

March 17, 1941

[Dedication of National Gallery of Art]

FDR Speech File

1362

What follows is the "reading copy"  
used by President Roosevelt in  
making this speech.

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
MARCH 17, 1941

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It is with a very real sense of satisfaction that I accept for the people of the United States and on their behalf this National Gallery and the collections it contains. The giver of the building has matched the richness of his gift with the modesty of his spirit, stipulating that the Gallery shall be known not by his name but by the nation's. And those other collectors of paintings and of sculpture who have already joined, or who propose to join, their works of art to Mr. Mellon's -- Mr. Kress and Mr. Widener -- have felt the same desire to establish, not a memorial to themselves, but a monument to the art they love and the country to which they belong. To these collections we now gratefully add the gift from Miss Ellen Bullard and three anonymous donors, which marks the beginning of the Gallery's collection of prints; and also the loan collection of early

American paintings from Mr. Chester Dale.

There have been, in the past, many gifts of great paintings and of famous works of art to the American people. Most of the wealthy men of the last century who bought, for their own satisfaction, the masterpieces of European collections, ended by presenting their purchases to their cities or their towns. Great works of art have a way of breaking out of private ownership into public use. They belong so obviously to all who love them -- they are so clearly the property not of their single owners but of all men everywhere -- that the private rooms and houses where they are hung become in time too narrow for their presence. The true collectors are the collectors who understand this -- the collectors of great paintings who feel that they can never truly own, but only gather and preserve for all who love them, the treasures they have found.

But though there have been many public gifts of art in the past, the gift of this National Gallery, dedicated to the entire nation and containing a considerable part of the most important work brought to this country from the continent of Europe, has necessarily a new significance. It signifies a relation -- a new relation here made visible in paint and in stone -- between the whole people of this country, and the old inherited tradition of the arts. And we shall remember that these halls of beauty, the ~~creation~~ conception of a great American architect, John Russell Pope, combine the classicism of the past with the convenience of today.

In accepting this building and the paintings it contains, the people of the United States accept a part in that inheritance for themselves. They accept it for themselves not because this Gallery is given to them --

though they are thankful for the gift. They accept it for themselves because, in the past few years, they have come to understand that the inheritance is theirs and that, like other inheritors of other things of value, they have a duty toward it.

There was a time when the people of this country would not have thought that the inheritance of art belonged to them or that they had responsibilities to guard it. A few generations ago, the people of this country were taught by their writers and by their critics and by their teachers to believe that art was something foreign to America and to themselves -- something imported from another continent and from an age which was not theirs -- something they had no part in, save to go to see it in a guarded room on holidays or Sundays.

But recently, within the last few years, they have discovered that they have a part. They have seen in their own towns, in their own villages, in school houses, in post offices, in the back rooms of shops and stores, pictures painted by their sons, their neighbors -- people they have known and lived beside and talked to. They have seen, across these last few years, rooms full of painting *and sculpture* by Americans, walls covered with the painting of Americans -- some of it good, some of it not good, but all of it native, human, eager, and alive -- all of it painted by their own kind in their own country, and painted about things they know and look at often and have touched and loved.

The people of this country know now, whatever they were taught or thought they knew before, that art is not something just to be owned but something to be made: that it is the act of making and not the act of owning which is art. And knowing this they know also that art is not

a treasure in the past or an importation from another country, but part of the present life of all the living and creating peoples -- all who make and build; and, most of all, the young and vigorous peoples who have made and built our present wide country.

It is for this reason that the people of America accept the inheritance of these ancient arts. Whatever these paintings may have been to men who looked at them a generation back -- today they are not only works of art. Today they are the symbols of the human spirit, and of the world the freedom of the human spirit made -- a world against which armies now are raised and countries overrun, and men imprisoned and their work destroyed.

To accept, today, the work of German painters such as Holbein and Durer and of Italians like Botticelli and Raphael, and of painters of the Low Countries like Van Dyck

and Rembrandt, and of famous Frenchmen, famous Spaniards -- to accept this work today on behalf of the people of this democratic nation is to assert the belief of the people of this nation in a human spirit which now is everywhere endangered and which, in many countries where it first found form and meaning, has been rooted out and broken and destroyed.

