

COLLECTION GUIDE

# Mark and Janeth Sponenburgh Gallery





# *Across Continents, Through Time*

## SELECTIONS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

THE MARK AND JANETH SPONENBURGH Gallery's installation, *Across Continents, Through Time: Selections from the Permanent Collection*, features a range of artworks from the Hallie Ford Museum of Art's permanent collections of European, Asian, and American art. The collections span 4,500 years of Western and Eastern art history and encompass four continents: Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America. The collections have been assembled over the years to support the liberal arts curriculum of Willamette University and to introduce Hallie Ford Museum of Art visitors to some of the major themes and styles in the history of Western and Eastern art. Far from comprehensive or complete, the collections are instead made up of small, unassuming art treasures that are meant to be studied, savored, appreciated, and enjoyed.

The first university art museum in the United States was founded at Yale University in 1832 by the Revolutionary War hero and American history painter John Trumbull. By the end of the nineteenth century, a number of colleges and universities had established art museums on their campuses, including Vassar College in 1864, Princeton University in 1882, Bowdoin College in 1894, and Harvard University in 1896, among others. From the very beginning, these institutions were founded to help support the liberal arts curriculums of their respective universities, to provide a vehicle for introducing their students to the history of art, and, in the words of Edward W. Forbes of Harvard University, to build collections that “tell the story of the artistic and imaginative possibilities of man . . .” and to create a place wherein “the student is fired . . . by the inspiration that comes from contact with (original) works of art.”<sup>1</sup>

Among the earliest donors of European art to Willamette University were Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam and his wife. Bishop Oxnam, who served as President of DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, from 1928 to 1936, was a mentor to G. Herbert Smith, who served as dean of freshmen at DePauw and went on to become president of Willamette from 1942 to 1969. During his lifetime, Oxnam and his wife traveled extensively in Europe and Asia and amassed a sizable collection of European and Asian art. When they began to disperse their art collection in the 1950s, they donated five nineteenth-century French Barbizon paintings to Willamette in honor of Oxnam's former colleague and protégé.

A turning point came in 1990 when Mark and Janeth Sponenburgh donated their art collection to Willamette. Professor Sponenburgh was a sculptor and art historian who, with his wife Janeth Hogue

Sponenburgh, traveled throughout Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Far East, and amassed an encyclopedic study collection of Western and Eastern art. Although Professor Sponenburgh taught at the University of Oregon and Oregon State University for many years, he and Janeth believed that their art collection, thoughtfully developed over four decades and used as a teaching tool in his art and art history classes, could serve a similar pedagogical role at Willamette. Indeed, their gift in 1990 provided the basis for the creation of the Hallie Ford Museum of Art in 1998.

A number of the antiquities on view in the Mark and Janeth Sponenburgh Gallery were given by Richard Brockway, a Willamette alumnus and retired General Telephone and Electronics Corporation (GTE) executive who, since the early 1960s, has amassed a major collection of ancient art, including superb examples of pottery, sculpture, glass, mosaics, coins, and lamps. A. Dean McKenzie, a professor emeritus from the University of Oregon, donated several exquisite examples of ancient and medieval art to the collection, and many of the Asian objects on view were donated by James and Aneta McIntyre. Mr. McIntyre was a geologist who worked in North Africa and the Far East in the late 1950s and early 1960s and who developed a passion for ancient and Asian art, especially Chinese and Japanese art.

Still other donors include Muriel Stieber of Salem, who donated a number of pieces of South Italian and Etruscan pottery acquired by her mother in Italy in the 1950s; Marge Riley of Portland, who donated several Greek and Russian Orthodox icons to the collection; Bill and Beverly Galen of Portland, who donated the superb Siennese corpus on view; Willamette alumnus Dan Schneider of Chicago, who donated the John Rogers sculpture and Larry Poons painting; and Michel and Victoria Hersen of Portland, who have a splendid collection of nineteenth-century American landscape paintings and have donated several American works on paper in the past.

