

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

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Press Contacts:
Deborah Ziska, Press Officer
(202) 842-6353
and Lisa Knapp, Publicist
(202) 842-6804

**COLLECTORS COMMITTEE SELECTS WORKS BY DAN FLAVIN
AND EDWARD RUSCHA AND IMPORTANT PHOTOGRAPHS AND PRINTS
FOR NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART'S EXPANDING COLLECTION
OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART**

Washington, D.C. – The National Gallery of Art announced today the acquisition of two "Monuments" for V. Tatlin (1967–1970) by Dan Flavin, a key figure of Minimal art, and Lisp (1968) by Edward Ruscha, one of the most compelling painters of the last forty years. The acquisition of these and other works—three photographs by Aaron Siskind from 1954 and one by John Cohen from 1959; the 1967 portfolio of lithographs by nine artists entitled "9," which includes the Gallery's first lithographs by Richard Lindner and Saul Steinberg as well as prints by Willem de Kooning and Ellsworth Kelly, among others; and Iliad (c. 1970), a vibrant monoprint collagraph by Romare Bearden—were made possible by the Gallery's Collectors Committee.

"It is through the continuing generosity of the Collectors Committee that the National Gallery of Art is able to enhance its collection of contemporary art in areas we are committed to developing. "Monuments" for V. Tatlin and Lisp are important historic works by major artists of the 1960s and 1970s, and the photographs and works on paper are all outstanding additions to our collection," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

Flavin's "Monuments" for V. Tatlin series is a celebrated example of his signature work of objects composed of tubes of fluorescent light. The sculptures explore the Minimalist interest in activating the surrounding space: light appears to project beyond the limits of the physical object into real space, creating an artwork whose boundaries are not clearly defined. The artist began this series in 1964 and continued to make new works for it until 1982 (about 40 were produced in total). Prior to this acquisition, the Gallery owned no major examples of first-generation Minimal work and no light-based work by this seminal artist. The sculptures will go on view later in the year.

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In Ruscha's oil on canvas, the word "lisp" is produced through the graceful twists and folds of what appears to be a paper ribbon casting its shadow against a yellow ground. The tiny drops of liquid at the end of the ribbon text, evoking the spray of a lisping speaker, reveal Ruscha's off-beat humor. This work represents the only "ribbon" painting the artist has ever made; it joins one other painting in the Gallery's collection, a later work entitled I think I'll ... (1983), as well as three drawings and 56 prints by Ruscha. Lisp will go on view in the East Building during the second week of May.

In February, the Gallery acquired Richard Serra's Five Plates, Two Poles (1971) with funds from The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, and it is now on view in the East Building. These acquisitions demonstrate a commitment to building the Gallery's collection of art from the 1960s and 1970s with key historical examples by leading figures. Jeffrey Weiss, the Gallery's curator of modern and contemporary art, is coordinating that effort.

HISTORY OF THE COLLECTORS COMMITTEE

Since 1975 the Collectors Committee has made possible the acquisition of more than two hundred works of art. Approximately half of these 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 to 1997. Barney A. Ebsworth and Doris Fisher, both major collectors of 20th-century art, currently chair the Collectors Committee. Ebsworth, from St. Louis, is the founder and retired chairman of INTRAV, Royal Cruise Line, and Clipper Cruise Line. Fisher lives in San Francisco and is co-founder, with her husband Donald, of The Gap.

NATIONAL GALLERY INFORMATION

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden, located on the National Mall between Third and Ninth Streets at Constitution Avenue, NW, are open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Sculpture Garden is open until 7 p.m. daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Admission is free. For general information, call (202) 737-4215; call the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176; or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. To receive the Gallery's free bimonthly Calendar of Events, call (202) 842-6662 or e-mail calendar@nga.gov.

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