

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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## JOSEPH ALSOP TO GIVE GALLERY'S 1978 MELLON LECTURES IN SPRING

WASHINGTON, D.C. November 7, 1977. Joseph Alsop will give the 1978 Andrew W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts at the National Gallery of Art in June and July. His subject will be "Art Collecting As A Phenomenon In Art History."

The lectures, to be given in the East Building auditorium, will inaugurate the new lecture hall shortly after the East Building's opening, scheduled for June 1. They will be open to the public at no charge and will be given at 6 p.m. on successive Mondays: June 5, 12, 19, 26 and July 3, 10.

For forty years, newspaper work was Mr. Alsop's vocation, and scholarship his avocation. In 1962, his avocation led to a book on the Aegean Bronze Age, From the Silent Earth, which is still in use in universities as an introductory text. Long before this, he had begun collecting material on a special field of art history which he describes as "the history and character of the phenomena of art, namely art collecting, art history and the art market, plus such secondary phenomena as art museums." Of his chosen field, he says, "it's deeply interesting for two reasons. To begin with, art collecting, art history and the other phenomena clearly constitute a continuously interacting

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system -- a most curious behavioral system of great complexity, which has never before been studied as a system. Furthermore, once you undertake systematic analysis, you have to make definitions; and once you are armed with definitions, you find that this behavioral system has only developed in six art traditions, and has therefore been unknown during most of the history of art on earth. That fact alone raises a whole series of previously unsuspected but important questions which have never been asked, yet badly need to be answered."

Mr. Alsop gave up his political column in 1973 to work full time on this large and demanding subject. The result will be a book, tentatively titled The Phenomena of Art, which will be jointly published by Harper and Row and the Princeton University Press in the Bollingen Series. His Mellon lectures will concern the history of art collecting with special emphasis on its first historical appearance in the Greek world, its subsequent disappearance with the onset of the Dark Ages in Europe, and its development in our own art tradition after its obscure reappearance in Italy in the 14th century. In the course of the lectures, Mr. Alsop will propose answers to what he calls the "unsuspected but important questions" inherent in this strange pattern of appearance and disappearance.

Born in Avon, Connecticut, Mr. Alsop graduated from Groton School (1928) and Harvard University (1932). He began his journalistic career with the New York Herald Tribune, first in New York (1932-35) and then in Washington (1936-37). He then wrote (with Robert E. Kintner)

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The Capital Parade, a syndicated column on politics for North American Newspaper Alliance (1937-40). He also was the author of the syndicated column Matter of Fact, first with his brother Stewart J.O. Alsop, through the New York Herald Tribune (1945-58), and then as sole author through The Washington Post (1958-74).

His military career began as a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy (1940). After leaving the Navy, he was sent to India, where he transferred to the American volunteer group ("Flying Tigers") on the staff of General Chennault. He was captured by the Japanese at Hong Kong, assumed civilian disguise and was held prisoner until June 1942, when he was exchanged and returned to the U.S. He became Chief of the Lend-Lease Mission to China at Chungking (December 1942) and, the next year, a captain in the 14th Air Force as well as a member of General Chennault's staff once again (1943-45). He was decorated with the Legion of Merit and Chinese Cloud Banner.

Mr. Alsop's publications include (with Turner Catledge) The 168 Days, (1938); (with Robert E. Kintner) American White Paper, (1940); (with Stewart Alsop) We Accuse, (1955); The Reporter's Trade, (1958); and From the Silent Earth, (1964).

The Andrew W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts were initiated in 1952 and are supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Their purpose is to "bring to the people of the United States the best contemporary thought and scholarship bearing on the subject of the fine arts." The series is in its 36th year.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director, or Mary Dyer, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. 20565, area code 202, 737-4215, ext. 224.