

# National Gallery of Art

## NEWS RELEASE

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### NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

### NAMES ELIZABETH CROPPER AS DEAN

### OF CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDY IN THE VISUAL ARTS

### AS CENTER BEGINS THIRD DECADE OF PROGRAMS FOR SCHOLARS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – National Gallery of Art director Earl A. Powell III has announced the appointment of Elizabeth Cropper as dean of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA), one of the world's leading centers for advanced research in the history of art. In January 2001 Cropper will succeed Henry A. Millon, who became the Center's first dean in 1979 and will retire in December 2000. Under Millon's leadership, the Center has sponsored fellowships for 620 scholars from 38 countries and published 60 volumes of the series Studies in the History of Art, documenting scholarly meetings for the purpose of stimulating further research and scholarly debate. Cropper is professor in the department of History of Art at The Johns Hopkins University and is currently director of the university's Charles S. Singleton Center for Italian Studies at the Villa Spelman in Florence, Italy.

"Hank Millon has built CASVA into a research center that has inspired and helped to shape hundreds of top scholars in art history, many of whom have gone on to become leaders in the museum and academic world," said Powell. "The trustees and I are very pleased that Elizabeth Cropper, as the second dean of CASVA, will have a solid foundation on which to take the Center into the twenty-first century. She has lectured and published widely in the field of Italian Renaissance and baroque painting and has held several distinguished visiting appointments, including the Slade Professorship at Cambridge University and the 1994-1996 Andrew W. Mellon Professorship at CASVA."

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The Center, which is privately funded from endowments and grants, was founded by the Gallery in 1979 to promote the study of the history, theory, and criticism of art, architecture, and urbanism, through the formation of an international community of scholars engaged in research and disciplinary exchange in proximity to major art collections and libraries. The activities of the Center include fellowships, meetings, publications, and research.

### **Elizabeth Cropper**

Cropper received her Bachelor of Arts with honors from Cambridge University, England, and her Ph.D. from Bryn Mawr College. Before joining The Johns Hopkins University as professor in 1985, Cropper was a professor at Temple University's Tyler School of Art. In addition to professorships at Cambridge University and CASVA, her visiting appointments include tenures as directeur d'Études Associé at the École des Hautes Études en Science Sociales, Paris (1990-1991 and 1997); as Samuel H. Kress Fellow, CASVA, National Gallery of Art; (1984-1985) and as professor at the Collège de France in 1996.

Among Cropper's postdoctoral research awards are positions as visiting scholar and fellow at the Harvard Center for Renaissance Studies, Villa I Tatti, Florence; Andrew W. Mellon Professor at CASVA; and visiting member, School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. Her recent publications include Pontormo: Portrait of a Halberdier (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 1997), Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting, with Charles Dempsey (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996) and Florentine Drawing at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent (Villa Spelman Colloquium Series, 4, Nuova Alfa Editoriale, Bologna, 1994).

### **Henry A. Millon**

Before becoming the first dean of the Center in 1979, Millon held numerous positions, including those as professor of history and architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, School of Architecture and Planning, in the 1970s and 1980s, and director of the American Academy in Rome from 1974 to 1977. During his tenure as dean of the Center he also organized exhibitions, including three at the National Gallery of Art: The Triumph of the Baroque: Architecture in Europe 1600-1750 (currently on view through October 9, 2000), Italian Renaissance Architecture: Brunelleschi, Sangallo,

Michelangelo—The Cathedrals of Florence and Pavia, and St. Peters, Rome. and Michelangelo: Draftsman/Architect. Among Millon's many fellowships, honors, and awards are the Centennial Medal, American Academy in Rome, 1995; an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, Tulane University, 1995; a Fulbright Fellowship in Italy in 1958-1960, and the Sesquicentennial Medal from Tulane University in 1997. He has written and edited numerous articles, books, and catalogues, primarily on the topic of architectural history. Among his academic degrees are a Master of Architecture and Ph.D. in the History of Art, both from Harvard University.