When the Willamette University alumnus and Harvard Art Museums director James Cuno spoke at the dedication of the Hallie Ford Museum of Art in the fall of 1998, he stated that as we enter the twenty-first century, we must not lose sight of the power of art museums, and of the works of art that comprise their permanent collections, to instruct, educate, inspire, and delight. Collections, he argued, must remain the heart and soul of any great art museum.<sup>2</sup> In the spirit of Jim's eloquent and impassioned words, we encourage you to savor the art treasures that comprise the Hallie Ford Museum of Art's permanent collections of European, Asian, and American art, and invite you to come back often to visit and enjoy.

JOHN OLBRANTZ

*The Maribeth Collins Director*

*Hallie Ford Museum of Art*

1. Edward W. Forbes, "The Relationship of the Art Museum to a University," in *Proceedings of the American Association of Museums*, 5 (1911): 55.

2. James Cuno, "To Delight and Instruct: Art Museums at the Turn of the Millennium," unpublished lecture given on October 1, 1998, at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, as part of the Hogue-Sponenburgh Art Lecture Series.



*Relief of a servant*

Egyptian, Old Kingdom, Dynasty 5–6, ca. 2500–2170 BCE, from a tomb at Sakkara  
 Limestone with traces of paint  
 15.375 x 10 x 1 in.  
 Gift of James and Aneta McIntyre, 2004.069.001

Ancient Egyptian tombs served as the eternal resting place for the deceased. Egyptian artists decorated tomb walls with scenes of the deceased receiving gifts in the afterlife and with pictures of daily life, which might show the deceased hunting or fishing in the marshes, or his servants working in the fields or leading cattle or sheep.

These low-relief sculptures, presented in registers or rows on the tomb walls, were meant to serve the deceased in the afterlife. The ancient Egyptians believed that once the deceased person was laid to rest and the tomb sealed, these scenes would come to life and provide the deceased with food and earthly pleasures in the afterlife.

JOHN OLBRANTZ



*Statuette of Taweret*

Egyptian, Late Period, Dynasty 26, 664–525 BCE  
 Basalt  
 5.25 x 2 x 2.25 in.  
 Gift of James and Aneta McIntyre, 2004.069.003

Taweret was the Egyptian goddess of childbirth and a protector of women and children. Like the Egyptian god Bes, she was believed to help women in labor and to ward off evil spirits that might harm the mother and baby. At the same time, she was thought to help with matters of female sexuality and pregnancy and was often associated with the goddess Hathor.

Taweret was usually depicted with the head and body of a pregnant hippopotamus and wearing a short, cylindrical headdress topped by two plumes and Hathor's solar disk. Expectant mothers often wore amulets depicting Taweret to invoke her protection, and small statuettes of her have been found in great numbers in ancient houses.

JOHN OLBRANTZ



### *Olpe with animal-style decoration*

Etrusco-Corinthian, ca. 600–575 BCE

Terra cotta, black-figure style

13 x 5 x 6 in.

Gift of James and Aneta McIntyre, 2004.069.008

Etrusco-Corinthian refers to a style of Etruscan pottery that imitates and adapts the Transitional and Ripe Corinthian styles (in the black-figure technique) produced between 630 and about 540 BCE. Its main centers of production were located at Vulci, Caere, and Tarquinia, in Italy. Some characteristic features of the Etrusco-Corinthian style include grotesquely proportioned animal figures with shoulder markings that over time have become stylized as simple circles.

This pear-shaped wine pitcher (*olpe*) is a remarkably well-preserved example of the style. The typical Etrusco-Corinthian animal motifs appear in three registers, and are created in a dark brown to red brown slip with added red and white paint, as well as incised details. The characteristic orientalizing decorative elements include rays, bands, rosettes and blob-rosettes, dogs, boars, goats, a goose, and a panther.

ANN M. NICGORSKI



Knudsen Group (attributed)  
*Skyphos (Corinthian type) with geometric and floral patterns*

South Italian, Canosan, Middle Gnathia,  
ca. 310–300 BCE

Terra cotta, Gnathia ware

5.75 x 7.75 x 4.875 in.

Gift of Richard C. and Elke Brockway, 2003.060

This *skyphos*, or cup, is painted black and is decorated with small-scale geometric and floral patterns in white, yellow, and red. The decorative scheme is characteristic of the Gnathia-style pottery that was produced in Apulia in Southern Italy during the late fourth to early third centuries BCE.

