

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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HOLD FOR RELEASE:  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 10, 1961. John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that the Chief Justice of the United States presided at a special ceremony last night, Saturday, December 9, at which the final documents deeding over one of the largest art collections ever formed were handed to the National Gallery and to 18 other museums. At the close of the ceremony, the Chief Justice read a letter from President Kennedy. The ceremony marked the completion of a 20-year project of art donations by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. An exhibition of selected works from every museum included in the project will open today, December 10, at 2:00 p.m. A fact sheet on the project and the exhibition, and the texts of the Chief Justice's speech and President Kennedy's letter are attached.

The introductory remarks by the Chief Justice of the United States were followed by a brief talk by Dr. Franklin Murphy, Chancellor of the University of California at Los Angeles and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Kress Foundation Board of Trustees. Dr. Murphy presented deeds of gift to the President of the National Gallery, Chester Dale, and to the Presidents or Board Chairmen of each one of the 18 other museums. Dr. Richard A. Harvill, President of the University of Arizona, replied for the recipient institutions, and the Chief Justice closed the ceremony by reading President Kennedy's letter.

Chief Justice Warren was acting in his capacity as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery. The other members of the Board are the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and five private citizens. The members of the board attended a dinner of about 200 given by Mr. and Mrs. John Walker before the ceremony.

TEXT OF LETTER FROM  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES  
READ BY THE CHIEF JUSTICE  
AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
DECEMBER 9, 1961

Dear Mr. Kress:

On the occasion of the opening of the exhibition ART TREASURES FOR AMERICA at the National Gallery of Art I congratulate you and your colleagues of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

The successful completion of your plan to make great works of art available to the public at the National Gallery of Art and twenty-one other museums throughout the Nation and in study collections in colleges and universities is an achievement of which America can be proud.

This extraordinary contribution to the artistic resources of our country, unprecedented in scope, will be an enduring memorial to the industry, foresight, and generosity of the Kress Family and of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

Sincerely yours,

(John F. Kennedy)

Mr. Rush H. Kress  
President  
Samuel H. Kress Foundation  
221 West 57th Street  
New York 21, New York

Fact Sheet from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation

ART TREASURES FOR AMERICA

An Exhibition of Works of Art

From the Samuel H. Kress Collection

in American Museums

Place. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Dates. December 10, 1961 through February 4, 1962

Purpose. More than an art exhibition, the show will commemorate a 20-year project that is unique in the history of art collecting, both in its concept and in its scale. At a ceremony the night before the opening, the final documents giving the entire collection away will be handed to the recipient institutions.

Scale. The cost to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation of the art donated in its two-decade project has exceeded 50 million dollars. "a valuation of the gift in terms of today's prices," John Walker, Director of the National Gallery, said, "staggeres the imagination." Over 3000 works-paintings, sculptures, drawings, tapestries, furniture, porcelains- have been given by the Foundation.

Scope. 45 institutions, from Puerto Rico to Hawaii and from Miami to Seattle, are beneficiaries of the Kress project, which includes the following donations: to the National Gallery of Art, a collection of 376 paintings, 92 pieces of sculpture, 1307 bronzes and medals; to New York's Metropolitan Museum and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, important collections of decorative arts, and to the Morgan Library in New York, a collection of drawings; to 18 "Regional Galleries" across the nation, Kress collections for permanent exhibition; and finally, to 23 colleges and universities, Kress collections for study and research.

Exhibition. For the exhibition at the National Gallery paintings will come from each one of the 18 regional museums in New York and Philadelphia. Six paintings being given to the National Gallery by the Foundation will be put on view for the first time.

Combined with the works of art on permanent view in the National Gallery, the exhibition will thus provide a unique opportunity to see under one roof a representation of the whole range of the Kress Collection, which after February 1 will be permanently scattered over thousands of miles. Paintings lent by the regional museums for the exhibition include works by Rembrandt, Titian, El Greco, Rubens, van Dyck, Botticelli, Goya, Tiepolo, Frans Hals, Guardi, Giovanni Bellini and Veronese. A checklist of participating institutions is attached.

History: In 1896, Samuel H. Kress left a \$25-a-month job teaching school to open his first store. Today, the Kress Company owns and operates 265 stores in 30 states.

