



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

News

Media only: Bethany Bentley (202) 633-8293
Amy Lowman (202) 633-8295

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Fact Sheet **Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery**

Director: Martin Sullivan

Total Full-time Employees: 61

Annual Budget (federal and trust) FY 2010: \$9 million

Approximate Number of Artworks: 20,168

Visitors (2010): 1,144,494

Background

The Portrait Gallery is the only museum of its kind in the United States to stand at the intersection of American history, biography and art. It tells the history 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 whose lives tell the American story.

The museum was established by an Act of Congress in 1962 and opened to the public in 1968. Its mission is to collect and display images of “men and women who have made significant contributions to the history, development and culture of the people of the United States.”

Collections and Exhibitions

The museum's collection includes a wide range of paintings, sculpture, photographs drawings and new media. Prominent works include the following:

- “Lansdowne” portrait of George Washington a by Gilbert Stuart, oil on canvas (1796)
- Benjamin Franklin by Joseph Duplessis (the image on the \$100 bill), oil on canvas (c. 1785)
- John Brown by Augustus Washington, daguerreotype (c. 1846-1847)
- Frederick Douglass by an unknown artist, ambrotype (1856)
- Abraham Lincoln by Alexander Gardner (cracked-plate portrait), albumen silver print (1865)
- Mary Cassatt by Edgar Degas, oil on canvas (c. 1880-1884)
- Gertrude Stein by Jo Davidson, terra-cotta (1922-1923)
- Charlie Chaplin by Edward Steichen, gelatin silver print (1925)
- Ethel Waters by Beauford Delaney, pastel on paper (1940)
- Beauford Delaney by Georgia O’Keeffe, pastel on paper (1943)
- John Coltrane by Roy DeCarava, gelatin silver print (1961)
- Eunice Kennedy Shriver by David Lenz, oil on canvas (2009)
- Bill and Melinda Gates by Jon Friedman, oil on canvas (2010)

In addition, the National Portrait Gallery's collections hold more than 1,600 portraits of the U.S. presidents, 5,444 glass-plate negatives from the studios of Mathew Brady and original artwork from 2,139 *Time* magazine covers. The museum has a vigorous schedule of special exhibitions that rotate

throughout each year. Long term permanent collection exhibitions include: “America’s Presidents;” “American Origins;” “Twentieth Century Americans;” “The Struggle for Justice;” a room titled, “One Life,” is dedicated to the biography of one person, “Bravo,” devoted to those in the performing arts; and “Champions,” which focuses on great athletes.

Educational Programs

The museum offers a wide range of programming that includes free lectures, performances and films. The Portrait Gallery also presents teacher workshops, family days and guided tours for thousands of people each year. School children and educators are treated to interactive tours tailored to curricula; families and young artists can participate in hands-on programming with the monthly Portrait Stories or Be the Artist programs. Adults can learn more about the museum and the collection by attending a weekly highlights tour. The popular Face-to-Face program takes place every Thursday at 6 p.m. These half-hour talks, led by a museum curator or leader in the field, offer visitors an intimate look into the life of a sitter featured in the work.

Catalog of American Portraits

The Catalog of American Portraits is a survey of American portraits in public and private collections across the United States and abroad. The portrait archives maintain information and images for more than 200,000 portraits of American subjects or by American artists. The catalog is available online via its Portrait Search feature. National Portrait Gallery collections are included in the portrait database as are portraits relating to the museum’s exhibitions.

Lunder Conservation Center

This is the first art conservation facility in the United States that allows the public permanent behind-the-scenes views of the two museums’ preservation work. Conservation staff members are visible to the public through floor-to-ceiling glass walls. People may also learn more about conserving their art by appointment.

The Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard

The Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard, designed by Foster + Partners, is a dynamic, year-round public gathering space enclosed by a curving glass roof. Foster + Partners was assisted by landscape designer Kathryn Gustafson of Seattle-based Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd. in the creation of the courtyard’s interior. Free public wireless Internet access (Wi-Fi) is available in the courtyard. The Courtyard Café offers casual dining from 11:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

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The Portrait Gallery’s National Historic Landmark building, praised by Walt Whitman as the “noblest of Washington buildings,” is considered one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in the United States. The \$283 million renovation (2000-2006) revealed the full magnificence of the building’s architectural features, including porticos modeled after the Parthenon in Athens, a curving double staircase, vaulted galleries, large windows and skylights as long as a city block. The museum shares its building and entrances with the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Collectively, the two museums and their activities are known as the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture.

About the Museum

The National Portrait Gallery is located at Eighth and F streets N.W. Metro: Gallery Place/Chinatown. Museum hours: 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, except Dec. 25. Free admission. Smithsonian information: (202) 633-1000; TTY (202) 633-5285. Web site: npg.si.edu; Facebook [facebook.com/npg.smithsonian](https://www.facebook.com/npg.smithsonian); blog face2face.si.edu; Twitter twitter.com/npg; YouTube [youtube.com/NatlPortraitGallery](https://www.youtube.com/NatlPortraitGallery).