FRISSON
The Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Collection

OCT 15, 2021 – NOV 27, 2022

#Frisson
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THE RICHARD E. LANG AND JANE LANG DAVIS COLLECTION


Following Francis Bacon’s retrospective exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1962, portraiture remained the artist’s main focus for the duration of the 1960s. In 1963, Bacon painted the series of four versions of *Portrait of Man with Glasses*, which he delivered to his London gallery, Marlborough Fine Art, in early July. Originally titled *Head 1* through *Head 4*, the paintings were not necessarily painted in this order and the titles subsequently changed.

The four portraits are dominated by distortion and deformation. *Portrait of Man with Glasses I* (1963) is the most abstract painting in the group, where the features of the face are entirely obfuscated. Bacon did not reveal the man’s identity, though research suggests that the subject could be London eye surgeon Patrick Trevor-Roper, with whom the artist socialized at the time. As Bacon worked from photographs and had images of Mahatma Gandhi and James Joyce in his studio, the latter have also been proposed as possible identities for the portraits. *Portrait of Man with Glasses I* (1963), together with *Study for a Portrait* (1967), also part of the Lang Collection gift, are the first works by Bacon to enter the Seattle Art Museum’s collection.

Francis Bacon was honored at the Pittsburgh International (known today as the Carnegie International) exhibitions of 1950, 1958, 1961, 1964, and 1967, and was distinguished with a Carnegie Institute painting award in 1967. Completed that same year, Study for a Portrait (1967) was featured in the 1970 Pittsburgh International. The painting was also included in the 1973 exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Four Contemporary Masters: Giacometti, Bacon, de Kooning, Dubuffet, which traveled to Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Brazil.

Beginning in 1948, Bacon’s preferred working method was in thematic series. Study for a Portrait, however, is a rare single composition that was never repeated. The self-referential inclusion of earlier works on the wall behind the seated woman—Three Studies for a Crucifixion (1962) on the right and likely Seated Figures (1962) in the middle—is also unique. Henrietta Moraes, a frequent subject and friend of Bacon, is depicted in Study for a Portrait. Bacon commissioned the photographer John Deakin to take nude photographs of Moraes, and the images of her poses acted as the basis for most of the artist’s female nudes made between 1961 and 1972. Study for a Portrait (1967), along with Portrait of Man with Glasses I (1963), also part of the Lang Collection gift, are the first works by Bacon to enter the Seattle Art Museum’s collection.
Willem de Kooning’s *Town Square* (1948) was acquired directly in 1976 from the renowned collection of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller, New York. The Hellers’ collection included notable Abstract Expressionist masterpieces including Clyfford Still’s *PH-338 (1949-No. 2)* (1949) (also part of the gift from the Lang Collection), Jackson Pollock’s *Blue Poles* (1952) (National Gallery of Australia, Canberra) and *One: Number 31* (1950) (Museum of Modern Art, New York).

1948 was a significant year for de Kooning. In April, his first solo exhibition opened at Charles Egan Gallery in New York, featuring ten mostly black-and-white abstractions. The exhibition received critical and institutional recognition: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, subsequently acquired *Painting* (1948) from the exhibition, and the Whitney Museum of American Art selected *Mailbox* (1948) for their 1948 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting. *Town Square* (1948) is part of this important body of work, characterized by a hybridity of abstract and figurative forms, reduced color palette, and fluid compositions. At the time, de Kooning used transparent tracing paper to explore the effects of individual lines and forms. Built in layers, white is the dominant color upon which a composition of black lines with ochre accents appears in a state of flux—an effect the artist described as a “slipping glimpse.” In tandem with his predominantly white abstractions such as *Town Square*, de Kooning also worked in the inverse, creating white-on-black compositions. In 1960, Harriet Janis and Rudi Blesh described the relationship between the black-and-white compositions in photographic terms, as “positives” and “negatives”: “To look rapidly back and forth at these two pictures creates an effect like that of a dark landscape upon which a searchlight flashes on and off.”

