

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

SMA ✓
EK ✓
LN ✓
Ro -

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 28, 1994

CONTACT: Ruth Kaplan
Deborah Ziska
(202) 842-6353

1994 COLLECTORS COMMITTEE GIFTS ANNOUNCED

Washington, D.C. -- Whitechapel Slate Circle, a major stone sculpture created by British artist Richard Long, has been acquired for the National Gallery of Art by its Collectors Committee, Gallery director Earl A. Powell III announced today.

"Whitechapel Slate Circle (1981) is a significant addition to the Gallery's collection of post-minimal art since the 1960s. The slate stones, randomly arranged within a circle make a dramatic visual statement that works beautifully in the grand East Building spaces designed by I.M. Pei," said Powell. This is the first work of art by Richard Long to enter the Gallery's collection. It is on view on the concourse level of the East Building.

Earlier in 1994 the Collectors Committee also made possible the acquisition of four works on paper. They include two photographs, A Young Man in Curlers at Home on West 70th Street, N.Y.C. (1966) by Diane Arbus (1923-1971), and Eleanor (c. 1958) by Harry Callahan (b. 1912), as well as an etching, Break the Rule (1986), and a drawing, The Green House Affect (1988), by William T. Wiley (b. 1937).

-more-

collectors. . . page 2

Richard Long was born in 1945 in Bristol, England, and studied at the West of England College of Art, Bristol, and St. Martin's School of Art, London. Most of his sculpture has originated during long walks in locales as disparate as Bolivia, Scotland, and Lapland, and as remote as the high Himalayas or the Sahara Desert. He considers his walks to be works of art and he often creates temporary sculptures along the way by forming circles or lines on the ground from local materials such as shrubbery or driftwood. He records his sojourns and the resulting sculpture with photographs and texts.

Since the early 1970s Long has transported his experience indoors in the form of sculpture and, more recently, mud paintings. In Whitechapel Slate Circle the cut stones are leftover pieces from a quarry. Selected by the artist for their texture and color, they are brought together to form the crisp shape of a circle fifteen feet in diameter. Long prefers simple, universal shapes such as lines, circles, and squares--forms that, though undeniably modernist, have resonance in many cultures.

Within the circle the stones are arranged uniformly but with no fixed location, so the work can assume a slightly different configuration each time it is assembled. The geometric clarity of the work is countered by the rough textures of the stones and the randomness of their placement. Although Long's stone circles do not aspire to the monumental, they have an expansive, distinctive presence when placed in the confines of a gallery

-more-

collectors. . . page 3

setting, where they serve as echoes of the landscapes of their origin.

According to Mark Rosenthal, curator of twentieth-century art, National Gallery of Art, "Long's works such as Whitechapel Slate Circle have great flexibility in the way they adapt to different interior settings. Our current installation places the Long sculpture near Sol Lewitt's wall drawing, from the Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection, to which it is related conceptually and formally."

The installation of Whitechapel Slate Circle at the National Gallery was carried out by staff masons. The work of art was first installed for the exhibition "British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century" at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, in 1981.

The Collectors Committee of the National Gallery of Art was formed in 1975 under the leadership of Ruth Carter Stevenson, now chairman of the Gallery's board of trustees, to help select commissions for the great public spaces of the East Building, then under construction, and to finance them through committee members' annual contributions. When the committee completed the job three years later, it began a new role of purchasing for the National Gallery paintings and sculpture by major twentieth-century artists. In 1989 the Collectors Committee established a curatorial discretionary fund for acquiring prints, drawings, and photographs.

#