



Smithsonian  
*Donald W. Reynolds Center for  
American Art and Portraiture*  
*National Portrait Gallery*

News

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July 16, 2008

**The National Portrait Gallery Presents “One Life: The Mask of Lincoln”  
in Celebration of Abraham Lincoln’s 200th Anniversary**

Abraham Lincoln (Feb. 12, 1809–April 15, 1865) is one of America’s most revered presidents. His leadership during America’s most divisive crisis, the Civil War, was essential to the abolition of slavery and the preservation of the union. In this exhibition, “One Life: The Mask of Lincoln,” National Portrait Gallery historian David C. Ward continues the museum’s “One Life” series with an exploration of how Abraham Lincoln crafted his public persona. “The Mask of Lincoln” will open Nov. 7, in anticipation of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of Lincoln’s birth, and will continue through July 5, 2009.

“The National Portrait Gallery is pleased to participate in the events surrounding the commemoration of Abraham Lincoln’s birth,” said Martin E. Sullivan, director of the National Portrait Gallery. “Lincoln’s role in shaping America cannot be understated, and this exhibition uses portraits from our collection to offer us insight into how he shaped his identity and personality.”

The exhibition includes more than 30 images of Lincoln; most are from the Portrait Gallery’s extensive collection, such as the “tousled hair” portrait taken in 1857, and a Mathew Brady photograph that was taken just before Lincoln’s groundbreaking 1860 speech at the Cooper Union. The latter image is known as, the “photograph that made Lincoln president.” The same photograph appears in a handsomely mounted gold campaign pin. Also in the exhibition are the “cracked-plate” photograph of Lincoln by Alexander Gardner, one of the last formal portraits taken of him; a drawing by Lambert Hollis, which is an eye-witness account of Lincoln’s arrival in Richmond only two days after the Confederate government evacuated the capital city in April of 1865; and an engraving of the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation.

SI-332-2008

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Americans in the 19th century identified themselves nearly equally by their religion and political party. This exhibition demonstrates that Lincoln was attuned to these cultural customs and used the emerging technology of photography to craft his image and keep himself in the mind's eye of his fellow citizens. He sought out opportunities to be photographed and produced a continuous portrait record of his time in office.

The "One Life" series is one-room exhibition that features the life of one person chosen by a curator or historian. "The Mask of Lincoln" is the fourth installment in the series and follows "Kate: A Centennial Celebration," "Portraits of Sandra Day O'Connor" and "Walt Whitman, a kosmos."

"One Life: The Mask of Lincoln," is one of many exhibitions and programs planned at the Smithsonian that celebrate the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln. The complete list will be posted on [gosmithsonian.com](http://gosmithsonian.com).

## **The National Portrait Gallery**

The National Portrait Gallery tells the stories of America through the individuals who have shaped its culture. Through the visual arts, performing arts and new media, the Portrait Gallery portrays poets and presidents, visionaries and villains, actors and activists who speak American history.

The National Portrait Gallery opened to the public in 1968. The museum's collection of more than 20,000 works includes paintings, sculpture, photographs, drawings and new media. Located at Eighth and F streets N.W., in Washington, D.C., it is open every day, except Dec. 25, from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Smithsonian information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Web site: [npg.si.edu](http://npg.si.edu).

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