Tony Bennett Donates Painting of Duke Ellington to the
Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery

The Smithsonian Institution today announced that Tony Bennett is donating his watercolor painting of Duke Ellington to the National Portrait Gallery. The painting will be presented at the museum in April 2009 to commemorate the 110th anniversary of Ellington’s birth.

The painting depicts Ellington with a bouquet of pink roses in the background. Bennett chose this motif to celebrate Ellington’s habit of sending the singer a dozen pink roses whenever Ellington composed a new song.

Bennett, a 15-time Grammy Award-winning singer, has been painting all his life and has a reputation as an accomplished visual artist. This donation marks the third painting he has donated to the Smithsonian. In 2006, Bennett’s painting of Central Park was donated to the Smithsonian American Art Museum and, in 2002, his portrait of Ella Fitzgerald was donated to the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History.

“We are honored to accept this donation from Mr. Bennett to the National Portrait Gallery’s collection,” said Martin Sullivan, director of the museum. “There was great affection between Bennett and Ellington, and both were outstanding contributors to America’s musical heritage.”

About the National Portrait Gallery

The Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery 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 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.


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