To accept this work today is to assert the purpose of the people of America that the freedom of the human spirit and human mind which has produced the world's great art and all its science -- shall not be utterly destroyed.

*(A)* Seventy-eight years ago, in the third year of the War Between the States, men and women gathered here in Washington to see the dome above the Capitol completed and the bronze Goddess of Liberty set upon the top. It had been an expensive and laborious business, diverting money and labor from the prosecution of the war, and certain

citizens found much to criticize. There were new marble pillars in the Senate wing and a bronze door for the central portal and other such expenditures and embellishments. But Lincoln, when he heard the criticisms, answered: "If people see the Capitol going on, it is a sign we intend the Union shall go on".

We may borrow the words for our own. We too intend the Union shall go on. We intend it shall go on, carrying with it the great tradition of the human spirit which created it.

The dedication of this Gallery to a living past, and to a greater and more richly living future, is the measure of the earnestness of our intention that the freedom of the human spirit shall go on.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Franklin D. Roosevelt  
August 1933*

What follows is the stenographic transcript of the speech as taken down by the White House Reporter. Words in the prepared text omitted by President Roosevelt are enclosed in parentheses. Words and phrases extemporaneously added are indicated by underlining.

*President Roosevelt's address*

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT  
at the  
Dedication of the National Gallery of Art  
Washington, D.C.  
March 17, 1941, 10.00 P.M., E.S.T.

MR. CHIEF JUSTICE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

It is with a very real sense of satisfaction that I accept for the people of the United States and on their behalf this National Gallery and the collections it contains. The giver of (the) this building has matched the richness of his gift with the modesty of his spirit, stipulating that the Gallery shall be known not by his name but by the nation's. And those other collectors of paintings and of sculpture who have already joined, or who propose to join, their works of art to Mr. Mellon's -- Mr. Kress and Mr. Widener -- have felt the same desire to establish, not a memorial to themselves, but a monument to the art that they love and the country to which they belong. To these collections we now gratefully add the gift (from) of Miss Ellen Bullard and three anonymous donors, which marks the beginning of the Gallery's collection of prints; and also the loan collection of early American paintings from Mr. Chester Dale.

There have been, in the past, many gifts of great paintings and of famous works of art to the American people. Most of the wealthy men of the last century who bought, for their own satisfaction, the masterpieces of European collections, ended by presenting their purchases to their cities or to their towns. And so great works of art have a way of breaking out of private ownership into public use. They belong so obviously to all who love them -- they are so clearly the property not of their single owners but of all men everywhere -- that the private rooms and houses where they (are) have lovingly hung in the past become in time too narrow for their presence.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

The true collectors are the collectors who understand this -- the collectors of great paintings who feel that they can never truly own, but only gather and preserve for all who love them, the treasures that they have found.

But though there have been many public gifts of art in the past, the gift of this National Gallery, dedicated to the entire nation, (and) containing a considerable part of the most important work brought to this country from the continent of Europe, has necessarily a new significance. I think, I think it signifies a relation -- a new relation here made visible in paint and in stone -- between the whole people of this country, and the old inherited tradition of the arts. And we shall remember that these halls of beauty, the (creation) conception of a great American architect, John Russell Pope, combine the classicism of the past with the convenience of today.

In accepting this building and the paintings and other art that it contains, the people of the United States accept a part in that inheritance for themselves. They accept it for themselves not because this Gallery is given to them -- though they are thankful for the gift. They accept it for themselves because, in the past few years, they have come to understand that the inheritance is theirs and that, like other inheritors of other things of great value, they have a duty toward it.

There was a time when the people of this country would not have thought that the inheritance of art belonged to them or that they had responsibilities to guard it. A few generations ago, the people of this country were often taught by their writers and by their critics and by their teachers to believe that art was something foreign to America and to themselves -- something imported from another continent, something (and) from an age which was not theirs -- something they had no part in, save to go to see it in (a)

some guarded room on holidays or Sundays.

