

Art Acquisition Highlights

September 2012

The following artworks were acquired in September 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. Raymond Duchamp-Villon (French, 1876-1918), *Maggy*, conceived in plaster 1912; cast ca. 1960. Bronze with black patina, 28 ³/₈ x 13 ³/₁₆ x 14 ¹⁵/₁₆ inches (Number 8 from an edition of 8, all cast between ca. 1931 and ca. 1960; signed, with the Georges Rudier foundry mark and incised Louis Carre Editeur) The Eric and Jeanette Lipman Fund

Duchamp-Villon was the middle brother of Jacques Villon and Marcel Duchamp. Together they formed the core of an early 20th-century collective called the Puteaux group, which explored the implications of cubism. Duchamp-Villon was the only sculptor and is sometimes considered the first to consistently translate cubism into three-dimensions. His career was cut short in 1918, when he died of typhoid fever contracted during World War I. Most of his bronzes were cast posthumously by his brothers.

Along with Matisse and Picasso, Duchamp-Villon was at the forefront of radically changing the traditional representation of the human face in sculpture. In seeking to reveal "essential qualities" of their sitters, these artists rejected the idea of portraiture as visual likeness. Their dramatic abstractions reorganized the head into simplified masses and planes, often involving extreme distortion. *Maggy* is one of Duchamp-Villon's most striking works, and his first to clearly show the influence of cubism and African art. The distortions also suggest a gargoyle, reflecting Duchamp-Villon's study of medieval sculpture. In addition, there is an element of caricature, as Duchamp-Villon enlarged the already prominent features of the subject—the wife of poet and painter, George Ribemont-Dessaignes.



The acquisition of *Maggy* strengthens VMFA holdings of early twentieth-century European sculpture and creates strong connections with works in the T. Catesby Jones collection of French art and the Ludwig and Rosy Fischer collection of German Expressionism. Its purchase is made with a fund created by long-time VMFA-supporters Jeanette and Eric Lipman.

John B. Ravenal
Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

2. Tie Bao (Chinese, 1752-1824), *Calligraphy on Mount Wuyi in Running Script*, Qing dynasty, dated 1802, hanging scroll; ink on paper, Image: 50 x 17 1/2"

This calligraphy transcribes a travel journal from *The Huachanshi Commentary* by Dong Qichang (1555-1640), a scholar and art theorist of the Ming dynasty. It describes a gathering of immortals at Mount Wuyi, a Daoist landmark in Fujian Province. Written in broad, tight strokes, the characters are placed in a loose composition, showing both strength and elegance. Born in a military family, Tie Bao was interested in calligraphy and literature at a young age. He took several court posts across the country after 1772. This scroll was most likely written in 1802, when he passed by Mount Wuyi to accept his new appointment in Guangzhou.

Li Jian

E. Rhoads and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation Curator of East Asian Art



3. Walter Antoine-Louis Barye (French, 1796-1875), *Virginia Deer*, 1837. Bronze, with brown and green patina (atelier). 10 1/8 x 16 x 6 1/4

Antoine-Louis Barye was the foremost sculptor of animal subjects in 19th-century France. Thanks to many recent gifts from Mrs. Nelson St Clair Jr., VMFA possesses one of the most extensive collections of his work in the country. Currently, these holdings are on view in a long-term installation adjacent to the galleries featuring French art from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.

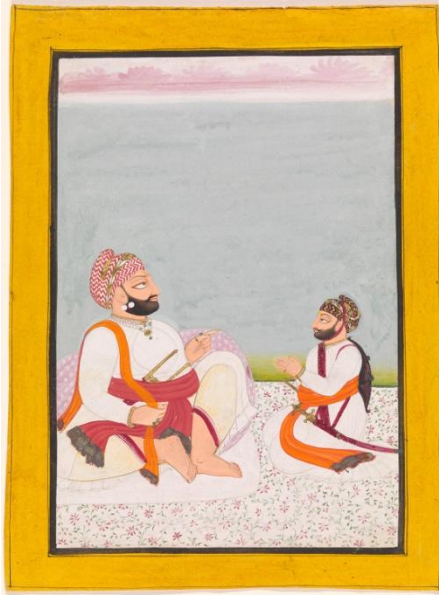


Virginia Deer is not only an extremely fine example of Barye's sensitive and dynamic interpretation of animal subjects, but it also represents a native Virginia species. This most recent acquisition, purchased with the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, further reveals VMFA's commitment to collecting objects in the areas of both French Romanticism and animal art.

