceiling of each gallery. The normal light will be daylight, filtered through a special diffusing glass.

For dark days and evenings, however, artificial light has been provided. A small number of galleries on the ground floor will be artificially lighted at all times.

According to the policy of the Gallery, the permanent collection will be restricted to the work of artists whose reputations have been established for at least twenty years following death, and their work, of course, must be of an exceptionally high standard of quality. However, in a specially designed gallery there will be, from time to time, loan exhibitions of the work of living artists, and the National Gallery will make every effort to cooperate with other Government agencies in encouraging the best in contemporary American art.