

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART: DEDICATION OF THE EAST BUILDING

1 June 1978

MR. PRESIDENT, MRS. MONDALE, BISHOP WALKER, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

ANDREW W. MELLON, MY FATHER, WHO GAVE THE ORIGINAL NATIONAL
GALLERY BUILDING TO THE NATION, DIED NEARLY FOUR YEARS BEFORE
ITS COMPLETION IN 1941. IT IS SAD TO THINK THAT AILSA MELLON
BRUCE, MY SISTER, AND MY PARTNER IN PROVIDING A LARGE SHARE
OF THE FUNDS FOR THIS NEW EAST BUILDING, ALSO DIED MANY
YEARS BEFORE ITS DEDICATION. I KNOW THAT SHE WOULD HAVE
BEEN MORE THAN HAPPY WITH THIS SPLENDID TANGIBLE RESULT
OF OUR UNDERTAKING.

CONGRESS HAS UNFAILINGLY FULFILLED ITS PLEDGE, MADE IN 1937,
TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION AND
MAINTENANCE OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY SO THAT ITS WORKS OF
ART COULD BE EXHIBITED TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC FOREVER, FREE
OF CHARGE. THE TRUSTEES OF THE GALLERY, MY SISTER AND MYSELF
WERE GRATEFULLY MINDFUL OF THE INTEGRITY OF THIS PLEDGE
WHEN WE MADE THE DECISION TO BUILD ON THIS SITE. AS IN
THE CASE OF THE ORIGINAL GIFT, THE EAST BUILDING HAS BEEN
BUILT FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WITHOUT THE USE OF PUBLIC
FUNDS.

THE EAST BUILDING WILL BE FAR MORE THAN A GREAT EDIFICE TO HOUSE WORKS OF CONTEMPORARY ART. IT WILL PROVIDE A LIBRARY OF ART HISTORY WHICH WE HOPE WILL RANK AMONG THE BEST IN THE WORLD, AS WELL AS A MAGNIFICENT PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE. THERE WILL SOON BE ESTABLISHED A CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDY IN THE VISUAL ARTS, WHERE MATURE SCHOLARS WILL STRIVE TO INCREASE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF OUR HERITAGE OF THE ART OF THE WESTERN WORLD. IT SEEMS FITTING THAT SUCH A CENTER SHOULD BE IN THE HEART OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL, ADJACENT TO, AND COMPLEMENTING THE WORK OF THE WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS, THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, THE FOLGER LIBRARY, THE NATIONAL COLLECTION OF FINE ARTS, AND THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, AS WELL AS ENHANCING THE IMMENSE INTELLECTUAL RESOURCES OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, SEVERAL UNIVERSITIES, AND MANY OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MUSEUMS.

SPEAKING FOR MY FELLOW TRUSTEES, THERE ARE MANY GROUPS, AND MANY INDIVIDUALS, TO WHOM WE OWE UNLIMITED THANKS.

FIRST, THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION, WHICH CAME TO OUR RESCUE WHEN, DUE TO INFLATION, GROWING COSTS BEGAN TO OUTSTRIP OUR AVAILABLE FUNDS. ITS GRANTS HAVE ENABLED US TO COMPLETE THE BUILDING WITHOUT ELIMINATING ANY OF ITS PROPOSED FUNCTIONS, OR SACRIFICING ANY ELEMENT OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY OF MATERIALS AND CRAFTSMANSHIP.

~~MR~~ JOHN WALKER, NOW DIRECTOR EMERITUS OF THE GALLERY, FIRST BROUGHT TO OUR ATTENTION THE GROWING NEED FOR PHYSICAL EXPANSION, THE DESIREABILITY OF MORE LIBERAL SPACE FOR SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS AND FOR LARGE WORKS OF ART; AND FIRST SUGGESTED THE INTERESTING IDEA OF INCLUDING A CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDY.

IT WAS THE ARCHITECT, I. M. PEI, WHOSE IMAGINATION AND ENORMOUS SENSE OF DIGNITY HAS PRODUCED THIS GREAT MODERN WORK OF ART.

THE SUPERB CRAFTSMANSHIP WHICH YOU WILL FIND THROUGHOUT THE BUILDING IS THE RESULT OF THE PAINSTAKING DEVOTION TO THE JOB OF THE GENERAL CONTRACTORS, THE CHARLES H. TOMPKINS COMPANY, THEIR SUB-CONTRACTORS, AND OF THE MYRIAD SKILLS OF THEIR CRAFTSMEN AND LABORERS.

THE COLLECTORS' COMMITTEE, A GROUP OF DISTINGUISHED COLLECTORS AND LOVERS OF ART, UNDER THE ABLE CHAIRMANSHIP OF MRS. RUTH CARTER JOHNSON, MADE POSSIBLE THE COMMISSIONING OF MANY MAJOR CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURES AND PAINTINGS TO ENLIVEN AND ADORN THE BUILDING.

AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BUILDING COMMITTEE, WHICH CONSISTED OF MY FELLOW TRUSTEES STODDARD M. STEVENS, JOHN R. STEVENSON, AND JOHN HAY WHITNEY, AS WELL AS THE DIRECTOR, CARTER BROWN, I PERSONALLY OWE ALL OF THEM A DEBT OF GRATITUDE FOR THEIR PATIENCE, THEIR DILIGENT ATTENTION TO DETAIL, AND THEIR WISE COUNSEL.

PARTICULAR MENTION MUST ALSO BE MADE OF THE INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SEVERAL OTHERS:

CARL A. MORSE, CHAIRMAN OF MORSE/DIESEL INC., CONSTRUCTION CONSULTANT TO THE TRUSTEES; DR. DAVID SCOTT, PLANNING CONSULTANT; HURLEY OFFENBACHER, CONSTRUCTION MANAGER; AND DAN KILEY, THE TALENTED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT WHO, WITH THE ENTHUSIASTIC COLLABORATION OF MY WIFE BUNNY, FASHIONED THE HARMONIOUS NATURAL SETTING FOR THIS BRILLIANT ARCHITECTURAL JEWEL.

AND FINALLY, THE ENTIRE STAFF OF THE GALLERY, FROM CARTER BROWN, THE DIRECTOR, DOWN THROUGH EVERY RANK AND EVERY INDIVIDUAL, WHO GAVE FULLY OF THEIR ENERGIES, THEIR ENTHUSIASM, AND THEIR DEVOTION.

I WILL NOW CLOSE, AND I USE THE SAME WORDS WITH WHICH I
CONCLUDED MY ADDRESS AT THE DEDICATION OF THE ORIGINAL
BUILDING IN 1941:

"THIS BUILDING IS THE PRODUCT OF MANY MINDS, INTENT ON
GIVING AMERICA THEIR BEST: AND WE ARE HAPPY TO TURN IT OVER
TO YOU, MR. PRESIDENT. . . .TO BE DEDICATED FOREVER TO THE
USE AND ENJOYMENT OF THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES."