
Notes to the Reader

Introduction

The art in the Senate owes its present form primarily to the Joint Committee on the Library, established by an act of Congress in 1802. As evidenced by its name, the Joint Committee's first duty was to maintain the Library of Congress, but it also supervised the acquisition of art for the Capitol, the White House, and the public squares of Washington, D.C. The committee became especially active in the selection of sculpture and painting after the middle of the 19th century. At that time, the U.S. Capitol had been greatly expanded, following the design of architect Thomas U. Walter, to create an imposing new dome and two large new chambers for the legislature. A massive campaign was under way to decorate the building to reflect the newfound importance of the United States in world affairs.

The collection of art in the Senate has taken shape through several means. Some pieces have been purchased and others have been specially commissioned. At times, donors have offered important works of historical significance, and many of these have received judicious approval and become welcomed additions to the collection.

A mainstay of the Senate's fine art is the Vice Presidential Bust Collection. The Joint Committee on the Library, acting under a resolution of May 13, 1886, began commissioning busts of the vice presidents to occupy the niches in the new Senate Chamber. After the first busts filled the 20 niches that surround the Chamber, new additions were placed throughout the Senate wing of the Capitol. The collection chronicles the individuals who have served as vice president and pays tribute to their role as president of the Senate. It also provides a unique survey of American sculpture from the 19th century to the present.

While the Senate has long recognized the role of the vice president, it recently established the Senate Leadership Portrait Collection to honor presidents pro tempore and majority and minority leaders of the Senate. Additionally, an awareness of the value of diversity and the contributions of those historically overlooked have led to commissions of United States Senators Blanche Kelso Bruce and Margaret Chase Smith. Thus, the history of the Senate and the nation continues to be told through the Senate's art program.

While much of the art in the Senate dates from the 19th century, it was not until more recently that the Senate took direct responsibility

for the care and protection of these artifacts. In 1968 the U.S. Senate Commission on Art was established to oversee the art, historical objects, and architectural elements in the Senate wing of the Capitol and Senate office buildings. The Office of Senate Curator was subsequently established to develop and implement the museum and preservation programs for the U.S. Senate on behalf of the Senate Commission on Art. The office collects, preserves, and interprets the Senate's fine and decorative arts, historic objects, and architectural features. Through exhibits, publications and other programs the office educates the public about the Senate and its collections.

Arrangement of the Catalogue

Catalogue entries are arranged alphabetically by subject, with some subjects having multiple entries by different artists. Every entry consists of a brief introduction to the life and career of the person and/or the event depicted, information about the creation and acquisition of the piece, and a short description of the artist's life and major works. Each piece is further documented with the title, artist's name (when known) and dates, medium of the work and date of completion, dimensions, signatures and inscriptions, acquisition information, and an accession number.

Completion Dates

The completion date refers to the year the final form of the work was achieved. In most cases, the artist has signed the artwork and this date is used; otherwise, the date is determined by primary documentation that states when the work was completed. Whenever possible, modeled and carved dates are included. Dates assigned conform to the following system:

1800	year of completion
ca. 1800	completed sometime around 1800 (plus or minus 5 years)
ca. 1800–1825	completed between approximately 1800 and 1825
1800/1801	completed in either 1800 or 1801

Dimensions

Dimensions are in inches followed by centimeters, height followed by width. For sculptured works, depth is given last. If the base was created by the sculptor as an integral part of the composition, it is included in the overall dimensions. Measurements for paintings are by sight (unless noted otherwise), and represent the maximum dimension in the stated direction.

Signatures and Inscriptions

Signatures and inscriptions are transcribed exactly as they appear and include only those markings that were made or directed by the artist or foundry. All markings are described from the viewer's point of view (unless noted otherwise). Illegible or reconstructed marks are enclosed in brackets; line breaks are indicated by a forward slash. Unusual inscription marks may include:

ARA	Associate of the Royal Academy (United Kingdom)
fecit, fe., f.	(Latin, <i>fecit</i>). Made by
pinxt., pinx	A term signifying "painted by"
Sc., Sculp.	Sculptor, Engraver
V	An upper case <i>V</i> in place of a <i>U</i> is common for early inscriptions

Catalogue Numbers

U.S. Senate accession numbers identify each piece of art with a unique control number.

This volume reflects the U.S. Senate fine art holdings as of September 2002. Additional information on the art is available through the Office of Senate Curator.

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Old Senate Chamber
(1998 photograph)

