

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

FOR RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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OPENING OF THE WIDENER COLLECTION

The National Gallery of Art has announced that the Widener Collection will be placed on exhibition and opened to the public at three o'clock on Sunday afternoon, December 20th.

It was Mr. Widener's desire that the public be allowed to enjoy this great collection at the earliest possible date; and a day and hour have accordingly been fixed which will make it possible for the many servicemen and war-workers visiting the Gallery during the week-end, to have their first view of the collection at that time and during the ensuing Christmas season.

The collection is given by Mr. Joseph E. Widener in memory of his father, the late Mr. Peter A. B. Widener. In receiving this great collection, the Nation will benefit by the discrimination, knowledge, and taste shown by Mr. Widener and his father, over many years, in bringing together a collection which, in scope and quality, has rarely been equalled in any period of collecting in Europe or America.

Included in Mr. Widener's great gift to the Nation and placed on exhibition at this time will be seventy-six paintings, many pieces of sculpture, as well as tapestries and other works of art of the first importance. The

paintings and sculpture will completely fill a number of rooms on the main floor. These will not be segregated but interspersed among the other exhibition galleries in such a way as to illustrate the chronological development of the various schools represented in the collection.

Works of art other than paintings and sculpture will be installed in rooms on the ground floor which have been specially prepared for them. In these rooms will be seen important objects of art such as the Chalice of the Twelfth Century, which once formed part of the Treasure of Saint Denis and was probably presented to that monastery by the famous Abbot Suger; Limoges enamels, rock crystals, Renaissance jewelry, several of the latter pieces with settings attributed to Benvenuto Cellini. There are remarkable examples of ceramics comprising a famous collection of majolica ware from Italy and 169 important examples of Chinese porcelains. There are also celebrated tapestries including the one which once belonged to Cardinal Mazarin. Also included are many pieces of furniture dating from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

Among the Italian paintings is the celebrated Feast of the Gods by Giovanni Bellini, mentioned by Vasari in 1550 as "one of the finest works that Gian Bellini ever did, which work he, himself, not being able to finish on account of his extreme old age, was taken over by Titian as superior to all others". Also included in the collection is the

unique painted shield, representing The Youthful David, by one of the rarest of the great Florentine masters, Andrea del Castagno. Other paintings in this group are The Small Cowper Madonna, perhaps the most characteristic of Raphael's early Madonnas, and superb panels by Benozzo Gozzoli, Lorenzo di Credi, Mantegna, and others. The later Venetian painters are represented by three great works by Titian; the Venus and Adonis, and the two portraits of the Spilimbergo sisters. Strongly under the influence of Venetian art are the two masterpieces by El Greco, St. Martin and the Beggar and Virgin with Santa Inez and Santa Tecla, both from the Chapel of San Jose' in Toledo. Also from Spain comes the remarkable painting of a Girl and her Duenna by Murillo.

Of the Northern Schools of the Seventeenth Century, Mr. Widener and his father gathered together a group of masterpieces unsurpassed in the annals of private collecting. There are the famous Van Dyck portraits, among which are supreme examples of his Genoese period, such as the monumental Marchesa Elena Grimaldi and the Marchesa Paola Adorno and her Son, and others. There are fourteen paintings by Rembrandt, including The Mill, considered by many connoisseurs one of the greatest landscapes in the history of art; and the pair of portraits from the Youssouppoff Collection, which stand among his portraits

as two of Rembrandt's noblest interpretations of character.

There are two famous paintings by Vermeer, A Woman Weighing Gold and A Young Girl with a Flute, the latter closely related to the Girl With a Red Hat, in the Mellon Collection. There are also works of other artists of the Dutch and Flemish Schools, including such masters as Hals, Cuyp, Potter, Ostade, de Hooch, and Hobbema.

A splendid group of portraits by Gainsborough, Reynolds, Romney, and others illustrate the Eighteenth Century; while Nineteenth Century English painting is beautifully shown in a small number of masterpieces by Turner and Constable.

The sculpture in the Widener Collection, although less numerous than the paintings, maintains the same magnificent level of quality. Included in the collection is the David of the Casa Martelli by Donatello, probably the greatest statue by this artist outside of Italy. There is also a celebrated Cupid by the same master, and distinguished examples of the art of Desiderio da Settignano, Rosellino, and Luca della Robbia. Later Italian Renaissance sculpture is represented by a famous portrait of Pietro Aretino by Jacopo Sansovino, as well as by a fine collection of bronzes including work by such outstanding masters as Benvenuto Cellini and Giovanni da Bologna.

The continuation of the Renaissance tradition in sculpture during the Eighteenth Century in France is

admirably illustrated by four Houdon portrait-busts.

Subsequent releases, with accompanying photographs, will deal more fully with the sculpture and decorative arts represented in the Widener Collection.