

## Art Acquisitions December 9, 2010

### Purchases

1. John White Alexander (American, 1856-1915), *Portrait Study in Pink (The Pink Gown)*, 1896, oil on canvas, 75 x 35½ inches, Signed and dated, lower right: *J.W. Alexander '96*. The J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art and Partial Gift of Juliana Terian Gilbert, 2010.111.



This striking and monumental picture by John White Alexander, one of the leading figurative painters working in Paris at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, represents VMFA's first major acquisition of this premier genre of the period. *Portrait Study in Pink* is also a classic example of the artist's 1890s style and subject matter—a full-length image of an unidentified young woman in an elegant interior, painted in a subtle, tonal color scheme. The painting reveals the indelible influence of the famed expatriate James McNeill Whistler on a generation of American painters.

French critics, especially, noted Alexander's artistic debt to Whistler, including his adoption of the technique of allowing the coarse weave of a canvas to reveal itself in a composition. Throughout the 1890s, Alexander produced works that shared this particular tonal “staining” and textural quality with Whistler, while imbuing his compositions with less severe, sinuous grace—a practice that defined Alexander for many as the so-called painter of the flowing line.

Like many of his colleagues, Alexander sent his paintings to avant-garde exhibitions throughout Europe; *Portrait Study in Pink* was seen in Paris, Copenhagen, and Vienna. It remained in the artist's private collection (and that of his family's) until the sale of his estate, suggesting a special pride in the work.

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

2. Beauford Delaney (American, 1901-1979), *Greene Street*, 1946, oil on canvas, 16 x 20 inches, signed and dated, lower left: *Beauford Delaney 46*. Museum Purchase: The J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art, 2010.104.



A leading 20<sup>th</sup>-century American modernist, Beauford Delaney produced striking portraits, cityscapes, and abstractions throughout a productive career that spanned from his birthplace of Knoxville, Tennessee, to Boston, New York, and Paris, where he died and is buried. Celebrated for their chromatic brilliance and technical complexity, Delaney's innovative paintings have attracted greater attention in the last quarter century through major exhibitions and publications. Today, he is considered among the top three African American modernists, alongside Jacob Lawrence and Romare Bearden.

VMFA's new acquisition, the first work by Delaney to enter the collection, dates from the artist's so-called Greene Street period, the address of his Lower Manhattan studio where he painted before his 1953 move to Paris. *Greene Street* features the artist's signature pictorial motifs of the time (fire escape and hydrant, lamppost) as well as his vibrant palette and energetic, impastoed brushwork. The bold color scheme—suggestive of the French Fauves (or “Wild Beasts”)—drew particular praise when the work was exhibited in 1949 at the RoKo gallery in Greenwich Village: critic and painter Elaine de Kooning singled out Delaney's “violently painted street-scene,” echoing Henry Miller's description of the artist's Greene Street work as “virulent, explosive paintings . . . invested with color, mad with color . . . full of remembrances too, and solitudes.” The textural saturation of built-up pigment, which would later characterize Delaney's powerful abstractions, first revealed itself in such important transitional work as *Greene Street*.

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

3. René Buthaud (French, 1886-1986), *"Oceania" Vase*, about 1931, glazed stoneware, 17½ x 9½ inches. Museum Purchase: The Sydney and Frances Lewis Endowment Fund, 2010.105.

