Significant Bequest by Frederic Hamilton Highlighted a Year of Important Acquisitions for the Denver Art Museum in 2014

Museum continues commitment to present, preserve and acquire a broad range of artwork

(Denver, CO) – Feb. 3, 2015 – On Jan. 13, 2014, the Denver Art Museum (DAM) announced that Denver-based philanthropist Frederic C. Hamilton, the museum’s Chairman Emeritus, was making a bequest of 22 impressionist masterworks from his private collection to the museum. The addition of these works elevates the museum’s holdings of impressionist works to one of the best in the Western United States. The bequest includes:

- Vincent van Gogh’s *Edge of a Wheat Field with Poppies*, the first Van Gogh artwork to enter the museum’s collection;
- Four works by Claude Monet including *Path in the Wheat Fields at the Pourville, 1882*, and *The Houses in the Snow, Norway*, illustrating a range of output during the peak of Monet’s career;
- Three paintings by Eugène Boudin, the first by the artist to enter the museum’s collection, including *Scene at the Beach in Trouville, 1881*;
- A painting by Paul Cézanne, another first for the museum’s collection,
- Works by Édouard Manet, Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro, Pierre Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley, William Merritt Chase and Childe Hassam.

This capstone gift—the largest gift ever given to the museum—marks 35 years of Hamilton’s generous giving to the DAM.

Other selected acquisition highlights in 2014 include:

**Architecture, Design and Graphics Department**

Contemporary British designer Faye Toogood’s furniture—including her Roly Poly chair—displays a preoccupation with materiality and an honesty towards her chosen materials. Inspired by the soft edges of children’s toys and her recent pregnancy, the fiberglass chairs, tables, and daybeds of Toogood’s Roly Poly furniture feature rounded forms, wide legs and a “welcoming chunkiness.” The DAM is the first museum to acquire work by Toogood. This work strengthens the DAM’s collection of contemporary British design, which features work by Ron Arad, Tom Dixon and Jasper Morrison, among others.

The department also acquired seven floor tiles for the Parco dei Principi Hotel, Rome, and a full place-setting of Domus flatware, both designed by Gio Ponti. The tiles, which represent a highpoint of 20th century Italian tile design, embody both a national interest in decorating with tile and the international rise of op art in the 1960s. Domus is one of several flatware patterns Ponti designed; the pointed implements, creased bowls and pierced handle make Domus exuberantly distinctive. The tiles, gifted by Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown, and the flatware, a gift of Dung Ngo, comprise a notable addition to the DAM’s design collection and the museum’s growing representation of Gio Ponti’s lengthy career, including DAM’s 1971 North Building.
Asian Art Department

A variety of works were added to the Asian Art Department in 2014, encompassing mediums including woodblock prints, bamboo, ink on paper, lacquer and glazed stoneware. Ronald Otsuka, the DAM’s Dr. Joseph de Heer Curator of Asian Art, retired at the end of 2014. Several woodblock prints that were on view in Otsuka’s final exhibition, *At the Mirror: Reflections of Japan in 20th Century Prints*, entered the collection.

2014 acquisitions featured in *At the Mirror*:

Other artworks acquired or given in honor of Otsuka included:

Modern and Contemporary Art Department

*A Beautiful Fall* was created by Joseph Stashkevetch in 2013 for an exhibition at the DAM titled *Epic—Joseph Stashkevetch: Drawings*. It was purchased on the occasion of the exhibition by the DAM with funds from the Eleanor and Henry Hitchcock Foundation and the Singer Family Foundation.

The department also acquired a 1964 painting by Agnes Martin titled *White Rose*. The 74 x 74 inch acrylic and graphite work by the noted Canadian-American artist, is a gift to the museum by Olivia Coan Jones. *White Rose*, one of the finest examples of this well-known abstract painter’s career, will be on view in *Showing Off: Recent Modern and Contemporary Acquisitions*, opening May 17, 2015.

Native Arts

Significant acquisitions by the Native Arts Department in 2014 included important works in all three collecting areas: American Indian, Africa and Oceania.

Among the works were 25 Hopi and Navajo *katsina* figures gifted by Elizabeth Landry and Ellen Anderman and Jim Donaldson; four Micmac quilled boxes (1825-1975) given by James E. Laramy; 12 contemporary ceramic works given by Nancy L. Harris; and seven West African textiles gifted by Jonathan and Dale Carolyn Gluckman.

A 2012 ink and tissue collage on paper by artist Rose B. Simpson (Santa Clara, b. 1983) titled *Transparency Self Portrait* was given to the department by Polly and Mark Addison.

