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## In Memoriam: E.A. Carmean, Jr. (1945–2019)



E.A. Carmean, Jr. with Alexander Calder during the construction of the East Building of the National Gallery of Art, c. 1976. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gallery Archives

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art announced today the death of former curator E. A. Carmean Jr., who passed away on October 12 at his home in Washington, DC. The cause was cancer.

Carmean, who was known throughout his life by his first two initials, was born on January 25, 1945, in Springfield, Illinois. He received a BA in art history, philosophy, and theology from MacMurray College in Jacksonville, Illinois, in 1967 and did graduate work at the University of Illinois from 1967 to 1970. In 1983 he was awarded an honorary doctorate in fine arts from MacMurray College. The recipient of Guggenheim and National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, he taught art history at George Washington University; Rice University; the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, North Dakota; and the University of Illinois.

In 1971 he joined the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, as curator of 20th-century art, working under then-director Philippe de Montebello.

From 1974 to 1984, Carmean served as the first curator of modern art at the National Gallery of Art, working with Paul Mellon, J. Carter Brown, and I. M. Pei to realize the East Building. This included commissioning major works from modern masters such as [Alexander Calder](#), [Anthony Caro](#), [Joan Miró](#), [Henry Moore](#), and [Robert Motherwell](#). One of his best-remembered installations for the East Building opening was of 13 sculptures from David Smith's *Voltri* series, placed on steps and platforms reminiscent of the Roman amphitheater at Spoleto.

In establishing the Gallery's 20th-century collection, Carmean added significant acquisitions by Constantin Brancusi, Max Ernst, Arshile Gorky, Juan Gris, Henri Matisse, and David Smith, as well as Jackson Pollock's [Number 1, 1950 \(Lavender Mist\)](#) (1950).

One of his innovations at the Gallery was a series of focus exhibitions, including [Mondrian: The Diamond Compositions](#), [Picasso: The Saltimbanques](#), and [Bellows: The Boxing Pictures](#), that examined in detail a single work from the permanent collection to study it in context. Carmean also organized exhibitions on artists such as [Jean Arp](#), [Morris Louis](#), and [David Smith](#).

Following his time at the Gallery, Carmean served as the director of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art. He retired in 1998 to attend seminary and was named a lay canon in the Episcopal Church in 2004. He authored more than 200 essays, books, and catalogs, published in seven languages.

Carmean is survived by his wife, Kathryn, their daughter, Elizabeth Carmean Adams, and her husband, Wayne Adams, and two grandchildren, Abigail and John Adams, of North Potomac, Maryland.

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

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<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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