*Dawn Shapes* (1967) was painted one year after the 33rd Venice Biennale (1966), where Helen Frankenthaler—together with Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, and Jules Olitski—represented the United States. Painted at a highly productive time in Frankenthaler’s career, the large-scale *Dawn Shapes* is a dramatic color field painting, a painterly direction she pioneered. Created on the floor with thinned acrylic paint, it is considered a “classic” example of her soak stain technique. While her paintings in the 1950s are more strongly defined by linear designs, a dramatic change occurred in the early 1960s when Frankenthaler covered large parts of the canvas in bold forms.

Compositionally related to several 1964 paintings with framed bands of contrasting colors around the edge of the canvas, *Dawn Shapes* (1967) exemplifies the spatial tension between pools of contrasting color and their relationship with areas of unprimed canvas. Earlier examples include large areas of unpainted canvas, whereas in this work only small slivers remain exposed. The painting is distinguished by a powerful suggestion of gravity through the insertion of a descending formation, and is closely related to *Mauve District* (1966) (Museum of Modern Art, New York).
Alberto Giacometti’s *Femme de Venise II* (1956) was originally part of the collection of Aimé Maeght (Galerie Maeght) in Paris. Sidney Janis, a champion of the European avant-garde, exhibited the sculpture in 1974 at his New York gallery, where Jane Lang first saw it and was captivated by the elongated figure. The Langs acquired it the following year.

Giacometti’s mature style, of which *Femme de Venise II* is an example, was predicated on a new concept of the figure, which he developed during and after World War II. The hieratic stance and the artist’s characteristic use of a heavy, rectangular pedestal are derived from studies of ancient Greek and Egyptian statues.

The *Women of Venice* were a group of ten upright silhouettes made for the French Pavilion of the 28th Venice Biennale in 1956. Giacometti created approximately 15 figures, modeled in clay and cast in plaster by his brother and frequent assistant, Diego Giacometti. Of these, he selected ten plaster casts for the Biennale. Some of the *Women of Venice* were closely related to life studies from the model, while others were marked by a greater degree of abstraction. Within this group, *Femme de Venise II* is among the most abstract, with both arms melting into the body. Only nine of the *Women of Venice* were later cast in bronze. *Femme de Venise II* is the first work by Giacometti to enter the Seattle Art Museum’s collection.
Adolph Gottlieb’s *Crimson Spinning #2* (1959) debuted in Paris at Galerie Rive Droit in April 1959, and traveled almost immediately to London, where it was included in another solo exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, *Adolph Gottlieb Paintings, 1944–1959*. Six years later it would feature prominently in a group exhibition mounted by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), *New York School: The First Generation, Paintings of the 1940s and 1950s*.

Gottlieb’s *Crimson Spinning #2* is a characteristic example of his “Burst” paintings, an iconic body of work that would occupy the artist from the mid-1950s into the 1970s. An extension of his earlier “Imaginary Landscapes,” the “Burst” paintings similarly feature compositions with ovoid shapes in opposition with staccato brushstrokes—further explorations into the possibilities of formal and conceptual dichotomies. In *Crimson Spinning #2*, stillness and movement are captured in the dynamic juxtaposition of forms: a red orb and cluster of black brushstrokes appear suspended in two separate registers. This painting is the first work by Gottlieb to enter the Seattle Art Museum’s collection.


To B.W.T. is dedicated to the painter Bradley Walker Tomlin (1899-1953), with whom Guston became friends in 1947. Following a year at the American Academy in Rome—where Guston was awarded the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1948—he relocated from Woodstock to New York City, and briefly shared a studio with Tomlin. As Guston’s work transitioned from the figurative imagery of the 1940s towards abstraction, To B.W.T. represents a classic early composition—an accumulation of vertical and horizontal brushstrokes weave together rich accents of orange, red, ochre, and green. Guston would cite Piet Mondrian’s artistic developments, moving from figuration to abstraction in the 1910s, as an analogy for his own artistic leap.