The decoration on the front side includes a highly stylized vine pattern consisting of grapes, leaves, and tendrils. On the back is a simple band of ivy. The shape is suitable for the *symposium* (drinking party), and the plant motifs are not only reminiscent of Dionysos and wine, but also suggest the way that garlands were actually suspended at the *symposium*.

ANN M. NICGORSKI

*Large single-handled pitcher*

Roman, ca. 1st–2nd century

Glass, free-blown (mouth and neck), pattern-blown (body), applied neck coil and handle

8 x 4.125 x 3.35 in.

Gift of Richard C. Brockway, 2007.019



Although glass is thought to have been discovered by Phoenician merchants on the Levantine Coast, the Roman glass artists took the medium to new heights of elegance and sophistication during the first through third centuries CE. A wide variety of shapes emerged, including cosmetic and perfume containers, drinking and eating vessels, flasks, and other shapes and forms meant to imitate ceramics and metal.

Pitchers were vessels or containers with handles and spouts for pouring. Large pitchers were used for pouring liquids such as water or wine, while small pitchers were used for pouring perfumes or cosmetic oils. This pitcher, with its beautiful turquoise color, pattern-blown body, elegant mouth and neck, and graceful shape, is a masterpiece of the Roman glass artist's craft.

JOHN OLBRANTZ



Attributed to Luca Giordano  
(Italian, 1634–1705)

*David and Bathsheba*

Date unknown

Black chalk and brown ink on paper

11 x 16 in.

Gift of the Willamette University Florence Program in memory of Wilbur Braden, 2001.036

Luca Giordano was an Italian Baroque painter active in Naples and Florence as well as Spain. The son of the Neapolitan painter Antonio Giordano, he apprenticed with his father and with painters Jusepe de Ribera and Pietro da Cortina. While in Florence, he painted the frescos for the dome of the Corsini Chapel and the ceiling of the Biblioteca Riccardiana. In 1692 he was called to Spain by Charles II and stayed for ten years, painting in Madrid, Toledo, and Escorial. Following his return to Naples, his last major commission was for the ceiling of the Treasury Chapel of San Martino.

The subject of David and Bathsheba was popular during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah the Hittite, who was away serving in David's army. David saw Bathsheba from afar, invited her to the palace, seduced her, and got her pregnant. Shortly thereafter, David wrote to Uriah's commander ordering Uriah into the heat of battle, where he was killed in action, thus freeing Bathsheba to marry David. Bathsheba is shown bathing with two assistants in the garden of the palace of David, as he looks on from the shelter of the awning to the left.

JOHN OLBRANTZ



### *Corpus Christi*

Italian, Siennese, 17th century

Wood and paint

17.5 x 4.5 x 3.5 in.

Gift of Dr. William and Beverly Galen, 2008.007

This remarkable figure represents Christ hanging in canonical cruciformity. It was once part of a small crucifix probably used for private devotions. The figure of a long-haired, bearded Christ is expressively carved. Although his arms are now missing, his body hangs as on the cross; as in other similar works his head is inclined to his right side with his eyes closed in death. No crown of thorns is represented, but it may have been added in a separate material.

Clothed only in a loincloth, his long body is emaciated and sharply attenuated to emphasize the extent of his suffering. As is traditional, his right foot is shown overlapping his left, and both are affixed to the cross with a single nail.

ANN M. NICGORSKI



### *Icon of Saint Nicholas and Saint George*

Greek, Orthodox Christian, 18th century

Egg tempera on wood panel

10.75 x 4 in.

Gift of Marge Riley, 2007.041.001

Originally the left panel of a small family triptych, this Greek icon features images of two of the most popular saints in both the Western and Eastern Christian churches. At the top is a typical bust of Saint Nicholas, a fourth-century bishop, wearing his episcopal garments while holding a Gospel book in his left hand and making a gesture of blessing with his right.

Below is a typical image of Saint George astride a white horse, spearing a small dragon. He is shown wearing a cape and a crown, a reference to his later martyrdom.

