

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VMFA Acquires Rare Gilded Age Chairs

Early works by Cy Twombly and Zulu costumes also acquired

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts recently acquired one of only two known Herter Brothers Drawing Room chairs from the iconic William H. Vanderbilt Gilded Age residence; a pair of Lockwood de Forest Indian-manufactured chairs; a Marguerite Zorach modernist painting; four Cy Twombly photographs from his Black Mountain residency; and two Zulu beaded costumes. The Metropolitan Museum of Art recently acquired the mate to VMFA's Herter Brothers chair, which continues the museums' history of collaboration.



Designed by Christian Herter (1839-1883), manufactured by Herter Brothers, active 1864-1906, *Gentleman's Armchair*, ca. 1881-82, New York, New York. Gilded wood; mother of pearl inlay; original upholstery; casters stamped India Rubber Comb Co. (165, 167), 33 ½ x 27 ½ x 28 inches. Commissioned for the William H. Vanderbilt Residence (constructed 1879-1882; razed ca. 1946), 640 Fifth Avenue, New York. Museum Purchase, J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art.

VMFA's acquisition of one of only two known Herter Brothers Drawing Room chairs with original upholstery from the William H. Vanderbilt residence marks a strong addition to the museum's acclaimed Aesthetic movement holdings.

In 1879, Christian Herter, principal of the high-end manufacturing concern Herter Brothers, received the defining commission of his extraordinary career: the interior and exterior decoration of the William H. Vanderbilt residence at 640 Fifth Avenue, New York. The Vanderbilt commission ranked as the foremost domestic project of the Gilded Age, and the mansion conveyed the "new impulse now felt in the national life . . . when wealth . . . has begun to re-invent everything, and especially the House." This chair gives visual testimony to Herter's unique accomplishment. Situated in the famed Drawing Room, its carved, gilded, and mother-of-pearl inlaid surface complemented the interior's dazzling holistic effect. The rich show cover and ornamental trim represent a rare survivor of the period.

The conservation of this remarkable Herter chair will be undertaken by specialist conservators at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in tandem with its mate, their recently acquired *Lady's Armchair*. The two museums have a history of collaboration—most recently in the restoration and on-going installation of VMFA's Worsham-Rockefeller Bedroom and the Metropolitan's Worsham-Rockefeller Dressing Room.

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

Designed by Lockwood De Forest (American, 1850-1932), manufactured by Ahmadabad Wood Carving Company, Gujarat, Ahmadabad, India, *Pair of Repousse and Chased Brass Overlaid Teak Chairs*, ca. 1881-82, Brass, teak; modern upholstery on oak and pine substrate, 34 5/8" H x 22 1/4" W x 22 1/2" D each. Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund.



VMFA's outstanding American and South Asian collections are bridged by the recent acquisition at auction of a pair of spectacular brass-clad chairs designed by Lockwood de Forest. Reportedly modeled after a silver chair – likely a princely throne – he saw in a palace at Jodhpur, the pair would have been crafted at the Ahmadabad Wood Carving Company, established in 1879 by de Forest to supply finely carved, inlaid, and brass-clad objects to his partnership with Louis Comfort Tiffany.

The provenance of these two chairs is as dazzling as their intricately tooled surfaces. Appearing in photographs of de Forest's first New York showroom, they were retained when he moved in 1888 to 7 East 10th Street, where they were used in the front hall of his elaborate home. There they remained until being purchased at auction in 1922 for William Randolph Hearst, who was then spending lavishly to furnish his San Simeon Castle. Since 1941, the pair has been in the collection of a New England family. Reflecting traditional Indian craft of the highest order, these opulent chairs embody the late 19th-century Aesthetic movement's fascination with the Orient and provide a fascinating link between Indian Maharajas and an American Mogul.

Dr. John Henry Rice
Curator of South Asian & Islamic Art

Marguerite Zorach (American, 1887-1968), *Two Sisters—Marguerite and Her Sister, Edith*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches. Original modernist frame. J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art.



Descended in the Zorach family, this lyrical painting enhances VMFA’s survey of modernist art and increases the number of independent early-20th-century women – “instinctive rebels” (in the words of Zorach’s daughter) such as Georgia O’Keeffe and Florine Stettheimer – in the American art collection. Moreover, it deepens the museum’s holdings of artist portraits in different media.

