

Artists' Choices

selected works of art from the tour

Welcome to the National Gallery of Art

There are over 94,000 objects in the museum's collection: paintings, sculpture, medals, works on paper, and decorative arts. Both of the National Gallery's buildings and all the art inside are gifts to the American people. The museum is located in Washington, DC, because Andrew Mellon, the very first donor, wanted a public art museum in the nation's capital. He also made sure that, by law, all the art must come from private funds and donors like himself and that admission to the Gallery is free. The Gallery receives additional funds from the federal government to support the maintenance of the building and most of the staff salaries.

When you visit the National Gallery, remember to respect both the works of art and your fellow visitors. Fairfax County sixth graders have a reputation for being both courteous and smart. Keep up the good work and enjoy your trip to the museum. And next time you come, plan to be a docent yourself for your family and friends!

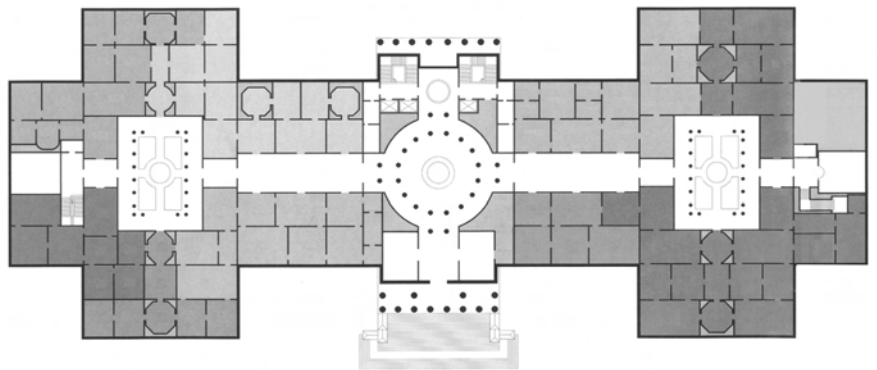
National Gallery of Art, West Building

built 1937–1941
architect John Russell Pope
(American, 1874–1937)
Gift of Andrew W. Mellon

■ To design and construct the National Gallery of Art, Andrew Mellon chose John Russell Pope, an architect who was already famous for his fine neoclassical buildings (based on examples from Greece and Rome), such as Constitution Hall and the National Archives. He later designed the Jefferson

Memorial. Pope planned a rectangular structure with two wings adjoining a rotunda, or round central space. The building would stretch 782 feet from 4th Street to 7th Street, a distance 30 feet, 8 inches longer than the U.S. Capitol!

The architect had an unusual structural problem to deal with because Tiber Creek runs beneath the Mall. For many feet under the surface, the ground is mud and clay. Therefore, he decided to rest the building on a foundation of 6,800 steel and concrete pilings pounded 35 to 40 feet into the ground. On top of these pilings he planned a museum of double walls with air space between. This would make the structure light in weight and also prevent sudden changes of temperature and humidity from reaching the art inside. The outer walls were made from reinforced concrete with light pink marble facing. The inner walls are hollow bricks with facings of limestone, stucco, stained oak, or carved and painted wood—they are based on architectural styles from different periods in history.



QUESTIONS

- 1 Which details in the West Building remind you of classical (Greek and Roman) times?
- 2 What choices must an architect make in planning a museum?

The Lackawanna Valley

c. 1856

by George Inness

(American, 1825–1894)

■ At the time George Inness painted this view of Scranton, Pennsylvania, located in the Lackawanna Valley, Americans were moving west to settle the lands on the frontier, and industrialization was taking place in eastern cities.

This picture is not simply a pleasant landscape, but also an advertisement. The Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Company asked Inness to create a painting that would draw attention to the railroad. Notice the roundhouse with tracks running through it and the trains that appear elsewhere in the composition. The one in the foreground is still powered by wood, but it carries coal that will run the engines of the future. On the road is a prairie schooner, a form of transportation that will gradually be replaced by mechanized vehicles. A youth sits on the hillside and although we don't see his face we can imagine what he might be thinking. Nearby, tree stumps may symbolize progress and the coming of a new era.

QUESTIONS

- 1 If you ran the railroad company, how would you use Inness' painting?
- 2 An artist can arrange his composition any way he wishes. Why do you believe Inness chose to place a tall tree just to the left of the boy's figure?

