

**North Carolina Museum of Art Receives Gift of Works of Art from
the Private Collection of Jim and Mary Patton**

Gift features works by masters of mid- to late-20th-century art

Raleigh, N.C.—The North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) announces a recent gift of works of modern and contemporary art from the private collection of Jim and Mary Patton. Amassed over a lifetime, the Pattons’ collection includes seminal works by masters of mid- to late-20th-century American art: Milton Avery, Richard Diebenkorn, Jackie Ferrara, Helen Frankenthaler, Adolph Gottlieb, Hans Hofmann, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Motherwell, David Park, George Rickey, Sean Scully, Frank Stella, and many others. The gift includes paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, and photographs. On December 10 the NCMA’s Board of Trustees accepted 81 of what will be a total of 100 works from the Pattons’ collection; two were previously given in 2013, and the final 17 are promised gifts to the Museum and will be acquired at a later date.



“We are immensely grateful for this exceptional gift from Jim and Mary Patton—two of the most generous and passionate art collectors from our state,” says Lawrence J. Wheeler, director of the NCMA. “This transformative gift significantly expands the breadth and scope of the Museum’s permanent collection and will allow our visitors to have an even more engaging and exciting experience in our modern and contemporary galleries.”

The Pattons have had long-standing ties to North Carolina. Jim Patton was born and raised in Durham and graduated with honors from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Mary Patton (1929–2014) grew up in Durham and attended the Woman’s College (now the University of North Carolina at Greensboro). The Pattons’ passion for art started with Mary Patton’s lifelong interest in painting, as an accomplished artist in her own right. Their enthusiasm for collecting was founded in a strong desire to work with artists and a deep commitment to stewardship.

In Jim Patton’s words, “I am thankful we were able to collect this art and give it back to the world. I like the idea that these works that Mary and I enjoyed over the years will give pleasure to other people.”

Highlights of the gift include:

- **Milton Avery, *Seaside Strollers* (1963)**: Mark Rothko counted Milton Avery among the most important American artists of his generation. *Seaside Strollers* is a late and nostalgic work, alluding to the artist’s summers spent on Cape Cod. Avery radically simplifies the elements of the composition to convey an almost dream-like scene. This is the second work by Avery to be added to the Museum’s permanent collection.
- **Richard Diebenkorn, *Untitled* (1949), pictured above**: Several elements characteristic of Diebenkorn’s work are recognizable in this early abstract painting: the buildup of blocks of dense color; the tension between the outward expansion of color and the edge of the canvas; and the bold, calligraphic lines that alternately slice and stitch the forms. *Untitled* joins another Diebenkorn work in the NCMA collection, *Berkeley No. 8*.
- **Helen Frankenthaler, *Captain’s Watch* (1986)**: Helen Frankenthaler is most famous for the “soak-stain” technique of paint application, in which she thinned paint with turpentine and then poured it onto the canvas to create her iconic works. In *Captain’s Watch*, Frankenthaler uses a very thin wash of gray and tan paint, brushed and poured across the lower register of the canvas in varying degrees of opacity, providing a luminous, saturated effect so frequently linked with the artist’s style. This is the third work by Frankenthaler to be acquired by the NCMA.

- **Adolph Gottlieb, *Ashes of Phoenix* (1948):** Thick black lines divide the canvas into a narrative story board and give each symbol a distinct space. This painting, along with *Phoenix Burst*, joins a third work by Gottlieb in the NCMA's permanent collection, presenting a significant opportunity to display, side by side, examples from Gottlieb's different phases of work.
- **Hans Hofmann, *Landscape* (1940):** *Landscape* demonstrates Hans Hofmann's experimentations with cubism, bright colors, abstraction, gesture, and brushwork. It may be seen as a link between Hofmann's earlier paintings—which were more representational in nature—and his fully mature style, which revels in complete abstraction. The painting is the first work by Hofmann to be acquired by the NCMA.
- **Ellsworth Kelly, *Blue Panel* (1980):** Ellsworth Kelly reduces art to an essential geometric form to create an object that questions the definition of art and art making. In *Blue Panel* color takes on a palpable presence. Deceptively simple at first glance, it explores complex ideas of visual perception and the power of pure abstraction. This is the first major work by Kelly to enter the Museum's permanent collection.
- **Robert Motherwell, *Royal Fireworks Music* (1974):** Robert Motherwell embraced collage from the beginning of his career, making it a fundamental part of his creative process. *Royal Fireworks Music* is one of a series of collages, each beginning with torn and cut pieces of paper chosen for their shape, color, pattern, or enigmatic, seemingly random references. This collage strengthens the Museum's already strong representation of paintings and drawings by Motherwell.
- **David Park, *Bus Stop* (1952):** *Bus Stop* is a significant work by David Park, an artist who revived figural painting in California's Bay Area after the Second World War. While at first glance the composition resembles a casual snapshot, Park's disciplined signature style is apparent throughout the painting: a limited, artificial palette of colors and an underlying geometry or implied grid.
- **Sean Scully, *Wall of Light, Peru* (2000):** *Wall of Light, Peru* is part of a larger *Wall of Light* series that Sean Scully started in 1998 and that now includes over 100 works. Scully describes these paintings as an attempt to "turn stone to light" and incorporates a sense of monumentality, weight, and physicality of a stone or brick wall into the work. He builds his paintings, like *Wall of Light, Peru*, block by block with repetitive and rhythmic patterns of vertical and horizontal bars of color. This work is the first by Scully to enter the NCMA's permanent collection.
- **Frank Stella, *The Whale-Watch* (1993):** *The Whale-Watch* is one of nine prints in the *Moby Dick Deckle Edges* series, created through a collaboration between Frank Stella and Tyler Graphics in 1993. The works in the series, while abstract, allude to the narrative found in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. *The Whale-Watch* will be joined at the NCMA by three additional prints from the series—*Extracts*, *Bower in Arsacides*, and *The Monkey-Rope*—also from the Pattons' collection.

Several of these works have been on view as promised gifts to the Museum since 2010.

"The Patton gift both adds additional works by artists currently in the collection and brings work by artists previously not represented," says Linda Dougherty, chief curator and curator of contemporary art at the NCMA. "It enables the Museum to present a comprehensive picture of the significant trends and movements in modern and contemporary art."

A selection of works from the gift will be featured in a special exhibition titled [The Patton Collection: A Gift to North Carolina](#), which opens March 28, 2015.

Photo caption:

Richard Diebenkorn, *Untitled*, 1949, oil on canvas, 48 x 41 in., Gift of Mary and Jim Patton, © 2014 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

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About the North Carolina Museum of Art

The North Carolina Museum of Art's permanent collection spans more than 5,000 years, from ancient Egypt to the present, making the institution one of the premier art museums in the South. The Museum's collection provides educational, aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural experiences for the citizens of North Carolina and beyond. The 164-acre Museum Park showcases the connection between art and nature through site-specific works of environmental art. The Museum offers changing national touring exhibitions, classes, lectures, family activities, films, and concerts.

The Museum opened West Building, home to the permanent collection, in 2010. The North Carolina Museum of Art, Lawrence J. Wheeler, director, is located at 2110 Blue Ridge Road in Raleigh. It is the art museum of the State of North Carolina, Pat McCrory, governor, and an agency of the Department of Cultural Resources, Susan Kluttz, secretary.