

# National Gallery of Art

## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
March 31, 1998

Deborah Ziska, Information Officer

PRESS CONTACT: Nancy Starr, Publicist  
(202) 842-6353

### COLLECTORS COMMITTEE SELECTS SCOTT BURTON'S "SIX-PART SEATING,"

### ALSO MAJOR PHOTOGRAPHS, PRINTS, AND DRAWINGS

### FOR GALLERY'S 20TH-CENTURY COLLECTION

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- An edition of Scott Burton's Six-Part Seating (1985), will be fabricated in 1998 for the National Gallery of Art's Sculpture Garden, now under construction. The selection and acquisition of this sculpture, as well as major photographs by Brassai and Misrach, and prints and drawings by Albers, Nevelson, Puryear, among others, for the twentieth-century collection, were made possible by the Gallery's Collectors Committee.

"We are delighted with the selection of Six-Part Seating, which will be made of polished granite. Visitors to our new Sculpture Garden will not only be able to view this striking work but interact with it by touching it and sitting on it," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

This will be the second work by Scott Burton (American, 1939-1989) to enter the National Gallery's collection, joining Rock Settees (1988), a unique and popular piece near the East Building entrance. Six-Part Seating draws on the work of

-more-

## **collectors committee...page 2**

minimalist sculptors such as Donald Judd and Tony Smith, whose basic forms and austere structures were employed by Burton as the elements of a functional style. This work also owes a significant debt to Constantin Brancusi, the great twentieth-century sculptor who challenged strict distinctions between sculpture and the utilitarian object. In this context, Six-Part Seating clearly derives from the monumental Table of Silence (1937-39), which Brancusi created for a park in Romania. Like Brancusi's circle of seating, Burton's group remains a powerful sculptural presence despite the functional role it serves.

Burton conceived and designed Six-Part Seating in 1985, anticipating an edition of two. The first example was produced for the Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh. As identically fabricated elements, Burton's seats may be arranged in various ways, such as in a circle (suggesting a gathering), or side-by-side in the form of a long bench. The Gallery edition will be made from polished granite (Radiant Red).

Burton emerged as a performance and installation artist during the early 1970s. Furniture -- as prop, utilitarian object, and sculptural form -- was his model and his preoccupying theme. He was deeply committed to art in public settings, believing that such work should be fully accessible to a broad, non-art audience.

### **PHOTOGRAPHY**

The Collectors Committee also made possible the acquisition of seven photographs. Three are by the renowned Transylvanian born, French photographer Brassai (Gyula Halász, 1899-1984) including two of his signature studies of Parisian

-more-

### collectors committee...page 3

night life, Couple at the Four Seasons Ball, Lappe Street, Paris (c. 1932), Magic City Dance Hall, Cognacq-Jay Street, Paris (c. 1932), and his 1948 portrait of the sculptor Alberto Giacometti. They are among the first photographs by Brassai to enter the Gallery's collection and join ten others acquired through other donations.

Four photographs by Richard Misrach (American, born 1949) are also the first of a group of twenty-three works by him to be acquired for the Gallery's collection. These large, color photographs including Comfort Stations, Edwards Air Force Base, California (1983), Bomb, Destroyed Vehicles, and Lone Rock, Bravo 20 Bombing Range, Nevada (1987), Dead Animals #327, Nevada (1987), and Desert Croquet #1 (Deflated World), Black Rock Desert, Nevada (1987) dramatically contrast the often devastating impact of man on the sublime beauty of the American West.

### PRINTS AND DRAWINGS

Other works on paper include Burgoyne Diller's Shop Tanks (c. 1932-1933), an early lithograph revealing his interest in geometric abstraction deriving from urban subjects; Josef Albers' early drypoint, Variants (1942); six elegant Untitled pen and ink drawings by William Baziotas from the 1950s, which reveal the subtlety and range of his compositional exploration; three early 1950s etchings by Louise Nevelson, two of The Ancient Garden and one of Magic Garden; and William T. Wiley's ink and wax on paper, Untitled (1962) that reflects his early roots in abstract expressionism. Martin Puryear's 1977 chalk drawing, Untitled, evokes a mysterious sense of weight and volume and provides an intriguing counterpoint to his sculpture, Lever No. 3, which

**collectors committee...page 4**

was acquired previously by the Collectors Committee.

### HISTORY OF THE COLLECTORS COMMITTEE

Since 1975 the Collectors Committee has made possible the acquisition of one hundred eighty-seven works of art. Approximately half of the committee's acquisitions have been works by living artists. The committee was formed in 1975 under the leadership of Ruth Carter Stevenson, chairman of the Gallery's Board of Trustees from 1993-1997. It is currently chaired by Barney A. Ebsworth and Doris Fisher, both major collectors of twentieth-century art. Ebsworth, from St. Louis, is the owner of INTRAV, a travel company, and Clipper Cruise Lines. Fisher, who lives in San Francisco, is co-founder with her husband, Donald, of The Gap.

###