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## NEW WEST BUILDING SCULPTURE GALLERIES PRESENTING 900 WORKS OF ART FROM NINE CENTURIES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2002

Washington, DC--On September 29 the National Gallery of Art will inaugurate new West Building sculpture galleries presenting more than 900 works of art, including masterpieces of sculpture from the Middle Ages through the late 19th and early 20th centuries; 18th-century French decorative arts; and major collections of Renaissance medals and plaquettes, as well as Chinese porcelains. The opening of this suite of 22 galleries and a study room brings to a dramatic close the most extensive renovation project the Gallery has undertaken in the last two decades--a project that fulfills the Gallery's goal of providing enhanced and expanded space for its growing sculpture collection. Encompassing approximately 24,000 square feet, the new suite of galleries occupies the entire northwest quadrant of the West Building ground floor.

The project, made possible through a gift from the Richard King Mellon Foundation in honor of Paul Mellon, took more than four years to complete and included restoration of six galleries, major renovation of ten galleries and a study room, and construction of six new gallery spaces, with some 5,000 square feet added to existing exhibition areas.

"Our designers have created architectural spaces that are ideal for the display of sculpture and the decorative arts," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are very pleased to be able to present such a rich, varied, and growing collection of works from nine centuries in one of the largest spaces dedicated to sculpture in the nation's capital."

## Art Highlights

Highlights of the installation include the 12th-century *Chalice of the Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis*; Leone Battista Alberti's bronze *Self-Portrait* plaque (c. 1435); a distinguished group of Italian Renaissance bronze statuettes, beautifully enhanced by works on loan from the Robert H. Smith Collection; Honoré Daumier's entire bronze sculptural oeuvre, including all 36 of his caricatures of French government officials; a selection of sculptures made by Auguste Rodin for his American patrons, among them his life-size plaster, *The Age of Bronze* (model 1875-1876, cast 1898); and the largest group in the world of the original wax and mixed-media sculptures by Edgar Degas.

## Architectural Highlights

Galleries are proportioned to suit the art on display--intimate rooms house small medieval objects, Renaissance medals, and small bronzes, while an expansive space with a central fountain provides an elegant setting for 16th- and 17th-century works, and a grand columned hall presents 19th- and early 20th-century sculpture. The new system of galleries creates expansive vistas and extends the previous suite of galleries to the Sixth Street entrance, creating a progression from the Gallery's indoor sculpture collection to the Sculpture Garden across Seventh Street. Maximum use is made of the natural light that floods through windows facing north, east, and west.

## The Installation

Visitors entering the new suite of galleries from the museum's Sixth Street entrance are drawn into a small gallery featuring works by Auguste Rodin and Augustus Saint-Gaudens, as well as a didactic display of the lost-wax casting process, donated by the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Collection, and centered on a small bronze designed for Rodin's *Gates of Hell*. From this point visitors move back in time from the 19th century to the Middle Ages, with a slight detour into two galleries housing a selection of early modern sculpture, and conclude their tour at Seventh Street.

In a long, light-filled room accentuated by 14-foot columns, additional Rodin sculptures are on view, including *The Thinker* (model 1880, cast 1901); the marble bust of *Katherine Seney Simpson (Mrs. John W. Simpson)* (1902-1903), his friend and the

founder of the Gallery's great Rodin collection; and the bronze *Head of Balzac* (model 1897, cast probably early 20th century); as well as works by important contemporaries such as Rodin's employer and teacher, Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse, Aimé-Jules Dalou, and Pierre-Eugène-Emile Hébert.

This expansive gallery and an adjoining one also include nearly 50 original wax and mixed-media sculptures by Edgar Degas from Paul Mellon's bequest, including the best known of these, *Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen*. This subject is presented in four versions: the celebrated dressed wax statuette exhibited in 1881, a plaster cast from it, a wax study in the nude of the same figure, and a bronze cast from the latter, installed so that the works are facing one another. Additional original Degas waxes, which are widely known through their posthumous bronzes, include subjects of women bathers and horses, the latter presented along with the artist's oil paintings *Scene from the Steeplechase: The Fallen Jockey* (1866, reworked 1880-1881 and c. 1897) and *Horses in a Meadow* (1871). The Gallery holds the largest collection of Degas wax sculpture in the world, including over two-thirds of the surviving works the artist produced in this medium over a period of approximately 50 years.

Two galleries focus on early modern figure sculpture with reliefs by Aristide Maillol and Elie Nadelman, terracotta studies and bronze portraits by Maillol and Auguste Renoir, sculpture by Paul Gauguin, Wilhelm Lehmbruck's monumental bronze *Standing Woman* (1910, cast 1957), and Paul Manship's bronze groups *Dancer and Gazelles* (1916) and *Diana and a Hound* (1925).

Marius-Jean-Antonin Mercié's beautifully polished and highly detailed *Gloria Victis* (model c. 1874, cast after 1879) is on view in a small rotunda with intricate parquet flooring. This work is flanked by niches housing two Rodin sculptures, *The Age of Bronze* (model 1875-1876, cast 1903-1904) and *The Walking Man* (model 1878-1900, cast probably 1903)--their rough, unpolished surfaces revealing the artist's break from sculptural style popular at the time.

A gallery featuring mid- to late-19th century sculpture includes an installation of Honoré Daumier's entire bronze sculptural oeuvre, including all 36 of his caricatures of French government officials as well as his moving relief *Fugitives (Emigrants)* (model c.

1850/1852, cast 1893) and his sinister *Ratapoil* (model 1851, cast c. 1891). Also on view here are Théodore Géricault's three Flayed Horses, including a wax of c. 1820/1824 and two bronzes cast from it; an important group of bronze animal figures by Antoine-Louis Barye; romantic small bronze images of historical figures; and a sensitive terracotta sketch of a *Mother and Child* (c. 1873) by Dalou.

