

# National Gallery of Art

## NEWS RELEASE

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THE ROBERT AND JANE MEYERHOFF COLLECTION: 1945 TO 1995

TO OPEN AT NATIONAL GALLERY ON MARCH 31, 1996;

ONE OF FINEST PRIVATE COLLECTIONS OF POSTWAR ART IN U.S.

Washington, D.C. -- The National Gallery of Art will present one of the greatest private collections of post-World War II art, The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: 1945 to 1995, to be exhibited in the East Building from March 31 to July 21, 1996. The exhibition marks the first time this extraordinary group of objects will be shown virtually in its entirety, with approximately 190 works.

"Over the past thirty years, Robert and Jane Meyerhoff have been remarkably true to their approach in collecting: to seek works that they find aesthetically rich and historically significant," said Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery of Art. "Their relationships with the artists whose works they acquire are equally direct and committed. The National Gallery is honored to present their collection and appreciative of their generosity."

The Meyerhoff Collection possesses both a personal character

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and an historic sweep. It was begun in 1958 with the purchase of Hans Hofmann's Autumn Gold, completed just a year before.

Following this auspicious start, the Meyerhoffs quickly became devoted to the work of other artists of Hofmann's and subsequent generations. In particular, the collectors have special admiration for five artists who helped refocus American art following the breakthrough of the abstract expressionist artists in New York: Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, and Frank Stella. In terms of breadth and quality, the collection of these artists is unmatched.

Johns is perhaps the most influential artist of the last forty years, having directly determined the innovations of pop, minimal, and conceptual art. He is represented by eleven paintings and seventeen works on paper or plastic, dating from 1960 to 1993. Such works as Night Driver (1960), Ale Cans (1978), and Between the Clock and the Bed (1984) present the artist at the height of his graphic powers. With paintings such as Untitled (E.G. Seidensticker) (1979), Perilous Night (1982), Racing Thoughts (1984), Spring (1986), and Mirror's Edge 2 (1993), his celebrated late career is shown in unrivaled depth.

Kelly's work combines a lush abstract sensuousity within geometric formats. The Meyerhoff Collection includes paintings from many stages of his career, for instance Orange Green (1966), Chatham III: Black Blue (1971), Dark Gray and White Panels (1977-1978), Red Curve (1986), and Blue Yellow Red V (1954-1987).

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Along with these major canvases, the collection contains five exquisite drawings that emphasize the artist's continued passion for the contours of plants.

A pioneer of pop art, Lichtenstein is represented in the exhibition by twelve paintings, three drawings, and three sculptures, drawn from all periods of his career. The Meyerhoff Collection presents well-known and dramatic images such as White Brushstroke II (1965), Cow Triptych (Cow Going Abstract) (1974), Expressionist Head (1980), Mountain Village (1985), and Bedroom at Arles (1992).

Rauschenberg, like Johns, was a principal forerunner of pop art who subsequently evolved a mature style of enormous virtuosity and brilliance. Major works to be shown include Bypass (1959), Archive (1963), Fanfare (1976), Rose Condor (1977), and Corinthian Covet (1980), along with seven drawings.

Stella was a primary force in turning abstract expressionist emotion into a cooler, more calculating kind of abstraction, and he has since investigated increasingly complex spatial relationships in his art. The Meyerhoff Collection includes important works representing the full range of his career: Marquis de Portago (first version) (1960), Gray Scramble (1969), Laysan millerbird (1977), Mellieha Bay (1983), La scienza della fiacca (1984), and the recently completed triptych Hooloomooloo 1,2,3 (1994).

Contributing to the historical breadth of the collection are

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canvases by Josef Albers, Willem de Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Hans Hofmann, Jackson Pollock, Ad Reinhardt, Mark Rothko, and Clyfford Still -- the great innovators of abstraction who worked in New York just after World War II, and the European masters Jean Dubuffet and Howard Hodgkin. Adding to this representation is the magisterial fifteen-painting series by Barnett Newman entitled Stations of the Cross -- Lema Sabachthani (1958-1966).

Finally, the collection encompasses works by a generation of artists who have emerged during the last two decades. The National Gallery will show paintings and drawings by Julian Lethbridge, Brice Marden, Joel Shapiro, and Terry Winters, among others.

This exhibition follows by a decade the announcement of Robert and Jane Meyerhoff's extraordinary donation that enabled the Gallery to purchase Newman's Stations of the Cross, and the 1987 announcement that the Meyerhoffs had signed an agreement with the Trustees of the National Gallery concerning the future donation of their collection to the Gallery. Since then the Meyerhoffs have made numerous gifts to the nation, including Souvenirs (1980-1984) by Howard Hodgkin, Entablature (1975) by Roy Lichtenstein, Untitled #2 (1981) by Agnes Martin, Soft Drainpipe-Red (Hot) Version (1967) by Claes Oldenburg, 1951-N (1951) by Clyfford Still, and Chodorów II (1971) by Frank Stella.

The exhibition has been organized by Mark Rosenthal, the Gallery's curator of twentieth-century art. Accompanying the

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exhibition is a fully illustrated catalogue, with essays by David Anfam, Harry Cooper, Molly Donovan, Ruth E. Fine, Marla Prather, Charles Ritchie, Rosenthal, and Jeffrey Weiss.

The National Gallery of Art, located on Constitution Avenue between Third and Seventh Streets, N.W., is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. For general information call (202) 737-4215; or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at (202) 842-6176. For information on visitor services call (202) 842-6690.

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