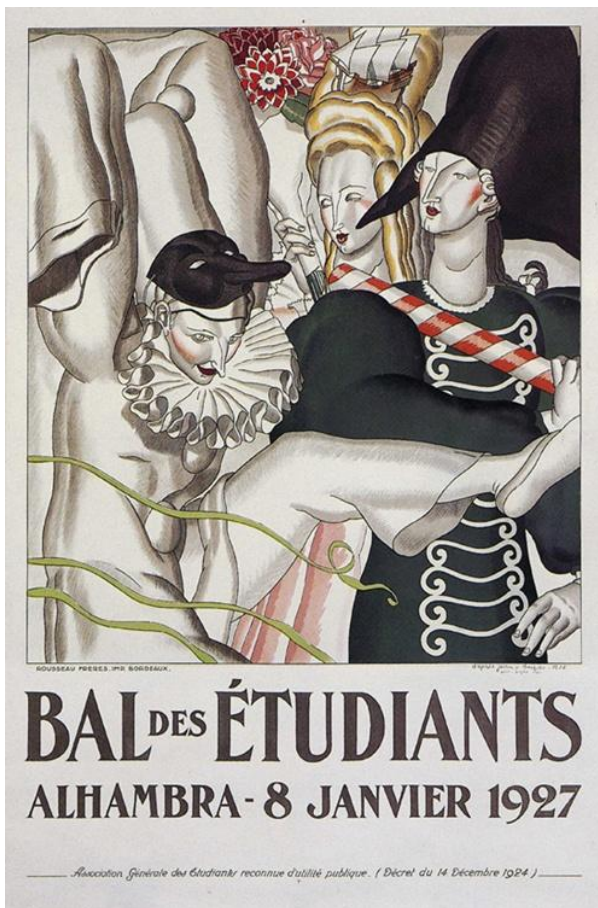


The collection of French Art Deco at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is among the finest in the United States. René Buthaud is one of the most prominent French Art Deco ceramists during the 1930s. The "Oceania" vase, and its pendant the "Africa" vase (now lost), depict figures that reflect the interest in non-western culture so prominent in Europe during the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At this period, there was a radical reassessment in Europe and America of so-called "Primitive" art. The "Oceania" vase and its pendant the "Africa" vase were almost certainly displayed at the Metropolitan Palace at the Colonial Exposition held in Paris in 1931. This exhibition was the last international world's fair exclusively devoted to the celebration of international colonialism. The artistic quality and dramatic effect of this vase makes it one of the most beautiful ever created by the artist.

Barry Shifman

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

4. Jean Dupas (French, 1882-1964) printed by Rousseau Frères (Bordeaux, France), *Poster: The Students' Ball (Bal des Etudiants)*, 1927, lithograph, 79 x 50½ inches. Museum Purchase: Funds provided by John and Maria Shugars, 2010.110.



Jean Dupas, born in Bordeaux, was one of the most successful French artists and designers during the Art Deco period. He created his first poster in 1924 for the Salon of Artists-Decorators in Paris. That poster was a huge success, and Dupas then began to receive regular commissions. In 1927 for the Students' Ball in the city of Bordeaux, the artist designed this work of art, printed by the renowned establishment Rousseau Frères, who was able to create extraordinary colors to complete the artist's vision. Made during the time when Dupas was travelling to Venice, Italy, this carnival scene evokes the mix of folkloric and art historical references that define the artist's style. Only a small number of this poster was printed, most likely due to the high cost of producing such brilliant colors, and it is rare to find them in such good condition today.

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

5. Charles Hoguet (German, 1821-1870), *Shepherds and their Flock Resting under a Tree*, 1868, oil on unlined canvas, 46½ x 56¼ inches, signed and dated: 'C Hoguet / 68'. Museum Purchase: Deaccessioning Funds, 2010.106.



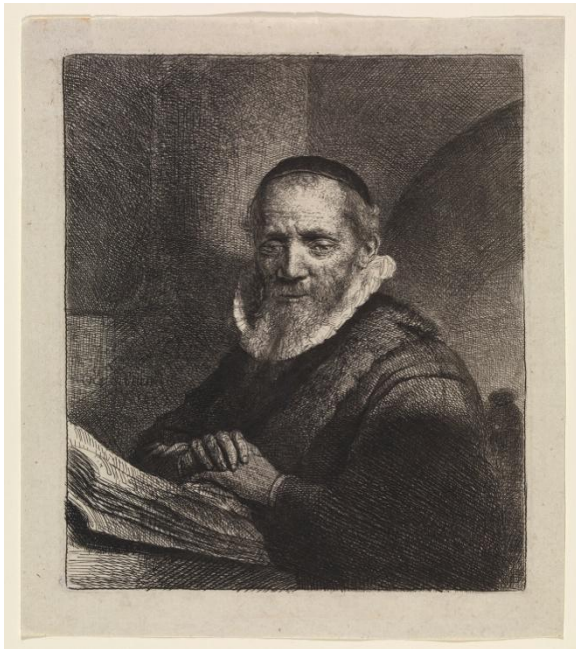
*Shepherds and their Flock Resting under a Tree* is a prime example of an academic landscape of the kind exhibited at the Paris Salon and elsewhere in Europe.

Characteristic of such landscapes is not only the grandiose elevated subject matter – the tree demonstrating the resilience and antiquity of the European soil - but also the high finish, anecdotal detail, and large scale. Such thoughtfully and imaginatively composed pictures were not executed “en plein air” but in the studio. This “Sublime” landscape has many echoes – from the Romantic oaks of Caspar David

Friedrich to the Realist oaks of Courbet. It is also “Picturesque” in every sense of the word – representing nature not as seen by the innocent eye but only as available to us through the imagination of the artist. The central oak itself recalls the famous Oak at Bas-Bréau, beloved of such Barbizon artists as Constant Troyon, with whom Hoguet painted in the forests of Fontainebleau. Additionally, such mountain landscapes are a specialty of German Romantic artists such as Carl Gustav Carus.

