

Release Date: October 17, 2007

Final Celebrations at the National Gallery of Art in Washington and at Windsor Castle Mark the Centenary of Paul Mellon's Birth



The Choir of St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle

Washington, DC—The 100th anniversary of the birth of Paul Mellon (1907–1999), founder and benefactor of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, will be commemorated on both sides of the Atlantic this autumn, bringing to a close the year-long celebration of his life.

On October 25, the Choir of St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle will perform at 3:00 p.m. in the East Garden Court of the West Building, in front of the entrance to the *J.M.W. Turner* exhibition. The leading British artist of his era, Turner was one of Paul Mellon's favorite painters. The 15-minute choral performance is the final event at the National Gallery of Art in honor of the centenary.

On November 10 at 5:15 p.m., Paul Mellon's life will be celebrated during evensong

service at St. George's Chapel. Evensong is a set of evening prayers sung within the Anglican church, and Gothic St. George's provides the historical backdrop for the ceremony. King Edward III founded the community at St. George's in 1348, and King Edward IV built the present chapel in 1475.

Paul Mellon and Anglophilia

Paul Mellon's mother was English and his collection included British art, especially British sporting art. In his memoir, *Reflections in a Silver Spoon*, Mellon suggested that his Anglophilia emerged during his first visit to England with his parents, when he was baptized in St. George's Chapel on December 22, 1907. He fondly described the days leading up to this event:

"[My parents] found themselves one day with the Dean of Windsor, and it came up in conversation that I had not been baptized. The Dean, horrified that an infant had crossed the Atlantic not having received baptism, offered to perform the ceremony himself in St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle...I was baptized in the historic surroundings of this famous building, scene of many royal baptisms, weddings, and funerals, which houses the remains of the kings of England and their consorts over hundreds of years. I have always felt conscious of this singular privilege, as if the ceremony somehow foreshadowed my later addiction to English life and English places."

Paul Mellon and the National Gallery of Art

When National Gallery of Art founder Andrew Mellon died in 1937, only months after the Gallery had been approved by Congress, his 30-year-old son Paul saw the museum to completion. In 1941, Paul Mellon presented the building and his father's collection of art to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who accepted it on behalf of the American people. Paul Mellon watched over and nurtured the museum's growth from a single grand building to a mature institution with two monumental structures, a sculpture garden, and a world-class collection. He generously contributed funds for acquisitions, education, archives, and the Gallery's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts. The East

Building was constructed entirely with funds provided by Paul Mellon, his beloved sister Ailsa Mellon Bruce, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Some 1,027 works of art given by Paul Mellon and his wife Bunny form an extraordinary legacy. They include many great paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by such major artists as George Stubbs, J.M.W. Turner, Camille Pissarro, Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Winslow Homer, Paul Cézanne, Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, George Seurat, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri Matisse, George Bellows, and Alexander Calder.

Paul Mellon's gift of 49 waxes, ten bronzes, and two plasters by Degas helped to make the Gallery the home of the largest group of original Degas sculptures in the world. Mellon also gave the Gallery some 350 paintings of American Indians by George Catlin.

###

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:

Press Office

National Gallery of Art

2000B South Club Drive

Landover, MD 20785

phone: (202) 842-6353 e-mail: pressinfo@nga.gov

Deborah Ziska

Chief of Press and Public Information

(202) 842-6353

ds-ziska@nga.gov