

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

The National Gallery of Art, situated along the northeastern border of the Mall between Third and Seventh Streets, N.W., was established by Joint Resolution of Congress March 24, 1937, and opened on March 17, 1941.

Although technically a bureau of the Smithsonian Institution, the National Gallery of Art is an autonomous organization governed by its own board of trustees. The chairman of the board is the Chief Justice of the United States. Other members are the Secretaries of State and of the Treasury, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and five distinguished private citizens.

The Gallery's collection has been, and continues to be, built by private donation; government funds serve solely to operate and maintain the Gallery itself. To date, more than 400 donors have contributed to the Gallery's holdings, which embrace the major schools of Western European and American art from the thirteenth century to the present.

The original building was erected with funds given by Andrew W. Mellon, who also gave his collection of 126 paintings and 26 pieces of sculpture, including such masterpieces as Raphael's The Alba Madonna, the Niccolini-Cowper Madonna, and St. George and the Dragon; van Eyck's Annunciation; Botticelli's Adoration of the Magi; and nine Rembrandts. Twenty-one of the paintings were once in the collection of the Hermitage in Leningrad. Also in Mr. Mellon's original gift were George Washington [Vaughan portrait] by Gilbert Stuart and The Washington Family by Edward Savage.

The Samuel H. Kress Collection, given to the nation over a period of years, includes the great tondo of The Adoration of the Magi by Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo Lippi, the Laocöon by El Greco, and fine examples by Giorgione, Titian, Grünewald, Dürer, Memling, Bosch, Juan de Flandes, François Clouet, Poussin, Watteau, Chardin, Boucher, Fragonard, David, and Ingres. Also included are a number of masterpieces of Italian and French sculpture.

The Widener Collection consists of fourteen Rembrandts, eight van Dycks, two Vermeers, major works of Italian, Spanish, English and French painting, and Italian and French sculpture and decorative arts.

The Chester Dale Collection includes masterpieces by Manet, Cézanne, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec, Monet, Modigliani, Pissarro, Degas, van Gogh, Gauguin, Matisse, Picasso, and Braque. He also gave paintings by such American artists as Gilbert Stuart, Childe Hassam, and George Bellows.

Several major works of art by some of the most important artists of the last hundred years, such as Picasso, Cézanne, Gauguin, and the American painter Walt Kuhn, were given to the Gallery in 1972 by the W. Averell Harriman Foundation in memory of Marie N. Harriman.

Paintings to round out the collection have been bought with funds provided by the late Ailsa Mellon Bruce, daughter of Andrew W. Mellon. Preeminent among them is the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci, the only generally acknowledged painting by Leonardo da Vinci outside Europe; Georges de la Tour's Repentant Magdalen, a very rare painting of the seventeenth century; and Picasso's Nude Woman, a key work of the artist's analytical cubist period. Among others are Rubens' Daniel in the Lions' Den, Claude Lorrain's Judgment of Paris, Saint George and the Dragon attributed to van der Weyden, and a number of American paintings, including Thomas Cole's second set of The Voyage of Life.

Cézanne's great early portrait of his father and 351 paintings, mostly of American Indians, by George Catlin are among acquisitions given by Paul Mellon, President of the National Gallery and son of Andrew W. Mellon. A fine collection of French impressionist and post-impressionist pictures is on loan to the Gallery from Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.

The National Gallery's rapidly expanding graphic arts holdings, the nucleus of which is the great collection given by Lessing J. Rosenwald, numbers approximately 50,000 items and dates from the twelfth century to the present. A major collection of contemporary American graphics, a recent gift from the Woodward Foundation, further enhances the Gallery's strength in twentieth-century art.

The Index of American Design contains over 17,000 watercolor renderings and 500 photographs of American crafts and folk arts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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The Education Department conducts daily tours of the Gallery's collection. The Extension Service lends films and slide programs to schools, colleges, and civic groups in more than 3,000 communities in the United States and Canada. Nearly all of the Gallery's services are available free of charge to the public.

The National Gallery's East Building, now nearing completion in the block bordering the east end of the original building, has been constructed to provide space needed for the Gallery's expanding activities. Funds for the new construction have come from Paul Mellon, the late Ailsa Mellon Bruce, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The architect is I.M. Pei. An underground concourse connecting the buildings opened in 1976, offering a major new restaurant complex, publication sales areas and lounges for the public, as well as space for art storage, offices, and the Extension Service. The East Building's galleries, scheduled to open in 1978, will provide space for temporary exhibitions and the growing permanent collection. The Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, with a major library, photo archive and study facilities, will open at a later date.

The National Gallery of Art is open daily, except Christmas and New Year's Day, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and Saturdays, noon to 9 p.m. Sundays. During the summer, the Gallery is open weekdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., noon to 9 p.m. Sundays. There is no admission charge.

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