Dr. Mitchell Merling  
Paul Mellon Curator/Head of the Department of European Art

6. Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606-1669), *Jan Cornelis Sylvius, Preacher*, 1623, etching, 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches. Museum Purchase: Funds provided by Frank Raysor, 2010.109.



Rembrandt was a renowned printmaker, acclaimed for his dramatic use of tone and naturalistic effects in his etchings. He produced around 290 prints, often reworking the plates significantly between states. His etched works echo the wide array of subject matter found in his oeuvre and portraits appear frequently among his printed works. Here he depicts Jan Cornelisz Sylvius, a Rembrandt's mastery of etching techniques such as cross hatching to create dramatic tonal effects as well as powerfully convey character.

Dr. Mitchell Merling  
Paul Mellon Curator/Head of the Department of  
European Art

7. Theodore Géricault (French, 1791-1824), *The Coal Wagon*, 1821, lithograph, 7-11/16 x 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches. Museum Purchase: Funds provided by Frank Raysor, 2010.108.
8. Theodore Géricault, *Chevaux Conduit à l'Ecorcheur*, 1825, lithograph, 5<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches. Museum Purchase: Funds provided by the Collectors' Circle, 2010.107.

Théodore Géricault (1791-1824) was one of the towering geniuses of the Romantic period. His great achievement was *The Raft of the Medusa* of 1819, which received an only mixed reception at the Salon and was not purchased by the State. Thereafter, he traveled to England where he took on the horse as a major subject. The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is fortunate to possess multiple works including paintings, drawings and prints by this great artist. Over the past seven years the museum has been fortunate to acquire a number of important lithographs by Géricault through gift and purchase. Géricault was one of the first artists to explore the artistic possibilities of lithography and his body of lithographs can be considered one of the great achievements of nineteenth-century romantic art.

*The Coal Wagon* comes from a series of lithographs that Géricault produced in England depicting English subjects, titled *Various Subjects Drawn from Life on Stone* and often referred to as the *English Series*. In this series, one of the artist's greatest achievements, the artist trained his eye on the common experiences of the English street. While often depicting tragic scenes of poverty and distress, Géricault never succumbed to sentimentality. The present subject is a good example of the objective tone Géricault took in England: a loaded cart led by a team of powerful horses – hard labor seen dispassionately. Rather than romantically glorifying the horse, Géricault here shows these animals as beasts of burden.



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In *Chevaux Conduit à l'Ecorcheur* Géricault employs a vignette composition that provides a sense of narrative to the scene. The horse was a major subject for the artist in both his paintings and lithographs and here he has faithfully rendered the anatomy of the animals while also conveying the romantic appreciation for the power and beauty of the horse – despite the irony of their being led to their deaths at the hands of the knacker. Along with lithographs by Géricault already in VMFA's collection including *Mare and Foal*, *The Postilion*, *An Arabian Horse* and *The Flemish Farrier*, as well as numerous drawings and studies of horses in the Mellon Collection, the present lithograph illustrates the artist's interest in the life of the horses as well as the central role that they played in contemporary life.

Dr. Mitchell Merling

Paul Mellon Curator/Head of the Department of European Art

9. A.B. Jackson (American, 1925-1981), *Ghetto Sketch #1*, 1970s, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 65½ x 45 inches. Museum Purchase: The Kathleen Boone Samuels Memorial Fund, 2010.159.



*I am moved to paint black people. I paint the people on the street. I paint the homegrown who are alien.*

--A.B. Jackson

Alexander Brooks Jackson was a prominent Virginia artist and educator, born in New Haven in 1925 to a white mother and black father. Trained at Yale University in painting and graphic design, he taught for many years in Norfolk, becoming the first African-American faculty member at Old Dominion University, where he was eventually appointed chair of the art department.

Jackson is best known for his *Porch People*: drawings and paintings of elderly African Americans resting on their front porches watching passers-by. *Ghetto Sketch #1* relates to these works in showing figures in an urban environment, looking out at the viewer as if framed by a column or

banisters. Jackson's deep involvement with the art of Rembrandt shows in his strong draftsmanship and in his expressive use of incompleteness, which in his hands has a quality both of the Old Masters and modernity.

