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\$10 Million Grant Received by National Gallery of Art from the Walton Family Foundation to Establish John Wilmerding Fund for Education in American Art



John Wilmerding. Photo credit: Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art announced today a \$10 million grant from the Walton Family Foundation to establish the John Wilmerding Fund for Education in American Art. Named for the Gallery's retired curator, deputy director, trustee, and chairman, the John Wilmerding Fund will support programs with a broad focus on American art, celebrating Wilmerding's immeasurable contributions to the field. This generous grant coincides with the National Gallery of Art's 75th anniversary in 2016.

"John is one of the nation's pre-eminent American art scholars and was our senior curator of American art, and in 2004 he promised his renowned collection of 19th-century American paintings. The Wilmerding Fund will significantly strengthen the Gallery's efforts to engage our visitors and expand our reach to new audiences in educating them about this country's rich artistic heritage," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "The Gallery extends its deep gratitude to Alice Walton and the Walton Family Foundation for this remarkable tribute to John Wilmerding and his distinguished service to the nation."

"Through John's efforts at the National Gallery of Art, there has been a renewed interest in American artists and their work," said Alice Walton, Walton Family Foundation board member. "The contributions he has made have reached countless visitors at the Gallery, and it is my hope that through this fund, a new generation will be inspired to appreciate – and create – American art."

John Wilmerding Fund for Education in American Art

The John Wilmerding Fund for Education in American Art will enable the Gallery to expand and diversify its local, national, and international audiences; branch out into new areas, particularly in the field of digital educational offerings; develop new multigenerational initiatives; and conduct annual evaluations to refine programming as needed. Among the new initiatives to be supported by the Wilmerding Fund will be an annual John Wilmerding Symposium and a Community Celebration. The inaugural Wilmerding Symposium will be held on Saturday, October 22, 2016, in conjunction with the reopening of the East Building (September 30, 2016). The symposium will feature a group of distinguished scholars who will speak on a topic related to American art.

The Community Celebration will be held on Saturday, November 5, and Sunday, November 6, 2016. More detailed information about the Wilmerding Symposium and Community Celebration will be announced in the near future.

In future years, the Gallery will add two academic-year internships: the annual John Wilmerding Internship in American Art and the John Wilmerding Internship in Digital Interpretation. These two opportunities will afford students authentic learning experiences and nurture future leaders in the field of museum education and technology. Other programs will include a digital interpretation program that will allow the Gallery to develop new interactive digital offerings such as a social mobile experience for onsite visitors, and mobile applications that can be used in multiple museum environments.

The Wilmerding Fund will also underwrite multigenerational initiatives designed to engage children and adults of all ages in the arts. These initiatives may include activities such as an art-making and discussion-based program for multigenerational audiences. Finally, this new fund will support the cost of annual evaluations and additional staffing related to the new initiatives.

About John Wilmerding

Born in 1938 in Boston, Wilmerding comes from a family with a rich history of collecting art. Wilmerding's great-grandparents, Henry Osborne Havemeyer and his second wife, Louisine Waldron Havemeyer, amassed an extraordinary group of European and oriental works of art that was eventually bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Wilmerding received his undergraduate, master's, and doctorate degrees in art history at Harvard University. He is associated with the generation of scholars of American art that include Barbara Novak, William H. Gerdts, Jules David Prown, and Theodore E. Stebbins.

After teaching at Dartmouth College, in 1977 Wilmerding began his tenure at the National Gallery of Art as the museum's first curator of American art. He was promoted to senior curator and then served as deputy director from 1983 to 1988. In 1980 he organized the landmark exhibition, **American Light: The Luminist Movement**, which included artists such as Frederic Edwin Church, Sanford Gifford, Martin Johnson Heade, and Fitz Henry Lane. Wilmerding returned to full-time teaching in 1988 at Princeton University as the Christopher Binyon Sarofim Professor of American Art. Since retiring from Princeton in 2013, Wilmerding has contributed to numerous exhibitions and publications in addition to serving as trustee for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, the Wyeth Foundation for American Art, and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. Wilmerding's many books and articles have helped define the scholarly nature of the American art field.

In 2004 Wilmerding announced the promised gift to the Gallery of 50 works of 19th-century American art from his collection, and George Caleb Bingham's *Mississippi Boatman* (1850) as an immediate gift. Previously, he donated *The Chaperone* (c. 1908) by Thomas Eakins on the occasion of the Gallery's 50th anniversary in 1991. Wilmerding served on the Gallery's Board of Trustees from 2005 to 2013 and as chairman from 2007 to 2013.

About The Walton Family Foundation

For nearly three decades, the Walton Family Foundation has focused on addressing social and environmental issues by giving in three distinct areas: K-12 education, freshwater and marine conservation, and quality of life initiatives in the foundation's home region. In 2015, the Walton Family Foundation invested nearly \$375 million in domestic and international projects. To learn more, visit www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org, and join the conversation on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

The Walton Family Foundation has been a donor to the Gallery since 2005 to help enhance the collection, further educational programming, and promote arts scholarship at the Gallery. Philanthropist and art patron Alice Walton is the founder and board chairperson of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas. She serves on the board of directors of the Walton Family Foundation and previously was a member of the Trustees' Council of the National Gallery of Art.

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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 visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt, Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc, and Instagram at <http://instagram.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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