Together with The Painter (1976), the gift of these two Guston paintings from the Lang Collection provide additional depth to the works by the artist already in the Seattle Art Museum’s collection, and expand the understanding of Guston’s figurative, abstract, and graphic works.
In 1970, Guston shocked the art world with an exhibition of new work at the Marlborough Gallery, which had been influenced by his feelings as result of the political and social unrest in the United States during the late 1960s. For Guston, using a “hooded figure” inspired by de Chirico and the robes worn by members of the Ku Klux Klan, the image of the hooded figure became a metaphor for the banality of evil and personal accountability. The exhibition was not well received, as noted by New York Times art critic Hilton Kramer in October of that year, who derided Guston as “A Mandarin Pretending To Be A Stumblebum.” However, Guston remained committed to his figurative work, which was recognized in a 1980-81 national touring retrospective organized by Henry Hopkins at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art that included The Painter (1976).

1976 was a pivotal and prolific year for Guston, as he painted over 40 iconic and highly allegorical works. The self-reflexive view of the painter was a recurring theme in his later work, beginning with the charged painting The Studio (1969) (Private Collection) and continuing with more introspective works such as Painting, Smoking, Eating (1975) (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam). The Painter (1976) continues this theme, casting the artist as an observer from a place of hiding. The nocturnal scene, suggested through a palette of blacks and browns, underscores the painting’s ominous mood. A closely related work in subject and style is Discipline (1976) (The Estate of Philip Guston).

Together with To B.W.T. (1952), the gift of these two Guston paintings from the Lang Collection provide additional depth to the works by the artist already in the Seattle Art Museum’s collection and expand the understanding of Guston’s figurative, abstract, and graphic works.
Franz Kline's *Painting No. 11* (1951) was in the estate of the artist when he died in 1962. Exhibited in the 1968 *Franz Kline* exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, *Painting No. 11* was purchased by Richard E. and Jane Lang in 1970 from Marlborough-Gerson Gallery in New York. The painting was their first acquisition of contemporary art.

1951 was a pivotal year for Kline, who co-organized the artist-initiated *9th Street Show* (May 21–June 10, 1951). *Painting No. 11* is a quintessential example of Kline's celebrated gestural style in stark black and white. It was made shortly after Kline's first solo exhibition at Charles Egan Gallery, New York, in October 1950, which premiered his large-scale abstractions. Developed from his drawings and works on paper, Kline enlarged some of his drawings using a Bell-Opticon projector at Willem de Kooning’s studio, introducing new possibilities of scale. In the catalogue for the 1964 Kline retrospective, held at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, in association with the Museum of Modern Art, New York, poet Frank O'Hara called the artist the Action Painter par excellence: “He did not want to be ‘in’ his painting, as Pollock did, but to create the event of his passage...”
First exhibited at New York’s Howard Wise Gallery, Lee Krasner’s *Night Watch* (1960) is part of a body of work often referred to as her “Night Journeys,” as Krasner, then suffering from insomnia, painted almost exclusively at night. Though previously known for her dramatic use of color, *Night Watch*, along with other works made in the early 1960s, uses a reduced palette of black, ochre, and creamy white, with gray accents. From roughly 1959 to 1963, Krasner was exploring new artistic terrain as well as the depths of her own psyche, processing recent experiences of loss and grief.

The title *Night Watch* (1960) alludes to one of Rembrandt’s celebrated paintings of a militia company made in 1642. It is a singular composition utilizing piercing eyes as a recurring motif, an allusion to the militia’s duty of keeping watch as well as a self-referential proclamation. Related works made the same year are *The Guardian* (1960) (Whitney Museum of American Art) and *The Eye is the First Circle* (1960) (Private Collection). In the words of the artist, “Painting is not separate from life. It is one.” *Night Watch* is the first work by Krasner to enter the Seattle Art Museum’s collection.

Joan Mitchell’s The Sink (1956) was first exhibited by Stable Gallery in New York in 1957, her third solo exhibition with the gallery. The Sink is a large-scale painting—nearly ten feet in length—produced during a pivotal and transitional moment for Mitchell in the late 1950s. Painted in the years leading to her inclusion in the 29th Venice Biennale (1958), documenta II (1959), and the São Paulo Biennial (1959), it was also before Mitchell permanently relocated to Paris in 1959. Mitchell’s process mined memories and experiences, and the artist often looked to her immediate environment for inspiration. In her paintings, Mitchell was “trying for something more specific than movies of my everyday life: To define a feeling.” The Sink, with its shimmering painterly surface, is believed to be a reference to a natural depression of land in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago—Mitchell’s hometown—and is an exemplar of her process and style.

