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NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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WASHINGTON, February 4: The National Gallery of Art is carrying on a million dollar building operation within its own walls. The work is so organized, however, that the average visitor is not aware of what is being done.

In the large, unfinished space behind the white-panelled rooms in the southeast corner of the building twelve new galleries are being constructed. Steel girders have been lifted by immense cranes over the sides of the building. They have been welded into skylights and laylights, fitted with specially made glass, through which daylight will filter into the rooms below. Air conditioning vents are already in place, fed by the machines that wash and distribute clean air throughout the building and maintain temperature and humidity at the desired level for preserving the works of art. Walls of hollow tile are nearing the stage where they will be ready for the wood panelling, now being manufactured to match the adjoining galleries already in use. The new rooms, when completed, will be available for the Nation's rapidly growing collection.



National Gallery of Art

- 2 -

The total cost of the new rooms will be just under a million dollars. The funds were supplied by The A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Paul Mellon, Donald D. Shepard, and Mrs. Mellon Bruce, Trustees. The building, itself, was the gift of the late Andrew W. Mellon. It was constructed at a cost of over \$15,000,000 and could not be duplicated today for two or three times that amount.

It was opened to the public on March 17, 1941--less than nine years ago. At that time the building housed only the Mellon Collection of 126 paintings and 18 pieces of sculpture; the Samuel H. Kress Collection of 375 paintings and 16 pieces of sculpture, all of the Italian School; and a few American paintings from the Chester Dale Collection and from other donors; also a small number of prints.

Since that time the Gallery's collection has grown so rapidly that it has been necessary to more than double the number of rooms in which the works of art are exhibited.

The Widener Collection with its famous Rembrandts, Vermeers, Donatellos, etc., came to the National Gallery in 1942. The Chester Dale Collection brought to Washington celebrated Renoirs, Cezannes, and other works of Nineteenth Century French artists. In 1943, a splendid collection of prints and drawings was received from Lessing J. Rosenwald. In 1946 a large number of important and rare paintings and sculpture in the Italian and French Schools was added to the Samuel H. Kress Collection.



National Gallery of Art

- 3 -

In 1947, the Gallery was further enriched by gifts of several masterpieces from the Ralph and Mary Booth Collection. In addition, there have been many gifts of paintings and sculpture, prints and drawings from other donors. The Gallery's collection of American paintings has become increasingly important. It has recently received additions of works by such well-known artists as Gilbert Stuart, Sully, Bellows, and Henri.

These and other paintings, with the Gallery's large and distinguished collection of sculpture, are housed in 93 rooms which are now open to the public. The additional exhibition space to be provided in the twelve new rooms under construction will prevent over-crowding and will make available an adequate setting for works of art that may come to the National Gallery in the immediate future. Meanwhile, visitors to the Gallery can enjoy the works of art now on exhibition without disturbance to the present installation.

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