Mitchell Merling

Paul Mellon Curator and Head of European Art

4. Chokha, Indian, Rajasthan, Devgarh, *Ravat Gokul Das and Rajavat Juvanji*, 1826, opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 11 x 8¼". Museum Purchase: Aldine S. Hartman Endowment Fund



This painting is the last-known work by one of India's most celebrated artists, Chokha of Devgarh. The double-portrait's large figure, at left, is Gokul Das II, ruler of Devgarh from 1786 to 1821. Pictured here posthumously, he meets with a lesser official; their ritualized interaction and carefully studied countenances are the subjects of the painting. VMFA's South Asian collection did not previously include any paintings from the important Devgarh school, a gap now filled with a superb work from a recognized master. Although it has been known to experts for some time, no image of the painting had been published. This work contributes to an emerging picture of Chokha as a remarkably versatile painter, and it joins many other masterworks of Indian painting at VMFA.

- Indian, Uttar Pradesh: *Proto-historic Bronze: Anthropomorph*, ca. 2500–1000 BCE, copper alloy. Gift of Terence McInerney
- Indian, Uttar Pradesh, *Proto-Historic Bronze: Harpoon*, ca. 2500–1000 BCE, copper alloy. Gift of Terence McInerney
- Indian, Rajasthan, Mandore, *Illustrated Manuscript of the Prajñāpāna Sūtra*, 1514, opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 167 folios, 2 illustrated, each 4 7/8 x 12 1/8". Gift of Terence McInerney
- Alexander Gorlizki (British) and Riyaz Uddin (Indian), New York and Jaipur, *Pipe Dreams (Hot Elvis)*, 2006, opaque watercolor on paper, 9 x 10 7/8". Gift of Terence McInerney

With the purchase of the Chokha painting came four additional Indian works, given in honor of Curator Emeritus Dr. Joseph M. Dye III. Two bronzes from the 3rd-2nd millennium BCE—an anthropomorphic figure and a harpoon—become the oldest objects in the collection, advancing our presentation of Indian art by some thousand years. A 16th-century illustrated manuscript of the *Prajñāpāna Sūtra*, a Jain religious text, joins two 15th-century examples already in the collection and allows us to showcase a century of artistic evolution in Jain painting. Finally, a 2006 painting brings the South Asian collection into the 21st century. *Hot Elvis (Pipe Dreams)*, the work of a pair of artists, evokes Mughal-period miniature painting in its intermingling of Indian and Western imagery. Briton Alexander Gorlizki invents his playful designs in Manhattan and sends them to Riyaz Uddin who, using the materials and techniques of Indian miniature painting, transforms them in his Jaipur studio into exquisitely executed pictures. This gift speaks to traditional Indian paintings in the South Asian collection as it resonates with works in the museum's Modern & Contemporary department.

John Henry Rice

E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art

ADDITIONAL PURCHASES

East Asian Art

VMFA acquired 10 works of Chinese calligraphy and painting from the Yuen-Tsien Bay collection through purchase in September 2012. The Y. T. Bay collection consists of a large number of scrolls, assembled by Mr. Y. T. Bay (1913-1987) in Hong Kong in the 1960s and the 1970s. Native of Shanghai, Mr. Bay relocated to Hong Kong in 1949, where he owned a silk factory. His business success and his passion for art enabled him to collect. Created by court artists, officials, and scholars, these works range from landscape, figure painting, flower-and-bird, to calligraphy, dating from the 18th to the mid-20th century.

- Wang Zhen (1867-1938), *Daoist Immortal Liu Hai*, 1914, Republic period, Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper, Image: 52 x 26”
- Wang Zhen, *Lotus Flowers*, dated 1923, Republic period, Hanging scroll; ink and color paper, Image: 54½ x 27”
- Wang Ti (1880-1960), *Song-Dynasty Prose in Clerical Script*, Republic period, Hanging scroll; ink on gold-flecked yellow paper, Image: 51½ x 12½”
- Weng Tonghe (1830-1904), Qing dynasty, *Five-Character Verse in Running Script*, 19th century, two hanging scrolls, ink on paper, Image: 58 x 14½”
- Qian Weicheng (1720-1772), *Landscape*, ca. 1765, Fan painting mounted as a hanging scroll; ink and color on paper, Image: 21 x 30”
- Zhang Ping (born 1934), *Wu Gorge on Yangzi River*, dated 1978, Republic period, Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper, Image: 27 x 18¼”
- Zheng Chang (1894-1952), painting, and Shen Yimo (1883-1971), calligraphy, *Retreat as a Fisherman*, dated winter of 1945, Republic period, Folding fan; ink and color on paper
- He Weipu (1844-1925), *Preface of Classics in Clerical Script*, dated 1908, Hanging scroll; ink on paper, Image: 57½ x 30¾”
- Liang Dingfen (1859-1920), Republic period, *Commentaries on Calligraphy in Small Standard Script*, winter of 1919, Set of four hanging scrolls; ink on satin, each image: 36 x 8”

