

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

ADVANCE FACT SHEET WEST BUILDING: THE NEW GROUND FLOOR

Public Opening (galleries): February 3, 1983 (10 a.m.)

Press Preview:

For two days, Monday and Tuesday, January 17 and 18, two weeks prior to the public opening of the National Gallery's new Ground Floor, the extensive remodeling of the Ground Floor of the West or original Building, the exhibition galleries and behind-the-scenes areas will be open to any accredited press from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. A press breakfast followed by a press conference will be held Monday morning, and a reception for press with the Gallery's Trustees, officers and staff will be held Tuesday afternoon. Critics for magazine reviews in January (or later) issues may view the new exhibition galleries by special arrangement in advance of the press previews, subject to the installation schedule. Filming and photography will be permitted subject to a similar arrangement. Color transparencies and black and white glossies of objects that will be on view are available now. Please contact the Gallery's Information Office for further information.

Scope:

A major remodeling of more than 40,000 sq. ft. of former exhibition galleries and office and storage space on the Ground Floor of the West Building, released by the opening of the East Building in 1978, has made possible a new museum-within-a-museum involving the installation and re-installation of nearly 2000 prints, drawings, paintings, small-scale sculpture and related decorative arts objects from the National Gallery's permanent collection of Western

(more)

European and American art dating from the twelfth century to the present. With some objects reinstalled for the first time in more than a decade, this more than doubles the number of works on view in both buildings.

Some of the most important works of art, including the great Renaissance bronzes from the Kress Collection and the exceptionally fine works of decorative arts from the Widener Collection, such as the Chalice of Abbot Suger of St. Denis, the Mazarin Tapestry, the eighteenth-century French furniture and the Chinese porcelains, have been on view for only limited periods during the past twelve years. Others, such as the Stieglitz photographs given by Georgia O'Keeffe, and the American naive paintings given by Col. and Mrs. Edgar William Garbisch, include selections from extraordinary holdings shown for the first time. Among the prints and drawings are outstanding examples of the work of Dürer, Mantegna, Rembrandt, Tiepolo, Boucher, Homer and Picasso selected from numerous gifts and bequests to the National Gallery since its opening in 1941.

For the visitor (see attached plan), the tour of the renovated areas can begin at the Seventh Street (or west) end of the West Building, which will be open to the public on a regular basis for the first time.* The Seventh Street lobby leads into the central corridor which runs the length of the building. It also gives access to two exhibition wings--prints and drawings to the south and decorative arts and sculpture to the north--both of which lead the visitor to the Central Gallery displaying the American naive paintings. Continuing through this gallery and along the corridor, the visitor comes to the Garden Café, in the middle of the building, and beyond the Café to the recently opened sales area, flanking the corridor which leads to the Fourth Street lobby and the East Building.

In non-public portions of the Ground Floor, the remodeling has created a substantial practical rearrangement of those departments concerned with the proper reception, examination, photography and distribution of works of art in-house, from the art receiving dock to the registrar's office, photo and conservation laboratories--which have been brought together in the northeast quadrant of the Ground

(more)

* The Seventh Street door will close for a brief period from April 1983 to November 1983 for work on Main Floor galleries, which are being finished off for an installation of seventeenth- and nineteenth-century paintings scheduled to open approximately a year later.

Floor, an area covering 20,000 sq. ft. The renovation also includes a lecture hall for symposia, seminars and audio-visual treatments of special exhibitions and events.

Funding:

Renovation of the West Building Ground Floor began in 1971 in conjunction with the design of the East Building by I. M. Pei. This involved alterations in the West Building's Fourth Street lobby, which opened to the public in 1976. The West Building project, which required removing columns supporting the Main Floor, became known as "Operation Breakthrough" and, together with the related Ground Floor remodeling, has been funded by The A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Paul Mellon, son of the Gallery's Founder, The Kresge Foundation, and Federal appropriations.

Planning Consultant:

David W. Scott

Construction Manager:

Hurley F. Offenbacher

Special (temporary) exhibitions:

The southern range of graphic arts galleries has been designed to allow for changing exhibitions of both the permanent collection and loan exhibitions of prints and drawings. Two exhibitions, in addition to the permanent collection of prints and drawings, have been installed for the opening and demonstrate this flexibility. (Releases are forthcoming on each exhibition.)

