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FACTS ABOUT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

On Monday evening, March 17, President Roosevelt will dedicate the new National Gallery of Art at Washington. On the following morning the Gallery, with the Mellon and Kress Collections on view, will be opened to the public.

Invitations to attend the ceremonies, which will be brief and in keeping with the dignity and importance of the structure, have been sent to many of the Nation's notables, Government officials, leading figures in the academic and art fields, and to the prominent directors of South American art galleries and museums. Geographically and institutionally, the audience is expected to be one of the most representative ever to be assembled for an occasion of this kind.

The building, under construction for almost four years and recently completed at a cost of Fifteen Million Dollars, was made possible by the gift of funds provided by the late Andrew W. Mellon. Following Mr. Mellon's death on August 26, 1937, construction of the building was carried to completion by the trustees of The A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Messrs. Paul Mellon, Donald D. Shepard and David K. E. Bruce.

The dedication on March 17, consummates a plan formulated by Mr. Mellon during the years he spent in Washington as Secretary of the Treasury, and later announced by him in a letter to President Roosevelt in December, 1936.

In his letter, Mr. Mellon offered to build and to give to the Nation an art gallery. He stipulated that the then proposed edifice should not bear his name but should be designated as the "National Gallery of Art". His gift included his collection of paintings and sculpture, which he hoped would become the "nucleus" of a great national collection. The gift was accepted by the Act of Congress of March 24, 1937, and a site for the building extending along Constitution Avenue and the Mall from Fourth to Seventh Streets was provided.

Funds for the maintenance of the Gallery, in line with the general practice for the maintenance of other Federal museums and art galleries, are to be provided by annual Congressional appropriation.

The architect for the National Gallery of Art was the late John Russell Pope, who died a few weeks after the ground-breaking ceremonies in June, 1937. Pope's associates, Otto B. Eggers and Daniel Paul Higgins, of the firm of Eggers and Higgins of New York City, carried the architectural phase of the construction to its completion.

Conceived as a repository for great masterpieces of art, the Gallery is considered by critics to be an outstanding achievement in the field of architectural art.

The pattern of the building consists of two square wings extending from a central Rotunda, surmounted by a low dome. Ionic columns supporting broad pediments on the longitudinal faces of the structure, suggest classic Greek influence in architectural design. In general outline the Gallery is in harmony with other Federal structures along Washington's Constitution Avenue.

In dimension the building is 785 feet long and 305 feet wide. It was erected on a foundation of 6,700 concrete piles. It is constructed principally of hard-surface, rose-white Tennessee marble. Completion of the structure required 800 car-loads of this material and represents one of the world's most extensive applications of marble in a single building. The marble in the walls is graduated

in color, from strong tones in the lower courses to blend imperceptibly into nearly pure white at the cornice.

The main entrance to the building is through two twelve ton bronze doors facing Washington's famous Mall. The Mall entrance leads directly to the Rotunda, one of the outstanding architectural features of the Gallery. The Rotunda is one hundred feet in diameter and of equal height. The dome, with its glass covered oculus, is supported by 24 Ionic columns, carved in Vermont from dark green Italian marble, quarried in Europe. In the center of the Rotunda is a gray marble fountain surmounted by Giovanni Bologna's famous bronze figure of Mercury, from the Mellon Collection, made probably between 1575-1600.

Extending east and west from the Rotunda are two large halls or galleries, almost 75 feet wide and more than 100 feet long, which will contain large pieces of sculpture. Already in place in the west hall are two life size bronze statues of Bacchus and Venus Anadyomene, made about 1525 at Florence by Sansovino. They were once part of Napoleon's National Collection in Paris, acquired by him from Northern Italy as "war booty" following his successful campaign against Austria. During an uprising

in Paris in May, 1871, with the Commune in power, the great Palais Royal was fired by a mob, and the statue of Venus was thrown from a window just in time to prevent its destruction. The scars of this adventure are still visible.

Each of the sculpture halls terminates in a large and beautifully patterned garden court. Seats for the convenience of gallery visitors have been set about the courts in the midst of growing flowers and evergreens. In the center of each court stands one of two well-known fountains which graced the gardens of the palace of Versailles over 250 years ago.

