

PAUL MELLON

Paul Mellon, who died on February 1, 1999, devoted himself and his wealth to the support of excellence. While doing so, he personally excelled in many realms, including collecting works of art and building museums to house them; breeding, racing, and riding horses; and, above all, philanthropy. Blessed with inherited wealth, a strong constitution (he was a champion trail rider into his seventies), and an equable demeanor, he made the most of a long life. Born June 11, 1907, Paul described his childhood in his highly readable autobiography, *Reflections in a Silver Spoon* (Morrow, 1992), as less than ideal despite the comforts of life in a well-to-do-home: an aloof, distant father, the financier Andrew W. Mellon; strained relations between his parents that led to separation and divorce; and the bleak, drab setting of industrial Pittsburgh. His brighter memories of early years were of summers in rural England, where his English mother, Nora McMullen Mellon, instilled in him a love of horses, horsemanship, and country life.

With appropriate filial piety, Paul's primary philanthropic activities were closely linked to the source of his wealth, Andrew W. Mellon, and to his father's previous charitable undertakings. One of his earliest philanthropic responsibilities, undertaken while still in his twenties, was as a founder, trustee, and eventually chairman of his father's Pittsburgh-based A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust (liquidated in 1980). Later Paul oversaw the consolidation of his own Old Dominion Foundation and the Avalon Foundation of his sister, Ailsa Mellon Bruce, into the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (1969), of which he was long a trustee.

Paul continued the work of his father in his involvement with the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Andrew Mellon formally offered the Gallery as an intended gift to the nation in 1936. He donated spectacular paintings, provided funds for the construction of John Russell Pope's splendid classical design, and decreed that the Gallery not bear his name so as not to discour-

age future support from others. Paul himself later followed that pattern of philanthropy and modesty in creating the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven and the East Building that more than doubled the size of the National Gallery. After Andrew Mellon's death in 1937, the year construction of the National Gallery began, young Paul stepped in and oversaw the project through to successful completion in 1941. That summer he enlisted as a private in the cavalry. After Officer Training School he served two years as a riding instructor at Fort Riley, Kansas, then went overseas with the OSS in England and Europe, rising to the rank of major. On his return in 1945, he became president of the National Gallery and served in that capacity for forty years before becoming an honorary trustee in 1985.

Whatever Paul received from the schools at which he was educated—Choate; Yale; Clare College, Cambridge; St. John's College in Annapolis—was generously repaid by his benefactions. As a student, Paul's primary interests were literary. At Yale, he was inspired (and his Anglophilia reinforced) by such English department luminaries as Chauncey Brewster Tinker and William Lyon Phelps. After graduating from Yale he continued his study at Cambridge, where his love of English outdoor life burgeoned through rowing on the Cam and riding—especially fox hunting. The latter interest precipitated his first steps as a collector, the purchase of books on hunting and racing. This led in 1936 to his first purchase of a painting, George Stubbs's *Pumpkin with a Stable Lad*, which he always maintained was his favorite English painting in his collection.

Paul's wide-ranging literary interests are manifest in the achievements of the Bollingen Foundation, which he and his first wife, Mary Conover Brown, established in 1945 for the advancement and preservation of learning in the humanities. Mary suffered from severe asthma, which she felt was psychological in origin. Paul and Mary had traveled to Switzerland so that she could be analyzed and treated by the great psychoanalyst Carl Jung. The foundation was named Bollingen after the village on Lake

Zurich where Jung had built a retreat. Mary died of a severe asthma attack in 1946. Over the years the foundation published a large number of scholarly volumes in the Bollingen Series, some quite esoteric, including Jung's *Collected Works*, the *I Ching; or, Book of Changes*, *The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*, and *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. In addition to making scholarly grants, the Foundation also funded the prestigious Bollingen Prize in Poetry. Coincidental with his interest in Jung and his work, Paul and his wife, Mary, built a major collection of books on alchemy and the occult, which he subsequently gave to the Beinecke Library at Yale. Another literary coup was the acquisition of the papers of James Boswell, biographer of Samuel Johnson, which, with Paul's assistance, came to Yale, where they have been systematically edited and published. Even more extraordinary was his acquisition in 1959 of the private library of John Locke. Whenever I visited Paul at his home in Upperville, Virginia, and went to the Brick House where many of his British paintings hung, I would wander off for a reflective visit to the small room where 835 old, leather-bound volumes, annotated, catalogued, and shelf-numbered in Locke's own hand, were kept. Paul later gave these books to the Bodleian Library at Oxford, to which he had earlier donated Locke manuscripts.

Another literary port of call for me at the Brick House was the library, with its extraordinary holdings of British rare illustrated books, including the great collection of color plate books assembled by Major J. R. Abbey, which is now at the Yale Center for British Art (Paul was especially adroit at collecting collections), and extraordinary American books and travel journals as well. Finally, a non-book detour took me upstairs to gaze in awe at the astonishing group of Degas waxes Paul had acquired, the unique, crisp progenitors of the bronzes with which we are so familiar.

