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Portrait of Marilyn Horne Donated to the National Portrait Gallery

The Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery announced the acquisition of a painting of renowned opera mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne by John Foote. Celebrated as one of the most remarkable voices of the 20th century, Horne is donating the portrait to the museum. The portrait will be installed in the gallery's "New Arrivals" exhibition Nov. 12.

"I am grateful for the generosity of Ms. Horne—her portrait is a wonderful addition to our collection," said Brandon Fortune, curator of painting and sculpture at the museum. "This painting serves as a biography of Ms. Horne and allows us to tell the story of American opera in the 20th century."

Foote created the portrait of Horne in 1971 to honor her debut at the Metropolitan Opera the previous year as Adalgisa in Bellini's "Norma," one of her signature bel canto roles. The painting was originally displayed in "Portraits of the American Stage, 1771–1971," an exhibition the National Portrait Gallery organized in recognition of the opening of the Kennedy Center in 1971.

Born in Bradford, Pa., Jan. 16, 1934, Horne became one of the most remarkable vocalists of the 20th century. An international opera performer, teacher and mentor, Horne's five-decade career began at the age of four when she sang at a rally for President Franklin Roosevelt. She honed her natural talent studying music at the University of Southern California before beginning her professional career in 1954, when she dubbed the singing voice of Dorothy Dandridge in the film "Carmen Jones." Horne's talent and career, including notable roles in "Norma," "Semiramide" and "Anna Bolena," have distinguished her as one of the greatest American opera performers. On Nov. 14, Horne is receiving the National Endowment for the Arts Opera Honors Award. Horne's portrait will join those of other prominent opera figures in the National Portrait Gallery, including Marian Anderson, Maria Callas and Leontyne Price.

The 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 nearly 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. Smithsonian information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Web site: npg.si.edu.

Note to editors: An image for publicity may be downloaded from a password-protected FTP site. Call (202) 633-8295 or e-mail ZirinskyJ@si.edu to access the site.

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