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NATIONAL GALLERY BREAKS GROUND FOR ITS EAST BUILDING

WASHINGTON, D.C. May 6, 1971. The National Gallery of Art broke ground today for the construction of the Gallery's East Building and new Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts.

Attending the midday ceremonies on the site at Madison Drive and Fourth Street on the Mall were the Gallery's Trustees: Warren E. Burger, Chief Justice of the United States and Chairman of the Gallery's Board; Paul Mellon, President of the Gallery; John Hay Whitney, Vice President of the Gallery; John Connally, Secretary of the Treasury; S. Dillon Ripley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution; Franklin D. Murphy; Lessing J. Rosenwald; and Stoddard M. Stevens. The Secretary of State is out of the country and was represented by the Acting Secretary, John N. Irwin.

In addition to the Trustees and their wives, an invited audience of government dignitaries and members of the scholarly community, staff of the National Gallery, and the public heard remarks by the Chief Justice and Mr. Mellon.

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Mellon said: "I take double pleasure in welcoming you to this occasion. As President of the National Gallery of Art, I am pleased to have you witness with us a ceremony that symbolizes perhaps the most important single forward step since the original Gallery building opened to the public in 1941. On a less official level, I am delighted to have you share in a moment that brings closer a goal for which many have worked and in which I have deep personal interest.

"It is the good fortune of the National Gallery of Art to have as Chairman of its Board of Trustees a man who leads a kind of
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double life, as he has long had--unknown to many--a deep personal interest in art. By virtue of his accomplishments and the nature of his office, he is an eminent spokesman for what is most to be valued in our country."

In his remarks, the Chief Justice pointed not only to the "remarkable growth" of the Gallery's collections, all privately donated in the past thirty years, but to correlative growth "in the very concept of this Gallery's role."

"Scholarship and the responsibility to foster a deeper and broader appreciation and understanding of art, to make art more accessible and more meaningful to the public have all come to the forefront of the Gallery's concern.

"To serve in this manner, the Gallery must extend its traditional activities. As a center for experiencing art, it must make lively use of special exhibitions and take advantage of new techniques. As a national museum, it must become a center for dissemination, it must extend its assistance to the communities across the country, by all means possible. And to root the interpretative services in the firmest understanding, the Gallery should provide the resources from which understanding grows--a strong library used actively by able scholars.

"The National Gallery has already gone far toward shouldering the responsibilities of such a far-reaching program, but it has had to ask the original building to serve in ways unforeseen in 1937. We break ground today for a structure which will enable the National Gallery to realize its fullest potential as a great gallery of and for our times, and to pass on to the Nation its vision of the potential gallery of the future."

Following their remarks, the Chief Justice and Mr. Mellon were handed shovels by J. Slater Davidson, Jr., President of Chas. H. Tompkins Co., Builders, the general contractor for the East Building, to officially dig the first spadefuls of earth on the site of the East Building. The Chief Justice added: "Our shovels will be symbolic. But this ceremony, this building are themselves symbolic. The project being started here is a joint undertaking--combining

the extraordinary generosity of certain private citizens and the operating support of the entire people of the United States, as represented here, in the capital of the country.

"It will bear witness to our continuing faith in those values that lie in the beautiful, in free inquiry, in education, and in the opportunity--available free to everyone--for the individual to enrich his life through the legacy of our common cultural inheritance."

Following the ceremonies on the site, the audience was invited by the Chief Justice to open a new exhibit of plans and models of the East Building, designed by I. M. Pei & Partners of New York. The exhibit, which will remain on view indefinitely, is installed in the Gallery's Rotunda area on the main floor.

A luncheon given by the Gallery's Trustees honoring past and present Kress Professors and National Gallery Fellows--two programs constituting the nucleus of the new Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts--was held in the Gallery's Widener Rooms after the ceremonies and viewing of the exhibit.

The East Building will provide exhibition galleries for both permanent and temporary special exhibitions, a terrace cafe, and housing for the expanding extension, publications and education programs. The Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, to be housed in the East Building complex, will include facilities for a major library and an extensive photographic archive.

Also among guests at the groundbreaking were:

Mrs. Mellon Byers, Mr. Brown's fiancée; Miss Mary Davis, Vice President of the Kress Foundation; Director Emeritus of the Gallery and Mrs. David E. Finley; Director of the National Park Service and Mrs. George Hartzog; Professor and Mrs. Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, Kress Professor, 1968-69; Mrs. Rogers Morton, wife of the Secretary of the Interior; Dr. Wolfgang Stechow, Kress Professor, 1970-71; Mayor of the District of Columbia and Mrs. Walter Washington; and twenty-six National Gallery Fellows, past and present, who came from their residences in various parts of the world.

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