Celebrated for her strong sense of color and design in painting and textile, California-born Marguerite Thompson Zorach belonged to America’s pioneering generation of avant-garde artists. Along with her husband, William, she exhibited her post-impressionist and fauve-inspired paintings in a number of important exhibitions of modern art, including the landmark 1913 Armory Show, which is currently marking its centenary. This striking painting from 1921—an

intimate portrait of Marguerite (at left) and her younger sister, Edith, in a dynamic cityscape of fragmented buildings—is representative of the family themes that run throughout Zorach’s career. Its simplified forms and angularity reveal the artist’s contemporary study of American folk art as well as Egyptian sculpture.

Dr. Sylvia Yount

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

Cy Twombly (American, 1928-2011), four photographs from one series, Kathleen Boone Samuels Memorial Fund:

Still Life, Black Mountain College, 1951, gelatin silver print , 7³/₈ x 7 1/4 inches (image), 14 1/4 x 11 1/4 inches (framed)

Still Life, Black Mountain College, 1951, gelatin silver print , 7³/₈ x 7 1/4 inches (image), 14 1/4 x 11 1/4 inches (framed)

Still Life, Black Mountain College, 1951, gelatin silver print, 7³/₈ x 7 1/4 inches (image), 14 1/4 x 11 1/4 inches (framed)

Still Life, Black Mountain College, 1951, gelatin silver print , 6 1/8 x 6 inches (image), 14 1/4 x 11 1/4 inches (framed)

VMFA has acquired four vintage photographs by Cy Twombly taken in 1951. Born and raised in Lexington, Va., Twombly received two early VMFA fellowships, the first of which extended from 1950 through 1951 and funded his time at Black Mountain College, where he made these images. The museum's archives include his required bimonthly reports to then director Leslie Cheek, in which he describes the significant artistic transformation he experienced that year. The role of the photographs in Twombly's oeuvre, as well as the artist's history with the museum, make VMFA a particularly rich context for these works. They join Twombly's painting, *Synopsis of a Battle*, 1968 in VMFA's collection.

John Ravenal, Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art and Dr. Sarah Eckhardt, Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art





Beaded Attire of a Senior Zulu Man, mid-20th c. (Eshowe region, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa). Mantuli Biyela, active mid-20th century (Zulu culture, South Africa). Twelve elements: cotton, glass beads, plastic beads, buttons, metal, hide, fiber

Beaded Attire of a Married Zulu Woman, mid-20th c. (Maphumulo region, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa). Artist unknown, active mid-20th century (Zulu culture, South Africa). Sixteen elements: cotton, glass beads, plastic beads, buttons, fiber

Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 2013.195-2013.196

VMFA has acquired the beaded vestments of a Zulu man and woman, augmenting its significant holdings of African costume and related forms of adornment. The man's outfit was created by Mantuli Biyela for her husband, Mthandeni Biyela. They were later purchased by Nesta Zondi directly from Mantuli Biyela, who sold them after her husband had passed away. Over many years, Zondi and her family worked tirelessly to preserve the Zulu's distinctive heritage of exquisite beadwork. In addition to the masculine "cat tail" aprons, the Biyela vestments include a shawl, a skirt to be drawn around back of the waist, a decorative girdle, a purse, a snuff spoon, and a sweets tin. A long bandolier and a cluster of necklaces complete the showy ensemble. All of the items are thoroughly ornamented with beads.



The elaborate woman's outfit includes a long beaded overskirt panel and beaded shawl. These are supplemented with richly beaded accouterments including two bandoliers, two necklaces, a belt, and a hat ornamented with lacy beadwork on the front edge and several beaded panels attached. The woman's ensemble was originally collected by Lionel Finneran, and comes from the Philips collection in South Africa. Both works were created during the dire years of the mid-20th century when the Zulus and other native peoples faced increasing hardship and racial persecution. Seen against this background, when western clothing was becoming more standard, the outfits represent strong declarations of Zulu identity and pride.

Richard B. Woodward
Curator of African Art

Additional Acquisitions

African

Gifts

- Four African Textiles: Akan culture (Ghana), *Kente cloth*, 20th century, cotton, 130³/₄ x 84³/₄"; Akan culture (Ghana), *Kente cloth*, 20th century, cotton, 132 x 89³/₄", Fulani culture (West

Africa), *Khasa*, 20th century, wool, 110½ (incl. fringe) x 49¾", Fulani culture (West Africa), *Khasa*, 20th century, wool, 98⅞ (incl. fringe) x 50½". Gift of Dr. Richard K. Priebe.

- Yoruba culture (Nigeria, Republic of Benin), Olokun Cloth, 1970s, cotton, indigo dye (*adire eleko method*), 77½ x 71½". Gift of Dan Hartman.
- Susanne Wenger (Austrian, worked in Nigeria, 1915 – 2009), two silkscreen prints on paper, ca. 1959: *Diviner for Obatala*, 29-9/16 x 19-11/16"; and title unknown, 27½ x 19¾". Gift of Dr. Richard K. Priebe.

