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**Recent Conservation Reveals Morse’s Experimentations**

Washington, DC—The renowned painting *Gallery of the Louvre* (1831–1833) by American inventor Samuel F. B. Morse (1791–1872) has been recently conserved and will be on view in a focus exhibition at the National Gallery of Art near the East Garden Court of the West Building. On loan from the Terra Foundation for American Art from June 25, 2011, through July 8, 2012, the painting depicts masterpieces from the Louvre's collection that Morse "reinstalled" in one of that museum's grandest galleries, the Salon Carré. *A New Look: Samuel F. B. Morse's "Gallery of the Louvre"* was previously on view at Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, from March 1 through June 12, 2011.

"The *Gallery of the Louvre* will not only enable visitors to learn more about the artistic accomplishments of Morse, best known for his inventions, and will further their understanding of his greatest painting and its historical importance," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are delighted to include it in our
series of special installations focused on an iconic American work."

**Support and Organization**

The exhibition is made possible by the generous support of the Terra Foundation for American Art and is organized in partnership with the National Gallery of Art.

"It is a wonderful tribute to Morse’s ambitious undertaking that his *Gallery of the Louvre* is on view at the National Gallery of Art in our nation’s capital. Morse had an unwavering belief in the power of art to foster cultural pride, yet the masterpiece he completed nearly 200 years ago was the result of a transatlantic effort," stated Elizabeth Glassman, president and chief executive officer, Terra Foundation for American Art. "Painted in Paris and New York, *Gallery of the Louvre* truly embodies our international mission. The foundation is committed to sharing its distinguished collection in an effort to stimulate cross-cultural dialogue and exchange on American art. For more than one year, the painting will reside at the National Gallery of Art, linking its excellent collections of American and European masterworks."

**Gallery of the Louvre**

Morse envisioned the Salon Carré as a workshop where individuals study, sketch, and copy from an imagined assemblage of the Louvre’s finest works, including paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Veronese, Caravaggio, Rubens, Van Dyck, and Watteau. Many of these artists are also represented on the Main Floor in the National Gallery of Art’s own collection; their works are on view nearby in the West Building.

In 1830, during a brief visit to the Louvre, Morse may have conceived a plan to paint one large picture containing reduced versions of the masterpieces of the collection. Morse’s *Gallery* had a number of precedents, including Johann Zoffany’s famed *The Tribuna of the Uffizi* (1772–1778, Royal Collection, Windsor Castle). And Morse’s idea of depicting the Salon Carré, one of the Louvre’s grandest spaces, follows in the vein of Hubert Robert’s painting *Project for the Transformation of the Grande Galerie of the Louvre* (1796, Louvre). But when Morse returned to the Louvre in 1831 to begin the project, he was disappointed to find the Salon Carré hung with contemporary French paintings, as depicted in Nicolas-Sébastien Maillot’s *Salon Carré du Louvre in 1831* (1831, Louvre). Morse therefore replaced them with
masterpieces from the Louvre's Grande Galerie, and he featured its entrance in his final composition.

Executed in Paris and New York, the *Gallery of the Louvre* was intended to inspire and inform American audiences. Morse's selection of old master paintings was guided by the teachings of his mentors, the taste of his patrons, and his own ideals as an artist-instructor. These pictures also illustrate various approaches to the treatment of light, color, line, and composition—topics that Morse addressed in his lectures at the National Academy of Design in New York.

Morse depicted himself at the center in the role of teacher, leaning over his daughter as she sketches. He also included friend and author James Fenimore Cooper at left with his wife and daughter. Nearby, the artist copying an unidentified landscape is thought to be Richard W. Habersham, one of Morse's colleagues in Paris. Exiting the gallery are a woman and little girl dressed in provincial costumes, suggesting the broad appeal of the Louvre and the educational benefits it afforded.

Morse exhibited the *Gallery* first in New York City during the fall of 1833 and again the following spring in New Haven. Highly praised by critics and a few connoisseurs, this type of picture with little narrative interest was rejected by the public. Crushed by the response, he sold the *Gallery* and its frame for $1,300 to George Hyde Clarke, a wealthy New York landowner and relative of Cooper's. Morse soon ceased painting altogether, moving on to his successful experiments with the daguerreotype, telegraph, and Morse code.

