

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • REpublic 7-4215 extension 248

HOLD FOR RELEASE:  
MONDAY, December 2, 1964

Washington, D.C., December 2, 1964. John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that a ceremony marking the first day of issue of a U.S. commemorative postage stamp honoring the fine arts will be held at 11:00 a.m. Wednesday, December 2, in the National Gallery auditorium. The stamp, based on a design by Stuart Davis, reproduces the first piece of abstract art ever to appear on a U.S. stamp.

The ceremony will be open to invited guests and to the general public. A temporary post office will be set up in the Gallery to postmark first day covers. The National Gallery and the main post office in Washington will be the only two locations cancelling covers on that day.

The Gallery will exhibit four original prints by Stuart Davis related to the stamp design, on loan from Mrs. Edith Gregor Halpert of the Downtown Gallery, New York. Also on view will be competing designs, by leading artists, together with illustrations of the evolution of the stamp.

Speakers at the ceremony will be the Hon. John A. Gronouski, Postmaster General; Mr. Lloyd Goodrich, Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; and Mr. Harold Weston, Chairman of the United States Committee of the International Association of Art. Mrs. Stuart Davis, widow of the artist who died on June 24 of this year, will also attend, together with her son, 12, a stamp collector. An album containing a pane of the new stamps will be presented to Master Davis by the Postmaster General.

Mr. Goodrich has called Davis "one of the most natively American and at the same time more universal of artists. His art came, directly and powerfully, out of American life." Brian O'Doherty, in the New York Times, called him "one of the limited company of major painters America has produced."

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Honored by a one-man exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1944, Davis was the recipient of two Guggenheim international awards, and last January won a gold medal at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts for the best painting in oils.

Davis' work has been adapted for the stamp by John Ross, President of the Society of American Graphic Artists. The final stamp design received Davis' approval not long before his death.

An invitational contest, sponsored by the Society of American Graphic Artists, was financed by a grant from Mrs. Albert List of New York.

Artists who participated in addition to Davis were Edmond Casarella, George Giusti, Robert Gwathmey, Jacob Lawrence, Michael Ponce de Leon, George Ortman, Gregorio Prestopino, Karl Schrag and Ben Shahn.

Judges were Fritz Eichenberg, director of the Pratt Graphic Arts Center, New York City; Antonio Frasconi, Connecticut artist whose design appears on the science commemorative stamp of 1963; Miss Una Johnson, print curator of the Brooklyn Museum; Julian Levi, director of the art workshop of The New School, New York City; and John Ross of Englewood, New Jersey, president of the S.A.G.A.

Four designs (those by Davis, Giusti, Gwathmey and Shahn) were selected by the panel for consideration by the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, which assists the Postmaster General. Mr. Walker, Director of the National Gallery, is a member of that Committee. The Committee recommended the Davis design to the Postmaster General, who approved it as a U.S. postage stamp.

120,000,000 copies of the stamp have been engraved by the U.S. Government Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

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