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New Installation of Early American Furniture and Decorative Arts from the Kaufman Collection to be Unveiled October 7, 2012, at National Gallery of Art with American Paintings from the Gallery's Collection



John and/or Hugh Finlay
Grecian Couch, 1810-1840
walnut, cherry; white pine, poplar, cherry
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Promised Gift of George M. and Linda H. Kaufman

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art presents ***Masterpieces of American Furniture from the Kaufman Collection, 1700–1830***. When this installation opens on October 7, 2012, on the Ground Floor of the West Building, it will be a landmark moment for the nation's capital, which until this time has had no major presentation of early American furniture and related decorative arts on permanent public view. The installation follows the promised gift in October 2010 of one of the largest and most refined collections of early American furniture in private hands, acquired with great connoisseurship over five decades by George M. (1932–2001) and Linda H. Kaufman (b. 1938).

The Kaufman Collection comprises more than 200 works of art, including American furniture, major Dutch paintings, American paintings, and works on paper, among them some 40 floral watercolors by Pierre-Joseph Redouté (1759–1840). Many of these objects were featured in 1986–1987 when the Gallery first exhibited *American Furniture from the Kaufman Collection*. The upcoming installation will highlight more than 100 of the finest examples of early American furniture and decorative arts, shown with a selection of American, European, and Chinese porcelains and a number of choice Redouté watercolors—all from the Kaufman Collection. Paintings by American artists from the Gallery's collection will also be integrated into the presentation.

"The Gallery is extremely grateful to George and Linda Kaufman, who chose to give their collection to the nation so that the public can view the finest works of some of America's greatest artisans here in the nation's capital," said Earl A. Powell, director, National Gallery of Art. "This unparalleled gift dramatically amplifies the great American achievements in painting and sculpture long represented at the Gallery, while also transforming our collection of decorative arts by augmenting its fine holdings of European decorative arts with equally important American examples."

The Kaufman Collection

Natives of Norfolk, Virginia, the Kaufmans began collecting when they married in the late 1950s, acquiring a few early pieces of furniture for their apartment in Charlottesville. Influenced by Linda's parents, Elise and Henry Clay Hofheimer II, who collected art and antiques, the young couple recognized the aesthetic as well as the enduring quality and historic importance of fine American furniture. They shaped their passion for the finest productions of artisans working in the major colonial and post-revolutionary urban centers through visits to the impressive collections of Winterthur Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Yale University's Garvan Collection. Their collection includes numerous examples of the most creative and costly furniture available in 18th- and early 19th-century America. The original owners as well as the makers of many of these objects are known.

The Installation

A monumental mahogany desk and bookcase (1765–1770), one of the most important examples of 18th-century Philadelphia furniture, will greet visitors as they enter the first gallery, introducing the magnificent architectural quality of great American furniture. Inspired in part by plate 78 of Thomas Chippendale's *Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* (London, 1754), this tour-de-force is crowned with a carved mahogany bust of English historian Catherine Macaulay (1731–1791). It will be flanked by two side chairs from the highly coveted set of at least 12 that were commissioned in 1770–1771 for the Philadelphia townhouse of General John Cadwalader (1742–1786) and his wife, Elizabeth Lloyd Cadwalader (1742–1776). Made for the couple's best parlor, these side chairs reflect English design but are wholly American in interpretation and superlative in execution. This first room also showcases some of the collection's earliest pieces, including a rare William and Mary japanned dressing table (1700–1725) and a brilliantly veneered high chest (1730–1760) with gilt shells and broken scroll pediment, both made in Boston.

The second room highlights the rococo, or Chippendale style, popular in America between about 1745 and 1780. Three extremely rare tea tables in the center of this space exemplify the distinctive regional artistry of Philadelphia, Rhode Island, and Williamsburg, Virginia, craftsmen. This theme of regional contrasts is further played out as important high chests from Philadelphia and from Newport, Rhode Island, complement each other on either side of the room. The pièce de résistance is the commanding block-front chest-on-chest made for wealthy Providence, Rhode Island, merchant John Brown (1736–1803)—an ancestor of J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery of Art from 1969 to 1992. This is one of several pieces representing the distinctively American block-and-shell design produced in both Newport and Providence, and its highly figured imported mahogany and the boldly sculpted shells signal the wealth and status of the Brown family. Also featured in this room are three delicate "pickle dishes" and a fruit basket from the earliest American porcelain manufactory, Bonnin and Morris, made in Philadelphia between 1771 and 1773.