But recently, within the last few years (,) -- yes, in our lifetime -- they have discovered that they have a part. They have seen in their own towns, in their own villages, in schoolhouses, in post offices, in the back rooms of shops and stores, pictures painted by their sons, their neighbors -- people they have known and lived beside and talked to. They have seen, across these last few years, rooms full of painting and sculpture by Americans, walls covered with the painting (of) by Americans -- some of it good, some of it not so good, but all of it native, human, eager, and alive -- all of it painted by their own kind in their own country, and painted about things that they know and look at often and have touched and loved.

The people of this country know now, whatever they were taught or thought of, or thought they knew before, that art is not something just to be owned (but) or something to be made; that it is the act of making and not the act of owning (which) that is art. And knowing this they know also that art is not a treasure in the past or an importation from another (country) land, but part of the present life of all the living and creating peoples -- all who make and build; and, most of all, the young and vigorous peoples who have made and built our present wide country.

It is for this reason that the people of America accept the inheritance of these ancient arts. Whatever these paintings may have been to men who looked at them (a) generations back -- today they are not only works of art. Today they are the symbols of the human spirit, (and) symbols of the world the freedom of the human spirit has made -- and, incidentally, a world against which armies now are raised and countries overrun and men imprisoned and their work destroyed.

To accept, today, the work of German painters such as Holbein and

Durer, (and) of Italians like Botticelli and Raphael, (and) of painters of the Low Countries like Van Dyck and Rembrandt, and of famous Frenchmen, famous Spaniards -- to accept this work today (on behalf of) for the people of this democratic nation is to assert the belief of the people of this democratic nation in a human spirit which now is everywhere endangered and which, in many countries where it first found form and meaning, has been rooted out and broken and destroyed.

To accept this work today is to assert the purpose of the people of America that the freedom of the human spirit and human mind which has produced the world's great art and all its science -- shall not be utterly destroyed.

Seventy-eight years ago, in the third year of the War Between the States, men and women gathered here in the Capital of a divided nation, here in Washington, to see the dome above the Capitol completed and to see the bronze Goddess of Liberty set upon the top. It had been an expensive and laborious business, diverting money and labor from the prosecution of the war, and certain (citizens) critics -- for there were critics in 1863 -- certain critics found much to criticize. There were new marble pillars in the Senate wing of the Capitol; (and) there was a bronze door for the central portal and other such expenditures and embellishments. But the President of the United States, whose name was Lincoln, when he heard (the) those criticisms, answered: "If people see the Capitol going on, it is a sign that we intend (the) this Union shall go on". (Applause)

We may borrow the words for our own. We too intend the Union shall go on. We intend it shall go on, carrying with it the great tradition of the human spirit which created it.

The dedication of this Gallery to a living past, and to a greater

and more richly living future, is the measure of the earnestness of our intention that the freedom of a human spirit shall go on (...) and too.

(Applause)

\* \* \* \* \*

HOLD FOR RELEASE



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MARCH 17, 1941

CAUTION: The following address of the President, to be delivered in connection with the dedication of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT LATER THAN 10:15 P.M., E.S.T., March 17, 1941. The same release of the text of the address also applies to radio announcers and news commentators.

CARE MUST BE EXERCISED TO PREVENT PREMATURE PUBLICATION.

STEPHEN EARLY  
Secretary to the President

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SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
MARCH 17, 1941

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It is with a very real sense of satisfaction that I accept for the people of the United States and on their behalf this National Gallery and the collections it contains. The giver of the building has matched the richness of his gift with the modesty of his spirit, stipulating that the Gallery shall be known not by his name but by the nation's. And those other collectors of paintings and of sculpture who have already joined, or who propose to join, their works of art to Mr. Mellon's -- Mr. Kress and Mr. Widener -- have felt the same desire to establish, not a memorial to themselves, but a monument to the art they love and the country to which they belong. To these collections we now gratefully add the gift from Miss Ellen Bullard and three anonymous donors, which marks the beginning of the Gallery's collection of prints; and also the loan collection of early

American paintings from Mr. Chester Dale.

There have been, in the past, many gifts of great paintings and of famous works of art to the American people. Most of the wealthy men of the last century who bought, for their own satisfaction, the masterpieces of European collections, ended by presenting their purchases to their cities or their towns. Great works of art have a way of breaking out of private ownership into public use. They belong so obviously to all who love them -- they are so clearly the property not of their single owners but of all men everywhere -- that the private rooms and houses where they are hung become in time too narrow for their presence. The true collectors are the collectors who understand this -- the collectors of great paintings who feel that they can never truly own, but only gather and preserve for all who love them, the treasures they have found.

