

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

Washington, D. C. January 30, 1968. After a search of more than two decades, the National Gallery of Art has acquired, through the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, a group of four life-size twentieth-century sculptures for the empty niches in its interior Rotunda. The bronze figures: Venus, Bather with Raised Arms, and Summer by Aristide Maillol (1861-1944), and Standing Woman by Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881-1919) will be installed this week.

Maillol, a Frenchman, and Lehmbruck, a German, were primarily concerned with the female figure. They are considered among the most important sculptors of this century. National Gallery Director John Walker describes their work as "timeless examples of the sculptor's art, with proportions that are particularly suited to the grandeur and the monumental scale of the setting in which they will be placed."

The spacious Rotunda where the four sculptures will be located, with its coffered dome and towering green-black marble columns, is considered the outstanding architectural feature of the National Gallery. It is also the area that nearly everyone

passes through when visiting the Gallery. In its proportions, its concept of space, and its classical orders, the Rotunda is an adaptation of the interior of the Pantheon in Rome. Standing in individual niches in this magnificent setting, the Maillol and Lehmbruck figures will face the large central fountain topped by the figure of Mercury by the Renaissance sculptor Giovanni Bologna.

Trained as a painter and tapestry-maker, Maillol did not turn to sculpture until he was forty years old. As a classicist he drew inspiration from Michelangelo and the sculpture of ancient Greece, creating forms at once expressive and harmonious, simple yet grand.

Lehmbruck was trained in Düsseldorf and worked for several years in Paris. His Standing Woman was first exhibited in Paris in 1910 along with sculpture by Maillol, whom Lehmbruck greatly admired. While both artists worked in the classical tradition, Maillol's figures are more robust and earthy than Lehmbruck's women.

Black-and-white photographs and color transparencies on loan for purposes of publication are available from William W. Morrison, Assistant to the Director, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565, Area Code 202, 737-4215, ext. 225.