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NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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WASHINGTON, March 16: At the request of the Department of the Army, the National Gallery of Art will open tomorrow an exhibition of paintings from the Berlin Museums before their return to the American zone of Germany, David E. Finley, Director, announced today.

"There will be no formal opening", Mr. Finley said. "The galleries on the ground floor and on the main floor in which the 202 pictures, principally from the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, are hung will be opened when the Gallery opens at 10 a.m. Wednesday." The exhibition will continue through Sunday, April 18.

"The pictures to be shown", Mr. Finley added, "are the finest of those discovered in 1945 by the United States Army when it captured the mines of the Kaiserroda Works, at Merkers, Germany. Shortly after the paintings had been removed from the mine, the Army decided to bring them to the United States for safekeeping until conditions in Germany warranted their return. The late Chief Justice Harlan F. Stone, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Art, announced that these works of art would be retained in the Gallery's air-conditioned storage rooms until the Army decided they could be properly cared for in Germany."

By a coincidence, the opening of the exhibition falls on the seventh anniversary of the opening of the National Gallery of Art.

Commenting on the exhibition as a whole, John Walker, Chief Curator, said that these 202 pictures, in conjunction with the works of art in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Art, comprised one of the greatest groups of paintings ever shown at one time.

"The Flemish and German pictures are of extraordinary interest in this country", Mr. Walker continued, "since neither school is so well represented in America as the work of Italian, Dutch, English and French artists. The panels by Jan van Eyck, van der Weyden, Petrus Christus, Altdorfer, Dürer, Cranach and Holbein form a galaxy unsurpassed today in any European museum.

"The Italian pictures are also very remarkable. This section begins with the Death of the Virgin, the most important panel by Giotto outside of Italy, and continues with famous paintings by Fra Filippo Lippi, Botticelli, Raphael, Giorgione, Titian, Caravaggio and Tiepolo.

"The Kaiser Friedrich Museum also had an illustrious collection of Dutch art. The present exhibition will show 15 Rembrandts, 6 Frans Hals, 2 Vermeers, and superb examples of landscape and genre paintings by other Dutch artists.

"French painting, too, is well represented, beginning with the greatest of all French portraits, that of Étienne Chevalier and his patron saint, by Fouquet. It continues with fine examples of seventeenth-century painting by Poussin and Claude Lorrain, eighteenth-century painting by Chardin and Watteau, and nineteenth-century painting by Daumier and Manet.

"This is a unique opportunity" Mr. Walker concluded, "for the American people to see the supreme treasures of one of the greatest of the European museums."

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