

Art Acquisition Highlights

May 2012

The following artworks were acquired in May 2012 by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. VMFA is a state agency and a model public/private partnership. All works of art are purchased with private funds from dedicated endowments. After the VMFA Board of Trustees approves proposed acquisitions on a quarterly basis, the art becomes the property of the Commonwealth of Virginia to protect, preserve, and interpret.

1. Marsden Hartley (American, 1877–1943), *Franconia Notch (Mt. Lafayette, Franconia Notch, N.H.)*, 1930, oil on canvas, 30 x 36 inches, Henry Heydenryk period frame, J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art



Franconia Notch by Marsden Hartley – among the most celebrated figures of the early 20th-century American avant garde – is a quintessential expression of the artist’s self-proclaimed “Americanness.” The painting belongs to a series of some 25 canvases depicting the White Mountains and rivers of New Hampshire, produced on Hartley’s 1930 return to America after an extended eight-year stay in France. This commanding picture with its bravura brushwork and high-keyed palette reveals the artist’s lifelong devotion to the work of Paul Cézanne, whose subjects Hartley had most recently studied in Aix-en-Provence. The White Mountains scene also marks a new departure for Hartley, who was intent

on reclaiming his American identity at a time of growing cultural nationalism. In these terms, *Franconia Notch* represents a critical juncture for an American artist who (like his hero Cézanne) had long embraced mountains as a persistent motif as well as a spiritual and creative metaphor. Hartley dubbed the enduring and intensely personal associations with mountain scenes his “mountain madness”; more than one-third of his oeuvre consists of such imagery.

Hartley has long been a major absence in VMFA’s American Art collection, represented only by an early Maine landscape that does not adequately convey his significant talents and legacy as a regional and international modernist. The acquisition of the mature and masterful *Franconia Notch* positions Hartley as an equal of his colleagues Arthur Dove and Georgia O’Keeffe, whose accomplished works from the same decade – *Mars Orange and Green* (1935) and *White Iris* (1930) – are prominent “stars” of the museum’s collection. Hartley’s masterwork also adds a new

dimension of modern landscape painting to VMFA's American Mid-Twentieth-Century gallery, complementing his longtime friend Rockwell Kent's *Greenland Summer* (1932).

Dr. Sylvia Yount

Chief Curator and Louise B. and J. Harwood Cochrane Curator of American Art

2. Walter McEwen (American, 1860-1943), *The Judgment of Paris*, ca. 1886, oil on canvas, 36³/₈ x 50¹/₄ inches, late 19th-century period frame, J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art



Walter McEwen's *The Judgment of Paris* – one of the Chicago-born artist's most celebrated paintings – is an iconic example of the work of the expatriate circle of artists active in the Netherlands in the late 19th century. McEwen (who sometimes spelled his surname "MacEwen") studied in Munich under the American painter Frank Duveneck before settling in Paris. Inspired by the work of Frans Hals and other 17th-century Dutch masters, McEwen made his first visit to the Netherlands in 1878. Three years later he became among the earliest foreign

artists to open a summer studio in the medieval village of Hattem. Specializing in nostalgic visions of Holland's preindustrial past, McEwen believed that his Dutch scenes reflected aspects of his native country, namely, its cultural values and political system. Such works were particularly popular with American viewers who associated the Netherlands with their proud colonial heritage.

The Judgment of Paris, a recasting of the famous Greek myth, received an Honorable Mention at the 1886 Paris Salon and was later seen in the artist's hometown of Chicago during the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, where it attracted admiring crowds. The painting allows VMFA to tell a broader story of American art's international flavor and popular appeal on both sides of the Atlantic toward the end of the 19th century.

Dr. Sylvia Yount

Chief Curator and Louise B. and J. Harwood Cochrane Curator of American Art

3. Lilian Westcott Hale (American, 1881-1963), *Autumn Fruit and Flowers*, ca. 1913, charcoal and graphite on paper, 28½ x 22½ inches, Newcomb-Macklin period frame, J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art



This large-scale charcoal and graphite drawing by Lilian Westcott Hale represents the best-known production of the noted New England artist and one-time Virginia resident. Its acquisition greatly enhances VMFA’s holdings of American works on paper, while augmenting the presence of women artists as well as figures associated with the early twentieth-century Boston School.

