

For Immediate Release

New acquisitions at Mia strengthen collections of Native American, Latin American, and Tibetan Buddhist art, among other areas

MINNEAPOLIS—(Mar. 13, 2024) — The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) announced today that more than 185 works were added to the museum's collection at the end of 2023, a combination of gifts and purchases that includes works in four departments in the museum. Among the highlight objects are: a photograph by Native American artist Cara Romero, made in collaboration with George Alexander, and acquired funds from an anonymous donor; a painting by the pioneering Venezuelan artist Carlos Cruz-Diez; eight vibrantly decorated 19th century Tibetan Buddhist carpets; an 18th century painting of a palace scene produced at the court of Udaipur (Mewar); a large-format painting by Jozef Israëls, a prominent, 19th century Dutch artist that was gifted to the museum; a sculpture by Jacques Lipchitz, on long term loan to Mia from the Walker Art Center; and an early 16th century engraving by Renaissance luminary Jacopo de' Barbari. Two of the Himalayan Buddhist carpets, the Lipschitz, and Israels are on view.



Jozef Israëls (Dutch, 1824-1911), *Pancake Day*, Oil on canvas. Gift of Alfred and Ingrid Lenz Harrison 2023.57.12

“These remarkable additions to our collection underscore Mia’s dedication to presenting a diverse range of art to our visitors, reflecting cultures both close to home and from distant lands,” said Matthew Welch, Mary Ingebrand Pohlad Deputy Director and Chief Curator at Mia. “Each work brings unique cultural and historical significance, expanding the narratives that we are able to share with audiences. At the same time, these acquisitions reflect the profound impact that art can have on our world, from the ways in which decorated rugs might affect a Tibetan Buddhist’s approach to prayer, to Jacques Lipchitz’s reflections on the oppression and murder of European Jews in the mid-20th century, to Cara Romero’s exploration of Indigenous cultural memory. We are grateful to the many donors who made these acquisitions possible.”

More detail on the highlights of these acquisitions as follows:

Carlos Cruz-Diez (Venezuelan, 1923 - 2019); *Physichromie No 480* (1969)

Carlos Cruz-Diez was a prominent figure in postwar Latin American art and played a pivotal role in the Optical and Kinetic Art movement, which had a major impact both on Venezuelan art and internationally. Born in Caracas, Cruz-Diez initially pursued a career in graphic design while nurturing his passion for painting. His desire to become an artist led him to Europe in 1954, and he eventually settled in Paris in 1960. Fascinated by the physical production and experience of color, Cruz-Diez embarked on pioneering experiments in what he called “Physichromie.” to explore this concept through art. He was a relentless researcher on the subject, exploring everything from literary sources like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s “Theory of Colours,” to the works of the Impressionists, to Joseph Albers.

Cruz-Diez’s Physichromie series—from which Mia’s acquisition comes—seeks to show that colors are not static, but rather that the viewer’s perception of them changes, affected by ambient light, reflection, and even interaction with other colors. In some circumstances, the human brain can even be induced to see colors that don’t really exist in the composition itself. In *Physichromie No 480*, overlapping rectangles defined by lines of colors demonstrate how our perceptions of colors can change, as the striations change across the canvas.

Jacopo de' Barbari (Italian (Venice), c. 1460/70–before 1516); *The Virgin and Child Reclining Against a Tree* (c. 1503-6)

This exquisite engraving epitomizes Jacopo de' Barbari’s classical style—and underscores his influence in printmaking, which lasted for decades. The work depicts a sleepy young Virgin Mary, seated on the ground at the foot of a large, knotty tree and nursing a naked, alert Christ Child. An ancient approach to depicting Mary, it became popular again in the Renaissance—and would disappear after the Council of Trent (1563), when nudity in sacred art was decreed indecorous, which included depictions of the Madonna’s exposed breast.

The work is even more exceptional given how little is known about the artist's life, from his birth, to his training, to his death. For centuries, he was known as the "Master of the Caduceus" (after the symbol with which he signed his works) and his name was only revealed centuries later. Jacopo de' Barbari's diverse body of known works ranged from the monumental "View of Venice"—a mural-sized woodcut over nine feet long, of which Mia owns one of the early prints—to portrait paintings, but printmaking is the area in which he had the widest impact, particularly through his impact on artists such as Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach.

Jacques Lipchitz (American (born Lithuania), 1891–1973); *Prometheus Strangling the Vulture II*(1944/1953)

Jacques Lipchitz's sculpture "Prometheus Strangling the Vulture II" is a monumental embodiment of the artist's defiance in the face of authoritarianism and his celebration of humanity's triumph over oppression, and was originally made famous in an earlier version shown at the 1937 Paris Exposition. Lipchitz, a prolific and innovative modern sculptor, began his journey from Lithuania to Paris in the early 1900s. There, he became a part of artistic circles that included luminaries like Guillaume Apollinaire, Jean Cocteau, and Pablo Picasso, shaping his artistic vision and leading him towards groundbreaking cubist work and public art commissions in the subsequent decades. He came to the United States in 1941, after the start of World War II.