ANN M. NICGORSKI



### *Ritual vessel (ding)*

Chinese, Warring States Period (476 BCE–221 BCE) or Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE)

Bronze

6.5 x 9 x 7 in.

Gift of James and Aneta McIntyre, 2006.038.001

Tripod vessels were some of the earliest ritual vessels cast in bronze, their legs giving the vessel stability when its contents were heated over embers. *Ding* vessels were used for offerings of stewed meat, and were considered one of the most important ritual vessels.

The legendary sage-king Yu the Great had nine bronze *dings* cast, symbolizing the nine ancient states of China. These *dings* became symbols of legitimacy for later rulers. By the time this piece was created, *dings* were made in odd-numbered sets that indicated rank—nine for kings and seven for lords—with the number decreasing for the lower ranks of the nobility.

KEVIN GREENWOOD

### Sakai Hōitsu

(Japanese, 1761–1828)

### *Iris and poem*

Edo Period (1615–1868), early 19th century

Hanging scroll; ink and light colors on ink with brocade mounting

38 x 13.75 in.

Signed by the artist with one red, gourd-shaped seal,

*Bunzen*; poem inscribed by the artist

Gift of James and Aneta McIntyre, 2007.023.003

Sakai Hōitsu, from a powerful samurai family, became a Buddhist monk in his thirties and then, beginning in his late forties, became one of the most important painters of his era. He followed the traditions of the Rinpa School of painters. This school, patronized by aristocrats and later by affluent merchants and high-ranking samurai, borrowed subjects from Japan's courtly past, but presented them in novel ways.

Iris are inevitably associated with *The Tales of Ise*, a tenth-century collection of poetry. One section describes a group of traveling aristocrats who come to a marsh filled with flowering irises. On the spot, they compose poems to their loved ones far away.

This caption is based on the research of independent Asian art scholar Patricia Graham.

KEVIN GREENWOOD



### *Calendar in the Kamasan style*

Balinese, ca. 1875–1900

Ink and colors on cloth

48 x 70 in.

Gift of Bunny Sather, 2003.019.001

This painting was produced on the island of Bali in Indonesia as an astrological calendar (*pelelintangan*). Because of the complexity of the calendrical systems in Bali, this calendar would have been used by a specialist, who would be consulted to determine auspicious days for various events.

The style in which the figures are portrayed is rooted in the traditional Balinese shadow puppet plays (*wayang kulit*) that render human figures in three-quarter view and animals in profile. The subjects shown in the calendar derive from traditional narratives. The lowest row on the calendar is missing, and may have been damaged and removed.

This caption is based on the research of Alison Shives, Willamette University Class of 2007.

KEVIN GREENWOOD



John Wesley Jarvis  
(American, 1780–1839)

*Portrait of William Williams*

ca. 1810  
Oil on canvas  
30 x 25.125 in.  
Gift of Mark and Janeth Hogue Sponenburgh, SPG90.01

John Wesley Jarvis was a prolific portraitist in New York State during America's golden age of portraiture, when Gilbert Stuart, John Vanderlyn, and Samuel Morse (to whom this portrait has been attributed) were painting idealized likenesses of public figures. Jarvis painted William Williams (1788–1850) in a simplified version of the neoclassical style popularized in France by Jacques-Louis David and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Jarvis presents Williams's head and upper body in a clear, directly lighted manner against a neutral ground, depicting Williams, a Utica, New York, printer and editor, as "a very handsome man, faultless in his attire and whole make-up, hair in rich curls, hands, nails, and whole person immaculate," as a contemporary described him. Williams touches his red pen-case, emblematic of his profession as an editor.

ROGER HULL



Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot  
(French, 1796–1875)

*A Balmy Afternoon*

ca. 1865

Oil on canvas

15.25 x 21.375 in.

Gift of Bishop and Mrs. G. Bromley Oxnam, OXN55.01

Camille Corot, one of the great French painters of the nineteenth century, is generally identified with the Barbizon group. In fact, he was an independent figure with wide-ranging interests in painting. *A Balmy Afternoon* does have affinities with the work of the Barbizon School and is typical of the manner that brought Corot popularity for decades during his lifetime and after. In the words of the art historian John Canaday, “Fluffy trees, some grasses and shrubs flecked here and there with bits of light, a sweet body of quiet water, a mild sky, and a few small, graceful figures are combined and recombined in these pictures.”

