

# *Introduction to the Collections*

THE COLLECTIONS OF the Dallas Museum of Art have grown dramatically since the museum's inception. At present they consist of approximately twenty-two thousand objects and include works from diverse cultures around the globe. The building of these holdings was not a simple or linear task. Like those of most museums, Dallas's collections at first grew sporadically, with the most dramatic development taking place from the 1960s onward. As with most other institutions, the taste and generosity of numerous private collectors and patrons have profoundly shaped the museum.

During the first two decades following its founding in 1903, the Dallas Art Association, parent body of the Dallas Museum of Art, initiated a permanent collection by both purchase and gift. While the number of pieces acquired was relatively small, several items of lasting significance were obtained. This is especially true in the area of what then was considered contemporary art. Childe Hassam's *September Moonrise* (1900), for example, was purchased in 1903. Robert Henri's *Dutch Boy Laughing* (1907) followed in 1909.

In 1925 Mrs. S. I. Munger greatly enhanced acquisition efforts by establishing the Munger Fund with a \$50,000 endowment. This fund, the first of its kind at the museum, has purchased numerous important works for the collection. One of its most notable early acquisitions was Claude Monet's *The Seine at Lavacourt* (1880) in 1938. More recently the Munger Fund added Narcisse Diaz de La Peña's *Forest of Fontainebleau* (1868) to the collection.

Because its collection was small and its means limited, the Dallas Art Association exhibited its works in a series of spaces provided by other institutions during the first three decades of this century. The first of these was the Carnegie Library. In 1909 the Fair Park Free Public Art Gallery was erected, but in 1928 its glass dome was destroyed by hail and the collection had to be moved to the Majestic Theatre. By the early 1930s, however, growth of the collection and the hiring of John Sites Ankeney as the first professional director encouraged the creation of a permanent home. In 1936, as part of the Texas Centennial Exposition, a sizable building in the art deco style was erected at the Dallas fairgrounds for use as an art museum. This facility greatly enhanced the role of the museum within the community. After the centennial celebration, Dallas philanthropists Esther and Karl Hoblitzelle placed on long-term loan their collection of Old Master pictures, including Paolini's *Bacchic Concert* (c. 1630). Those

works, plus a significant collection of English and Irish silver, were given to the museum in 1987 by the Hoblitzelle Foundation.

In 1943 the artist Jerry Bywaters became director of the museum. During his twenty-one-year tenure, the institution emerged as an important regional center. Its collections of Southwestern and Mexican art were enhanced, most significantly by Rufino Tamayo's masterpiece *El Hombre* (1953). A bequest of thirty-six paintings from Joel T. Howard substantially increased the representation of American impressionists, while purchases and gifts strengthened the collection of more contemporary work. During the 1940s and 1950s important works by George Bellows, Thomas Hart Benton, Ernst Blumenschein, Charles Burchfield, George Grosz, Alexandre Hogue, Edward Hopper, Reginald Marsh, and William Zorach were acquired. Avant-garde trends were represented by works like Jackson Pollock's drip painting *Cathedral* (1947) and Alexander Calder's mobile *Flower* (1949).

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed the maturation of the Dallas Museum of Art as a professional institution. In 1960 Margaret and Eugene McDermott established a fund for the acquisition of art. This fund, as well as other generous gifts from the McDermotts, proved to be central to the growth of the collection at a high level. With McDermott support, Dallas's core collections in ancient American, Indonesian, and African art have been built. The acquisition of other works as diverse as sculpture by Degas and David Smith, classical jewelry from ancient Greece, and nineteenth-century American silver also have been made possible by the generosity of the McDermotts. A particularly important aspect of much of the McDermotts' largess is that it came in the form of challenges to other major museum benefactors, such as the Murchison, Meadows, and Hamon families.

In 1963 the museum merged with the Dallas Museum for Contemporary Arts, which had been founded in 1956. Under the enlightened directorship of Douglas MacAgy, that institution had amassed a collection of significant works including important examples by Redon,

Matisse, Bacon, and Nicholson, as well as two famous works by the American expatriate modernist Gerald Murphy. With the merger of the two museums, all these works and many others were transferred to a new legal entity called the Foundation for the Arts, which placed the collection on permanent deposit at the Dallas Museum of Art.

Merrill Rueppel assumed the directorship of the museum in 1964 and worked to broaden the collection during his nine years in Dallas. Especially noteworthy were the strides made in ancient American, African, and ancient Mediterranean art, including masterworks of Greek and Roman sculpture acquired through the generosity of Ida and Cecil Green. Major contemporary works by Jean Arp, Jim Dine, Arshile Gorky, Adolph Gottlieb, Barbara Hepworth, Franz Kline, Henry Moore, and Robert Motherwell were also added to the collection during the Rueppel years.