Unique among Robert Motherwell’s works in color and theme, Irish Elegy (1965) is compositionally related to the artist’s celebrated series of over 100 paintings completed during the years 1948 and 1967: Elegies to the Spanish Republic. The works, which feature a recurring motif of abutting black ovals, followed the Spanish Civil War and were meant as a “lamentation or funeral song”—a reminder of the continued dictatorship of General Francisco Franco. In 1965, as political tensions in Ireland were on the rise, Motherwell drew attention to yet another escalating conflict. His connection to Ireland was also a personal one: the country was home to his maternal grandmother. As noted by scholars, Irish Elegy is a rare Elegy painting in that the thrust of the rough oval forms move from right to left rather than from left to right. The painting was completed before Motherwell’s 1965 retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and was included therein.
Robert Motherwell’s painting *Before the Day* (1972) was purchased directly from the artist by Richard E. and Jane Lang in 1972. While visiting Motherwell’s studio, Jane wondered if the painting, then in-progress, could be completed by August 31, the birthdate of her son, Don Hussong. Completed the summer of that year—the date “30 August” is inscribed in the upper left corner—the title may thus be understood as a reference to Don Hussong’s birthday. *Before the Day* aligns with Motherwell’s series of “Open” paintings first began in 1967. A departure from his preceding *Elegies to the Spanish Republic*, Motherwell’s “Open” works explore permutations of line and color, each characterized by sparse visual elements and rectangular planes. Inspired by a chance encounter in the studio—Motherwell observed a recent painting leaning against a larger canvas in an agreeable way—the compositions create the suggestion of a window, or opening. A hybrid of painting and drawing (paintings including *Before the Day* feature charcoal), the “Open” series remained a focus for Motherwell until the early 1980s.

1951 was a highly productive year for Jackson Pollock, during which time his technical and aesthetic objectives begin to merge in both his paintings and drawings. On the cusp of reintroducing figurative elements into his paintings, *Untitled* (1951) is part of a small and significant suite of drawings that demonstrate Pollock’s continued investigations of the painted mark in relation to its support. Using two sheets of paper, Pollock worked on two drawings in tandem. The ink that bled through the top page stained the surface of the underlying sheet, which Pollock turned into a second composition (the latter of which is in the collection of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh). *Untitled* (1951) is the first in a small series of these dual compositions, and was a birthday gift from the artist to art critic Clement Greenberg. After the drawing was acquired by Richard E. and Jane Lang, it was included in the 1980 Museum of Modern Art, New York, exhibition *Jackson Pollock: Drawing into Painting.*
Ad Reinhardt’s *Painting* (1950) belonged to the estate of the artist before it was sold to Richard E. and Jane Lang in 1974 by the Marlborough Gallery, where it had been included in a solo exhibition of Reinhardt’s work that same year. Beginning in the 1940s, Reinhardt took classes in Asian art history, igniting an interest in Eastern art and philosophy that would introduce him to values and artistic traditions—such as calligraphy—that were distinctly different from those of the West. The vertical composition of *Painting* is structured by a grid-like pattern of horizontal and vertical brushstrokes, set against a luminous field of variegated reds and browns. This painting in particular marks an important transition in Reinhardt’s work, as its subtle tonal values, grid structure, and evocation of light prefigure his most minimal works—the black paintings—that would remain his focus from the mid-1950s until his death in 1967. *Painting* is the first work by Reinhardt to enter the Seattle Art Museum’s collection.

Painted during the last year of World War II, Mark Rothko’s Untitled (1945) is an example of a pivotal moment in the artist’s career. Bearing stylistic connections to his surrealist contemporaries, many of whom emigrated to New York from war-torn Europe, Untitled is divided into three horizontal bands—a compositional device that evokes geological, subterranean strata—and overlaid with glyph-like biomorphic forms. It was perhaps Rothko’s interest in Greek art and mythology that informed the visual structure of this early painting (most notably the frieze-like division of the visual plane). This compositional stacking, together with the painting’s soft and luminous paint application, positions Untitled as a predecessor to the celebrated ethereal abstractions of stacked fields of color Rothko would begin in the late 1940s.