As early as the 1920's, Samuel Kress had been struck by the artistic riches in European museums and the great lack of art available to the public in America. It was then that he started his collection which, under the influence of the late Bernard Berenson, concentrated on Italian painting. By the end of the 1930's, the Kress Collection was believed by critics to be the most comprehensive representation of Italian painting in private hands anywhere.

Kress's original plan was to build a museum for his collection in New York. When he learned in 1938 of the plans for a National Gallery, however, he decided to give his entire collection to the new Gallery, which opened in 1941.

Although established and principally endowed by Samuel H. Kress, the Foundation represents the interest of two other members of the Kress family. Claude Washington Kress bequeathed considerable funds to the Foundation upon his death in 1940. Rush Harrison Kress succeeded his brother as head of the Foundation when ill health made it impossible for Samuel Kress to carry on his work. Samuel Kress died in 1955.

In the course of the two decades since the opening of the National Gallery, the program of the Kress Foundation has continued to develop. Working closely with the National Gallery staff, the Foundation continued to acquire works of art, refining the original collection, enriching it with some

of its finest masterpieces, and broadening the scope of the collection to include French, German, Spanish and Dutch art as well as Italian. The problem of limitations of space, shared by museums the world over as their collections develop, soon arose. The standard solution to this problem is to concentrate works in museum vaults, where they are accessible only to specialists.

The Regional Museum Concept. In 1947, Mr. Rush H. Kress initiated the plan of distributing Kress collections to regional museums throughout the country. With the emphasis on the broadest geographic distribution, 18 museums were selected.

The cities chosen have cooperated enthusiastically with the Foundation. In some cases they have built new museum wings or even whole new museums. In all cases they have provided permanent space for the collections in fire-proof, air-conditioned, humidity-controlled, well-lighted galleries, and they have accepted only what they will be able to keep permanently on exhibition. The directors and curators have had a part in choosing their collections and the Foundation has made many new acquisitions to meet special regional needs. The museum staffs have also cooperated with the Foundation in the publication of catalogues of their collections.

Restoration and Framing. In its fireproof laboratories and storage vaults in the Pocono Mountains, the Foundation has carried forward a program of assuring the good condition of every object. The most modern techniques have been employed involving X-rays, infra-red, ultra-violet and raking light, and a new synthetic form of tempera that substitutes a polyvinyl acetate base for the egg white of the old masters.

The Foundation sees to the framing of every picture it gives away. Two Italian experts combed Europe for authentic period frames, and the Foundation acquired a collection of 800 frames from the Italian Renaissance.

Book. "Art Treasures for America." An anthology of the paintings from the Kress collection in the National Gallery and the 18 regional galleries was published October 15

by the Phaidon Press, London. With 100 color plates and 87 black-and-white illustrations, it has a text by Charles Seymour, Jr., Professor of the History of Art, Yale University; and prefaces by Guy Emerson, Art Director of the Kress Foundation, and John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art. The Anthology is designed to serve both as a souvenir volume of the exhibition at the National Gallery, and as an introduction to a comprehensive catalogue of the Kress collection which will be published as rapidly as possible in the next few years.

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For further information contact Miss Davis in New York at JUdson 6-4450 or ULster 8-1936, or Mrs. Shapley in Washington at RE 7-4215.

Checklist of Institutions Represented  
in the exhibition  
ART TREASURES FOR AMERICA  
from the Samuel H. Kress Collection  
National Gallery of Art  
December 10, 1961 - February 4, 1962

ALLENTOWN, Pennsylvania. Allentown Art Museum.

ATLANTA, GEORGIA. Atlanta Art Association.

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA. Birmingham Museum of Art.

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA. Columbia Museum of Art.

DENVER, COLORADO. Denver Art Museum.

EL PASO, TEXAS. El Paso Museum of Art.

HONOLULU, HAWAII. Honolulu Academy of Arts.

HOUSTON, TEXAS. Museum of Fine Arts of Houston.

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI. William Rockhill Nelson  
Gallery of Art.

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. Brooks Memorial Art Gallery.

MIAMI, FLORIDA. The Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery.  
University of Miami, Coral Gables.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA. Isaac Delgado Museum of Art.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK. Pierpont Morgan Library.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

PORTLAND, OREGON. Portland Art Museum.

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA. North Carolina Museum of Art.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA. M. H. de Young  
Memorial Museum.

