

Art Acquisitions

November 2011

Purchases

1. Sue Williamson (South African, born England, 1941), *For Thirty Years Next to His Heart*, 1990, color laser prints, hand-covered frames, 49 panels, 77 x 103. Sydney and Frances Lewis Endowment Fund.

Roger Ballen (American, b. 1950), *Old man, Ottoshoop*, 1983, gelatin silver print, 15-11/16 x 15 1/2". Kathleen Boone Samuels Memorial Fund.

Ian Berry (British, b. 1934), *South Africa, Supporters Climb to Every Vantage Point*, 1994, gelatin silver print, 19-15/16 x 14 7/8". Funds provided by Mike Schewel and Priscilla Burbank.

Alf Kumalo (South African, b. 1930), two digital prints: *Soweto*, 1980, 17 1/2 x 24" and *A Protest March after the Uitenhage Massacre of 21st March*, 1985, 20 x 24". Funds provided by Mike Schewel and Priscilla Burbank.

Jürgen Schadeberg (South African, born Germany, 1931), *Miriam Makeba*, 1955, gelatin silver print, 19 7/8 x 15 3/4". Funds provided by Mike Schewel and Priscilla Burbank.

Zwelethu Mthethwa (South African, b. 1960), *Untitled*, 1998, chromogenic print mounted to UV Plexiglas, 38 x 51". Funds provided by Ivan Jecklin and Allison Weinstein.

David Goldblatt (South African, b. 1930), *Children of Pomfret at the Entrance to the Incline Shaft*, 2002, digital print in pigment dyes, 24-1/16 x 29 5/8". Funds provided by Ivan Jecklin and Allison Weinstein.

Nontsikelelo Veleko (South African, born, 1977): three pigment ink prints from the series "Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder," each 14 3/8 x 9 3/16". Funds provided by Ivan Jecklin and Allison Weinstein.

VMFA recently acquired 11 works from its 2010 exhibition *Darkroom: Photography and New Media in South Africa since 1950*. This diverse group of works increases the museum's representation of global perspectives in photography. The historic struggle to end South African apartheid reverberates with civil-rights era protests in the United States, and these images place local and national narratives of racial conflict within an international context. VMFA's purchase of these works was made possible through the generous support of three trustee families: Ivan Jecklin and Allison Weinstein, Mike Schewel and Priscilla Burbank, and the Sydney and Frances Lewis Endowment Fund.



Jürgen Schadeberg (South African, born Germany, 1931), *Miriam Makeba*, 1955, gelatin silver print, 19 7/8 x 15 3/4". Funds provided by Mike Schewel and Priscilla Burbank.

2. Theodore Géricault (French, 1791-1824), two lithographs: *A Paralytic Woman*, 1821, lithograph, sheet: 365 x 513 mm; plate, 225 x 317 mm. Funds provided by Frank Raysor, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Nelson, and the Revolving Art Purchase Fund; and *The Dead Horse*, 1823, lithograph, 275 x 350 mm. Funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Nelson.

VMFA continued to develop its representative collection of the works of Theodore Géricault with the purchase of two prints. The *Paralytic Woman* from the so-called "English Series" presents a mordant commentary on the street life Géricault observed when he worked in London. *The Dead Horse* is one of a series of four prints focusing on the lives of working horses - in this case, the bleak image of an equine corpse laying in the snow. VMFA is proud to collect the work of this towering genius of the Romantic movement.

3. Collection of Colonial Indian Silver: 91 objects, 234 pieces total, ca. 1805-1920.



Oomarsee Mawjee, Indian, Gujarat, Kutch. *Tea Service*, ca. 1884, silver, ivory. Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund



Oomarsee Mawjee Jr. for the Gaekwad of Baroda, Indian, Gujarat, Kutch, Baroda. *Tea Service in the Shape of Quails*, ca. 1920-30, silver, ivory. Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund

Dramatically enhancing the breadth and quality of its South Asian collection and underscoring its reputation as a world-class center for decorative arts, and particularly silver, VMFA has acquired an important collection of 19th and early 20th century Anglo-Indian silver through a gift-purchase agreement. Richmond, Va., now possesses the largest, finest, and most comprehensive public collection of Colonial Indian silver outside India.