In an effort to educate his American audience, Morse published *Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures...from the Most Celebrated Masters, Copied into the "Gallery of the Louvre"* in 1833, which included identifications of the works of art that he depicted. A brochure written by Peter John Brownlee, associate curator at the Terra Foundation, accompanies the exhibition and includes an updated version of Morse's key to the art, reflecting current scholarship. Although Morse never named the people represented in his painting, this key also includes possible identities for some of them.

**Recent Conservation**

The recent conservation of the painting has revealed that the technical construction
of Morse’s *Gallery* was no less complex than its composition. Following the example of his mentor Washington Allston, Morse experimented with various painting media and used the Titian-inspired technique of applying glazes—thin layers of translucent mixtures of oil and pigment—to achieve the richness of coloring as well as the exquisite modeling of figures within the paintings depicted in the Gallery.

But Morse also mixed resinous materials with his pigments to approximate the deep tonal qualities of the old master paintings represented and added varnishes to expedite the drying process. Unfortunately, damage caused by these materials, combined with the stress of rolling the canvas for transport from Paris to New York, necessitated extensive repairs that the artist probably undertook himself prior to showing the work publicly. Thus, he was both the painting’s creator and first conservator.

**Samuel F. B. Morse (1791–1872)**

Known today primarily for his role in the development of the telegraph, Samuel F. B. Morse began his career as a painter. Born in Charlestown, Massachusetts, he attended Yale University, graduated in 1810, and moved to Boston. There he became the private pupil and friend of the painter Washington Allston, who introduced him to a traditional program of study that encompassed drawing, anatomy, and art theory. With Allston’s encouragement, Morse went to London, where he met Benjamin West and was accepted as a student at the Royal Academy of Arts. Morse’s first major painting there, *The Dying Hercules* (1812–1813, Yale University Art Gallery), earned high praise.

Returning home in 1815, full of optimism and national pride, Morse confronted an artistic climate unfavorably disposed to history painting in the grand manner and was forced to turn to portrait painting for financial support. Throughout the late 1810s and 1820s, he painted portraits of clients in cities and towns along the Atlantic seaboard. His practice as a portraitist and his ambitions to advance a strong national art came together in his first great picture, *The House of Representatives*, which he toured as a single-painting exhibition to modest, though ultimately unsatisfying, critical and popular response.

In 1826, Morse was elected the first president of the National Academy of Design, a
New York institution he had helped establish. Later that year, in a series of lectures he delivered at the New-York Athenaeum, he argued that "it is the principal aim of painting to excite the Imagination by visible reproduction of natural objects" and other phenomena observable in nature. To put this theory into practice, the painter used the tools of line and color. Skill in drawing and composition could be honed at institutions such as the National Academy, while excellence in the application of color came with copying the works of the old masters, which also provided much-needed income.

American artists such as West, John Singleton Copley, and John Trumbull had often supplemented their incomes by painting copies of works by Renaissance and baroque artists, usually as commissions for private patrons. Morse also executed copies on commission, fulfilling numerous requests for reproductions of works by Titian, Rubens, Poussin, Murillo, and others. Such works funded Morse's studies abroad between 1829 and 1832—a trip that culminated in the monumental painting Gallery of the Louvre.

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

Public Programs and Activities at the National Gallery of Art Celebrate *A New Look: Samuel F. B. Morse's "Gallery Of The Louvre"

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art, Washington, plans a variety of offerings in conjunction with its presentation of *A New Look: Samuel F. B. Morse's "Gallery of the Louvre,*" on view at the Gallery from June 25, 2011 through July 8, 2012. In his monumental canvas, completed in 1833 and recently conserved, Morse depicted the Salon Carré, one of the Louvre's grandest spaces, where art students learn by studying masterpieces of the past. The lectures, gallery talks, symposium, teacher workshop, and other exhibition-related resources examine the works he chose to depict in his composition, as well as the concept of museums as places for study.

Unless otherwise noted, all programs are offered free of charge, with admission on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Lecture Programs and Symposium**

**Peter John Brownlee**, associate curator, Terra Foundation for American Art, presents a lecture titled *A New Look: Samuel F. B. Morse's "Gallery of the Louvre,*" at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 9. In a program coordinated with and supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art, author and historian **David McCullough** presents a lecture on his new book *The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris* at 3:30 p.m. on Monday, September 26. A book signing follows his talk. In the spring of 2012, the Gallery hosts scholars for a public symposium titled *Samuel F. B. Morse's "Gallery of the Louvre" in Its International Context*. All lectures are presented in the East Building Auditorium.
Gallery Talks

Public tours focusing on Morse's painting will be given by the adult programs department of the education division. For additional times and topics, please consult the bimonthly calendar of events or the Gallery Talks section of the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov/programs/galtalks.