Hale’s subject matter is typical of the genteel Boston School – light-filled, upper-class domestic interiors populated by artfully composed women and children – yet her works on paper, with their refined technique, are unique. Rendered in subtly modulated, vertical strokes of charcoal and graphite with contrasting highlights created by the cream paper, Hale’s vapory drawings won her the greatest acclaim. *Autumn Fruit and Flowers* depicts an interior of the artist’s Dedham, Massachusetts, home. Elegantly appointed with numerous family heirlooms – 18th-century silver, furniture, a Japanese hanging scroll, and a distinctive embroidered “mourning” sampler – the house showcased the Hales’ patrician New England roots. Bringing nature into the realm of culture, the lithe model in this drawing – dressed in an artistic gown with “colonial” overtones – introduces an ethereal figural presence into a harmonious composition of carefully conceived still-life elements.

Dr. Sylvia Yount

Chief Curator and Louise B. and J. Harwood Cochrane Curator of American Art

4. Susanna Gilliam Payne (American, 1813—unknown), *Needlework Sampler*, dated “July 9, 1829, Virginia,” wool on linen, 17 ½ x 22 inches, Gabe W. Burton Fund



Susanna Payne’s sampler belongs to large body of needlework produced by girls for purposes of education, refinement, and artistic display. Popular in America, Britain, and elsewhere beginning in the late 18th century, the fashion reached its peak in the first quarter of the 19th century, but continued to influence needlework in the antebellum period, particularly in rural regions. Virginia resident Susanna Payne was 16 years old when she completed this piece.

The Payne sampler holds particular significance for VMFA, incorporating a genealogical footprint that links it to an important Virginia portrait by the so-called “Payne Limner” as well as to the museum’s founder, John Barton Payne. The sampler makes a wonderful addition to the museum’s American Early Republic gallery, adding depth to discussions of gendered education and the domestic arts in early America in general, and the material culture of Virginia’s Payne family in particular.

Dr. Susan J. Rawles
Assistant Curator of American Decorative Art

5. Dean Byington (American, born 1958), *Two Harbors*, 2012, oil on linen, 68½ x 80 inches, Pamela K. and William A. Royall Jr. Fund for 21st-Century Art



Based in San Francisco, Dean Byington makes fantastical scenes of natural and architectural wonders. He taught himself to draw in the highly stylized manner of nineteenth-century wood engravings, and his paintings at first glance convey a nostalgic quality. Byington's dense process begins by collaging drawn and found images and then scanning the results. From these elements he makes silk-screens, which he prints on the canvas (*Two Harbors* incorporates about 30 screen-prints). Finally, he hand-paints the interstices between the prints to hide the process and to weave the found and invented imagery into a seamless whole that fills the canvas with intricate detail.

Two Harbors depicts mountains, lakes, forests, waterfalls, bridges, staircases, and a vast range of architectural fragments lining the terraces of a mined pit that derives from an inversion of an ancient Egyptian step pyramid. The two harbors at the top contrast the developed and the unspoiled and provide the sources for the rivers and falls, whose actions erode the signs of civilization below. What at first appears serene takes on a post-apocalyptic feeling: a mythical landscape marked by ruin and depopulation. Byington's painting adds a fascinating work by an accomplished mid-career artist to VMFA's contemporary holdings. It also represents the first purchase with the Pamela K. and William A. Royall Jr. Fund for 21st-Century Art.

