

FACT SHEET

The National Gallery of Art is the nation's art museum, welcoming all people to explore art, creativity, and our shared humanity. Millions of people come through its doors each year—with more than 100 million accessing the National Gallery's digital platforms in 2024, including website, video content, and social media channels—making it one of the most-visited art museums in the world. The National Gallery's renowned collection includes over 160,000 works of art spanning the history of Western art, from classical to contemporary. Admission to the National Gallery of Art, including special exhibitions and public programs, is always free, allowing visitors from across the nation and world to experience the transformative power of art.

Notable Facts

- The National Gallery holds the only painting by Leonardo da Vinci in the Americas.
- The National Gallery's East Building, West Building, and Sculpture Garden collectively offer over 25 acres of public space where visitors can experience art.
- Prominently located in the heart of the nation's capital, the National Gallery occupies nearly a quarter of the National Mall.
- Of the top three art museums in the United States by number of annual visitors, it is the only one that has no admission fee.
- The National Gallery has the most extensive public collection of works by Mark Rothko in the world—1,001 works and related research materials—and is the primary repository and study center for the artist's works.
- It holds one of the largest collections of works by Amedeo Modigliani in the world.
- It has one of the largest impressionist collections outside of Europe.
- It has one of the largest collections of works by Johannes Vermeer in the world.
- The National Gallery holds the world's largest collection of works by Alexander Calder, including the largest mobile the artist ever created—the site-specific mobile commissioned specifically for the East Building atrium.

Background

The National Gallery of Art was founded as a gift to the American people. The museum was conceived by Andrew W. Mellon, a financier and art collector who served as secretary of the Treasury under three presidents from 1921 to 1932 and who believed that the United States should have a world-class national art museum. In 1936, Mellon offered a gift of his art collection and funding to establish a new museum on federal land in Washington, DC. With President Franklin D. Roosevelt's endorsement, Congress accepted Mellon's gift in 1937. President Roosevelt dedicated the National Gallery's first building—now known as the West Building—on March 17, 1941. The National Gallery became a "collection of collections" thanks to the generosity of founding benefactors.

The East Building was added to accommodate the National Gallery's growing collection of modern art and the new Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts. Designed by architect I. M. Pei & Partners, the East Building was dedicated by President Jimmy Carter on June 1, 1978.

Kaywin Feldman currently serves as the fifth-ever director of the National Gallery of Art and is the first woman to run the organization.

Collections

The collection of the National Gallery of Art features over 160,000 works, including sculptures, decorative arts, prints, drawings, photographs, and paintings, spanning the history of Western art from classical to contemporary.

Through its acquisitions, the National Gallery of Art aims to uplift artistic excellence and offer a wide scope of art history. In the past five years, the National Gallery has acquired more than 6,000 new works created by artists who represent a range of perspectives.

Collection highlights:

- West Building:
 - Leonardo da Vinci, [*Ginevra de' Benci \[obverse\]*](#), c. 1474/1478
 - Rembrandt van Rijn, [*Self-Portrait*](#), 1659
 - John Singleton Copley, [*Watson and the Shark*](#), 1778
 - Edgar Degas, [*Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*](#), 1878–1881
 - Judith Leyster, [*Self-Portrait*](#), c. 1630
 - Archibald Motley, [*Portrait of My Grandmother*](#), 1922
 - Vincent van Gogh, [*Self-Portrait*](#), 1889
 - Johannes Vermeer, [*A Lady Writing*](#), c.1665
- East Building:
 - Jackson Pollock, [*Number 1, 1950 \(Lavender Mist\)*](#), 1950
 - Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, [*Target*](#), 1992
 - Georgia O'Keeffe, [*Jack-in-the-Pulpit*](#) series, 1930
 - Joan Miró, [*The Farm*](#), 1921–1922
 - Pablo Picasso, [*Family of Saltimbanques*](#), 1905
 - Alexander Calder, [*Untitled*](#) (mobile), 1976
- Sculpture Garden:
 - Louise Bourgeois, [*Spider*](#), 1996, cast 1997
 - Robert Indiana, [*AMOR*](#), conceived 1998, fabricated 2006
 - Barry Flanagan, [*Thinker on a Rock*](#), 1997
 - Roy Lichtenstein, [*House I*](#), model 1996, fabricated 1998
 - Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, [*Typewriter Eraser, Scale X*](#), model 1998, fabricated 1999

Events and Education

The National Gallery of Art presents thousands of free programs and events annually, including tours, lectures, educational and family programs, films, concerts, and large-scale community events like Jazz in the Garden—which has welcomed over 1.5 million guests since it began in 2001—and National Gallery Nights, which brings an average of 8,000 visitors per year to the museum.