Alfred Stieglitz. February 3 through May 8, 1983. Over 170 Stieglitz photographs have been selected from the key set of approximately 1600 images donated by Georgia O'Keeffe, the artist's widow. The Gallery's holdings are the most complete set of Stieglitz' work in one location. The exhibition is chronologically organized to show this master photographer's career, which began in the late nineteenth century with studies in Germany and culminated in achieving general recognition of the artistic merit of photography by the 1930s in New York. This exhibition, made possible by a generous grant from Springs Industries, Inc., will also be seen at The Metropolitan Museum of Art June 14 through August 14, 1983 and at the Art Institute of Chicago October 11, 1983 through January 3, 1984.

Drawings from the Holy Roman Empire. February 3 through April 10, 1983. Approximately one hundred drawings surveying the work of artists active in Central Europe from 1540 to 1680 constitute the first major exhibition of this neglected area and era of artistic creation. Among the works, drawn from both public and private collections, are examples of figure

(more)

drawings, biblical and mythological themes, hunting scenes, landscapes, and genre. The Princeton Art Museum, Princeton University, is organizing the exhibition.

Permanent Collections:

Sculpture: The new sculpture galleries will contain bronzes, medals, and plaquettes from the distinguished Kress and Widener collections, related objects from the Widener collection of decorative arts, and other outstanding works from the Gallery's permanent collections. These galleries will be arranged chronologically and geographically, rather than by medium, allowing viewers to study relationships between contemporary works of various types. Among the numerous important works on view are:

- a medallic self-portrait reliably attributed to Leon Battista Alberti, his only work of sculpture known to have survived
- a selection of small bronzes by Riccio
- the Capitoline She-Wolf (Roman School)
- sixteenth-century plaquettes by such masters as Moderno and Valerio Belli, exhibited with sixteenth-century historiated maiolica from the Widener collection
- a newly constructed "Treasury" containing jewels and rock crystals from sixteenth-century Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands
- eighteenth-century French sculpture by Clodion and Houdon
- nineteenth-century sculpture, including many works by Barye recently given to the National Gallery by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, and a collection of some forty works by Rodin, many from the Simpson collection
- sculpture by such twentieth-century masters as Duchamp-Villon, Maillol, Manzù, and Lehmbruck

Douglas Lewis and Carolyn Wilson Newmark of the National Gallery's Sculpture Department conceived and supervised the installation of works in these new galleries. Designer for galleries showing work from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century is Charles B. Froom of New York. The remaining galleries

(more)

have been designed by Gaillard Ravenel and Mark Leithauser of the Gallery's Design and Installation Department.

Note: In conjunction with the opening of the sculpture galleries, a grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation will enable the Gallery's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts to sponsor an international symposium and seminar devoted to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian bronzes. Nearly 1000 Renaissance medals, reliefs, plaquettes and small statuettes have received conservation treatment in preparation for permanent exhibition in the renovated West Building. Although bronze was the primary alloy used for fabricating these fifteenth century pieces, a fair number exist in lead, silver, gold and gilt bronze, each requiring an exacting examination and treatment. The work has been carried out in the new Sculpture Laboratory using surgical microscopes, ultrasonic cleaners, various chemicals and hand tools. Numerous scientific investigations have included corrosion product analysis by x-ray diffraction and emission spectroscopy, solubility testing of patinas, and x-radiography. All fabrics considered for use in the display of the metal objects were tested in an aging oven to predict corrosiveness to silver, copper and lead. Chief conservator Victor Covey and Shelley Sturman, sculpture conservator, have been responsible for the examination and treatment of these objects.

Decorative arts:

The National Gallery's Widener collection of decorative arts, while not large in size, is of exceptionally high quality. The objects in this collection date from the twelfth through the eighteenth centuries and include numerous rare and important works of art. The Chalice of Abbot Suger, dating from c.1140, served as the sacramental cup for the coronation of French queens at the royal abbey for nearly six centuries. One of the most splendid surviving treasures of the Middle Ages, the chalice is the highlight of an important collection of Medieval and Renaissance liturgical arts and textiles. The eighteen pieces of French eighteenth-century furniture in the Widener collection are signed or can be firmly attributed to known cabinetmakers, most of whom worked for the royal court. Of particular interest is Marie Antoinette's writing desk from the Tuileries Palace, the only desk found in the royal apartments where the Queen was held under house arrest prior to her execution. Marie Antoinette was also the last queen of France to use the Chalice of Abbot Suger in her coronation ceremony. Eight tapestries, dating from the 1400s and early 1500s, include three designed

(more)

by the famous Flemish painter Bernaert Van Orley, as well as The Triumph of Christ, once in the collection of Cardinal Mazarin and considered the finest surviving tapestry from the European Middle Ages and the largest "cloth-of-gold" in the world. The Widener collection of Chinese porcelains, one of the country's most notable collections of polychrome ware, is newly installed in three galleries. These have not been on view for more than ten years.

