



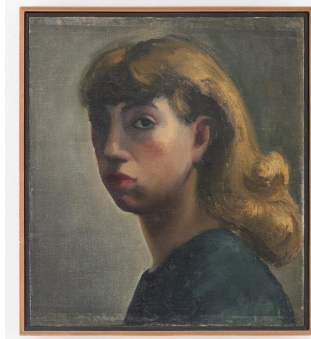
**WADSWORTH ATHENEUM**  
MUSEUM OF ART

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**New Works of Modern and Contemporary Art, an Expressionist Painting, and American and European Decorative Art enter the Wadsworth Atheneum Collection**

Hartford, Conn. (September 27, 2021)— The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art has recently acquired thirteen new works to add to its exceptional collections. These new additions diversify the Wadsworth’s holdings across departments and provide opportunities to tell more impactful and integrated stories of art and artists across time. They include unique examples of early American silver, a pair of mid-eighteenth-century English armchairs, a German Expressionist painting, a leading modernist self-portrait, and seven contemporary works, including an abstract sculptural painting, an assemblage of photographs, a feminist aquatint etching, and a large-scale watercolor drawing by an artist collective.

“The Wadsworth Atheneum’s latest acquisitions extend the scope and diversity of the collections while building on its historic strengths,” said Interim Robert H. Schutz Jr. Chief Curator Matthew Hargraves. “They include objects of the highest quality with outstanding additions in the realm of American and European decorative arts, as well as exceptional new examples of German and American modernism, not to mention contemporary sculpture and works on paper. These acquisitions maintain the Wadsworth’s long tradition of bringing world-class art to our communities in the city of Hartford and the state of Connecticut.”

Two works of American silver, including a rare *Nutmeg Grater* (circa 1810–20) by the Caribbean silversmith Peter Bentzon, and a *Flagon* (circa 1797–1800) by Connecticut

silversmith Ebenezer Chittenden, expand on the Wadsworth's extensive decorative arts collections. Bentzon's nutmeg grater is a rare example made in the Americas rather than imported from England. Bentzon, a free silversmith of color born in the Virgin Islands, trained in Philadelphia and went on to operate his own independent businesses in both Philadelphia and St. Croix. The nutmeg grater, along with a previously acquired marrow scoop attributed to the enslaved silversmith Abraham of Charleston, South Carolina, allows the museum to expand our holdings and highlight metalsmiths of African descent. With this acquisition, the Wadsworth is one of the few museums in the United States to have within its collection two objects by two different silversmiths of color. The flagon is not only one among the most impressive objects ever to come from Chittenden's workshop but is also one of the most outstanding examples of early Connecticut silver known to scholars. Monumental in design and construction, the flagon is a commanding seventeen-inches tall and is a well-documented commission by the First Church of Christ in Derby, Connecticut. The object has been known for over a hundred years, having been published in E. Alfred Jones' seminal book, *The Old Silver of American Churches* (1913). The Wadsworth is honored and thrilled that thanks to the generosity of Susan F. Pollack, in memory of her late husband and distinguished silver collector, Daniel A. Pollack, the flagon has returned to Connecticut and will soon be permanently on view in a newly established gallery devoted to metalwork.

Additionally, two carved and gilded Rococo-style armchairs by Wright and Elwick, the preeminent firm of cabinet makers and upholsterers in Yorkshire during the second half of the eighteenth century, join the Wadsworth's European Decorative Art collection. Gifted to the Wadsworth by Michael R. Lynch and Susan L. Baker, the chairs were made for William Wentworth, 2nd Earl of Strafford (1722–1791), for Wentworth Castle, South Yorkshire, England, who in the mid-eighteenth century embarked on an expansion of the castle built by his father, Thomas Wentworth. Money for the expansion and furnishing of the castle was made at least in part from participation in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The chairs, along with the Wadsworth collections of silver and porcelain, help fill out the transnational aspect of design in eighteenth-century decorative arts. At the height of fashion in mid-18th century, the chairs are well-rendered English interpretations of the French Rococo style and are carved, gilded and covered in their original luxurious wool and silk floral tapestry. They also add the important country house dimension to the story of the English Grand Tour that the museum tells through its painting collection.

The newly acquired painting *Geisha Revue* (1911/13) by Georg Tappert is the first work by the artist to join the collection. It was recently debuted at the museum in *The Dance on the Volcano: German Expressionism at the Wadsworth*. Tappert was a key painter in Berlin in the years before WWI. With its flickering bright colors and cacophonous composition representing a group of geisha in a flat yet highly rhythmic fashion, *Geisha Revue* is an early masterpiece. *Geisha Revue* significantly strengthens and invigorates the Wadsworth's collection of Expressionist works.

*Self-Portrait* (c. 1931–1933), an early painting by the female Abstract Expressionist Lee Krasner, is the most recent acquisition. A highly innovative artist, Krasner transitioned from representational works to abstract collages and finally large-scale color field works

over the course of her forty-year career. Her *Self-Portrait* offers a rare glimpse into her artistic beginnings as an art student in New York City and provides a counterpoint to her later composition, *Broken Gray* (1955), already in the collection. One of five known self-portraits, this example is the most accomplished in terms of mood and handling of paint. With her penetrating, fixed gaze, Krasner appears self-assured and almost defiant, traits of a strong personality in the context of a male-dominated art world at the time. This compelling modern portrait adds to the Wadsworth's collection of paintings by modern women artists as well as artists' self-portraits spanning hundreds of years.