But though there have been many public gifts of art in the past, the gift of this National Gallery, dedicated to the entire nation and containing a considerable part of the most important work brought to this country from the continent of Europe, has necessarily a new significance. It signifies a relation -- a new relation here made visible in paint and in stone -- between the whole people of this country, and the old inherited tradition of the arts. And we shall remember that these halls of beauty, the creation of a great American architect, combine the classicism ~~and~~<sup>of</sup> the past with the convenience of today.

In accepting this building and the paintings it contains, the people of the United States accept a part in that inheritance for themselves. They accept it for themselves not because this Gallery is given to them --

though they are thankful for the gift. They accept it for themselves because, in the past few years, they have come to understand that the inheritance is theirs and that, like other inheritors of other things of value, they have a duty toward it.

There was a time when the people of this country would not have thought that the inheritance of art belonged to them or that they had responsibilities to guard it. A few generations ago, the people of this country were taught by their writers and by their critics and by their teachers to believe that art was something foreign to America and to themselves -- something imported from another continent and from an age which was not theirs -- something they had no part in, save to go to see it in a guarded room on holidays or Sundays.

But recently, within the last few years, they have discovered that they have a part. They have seen in their own towns, in their own villages, in school houses, in post offices, in the back rooms of shops and stores, pictures painted by their sons, their neighbors -- people they have known and lived beside and talked to. They have seen, across these last few years, <sup>rooms</sup> full of paintings by Americans, walls covered with the painting of Americans -- some of it good, some of it not good, but all of it native, human, eager, and alive -- all of it painted by their own kind in their own country, and painted about things they know and look at often and have touched and loved.

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Seventy-eight years ago, in the third year of the War Between the States, men and women gathered here in Washington to see the dome above the Capitol completed and the bronze Goddess of Liberty set upon the top. It had been an expensive and laborious business, diverting money and labor from the prosecution of the war, and certain

citizens found much to criticize. There were new marble pillars in the Senate wing and a bronze door for the central portal and other such expenditures and embellishments. But Lincoln, when he heard the criticisms, answered: "If people see the Capitol going on, it is a sign we intend the Union shall go on".

We may borrow the words for our own. We too intend the Union shall go on. We intend it shall go on, carrying with it the great tradition of the human spirit which created it.

The dedication of this Gallery to a living past, and to a greater and more richly living future, is the measure of the earnestness of our intention that the freedom of the human spirit shall go on.

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It is with a very real sense of satisfaction that I accept for the people of the United States and on their behalf this National Gallery and the collections it contains. The size of the building has matched the richness of his gift with the modesty of his spirit, stipulating that the Gallery shall be known not by his name but by the nation's. And those other collectors of paintings and of sculpture who have already joined, or who propose to join, their works of art to Mr. Mellon's -- Mr. Kress and Mr. Widener -- have felt the same desire to establish, not a memorial to themselves, but a monument to the art they love and the country to which they belong. To these collections we now gratefully add the gifts from Miss Ellen Bullard and three anonymous donors, which marks the beginning of the Gallery's collection of prints; and also the loan collection of early American paintings from Mr. Chester Dale.

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But though there have been many public gifts of art in the past, the gift of this National Gallery, dedicated to the entire nation and containing a considerable part of the most important work brought to this country from the continent of Europe, has necessarily a new significance. It signifies a relation -- a new relation here made visible in paint and in stone -- between the whole people of this country, and the old inherited tradition of the arts. And we shall remember that these halls of beauty, the creation of a great American architect, combine the classicism of the past with the convenience of today.

In accepting this building and the paintings it contains, the people of the United States accept a part in that inheritance for themselves. They accept it for themselves not because this Gallery is given to them -- though they are thankful for the gift. They accept it for themselves because, in the past few years, they have come to understand that the inheritance is theirs and that, like other inheritors of other things of value, they have a duty toward it.