Museum Purchase: Robert A. and Ruth W. Fisher Fund

Modern & Contemporary Art

- Ben Durham (American, born 1982), *Amanda*, 2012. Graphite on handmade paper. 58 x 44 x ¾ inches. Funds provided by Jil and Hiter Harris

The subjects of Durham’s portraits are friends, classmates and acquaintances from his childhood in Lexington, Kentucky. In a ritualistic daily process, he combs the Lexington police reports for familiar names and faces, collecting their mug shots and arrest records. Ranging from petty theft to violent crime, these records represent the climax of troubled pasts. Drawn on thick handmade paper, the *Text Portraits* are composed entirely of words—words comprising everything the artist knows, remembers, or has been told about the subject. Extremely tactile and obsessively worked, Durham’s writing at times wears away the thick handmade paper’s surface to depict shadows, hair, and eyes, while light cheeks and shoulders remain legible. The series, which began as a meditational process of remembering and recording, creates a complex portrait built from fact and reflection.

Durham is a fast-rising young artist with a growing exhibition history at established galleries and museums. In addition, his work is in major museum collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art. The acquisition of Durham's *Amanda* helps VMFA better represent contemporary artists' interest in drawing as a major medium. It also makes a strong connection with portraits from a number of collection areas. In addition, it adds a work by an artist currently based in Richmond.

John B. Ravenal

Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

- Lalla Essaydi (Moroccan, born 1956), *Les Femmes du Maroc: La Grande Odalisque*, 2008. Color photograph, 71 x 86 inches. Number 2 from an edition of 5. Funds provided by Mary and Donald Shockey Jr. and Jil and Hiter Harris

Essaydi's photography explores the charged rhetoric of veiling and revealing that surrounds Islamic women. The women in the series *Les Femmes du Maroc* are enveloped in Islamic calligraphy: writing, applied in *benna*, which adorns their skin, robes, and the interiors that surround them. The text both entraps them and recalls a form of decoration that marks some of the happiest and most significant moments of an Islamic woman's life. In responding to one of the defining images of Orientalism—Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' *Grande Odalisque* (1814)—Essaydi's image replaces a Western male perspective on “the Orient” with that of a Muslim female, and provides a contemporary reflection on a theme that stretches back several hundred years in visual art, literature, and music.

Essaydi was raised in Morocco and spent many years in Saudi Arabia, and although she was educated in Europe and the United States, the experience of traditional Islamic life was fundamental in shaping her. She has commented, “In my art I wish to present myself through multiple lenses—as artist, as Moroccan, as Saudi, as traditionalist, as Liberal, as Muslim. In short, I invite the viewer to resist stereotypes.” Essaydi's work is currently on view in a solo exhibition at the National Museum of African Art, Washington DC. The acquisition of *La Grande Odalisque* strengthens the global character of the 21st-century collection and increases VMFA's holdings of work by women artists and artists of color. In addition, it creates a conversation with works in other areas of the collection, including American and South Asian art.

John B. Ravenal

Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

- Robert Pruitt (American, born 1975), *Steeped*, 2011. Conté and charcoal on hand-dyed paper, 50 x 38 inches. Funds provided by Jil and Hiter Harris

For the past decade, Pruitt has made large drawings of mostly single figures: ordinary people presented as multicultural superheroes in colorful and outlandish costumes, attitudes, and poses. Pruitt's subjects are people he knows, and their accouterments allude to comic books, science fiction, mythology, art history, and politics. Pruitt describes his mission as expanding African American identity, combining symbols of science and exploration with references to Dogon and Egyptian mythology, black music traditions, and contemporary art. The dignified, self-possessed woman in *Steeped*—based on a photograph of the artist's girlfriend—looks out from beneath an absurdly large afro shaped like a Meso-American step-pyramid.

The acquisition of *Steeped* adds a bold work by an artist who is gaining increasing national attention, including participation in the 2006 Whitney Biennial. In addition, it reflects the centrality of cultural hybridity as an interest among contemporary artists and scholars. Finally, *Steeped* contributes a positive and richly complex image of an African American subject to VMFA's holdings.

John B. Ravenal
Sydney and Frances Lewis Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

SELECTED GIFTS

African Art

- Seven cotton textiles from Liberia, mid-20th century, Kpelle or Loma culture: *Narrow-Band Cloth*, 68 x 72"; *Narrow-Band Cloth*, 72 x 71"; *Man's Robe*, 78 x 60"; *Small Tunic*, 48 x 24"; *Man's Robe*, 91 x 71"; *Man's Robe*, 86½ x 52"; *Man's Robe*, 98½ x 68". Gift of Liberia 1 Peace Corps Volunteers 1962-1964

VMFA has received a gift of seven textiles from Liberia for its African art collection. Originally collected by George Radcliffe during his term as a Peace Corps volunteer, the group was donated on behalf of the entire Liberia 1 Corps, the first class of US Peace Corps Volunteers to Liberia, 1962-1964. The works originate from the Loma and Kpelle ethnic groups of Liberia's north central region. They are the first examples from Liberia to enter the collection, thus helping to broaden the museum's representation of textile design in Africa. All of the textiles were hand-woven on narrow looms, a men's weaving technique that yields long strips for cutting and stitching side-by-side to create larger fabric for tailoring garments, such as the four men's robes that are part of this gift.

