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Mary Cassatt's Original Pastel Boxes Acquired by the National Gallery of Art on View from September 11 through October 5



Pastel boxes originally owned by Mary Cassatt and recently acquired by the Art Materials Collection and Study Center at the National Gallery of Art.

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art has recently acquired three original pastel boxes that were owned by Mary Cassatt. They will go on public view for a limited time only in conjunction with [Degas/Cassatt](#), the immensely popular exhibition that has drawn more than 300,000 visitors to date.

Both the exhibition and display of pastels will end on October 5, an occasion marked with the public symposium [Degas and Cassatt: Different Perspectives](#) from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the West Building Lecture Hall.

Mary Cassatt most likely began working in pastel around 1878. She exhibited three pastels in her debut at the 1879 impressionist exhibition, including *At the Theater* (1878/1879), which is currently on display in the exhibition. Her interest in the medium reflects her enthusiasm for exploring alternative to oil paints and by the 1890s, pastel eclipsed oil as her preferred medium.

Presumably in 1920, Cassatt gave these boxes of pastels to ten-year-old Electra Webb Bostwick, the granddaughter of Louisine Havemeyer, an art collector and dear friend of the artist. Years later, Bostwick recalled, "Not realizing the value of the pastels I wasted lots of them on playing and swapping them with my friends."

Donated to the [Shelburne Craft School](#) in Vermont in the early 1940s, these boxes were brought to the attention of the Gallery by conservators at the [Shelburne Museum](#). As a result, the pastel boxes have recently been acquired by the Gallery's [Art Materials Collection and Study Center](#), a permanent home for artists' materials, technical information, and trade literature. Having Mary Cassatt's actual art supplies will enable Gallery conservators and art historians to further their analysis and understanding of the artist's process, and of the materials themselves.

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 at 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. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt, Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc, and Instagram at <http://instagram.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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Questions from members of the media may be directed to the Department of Communications at (202) 842-6353 or pressinfo@nga.gov

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