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HIGH MUSEUM OF ART TO HOST SEVENTH ANNUAL COLLECTORS EVENING TO HELP GROW PERMANENT COLLECTION

Works to be selected from six acquisitions proposed by the High’s curatorial departments

ATLANTA, Sept. 21, 2017 – The High Museum of Art will host its seventh annual Collectors Evening on Oct. 26, 2017, from 6:30 to 10 p.m. at The Ritz-Carlton, Buckhead. The Museum’s curators will present their proposed acquisitions during the event: one artwork from each of six collecting areas. Attendees will cast their ballots, and the High will purchase the works of art with the most votes. Collectors Evening is open to the public. Tickets and additional information are available at www.high.org/CollectorsEvening.

“Collectors Evening is one of our most popular fundraisers, not only because it offers a wonderful opportunity to help the Museum build its collection, but also because it allows guests to engage with art on a very personal level,” said Rand Suffolk, the High’s Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director. “Our curators are very passionate about the works of art they have chosen, and their enthusiasm makes for an electrifying evening.”

Collectors Evening was established in 2010 as a new way to add artworks to the High’s permanent collection. Following a reception during which attendees enjoy one-on-one conversation with the Museum’s curators, the evening continues with dinner, presentations by each of the curators and a few rounds of voting. This year’s event is co-chaired by Michelle Crosland, Wendy Kopp, Stephanie Russell and Lisa Cannon Taylor.

Since the inception of Collectors Evening, attendees have selected a total of 25 acquisitions for the museum. The four artworks acquired at the 2016 Collectors Evening were Vik Muniz’s photograph “Vik, 2 Years Old” (2014); “The Dirty Spoon Cafe” (2002), a hand-tooled leather work by Georgia-born artist Winfred Rembert; James Henry Daugherty’s oil on canvas “Portrait of Industrial Designer John Vassos” (ca. 1935); and “Indian Country” (2015), by abstract artist Stanley Whitney.
This year’s proposed acquisitions are:

**African Art**

“The Minotaurus” (2015), an 8-foot-tall cast bronze sculpture by South African artist Nandipha Mntambo (born 1982), is the proposed acquisition for the African art department. Mntambo often explores the interrelationships between things typically demarcated as categorical opposites, such as humans and animals or men and women. She used her own body to cast in bronze this larger-than-life self-portrait disguised as a minotaur. Unlike standard representations of the Greek mythological creature, this sculpture projects a tender, gentle quality. Raised high on a sandstone base, the figure has a tranquil expression that contradicts the aggressive and domineering character typically attributed to this creature. This acquisition would be the first monumental bronze to enter the High’s African art collection and would reflect the Museum’s continuing exploration of contemporary African art. The work also would serve as a dynamic counterpoint to the High’s collection of 19th-century European and American Neoclassical sculpture.

**American Art**

The proposed acquisition for the American art department is Manuel Joachim de Franca’s oil on canvas “Portrait of Joseph Roberts, Jr.” (1835). Following his emigration to Philadelphia from Portugal in 1830, de Franca (1808–1865) quickly established himself as a considerable talent among the city’s celebrated early-19th century portraitists, who included Thomas Sully and John Neagle. This richly painted portrait of Roberts, an insurance actuary and amateur scientist, proves de Franca could equal the achievements of his more famous contemporaries. The sitter is shown surrounded by objects suggesting an interest in astronomy, including a brass telescope, celestial globe and the first volume of Mary Fairfax Somerville’s 1831 treatise “Mechanism of the Heavens.” Like many portraits from this era, this painting alludes to the rise of hobbyist interests among successful businessmen in America’s largest cities. With its luscious and fluid brushstrokes — particularly as seen in the sitter’s garments and the background fabric — as well as its noble and high-minded composition, the painting is also a superb example of Grand Manner portraiture. The work would join the High’s collection as the first American painting in this loose, flamboyant style, which took hold among fashionable circles as the country’s painters and art audiences became more cosmopolitan and sophisticated. This portrait would also complement the High’s current strengths in more conservative portrait styles by prominent artists such as John Singleton Copley, Ralph Earl, Gilbert Stuart and Benjamin West.