A New Look: Samuel F. B. Morse's Gallery of the Louvre

July 19, 20, 21 at 1:00 p.m.
August 23, 24, 25 at 1:00 p.m.
September 7, 8, 14, 15 at 2:00 p.m.
West Building, Rotunda
Eric Denker, senior lecturer, National Gallery of Art
(30 mins.)

Teacher Workshop

The Artist in the Museum

Morse depicted an ideal world where art students learn by studying masterpieces of the past. Following this tradition, this workshop offers the opportunity to sketch great works of art in the National Gallery of Art. Ranging from novice level to advanced, exercises can be adapted for use at school. This workshop is open to those interested in sharpening their observation skills.
February 4, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.
February 18, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.
Fee: $10

To register, please visit the Teacher Workshops section of the Gallery's website at http://www.nga.gov/education/teacher.shtm.

Exhibition Film

A New Look: Samuel F. B. Morse's "Gallery of the Louvre"

A documentary video on the extensive six-month conservation treatment of the Gallery of the Louvre will be presented at the Gallery during the exhibition. Featuring interviews with conservators, curators, and other specialists, this 30-minute film shares new information about the painting—from the experimental
techniques and materials Morse employed in his composition to how his methods, along with the rigors of transatlantic travel, caused damage to the work that necessitated repairs most likely made by Morse himself before the painting’s first public exhibition. The video is produced by Sandpail Productions for the Terra Foundation for American Art.

**Exhibition Brochure**

A brochure written by Peter John Brownlee, associate curator at the Terra Foundation, accompanies the exhibition and includes an updated version of Morse’s key to the art, which Morse originally published in 1833 under the title *Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures...from the Most Celebrated Masters, Copied into the “Gallery of the Louvre.”* Although Morse never named the people represented in his painting, this key also includes possible identities for some of them, reflecting current scholarship.

**About the Exhibition**

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For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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About the Terra Foundation for American Art

The Terra Foundation for American Art and the National Gallery of Art have collaborated to present *A New Look: Samuel F. B. Morse’s Gallery of the Louvre* to audiences in Washington, D.C. Morse's iconic painting is a signature work in the Terra Foundation's collection and recently underwent extensive conservation treatment, which revealed many new insights into the canvas and Morse's working methods. These are documented in a 30-minute video featuring interviews with conservators, curators, and other specialists. For more than a year, the newly conserved *Gallery of the Louvre* will be on view at the National Gallery of Art and will be the subject of specialized programs that take a new look at the painting, its creation, and its role as a catalyst for transatlantic dialogue.

The Terra Foundation for American Art was established in 1978 by businessman, art collector, and cultural ambassador Daniel J. Terra (1911–1996) who thought the art of the United States was a dynamic and powerful expression of the nation's history and identity. Ambassador Terra also believed that engagement with original works of art was a transformative experience, and throughout his lifetime he worked to share his collection of American art. Today, the Terra Foundation's collection comprises more than 700 objects, and it continues to grow through acquisitions and gifts. The foundation works to ensure its collection is accessible: it creates focused shows featuring its collection for public exhibition; maintains a comprehensive database of the collection online; and lends artworks to exhibitions around the globe.

In addition to special loans and exhibitions from its collection, such as *A New Look: Samuel F. B. Morse’s Gallery of the Louvre*, the Terra Foundation supports worldwide study and presentation of historical art of the United States through grants, initiatives, partnerships, and other resources. To date, its expansive grant program has awarded close to $30 million to support more than 350 programs in over 90 countries. The foundation has made it a priority to create an international dialogue that is lively and relevant: it encourages new perspectives that interpret American art in dynamic ways and makes opportunities for engagement that resonate with individuals around the globe. From offices in Chicago and Paris, Terra Foundation staff continues to build on the founding mission set by Ambassador Terra: working to bring American art to the world and the world to American art. For more information on the foundation's collection, activities, and opportunities for support, please visit www.terraamericanart.org.
A New Look
Samuel F. B. Morse's
Gallery of the Louvre

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
JULY 5, 2013 - JULY 8, 2013

The exhibition is made possible by the generous support of the Evans Foundation for American Art and is organized in partnership with the Metropolitan Museum of Art.