These fountain groups were modeled in lead on the order of Louis XIV between 1670-1675. The fountains are similar in size and general effect and were part of the decorations for the celebrated "Theatre d'Eau" at Versailles. Both are group sculptures; one, by Pierre Legros, represents two winged Cherubs playing with a lyre, and the other, by Jean-Baptiste Tubi, depicts two similar figures at play with an irate swan.

The two hundred thousand and more square feet of exhibition area which radiates from the main corridors and garden courts provide space for almost one hundred

separate galleries.

Each gallery is more or less scaled to the size of the paintings and sculpture to be exhibited. Decorative treatments were designed to suggest the backgrounds used during the period when the paintings were executed. The galleries containing paintings of the early Italian Schools have plaster walls with doorways of Travertine stone. Paintings of the later Italian Schools are hung against a background of cotton damask. The Dutch and Flemish paintings are hung against oak paneled walls. Paintings of the XVIII Century English, French and American Schools are hung on walls of paneled wood painted. All Gallery floors are of oak, rather dark in color.

The galleries are lighted by natural daylight, diffused through specially treated glass lay-lights. At night or on dark days the paintings and sculpture are illuminated by specially designed floodlights placed above the diffusing glass in the ceilings of the galleries.

The visitors' comfort is again served in most of the galleries with large sofas so that any picture of particular interest can be studied at length without fatigue.

The entire structure is air-conditioned, and other conveniences include a cafeteria, art-reference library and a lecture hall.

From its opening day on March 17, the National Gallery of Art will rank with the leading art centers of the world. The Mellon Collection with 126 paintings and 26 pieces of sculpture, and the Kress Collection with 375 paintings and 18 pieces of sculpture will receive their first public showing on opening day. Not even the late Mr. Mellon or Mr. Kress have had the privilege of seeing their full collections on display at one time.

The Mellon Collection covers the principal European Schools from about the year 1200 to the early XIX Century and includes a number of early American masterpieces. The Kress Collection exhibits 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.

These priceless treasures of art have been gathered by Mr. Mellon and Mr. Kress from some of the most famous private and museum collections in the world. Outstanding among the private collections contributing to the National Gallery are : the Dreyfus Collection in Paris, the Barberini Collection in Rome, the Benson Collection in London and the Giovanelli Collection in Venice. Among the great state

museums, the Hermitage Gallery in Leningrad; the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin and the Alta Pinakothek in Munich, have yielded important works.

Many of the great masters whose names are immortal in the world of fine arts will be represented at the opening. Among these are: Stuart, West, Copley, Savage and Trumbull of the American School. From the Dutch School the Gallery has works by Rembrandt, Hals, Vermeer, Hobbema, and de Hooch. The British School is represented by Gainsborough, Reynolds, Romney, Hoppner, Turner, Constable and Raeburn. Masters of the Flemish School include van Eyck, van der Weyden, Gerard David, Memling, Van Dyck and Rubens. Chardin, Lancret, Legros and Clodion of the French School. German artists include Holbein and Durer. The Spanish School contributes El Greco, Velasquez and Goya. Finally, the Italian School is represented by such great names as Duccio, Giotto, Masaccio, Simone Martini, Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, Botticelli, Perugino, Pinturicchio, Raphael, Giorgione, Bellini, Carpaccio, Titian, Mantegna, Correggio, Tiepolo, Guardi, Longhi, Canaletto, Donatello, Verrocchio, Desiderio, Jacopo Sansovino and Giovanni da Bologna.

The policy governing acquisitions for the Gallery, restricts the permanent collection to the work of artists whose reputations have been established for at least twenty years following death, and their work of course must be exceptional in quality.

The works of contemporary artists, however, will also be shown from time to time in loan exhibitions, in a gallery specially provided for this purpose.

The Act of Congress of March 24, 1937, constituted the National Gallery as a Bureau of the Smithsonian Institution but administered by its own Board of Trustees, composed of the Chief Justice of the United States (serving as Chairman of the Board); the Secretary of State; the Secretary of the Treasury; the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, ex-officio; and five general trustees. David K. E. Bruce, President; F. Lamot Belin, Vice President; Duncan Phillips, Joseph E. Widener and Samuel H. Kress are presently the general Trustees.

The administrative officers of the National Gallery of Art are: David K. E. Bruce, President; F. Lamot Belin, Vice President; Donald D. Shepard, Secretary and Treasurer; David E. Finley, Director; Harry A. McBride, Administrator; John Walker, Chief Curator; and Macgill James, Assistant Director.