

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VMFA's New Acquisitions Celebrate African and African American Culture

The Board of Trustees of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts met on December 16 to approve the acquisition of a focused group of 12th to 20th-century objects by African and African American artists, among other works. The acquisitions underscore VMFA's ongoing commitment to building, interpreting, and programming a diverse, global permanent collection. Each quarter, after VMFA's trustees approve proposed acquisitions, the art becomes the property of the Commonwealth of Virginia, exemplifying the museum's "It's Your Art" motto.

Programming:

A series of upcoming public and member programs complement the focused acquisitions.

January 10: Lecture on Rosenwald Fund for 20th-century African American art and education

January 24: Conversation and film on Ethiopia's sacred arts

February 2: Jazz-themed Family Day

February 15: Presentation on 18th-century Virginia's enslaved populations

For more information on these programs, visit <http://vmfa.museum/Learn/>

Enriching VMFA's already acclaimed holdings of African art, American painting, sculpture, and photography, the new acquisitions include:

African

- *Processional Cross*, 17th-18th century, Ethiopia, Silver, Gift of Robert and Nancy Nooter
- *Galukoji* (Divination Instrument), c.1930, Pende culture (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Wood, fiber, feathers, Aldine S. Hartman Endowment Fund
- *Barber Shop Sign*, after 1957. Unidentified artist, Ghana, Paint on panel, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth L. Brown



VMFA's new acquisitions of African art push the boundaries of the collection to include Ethiopian religious art from the 12th to the 19th century. They also represent works from other countries that respond to the wrenching transitions experienced during the 20th-century colonial period and the renewed sense of optimism that came with independence.

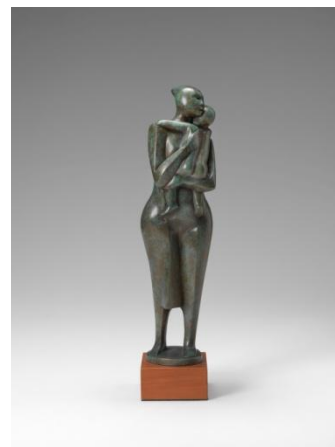
Ethiopian icons, crosses, and manuscripts acquired from the collection of Robert and Nancy Nooter place VMFA among a select few museums that own and display Ethiopian art.

An array of works reflective of both the colonial era and the independence movement from Ghana, Burkina Faso, South Africa, and Democratic Republic of the Congo – including a flag, diviner's implement, statues, paintings, and prints – were acquired from the collections of Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Brown and Mr. and Mrs. Allen Davis. Select works from several western and central African cultures – including a rare Kuba royal drum – enrich VMFA's core representation of Africa's historical arts. These works were also acquired from the Brown and Davis collections, formed during and after both men served as ambassadors to several African nations.

Richard B. Woodward, Curator of African Art

American

- Beauford Delaney (American, 1901-1979), *Marian Anderson*, 1965, oil on canvas, 63 x 51½", J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art
- Aaron Douglas (American, 1899-1979), *The Prodigal Son*, ca. 1927, oil on canvas, 26 x 18 ½", J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art
- Elizabeth Catlett (American, 1915-2012), *Standing Mother and Child*, 1978, bronze, 16-1/16 x 4-3/8 x 3½", Gift of Richmond Chapter, The Links, Inc.



Important paintings by two leading 20th-century American modernists – Beauford Delaney's *Marian Anderson* (1965) and Aaron Douglas's *The Prodigal Son* (ca. 1927) – were purchased with the J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art. In addition, Elizabeth Catlett's bronze *Standing Mother and Child* (1978) was donated by the Richmond chapter of The Links, Inc.

Beauford Delaney is critically acclaimed for his modern portraits, of which *Marian Anderson* is his most ambitious and accomplished. Characterized by a chromatic brilliance and technical complexity,

the painting of the iconic contralto and cultural figure epitomizes the artist's exploration of abstractions that featured the color yellow as a symbol of perfection and transcendence. The second work by Delaney to enter VMFA's collection (the 1946 New York cityscape, *Greene Street*, was acquired in 2010), *Marian Anderson* becomes the museum's first painted portrait of a celebrated historical black figure.

