

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

Daniels, Maygene F.
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Deborah Ziska, Information Officer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 31, 1997

PRESS CONTACT: (202) 842-6359
Nancy Starr, Publicist

THE NINE-TON CAT: BEHIND THE SCENES AT AN ART MUSEUM

A NEW BOOK FOR ALL AGES ABOUT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

"A fascinating glimpse at the people and processes that make an art museum tick." School Library Journal

"An exciting, well-written, and informative account of all the planning and coordination necessary to keep the National Gallery of Art in Washington ready for its (millions of visitors a year.)" Kirkus Review

"Those who don't go for the art might still be enticed by the engineering - vacuums under the stair grating that clean visitors' shoes, a hydraulic crane that takes four days to lower a fifteen-ton bronze into position, a removable glass wall that provides ingress for pieces too large to fit through the door." The Bulletin

Washington, D.C. -- Why does a museum need 800 keys? Who can bring back the rosy cheeks of a girl in a 500 year-old painting? How do you lift a nine-ton sculpture of a crouching cat? These and other intriguing questions are answered in a vividly illustrated new book for all ages, The Nine-Ton Cat: Behind the Scenes at an Art Museum (Houghton Mifflin Company in association with the National Gallery of Art; March 31, 1997 publication date). Readers spend a lively day at the National Gallery of Art, learning what it takes to operate one of the world's preeminent and busiest museums.

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nine-ton cat...page 2

"Educating the public is one of the Gallery's top priorities," said Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery of Art. "The Nine-Ton Cat is one of many books the Gallery has published to help people of all ages make their visits to art museums more enjoyable."

The book was made possible by a grant from the Vira I. Heinz Endowment.

The Nine-Ton Cat introduces the many activities of the Gallery's well-trained museum staff as they care for nearly 100,000 treasures by famous artists such as Vermeer, Calder, Manet, Cassatt, Homer, and Picasso. Readers learn about the lamper, who checks the museum's 8,000 lights; the curator and designers as they plan a popular exhibition; a museum conservator as he cleans and restores the only painting by Leonardo da Vinci in America; the skilled workers who do the carpentry, painting, stonework, and cleaning to keep the museum's 1,200,000 square feet in tip-top shape; and the 300 people on the museum's security force as they safeguard the art and the people in the museum.

From the complex underground system of hundreds of miles of color-coded pipes to the nine greenhouses where over 15,000 plants are cultivated for display throughout the Gallery, The Nine-Ton Cat reveals that the museum has myriad functions in addition to caring for the nation's unique art treasures.

The book, illustrated with seventy-seven color photographs, was written by Peggy Thomson with Barbara Moore, head of education publications at the National Gallery, and edited by Carol Eron, managing editor of the Gallery's *Studies in the*

nine-ton cat...page 3

History of Art series.

The Nine-Ton Cat may be purchased for \$14.95 (paperback) or \$21.95 (hardcover) at many local bookstores and the National Gallery of Art shops, which are open Monday - Saturday, 10 am - 5 pm, and Sunday, 11 am - 6 pm. To order from the National Gallery shops by phone using a credit card, call (301) 322-5900 or (800) 697-9350, Monday - Friday, 8 am - 4 pm.

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. Admission is free of charge. 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.

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Note to press: For review copies, staff and curatorial interviews, and on-site visits to the Gallery, please contact the National Gallery Press Office.