The creation of this sculpture holds a pivotal place in Lipchitz's career and the broader context of the 1937 Paris Exposition. At a time when the specter of fascism loomed over Europe, artists saw international platforms such as these large art shows as opportunities to make powerful political statements. Lipchitz's sculpture, soaring thirty feet tall, made a profound anti-fascist statement and received a gold medal at the exposition. Sadly, it was destroyed in 1938 by right-wing sympathizers who understood its potent critique of Hitler's anti-Semitic policies and actions. In 1944, Lipchitz made a new plaster version, smaller than the original, titled "Prometheus Strangling the Vulture II"; the bronze Mia has acquired is one of two cast in 1953 from the plaster version. Acquisition of this work was supported by Leni and David Moore.

Jozef Israëls (Dutch, 1824 - 1911); *Pancake Day*(c. 1885)

Jozef Israëls was a prominent Dutch artist of the 19th century, particularly recognized for his departure from the romantic-academic conventions that dominated the art of the period and instead embracing modern French realism. Born into a Jewish middle-class family in Groningen, he received a solid academic and religious education alongside early drawing lessons. His artistic journey led him from Amsterdam to Paris, after which he settled in The Hague. Israëls became a renowned figure during his lifetime, with exhibitions across Europe and North America, and robust demand for his work from collectors.

Israëls specialized in genre painting, particularly the crafting of intimate interior scenes that captured moments of respite and modest family meals among fishermen and rural communities. "Pancake Day" epitomizes this genre, and its distinctive dark, tonal style and broad brushwork reflect the influence of Rembrandt, the renowned Dutch master from two centuries prior. Israëls' inspiration for this work—both in technique and subject matter—can be traced back to Rembrandt's etching "The Pancake Woman" (1635), and this is a theme he explored in at least 11 paintings, in which he varied elements such as the figures, settings, palette, and dimensions. But across these works, a common thread emerges: a dimly lit interior, illuminated food, quietly expectant children, and a mother tending to her task with grace. The work Mia has acquired—gifted to the museum by Alfred and Ingrid Harrison—is the largest canvas in this series.

Cara Romero (American (Chemehuevi), born 1977); *The Zenith*(2022)

Cara Romero's "The Zenith" is a striking testament to her unique perspective as an enrolled citizen of the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, raised in both the rural Chemehuevi reservation in the Mojave Desert, CA, and the urban sprawl of Houston, TX. Her identity informs her photography, which seamlessly blends fine art and editorial photography, a visceral approach to representing Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural memory, collective history, and lived experiences from a Native American female perspective.

In "The Zenith," Romero collaborates with artist George Alexander (Mvskoke Creek) to create a thought-provoking piece that challenges prevailing notions of marginalized groups "disappearing" and looks to redefine narratives for Native artists. The artwork features Alexander donning an astronaut's helmet, seemingly suspended amidst indigenous white corn and stars. The work invites contemplation of both humanity's potential—implied by the pursuit of space and all that has brought—and at the same time, the future of foodways within an Indigenous framework that sees interconnections between the terrestrial and the celestial. Romero's work is acquired with the financial support of an anonymous donor.

Eight 19th century Tibetan Carpets

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These eight rare Himalayan carpets offer a fascinating glimpse into esoteric Tibetan Buddhist rituals. Created for high-ranking monks, the carpets depict flayed skins and dismembered bodies, imagery representing detachment from suffering in meditative visualizations. Despite the grim iconography of beheadings and flesh, the carpets manifest transcendent spirituality through exquisite wool weaving. They originate from cloistered monastic enclosures for protective deities, sacred sites providing power during obscure rites towards enlightenment.

While little-known, the carpets reveal rich philosophical dimensions within Tibetan art. As superb examples of a delicate devotional artform, they substantially augment Mia's holdings in Himalayan material culture. Rarely circulated, and intriguing even to scholars, the group represents an unparalleled opportunity to exhibit an evocative Buddhist tradition of using visceral imagery as part of ritualized meditation.

Gift of Drawings from the collection of JoAnn Gonzalez Hickey

A gift of 100 contemporary drawings from the collection of JoAnn Gonzalez Hickey was also presented to the museum as a year-end gift. The selection of drawings, dating from 1980 to 2014, reflects Gonzalez Hickey's passion for supporting early- to mid-career artists and embracing a variety of media used to create the drawings, including pen and ink, colored pencil, acrylic, pastel, watercolor, and collage. Among the 53 international artists represented in the gift are such prominent figures as Joseph Amar, Eve Ashein, William Cordova, Gloria Ortiz-Hernandez, and Joan Witek. The gift will significantly enhance Mia's collection of contemporary works on paper.

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About the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Home to more than 100,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest art collections in the country—from all corners of the globe, and from ancient to contemporary—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

For more information, call + 1 612 870 3000 or visit artsmia.org

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