Called the Dean of African American art, Aaron Douglas is regarded as the leading visual artist of the Harlem Renaissance as well as the first black artist to create a distinctive modernist style that connected contemporary African Americans with their African heritage. *The Prodigal Son* has all the hallmarks of Douglas's signature approach, while evoking one of his most important collaborations – eight gouache accompaniments to James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*, a collection of free-verse poems inspired by folk sermons of Southern black preachers. *The Prodigal Son* oil acquired by VMFA directly relates to this award-winning 1927 publication for which Douglas produced various drawings and paintings, including versions of the same subject in different media.

Standing Mother and Child is among the best-known later sculptures by the seminal African American artist and social activist Elizabeth Catlett. The iconic theme of mother and child, so expressively rendered in this 1978 bronze, is one most associated with the artist (who had three sons with her second husband, Francisco Mora). Characterized by Catlett's distinctive figural realism with abstract elements drawn from African and Pre-Columbian art, *Standing Mother and Child* emphasizes the loving intimacy between the all-but fused figures.

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

Photography

- Gordon Parks (American, 1912-2006), *Stokely Carmichael, Watts, Los Angeles, CA*, 1966, gelatin silver print; printed 1966 or 1967, 13 X 10¹/₄", Katherine Boone Samuels Memorial Fund
- Gordon Parks (American, 1912-2006), *Untitled, Mobile, Alabama*, 1956, pigment print, 13³/₄ x 13³/₄, Funds provided by Linda Sawyer, Plantation, Florida

Two photographs by Gordon Parks are the first by this major 20th century photographer to enter VMFA's collection. Both of these images enable the museum to tell a more expansive story of photography at mid-century, while emphasizing Parks' commitment to documenting the Civil Rights movement over more than a decade.

Parks' position as the first African American photographer on the staff of *Life* magazine put him at the center of the period's complex racial politics, from segregation in the South to the rise of the Black Power movement. *Stokely Carmichael, Watts, Los Angeles* was the lead image in the May 17, 1967 *Life* feature on this important, if controversial, African American leader who, in the late 1960s, coined the term "Black Power." Gordon Parks wrote the essay in the *Life* feature, offering an important opportunity to pair his written voice with his photographic vision.

Untitled, Mobile, Alabama, is part of a series of 70 original transparencies taken for a September, 1956 *Life* photo-essay on segregation entitled *The Restraints: Open and Hidden*. The "colored entrance" neon sign reveals the degree to which segregation was indelibly designed and integrated into 1950s

culture. Moreover, the dignity and repose of the woman and small child stand in contrast to many of the more violent Civil-Rights images of protests that are usually associated with the genre.

Sarah Eckhardt, Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

In addition to this resonant array of African and African American objects, additional works of art were acquired by purchase and gift at the December meeting:

American

- Unknown Artisan (Albany, New York), *Pair of Girandole Mirrors*, ca. 1810-1820, Eastern white pine (*pinus strobus*) and yellow poplar (*liriodendron tupipifera*), carved, gessoed, and gilded, with ebonized framing around mirrors; iron wire, gilt brass, mirror plate, and cut glass prisms, 38-5/8 x 24-1/3 x 8” each, Floyd D. and Anne C. Gottwald Fund.