Richard Woodward
Curator of African Art

American Art

- John Henry Twachtman (American, 1853-1902), *Canal in Venice*, 1884. Pastel and graphite on colored paper. 22 ½ x 17 ½". Gift of Charles G. Thalhimier in honor of his wife Sibyl's 90th birthday

A founding member of "The Ten," America's leading group of impressionist painters, Twachtman trained as a realist in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Munich, Germany, before lightening his touch and palette after seeing the startling work of James McNeill Whistler and the French Impressionists in Europe. This ethereal scene of Venice, which dates from Twachtman's last year abroad, suggests his experimental and transitional use of the medium of pastel, then favored by many progressive artists. Specifically, Twachtman approached pastel as a constructive step between his early painterly style and the muted tonality of his later landscapes. His Italian scene was specifically inspired by Whistler's 1881 London exhibition of Venetian pastels (VMFA owns one example, *Sotto Portico—San Giacomo*). In Twachtman's drawing, Whistler's influence is evident in the use of colored paper to create an overall sense of compositional harmony, the vertical framework, and the delicate abbreviation of details evoking a glimpsed view. The scene depicts the Rio della Guerra, just north of the Piazza San Marco. The daring vacancy and shimmering play of subtle colors at the center of the image suggest the distance from the bustling square and the retreat into quieter, more residential areas of the city. This generous gift from a longtime VMFA patron represents the first work by Twachtman to enter the museum's collection.

Dr. Sylvia Yount

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

Ancient Art

- A collection of 49 Roman Republic silver coins from ca. 211–43 BCE, silver, various sizes. Museum purchase: Kathleen Boone Samuels Memorial Fund and the Ceres Foundation

This gift of coins represents a significant addition to VMFA's Ancient Art holdings. Romans began issuing silver coins during the darkest days of their city's struggle against the Carthaginian leader, Hannibal, in the third century BCE. The moneyers—the people tasked with supervising the design and minting of coins—used the coins as propaganda to inspire the citizenry by using symbols such as a bust of the goddess Roma and images of Castor and Pollux, twin sons of Jupiter who had helped Rome in an earlier time of peril. Just seventy years after Hannibal's defeat, the moneyers began to use coins as electoral propaganda to help them get elected to public office by emphasizing the important role their families had played in Rome's rise to world domination. This emphasis on family rather than city corresponds with the beginning of the end of the Roman Republic, and soon the moneyers began to refer to current events and living leaders rather than long-dead heroes and Rome's past. The new leaders—military men like Sulla and Marius, Pompey the Great, Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, and the young Octavian—fought a series of Civil Wars and paid their soldiers with coins bearing imagery intended to rally the support of both the soldiers and the citizenry. Because the coins were such an important means of communication, they were often designed by skilled craftsmen, sometimes the same artists who carved exquisite intaglios into gemstones.

Dr. Peter J. Schertz

Jack and Mary Ann Frable Curator

East Asian Art

- Kawase Hasui (Japanese, 1883-1957), *Seventy Works of Woodblock Prints and Watercolors*, 1919-1957: 65 woodblock prints; ink and color on paper; five watercolors: album leaves, ink and color on paper, various sizes. Gift of René and Carolyn Balcer for the René and Carolyn Balcer Collection

European Art

- Théodore Géricault (French, 1791-1824), *Pity the Sorrows of a Poor Old Man!... plate 2 from Various Subjects Drawn from Life on Stone*, 1821, Lithograph in black on ivory wove paper. Museum Purchase: funds provided by Alice and Lewis Nelson and Frank Raysor Fund
- Théodore Géricault, French (1791-1824), *The Piper, from Various Subjects Drawn from Life on Stone*, 1821, lithograph, 390 x 297 mm. Museum Purchase: Frank Raysor Fund

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

VMFA's permanent collection encompasses more than 33,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years of world history. Its collections of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, English silver, Fabergé, and the art of South Asia are among the finest in the nation. With acclaimed holdings in American, British Sporting, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist, and Modern and Contemporary art – and additional strengths in African, Ancient, East Asian, and European – VMFA ranks as one of the top comprehensive art museums in the United States. Programs include educational activities and studio classes for all ages, plus lively 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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