The next room introduces the dramatic change in style that occurred soon after the American Revolution. Termed the Federal period, it followed precedents set in England by the Scottish architects William and Robert Adam. It is characterized by light and

linear shapes, new forms like sideboards and large dining tables, and shimmering veneers and inlays instead of carved rococo foliate ornament. Two new-style tambour desks and a rare demilune card table (c. 1794) made in Boston by English émigré craftsmen John and Thomas Seymour contrast with a stately Philadelphia desk and bookcase and a satinwood veneered card table signed and dated 1807 by Robert McGuffin (c. 1780–after 1863). A singularly impressive clothes press from Charleston, South Carolina (1785–1805), with rich mahogany veneers, is juxtaposed with an equally important eagle-inlaid clothes press from New York of similar date. The focal point at the end of this room is a brilliantly veneered mahogany sideboard, inlaid with drapery swags, ovals, urns, and bellflowers. Labeled by New York cabinetmakers William Mills and Simeon Deming (active 1793–1798), this splendid piece was commissioned by Oliver Wolcott (1726–1797), a signer of the Declaration of Independence and governor of Connecticut from 1796 to 1797. A pair of rare French porcelain vases with portraits of George Washington and John Adams is displayed along with portraits of Washington and Adams by Gilbert Stuart.

The final room celebrates the later classical style popularized by Napoleon Bonaparte. Ancient Greek and Roman influences with strong archeological references may be seen in objects made between about 1810 and 1830. Fashionable motifs like great lions' paw feet, eagles, dolphins, hippocampi (sea horses), and harps and lyres are paired with specimen-marble tops imported from Italy. New forms like center tables, Grecian couches, and grand circular mirrors with scrolling candle arms create a bold, ornamental look in this period. Exuberant curvilinear shapes overtake the earlier, more restrained classical style as bold carving returns, now coated with materials imitating ancient bronze. The focal point in the center of this room is one of the finest specimen-marble-top center tables made by Philadelphia cabinetmaker Anthony Quervelle (1789–1856), one of a pair originally owned by wealthy Philadelphian Edward Coleman (d. 1841).

The installation is guest curated by Wendy Cooper, the Lois F. and Henry S. McNeil Senior Curator of Furniture, Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library.

American Paintings from the Gallery's Collection

These fine examples of American decorative arts in the Kaufman Collection will be complemented by outstanding American paintings from the Gallery's own collection. Portraiture formed the mainstay of subject matter in colonial and Federal American art, and a number of portraits will be displayed by artists such as John Wollaston (active 1742/1775), Ralph Earl (1751–1801), and Gilbert Stuart (1755–1828)—declared the "Father of American Portraiture" by his contemporaries.

Decorative Arts at the National Gallery of Art

The installation of the Kaufmans' promised bequest of masterpieces of American furniture brings new focus to the decorative arts collection at the National Gallery of Art. Among its holdings, the Gallery has a fine collection of European furniture, tapestries, enamels, and ceramics from the 15th and 16th centuries as well as medieval church vessels. In addition, the Gallery possesses elegant 18th-century French furniture and a spectacular group of Chinese porcelains, primarily from the Qing Dynasty of the 17th to 19th centuries. Most of these objects were gifts of the Widener family of Philadelphia, including the renowned chalice of Abbot Suger (c. 1137–1140) that incorporates a sardonyx cup from antiquity (c. 200–100 BCE), Renaissance maiolica and Limoges enamels, furniture, and the rare French ceramics known as Saint-Porchaire. The Kaufmans' promise of an equally brilliant American decorative arts component will dramatically transform the Gallery's department of sculpture and decorative arts.

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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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