Untitled (1945) brings to the Seattle Art Museum collection a rare example of Rothko’s pivotal early work and, together with Untitled (1963), also from the Lang Collection, adds further depth and understanding of the artist’s work.
Mark Rothko's *Untitled* (1963) belonged to the estate of the artist before it was sold to Richard E. and Jane Lang in 1972 by the Marlborough Gallery. The painting, an example of the artist's mature style, would find inclusion in major Rothko exhibitions at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1978) and National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (1998). This painting evidences the artist's mastery of his signature style, characterized by large, atmospheric bands of color that vibrate with quiet intensity. Measuring 69 x 90 inches, the painting's scale creates an immersive environment for viewers as well. In an undated essay, the artist indicated that the inner light of these paintings stemmed from his continued interest in mythology: “For light makes it possible to substitute for the directness of the mythologist's sensuality a new factor that we can call emotionality.” While exuberant color was the hallmark of Rothko's earlier color field abstractions (as evidenced in his 1953 painting, #10, in the Seattle Art Museum's collection), the darker and more muted tones of *Untitled* (1963) are quintessential of his later work.

*Untitled* (1963) brings to the Seattle Art Museum collection a highly significant late painting and, together with *Untitled* (1945), also from the Lang Collection, adds further depth and understanding of Rothko's work.
David Smith’s *Cubi XXV* (1965) was acquired by Richard E. and Jane Lang in 1978. Previously, it belonged to the estate of the artist before entering the collection of Meshulam Riklis, during which time it was on loan to the Wadsworth Atheneum and on view for many years.

Situated within a career defined by sculptural innovation, Smith’s *Cubi XXV* is one of a series of 28 sculptures considered to be the artist’s culminating body of work, and one of the last completed before the artist’s untimely death in 1965. Executed between the years 1961 and 1965, Smith’s *Cubi* are known for their explorations of volume, shape, scale, and surface. In the case of *Cubi XXV*, stainless steel cylindrical forms balance on extended beams. Often linked to Minimalism due to their industrial medium and form, the sculptures’ shimmering, wire-brushed surfaces also find connection to Abstract Expressionism, due to their gestural and emotive qualities.
Prior to entering the collection of Richard E. and Jane Lang, Clyfford Still’s painting *PH-338 (1949-No. 2)* (1949) was originally in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller, sold to the New York couple by Betty Parsons. The Hellers’ collection included notable Abstract Expressionist masterpieces, including Willem de Kooning’s *Town Square* (1948) (also part of the gift from the Lang Collection), and Jackson Pollock’s *Blue Poles* (1952) (National Gallery of Australia, Canberra) and *One: Number 31* (1950) (Museum of Modern Art, New York). This painting was included in the artist’s penultimate show at Betty Parsons Gallery, from April 17-May 6, 1950, before traveling to San Francisco for another solo exhibition at Metart Galleries, from June 17-July 14, 1950. Eight years later, it was one of four paintings by Still included in the landmark exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, *The New American Painting*, which traveled to eight European countries.

With its expanses of color and textured surface, *PH-338* evidences Still’s mature style. Still lived in Eastern Washington and California until 1950, and there is a rugged quality to the works from this period, hinting at such environments; however, the lack of horizon line, persistent brushwork, and pure color maintain its grounding as an abstraction. Painted while Still was living and teaching in San Francisco, the all-over quality of the composition makes *PH-338* a towering artistic proposal in the late 1940s—a time when many of his contemporaries were still exploring the full potential of abstraction in relation to scale. A closely related composition in color, composition, and scale is the 1949 painting *PH-385 (1949-No. 1)* (Clyfford Still Museum, Denver). The painting is of further significance as it is the first work by Still to enter the Seattle Art Museum’s collection.
FRISSON: ICONIC COLLECTION DEBUTS AT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM OCTOBER 15

Donated works of art transform SAM’s collection; Frisson features 21 Abstract Expressionist and post-war European works by Francis Bacon, Lee Krasner, Joan Mitchell, Clyfford Still

SEATTLE – The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) presents Frisson: The Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Collection (October 15–November 27, 2021), celebrating the gift of 19 exceptional works of art recently donated by the Friday Foundation in honor of late Seattle collectors and philanthropists Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis.

Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis built their collection during the 1970s and early 1980s, filling their home with singular works of art. In little more than a decade, they assembled one of the most significant private collections of Abstract Expressionist paintings and sculptures on the West Coast, augmented by two towering European artists of the same period. They were also devoted philanthropists in a burgeoning Seattle cultural scene. This exhibition celebrates their legacy of generosity and passion for art, particularly the “frisson” of excitement that arises from engaging deeply with art.

Rarely seen in public in the last 40 years, the works in Frisson will be presented in dynamic juxtapositions with each other that capture the spirit of the Langs’ shared endeavor. Conducting careful research, they chose leading examples from an artist’s career or works that marked important turning points.

“This is a special moment for SAM and for Seattle,” says Amada Cruz, Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO. “Dick and Jane believed in the transformational power of art in a community, and they have transformed our collection with these extraordinary gifts that people for generations to come can now sit with and enjoy. It’s something we all need right now—to connect again in our beautiful downtown galleries with inspiring art.”
Many of the works donated represent a first for SAM’s collection, including the first paintings by Francis Bacon (*Portrait of Man with Glasses I*, 1963 and *Study for a Portrait*, 1967), Lee Krasner (*Night Watch*, 1960), and Clyfford Still (*PH-338* (1949-No. 2), 1949); it also marks the first artwork by Alberto Giacometti, the sculpture *Femme de Venise II* (1956). As a group, all of the works transform SAM’s collection of post-war art and present new possibilities for its artistic program. The exhibition is accompanied by a major publication with scholarly texts dedicated to each work by leading experts in the field.

“It’s thrilling to share with the public these formidable examples of Abstract Expressionism and post-war European art,” says Catharina Manchanda, Jon & Mary Shirley Curator of Contemporary Art. “The emotional current of these works, reflective of their specific time and context, runs from exuberant to contemplative, fierce to soaring. They are an invitation to engage.”

*Frisson* features 21 works of art—18 paintings, two sculptures, and one drawing—by 17 influential American and two European artists of the post-war period, spanning the years between 1945 and 1978. The works will be on view in the museum’s modern and contemporary galleries.

In addition to the 19 new works in the museum’s collection, *Frisson* features two paintings previously gifted to the museum: the portrait *Richard Lang* (1978) by Alice Neel, and Andy Warhol’s double portrait of *Jane Lang* (1976). Alice Neel, the subject of a major retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2021, was in her late seventies when she painted the portrait of Richard Lang. The portrait of Jane Lang was commissioned as a surprise gift on the occasion of the exhibition *Andy Warhol: Portraits* at SAM in 1976. The Langs donated one of the panels to the museum following the exhibition; the second panel, which stayed in their home, was gifted to SAM in 2020 by the family.

**TICKETING**

**Museum Hours**
- Closed Monday & Tuesday
- Wednesday–Sunday 10 am–5 pm
- Holiday hours on the website

**General Admission**
- $19.99 Adult
- $17.99 Senior (65+), Military (with ID)
- $12.99 Student (with ID), Teen (15–18)
- FREE for children (14 and under)
- FREE for SAM Members

**Special Prices**
- First Thursdays: Free to all
- First Fridays: Free general admission for seniors (65+)

Details are subject to change. For the most up-to-date information on planning a visit, go to [seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org).