Apart from being one of the most acclaimed painters from the Tidewater region, Jackson has ties to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. His work was included in several VMFA exhibitions and in 1965 he received a Purchase Award and a Certificate Distinction as well as two consecutive years of VMFA Fellowship. In 1967, Jackson was commissioned to design the museum's holiday greetings card. *Ghetto Sketch #1* joins two minor works already in the collection—a sketch for the holiday card and a watercolor. It is a splendid addition to our collection and strengthens our representation both of Virginia artists and African-American artists.

John B. Ravenal

Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art



## Gifts

1. Fabergé firm, St. Petersburg, Workmaster: Henrik Emanuel Wigström (1862-1923), *Ashtray*, ca. 1900, bloodstone, varicolored gold, enamel, rubies. From the Collection of Georges and Alice Lurcy. Gift of Alice and Lewis Nelson in celebration of VMFA's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 2010.117.



Karl Fabergé (St. Petersburg 1846 - Lausanne 1922) is without any doubt the most famous goldsmith/jeweler of all time, surpassing in celebrity the Renaissance sculptor Benvenuto Cellini and even the Northern Baroque goldsmith Johann Melchior Dinglinger. His early activity was restricted to the field of jewelry, but as of 1885, working for the Russian Tsar Alexander III, he created an Imperial Easter egg, the first of a line of 50 ever more ambitious and expensive works of art, which account

for much of this master craftsman's fame. At the same time he began marketing a new line of delightful, original and highly popular objects of art in gold, enamel and/or semi precious stones, including flowers, animal sculptures and *objets de vitrine*. The head of his goldsmithing workshop between 1903 and 1917 was the Fin Henrik Wigström, celebrated throughout Europe as one of the leading craftsmen of his time. Many of his exquisite enameled cigarette-cases and miniature objects were acquired by Europe's Royalty and the Nobility of St. Petersburg. This charka-shaped ashtray goes beyond functionality (Fabergé produced many objects serving for the social ritual of smoking) to become a pure objet d'art. With Fabergé such utilitarian objects routinely become a decorative object of luxury and often served as a little present, as here, encased in one of the firm's signature wooden boxes. This little jewel, made of mottled green bloodstone and mounted in 14 kt gold covered in opaque white enamel is documented in the surviving archives of the Imperial court as having been acquired in 1906 by the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, born Princess Dagmar of Denmark, widow of Tsar Alexander III. It later passed through the collections of H.M. Olga, then H.R.H. Christopher of Greece, before being auctioned in 1952 and acquired by Georges Lurcy, uncle to the present donor, Mrs. Alice Nelson. This deceptively simple ashtray is an invaluable complement to Mrs. Pratt's other desk accessories as an example of the transformative genius of Fabergé and his workshops.

Dr. Mitchell Merling

Paul Mellon Curator/Head of the Department of European

2. T. G. Hawkes & Company (Corning, New York, 1880-1962) manufacturer, *Punchbowl Set with Twelve Cups*, 1908, leaded glass 14 x 15 inches. Gift of Nancy Fitzgerald Weir in celebration of VMFA's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 2010.112.1a-b, .2-14



This punchbowl reflects the highest quality of cut glass produced in the United States during the so-called “brilliant period,” ca. 1890-1915. Like its accompanying parts—the stand, cups, and ladle handle—it was blown and shaped and then cut after cooling. Rare and costly, punchbowls like this one were highly prized works of art. At its center is a twenty-four point hobstar — a mark of its distinction.

Thomas Gibbons Hawkes was one of the most important glass-cutters of the era. A native of Ireland, his ancestors had been co-founders of Waterford Glass. Arriving in Brooklyn, New York, in 1863, Hawkes served ten years as a foreman at the glass-cutting firm of Hoare & Dailey in Corning, New York, before founding Hawkes Rich Cut Glass Works in 1880. In 1889, he received the grand prize at the Paris Exposition and, a year later, incorporated T. G. Hawkes & Co. Hawkes went on to co-found Steuben Glassworks in 1903.

This punchbowl was commissioned in 1908 by Edward Eugene Fitzgerald for his home in Minden, Louisiana. Considered an heirloom at the time of its making, it descended in the family until its recent donation to the VMFA.

Dr. Susan J. Rawles  
Assistant Curator of American Decorative 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 22,000 works of art, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside Russia and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is home to acclaimed collections of English Silver and Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British Sporting and 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](http://www.vmfa.museum)

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