Of the seven contemporary works joining the collection, three are by artists featured in the Wadsworth's most recent MATRIX exhibitions. Inaugurated in 1975, MATRIX is the Wadsworth's groundbreaking series of contemporary art exhibitions featuring artists from around the world. Since its inception, MATRIX has been a forum for art that is challenging, current, and sometimes controversial. The museum has acquired works by Sonya Clark (MATRIX 184), Ali Banisadr (MATRIX 185), and Todd Gray (MATRIX 186). Textile artist Sonya Clark created *Blackened and Bleached* (2015) to mark the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War and explore our understanding of historical events and identity. Banisadr's *The Caravan* (2020) cites Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Triumph of Death* (c.1562, Museo del Prado, Madrid) as inspiration and features theatrical compositions with agitated masses and individuals in motion, or commotion especially connected to this time of political and social turmoil. *Cosmic Journey* (1619) (2019) by Todd Gray explores the history and legacy of European colonialism, slavery, and the African diaspora in an assemblage of four photographs.

Two abstract additions, a sculptural painting, *Number83S*, by Leonardo Drew and a collage painting *Amulet* (2019) by Medrie MacPhee are among the contemporary acquisitions. *Number 83S* expresses Drew's longstanding fascination with material decomposition and transformation, using new materials to create the "look" of found materials. The patterned fragments of the sculpture are organized on an open-grid framework with "scorched" branches extending from the edges of the form, playing upon the tension between order and chaos. The collage painting, *Amulet*, by MacPhee uses found materials of second-hand or discounted garments that are deconstructed, flattened, and collaged onto the canvas and improvised upon until the painting "arrives." There is humor and triumph in MacPhee's elevation of these garment remainders into fine art. *Amulet* was a gift of the American Academy of Arts and Letters; Hassam, Speicher, Betts and Symons Funds.

An aquatint etching, *Jazzmyne* (2020), by Shona McAndrew builds on the museum's collection of contemporary feminist art. A gift of Linda Cheverton Wick, *Jazzmyne* leaves behind the idyllic representation of women in art as created by men, with McAndrew portraying real women in intimate settings. With a pose based on Jean-Baptiste-Ange Tissier's *L'Odalisque dit aussi L'Algérienne et son esclave* (*The Algerian Woman and Her Slave*) (1860), the etching's subject is Jazzmyne, an empowered woman and social media sensation whom McAndrew befriended after following her on Instagram.

A large-scale watercolor drawing *Piscina llena (Filled swimming pool)* (2001), by the Cuban artist collective Los Carpinteros has also joined the collection as a gift from Alice and Marvin Kosmin. Key to the work of Los Carpinteros is the intersection of art and society, creating a response to places, spaces, and objects and how they have been conceived, built, used, and abandoned in a humorous way. Typical of their work, this drawing depicts a swimming pool surrounded by ladders that forms an infinite combination of entrances and exits, negotiating the spaces between functional and nonfunctional. Los Carpinteros was founded in 1992 by Marco Antonio Castillo Valdes, Dagoberto Rodríguez Sanchez, and Alexandre Arrechea, who worked as a group in order to “renounce the notion of individual authorship and refer back to an older guild tradition of artisans and skilled laborers” and to emphasize their belief that art always, to some extent, involves collaboration.

“By increasing the range of voices represented we are expanding the array of stories that can be told through the works of art in our care,” said Jeffrey N. Brown, Interim Director & CEO of the Wadsworth Atheneum. “This development of the museum's holdings continues our long-standing commitment to creating and preserving a collection that reflects the community and provides access and insight into different time periods, cultures and perspectives.”

*Sustaining support for the Wadsworth Atheneum provided by the Greater Hartford Arts Council's United Arts Campaign with support from the Department of Economic and Community Development, Connecticut Office of the Arts.*

### **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 are noon–8pm Fridays, and noon–5pm Saturdays, and Sundays. Visitors are required to wear a face mask/covering while inside the museum. The library, food service, and Austin House are currently closed to the public. Admission: \$5–15; discounts for members, students and seniors. Free admission for Hartford residents with Wadsworth Welcome registration. Free “happy hour” admission 4–5pm. From July 1 to September 6, Connecticut children age 18 and under plus one accompanying adult can visit free of charge through the Connecticut Summer at the Museum program. Advance ticket registration via [thewadsworth.org](http://thewadsworth.org) is encouraged, not required. Phone: (860) 278-2670; website: [thewadsworth.org](http://thewadsworth.org).

Image captions (left to right):

Peter Bentzon, *Nutmeg Grater*, c.1810-1820. Silver with steel grater. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Douglas Tracy Smith and Dorothy Potter Smith Fund; Lee Krasner, *Self-Portrait*, 1931-1933. Oil on canvas. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art,

The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund; Leonardo Drew,  
*Number 83S*, 2021. Wood, sand, and paint. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art,  
Douglas Tracy Smith and Dorothy Potter Smith Fund.

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