

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
Washington, D. C.

REpublic 7-4215

Mr. Cavins

FOR RELEASE: Wednesday,
October 19, 1955

WASHINGTON, D. C. October 18, 1955: The Trustees of the National Gallery of Art announced today that Mr. Chester Dale of New York has been elected President of the Gallery to succeed the late Samuel H. Kress.

Mr. Dale, who has been a Trustee of the Gallery since 1943, is an outstanding financier, art collector, and benefactor of the Gallery. He is a native of New York City, where he has lived all his life. He organized his own security business in 1903, specializing in railroad securities. He became a pioneer in public utilities, imaginatively advocating the sale of electric power and water securities before others foresaw their future. He became one of the senior partners of W. C. Langley and Company, and was perhaps the best known figure in Wall Street in the field of public utilities.

In 1935 Mr. Dale retired from active business, including his memberships on boards of directors, to devote his time to his outstanding collection of paintings, now his major interest, and said by many to be the greatest collection of modern French art in the world. The collection is particularly rich in the finest works of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. At the beginning of World War II Mr. Dale closed his large house in New York where the collection had been hanging and placed the

major portion of his nineteenth century French paintings, comprising five galleries, at the National Gallery of Art on indefinite loan. Later he sent four galleries of twentieth century French paintings to the National Gallery of Art, thus presenting a continuous history of the development of French art through these two centuries up to the present. In addition Mr. Dale has given many notable masterpieces of other schools to the National Gallery of Art and to other museums, and has in his apartment in New York an important collection of seventy-five paintings, the works of French and other artists, which he has announced will ultimately be given to the public.

The Trustees of the National Gallery of Art announced today that Mr. David E. Finley, Director of the Gallery, would retire as Director on July 1, 1956.

Mr. Finley, who has recently become eligible for retirement under the Retirement policy of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Art for the executive officers of the Gallery, has sent the following letter to the Trustees, asking that they approve his retirement at an early date. The Board has asked Mr. Finley to continue as Director until July 1, 1956, and he has agreed to do so, in order to superintend the preparations for the Fifteenth Anniversary of the opening of the Gallery, to be held on March 17, 1956, and also the re-installation of the Kress Collection with the important additions that have been made to that Collection in recent years.

Mr. Finley's letter to Mr. F. L. Belin, Acting President of the Board of Trustees, and the Resolution of the Board of Trustees follow:

"I have recently become eligible for retirement as Director of the National Gallery of Art, under the Retirement Policy established by the Board of Trustees for the five executive officers of the Gallery.

"You have told me that you hoped I would remain as Director until July 1, 1956, in order that I might complete the preparations now under way for the celebration of the Fifteenth Anniversary of the National Gallery and the re-installation of the Kress Collection with the important additions that have been made to that Collection in recent years.

"I hope you will bring this letter to the attention of the Board of Trustees at their October meeting and say that, if it is also their wish that I should continue as Director until July 1, 1956, I shall, of course, be glad to do so. When the Board has acted on this matter, I would like my impending retirement to be announced at an early date in order that the Board of Trustees may proceed with the selection of my successor after such an announcement has been made.

"I have been Director of the National Gallery since March 1938, shortly after it was chartered by the Congress. It has been a great privilege to have had a part in developing the Gallery and its collections during these formative years. During all this time I have received the strongest and most sympathetic support from the Trustees of the Gallery for which I wish to express my most grateful thanks.

Sincerely yours,

DAVID E. FINLEY
Director "

R E S O L V E D

"That the Trustees of the National Gallery of Art request David E. Finley to continue on in employment as Director of the National Gallery of Art from his normal retirement date, July 1, 1955, to July 1, 1956, in order to superintend the Fifteenth Anniversary celebration of the opening of the National Gallery of Art to be held on March 17, 1956; and

"That the Trustees of the National Gallery of Art express their deep appreciation and gratitude to David E. Finley for his devoted services to the National Gallery of Art since his appointment as Director of the

National Gallery of Art at the first meeting of the Trustees, March 9, 1938. Mr. Finley's meticulous attention to the construction of the National Gallery of Art resulted in the magnificent arrangements which have been made for the display of its collections. Through his efforts there has been achieved Mr. Andrew W. Mellon's hope that the National Gallery of Art would attract other works of art of the highest quality and thus form a great national collection. During Mr. Finley's administration as Director of the National Gallery of Art there have come to the Gallery the collections of Samuel H. Kress, Peter A. B. and Joseph E. Widener, Chester Dale, Lessing J. Rosenwald, Ralph and Mary Booth and many other important individual contributions. When the Gallery was opened to the public in 1941, sixty-one galleries and exhibition areas were required to exhibit the Gallery's collections. By March 17, 1956, sixty-two additional galleries and exhibition areas will have been finished under Mr. Finley's direction or used as exhibition areas to house additional acquisitions which have come to the Gallery by his efforts. Under his guidance the National Gallery of Art has achieved a place among the greatest of the world's galleries. The example of his administration and his leadership in the arrangement of international exhibitions will leave a lasting impression of his work not only on the National Gallery of Art but on the other art galleries of the Nation. His positions as Vice Chairman of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas, and as Chairman, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and his appointments by Presidents Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower as a Member of the Commission of Fine Arts, of which he has been Chairman since 1950, have added prestige to the office of Director of the National Gallery of Art; and

"That the Trustees indicate their sense of personal loss at the retirement of David E. Finley and express to him their high regard and best wishes that he may enjoy many years of health and happiness after his long career of distinguished public service to his country; and

"That the Trustees request the Secretary to transmit an embossed copy of this resolution to David E. Finley."