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON. Seattle Art Museum.

TUCSON, ARIZONA. University Art Gallery.

TULSA, OKLAHOMA. Philbrook Art Center.

WASHINGTON, DC. National Gallery of Art.



TEXT OF OPENING REMARKS BY  
THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE UNITED STATES  
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
DECEMBER 9, 1961

As Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Art I am delighted to preside at this meeting tonight. We are gathered here to participate in a remarkable event, an event which is a landmark in the history of American philanthropy. The Trustees of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation this evening will add magnificently to their already superb gifts to the National Gallery of Art, which now fill almost a third of the exhibition space in this building. And they will complete their donations to galleries in eighteen cities of the United States stretching from Allentown in the east to Honolulu in the west and from Seattle in the north to Miami in the south. These gifts, along with donations made to the Metropolitan Museum, the Philadelphia Museum, the Morgan Library and twenty-one colleges and universities, represent the dispersal of one of the greatest collections ever formed.

The importance of this enterprise of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation in the development of American philanthropy is equally significant. It has been pointed out by students of American educational foundations that there is an imbalance between the interests of such foundations in the sciences and their interest in the arts. In our troubled times we expect, though we cannot but regret, this disproportionate emphasis on the sciences. Our physical survival may depend upon scientific investigation. But the survival of the human spirit is even more important. It is nurtured on great works of art, whether of literature, or of music, or of the fine arts. The Trustees of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation have recognized the importance of art in the life of every human being. As a result of the gifts which will be made here this evening millions of people will gain an insight into values that lie beyond the reach of time. Each of us contemplating these achievements of human genius will feel renewed faith in the dignity of man and in the ultimate triumph of our humanistic ideals.

Remarks of Richard A. Harvill, for  
Program of December 9, 1961 when the  
Samuel H. Kress Foundation makes  
Presentation of Art Collections to  
Regional Galleries.

It is with appreciation and pride that I receive this magnificent gift and express the gratitude of the eighteen regional galleries, and indeed of the people of the United States to whom these gifts are actually made.

We are all familiar with the beginnings of this great collection by Samuel Kress, and with its growth and development through the dedicated efforts of the three Kress brothers, Samuel, Rush and Claude. In order now to achieve the original desire of Samuel Kress to make available the great art masterpieces to the American public, the Kress Foundation is distributing many of its art treasures among eighteen galleries, located throughout the country.

Contrary to the axiom that the whole is no greater than the sum of its parts, it is clear that the combined cultural benefits of eighteen parts can far outweigh the benefits and values of the Collection in a single art gallery.

The great Kress Collection is not really divided. It is still the Kress Collection, and it belongs to the American people as it was always intended that it would one day. Each smaller collection is fully catalogued and each piece is always on display. The numbers of those who will see and will be influenced by the regional exhibits is so great that the soundness of the regional concept is abundantly confirmed.

When David Finley spoke at The University of Arizona on the occasion of the presentation of the Collection, he made one point which seems to me to be especially significant. He spoke of people "well trained in their own fields but unable to lead a really useful life because their curiosity had not been aroused" by some knowledge in other fields -- such as the humanities. The regional Kress collections will do much to arouse that curiosity and, in addition,

provide spiritual values through art which can act as a counterbalance to the national tendency of over-emphasis upon material values. Today it is recognized that an art gallery can do more than exhibit art -- that it can teach people about spiritual values and help people learn how to acquire and develop these values.

But in the United States there are broad areas of the nation where no major works of art may be seen. It is this serious lack of opportunity that is now greatly remedied through the acumen and generosity of the Kress Foundation. We shall have, in addition to a National Gallery of Art enriched to stand as one of the greatest art galleries of the world, a series of eighteen regional galleries, each possessing a superb collection of Kress paintings and sculptures. Every year many thousands of Americans will see and enjoy these treasures, and many will experience a growing enrichment of spirit.

The actual presence of fine examples from the great tradition of European art in a community as a possession of that community, suitably housed and reverently handled, will become a pervasive influence toward understanding and appreciation of the meaning of art in the life of a people.

