National Museum of Women in the Arts Receives $9 Million Bequest
Largest Single Gift in Museum’s History

WASHINGTON—The National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) is pleased to announce the largest single financial gift in the museum’s history. On its 30th anniversary, NMWA has been honored by a major gift of $9 million from the Estate of Madeleine Rast. The bequest will bolster the museum’s endowment, strengthening in perpetuity NMWA’s mission to bring recognition to the achievements of women artists.

“We are inspired and truly grateful for this extraordinary gift. Madeleine was absolutely convinced of the importance of establishing a museum for women in the arts. Her conviction never wavered and, over time, she became a steadfast advocate for our mission as well as a dear friend,” said NMWA Founder Wilhelmina Cole Holladay. “Her generous gift to the museum will be enable future generations to enjoy the highest standards of exhibitions and programs and help make us more visible throughout the world.”

Board President Emerita Carol Lascaris, who co-chairs the endowment with her husband, Climis, said, “The Legacy of Women in the Arts Endowment is the lifeblood of our institution. It upholds the founder’s vision and supports our mission for future generations. Climis and I are so grateful to Madeleine Rast for planning this remarkable gift, which magnifies our museum’s strength and financial security.”

In 1993 when NMWA first announced her intention to create a charitable remainder trust, Madeleine Rast said: “The achievements of women artists of the past have generally been overlooked and ignored, yet many women persisted, developing their talents and producing magnificent works of art. Today’s artist still faces the same set of problems. She needs the time and place to develop her art. She needs a responsive audience also capable of constructive criticism. She needs a peer group for support and collaboration. And, yes, she needs recognition for her work.”
Rast (1924–2017) was born in Zurich, Switzerland, and came to the United States as a young woman, settling in California. She was attracted to the entrepreneurial spirit and openness to new ideas in the U.S., and she worked hard to establish herself, working clerical jobs while pursuing a second degree in accounting. She began to excel professionally, eventually becoming a successful management auditor in the public and private sectors, but she was aware of not having the same support or opportunities as men in the field.

She became a savvy businesswoman, excelling as an investor and in her accounting career, but she never forgot that she—and other women—faced barriers to their goals. Rast said that she chose to support NMWA because it is an institution that inspires and encourages women in a way that she would have appreciated in her own career. She told the museum, “Giving is a very personal act, but if you believe as strongly as I do in advancing the cause of women, then there’s no question about it.”

Friends from Rast’s life and involvement with the museum remember her as a thoughtful and pragmatic woman. In addition to her belief in equity for women, she also believed strongly in taking action on her principles. Always interested in hearing about NMWA’s exhibitions and programs, Rast was also constantly thinking of its future and financial health.

Rast was also moved by the building itself, which she saw as a prominent, elegant home for a worthy mission. She saw the museum as the physical manifestation of the dream of supporting and celebrating women’s achievements in the arts. For Rast, her bequest provided an avenue to combine her love for the arts, her staunch belief in women’s independence, and her financial prowess. Her gift supports the institution in an exceptional and unprecedented way.

National Museum of Women in the Arts
The National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) is the world’s only major museum solely dedicated to celebrating the creative contributions of women. The museum champions women through the arts by collecting, exhibiting, researching and creating programs that advocate for equity and shine a light on excellence. NMWA highlights remarkable women artists of the past while also promoting the best women artists working today. The museum’s collection includes over 5,000 works by more than 1,000 women artists from the 16th century to the present, including Mary Cassatt, Frida Kahlo, Alma Thomas, Lee Krasner, Louise Bourgeois, Chakaia Booker and Nan Goldin.

NMWA is located at 1250 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C., in a landmark building near the White House. It is open Monday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and Sunday, noon–5 p.m. For information, call 202-783-5000 or visit nmwa.org. Admission is $10 for adults, $8 for visitors 65 and over and students, and free for NMWA members and youths 18 and under. Free Community Days take place on the first Sunday of each month. For more information about NMWA, visit nmwa.org, Broad Strokes Blog, Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

# # #

Image credit line:
Portrait of Madeleine Rast (1924–2017), 1992, from her personal collection