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The Circle of the National Gallery of Art Celebrates 20 Years of Giving

Washington, DC -- The Circle of the National Gallery of Art, a national philanthropic group with 1,100 members, is celebrating its 20th anniversary this fall. Since its founding in 1986, The Circle has raised more than \$30 million through annual gifts to fund art acquisitions, special exhibitions, conservation, scholarly and scientific research, films, publications, symposia, and other educational and outreach programs.

The Circle will commemorate its 20th anniversary with a gala event, curatorial presentations, and a viewing of the current exhibition **Constable's Great Landscapes: The Six-Foot Paintings**.

"The generous and enthusiastic support of Circle members over the years enables us to collect, conserve, and exhibit important works of art, and to reach out to diverse audiences in exciting new ways," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "The Circle is also a way for people to be involved and to make a real commitment to the mission of the Gallery to preserve, expand, and exhibit the Gallery's collection and make it more accessible through educational and outreach programs and publications."

Among the 30 works of art acquired through the years with funds from The Circle are Wayne Thiebaud's *Cakes* (1963) and Martin Johnson Heade's *Giant Magnolias on a Blue Velvet Cloth* (c.1890). Leonardo da Vinci's *Ginevra de' Benci* (c.1474/1478)—the only painting by the master in the Western Hemisphere—and all four of the Gallery's Johannes Vermeer paintings have period frames made possible by Circle funds. The Circle has funded many conservation endeavors, including the conservation of Jan van Eyck's masterpiece, *The Annunciation* (c. 1434/1436). Circle funds have also

supported participants in the education division's summer Teacher Institute and Minority Internship Program, and organizational costs for the 1989 National Docent Symposium, as well as numerous public programs, including the 1999 Duke Ellington Orchestra jazz concert in celebration of the opening of the Sculpture Garden.

The Circle was founded by major Gallery donors Robert H. Smith, a Washington developer and National Gallery of Art trustee emeritus, and the late Katharine Graham, longtime publisher of The Washington Post. Current Circle co-chairs are Mary Jo Kirk, a real estate broker from Washington Fine Properties, and Edward J. Mathias, managing director of The Carlyle Group, both in Washington, DC. Past co-chairs are Juliet C. Folger, David O. Maxwell, and Marina K. French.

Growing from 83 members in its first year to 1,100 today, The Circle brings together individuals from a range of backgrounds across the United States who share an appreciation for the arts and a personal commitment to enhancing the nation's gallery. Members come from 29 states and the District of Columbia.

"Membership in The Circle is a fabulous way to actively appreciate great art and learn about the workings of a world-class and influential institution, while supporting its mission. Thanks to the leadership of outstanding co-chairs through the years, The Circle is poised to expand its membership and increase contributions to the Gallery for generations to come," said Vicki Sant, president of the Gallery and past Circle member with her husband Roger Sant.

"Becoming a Circle member was a daunting prospect for me," said David M. Frost of Silver Spring, MD. "I was a government lawyer at the beginning of my career—hardly the stuff of which philanthropists are made! I remember sitting in one of the West Building galleries to think it over, and then making one of my best decisions. In making my small gifts to the Gallery I have discovered that some of the 'stuff of which philanthropists are made' may be found in all of us."

Annual Circle memberships start at \$1,000 a year and are tax deductible. To learn more about The Circle, visit www.nga.gov/support (<http://www.nga.gov/support>) or contact The Circle office at (202) 842-6450.

The National Gallery of Art, which opened in 1941 as a gift to the nation from industrialist, public servant, philanthropist, and art collector Andrew W. Mellon, is open to all visitors free of charge. Located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, the public hours are 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. 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 (<http://www.nga.gov/index.htm>).

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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>) .

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. Follow the Gallery on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on [Twitter](http://twitter.com/ngadc) at 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.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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