These are some of the reasons why we are all so deeply grateful to Samuel Kress, his brothers Rush and Claude and to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. These are some of the reasons why we are so proud to be the recipients of this fabulous philanthropy. In accepting these works of art as the gifts of the Foundation, I can assure you that each of the eighteen museums on whose behalf I am speaking will always be faithful to the original concept of the collection -- to provide for the American public an opportunity to see and love these magnificent examples of creative skill through the centuries.

Finally, I pledge for the eighteen regional galleries our best efforts to justify the hope expressed by Guy Emerson,

the wise and distinguished Art Director of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, that we will "continue to build up the collections in beauty and quality."

These few words cannot express the deep gratitude we feel nor the great sense of responsibility we assume when we accept these generous gifts. Our thanks are so profound that the simple words "we thank you" must convey our feelings.

The Kress Gift to the Nation  
December 9, 1961  
Washington, D.C.

Comments of Dr. Franklin D. Murphy, Chancellor, UCLA,  
and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Kress Foundation

Mr. Chief Justice, Mr. and Mrs. Kress, Distinguished Guests ---

For me and for my colleagues, the Board of Directors of the Kress Foundation whom I have the honor to represent, this is a day of profound fulfillment.

It is my privilege and duty to do really a very simple mechanical thing - namely, to transfer a piece of paper from my hand to that of nineteen individuals. But clearly, it is the symbolism of this act that lives tonight. For, by the transfer of these several deeds of gift, there is given to the American people a great and glowing treasure of man's reaction to his own history and his own environment by way of brush and chisel. What we here do tonight is comparable to few other such acts in history - indeed, it invokes the memory of the day when Anna Maria Louisa of Tuscany and the Palatinate so richly endowed the Tuscan State.

The excitement and pleasure of this event, however, must not blur the image of those who set this project on its way and brought it to this triumphant conclusion. The spirit of Samuel H. Kress - at once vigorous, determined, sensitive and imaginative - surely is with us tonight. It was he who dared dream that Americans from Washington to Honolulu and from New York to El Paso would have the opportunity to explore the genius of the artist in qualitative terms and at first hand.

This dream was enthusiastically nourished, both with encouragement and material support, by his brothers, Claude Kress and Rush Kress.

When Samuel H. Kress became incapacitated, Rush Kress assumed the responsibility of bringing this project to completion in the name of his brother. This he has done through

these last years with enormous dedication and unswerving determination. Mr. Kress, you must know that your fellow trustees and indeed the American people at large are, at this moment, deeply in your debt.

Obviously, a project of such dimensions, involving great subtlety and sophistication, required a whole range of advisors and workers in the vineyard. Time does not permit us to note them all this evening, but no one, I am sure, will take umbrage if I especially single out Mr. Guy Emerson. As Art Director of the Kress Foundation, it has been his responsibility to guide, organize and advise quizzical trustees on the one hand, and acquisitive museum directors on the other. All of us here involved in this project shall always be in his debt.

The full scope of the project which is simply titled "The Kress Gift to the Nation" is still difficult to comprehend, even for those of us who have been quite close to it. Briefly stated, its objective has been to bring to the American people, both in breadth and in depth, a significant segment of the artistic flowering of western Europe. The coverage of this effort includes painting, sculpture, the graphic and the decorative arts. Early it was determined that the major collection should be provided for the National Gallery of Art located in our national capitol. As you will see later this evening, this has been accomplished beyond, I am sure, the original expectation.

Additionally, the bold notion was developed that important collections would be provided museums across the length and breadth of the United States. Examples of each of these collections are present in this show, and, again, I think you will agree that this daring and comprehensive ambition has been remarkably fulfilled.

Finally, with an eye to the important role which the American colleges and universities must play in the creation not only of well trained curators for the growing number of museums in this country, and not only for the training of

those artistically motivated, but also for the development of an ever greater number of interested and knowledgeable connoisseurs, a program was developed and implemented to provide study collections of paintings to 22 colleges and universities from coast to coast.

Involved in this gift are approximately 1300 paintings, 150 sculptures, 1300 bronzes, the great Barbarini Tapestries, the Hillingdon Collection of French Decorative Arts and the Croome Court Room, a unique collection of Piazzetta Drawings and many other miscellaneous but important objects.

We of the Kress Foundation proudly, unashamedly and fervently declare that we have been faithful to the vision of Samuel H. Kress, and that it has been a unique privilege for all of us to have played some role in the implementation of this grand design which comes to culmination tonight.