Added to the Oceania collection was an Asmat *Jipae mask*, (right) Arkampinoko, Papuan Province, Indonesia. The bark, wood, paint and feather piece was a gift of the Crandall family.
New World Department

Gifts of Mexican colonial art to the DAM’s New World Art Department from the Frederick and Jan Mayer collection have greatly enhanced the Spanish Colonial collection, making it one of the most significant in the world. Noteworthy works include three extraordinary feather paintings depicting Christian saints. This Aztec art form captured the attention of Spaniards before and after the conquest of Mexico. During the colonial period, Spaniards encouraged the continuation of featherwork in schools they founded attached to missions where Indian artists made Aztec-style feather mosaics, but now depicting Christian saints. These works are very rare today, making *Saint John the Evangelist* (right) an important addition to the DAM collection.

Another significant work is one of only a handful of signed *enconchado* paintings. During the colonial period in Mexico, a unique art form known as *enconchado* was invented which may be related to both pre-Hispanic shell mosaic and Asian shell inlay traditions. *Enconchado* wood panels were inset with pieces of mother-of-pearl and then painted with oil paints thinned to a translucence, to allow the shimmer of the pearl to shine through the paint. The outstanding example gifted to the DAM—a work by Agustín del Pino depicting St. Ignatius Loyola—is a pair with another *enconchado* painting of Saint Francis Xavier in the Museo de America in Madrid, Spain.

Department of Painting & Sculpture

In 2014, the museum presented an exhibition of works by Colorado artist Daniel Sprick. Featured in *Daniel Sprick’s Fictions: Recent Works* was this stunning portrait of *Jared*. Sprick’s recent paintings blur the line between realism and abstraction. His meticulous representation of everyday objects and stirring interpretation of the human form provide viewers a new way to look at the world.

In *Jared*, a flat-chested, dreadlocked youth in silhouette before a pale light sets the tone immediately. Echoes of the unfurling dreads are mirrored in the bands of unfinished arms, and rose and citron highlights lace across the landscape of Jared’s face despite the golden light emanating from no specific source. This image is fiction at its best.

The Petrie Institute of Western American Art

Several paintings representing artists in the Taos Society of Artists came to the DAM as a year-end gift in December 2013 from Dr. George C. Peck and Catherine M. Peck. Complementing those works, the museum acquired additional paintings from the Peck Collection, greatly enhancing the Western American art collection.

Their gifts included oil paintings by Victor Higgins (*Taos, New Mexico*, c. 1921—right), William Herbert Dunton (*Evening on the Range*, before 1925) and Kenneth Miller Adams, (*Reapers (Harvest)*, c. 1935).

Photography Department

The Photography Department was given ten photographs from Neil Winokur’s *Self Portrait* series by Joyce and Ted Strauss in memory of Nancy Tieken. Combined with the *Self-Portrait* works acquired in connection with an important DAM-organized Winokur exhibition in 1993, this gift provides the DAM with the only complete *Self-Portrait* series held by a North American museum.
In this series, the artist created a droll and sometimes ironic catalogue of the people, animals and objects that surround him. The clever superficiality of Winokur’s self-portraits also derive, in part, from the deadpan celebrity portraits of his one-time mentor, Andy Warhol. The bright, candy-colored backdrops and seemingly naïve forms of the Winokur photographs evoke both commercial imagery and pop art.

Andy Warhol’s *Little Red Books* offer unique and carefree glimpses of the circle of friends, celebrities and hangers-on who frequented Warhol’s New York studio, The Factory, between 1969 and 1975. The informal, one-of-a-kind Polaroid snapshots in the albums reveal an improvisational skill and suggest interactions with their subjects that are comparatively friendly and unselfconscious.

The particular Little Red Photo Book was acquired by the DAM as a gift from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. It is exceptional both for its stylistic quirks and subject matter, including pictures of such cultural icons as John Lennon, Yoko Ono and Jack Nicholson as well as snapshots of the famous “Warhol Superstar” Viva, designer Jed Johnson and avant-garde filmmaker/Anthology Film Archive founder Jonas Mekas.

**Textile Art**

A 2013 end-of-year gift to the Textile Art Department, this Princess Feather quilt (left) was a family heirloom, passed down through generations until given to the DAM. The Princess Feather pattern was extremely popular in the second half of the 19th century and appears in many variations. The suggested origins of this motif, also known as Prince’s Feather, range from the plumes and flowers of the amaranth plant to the ostrich plumes on the Prince of Wales insignia. According to the donors and family history, the quilt was made by Sally Rivers, who lived on a farm near Thomasville, Alabama.


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