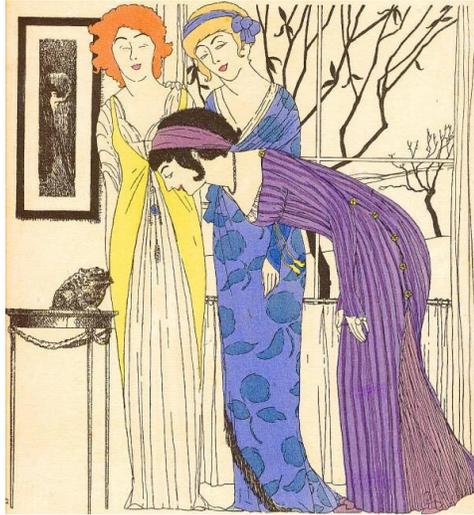
John B. Ravenal

Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

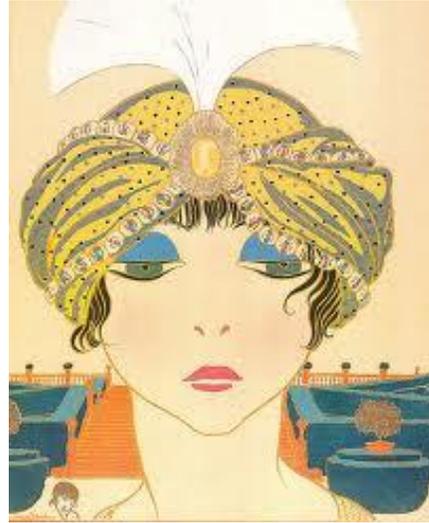
6. Paul Iribe (French, 1883-1935), artist; Paul Poiret (French, 1879-1944), fashion designer, *Les Robes de Paul Poiret*, Paris: Société Générale d'Impression, 1908, 12¾ x 11¾ inches

Georges Lepape (French, 1887-1971), artist; Paul Poiret (French, 1879-1944), fashion designer, *Les Choses de Paul Poiret*, 1911, 13¼ x 12 inches

The John and Maria Shugars Fund



Paul Iribe



George Lepape

Paul Poiret dominated the Paris fashion world from about 1909 to 1914, revolutionizing *haute couture* with his designs for the “new woman.” His fashion did away with constricting corsets in favor of loose-fitting tunics, capes, kimonos, and pantaloons. Inspired by Art Nouveau, East Asian prints, and the Ballets Russes, Poiret created jeweled evening gowns, billowing harem pants, fringed capes, and exotic turbans. In addition, he is credited with being the first fashion designer to produce his own line of perfumes and cosmetics.

In 1908, Poiret commissioned Paul Iribe to illustrate a publicity album of his fashion collection. Iribe was an important designer working in Paris in the early 20th century. Several years later, Poiret asked Georges Lepape to create a similar pochoir (stencil) portfolio. Lepape was one of the most successful French artists of the early 20th century. In the field of fashion, he provided numerous designs for Lucien Vogel’s magazine, *Gazette de Bon Ton*, and was then discovered by Condé Nast, for whom he executed dozen of covers for French, English, and American *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and *House & Garden*. The albums are considered landmarks in the history of 20th-century fashion illustration and among the earliest French fashion books. They will strengthen VMFA’s collection of rare Art Deco books and portfolios.

Barry Shifman

Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Decorative Arts 1890 to the Present

Photography

VMFA continues to strategically develop its photography collection, most recently with the acquisition of 25 photographs by 12 different artists, including Fred Baker, Mikki Ferrill, Judith Fox, György Kepes, Gita Lenz, Phil Nesmith, Cindy Sherman, Beuford Smith, Deborah Turbeville, Shawn Walker, Minor White, and Willie Anne Wright. Of these works, 13 were gifts and 12 were purchases. The majority introduces new artists to the collection and greatly expands VMFA's representation of women and African American photographers.

Dr. Sarah L. Eckhardt

Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art



Mikki Ferrill (American, b. 1937), *Veterans' Day Parade, Oakland, Calif.*, 1991, vintage gelatin silver print, 7 x 10 inches

Selected Gifts

Seven paintings and drawings by Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists

- Eugène Boudin (French, 1824–1898): *Beach Scene at Deauville*, 1865, oil on canvas, 16½ x 25½ inches; *Fishermwomen*, black chalk and watercolor, 5¼ x 8⅝ inches; *Fishermwomen*, black chalk and watercolor, 5¼ x 8⅝ inches
- Raoul Dufy (French, 1877–1953), *Les Régates á Deauville*, 1938, oil on canvas, 23⅞ x 28¾ inches
- Berthe Morisot (French, 1841–1895), *The Harbor at Cherbourg, (Le Port de Lorient)*, 1871, pencil and watercolor, 6 ⅜ x 8 inches
- Albert Marquet (French, 1875–1947): *Voilier (with sails lowered)*, black ink, 8 x 7⅞ inches; *Voilier (with sails raised)*, black ink, 8 x 7¾ inches

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, Upperville, Virginia

This exquisite group of paintings and drawings by important Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists represents a major contribution to the Mellon Collections as well as to VMFA's European art holdings. The four artists represented are both favorites of the collectors as well as pivotal figures in the development of 19th-and early 20th-century art in France. These most recent gifts of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon continue to transform the museum into a major center for the display and study of French art as well as a treasured public resource for all to enjoy.

