

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL GALLERY HITS TEN-YEAR HIGH IN ATTENDANCE FOR 1998
AND ACQUIRES MORE THAN 1,000 WORKS OF ART,
INCLUDING THE RENOWNED WHITNEY COLLECTION

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The National Gallery of Art hit a ten-year high attendance in 1998 of 6.2 million visitors averaging 17,076 people per day. In addition to the permanent collection, educational programs, films, concerts, and a performing arts festival, visitors attended some fifteen special exhibitions. Among the most popular exhibitions were Van Gogh's Van Goghs: Masterpieces from the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (480,496) and Alexander Calder: 1898-1976 (288,709).

The Gallery also acquired more than one thousand works of art, including eight important post-impressionist and fauve paintings bequeathed by philanthropist Betsey Cushing Whitney, widow of ambassador John Hay "Jock" Whitney. "The outstanding gifts in 1998 were made by Mrs. Whitney and other generous donors who care deeply about making great art accessible to the American public," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

Among the masterworks in the Whitney gift are Vincent van Gogh's powerful Self-Portrait (1889), Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's monumental Marcelle Lender Dancing the Bolero in "Chilpéric" (1895-1896), Henri Matisse's brilliant Open Window, Collioure (1905), and Georges Braque's fauve The Port of La Ciotat (1907).

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The Whitney gift also includes Raoul Dufy's The Beach at Sainte-Adresse (1906), Maurice de Vlaminck's Tugboat on the Seine, Chatou (1906), Albert Marquet's The Beach at Trouville (1906), and Kees van Dongen's Saida (c. 1913?). Many of these works are now on view in the West Building.

PAINTINGS

The strong influence of Caravaggio is apparent in Valentin de Boulogne's dark and dramatic Soldiers Playing Cards and Dice (The Cheats) (c. 1620), an acquisition made possible by the Patrons' Permanent Fund. It will go on view in the spring. The rich patterns, unexpected viewpoints, and palette typical of nabi artist Edouard Vuillard can be seen in his five-panel screen Place Vintimille (1911) given by Enid A. Haupt. The acquisition of the sumptuous Ambi II (1959) by Morris Louis, a Washington artist central to the development of color field painting, was made possible by The Nancy Lee and Perry Bass Fund. Pat Steir's Curtain Waterfall (1991), a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Barney A. Ebsworth, is one of the artist's most dramatic and exquisite waterfall pictures and is currently on view in the East Building.

DRAWINGS

An album of eighty-one drawings made in Rome between 1775 and 1780 by the great French neoclassical artist Jacques-Louis David was acquired through the Patrons' Permanent Fund. The Gallery also acquired a major Pissarro pastel, La Vachère (1892), a gift of Evelyn Stefansson Nef and Mr. and Mrs. James T. Dyke.

Among significant additions to the Gallery's American collection is Generation (1914), a synchromist watercolor with complex interlocking color forms by Stanton Macdonald-Wright. Three important drawings made by Barnett Newman between 1944 and 1946, which reveal the development of his unique abstract vision, were acquired from Annalee Newman with the help of The Nancy Lee and Perry Bass Fund. Other additions to the Gallery's holdings of abstract expressionism are thirty drawings by Franz Kline, gifts from Elizabeth Ross Zogbaum and Rufus Zogbaum. In a variety of media, they include examples of Kline's early figurative work as well as classic abstractions in color and black and white.

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PRINTS

The fine, richly inked engraving, The Virgin and Child (1470s ?) by Andrea Mantegna, whose engravings had enormous influence in the Renaissance and beyond, is considered by many to be his greatest work. One of the finest surviving impressions, this work was acquired through the Patrons' Permanent Fund.

Kathan Brown and Crown Point Press together donated approximately 500 etchings and woodcuts by more than 50 contemporary artists. Among these are works by Francesco Clemente, Tony Cragg, Anish Kapoor, Pat Steir, and William T. Wiley. Most are the impressions signed by the artists to authorize the printing of their editions.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Augmenting its previous gifts, The André and Elizabeth Kertész Foundation generously donated six rare vintage photographs by André Kertész. All self-portraits, the group includes Albany (1918) and Elizabeth and I (1931), in which Kertész assumes the role of both observer and observed, and more indirect self-portraits such as South Port, Long Island (1942 or 1949), in which he depicts himself only as a shadow.

SCULPTURE

The exquisitely modeled and elegantly cast silver Christ at the Column (c. 1630s; cast probably mid-seventeenth century) by Alessandro Algardi was added to the Gallery's three other works by the artist on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of his birth. The acquisition is made possible by the New Century Fund, Gift of The William Stamps Farish Fund.

PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED GIFTS

Other major 1998 acquisitions announced previously include Dutch master Johannes Cornelisz. Verspronck's portrait Andries Stilte as a Standard Bearer (1640), made possible by the Patrons' Permanent Fund; John Constable's Cloud Study: Stormy Sunset (1821-1822), a gift of Gallery trustee Louise Mellon in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon; seven paintings from Jacob Kainen, including three from the artist,

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two from Ruth Cole Kainen, and one from Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth S. Hitch; Hans Holbein the Younger's drawing Tantalus (1535/1540), a gift of Ladislaus and Beatrix von Hoffmann and the Patrons' Permanent Fund; ten important old master drawings given by Dian and Andrea Woodner; three Rembrandt etchings purchased through the New Century Fund; twenty-two drawings by fifteen artists such as Eva Hesse, given by Werner H. and Sarah-Ann Kramarsky; twelve of Alex Katz's drawings surveying his career and two of his earliest prints, donated by Raphael and Jane Bernstein through the Parnassus Foundation; and four rare masterpieces of twentieth-century modernist photography by Charles Sheeler, acquired with funds from The Brown Foundation, Inc., Houston, the New Century Fund, and the Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The National Gallery of Art, located on the National Mall at Fourth Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W., is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free. For general information, call (202) 737-4215, TDD at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. To receive a free bimonthly Calendar of Events, call (202) 842-6662.

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