There was a time when the people of this country would not have thought that the inheritance of art belonged to them or that they had responsibilities to guard it. A few generations ago, the people of this country were taught by their writers and by their critics and by their teachers to believe that art was something foreign to America and to themselves -- something imported from another continent and from an age which was not theirs -- something they had no part in, save to go to see it in a guarded room on holidays or Sundays.

But recently, within the last few years, they have discovered that they have a part. They have seen in their own towns, in their own villages, in school houses, in post offices, in the back rooms of shops and stores, pictures painted by their sons, their neighbors -- people they have known and lived beside and talked to. They have seen, across these last few years, rooms full of painting by Americans, walls covered with the painting of Americans -- some of it good, some of it not good, but all of it native, human, eager, and alive -- all of it painted by their own kind in their own country, and painted about things they know and look at often and have touched and loved.

The people of this country know now, whatever they were taught or thought they knew before, that art is not something just to be owned but something to be made; that it is the act of making and not the act of owning which is art. And knowing this they know also that art is not a treasure in the past or an importation from another country, but part of the present life of all the living and creating peoples -- all who make and build; and, most of all, the young and vigorous peoples who have made and built our present vital country.

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THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS

*Washington, D.C.*

March 13, 1941

Dear Missy:

Mr. Hassett asked me a few days ago if I would try my hand at a draft of the speech the President is to give at the dedication of the National Gallery. The enclosed is the draft - it is actually, for me, the fourth draft. I showed it to Felix and read it to Bob Sherwood last night and both of them think well of it. I hope the President will. Needless to say, I am entirely at his disposition to do anything with it he may wish done.

Always,

Faithfully yours,

*Archibald MacLeish*  
Archibald MacLeish

Miss Marguerite Leland  
Personal Secretary to the President  
The White House

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR MISS GRACE TULLY:

Here is a letter from the National  
Gallery of Art which I think the President  
will wish to see before he puts the final  
touches on his speech to be delivered tonight.

*Pill*

W.D.S.



NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

March 15, 1941

Dear Mr. Hassett:

If the President in his speech makes reference to the gift of Mr. Kress and the prospective gift of Mr. Widener, would it be possible for him to make reference also to the gift, which has been received by the Gallery, of a very important collection of prints from Miss Ellen Bullard and three anonymous donors which makes the beginning of the Gallery's print collection.

Also, that the Gallery has received on loan from Mr. Chester Dale a group of American paintings from the Chester Dale Collection, which illustrate the fine quality of painting by some of the earlier American Painters.

Sincerely yours,

*Thomas D. Mabry Jr.*  
Thomas D. Mabry, Jr.

Mr. William D. Hassett  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

DRAFT OF SPEECH:DEDICATION CEREMONY:NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

It is with a very real sense of satisfaction that I accept  
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*Art*  
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most important work brought to this country from the continent of Europe, has necessarily a new significance. It signifies a relation - a new relation here ~~is~~ <sup>not</sup> made visible in paint and in stone - between the people of this country, <sup>whole</sup> ~~the whole people of this country~~, and the old inherited tradition of the arts. B,

In accepting this building and the paintings it contains, the people of the United States accept a part in that inheritance for themselves. They accept it for themselves not because this Gallery is given to them - though they are thankful for the gift. They accept it for themselves because they have come, in the past few years, to understand that the inheritance is theirs and that, like other inheritors of other things of value, they have a duty toward it.

There was a time, and that not long ago, when the people

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But recently, within the last few years, they have dis-  
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painting of Americans - some of it good, some of it not good,  
but all of it native, human, eager, and alive - all of it  
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The people of this country know now, whatever they were  
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and build; and, most of all, the young and vigorous peoples  
who have made and built ~~themselves~~ our *present* ~~with~~ country.

It is for this reason that the people of America accept  
the inheritance of these ancient arts. ~~But it is not for this~~  
~~reason alone that they have come to feel a duty toward them.~~  
~~Their sense of duty has another source.~~ Whatever these paint-  
ings may have been to men who looked at them a generation back  
~~even ten years ago or five or three or two~~ - today they are  
not only works of art. Today they are the symbols of the  
human spirit, and of the world the freedom of the human spirit  
made - a world against which armies now are raised and countries  
overrun and men imprisoned and their work destroyed.

