

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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## NATIONAL GALLERY RECEIVES GIFT OF JOHNS DRAWING

Washington, D.C., May 15, 1990 -- On the occasion of the exhibition The Drawings of Jasper Johns, opening on May 20, the National Gallery has acquired its first drawing by Johns for the permanent collection, director J. Carter Brown announced today. The drawing, Numbers, 1966 (23 3/16 x 18 1/4 in.), a work of graphite pencil, graphite wash, and metallic powder wash on polyester fabric, is a gift of Leo Castelli in honor of Toiny Castelli, his late wife.

"We are deeply grateful to Leo Castelli for this gift of an especially beautiful and important early Johns drawing to the Gallery," said Mr. Brown. "As we open this exhibition devoted to Jasper Johns' drawings, it is extremely gratifying that we can count one of the drawings among the works in our collection."

Johns began to use single numerals as a subject in his art in 1955. Numbers is one of several related compositions Johns made between 1957 and 1968 that depict sequential figures or letters of the alphabet in a gridlike arrangement. The artist has attributed the idea for this format to an alphabet chart he saw in a book.

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This darkly luminous composition is unusual in Johns' work for its reddish bronze coloring, produced with metallic powder wash. The metallic powder is applied irregularly over a layer of graphite wash that defines both the stenciled numerals and the background. Although Johns had used this medium in a map drawing in 1965 and had taken it up again in two other drawings in 1966-1967, Numbers represents his most extensive use of the medium.

Leo Castelli, one of the most prominent figures in the postwar art world, has been Johns' art dealer and friend since he first began to exhibit the artist's work in his gallery in 1958. In addition to his gift of Numbers, he has lent Flag, 1958, The Critic Sees, 1962, and Device, 1962, to the present exhibition. Castelli's son, Jean-Christophe, has lent three drawings to the exhibition: Gray Alphabets, 1960, Target with Four Faces, 1968, and Study for Racing Thoughts, 1983. Jean-Christophe Castelli has also lent Jasper Johns' painting Fool's House, 1962, and Roy Lichtenstein's George Washington, 1962, to the exhibition Twentieth-Century Art: Selections for the Tenth Anniversary of the East Building, on view in the concourse of the East Building.

The Drawings of Jasper Johns is in the West Building, ground floor, and runs from May 20 to July 29, 1990. The exhibition and the catalogue are made possible by Ford Motor Company.

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