European

38 Works on Paper for the Frank Raysor Collection, donated by Frank Raysor, New York:

- 15 lithographs by Théodore Géricault (French, 1791-1824): *Horses Going to a Fair*; *A Party of Life Guards*; *Horses Exercising*; *The English Farrier*; *A French Farrier*; *Lara Blessé*; *A Horse Being Walked Before the Race*; *The Race*; *A Draft Horse Unhitched from its Cart*; *A Postilion or The Two Harnessed Horses*; *Cuirassiers Charging an Artillery Battery*; *Hussar Trumpeter*; *An Artillery Officer Commanding the Charge*; *Three Horses Being Led to the Slaughterhouse*; *Officier d'Artillerie légère de al Garde Imperiale (Light Artillery Office of the Imperial Guard)*
 - 14 works on paper by Alfred Hutton (American, 1877–1954): *Windswept*; *Corner of the Huguenot Church*; *Smyth Gate*; *The Garden Gate*; *Old St. Michaels*; *Charleston, Cabbage Row*; *Sea Coast*; *English Pines*; *St. Phillips, Charleston*; *An Oak in Middleton Gardens or: The Middleton Live Oak*; *The Sword Gate*; *Flower Vendors at Charleston Market*; *On the Way House*; *Ashley Hall*
 - One drawing by Alphonse Legros (French, 1837-1911): *Portrait of Professor Thomas Huxley*
 - Five drawings, one portfolio and one bronze by Théophile Alexandre Steinlen (French, 1850-1923): *Colette Enfant et Chats*, charcoal; *À la Bodnière*, ink; *Une Chatte et ses Petits*, blue crayon; *Bad Hory*, ink; *Little Boy with Cat and Dog*, ink; *Des Chats: Images sans Paroles*, ca. 1898, hardback portfolio; *Cat*, bronze
 - Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (Italian, 1696-1770), *Negretto*, before 1762, etching
 - Edmund Blampied (British, 1886-1966), *Farmers Vraicking*, ca. 1940-45, oil on canvas
- Aesop's Fables, with His Life Extra Illustrated*, illustrations by Francis Barlow, Sebastian LeClerc, and Wenceslaus Hollar, 1666, first edition
- Eight woodcuts by Julius J. Lanke (American, 1884-1960): *New Year's Greeting—Rothenburg*, 1926; *“N” Street House, Georgetown*, 1923; *Two Poplars*, 1920; *March Day in Georgetown*, 1925; *March Day in Georgetown (another impression)* 1925; *Christmas Greeting: Coach*, 1925; *Plowman Letterhead*, 1927; *Martinsabteigasse—Cologne*, 1927

Donated by Mrs. Nelson L. St. Clair, Jr., Williamsburg, Va.:

- Antoine-Louis Barye (French, 1796-1875):
Large Seated Lion, ca. 1847, bronze (atelier)
Tatar Warrior Checking His Horse (model), ca. 1845, bronze (atelier)
Charging Bull, ca. 1842, bronze (atelier)
Pureblood Arab Stallion (Arab Pur-Sang) (master model) ca. 1873, bronze

Charles VII, The Victorious, ca. 1836–40, bronze (atelier)
Panther of Tunisia (master model), ca. 1832, bronze (Barbédienne)
Les Antilopes, ca. 1830, lithograph
Ours du Mississippi, 1836, lithograph

- Pierre-Jules Mêne (French, 1810-1877), *Boar Attacked by Hounds*, ca. 1848, bronze

European Decorative Art

- Koloman Moser (Austrian, 1868-1918), designer and illustrator, *Flächenschmuck (Decorations for Flat Surfaces)*, 1901, Portfolio of 30 loose color lithographs, Swenson Art Nouveau Fund

South Asian

- Derry Moore (Henry Dermot Ponsonby Moore, 12th Earl of Drogheda) (British, born 1937), *Shekhavati Traders, near Jaipur*, ca. 1990, digital print from color negative, 32-13/16 x 32-11/16, Funds provided by Mimi Wilson Dozier in honor of Joseph M. Dye, III
- Indian, Karnataka or Andhra Pradesh, *Episode from a picture-story series of the Shri Jaimini Ashvamedha episode of the Mahabharata*, mid-19th century, opaque watercolor on paper, 11³/₄ x 15³/₄", South Asian Arts Fund and South Asian Deaccessioning Funds
- Indian, Malwa, Central India, *Illustration to a Ragamala Series: Bangal Ragini*, ca. 1680 opaque watercolor on paper, 9¹/₄ x 6³/₄", Funds provided by Friends of Indian Art in memory of Ranjit Sen

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 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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