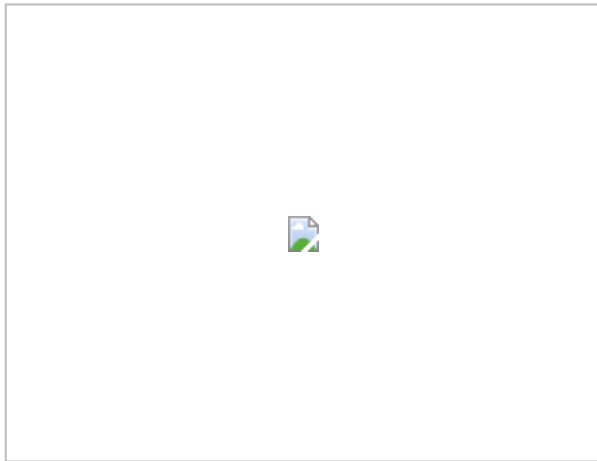


Release Date: January 16, 2009

Abraham Lincoln's 200th Birthday is Celebrated by National Gallery of Art

Focus Exhibition on View for One Year Starting February 12, 2009; The Shaw Memorial and American Galleries are Back on View



Detail of the six-foot plaster model (1916) of Abraham Lincoln by Daniel Chester French (1850–1831), for the Lincoln Memorial unveiled in 1922. Collection of Chesterwood, a National Trust Historic Site, Stockbridge, MA.

Photo by Jerry L. Thompson, 2004. Courtesy Chesterwood, a National Trust Historic Site, Stockbridge, MA.

Washington, DC—On the occasion of the 200th anniversary celebration of President Abraham Lincoln's birthday, the National Gallery of Art will present a one-year focus exhibition, *Designing the Lincoln Memorial: Daniel Chester French and Henry Bacon*, on view in the West Building, Main Floor, starting February 12, 2009. The installation features the six-foot-high plaster final model of the most renowned Lincoln statue by American sculptor Daniel Chester French (1850–1931), as designed for the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall, and the original wood model of the Lincoln Memorial by American architect Henry Bacon (1866–1924).

The works will be accompanied by life-size photobanners of the actual Lincoln

sculpture and a watercolor of the *East Elevation of the Lincoln Memorial* by Jules Guerin (who executed the murals in the Memorial), as well as informative, illustrated text panels addressing the making of the statue and the memorial, the careers of French and Bacon, and the role the Lincoln Memorial has played in American life. Nearby, Augustus Saint-Gaudens' *Memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the Massachusetts Fifty-fourth Regiment* and the American paintings galleries are returning to public view after nearly two years of Gallery renovations.

"The Lincoln Memorial inspires American citizens and people from all over the world every day," said Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery of Art. "It is our hope that visitors to the Gallery's installation will gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for the dedication, skill, and collaborative effort invested in the creation of the magisterial and deeply moving memorial to our sixteenth President on the National Mall."

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art.

The exhibition is made possible by the generous support of Robert H. Smith.

The National Gallery of Art is grateful to the National Trust for Historic Preservation and to Chesterwood for the loan of the Lincoln model, which has not traveled since it went on tour in a retrospective of French's work in 1976–1977. Chesterwood, French's country home, studio, and garden in Stockbridge, MA, is a National Trust Historic Site and a National and Massachusetts Historic Landmark. It is open to the public from May 1 through October 31.

The Gallery is also grateful to the Fine Arts Program, Public Buildings Service, U.S. General Services Administration for the loan of the architectural model that was used by Henry Bacon to bolster his entry in the design competition for the memorial. Bacon's design, inspired by the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, was executed in white marble and limestone between 1914 and 1922 on the National Mall.

Daniel Chester French, The Sculptor

Daniel Chester French was born in 1850 in Exeter, NH, as the youngest of four children,

to Anne Richardson and Henry Flagg French, a lawyer. He received early art training from Abigail May Alcott, the sister of the author Louisa May Alcott, in Concord, MA. He pursued further studies with New York sculptor John Quincy Adams Ward and Boston physician and artist Dr. William Rimmer. While French was in Europe, his first commission, *The Minute Man*, was unveiled in Concord on April 19, 1875, before a crowd that included President Grant, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. In 1876, after his father became assistant U.S. Treasury secretary, French set up a studio in Washington, DC, and also worked in New York.

