

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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NEWS RELEASE

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Washington, D. C. May 30, 1967. The National Gallery of Art has documented its first quarter century with an official report of the years 1941 to 1966. Copies (at \$5) went on sale this week at the Gallery in Washington, D. C.

An opening statement in the 102-page, hard-cover book states: "In twenty-five years the growth through private philanthropy of the collections...has been more rapid than that of any other art museum in history. Had this Gallery been begun a few years later, such growth would have been impossible....The dwindling supply of old masters, taxation and death duties, and increasingly tight restrictions on the export of national treasures have combined to change the situation fundamentally."

It continues with an account of the growth of the Gallery's collection.

"When we opened in 1941," Director John Walker recalls, "cavernous, unfinished spaces lay empty. In relation to the five and a half acres of galleries, the Andrew Mellon nucleus collection of old masters represented a density of about 24 works to the acre."

The situation changed rapidly as art poured in from private sources, especially from the Widener family, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, Chester Dale, Lessing J. Rosenwald, Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch, the Horace Havemeyer family, Mr. and

Mrs. Paul Mellon, and Mrs. Mellon Bruce.

From several hundred works of art in 1941, the number grew in 25 years to more than 30,000. Acquisitions illustrated in the report by color reproductions are the rare 12th century Chalice of Abbot Suger; Saint George and the Dragon by van der Weyden; the Alba Madonna by Raphael; Laocoön by El Greco; A Girl with a Broom by Rembrandt; A Woman Weighing Gold by Vermeer; Mrs. Richard Yates by Gilbert Stuart; and The Lovers by Picasso.

Leonardo's Ginevra de' Benci, the most recent of the National Gallery's acquisitions, is not included since it was not purchased during the first 25 years.

A fascinating function of the National Gallery is reported in a chapter dealing with scientific research. Organized 17 years ago, the National Gallery's Research Project in Pittsburgh has developed a vastly improved synthetic varnish for paintings and conducted research to enable it to publish the standard reference work on deteriorating effects of light upon museum objects. The Project is currently perfecting methods of distinguishing old masters from forgeries by radioactive analysis.

The report also summarizes Gallery activities in research, publications, government, education, and music. It stresses the degree to which Gallery services reach citizens outside Washington, primarily through an extension service which has served 3,000 separate American communities.

Review copies of the National Gallery's 25th Anniversary Report are available on request from William W. Morrison, Assistant to the Director, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565, Area Code 202, 737-4215, ext. 225.