Other highlights of the decorative arts galleries include:

--four rooms devoted to the display of eighteenth century French furniture, other decorative arts and prints and drawings from the Widener collection. These relocated and redesigned rooms have been made possible by a generous grant from Peter A. B. Widener, grandson of the original donor. They were designed with the assistance of William Reider of the Metropolitan Museum, under the supervision of William J. Williams of the National Gallery staff. One of the rooms contains two glassed-in cases which will display the furniture opened to reveal inner workings.

--new galleries to house the Widener collection of Medieval and Renaissance textiles and liturgical objects, designed by Gaillard Ravenel and Mark Leithauser of the Gallery's Design and Installation Department, with technical consultation provided by Joseph V. Columbus of the Gallery's Conservation Department. Gallery and installations for the Chinese porcelains were designed by Richard Saito and William J. Williams of the National Gallery staff.

Prints and Drawings:

Fourteen galleries have been designated for the history of graphic arts. The space consists of two sequences of galleries: one for selections from the permanent collection of prints and drawings, the other for special exhibitions. Prints from the permanent collection will offer an historical survey and include many works never before shown. Old master and modern drawings from the permanent collection, like the prints, will be shown continuously, with the selections changing every few months. During the first two years, drawings acquired since the 1974 exhibition of recent acquisitions will be on view, including works not shown in special exhibitions since then and selections from recent acquisitions during the past four years. Graphics exhibitions will be carried out under the supervision of Andrew Robison of the National Gallery's

(more)

Graphic Arts Department working with the Gallery's Department of Design and Installation.

Paintings:

Over more than a quarter-century from 1953 until 1979, Col. Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch donated and bequeathed over 300 paintings from their collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American naive art, making the Gallery's folk art collection one of the foremost in the country. Among the 63 paintings on view are: Peaceable Kingdom by Edward Hicks, The Cat by an anonymous painter, companion portraits of Capt. Samuel Chandler and Mrs. Samuel Chandler by Winthrop Chandler, The Westwood Children by Joshua Johnson, and The Burnish Sisters by William M. Prior. John Wilmerding and Linda Ayres of the National Gallery's Department of American Art have organized this installation.

Additional Public Areas:

Lecture Hall: The newly constructed lecture hall off the Central Gallery provides seating for 150 persons. Special facilities allow for simultaneous translation and will serve multi-lingual meetings and international symposia. Two seminar rooms, located adjacent to the hall, will provide facilities for smaller meetings and symposia. Limited use of the lecture hall begins in October under the auspices of the National Gallery's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts.

Publications Sales: The new publications sales area, located along a broad corridor between the Fourth Street and Constitution Avenue entrances, opened in March of 1981. It allows the Gallery to offer a wider variety of reproductions, books, and, for the first time, audiovisual programs produced by the Extension Services Department. The new area, which is also equipped with a special lift for the handicapped, provides direct physical and visual access through the east end of the Ground Floor, thus for the first time allowing visitors to circulate without going upstairs and back down again.

Garden Café: The new café, located at the center of the Ground Floor between the new publication sales area and the new galleries, will serve visitors to the West Building. It offers a menu of light snacks, sandwiches, and desserts, and is open daily from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 12 noon to 6 p.m. Like the other food services in the National Gallery, it is operated by Guest Services, Inc.

(more)

Support Services Areas (non-public):

Conservation Laboratories: These greatly expanded facilities, which now rank among the finest of their kind in the U.S., have been made possible by generous grants from The Kresge Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. New laboratories for paper conservation, sculpture conservation, and the scientific analysis of works of art are housed in former office space immediately adjacent to the paintings conservation labs.

Registrar: The registrar's area is part of a remodeled art receiving and processing complex consisting of an art delivery dock, packing and examination rooms, a vault, and offices with records files. The area is designed for a maximum of both security and convenience, and it is immediately adjacent to the photo and conservation laboratories.

Photography Laboratories: The photo labs are centrally located in remodeled space formerly occupied by the cafeteria kitchen, which was converted into high-ceilinged studios, one for photography of paintings and one for sculpture. The photo lab complex also includes a series of rooms for processing, storage, and administrative use, and will be supplemented by a Photo Services Office, in the area of the former bookstore, designed for public and staff study and ordering of photographic prints.