To accept, today, the work of German painters such as  
Holbein and Durer and of Italians like ~~Duccio and~~ Botticelli  
~~and Giotto~~ and Raphael, and of painters of the Low Countries,  
like Van Dyck and Rembrandt ~~and Vermeer~~, and of famous Frenchmen,

famous Spaniards - to accept this work today on behalf of  
the people of this democratic nation is to assert the belief  
of the people of this nation in a ~~cause~~ which now is everywhere  
endangered and which, in many countries where it first found  
~~form~~  
~~measures~~ and meaning, has been rooted out and broken and destroyed.

To accept this work today is to assert the purpose of the  
people of America that the freedom of the human spirit and  
~~the freedom of the~~ human mind which ~~has~~ produced the world's  
great art and all its science - ~~which have produced the happy~~  
~~and enduring nations also-~~ shall not be destroyed.

Seventy-eight years ago, in the ~~second~~ year of the war  
between the states, men and women gathered here in Washington  
to see the dome above the Capitol completed and the bronze  
Goddess of Liberty set upon the top. It had been an expensive  
and laborious business, diverting money and labor from the  
prosecution of the war, and certain citizens found much to

criticize. There were new marble pillars in the Senate wing and a bronze door for the central portal and other such expenditures and embellishments. But Lincoln, when he heard the criticisms answered: "If people see the Capitol going on, it is a sign we intend the Union shall go on".

We may borrow the words for our own. We too intend the Union shall go on. We intend it shall go on, carrying with it the great tradition of the human spirit which created it,  
the great tradition which its strength and its protection will,  
in every generation recreate again.

The dedication of this Gallery to a ~~dead~~ living past, and to a greater and more richly living future, is the measure of the earnestness of our intention that the freedom of the human spirit ~~in the union of our common freedom~~ shall go on.

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
MARCH 17, 1941

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It is with a very real sense of satisfaction that I accept for the people of the United States and on their behalf this National Gallery and the collections it contains. The giver of the building has matched the richness of his gift with the modesty of his spirit, stipulating that the Gallery shall be known not by his name but by the nation's. And those other collectors of paintings and of sculpture who have already joined, or who propose to join, their works of art to Mr. Mellon's -- Mr. Kress and Mr. Widener -- have felt the same desire to establish, not a memorial to themselves, but a monument to the art they love and the country to which they belong. To these collections we now gratefully add the gift from Miss Ellen Bullard and three anonymous donors, which marks the beginning of the Gallery's collection of prints; and also the loan collection of early

American paintings from Mr. Chester Dale.

There have been, in the past, many gifts of great paintings and of famous works of art to the American people. Most of the wealthy men of the last century who bought, for their own satisfaction, the masterpieces of European collections, ended by presenting their purchases to their cities or their towns. Great works of art have a way of breaking out of private ownership into public uses. They belong so obviously to all who love them -- they are so clearly the property not of their single owners but of all men everywhere -- that the private rooms and houses where they are hung become in time too narrow for their presence. The true collectors are the collectors who understand this -- the collectors of great paintings who feel that they can never truly own, but only gather and preserve for all who love them, the treasures they have found.

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But though there have been many public gifts of art in the past, the gift of this National Gallery, dedicated to the entire nation and containing a considerable part of the most important work brought to this country from the continent of Europe, has necessarily a new significance. It signifies a relation -- a new relation here made visible in paint and in stone -- between the whole people of this country, and the old inherited tradition of the arts. And we shall remember that these halls of beauty, the creation of a great American architect, combine the classicism of the past with the convenience of today.

In accepting this building and the paintings it contains, the people of the United States accept a part in that inheritance for themselves. They accept it for themselves not because this Gallery is given to them --

though they are thankful for the gift. They accept it for themselves because, in the past few years, they have come to understand that the inheritance is theirs and that, like other inheritors of other things of value, they have a duty toward it.

There was a time when the people of this country would not have thought that the inheritance of art belonged to them or that they had responsibilities to guard it. A few generations ago, the people of this country were taught by their writers and by their critics and by their teachers to believe that art was something foreign to America and to themselves -- something imported from another continent and from an age which was not theirs -- something they had no part in, save to go to see it in a guarded room on holidays or Sundays.