**EXHIBITION CATALOGUE**

A 204-page catalogue with 120 color illustrations published by Seattle Art Museum and distributed by University of Washington Press will be available for
purchase on site and online at SAM Shop ($45). Also titled Frisson: The Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Collection, (ISBN: 978-0-932216-79-3), the catalogue is edited by Catharina Manchanda and features newly commissioned scholarly essays by leading experts in their fields, including Bruce Guenther, David Anfam, Michael Brenson, John Elderfield, Jack Flam, Carter Foster, Catherine Grenier, Martin Lewis Harrison, Sanford Hirsch, Norman Kleeblatt, Eleanor Nairne, Amy Rahn, Elizabeth Smith, Robert Storr, and Jeffrey Weiss.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

Frisson: The Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Collection was made possible by the Friday Foundation.

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ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and rededicated as the Asian Art Museum in 1994, and it reopened on February 8, 2020, following an extensive renovation and expansion. SAM’s desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM’s downtown expansion celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM’s collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time periods.
SEATTLE ART MUSEUM ANNOUNCES INAUGURAL ACQUISITIONS FROM NEW FUND FOR CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL ART

Major new fund from the Friday Foundation brings six pioneering works to the museum collection

SEATTLE – The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) has made the inaugural acquisition selections from its Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Acquisition Fund for Global Contemporary Art. The six works of contemporary art from around the world, by artists of color and women, join the museum’s collection and will go on view in the coming years.

The works of art are by Dr. Chila Kumari Singh Burman, Dawn Cerny, Dana Claxton, Woody De Othello, Senga Nengudi, and Naama Tsabar. The selections align with SAM’s broader acquisitions strategy, bringing more works by Black, Indigenous, and artists of color as well as women into its global collection.

The Friday Foundation celebrates the legacy of Seattle philanthropists and collectors Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis. In October 2020, the foundation announced its gift of $2 million to endow the acquisition fund at the Seattle Art Museum. In February 2021, the foundation gave an additional $200,000 to inaugurate the fund so the museum could begin acquiring artworks without waiting for endowment distributions.

Altogether, the Friday Foundation has donated a total of $14.5 million to SAM over the last two years, including $2 million to its Closure Relief Fund and $10.5 million to support SAM’s art conservation programs, including care for 19 iconic works of art from the Lang Collection gifted to the museum. These works go on view at the downtown museum beginning October 15, 2021, in Frisson: The Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Collection.

“These inaugural acquisitions point towards the future of SAM’s collection and underscore the visionary leadership of the Friday Foundation,” says Catharina Manchanda, Jon & Mary Shirley Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art. “From the support during the critical moment of the pandemic closures, to the extraordinary gift of major works of art and robust support for conservation and care, and now to the acquisition of groundbreaking works of contemporary art, we see the legacy of the Langs is supporting the past, present, and future of the Seattle Art Museum.”

ABOUT THE INAUGURAL ACQUISITIONS
Chila Kumari Singh Burman (British, born 1957)
*Kali (I’m a Mess)*, 2020

For over 30 years, Dr. Chila Kumari Singh Burman has used a variety of mixed media to advocate for female empowerment, racial equity, and to promote her Punjabi heritage; she was also part of the British Black arts movement in the United Kingdom. Burman makes artwork that has an affective and sensory charge, and she recently moved to the medium of LED neon.

*Kali (I’m a Mess)* was part of a recent commission by Tate Britain to reenvision their formal portico. She superimposed Bollywood posters onto columns and affixed fluorescent Hindu deities. Entitled *remembering a brave new world*, the installation opened to coincide with Diwali, the five-day Indian festival which celebrates the triumph of light over darkness. At Tate Britain, this image of Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction and protection, was installed over the iconic statue of Britannia perched atop the building’s pediment. With her small fangs and tongue exposed, this Kali is both fearsome and playful. The artist uses Kali and the accompanying expression as a potent symbol of liberation that speaks to larger political and social concerns of 2020.

Dawn Cerny (American, born 1979)
*Screen from Leisure Activity Area at Eden Lake*, 2020

Seattle-based Cerny creates sculptures that imply the body and bring the aesthetic of the home—notably the suggestion of furniture that serves as a display for other objects—into art spaces. Her work captures the spirit of the tentative and in-between, conveying different psychological and emotional states. Sagging, slumping, and leaning, her sculptures offer makeshift support for other functional and “proper” things: a painting, a glass jar, a ceramic vase.