Paul's interest in French art was undoubtedly stimulated by the commitment to it of his second wife, Rachel ('Bunny') Lambert Lloyd, a distinguished and sensitive landscape gardener, whom he married in 1948 and by whom he is survived. Paul and Bunny be-

gan to collect French art in 1948. In 1966 the National Gallery exhibited their superb collection of French art along with the collection of Paul's sister, Ailsa Mellon Bruce.

Another fecund publishing venture Paul made possible is the series of volumes on British art published by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art in London under the imprint of Yale University Press. This publishing venture, which has transformed scholarship in the field, was initiated by the London Centre's predecessor, the Paul Mellon Foundation for British Art, founded by Paul in 1963 and directed by his British art advisor, Basil Taylor.

In recognition of Paul's literary interests and accomplishment, the American Antiquarian Society elected him a member in April 1967. Paul's interest in books, which manifested itself in his collecting and his philanthropy, was deep-rooted. In his autobiography he wrote that after his marriage in the mid-1930s, as he contemplated what he would do with his life, 'I daydreamed . . . about entering the publishing business or something connected with books, having long ago given up the idea of an academic career' (*Reflections*, 158). A steady supporter of the Society, he also responded quietly but generously whenever Marcus McCorison petitioned him for assistance with a special acquisition or a major fund drive.

Paul began to collect British art in the late 1950s with the encouragement and help of Basil Taylor. His interests differed from the taste for elaborate, full-length portraits by artists such as Reynolds, Gainsborough, or Romney that had appealed to and were collected by his father and other industrialists in the earlier years of the century—portraits with which he was all too familiar from his Pittsburgh childhood. Paul preferred informal scenes of English life—landscapes, sporting and marine art, conversation pieces—and had a special affinity for watercolors, drawings, and oil sketches along with the finished paintings. He collected works by artists then little appreciated—George Stubbs, Joseph Wright of Derby, and Arthur Devis—as well as those of such better-

known printers as William Hogarth, J.M.W. Turner, and John Constable. His broad scope ranged chronologically from Holbein and Hilliard to the mid-nineteenth century. There he stopped abruptly, like a shying horse, feeling that pre-Raphaelite paintings, for which he did not care very much, were overpriced, and he only acquired occasional later works by artists he did like—Whistler, Ben Nicolson, Barbara Hepworth. He assembled his holdings of British art with great rapidity, seizing the opportunity offered by a flaccid market. By the mid-sixties he had built a major collection, much admired when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1965 and in America at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Yale University Art Gallery the following year.

What was he to do with this enormous collection? He hung English pictures, along with his French Impressionist and post-Impressionist masterpieces and a choice group of American art that included paintings by Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins (most of the French and American pictures have gone to the National Gallery) in his several homes—‘Oak Spring’ in Upperville; on Whitehaven Street in Washington; on East 70th Street in New York; and at Osterville on Cape Cod, where he spent a month or so in the latter part of each summer; in Antigua, a vacation home for winter visits; and even in his Gulfstream jet. But he also filled two virtual private museums with British art—the Brick House in Virginia and a building next to his home in Washington on Whitehaven Street. His British collection was too large and too narrow in focus to give *in toto* to the National Gallery—only a portion could be on view there at any one time. With the exhibition of the collection at Yale in 1966, the idea took firm hold that in a university setting the collection could simultaneously be displayed adequately and foster scholarship in the English field he loved so well. And thus the collection came to Yale—the initial and promised gift was announced in 1966, and the great building designed by Louis Kahn (while I was director, 1968–75) was opened in 1977. It should be noted, almost as an aside, but hardly

so, in fact, that Paul Mellon was also a major patron of architecture, notably by Kahn at Yale and by I. M. Pei, the architect of the East Building of the National Gallery in Washington and of several buildings at Choate, especially the Paul Mellon Arts Center.

Paul's philanthropic career tracked his own history and inclinations. He professionalized the art of personal giving as he systematically gathered information and advice at each step along the way toward a final decision. Then, with admirable restraint and lack of ego, he allowed the recipients, who, he said, in addition to carrying out the intention of his gift had to live with the results, license to get on with the job, although he liked to be asked for his thoughts, to have an opportunity 'to put his oar in.' In the end, it can be said that through his life and his works, Paul Mellon raised the practice of philanthropy to the level of a fine art.

Jules David Prown

HOPE HARTWELL SPEAR

Hope Hartwell Spear died on February 4, 1999, at the age of seventy-four at her home in Worcester, Massachusetts, the city where she had lived all of her life. She was the daughter of Harold H. and Gladys P. Bronson Hartwell and was graduated from Bancroft School and Sarah Lawrence College. She was elected to the American Antiquarian Society in 1980.

Hope was in regular attendance at AAS meetings until her last, prolonged illness. She served as a member of the Pursuing Committee of the Worcester Association for Mutual Aid in the Detection of Thieves, the support arm of the Society. In this capacity, she chaired and assisted with annual functions and was indefatigable in recruiting volunteers to assist her. She was the chair of the one and only and enormously successful, gala ball held at the Society in the Reading Room on the occasion of the 175th anniversary in 1987.

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