

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES ELECTS EARL A. POWELL III  
NEW DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Washington, D.C., April 28, 1992 - Following a special meeting of the Board of Trustees today, Franklin D. Murphy, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Art, announced that Earl A. ("Rusty") Powell III, director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, will succeed J. Carter Brown as director of the Gallery. Mr. Powell, who will assume his new post in the fall, at a date to be determined, will become the fourth director in the Gallery's fifty-one year history. Mr. Brown, who has served as the Gallery's director for nearly twenty-three years, announced in late January his intention to retire. At this meeting the Board also voted Mr. Brown to the title of "director emeritus" upon his departure before the end of the year.

Mr. Powell has been director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) for the past twelve years. Before that, he worked

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at the National Gallery for four years in various curatorial capacities, finally as executive curator from 1979-1980.

"Rusty is a much admired leader with an outstanding record of achievements," said John R. Stevenson, chairman of the search committee which recommended the election of Mr. Powell. "He brings to the Gallery the wealth of curatorial judgment, fund-raising ability, and administrative skills needed to assume one of the most challenging jobs in the museum profession. We are fortunate to have found a new director of his stature and expertise, and we are delighted to welcome him back to the Gallery."

During his tenure as director of LACMA Mr. Powell has been responsible for significant growth and innovation in every aspect of the museum's activities. Over the past twelve years the museum's budget has increased from \$8.5 million to \$31 million; both its attendance and membership have more than doubled; and its capital campaign, which raised \$80 million, was successfully completed.

In the same period a major building expansion program resulted in the addition of 281,000 square feet of new or renovated space, most notably the renovation of the Ahmanson building in 1983, the construction of the Robert O. Anderson complex to house modern and contemporary art, completed in 1986, and the Pavilion for Japanese Art, which opened in 1988.

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Under Mr. Powell's directorship the museum's holdings have been greatly enhanced. Twelve major collections were donated or promised, including the Cohn collection of ancient and European art, the Cantor collection of Rodin sculpture, the Rifkind collection of German Expressionist prints, drawings and illustrated books, the Gilbert collections of Monumental Silver and Italian Mosaics, and the Carter collection of 17th century Dutch paintings. Among the many individual acquisitions during this time some of the most important were the approximately 2,200 works of art given or promised for LACMA's 25th anniversary in 1990. These included Paul Gauguin's Paysage a Pont Aven (1888), Jacob van Ruisdael's The Great Oak (1652), Fitz Hugh Lane's Boston Harbor Sunset (1850-1855), and Willem de Kooning's Montauk Highway (1958).

Since 1980 Mr. Powell has generated a number of important special exhibitions, including A Day in the Country: Impressionism and the French Landscape (1984), David Hockney: A Retrospective (1988), Guido Reni: 1575-1642 (1988), The Fauve Landscape: Matisse, Derain, Braque, and their Circle (1990), and Masterpiece in Focus: "Soap Bubbles" of Jean-Siméon Chardin (1991), and Degenerate Art: the Fate of the Avant Garde in Nazi Germany (1991).

Before assuming the directorship of LACMA Mr. Powell was a

curator at the National Gallery of Art for four years, becoming executive curator in 1979. During this time he was heavily involved in the installation and opening of the Gallery's East Building, as well as many major loan exhibitions, including The Splendor of Dresden: Five Centuries of Art Collecting (1978), The Art of the Pacific Islands (1979), and American Light: the Luminist Movement (1850-1875) (1980). Before joining the Gallery, Mr. Powell was curator of the Michener Collection and assistant professor of art history at the University of Texas, Austin (1976-1978).

Born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in 1943, Mr. Powell graduated with honors from Williams College and received an A.M. and a Ph.D. from the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, where he specialized in 19th-20th century European and American art, with a thesis on English Influences in the Art of Thomas Cole 1801-1848.

Mr. Powell served in the U.S. Navy from 1966 to 1969, and as a Commander in the U.S. Naval Reserve from 1976-1980.

In 1978 Mr. Powell was awarded the King Olav medal by King Olav V of Norway for his work on the National Gallery exhibition,

Edvard Munch: Symbols and Images, the first U.S. survey of the Norwegian expressionist. In 1985 Mr. Powell was made Chevalier of Arts and Letters by the French Minister of Culture for the LACMA exhibition, A Day in the Country: Impressionism in the French Landscape.

Mr. Powell is a member of the Walpole Society and a trustee of the Association of Art Museum Directors, the American Federation of the Arts and the Newport Art Museum, and Pitzer College, and is a member of the Board of Overseers of the Claremont Colleges. He also serves on the USIA Committee for the Arts, the Business Committee for the Arts, and is Co-Chairman of the Commission on Museums for a New Century, of the American Association of Museums.

Mr. Powell has published a number of articles and catalogue essays, including an exhibition catalogue on Milton Avery (1976) and a catalogue raisonne for the James A. Michener Collection (1978), both for the University of Texas, at Austin, and catalogue essays for several National Gallery exhibitions during his tenure. His book on the American landscape pioneer, Thomas Cole, was published by Harry N. Abrams in 1990.

He has been married since 1971 to Nancy Landry Powell, and has three children, Cortney, Channing, and Sumner.

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