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Paul Mellon's Most Treasured Works on Paper Celebrated in Exhibition at National Gallery of Art in Honor of Gallery's 75th Anniversary



Mary Cassatt, *The Black Hat*, c. 1890
pastel
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon

Washington, DC—Paul Mellon was one of America's greatest art collectors and remains one of the National Gallery of Art's leading benefactors. Timed to coincide with the Gallery's 75th anniversary, *In Celebration of Paul Mellon* features 88 of the finest pastels, watercolors, drawings, prints, and illustrated books selected from his donations.

On view in the West Building from May 8 through September 18, 2016, this celebratory exhibition accentuates both Paul Mellon's generosity and his distinctive approach to collecting.

Paul Mellon played many crucial roles at the National Gallery of Art in carrying out the founding vision of his father, Andrew, who had laid plans for the museum before his death in 1937. The younger Mellon was a major donor of funds and works of art, a valiant advocate for the Gallery's architecture (both the East and West Buildings), and a supporter of its programs for scholars and for all who appreciate fine art.

"Paul Mellon was one of the Gallery's closest and most generous friends, who shaped so much of what the museum has become," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art, Washington. "We are delighted to celebrate the refined taste of Paul Mellon on the occasion of the Gallery's 75th anniversary."

Exhibition Highlights

Paul Mellon (1907–1999), with his late wife Rachel Lambert ("Bunny"), was among the most generous donors to the National Gallery of Art. Paintings and sculptures from their collection are always on view throughout the Gallery's permanent installations. The great majority of Mellon's gifts, however, were works on paper, which, because of their sensitivity to light, cannot be constantly displayed.

Mellon had a close personal relationship with his collection, whether they were American scenes by Winslow Homer or Maurice Prendergast; sensitive portrait drawings by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres or Edgar Degas; sporting lithographs by Théodore Géricault or George Bellows; abstracting pen landscapes by Vincent van Gogh; visions of Parisian entertainments by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec or Jacques Villon; cubist compositions by Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, or Georges Braque; or delightful watercolors of a cucumber by Édouard Manet or butterflies by Odilon Redon.

Mellon had an intimate approach to living with the art he chose, admiring and arranging his treasures from day-to-day. He delighted in large works hung on the wall and smaller ones he held in his hands, and books he admired on his desk or lap.

Attempting to honor this personal approach, the exhibition is not ordered by formal museum chronology or separated by geographical schools. The exhibition juxtaposes artists from different nationalities and time periods in the hope that visitors will enjoy both the extraordinary quality of the art and

experience the repeated visual delight that Paul Mellon felt.

Related Activities in Honor of Paul Mellon

Concert

Oran Etkin: "Re-imagining Benny Goodman" in honor of Paul Mellon

May 8 at 3:00 and 4:15

West Building, West Garden Court

Gallery Talks

In Celebration of Paul Mellon

May 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 17, 24, 25 at 1:00

June 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29 at 12:00

(50 minutes)

West Building Rotunda

Eric Denker, David Gariff

Paul Mellon Collects: Paintings from the Permanent Collection

May 5, 6, 9, 13, 18, 19, 21, 22 at 1:00 (wb)

(50 minutes)

West Building Rotunda

David Gariff

Brochure

A full-color brochure is available mapping some of the paintings and sculptures on view throughout the National Gallery of Art donated by Paul and Bunny Mellon.

National Gallery of Art's 75th Anniversary

Throughout 2016, the Gallery will commemorate its 75th anniversary with a variety of public programs and presentations that highlight the generous gifts of art from many individuals since the museum was established.

Andrew W. Mellon founded the Gallery and gave not only the West Building and his priceless art collection but also a substantial endowment. Believing that the museum should be a truly national institution, Andrew Mellon insisted that it not bear his name. When the Gallery opened on March 17, 1941, Paul Mellon presented the museum to the nation on behalf of his late father, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt accepted the gift on behalf of the American people.

Other major donors were already beginning to give their collections to the Gallery before its opening. In 1939, Samuel H. Kress donated 375 Italian paintings and 18 sculptures, while P.A.B. Widener's art collection, later enhanced by his son Joseph, was offered to the Gallery in 1939 and given in 1942. In 1943, Lessing J. Rosenwald made his first major gift to the Gallery, donating approximately 22,000 old master and modern prints and drawings over the years. Chester Dale, made his first gift to the Gallery in 1943 and eventually bequeathed most of his remarkable collection of French and American paintings to the museum in 1962. Andrew Mellon's two children, Ailsa Mellon Bruce and Paul Mellon, also became lifelong benefactors. The Gallery became a "collection of collections," and these early gifts set a precedent for giving to the nation that continues to this day.

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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Exhibition Press Release

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[Exhibition Wall Text](#) (PDF 828 mb)

[Guide to Mellon Works on View](#) (PDF 821 kb)

ONLINE RESOURCES

Exhibition Page:

[In Celebration of Paul Mellon](#)

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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

The public may call (202) 737-4215 or visit www.nga.gov for more information about the [National Gallery of Art](#).

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