Highly acclaimed films and lectures are presented regularly, free of charge. Talks range from lectures on the collection or specific exhibitions as well as annual series such as the Andrew W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, the Diamondstein-Spielvogel Lecture Series (featuring distinguished artists), the Elson Lecture Series (featuring contemporary artists whose work is represented in the National Gallery's collection), the Sydney J. Freedberg Lecture on Italian Art, and the Wyeth Lectures in American Art.

In addition to presenting public events and adult learning activities, the National Gallery partners with local schools on programs created in collaboration with schools and educators. The museum's flagship "Art Around the Corner" program uses a whole-school approach, which offers something for every member of the school community—including student visits, teacher workshops, and family programs—both at the museum and in schools. Over its 30-year history, "Art Around the Corner" has engaged approximately 21,000 students. In 2024, the program reached around 3,000 students, 1,300 teachers, and 900 families,

helping them to explore artistic expression, and giving schools and teachers the resources to continue this work every day.

Sculpture Garden

In 1966 the National Gallery of Art entered a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service to create a sculpture garden on the site immediately to the west of the West Building. The National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden was a gift of the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton dedicated it on May 19, 1999.

The garden showcases iconic 20th-century works by artists including Alexander Calder, Joan Miró, Louise Bourgeois, Ellsworth Kelly, and Claes Oldenburg. Its central fountain—which becomes an ice rink each winter—serves as a popular gathering place for visitors. It has also been the site of Jazz in the Garden since 2001.

The Center

The National Gallery of Art is home to the renowned cultural research institute the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (the Center). Since its inception in 1979 with the opening of the National Gallery's East Building, the Center has promoted the study of the production, use, and cultural meaning of art, artifacts, architecture, urbanism, photography, and film from all places and periods through the formation of a community of scholars. The Center hosts approximately 50 research fellows every year, ranging from predoctoral students to distinguished professors. The Center also presents about 25 public programs a year, giving in-depth looks at varying aspects of art history.

Library

The National Gallery of Art Library is one of the world's foremost resources for the study of art history. Its publicly accessible, constantly growing collection spans more than 16 million images and 500,000 volumes. These include thousands of rare books dating back centuries, and many of these resources are available online.

Archives

The National Gallery of Art Archives form a rich body of primary source information about the museum's past as well as the history and culture of the United States. Accessible to the public and researchers, the Archives include correspondence, photographs, printed materials, architectural records, audio and visual recordings, oral histories, and digital assets. These and other documentary items cover the museum's past and development, including exhibitions, acquisitions, programs, activities, and buildings.

Publications

The National Gallery of Art has one of the largest and most active museum publishing departments in the nation. Established in 1940 before the museum opened, the program acts as a bridge between the National Gallery's research, collection, and the public. It publishes six to eight titles each year including exhibition books, collection highlights, and research from the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts. Collection research is available for free on nga.gov, including in the biennial conservation journal *Facture*. Publications have received dozens of top awards in the field and best of the year recognition from the New York Times, Hyperallergic, and others.

Building Fast Facts

West Building:

Opened 1941

Architect: John Russell Pope

Art-containing space: ~179,000 square feet

Concourse Level (in between West and East Buildings): 2 cafés, 2 shops

East Building:

Opened 1978

Architect: I. M. Pei

Art-containing space: over ~10,000 square feet

Roof Terrace (added in 2016)

1 café, 1 shop

Library

Sculpture Garden:

Opened 1999

264,000 square feet

Landscape architect: Laurie Olin

22 modern and contemporary sculptures

Ice rink open mid-November to early March

1 café

Visiting the National Gallery of Art

The National Gallery's West Building, East Building, and Sculpture Garden are open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily. No timed passes are required. Admission is always free.