From early on, French's figures demonstrated a keen sense of animation, power, and inner spirit. He collaborated with a team of artists, including renowned American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens on sculptures for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. Beginning in 1898, French and his wife, Mary Adams French, spent long summers at Chesterwood, in Stockbridge, MA, where French executed many of his commissions, including the Lincoln statue. In late October it was their habit to return to New York, where he also worked.

In 1914, French was selected by the Lincoln Memorial Committee to create the Lincoln statue as part of the memorial to be designed by Henry Bacon; French was also Bacon's personal choice as a collaborator. French resigned his chairmanship of the Fine Arts Commission in Washington, DC, a group closely affiliated with the memorial's design and creation, and he undertook this new mission with gratitude and purpose in December 1914.

Throughout his prolific career French would produce not only sensitive portraits (some imagined of historical figures such as *John Harvard*), but also allegorical figures that brilliantly personified the values of the age. In the post-Civil War era of public monuments and city beautification, his extraordinary skills were in high demand. At the time of his death in 1931, French was universally recognized as America's foremost sculptor.

Evolution of the Lincoln Statue

French's studies of Lincoln, through biographies, photographs, and the famous life-

mask taken by Leonard Volk in 1860, provided a framework for his first statue of the standing *Abraham Lincoln*, created for the Nebraska State Capitol in 1911–1912. For the national memorial, he and Bacon decided that a seated figure would be required. French began with a small clay study and subsequently created several plaster models, each time making subtle changes in the figure's pose or setting. He placed the President not in an ordinary 19th-century seat, but in a ceremonial, classical chair composed of fasces, a Roman symbol of unity, to convey that the subject was an eminence for all the ages. He paid special attention to the President's expressive hands, using casts of his own to achieve the correct placement of the fingers.

Through his considerable refinements and innate grasp of Lincoln's humanity, French was able to produce a figure of enormous gravity and sympathy. The second of French's plasters, the example created at Chesterwood in the summer of 1916 (inscribed Oct. 31) and featured in the National Gallery of Art installation, would be further enlarged and finally became the basis of the colossal marble.

To determine the optimum scale for the memorial statue French and the architect took photographic enlargements of the statue to the memorial under construction and determined that the figure should be approximately 19 feet in height and the pedestal below it another 11 feet. French's longtime collaborator, the firm of Piccirilli Brothers, was employed to do the carving. It took a full year for French's design to be transferred to 28 massive marble blocks. He provided finishing strokes in the carvers' studio in New York and after the statue was assembled in the memorial on the National Mall in Washington, DC, which is also the home of some 14 monuments, statues, and portrait busts by the sculptor.

The Architect: Henry Bacon

In choosing Daniel Chester French to execute the statue, the Lincoln Memorial Commission was following the recommendation of the architect Henry Bacon, who at this point in his career had been collaborating with French for nearly 25 years. Bacon, in fact, had designed the base for French's sculpture of Lincoln at the State Capitol in Lincoln, NE, and would work with him to create the graceful *Samuel F. Dupont Memorial* (1917–1921), the grand fountain in the center of Dupont Circle, a familiar

sight for Washingtonians.

From the earliest stages Bacon, who as a young architect worked for the famous firm of McKim, Mead, and White, envisioned a classical, colonnaded structure with three inner chambers, inscriptions included on its interior walls, and a sculpture of Lincoln at its center. The setting in Potomac Park, on an axis with the U.S. Capitol and the Washington Monument, was designated in 1911. The placement is laden with meaning, as it overlooks the Potomac River to Virginia and recalls Lincoln's role as the preserver of the Union.

Bacon provided further symbolism in his design by adding 36 columns for the 36 states at the time of Lincoln's presidency (plus two additional columns at the entryway), topped by a frieze with the names of these 36 states and their dates of statehood. Above it would rise the attic bearing the names of 48 states, the number at the time of the memorial's completion. Bacon's plan included the choice of inscriptions of the Gettysburg and Second Inaugural Addresses, capped by murals illustrating the qualities of "Emancipation" and "Reunion." These were executed by Jules Guerin (1866–1946). Bacon demonstrated an extraordinary measure of devotion to the project, traveling to Washington to visit the site hundreds of times and overseeing each detail for months, even before the time of his formal commission in 1913 and until the memorial's dedication on May 30, 1922.

