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Masterpieces from Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon Bring Depth to National Gallery of Art's French and American Collections

–Artists include Vincent van Gogh, Winslow Homer, Claude Monet, Georges Seurat, and others–



Vincent van Gogh, *Still Life of Oranges and Lemons with Blue Gloves*, 1889, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon

Washington, DC—An astonishing 62 rare works by Vincent van Gogh, Winslow Homer, Claude Monet, Georges Seurat, and others have arrived at the National Gallery of Art, Washington. They were bequeathed to the Gallery by renowned philanthropist, art collector, and founding Gallery benefactor Paul Mellon (1907–1999), subject to a life estate in his wife, which gave her the right to possess the work for her lifetime. Arts patron and master gardener Rachel Lambert Mellon (1910–2014) died at Oak Spring, her estate in Upperville, Virginia, on March 17, 2014. The paintings, sculptures and works on paper then released were among the 110 works of art bequeathed to the Gallery by Paul Mellon that remained in his wife's care after his death on February 1, 1999.

"Paul Mellon was one of the greatest philanthropists of our time, and his donations of art to the National Gallery of Art are unsurpassed. Paul and Bunny Mellon left an extraordinary legacy, that we plan to honor with an exhibition in 2016," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. (Exhibition details will be announced at a later date).

During her lifetime, Rachel Lambert Mellon had released 48 works of art to the Gallery. Among the most recent of these is Vincent van Gogh's mesmerizing *Green Wheat Fields, Auvers* (1890), which went on view in December 2013 for the first time since 1966.

A highlight of the bequest is another major painting by Van Gogh: *Still Life of Oranges and Lemons with Blue Gloves* (1889). Currently undergoing conservation treatment, the painting will be on view June 7 in the Gallery's West Building, French Galleries, with Van Gogh's renowned *Portrait of Joseph Roulin* (1889), on loan from the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands.

Still Life with Bottle, Carafe, Bread, and Wine (c. 1862–1863) by Claude Monet is an intimate

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painting of a subject not usually associated with the artist. One of Monet's earliest known paintings, the Mellons' purchase of this work reflects their thoughtful and deeply personal approach to collecting art.

The Riders (c. 1885) by Edgar Degas depicts a group of jockeys on horseback, a subject favored by both Degas and Paul Mellon, a renowned racing enthusiast. This large, vibrantly colored canvas is an extraordinary complement to the many Degas waxes and drawings on the same subject, donated by Paul Mellon in his lifetime. The Gallery has the world's third largest collection of works by Degas and, thanks to Mellon, the world's greatest collection of this artist's sculpture made during his lifetime.

Twelve exquisite oil sketches by Georges Seurat join four paintings and one drawing in the Gallery's permanent collection. "Seurat died young and his body of work is relatively small compared to his impressionist and post-impressionist counterparts," said Kimberly A. Jones, associate curator of French paintings. "These new works vastly enhance our holdings and position the Gallery as one of the strongest collections of his work in the United States."

Among the nine American paintings in the bequest, two works by Winslow Homer—*The Flirt* (1874), a study for the Gallery's *Breezing Up*, and *School Time* (c. 1874)—constitute especially important additions to the collection. A significant group of still lifes—two remarkable works by Raphaele Peale and three by John Frederick Peto—strengthen the Gallery's holdings in that genre. The bequest also included a major group of seven Homer drawings and watercolors, the most notable being *Rustic Courtship* (1874) and *The Berry Pickers* (1873), as well as a rare pastel on canvas by William Merritt Chase, *Gathering Flowers, Shinnecock, Long Island* (c. 1897).

The artists represented in this bequest include: Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805), Raphaele Peale (1774–1825), Titian Ramsay Peale (1799–1885), Pierre-Jules Mêne (1810–1879), Eugène Boudin (1824–1898), Emmanuel Fremiet (1824–1910), Camille Pissarro (1830–1903), Edouard Manet (1832–1883), Edgar Degas (1834–1917), Henri Fantin-Latour (1836–1904), Winslow Homer (1836–1910), Claude Monet (1840–1926), Berthe Morisot (1841–1895), Auguste Renoir (1841–1919), René Pierre Charles Princeteau (1844–1914), William Merritt Chase (1849–1916), Jean-Louis Forain (1852–1931), Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), John Frederick Peto (1854–1907), Maurice Brazil Prendergast (1858–1924), Georges Seurat (1859–1891), Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947), Lyonel Feininger (1871–1956), Maurice de Vlaminck (1876–1958), Raoul Dufy (1877–1953), Paul Klee (1879–1940), Georges Braque (1882–1963), André Dunoyer de Segonzac (1884–1974), Roger de La Fresnaye (1885–1925), René Magritte (1898–1967), and Alexander Calder (1898–1976).

Paul Mellon and his sister, Ailsa Mellon Bruce, the son and daughter of Nora McMullen and Andrew W. Mellon, represent the second generation of major benefactors to the National Gallery of Art. Andrew W. Mellon was a Pittsburgh industrialist and financier, served as Secretary of the Treasury of the United States from 1921 to 1931, and as U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, 1931 to 1932. He founded the National Gallery of Art in 1937 and donated his famous art collection to the nation.

Since 1964, Paul Mellon and Rachel Lambert Mellon have donated 1,168 works of art to the National Gallery of Art. Their collection was rich in the works of the recognized masters of British art and French impressionists and post-impressionists, as well as works by their lesser known contemporaries.

In addition to the gifts of art, Mellon provided essential funding for a number of Gallery projects, including generous gifts to the Gallery's main fund for acquisitions, the Patrons' Permanent Fund. Most important, he, his sister Ailsa, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation provided the funds for the construction of the East Building. Paul Mellon was first elected to the board of trustees in 1938, making him the Gallery's first president, and he continued to serve the Gallery until his death in 1999. He was also instrumental in establishing the Gallery's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, whose mandate, in his own words, is "to increase our understanding of our heritage of the art of the Western world." In the field of art conservation, Mellon directed many foundation grants to laboratories, training programs for prospective conservators, and ongoing research aimed at developing new conservation materials and techniques.

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. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/modern-art-during-renovation.html>.

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at www.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.

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