But recently, within the last few years, they have discovered that they have a part. They have seen in their own towns, in their own villages, in school houses, in post offices, in the back rooms of shops and stores, pictures painted by their sons, their neighbors -- people they have known and lived beside and talked to. They have seen, across these last few years, rooms full of paintings by Americans, walls covered with the painting of Americans -- some of it good, some of it not good, but all of it native, human, eager, and alive -- all of it painted by their own kind in their own country, and painted about things they know and look at often and have touched and loved.

The people of this country know now, whatever they were taught or thought they knew before, that art is not something just to be owned but something to be made: that it is the act of making and not the act of owning which is art. And knowing this they know also that art is not

a treasure in the past or an importation from another country, but part of the present life of all the living and creating peoples -- all who make and build; and, most of all, the young and vigorous peoples who have made and built our present wide country.

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To accept this work today is to assert the purpose of the people of America that the freedom of the human spirit and human mind which has produced the world's great art and all its science -- shall not be utterly destroyed.

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The dedication of this Gallery to a living past, and to a greater and more richly living future, is the measure of the earnestness of our intention that the freedom of the human spirit shall go on.

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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
MARCH 17, 1941

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and Rembrandt, and of famous Frenchmen, famous Spaniards -- to accept this work today on behalf of the people of this democratic nation is to assert the belief of the people of this nation in a human spirit which now is everywhere endangered and which, in many countries where it first found form and meaning, has been rooted out and broken and destroyed.

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We may borrow the words for our own. We too intend the Union shall go on. We intend it shall go on, carrying with it the great tradition of the human spirit which created it.

The dedication of this Gallery to a living past, and to a greater and more richly living future, is the measure of the earnestness of our intention that the freedom of the human spirit shall go on.

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STATEMENTS FILE

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE DEDICATION OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
DEDICATION OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
MARCH 17, 1941, 10.00 P.M., E.S.T.

## STATEMENTS FILE

HOLD FOR RELEASE

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March 17, 1941

**CAUTION:** The following address of the President, to be delivered in connection with the dedication of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

**NOTE:** Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAN 10:15 P.M., E.S.T., March 17, 1941. The same release of the text of the address also applies to radio announcers and news commentators.

1745

CAVEAT MUST BE EXERCISED TO PREVENT PREMATURE PUBLICATION.

STEPHEN EARLY  
Secretary to the President

-----  
Mr. Chief Justice, Ladies and Gentlemen:

*This*  
It is with a very real sense of satisfaction that I accept for the people of the United States and on their behalf this National Gallery and the collections it contains. The giver of the building has matched the richness of his gift with the modesty of his spirit, stipulating that the Gallery shall be known not by his name but by the nation's. And those other collectors of paintings and of sculpture who have already joined, or who propose to join, their works of art to Mr. Mellon's -- Mr. Kress and Mr. Widener -- have felt the same desire to establish, not a memorial to themselves, but a monument to the art they love and the country to which they belong. To these collections we now gratefully add the gift from Miss Ellen Ballard and three anonymous donors, which marks the beginning of the Gallery's collection of prints; and also the loan collection of early American paintings from Mr. Chester Dale.

*that*

*d*  
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*And as*

*I have lovingly*  
But though there have been many public gifts of art in the past, the gift of this National Gallery, dedicated to the entire nation, and containing a considerable part of the most important work brought to this country from the continent of Europe, has necessarily a new significance. It signifies a relation -- a new relation here made visible in paint and in stone -- between the whole people of this country, and the old inherited tradition of the arts. And we shall remember that these halls of beauty, the creation of a great American architect, John Russell Pope, combine the classicism of the past with the convenience of today.

*in the past**that**I think, I think**conception*

and other art that

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We may borrow the words for our own. We too intend the Union shall go on. We intend it shall go on, carrying with it the great tradition of the human spirit which created it.

The dedication of this Gallery to a living past, and to a greater and more richly living future, is the measure of the earnestness of our intention that the freedom of the human spirit shall go on, too. (Applause)

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critics -- for there were critics in 1863 -- certain critics.