Home, Sweet Home

c. 1863

by Winslow Homer

(American, 1836–1910)

■ For Americans, the Civil War constituted the most traumatic political event of the nineteenth century. The division of the country into northern Union states and the southern Confederacy often divided families and turned friends into enemies. Early in the war, the artist Winslow Homer traveled to the front with Union troops to document their daily lives in illustrations he made for *Harper's Weekly* magazine.

Homer's painting *Home, Sweet Home* depicts a typical Union camp, the conditions of which give Homer's title an ironic ring. The "home" that the soldiers share on the

battlefront is dirty and uncomfortable. Dinner will not come out of a kitchen but off a campfire. The uniforms of the soldiers in the foreground are worn and muddy.

On the lap of the seated soldier we see pieces of paper that may represent a letter from home. In the background, a regimental band plays "Home, Sweet Home," a melody cherished by both Union and Confederate forces. The nostalgic reverie suggested by this tune and reiterated by the painting's title, however, is a bittersweet reminder of the destruction of domestic peace in the United States. A tattered tarp bearing the letters "U.S." hangs behind the standing soldier, symbolizing the precarious state of a nation divided against itself.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Does this painting glorify the Civil War? Explain?
- 2 What aspects of home are most important to you?

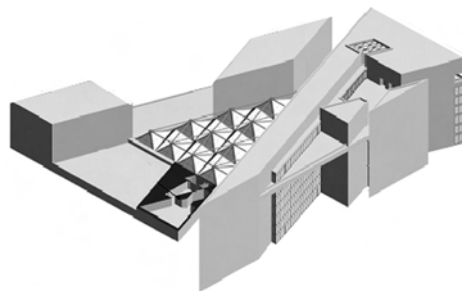
National Gallery of Art, East Building

built 1971–1978

architect Ieoh Ming Pei

(American, born in China, 1917)

Gift of Paul Mellon, Ailsa Mellon Bruce, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation



■ Thirty years after the National Gallery of Art opened, there was need for additional gallery and office space. Located across from the original building was a trapezoidal (four-sided shape with only two parallel sides) piece of land that had been set aside as the site for a new "East Building." Andrew Mellon's children, Paul Mellon and Ailsa Mellon Bruce, donated funds for its construction. I. M. Pei was chosen to design the addition. Although his firm also designs apartments and offices, Pei is most famous for public buildings such as the renovation of the Louvre Museum in Paris and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland.

Pei presented a bold plan to bisect the trapezoidal lot

and create two triangular structures joined together with glass walls and a “space frame” roof. One contains the art, while the other houses a library, study center, and office space for employees. An underground link containing the cafeteria and museum shop connects the two buildings.

Instead of resting on concrete pilings like the West Building, the new building floats on top of the mud upon a six-foot thick concrete pad. The museum was constructed with a brick core and long stretches of steel-reinforced concrete. The exterior is faced with pink marble from the same quarry that supplied the stone for the West Building. The sharp geometry of Pei’s triangular structure complements the rectangles of Pope’s original museum.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Think of putting triangles together in different ways. Which other kinds of shapes could you make?
- 2 What are some words that describe life in the twentieth century? When you go to the East Building, look for art that may have been based on those same ideas.

Lever No. 3

1989
by Martin Puryear
(American, born 1941)

■ Martin Puryear grew up in the Washington, DC area. After graduating from The Catholic University of America, he spent time in the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, which enabled him to see firsthand the tradition of wood carving in his own African-American heritage. Thereafter, he studied wooden construction techniques in both Sweden and Japan before starting to make his own sculpture.

Martin Puryear’s *Lever No. 3* is an abstract sculpture. The title associates the lyrical, sweeping form with a tool we all know well. However, this is not a realistic copy of a readily identifiable object. Instead, with its humped base and long, curving lines, the work makes us think equally of some unusual animal or form from nature.

Lever No. 3 is made of wood; layers of pine boards were cut, laminated together, and planed smooth. The artist applied black paint and then rubbed it down so that the grain of the wood shows through. The slightly irregular surface seems ancient, almost mysterious. We sense a

contrast between the worked surface and the elegant form. As Puryear said, “The strongest work for me embodies contradiction, which allows for emotional tension and the ability to contain opposed ideas.”

QUESTIONS

- 1 One element an artist has to consider is balance. How did Puryear achieve it in this sculpture?
- 2 How would *Lever No. 3* be different if it had been made in another material?

