National Portrait Gallery to Present the Clintons’ Portraits

When the National Portrait Gallery opens to the public in its gloriously restored National Historic Landmark building on July 1, visitors will view the portraits of President Bill Clinton and First Lady, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton. President and Sen. Clinton will unveil the portraits on Monday, April 24, in a private ceremony. The Portrait Gallery holds the nation’s only complete collection of presidential portraits outside the White House. This is the first time that the Portrait Gallery commissioned and acquired a portrait of a first lady at the same time as a president.

“We are honored that the president and first lady have continued a recent White House tradition to sit for portraits commissioned for the National Portrait Gallery,” said Portrait Gallery director, Marc Pachter. “Generations of Americans will enjoy meeting them in these magnificent portraits.”

President William Jefferson Clinton, 59, was the first Democratic president since Franklin D. Roosevelt to win a second term. Clinton’s presidency reshaped the nation’s public welfare system. His administration also played a crucial part in curbing the massive federal spending deficits that had soared out of control in the 1980s; during his second term the government had a surplus in revenues for the first time since the late 1960s.

Hillary Rodham Clinton, 58, in her role as the nation’s first lady, chaired the Task Force on National Health Care Reform. She was a leading advocate for expanding health insurance coverage, ensuring children are properly immunized, and raising public awareness of health issues. Hillary Rodham Clinton was elected U.S. Senator from New York in 2000. She is the first, first lady elected to the U.S. Senate, and the first woman elected statewide in New York.

Nelson Shanks, President Clinton’s choice to paint his portrait for the Portrait Gallery, has depicted notable figures such as Pope John Paul II, Diana, Princess of Wales, President Ronald
Reagan, Lady Margaret Thatcher, Luciano Pavarotti and Katharine Graham. Shanks’ portrait of Denyce Graves also will be on view at the Portrait Gallery when it opens July 1.

Ginny Stanford was Sen. Clinton’s choice to paint her portrait for the Portrait Gallery. Stanford, a native of Missouri, is a resident of Northern California. Since her first exhibition in 1974, she has exhibited widely throughout the U.S. Stanford’s painting of M.F.K. Fisher, the food critic, is now a part of the Portrait Gallery’s permanent collection.

Since it opened to the public, the Portrait Gallery has been committed to collecting portraits of presidents. Shank’s portrait of President Clinton will be hung in “America’s Presidents,” which lies at the heart of the Portrait Gallery’s mission to tell the story of America through the individuals who have shaped it. Formerly called the “Hall of Presidents,” “America’s Presidents” has been expanded nearly three-fold to accommodate more images from the Portrait Gallery’s permanent collection.

With the Portrait Gallery’s increased interest in collecting the portraits of first lady’s, Sen. Clinton’s portrait is the first, first lady’s portrait that will be accessioned into the collection at the same time as a president’s. Initially the portrait of Sen. Clinton will be hung in the exhibition, “Americans Now.” This exhibit, drawn from the Portrait Gallery’s permanent collection, features prominent Americans. It also will reflect the variety of media the Gallery is now collecting and address the museum’s newly established policy of accepting living subjects into the collection.

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


Note to editors:
Images of the portraits will be available at ftp://npg-pa-gst1@ftp.si.edu after 6 p.m. on April 24. Call (202) 275-1768 or email bentleyb@si.edu for the password.

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