Works from the late 18th and early 19th century include Antonio Canova's bronze *Winged Victory* (c. 1803/1806), which was designed for the hand of a monumental statue of Napoleon; Jean-Antoine Houdon's plaster bust of *George Washington* (1786/1793); and busts by the great portrait sculptors Joseph Chinard and Pierre-Jean David d'Angers.

Eighteenth-century French furniture, including works by Charles Cressent, Jean-François Leleu, Joseph Baumhauer, and others from the Widener Collection is installed in three refurbished period rooms. The beauty of the carved oak paneling in the center room, with its curved forms and foliate patterns, reflects the taste of France under Louis XV. A delicate lady's writing table by Jean-Henri Riesener is also on view. This inlaid desk with gilded metal fittings was listed in the 1784 royal inventories of the Tuileries Palace as part of the furniture in the queen's apartment. It was in these rooms that Marie-Antoinette was imprisoned for a time during the French Revolution.

In a long, vaulted gallery illuminated by the light of a row of windows are 16th- and early-17th-century bronzes on loan from Robert H. Smith, president of the National Gallery of Art. These sculptures are grouped around a fountain graced by *Venus and Cupid* (c. 1575/1580), by a follower of the great 16th-century sculptor Giovanni Bologna.

The next suite of galleries features small works in ivory, wax, and metal from the 16th through the 18th centuries; north Italian sculpture of the early 16th century in bronze; and 15th- and 16th-century Italian sculpture in bronze, marble, and clay. Highlights in these galleries include medals of the Italian, English, and Dutch baroque, as well as those of the French ancien régime; elegant 16th-century Italian portraits of ladies; German and Flemish plaquettes; Riccio's great bronze relief of *The Entombment*, as well as bronzes by Riccio and his Paduan contemporaries, such as Severo da Ravenna's *Neptune on a Sea Monster*. Also on view are a central Italian bronze *She-Wolf*

*Suckling Romulus and Remus*, Andrea del Verrocchio's unfired clay *Putto Poised on a Globe* (probably 1480), and a Venetian marble *Allegorical Figure* (c. 1485) attributed to Pietro Lombardo.

In a small vaulted room reminiscent of a chamber in a Renaissance palace, a display of rare books on sculpture is featured. This gallery presents a series of changing installations selected from the Gallery's collection of rare books. A cabinet-like room houses Renaissance medals displayed in classically detailed freestanding wooden cases that allow visitors to see these objects from both sides. Plaquettes in the same room will be installed in cases under the windows. For appointments to see the study collection of medals and plaquettes researchers should call (202) 842-6093.

Intimate galleries have been designed to display other small works of art, including Chinese porcelains, primarily from the Qing Dynasty of the 17th to 19th centuries from the Widener Collection; Renaissance maiolica (brilliantly painted tin glazed earthenware); a pair of early 16th-century Florentine *Annunciation* stained-glass windows; the Gallery's newly acquired Holy Kinship Altarpiece, a 15th-century German polychromed and gilded wood relief; and furniture, church vessels, and tapestries from the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, including an ancient sardonyx chalice in a 12th-century jeweled and silver-gilt setting--the masterpiece of the Gallery's collection of medieval art--as well as the 16th-century Flemish tapestry *The Triumph of Christ* ("*The Mazarin Tapestry*").

### **Architectural and Design Considerations**

The renovation and construction of these new galleries involved adding classical moldings and other architectural elements, raising the ceilings, and in some cases uncovering previously blocked windows to create airy, vaulted spaces. Care was taken to create harmony between the new suite of galleries and the existing exhibition spaces in the West Building, which were designed by the building's architect John Russell Pope. The oak flooring in the sculpture galleries is similar to that appearing elsewhere in the building; marble base moldings replicate those used in the building's original galleries; and freestanding columns are of the same Doric order as those in the Garden Courts on the main floor. Incorporated in the redesigned spaces are many of the same

wall finishes as those used in the building's French, English, and Italian painting galleries. Richly glazed walls in subtle earthen hues, quiet greens, and varying shades of gray echo those in the rooms on the floor above.

The galleries are a careful blend of the old and the new. Large bronze-latticed windows in the space were retained, but their original panes were replaced with laminated glass panels that block ultraviolet light and reduce heat transfer. The indirect northern light from these windows, ideal for illuminating works of sculpture, was augmented with small low-voltage light fixtures. Outside, in an area enclosed by a marble wall, gardens have been planted where the Gallery's greenhouses once stood. Their greenery is visible from the galleries within.

The original plans for the West Building called for sculpture to be installed on the main floor in two large barrel-vaulted halls on either side of the Rotunda and in smaller peripheral galleries. In keeping with these plans, sculpture will continue to be exhibited on the main floor.

### **Project and Curatorial Team**

Manfred Leithe-Jasper, visiting senior curator of sculpture, worked with the designers in the installation of the art, chiefly assisted by Alison Luchs, curator of early European sculpture. Nicholas Penny, newly appointed senior curator of sculpture, participated in the final phase of installation.

Design and installation was carried out by Gallery chief of design Mark Leithauser, deputy chief of design Gordon Anson, and the department of design staff. Overall construction was supervised by Darrell Willson, Gallery administrator and Susan Wertheim, assistant to the administrator for capital projects. New gardens were designed by the Gallery chief of horticulture Don Hand and installed by Gallery horticultural staff.

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## 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 along 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 be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit [www.nga.gov/renovation](http://www.nga.gov/renovation) (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

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