ROGER HULL



Edward Steichen  
(American, 1879–1973)

*Across the Valley of the Morin—  
Clouded Night*

1910  
Oil on canvas  
24.25 x 25.125 in.  
Gift of Mark and Janeth Hogue Sponenburgh,  
SPG90.007A

Edward Steichen painted this moonlit view of the valley of the River Morin while living in France. It is one of a series of nighttime landscapes the young artist created while exploring the expressive potential of both painting and photography. In a romantic tradition that extends back to Washington Allston's *Moonlit Landscape* (1819) and includes James A. M. Whistler's *Nocturnes* as well as Albert Pinkham Ryder's paintings, Steichen's gently illuminated *Valley of the Morin* evokes a mood of poetic reverie. As with his photography of this period, this painting features soft light, blurred contours, and rich tonalities. Mark and Janeth Sponenburgh, who donated this work to Willamette University, acquired it from the son of Arthur and Beatrice Robinson, early patrons of Steichen.

ROGER HULL



Larry Poons  
(American, born 1937)

*Untitled*

1978  
Acrylic on canvas  
92 x 26.75 in.  
Maribeth Collins Art Acquisition Fund / partial gift of  
Dan and Nancy Schneider, SCH95.01

Larry Poons was born in Tokyo, Japan, in 1937 and studied at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and at the Art Students League of New York. He gained prominence in the 1960s with paintings of circles and ovals on brilliantly colored backgrounds. His work from that period was associated with Op art, an art movement that made use of optical illusions.

This untitled painting from the 1970s is from a phase in Poons's career that he refers to as his "archaeological period." To create these works, the artist hung huge canvases vertically on his studio walls and literally threw paint onto the canvas. This process created the streaming, molten-like painted surfaces characteristic of his work of these years.

JOHN OLBRANTZ



Jacob Lawrence  
(American, 1917–2000)

*Douglass*

1999

Ed. AP

Silk screen on Rising Two Ply Rag paper

26.375 x 18 in.

Maribeth Collins Art Acquisition Fund, 2003.023

Jacob Lawrence was one of the foremost American artists of the twentieth century. Born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and raised in New York City, he received his formal art education at the Harlem Art Workshop in the 1930s. Swept up in the vigorous social and cultural milieu of Harlem during the Depression, Lawrence drew on African American history and Harlem scenes for his subjects, portraying the lives, hopes, dreams, and aspirations of African Americans.

From the 1960s until his death in 2000, Lawrence made prints. In *Douglass*, from 1999, he drew on a familiar African American historical figure for his subject matter. With characteristic shallow space and broad flat areas of brilliant color, Lawrence depicts the great nineteenth-century writer, orator, statesman, and abolitionist sitting at his writing desk with pen and paper in hand; this print is based on a series of paintings on the life of Frederick Douglass that Lawrence completed in 1939.

JOHN OLBRANTZ



HALLIE FORD MUSEUM OF ART,  
WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY

The Hallie Ford Museum of Art was founded in 1998 to serve as an artistic, cultural, and intellectual resource for Willamette University, the City of Salem, the mid-Willamette Valley, and beyond. It includes four permanent galleries, two temporary exhibition galleries, a lecture hall, offices, and support spaces for collections and exhibitions. Permanent galleries focus on European, Asian, and American art; Native American art; historic and contemporary regional art; and European, Asian, and American works on paper. Temporary exhibitions feature historic and contemporary art.

The Hallie Ford Museum of Art is located at 700 State Street (corner of State and Cottage Streets) in downtown Salem near the campus of Willamette University. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. The galleries are closed on Monday. There is a modest admission fee, but Tuesday is always a free day. For further information, please call 503-370-6855, e-mail [museum-art@willamette.edu](mailto:museum-art@willamette.edu), or visit our website at [www.willamette.edu/arts/hfma](http://www.willamette.edu/arts/hfma).

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## Hallie Ford Museum of Art

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