Augustus Saint-Gaudens and the

Memorial to Colonel Shaw and the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment

Near the Lincoln Memorial installation in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art, one of the greatest works of 19th-century American sculpture has returned to public view after some 18 months of renovations in the American galleries. The *Memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the Massachusetts Fifty-fourth Regiment* is on a long-term renewable loan to the Gallery from the National Park Service, Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, Cornish, NH.

Created by the preeminent sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907), a friend and colleague of Daniel Chester French, the relief masterfully depicts Colonel Shaw

and the first African American infantry unit from the North to fight for the Union during the Civil War. The memorial, which had been on display since 1959 in an outdoor pavilion at the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, underwent restoration in Boston before it was installed in the National Gallery of Art in 1997.

The monumental plaster, measuring nearly 15 feet high, 18 feet wide, and three feet deep is accompanied by rare and early plaster sketches of the memorial, the angel, and six portrait heads of African American soldiers by Saint-Gaudens.

American Galleries Reopen

American paintings—more than one thousand—constitute by far the largest holding of any single school in the National Gallery of Art. All fourteen of the American galleries holding some 150 paintings that date from the 18th century to the early 20th century will return to public view later this spring. During the period of renovations, major works from this collection have been included in a special installation— *Crosscurrents: American and European Masterpieces from the Permanent Collection*—in the West Building Ground Floor galleries.

Currently seven American galleries have reopened. Highlights on display are the recently cleaned painting *New York* (1911) by George Bellows (1882–1925); *Allies Day, May 1917* (1917) by Childe Hassam (1859–1935); *Breezing Up (A Fair Wind)* (1873–1876) by Winslow Homer (1836–1910); *El Rio de Luz (The River of Light)* (1877) by Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900); and *The Voyage of Life* (1842), a set of four paintings by Thomas Cole (1801–1848).

In time for the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States, the Gallery has also installed the Gibbs-Coolidge Set of Presidential Portraits by American artist Gilbert Stuart (1755–1828) in gallery 65. These iconic images of the first five presidents—George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe—have come to define how the nation remembers and pictures these famous men. They will be on view with other fine examples of Stuart's American portraits from the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

When all the American galleries reopen, additional American masterpieces will include

Watson and the Shark (1778) by John Singleton Copley (1738–1815); *Lake Lucerne* (1858) by Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902); *The Old Violin* (1886) by William Michael Harnett (1848–1892); and *Symphony in White, No. 1 The White Girl* (1862) by James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903).

Related Programs

Film Documentary: *Augustus Saint-Gaudens: Master of American Sculpture*

Thursday, February 12, 12:30 p.m.

Sunday, February 15, 12:00 noon

East Building Auditorium

First come, first seated

A new feature documentary film on the great American sculptor whose major works include the Standing Lincoln in Chicago and the Shaw Memorial in Boston will be shown. Paul Sanderson, the film's producer, director, and writer, will present introductory remarks on *Augustus Saint-Gaudens: Master of American Sculpture*, on Sunday, February 15, 12:00 noon (length: 74 minutes).

Choral Festival of Early American Song

East Garden Court, West Building

Regional groups perform songs written in America prior to 1900 or later arrangements of tunes popular up to 1900:

April 17, 1:30 p.m. National Men's Chorus, Washington, DC

April 17, 3:30 p.m. Columbia Union Choir, Takoma Park, MD

April 18, 1:30 p.m. Master Singers of Virginia, Fairfax, VA

April 18, 3:30 p.m. Greater South Jersey Chorus, NJ

April 19, 1:30 p.m. Central Bucks High School West Choir, Lewistown, PA

April 19, 3:30 p.m. Eighteenth Street Singers, Washington, DC

Gallery Talk: Augustus Saint-Gaudens' *Memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the Massachusetts Fifty-fourth Regiment*

February 9–22, 12:00 noon, daily

Meet in Rotunda, Ground Floor, West Building

This talk offers an in-depth discussion of the accomplishments of one of the first regiments of African American men to fight in the cause of freedom and the preservation of the Union under President Lincoln, as depicted by Saint-Gaudens, America's renowned sculptor of the 19th century.

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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 at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter 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