Eugène Boudin was the son of a mariner who remained captivated by the sea throughout his career, producing works that dealt with a wide range of activities – from the new fashion of bathing to more workaday pursuits like fishing and boating. A native of Normandy, Boudin returned there frequently to paint its environs often working outdoors, sketching and painting directly from nature. His keen interest in the effects of light and atmosphere as well as his loose, painterly brushstrokes anticipated Impressionism.

Another artist from Normandy, Raoul Dufy also maintained a particular fascination with boating and seaside life. Dufy's early encounters with the work of the Fauves as well as that of Cezanne greatly influence his distinctive style, which combined the vibrant palette of the former and the analytic view of space and form of the latter into a lyrical and witty vision. The bright hues and jaunty lines of the masts and sails in this work create a joyous impression of boats racing at the fashionable resort town of Deauville.

Mitchell Merling

Paul Mellon Curator and Head of the Department of European Art



Boudin, *Beach Scene at Deauville*, 1865



Dufy, *Les Régates á Deauville*, 1938

- Alfred Stevens (Belgian, 1823–1906), *Woman in a Studio*, ca. 1862-65, oil on panel, 21 5/8 x 17 1/8 inches, Gift of Jane Joel Knox



Alfred Stevens was arguably the most sought after and acclaimed European artist to depict the fashionable bourgeoisie of Second Empire Paris. Known particularly for his lavish interiors featuring elegant young women, Stevens was also a pivotal figure in the intellectual and artistic circles of late-nineteenth-century France. *Woman in a Studio* is a striking example of the artist's alluring subject matter and luxurious style that meticulously captures the decorative tastes of cosmopolitan Parisian life - from Asian objects to artistic furnishings. The painting also likely depicts a corner of Stevens's own studio, featuring his tools of the trade and a female connoisseur. Despite the artist's acute interest in the details of such scenes, he presents a measured vision of this domestic world, avoiding high-keyed emotion and sentimentality in favor of a straightforward, if elaborate depiction of his subjects. This aspect of Stevens's style derived from the example of Dutch baroque artists such as Gabriel Metsu and Gerard Ter Borch whom he greatly admired.

Mitchell Merling
Paul Mellon Curator
Head of the Department of European Art

- Siemon Allen (South African, born 1970), *Zonophone*, 2010, digital print with Epson Ultrachrome HDR ink on Hahneumuhle Museum Etching Fine Art Paper mounted on Sintra, 78 x 78 inches, Number 2 from an edition of 2, with 1 artist's proof, Gift of Pamela K. and William A. Royall Jr.



Simeon Allen's *Zonophone* is a digital print made from a record in his extensive audio collection of South African jazz and punk music, plays, political speeches, and sports commentary. The collection is part of Allen's larger project of archiving mass-produced printed material relating to the history of South Africa and, thus, to questions of personal and national identity. Allen scanned the record at high resolution and printed it in rich matte tones on velvety archival paper, creating a strong tactile quality. At 6 ½ feet square, it offers remarkable detail, capturing each vinyl groove and the accumulated wear and tear to the label.

Zonophone reproduces the earliest record in Allen's collection, and possibly the earliest mention of South Africa in an audio recording. The tune is "Marching on Pretoria (Patriotic Song)," dating from the second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). The song expresses a British patriotic position on the war, but shares similarities with a famous Afrikaans song from the same time called "Marching to Pretoria". Both are based on the American Civil War song "Marching through Georgia" by Henry Clay Work. The acquisition of *Zonophone* enhances VMFA's representation of global 21st-century art. It also adds a work to the collection by an artist currently based in Richmond (Allen teaches in the Department of Sculpture + Extended Media at Virginia Commonwealth University).

John B. Ravenal

Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

With a collection of art that spans the globe and more than 5,000 years, plus a wide array of special exhibitions, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) is recognized as one of the top comprehensive art museums in the United States. The museum's permanent collection encompasses more than 24,000 works of art, including one of the nation's finest collections of American Art, Art Nouveau and Art Deco, and the largest public collection of Fabergé outside Russia. VMFA is home to acclaimed collections of English Silver in addition to Ancient, Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British Sporting, and Modern & Contemporary art as well as renowned African, East Asian, and South Asian holdings. In May 2010, VMFA opened its doors to the public after a transformative expansion, the largest in its 75-year history. Programs include educational activities and studio classes for all ages, plus fun after-hours events. VMFA's Statewide Partnership program includes traveling exhibitions, artist and teacher workshops, and lectures across the Commonwealth. VMFA is open 365 days a year and general admission is always free. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.vmfa.museum.

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