**Decorative Arts and Design**

Technology and nature meet in “Fragile Future 3.13” (2013), the proposed acquisition for the decorative arts and design department. Created by Amsterdam-based Studio Drift designers Lonneke Gordijn (Dutch, born 1980) and Ralph Nauta (Dutch, born Britain, 1978), this 6-foot-tall light sculpture features handpicked dandelion seeds meticulously attached to a series of LED lights connected through three-dimensional bronze circuits. The LEDs symbolize light as the essence of all life, and the dandelion seeds, known to be transient and fleeting, suggest the delicate state of nature and today’s disposable consumer culture. With a labor-intensive design that unites nature, poetic aesthetics and technology, the sculpture challenges ideas of mass
production and questions whether technological advances are superior to natural evolution. This acquisition would deepen the High’s significant holdings of 21st-century international design and would be the first Studio Drift work to enter its collection.

Folk and Self-Taught Art
The proposed acquisition for the folk and self-taught art department is a group of 24 quilts that represent the aesthetic breakthroughs of early 20th-century African American quilters in the South. The variety of materials used in these works, from cotton flour sacks to bright corduroy clothes, exemplifies the unidentified quilt makers’ resourcefulness and improvisational technique. The textiles include key examples of iconic quilt styles pioneered by African American women, such as the Log Cabin variation, a pattern of concentric squares that represents an aerial perspective of a humble country dwelling. These objects document lives that are often underrepresented in museum collections and evidence how abstract visual languages developed outside of the mainstream art world. Many of the quilts are nearly 100 years old, but they remain in exceptional condition thanks to the care of Corrine Riley, a textile artist and conservator who began building a leading collection of African American quilts in the 1970s. This proposed acquisition would bridge aspects of the High’s existing textile collections, linking to Nigerian and Ghanaian textiles as well as historical American works and Gee’s Bend quilts. In addition, this acquisition would build on existing holdings to reinforce quilting traditions as a distinguishing collection strength for the Museum.

Modern and Contemporary Art
“Conspiracy of Icons #1” (1991), by Donald Locke (Guyanese, 1930–2010), is the proposed acquisition for the department of modern and contemporary art. Locke belonged to a generation that grappled with the legacy of colonization and the dawn of independence in the Caribbean. He enrolled in Guyana’s free Working People’s Art Class at age 18 and received scholarships to study at the Bath Academy of Art in England and the Edinburgh College of Art. He studied painting, pottery and sculpture, all practices that remained important throughout his artistic development. The recipient of a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship, Locke moved to the United States in 1979, and in 1990 he relocated from Arizona to Atlanta, where he maintained a studio practice while teaching at Georgia State University. This painting was the central work in the High’s recent Locke exhibition, and it includes a variety of found objects, such as original and historical photographs that relate the artist’s experience of British colonialism to the history of the American South. His dynamic brushwork refers to the development of the postwar avant-garde — particularly action painting, such as the work of Franz Kline — and the rise of such Neo-Dada artists as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, who dominated the art world in the decades following World War II. The painting would be an important addition the High’s growing collection of contemporary work examining history, post-colonialism and the African Diaspora.

Photography
“Blacktail Lake WY 7” (2013) and “Nurphar Lake WY 5” (2013), two prints from American photographer Matthew Brandt’s “Lakes & Reservoirs” series, are the proposed works for the High’s photography collection. Brandt (born 1982) is at the forefront of a generation of artists whose work explores and challenges the basic understanding of photography as a medium.
Across numerous bodies of work, he demonstrates that a photograph is created as much by the photographer as by the subject it portrays. For his “Lakes & Reservoirs” series, Brandt made large-format photographs of bodies of water throughout the American West and then submerged the color chromogenic prints in water he had collected from those locations. The water breaks down the image, causing the dyes to dissolve and combine and the emulsion to bubble and crack, abstracting what was once a straight representation. In a sense, the photographs are not merely of the lakes but also by them, because the resulting image is steeped in the actual material it represents. These two massive prints of lakes in Wyoming emphasize the grandness of the landscape and create an immersive viewing experience. In addition to skewing photography’s materiality, these works also engage with the long history of depicting the Western landscape, a tradition that is well represented in the High’s collection. Brandt’s work would augment the High’s strong holdings of contemporary landscape photography, best exemplified by Sally Mann, Richard Misrach and Emmett Gowin, as well as the Museum’s growing collection of contemporary work that examines the fundamental tenets of photographic processes by artists including Hiroshi Sugimoto and Vik Muniz.

Collectors Evening Support
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About the High Museum of Art
The High is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 16,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American art; a substantial collection of historical and contemporary decorative arts and design; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African-American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography, folk and self-taught art, and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. Through its education department, the High offers programs and experiences that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit high.org.

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