Many of the collection's 91 items are formal table-service objects, such as tea services, vessels, trays and salvers, pepper pots, and an extensive dessert service. As many of the items are multi-part sets, the actual number of pieces acquired is 234. More unusual objects include rosewater sprinklers, calling card cases, and a reproduction of a Hellenistic statue excavated at Pompeii.

The British Colonial period is one of India's most fascinating and visually rich artistic eras. Like Mediterranean-influenced Gandharan sculpture and the hybrid paintings style of the Mughals, Raj-period decorative arts reveal the multicultural dimensions of a culture too often considered impenetrably exotic and alien. Silver made for British-Colonial tables explores the interplay of European and Indian aesthetics, production, and patronage through objects that are at once approachable and exotic.

The new acquisition joins three other 19th century Indian silver objects in VMFA's internationally recognized collection of South Asian art. An early 19th century teapot and stand, very English in form, was acquired earlier this year, and the other two items – a dazzling *bowdah* (elephant saddle) and pair of flywhisk handles – are examples of objects made not for India's British elite, but for her native princes. The collection also naturally links to a small but important group of Mughal-Period silver, and it resonates with the museum's acclaimed Gans English silver collection, as well as with fine examples of American Colonial silver.

4. Jacob Lawrence (American, 1917-2000), *The Legend of John Brown*, No. 13, 1977 (after 1941 gouache series), silk-screen print on Domestic Etching paper. J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund and partial gift of Derrick Johnson in honor of his grandson, Mark Devon Johnson, on the occasion of VMFA's 75th anniversary.



Jacob Lawrence's *The Legend of John Brown* graphic series – consisting of 22 silk-screen prints – is based on the artist's same-size gouache paintings from 1941 (owned by the Detroit Institute of Arts) that explore the life of the controversial abolitionist. In 1977, when the John Brown paintings had become too fragile for public display and access, the institute commissioned Lawrence – working with Ives-Sillman of New Haven, Conn. – to reproduce them in 60 portfolios of limited-edition screen-prints, published by Detroit's Founders Society.

Lawrence's John Brown series was among the historical epics he produced in the 1930s and 1940s focusing on heroic 19th-century figures such as Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass as well as the Great Migration of the early 20th-century. (A 1974 silk-screen print related to Lawrence's iconic representation of the effects of that massive exodus of blacks from the south to the north and west – *The 1920s . . . Migrants Arrive and Cast their Ballots* – is hanging in VMFA's American Art galleries.)

As Lawrence explained: “The inspiration to paint the Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman and John Brown series was motivated by historical events as told to us by the adults of our community . . . the black community. The relating of these events, for many of us, was not only very informative but also most exciting to us, the men and women of these stories were strong, daring and heroic; and therefore we could and did relate to these by means of poetry, song and paint.” It is for these powerful narratives that Lawrence continues to be most celebrated today.

5. Walter B. Stephen (American, 1875-1961), three vases, pottery: *Crystalline Glaze Vase*, impressed Stephen mark for 1936, 9 ¼ in. high; *Monumental Cracked Blue Vase*, mark for Pisgah Pottery, 1940, 18 in. high; *Cameo Pottery Vase with "Westward Ho" scene*, marked on shoulder "W.B. Stephen," base with clear impressed mark for 1939, 7 in. high. Director's Discretionary Purchase with J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund.