Harry S. Parker III was appointed director in 1973 and proceeded to lead the museum through a momentous period of building construction and art acquisition. Among the most significant acquisitions made during the 1970s were the Schindler Collection of African Art (1975) and the Wise Collection of Ancient American Art (1976). A bequest in 1977 to the Foundation for the Arts from Mrs. John B. O'Hara made possible the addition of numerous European works including Vernet's *Mountain Landscape with Approaching Storm* (1775), Turner's *Bonneville, Savoy, with Mont Blanc* (1803), and Courbet's *Fox in the Snow* (1860). More recently the O'Hara Fund has added major canvases by Pierre, Giroust, and Liebermann. Just as significant have been important impressionist and modernist works given by the Meadows Foundation, Incorporated, and the James H. and Lillian Clark Foundation. Especially noteworthy among the Clark gifts are paintings and works on paper by Piet Mondrian and Constantin Brancusi's masterpiece *Beginning of the World* (c. 1920). Frederic Church's masterpiece *Icebergs* (1861) was given to the museum by an anonymous donor in 1979.

The 1980s saw Dallas's facility and collections

expand greatly. Before his departure in 1987, Parker oversaw the 1984 opening of a spacious new facility in downtown Dallas designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes and Associates. During Parker's directorship, textiles became an important focus of the museum with the coming of the Williams and Nasher Collections of Guatemalan Textiles (1982 and 1983) and the Alpert Collection of Indonesian Textiles (1983). A fund for the purchase of textiles was also established at that time. Beyond textiles, important works by Claes Oldenburg, Ellsworth Kelly, Richard Fleischner, and Scott Burton were commissioned for the opening of the new building. In 1985 Wendy Reves presented the museum with the extraordinary Wendy and Emery Reves Collection of European Art. Included in this gift were superb works by Bonnard, Cézanne, Corot, Gauguin, Manet, Pissarro, Redon, Renoir, Rodin, van Gogh, and Vlaminck. Important examples of European and Asian export decorative art also came with the collection and became the basis for a department of decorative arts. This area was further strengthened in 1985 by the purchase of the Faith P. and Charles L. Bybee Collection of American Furniture. In 1987 the estate of Ida Green established an endowment for the purchase of ancient Mediterranean art.

With the arrival of Richard R. Brettell as director in 1987, the collections expanded in new ways. Dallas's collection of Mediterranean gold jewelry was acquired in 1991 in honor of Virginia Lucas Nick through the generosity of the McDermott and Green families and the Museum League. Important holdings in American silver dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were amassed, and the 20th-Century Design Fund was established by Elizabeth and Duncan Boeckman in 1991. This fund has allowed rapid expansion into the design field. Significant growth in the field of prehistoric Native American ceramics occurred thanks to the generosity of an anonymous collector. Simultaneously the groundwork was laid for the acquisition of the John R. Young Collection of Meiji-period Japanese decorative arts, which came to the museum through the Foundation for the Arts in the early 1990s. Similarly the

collecting of Spanish Colonial art was initiated under Dr. Brettell. A gallery devoted to this material was incorporated in the reinstatement of the museum's holdings of American art in the Jake and Nancy Hamon Building, which opened in 1993.

Jay Gates's directorship, which began in 1993, has seen steady growth in the permanent collection. Especially noteworthy have been additions to the museum's five principal areas of specialization—African, ancient American, Indonesian, American decorative, and contemporary art. Among these new acquisitions have been an extraordinary standing male figure with nails from Zaire (nineteenth century); a checkerboard-patterned Inca tunic (c. 1500); a pair of carved mythological animals from Sarawak (nineteenth century); the Vanderbilt console by the Herter Brothers (c. 1881); and the painting *Äpfel* by Gerhard Richter (1988). Beyond these fine works, important pieces of ancient Mediterranean, European, and American art have come to the museum in recent years, including a large Greek krater (c. 340–330 B.C.); Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones's *The Pilgrim at the Gate of Idleness* (1884); and John Singleton Copley's portraits of Sarah and Woodbury Langdon (1767). Of special note has been the rapid and unexpected growth in the area of South and Southeast Asian art. The collectors Alta Brenner and especially David T. Owsley have been instrumental in the development of these holdings.

As this brief overview demonstrates, the sources for art collecting at the Dallas Museum of Art have been diverse and often unexpected. Over nearly a century, private collectors, generous funders, directors, curators, and numerous other staff members, in partnership with the City of Dallas, have expended enormous amounts of time, energy, and resources on building and refining the museum's holdings. The citizens of Dallas can be proud of their accomplishments.

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