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Late Careers of Artists and Writers is Timely Theme of 2006 and 2007 A. W. Mellon Lecture Series Featuring Renowned Scholars Simon Schama and Helen Vendler

Presented by the National Gallery of Art, Washington

Washington, DC – The National Gallery of Art has invited Simon Schama, University Professor of Art History and History at Columbia University, and the poetry critic Helen Vendler, the A. Kingsley Porter University Professor at Harvard University, to give the 55th and 56th A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts this fall and spring at the Gallery.

The common theme of their lectures, coincidentally, is the last works of artists and writers, a timely subject that is addressed in recent books such as *On Late Style* by Edward W. Said and *Late Thoughts: Reflections on Artists and Composers at Work* edited by Karen Painter and Thomas Crow. Schama is talking about painters; Vendler is talking about poets.

The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts were established by the National Gallery of Art's Board of Trustees in 1949 "to bring to the people of the United States the results of the best contemporary thought and scholarship bearing upon the subject of the Fine Arts." The program is named for Andrew W. Mellon, the founder of the National Gallery of Art, who gave the nation his art collection and funds to build the West Building, which opened to the public in 1941.

Schama's series, *Really Old Masters: Age, Infirmary and Reinvention*, includes the following lectures:

November 12

To Start with: Finito?

November 19

The Elixir? Jacques-Louis David and Revolutionary Rejuvenation; Goya and Infirmity

December 3

Indistinct Visions: Turner and Monet

December 10

Picasso and Matisse: The Endgames of the Avant-Garde

December 17

Losing It: The Case of Willem de Kooning

Vendler's series, *Last Looks, Last Books: The Binocular Poetry of Death* includes the following lectures:

April 15

Introduction

April 22

Facing the Worst: Wallace Stevens, *The Rock*

April 29

The Contest of Melodrama and Restraint: Sylvia Plath, *Ariel*

May 6

Death by Subtraction: Robert Lowell, *Day by Day*

May 13

Caught and Freed: Elizabeth Bishop, *Geography III*

May 20

Self-Portraits While Dying: James Merrill, *A Scattering of Salts*

All lectures will take place at 2 p.m. in the East Building Auditorium. They are free and

open to the public; seating is first come, first served.

Simon Schama

Simon Schama is the author of many books, including *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (1977); *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (1987); *Citizen: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (1989); *Landscape and Memory* (1995); and *Rembrandt's Eyes* (1999). His most recent book is *The Power of Art*, the companion volume to an 8-part television series for the BBC and PBS.

He has been a regular contributor to *The New Republic*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The Guardian*, and art and cultural critic for *The New Yorker*, winning a National Magazine Award for his art criticism in 1996. His television work as writer and presenter for the BBC includes *Art of the Western World*; *Rembrandt: The Public Gaze and the Private Eye*; a 5-part series based on *Landscape and Memory*; and an award-winning 15-part *History of Britain*, which drew 4 million viewers in the United Kingdom and was shown in the United States on the History Channel.

Schama studied history at Cambridge University, where from 1966 to 1976 he was a fellow of Christ's College. From 1976 to 1980 he was a fellow and tutor in modern history at Brasenose College, Oxford. From 1980 to 1993 he was professor of history, Mellon Professor of the Social Sciences, and William Kenan Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University and senior associate of the Center for European Studies.

Helen Vendler

Helen Vendler is one of the most influential critics of contemporary poetry in the United States. A distinguished scholar, she has published acclaimed books on the odes of Keats and on the sonnets of Shakespeare, as well as reviews for *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Review of Books* and other journals.

Among her books on aspects of contemporary poetry are *Part of Nature, Part of Us* (1980), *Soul Says* (1995), *The Given and the Made* (1996) and *Coming of Age as a*

Poet (2003). Vendler has also edited a number of anthologies, notably *The Harvard Book of Contemporary American Poetry* (1985).

Vendler has taught at Harvard since 1985. She previously taught at Cornell University, Swarthmore College, Haverford College, Smith College, and Boston University. She has held many fellowships, including three from the National Endowment for the Humanities, a Guggenheim and a Fulbright. She has frequently been a judge for the Pulitzer Prize in poetry; she also served on the Pulitzer Board. She holds 23 honorary degrees from universities and colleges in the United States and abroad.

Past A.W. Mellon Lecturers

Previous lecturers include Sir Kenneth Clark (1953), E. H. Gombrich (1956), Kathleen Raine (1962), Sir Isaiah Berlin (1965), Stephen Spender (1968), Sir Nikolaus Pevsner (1970), Jacques Barzun (1973), Leo Steinberg (1982), Jennifer Montagu (1990), Anthony Hecht (1992), Salvatore Settis (2001), Michael Fried (2000), and Kirk Varnedoe (2003).

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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