Cubist Still Life

1974
by Roy Lichtenstein
(American, 1923–1997)

■ In the 1960s Roy Lichtenstein began to make pop art. These were ironic and playful images inspired by such elements of popular culture as advertisements, billboards, and comic strips. Not only did he use comic book characters—like Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse in *Look Mickey*—but Lichtenstein often made his paintings by mimicking the comic books’ ink-dot printing technique.

In subsequent years, Lichtenstein experimented with other styles too. In *Cubist Still Life*, he uses his “cartoon” approach to consider cubism, an early twentieth-century art movement that reinterpreted natural appearances in geometric compositions. The cubists presented a composite of objects as if viewed from many different angles at the same time, breaking down their shapes into various planes while suggesting their various textures. We might see the side of a bottle as a rectangle and its bottom as a circle.

Cubist Still Life seems like an enlarged version of a typical cubist work, done in the artist’s own distinctive style, with a sense of fun in bright yellow, red, and black paint. Lichtenstein’s broad areas of color, flat patterns, and clear outlines—which tend to make different textures seem similar—also make his still life seem even more abstract than the cubist ones to which he was paying homage.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Find things in the painting that are somewhat abstract but still resemble objects from everyday life.
- 2 Point out aspects of *Cubist Still Life* that have the cartoon-like quality of Lichtenstein’s earlier work.

Information

TRANSPORTATION

Metro stops are Judiciary Square (red line), Navy Memorial/Archives (yellow/green line), and Smithsonian (orange/blue line).

Metered street parking is available along the Mall for cars and vans. Buses may let students off at the entrance noted on your confirmation sheet. Parking for buses is allowed on Independence Avenue next to the Washington Monument.

Please check your school tour confirmation letter for the location where your tour will begin. If you are unable to keep this appointment, notify the Tour Scheduler at 202.842.6249 as soon as possible.

LUNCH FACILITIES

Groups may not bring sack lunches. Please note this change in policy.

There are no special lunch facilities for school groups. Groups may purchase their lunches from the full-service cafeteria. Group meal plans can be arranged by calling 202.216.2480.

Restrooms are located by the cafeteria and near main entrances of the Gallery.

WHAT TO BRING

Hand-held cameras, pencils, and pads are allowed in the permanent collection areas, but not in special exhibitions. The use of a tripod, easel, or ink and chalk

drawing materials is prohibited without special advance permission. Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering the Gallery. Visitors may not wear backpacks in the galleries; backpacks must be checked or carried by hand. We recommend that students leave their backpacks at school or on the bus to prevent entry delays. For further information on museum visitor policies, please see: <http://www.nga.gov/ginfo/policies.htm>

MUSEUM PUBLICATIONS AND REPRODUCTIONS

Postcards are available in the museum shops for 50 cents each; 11 x 14-inch reproductions are \$5.00 each. Museum shops are located in the East Building Concourse (next to the cafeteria), and on the ground floor of the West Building between the 4th and 6th Street entrances.

ACCESSIBILITY

The 6th Street entrance to the West Building at Constitution Avenue and the 4th Street entrance to the East Building each have ramps to accommodate visitors in wheelchairs. The 6th Street entrance may be used as a drop-off and pick-up location. Please inform your docents prior to your tour of any special needs for your students.

DISCOUNT POLICY AND ORDERING INFORMATION

We are pleased to offer a 20% discount on postcards, 11 x 14-inch reproductions,

large reproductions, and Gallery publications to educational and religious institutions. To receive the discount, orders must be submitted on official letterhead with prepayment or an authorized institutional purchase order (\$50.00 minimum). Your discount is on the merchandise total only—not the shipping and handling fees. Use the total purchase amount before discount to calculate shipping and handling charges.

Orders must be mailed or faxed to the address below:

National Gallery of Art
Gallery Shops Mail Order Department
2000 B South Club Drive
Landover, Maryland 20785
Phone: 800.697.9350 or 202.842.6002
Fax: 202.789.3047

To receive a current list of available reproductions, please call the phone numbers above. All orders are processed within 7 to 10 business days and are shipped via FedEx Ground.

How to Expedite Your Order

- Write your order clearly with full address and a daytime phone number so we can reach you if we have questions.
- Next-day delivery is possible for an additional \$6.00, domestic addresses only.
- If you have any questions, please call us before placing your order.