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Transformative Acquisitions Join the Collection at Wadsworth Atheneum

Hartford, Conn. (July 9, 2019)—The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art has recently added a number of exceptional works into its encyclopedic collection of nearly 50,000 objects. Acquired through purchase and gift alike, these new acquisitions encompass European and American visual and decorative arts in a variety of media, including contemporary painting, prints, and photography, a Flemish seventeenth-century painting, an important piece of late eighteenth-century Rhode Island furniture (together with silver and the family archive of Peleg Weeden), and a group of ten American samplers dated late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century. Each contributes markedly to the Wadsworth’s collection profile and several are enriching the museum’s capacity to mount impactful exhibitions now and into the future.

“Among the 87 objects we’ve been able to collect in the past 12 months a striking proportion of them have opened up the possibility for richer and more diverse experiences with human creativity within our galleries,” says Thomas J. Loughman, Director and CEO of the Wadsworth. “We look forward to introducing these great objects and their fascinating stories to art lovers in Connecticut and beyond.”

The group of ten, early American samplers from New England were acquired from the Glee Kruger Collection at the end of 2018. Kruger was a pioneer in the collecting and appreciation of samplers as works of design, publishing and serving as curator of a number of important exhibitions since the Bicentennial. From the group, an architectural Dorcas Stearns wrought by the 12 year old Amherst, CT student in 1823 quickly joined the checklist of Design in the American Home, 1650 to 1850; an ongoing exhibition that
looks at the influence of cultural values, trends, and technologies on the design of household items—from necessities to luxuries. The Wadsworth’s acquisition of a Pembroke Table (1790–95) attributed to Rhode Island silversmith Peleg Weeden, along with silver spoons and over two hundred Fowler-Weeden-Wightman family manuscripts, provides a rare look at the life and work of a design innovator in Federal period New England. Acquisition of the family manuscripts provides the Wadsworth with an opportunity to more fully research the table and silver to uncover new stories surrounding these important works of art.

An exceptional seventeenth century painting *A Still Life* (1682), by Flemish painter Nicolaes van Verendael joins the Wadsworth’s collection of Flemish still lifes including works by Willem Claesz Heda and Balthasar van der Ast. Van Varendael’s painting of flowers, insects, and a pocket watch, is distinguished by a remarkably vivid palette, the result of his use of a copper plate as a support. Plans are afoot for the painting to join the story of European art in the critically acclaimed reinstalled galleries in the Morgan building.

Recently on view in the special exhibition *Sean Scully: Landline* and now entering the collection is a seven-foot high painting with expressive bands of color in varying tones of blue by Sean Scully. *Landline Blue See* (2018) is one of two gifts from the artist this year, the second being a portfolio of 10 prints from the series *Landlines and Robes* (2018). Joining an earlier painting by Scully, *Red and Pink Robe* (2008), purchased for the collection in 2009, the museum’s holdings now describe the shift in Scully’s work over the course of the past decade.

Currently, six contemporary photography acquisitions are on view in *Be Seen: Portrait Photography Since Stonewall* (June 22–September 15, 2019). Works by Zanele Muholi, Catherine Opie, Paul Mpagi Sepuya, and Mickalene Thomas contribute to an examination of portrait photography as a means to challenge and subvert societal norms of gender and sexuality in the 50 years since the 1969 Stonewall Riots. Alongside works from the collection by artists such as Robert Mapplethorpe, Nan Goldin, and Cindy Sherman, these recent acquisitions continue to chronicle the rise of traditionally under-represented voices through contemporary art.

**About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art**

Founded in 1842 with a vision for infusing art into the American experience, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is home to a collection of nearly 50,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years and encompassing European art from antiquity through contemporary as well as American art from the 1600s to today. The Wadsworth Atheneum’s five connected buildings—representing architectural styles including Gothic Revival, modern International Style, and 1960s Brutalism—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Hours: Wednesday–Friday: 11am–5pm; Saturday and Sunday: 10am–5pm Admission: $5–15; discounts for members, students and seniors. Free admission for Hartford residents with Wadsworth Welcome registration. Free “happy hour” admission 4–5pm. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.
Images (left to right):


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