### **CASVA Background**

According to the National Gallery of Art's second director, John Walker, the idea of establishing a center for advanced study at the National Gallery of Art dates from a conversation he had with the Gallery's first director, David E. Finley, and Paul Mellon, son of the Gallery's founder and one of its leading benefactors. In 1965 the Gallery took an initial step toward forming the Center by establishing a program of predoctoral fellowships and appointing a professor-in-residence. Support for the new program came primarily from the Kress Foundation and endowments in honor of Finley and founding benefactor Chester Dale.

In 1968, Gallery assistant director J. Carter Brown (now director emeritus), presented the Board of Trustees with a report on the desirability and feasibility of a national institute for advanced research. The report cited the benefit to the mature scholar of uninterrupted time for research and writing away from regular professional responsibilities and, especially, time for reflection and the completion of long-term projects; of adequate financial support for research, travel, and living accommodations; of access to research facilities, particularly libraries and photographic archives; of contact with the Gallery's collections and the possibility for discussions about methodology, theory, evidence, and opinion among an international community of scholars, curators, and conservators.

Since its founding, the Center has been fortunate in securing a number of endowment grants as well as annual funding from foundations and individuals. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the Center's principal benefactor. In 1977 the Board established the Center as an integral part of the National Gallery of Art and authorized a senior fellowship program to be supported by private funds. It was also decided to incorporate within the Center

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the Gallery's existing predoctoral fellowship program and Kress Professorship together with the predoctoral fellowships supported by current Gallery president Robert H. Smith and his wife Clarice, those endowed by Chester Dale, and those supported by The Samuel H. Kress Foundation. International participation has been encouraged through a series of special initiatives for scholars from Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and East and South Asia.

The Center has grown to support annually the Andrew W. Mellon Professor (a two-year appointment of a mid-career scholar), the Samuel H. Kress Professor (an appointment of one academic year of a distinguished scholar), six senior fellows, twelve visiting senior fellows, and seven predoctoral fellows, in addition to an Ailsa Mellon Bruce Curatorial Fellowship, which enables a National Gallery of Art curator to take a leave of absence for special research. A board of advisors, composed of seven art historians appointed with rotating terms, serves as a selection committee to review all fellowship applications.

The Center's meetings range from informal "shoptalks" presented by the predoctoral fellows on their dissertation research to international symposia for 150 to 200 participants. The Center also hosts the Gallery's annual Andrew W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts and the series of colloquia delivered by the Kress Professor, Mellon Professor, and senior fellows. Each fall the Center publishes a report of research and activities of the preceding academic year, as well as symposia papers in the Gallery's series Studies in the History of Art. Each member of the Center's professional staff of three deans is engaged in a long-term research project that will result in a research tool useful to the discipline, such as the publications A Guide to the Description of Architectural Drawings and Keywords in American Landscape Design 1600-1850. The Center is also a founding member of the Association of Research Institutes in Art History and a member of Research Institutes in the History of Art, an international association.

Topics studied at the Center since its inception reflect its historical, cultural, and methodological breadth. They include urban development in ancient Greek colonies, Piranesi's drawings of architectural fantasies, the twilight paintings of Frederic Edwin Church, the iconographic significance of the lām/alif ligature in medieval Islam, chiaroscuro woodcuts of sixteenth-century Italy, medieval stained glass in western France, the relationship of art to power in Central African art, the relationship of photography and surrealism in the early twentieth century, and Vermeer's painting techniques.

Among the Center's alumni are leaders in the museum and art world such as Colin Bailey, chief curator, National Gallery of Canada; Sylvie Béguin, curator, Musée du Louvre; Doreen Bolger, director, The Baltimore Museum of Art; Hubert Damisch, École des Haute Études, Paris; Elizabeth Kieven, director, Bibliotheca Herziana, Rome; and Michael Conforti, director, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

For more information about CASVA, call 202-842-6480 or visit the Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov).

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