A centerpiece of *Les Choses*, Cerny’s recent solo exhibition at SAM in honor of her 2020 Betty Bowen Award, *Screen from Leisure Activity Area at Eden Lake* is one of Cerny’s most accomplished works. Unlike conventional screens, which separate a space or hide objects from view, this work is an armature that allows us to see through it. Made in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, the work’s title and bright colors suggest leisure and play but the sculpture itself, with its draped bands suggestive of bandages and small hanging screens, takes us far from Eden as it brings to mind partitions between hospital beds.
Dana Claxton (Hunkpapa Lakota [Sioux], born 1959)
Headdress—Shadae, 2019

Claxton creates photo-based work that investigates hybrid identities through dress and adornment. *Headdress-Shadae* is from her *Headdress* series of illuminated photographs, for which she invited young Indigenous women to bring regalia and other objects of adornment and personal significance to her studio. The sitters were then dressed to the point where their faces were partially or fully obscured. This portrait deviates from Western notions of a physical likeness, and instead becomes a symbolic and spiritual portrait—each an object of personal and cultural significance.

Claxton is one of the leading First Nations photographers and filmmakers in Canada and head of the University of British Columbia’s Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory. *Headdress—Shadae* was included in the 2019 Toronto Biennial.

Senga Nengudi (American, born 1943)
Ceremony for Freeway Fets, 1978

Nengudi, born Sue Irons in Chicago, is a leading member of the Black avant-garde in the United States and has been at the vanguard of performance art since the 1970s. *Ceremony for Freeway Fets* is a celebrated work from 1978. The performance was part of a public art project for the California Department of Transportation, and the centerpiece was a nylon sculpture installed on the support columns of a Los Angeles freeway overpass. Fellow artists from the Studio Z collective and musicians, loosely directed by Nengudi, animated the vacant space in her attempt to create “an African village.” The piece combined elements of Japanese theater with free jazz and references to the Yoruba masquerade of Gelede. Photographed by Roderick “Kwaku” Young, the eleven photographs capture the improvisational spirit and ephemeral nature of the event.
Woody De Othello (American, born 1991)
_Two Way Connection, 2021_

Sculptor and painter Othello is originally from Florida and now lives and works in the San Francisco Bay area. His work is inspired by his Haitian heritage, the California Funk art movement, and everyday domestic objects.

_Two Way Connection_ is part of a new body of work from his residency at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Made during the COVID-19 pandemic, his sculptures reflect how we listen with our bodies. The sculpture merges the shape of a vessel with eyes, ears, mouths, and hands, topped by an old-fashioned telephone receiver, into an anthropomorphic form placed on a sculpted side table. At a time when we were collectively deprived of closeness and human touch, and the majority of communication relied on the phone and computer, Othello responds with sensuousness and tactility.

Naama Tsabar (Israeli, born 1982)
_Transition (2019)_

Tsabar creates installations, performances, and sculptures using materials such as loudspeakers, amplifiers, and other elements of club culture. Addressing the implicit gender roles and coded behaviors of music and nightlife scenes, the artist appropriates and subverts the gestures of virility and power associated with rock and roll. Tsabar probes the culture of rock music from multiple angles, creating sensuous performances and installations that merge sculpture and instrument.

_Transition_ is a sculpture and fully functioning speaker made of wood, cables, and a disassembled Boss Katana 100 guitar amplifier. Its red and white lines are cables that would ordinarily be part of the functional interior of an amp. The work is connected to a power outlet, and a second cable can be connected to an electric guitar, microphone, or mp3 player—activated by designated musicians or performers. The artist looks to expand and redefine the role of the viewer, as _Transition_ awaits activation.

**Image captions:** _Kali (I’m a Mess), 2020_, Chila Kumari Burman, 6mm 12v silicone LED neon, galvanized weld mesh, 12v switch mode transformers, IP67 plastic box, 137 13/16 x 70 7/8 x 1 3/16 in. Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Acquisition Fund for Global and Contemporary Art,

ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM
As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and rededicated as the Asian Art Museum in 1994, and it reopened on February 8, 2020, following an extensive renovation and expansion. SAM's desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM's downtown expansion celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time periods.