American

Purchases

- Edwards S. Custis (American, 1868-1952), *Before the Storm, Apache*, 1906, orotone, 11 x 14". A. Paul Funkhouser Endowment Fund
- Charles Ethan Porter (American, 1847-1923), *Chrysanthemums*, ca. 1881, oil on canvas, 10 x 16". John Barton Payne Fund

Gift

- Designed by Edward Lycett (American, born England, 1833-1910), made by Faience Manufacturing Company (1881-1892), *Covered Vase*, 1886-1890, Greenpoint, Brooklyn, New York. Cream-colored earthenware painted over the ivory-glazed or bronze-luster ground with polychrome enamels and flat and raised gold paste decoration, 11¾ x 6½". Gift of Emma and Jay Lewis.

European

Purchases

- Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471-1528), *The Woman of the Apocalypse and the Seven-Headed Dragon* (from the Latin Apocalypse), 1511. Woodcut on laid paper, 39 x 27.7 cm. Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund
- Théodore Géricault (French, 1791-1824), *Le Marchand de Poissons Endormi*, 1820-21. Pen lithograph printed from stone paper (lithographic carton) on off-white wove paper, 21.8 x 29 cm. Alice and Lewis Nelson Fund.
- Rembrandt Van Rijn (Dutch painter, draftsman, and printmaker, 1606-1669), *The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds*, 1634, etching, drypoint and burin, state III/III, 26 x 21.9 cm. Kathleen Boone Samuels Memorial Fund, Alice and Lewis Nelson Fund, and funding from Frank Raysor.
- Sonia Delaunay (French, 1885-1979), *Sonia Delaunay: ses peintures, ses objets, ses tissus simultanés, ses modes*, Portfolio of 20 *pochoir* (colored stencils) plates from 1915-1925, published by Librairie des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, 1925. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Rare Book Collection. John and Maria Shugars Fund.

Modern and Contemporary

Purchases

- Guerrilla Girls (Anonymous Collective, American, 1985 - current), *Guerrilla Girls Portfolio Complete* 1985-2012, 1985-2012, Boxed portfolio of 89 prints; mostly 17 x 22 inches, Additional material will be accessioned by the library, including: three signed copies of Guerrilla Girl books: *The Guerrilla Girls Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art* (1998); *Bitches, Bimbos and Ballbreakers...* (2003); *The Guerrilla Girls Art Museum Activity Book* (2004); print edition of the newsletter *Hot Flashes* (1991-94). NEA Fund for American Art.
- Bob Adelman (American, born 1930), *Demonstrator during the March on Washington, D.C., 1963*, printed 2013, gelatin silver print, 10 ½ x 15 inches (sheet); 9 ½ x 14 inches (image). Signed in pencil and photographer's copyright stamp on print verso. Aldine S. Hartman Endowment Fund.
- Gordon Parks (American, 1912-2006), *White police officer standing between two black protestors, 1963*, printed 1963. Gelatin silver print, 8 ⅞ x 12 ½ inches (sheet). Signed in ink, LIFE Magazine story stamp, and LIFE Picture Collection stamp on print verso. Aldine S. Hartman Endowment Fund.

Gifts

- Wendell Castle (American, born 1932), *Blue Noon*, 2007, polychromed fiberglass, 76 ¼ x 38 ½ x 33 ½ inches. Unique prototype for an edition of 8. Gift of the Artist and Friedman Benda.
- Janos Enyedi (American, 1947-2011), *Sampson Crane Detail--The Port of Virginia*, 2005, digital photograph (number 1 from an edition of 3), 40 x 60". Gift of Diana Enyedi.
- Italo Scanga (American, born in Italy, 1932 – 2001), *Changing Times*, 1999, collage and acrylic on paper with artist's frame, 35 ¼ x 27 ¾ inches, Gift of the Italo Scanga Foundation.
- Willie Anne Wright (American, born 1924), *Pools--At Polly's Pool*, 1983, Cibachrome pinhole photograph, 16 x 20". Gift of Alyssa Salomon.

About the acquisitions

The artworks were approved by the VMFA Board of Trustees in September 2013. VMFA is a state agency and a public/private partnership. All works of art are purchased with private funds from dedicated endowments. After VMFA's board approves proposed acquisitions on a quarterly basis, the art becomes the property of the Commonwealth of Virginia to protect, preserve, and interpret.

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—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 features

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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