Exhibits Preparation and Index of American Design: The remodeling of over 6,000 sq. ft. of the areas formerly used for print storage, Extension Services, and related offices has provided the Gallery with a new study-storage area for the Index of American Design and support facilities for the preparation and installation of the exhibitions projected for the new ground floor galleries. The Index of American Design contains over 17,000 renderings presenting a vivid pictorial survey of American decorative arts and is a major resource for both study and exhibitions.

Credits:

Fourth Street Lobby Area-

I. M. Pei and Partners, New York, architects:

Weiskopf and Pickworth, New York

Mueser Rutledge Wentworth and Johnston, New York

Syska & Henessy, Inc., Washington

Operation Breakthrough and remaining ground floor areas-
Keyes Condon and Florance, Washington, architects:

Nash M. Love & Associates, Springfield, Virginia

James Madison Cutts, Washington

(m o r e)

Contractors:

Associated Builders, Inc., Hyattsville, Maryland
Corning Construction Corp., Beltsville, Maryland
Grunley Walsh Construction, Washington
Skinker & Garrett Contractors, Washington
Spradlin Construction Co., Wheaton, Maryland
Charles H. Tompkins Co., Washington

Consultants and Designers:

Bolt Beranek and Newman, Inc., Arlington, Virginia
Cini-Grissom Associates, Rockville, Maryland
Harold Eberhard, Jr., New York
Charles B. Froom, New York
Mark Hampton, Inc., New York
Herman and Lees Associates, Cambridge, Massachusetts

END

September 24, 1982

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION or photographs contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director (Information Officer), Carolyn Engel Amiot, or Marla Price, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565, (202) 842-6353.

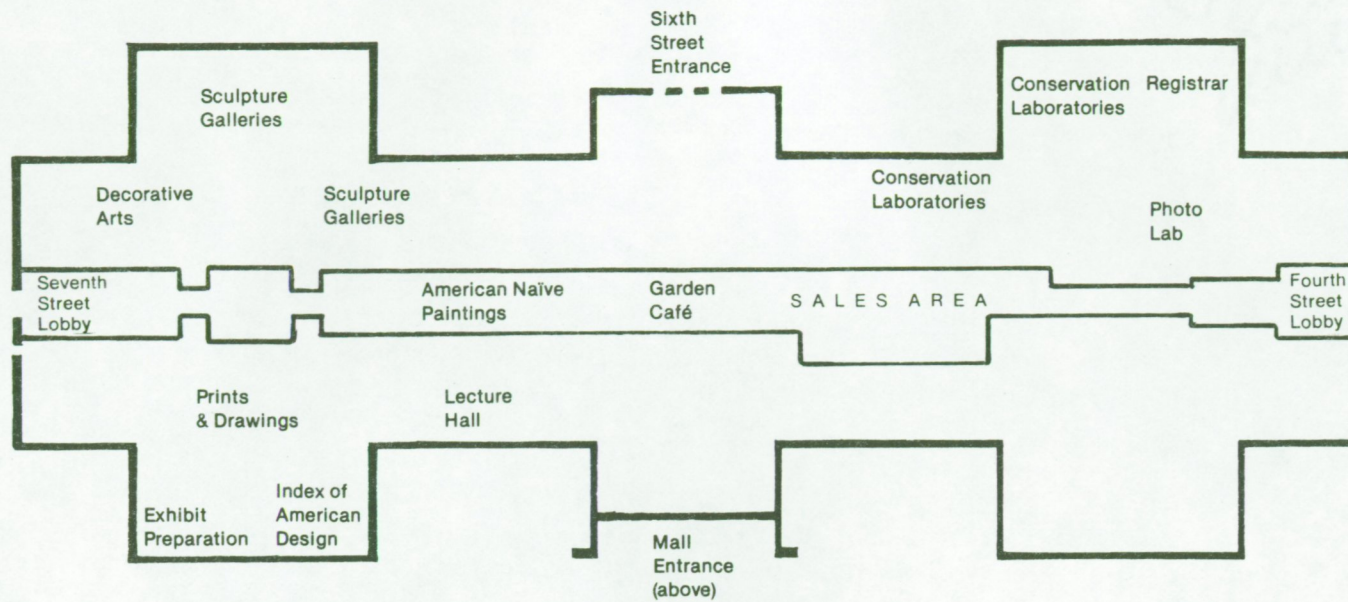


Diagram of the ground floor of the West Building showing Operation Breakthrough