Born in Iowa to a family of westward settlers, Walter Stephen moved as a child to Tennessee, where his father worked as a stonemason. Stephen's transformation from a stonemason's apprentice to a ceramic artist was inspired by his mother, Nellie Stephen, an amateur illustrator who assisted her son in developing myriad pottery forms and decorations. On the heels of the influential St. Louis World's fair in 1904, Walter and Nellie established Nonconnah pottery near Memphis. Eventually, Stephen moved to North Carolina where, in 1926, he opened the Pisgah Forest Pottery near Asheville. Inspired by Asian ceramics and the Arts and Crafts movement, he began experimenting with different glazes and techniques, developing important relationships with other successful potters in the area who mentored his maturing style and helped him to improve his market presence. A review of Stephen's work highlights his three signature decorative techniques: a crystalline glaze; a host of Asian-inspired glazes, most notably turquoise, which he preferred in a "flawed" crackle finish; and cameo ware. The latter, a *pâte-sur-pâte* technique employed by Sèvres and other 19th-century factories, was a freehand cameo process in which successive layers of transparent porcelain slip are laboriously applied by stages into images. Stephen's best known examples are nostalgic silhouettes of westward movement, settlement, and pioneer life – like this example of "Westward Ho." Although he created pots until his death in 1961, the majority of Stephen's work dates before 1949.

6. Ethiopian *Pendant Double Diptych*, late 17th century, tempera on panel, 3¼" h. Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund.



VMFA is acquiring 43 works of Ethiopian religious art during 2011 and 2012 through a gift/purchase arrangement with collectors Robert and Nancy Nooter. The works date from the 12th to the 19th century and include paintings, illuminated manuscripts, scrolls, crosses, and liturgical accessories.

The Ethiopian Church is the largest of the Oriental Orthodox family of churches. Most of its 40 to 45 million members live in Ethiopia. The church's origins trace to the conversion of the Axumite king, Ezana, in the 4th century, by Saint Frumentius, a Syrian-Greek who arrived there

after being shipwrecked on the Red Sea coast. Through the centuries, the Ethiopian Church was allied with the Egyptian Coptic Church and headed by the Coptic Patriarch in Alexandria. In 1959, the two churches separated and since then the Ethiopian Church has had its own Patriarch.

Ethiopian religious painting shares common iconography and general format with other early Christian and Byzantine images, including icons, and illuminated manuscripts and scrolls, but it is distinctive in style, being characterized by strong colors and bold, simplified forms that accentuate key facial features and gestures. Perhaps the quintessential Ethiopian ecclesiastical object is the cross. Over the centuries, Ethiopian crosses have been crafted in wood, iron, brass, and silver in a wide range of styles and designs, some ornate and lacy, others bearing imagery in low relief or etched into the surface. Twenty-one processional and hand crosses are included in the collection being acquired by the museum.

Ethiopian art was introduced in the United States in 1993 through the seminal exhibition, *African Zion: The Sacred art of Ethiopia*, which was a collaborative effort of InterCultura, the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa. Shortly thereafter, the Walters Art Gallery developed the largest collection of Ethiopian art outside Addis, and they display the collection alongside their rich holdings of Byzantine and Russian ecclesiastical art. With the acquisition of the Nooter collection, VMFA will become a leading institution in this area and will present most of the collection in the African art gallery to establish its African context, while some of the works will be shown with the museum's Coptic and Byzantine art, thus enriching two areas within the museum.

Robert and Nancy Nooter are among the museum's most significant donors, having contributed more than 150 works of African art to the collection prior to this gift/purchase. The Nooter's collection of Native American art, comprising some 150 works, is also on long-term loan at the museum, where it is featured in a special gallery.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is a state agency and a model public/private partnership. All works of art are purchased with private funds from dedicated endowments. After the board of trustees accepts the acquisitions, the art becomes the property of the Commonwealth of Virginia to protect, preserve and interpret. The acquisitions committee meets quarterly.

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 23,000 works of art, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside Russia and one of the nation's finest collections of American art, Art Nouveau and Art Deco. VMFA is home to acclaimed collections of English Silver and Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British Sporting and Modern & Contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan and African art. 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. General admission is always free. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.vmfa.museum.

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