

WORCESTER ART MUSEUM

WORCESTER ART MUSEUM ACQUIRES FOUR WORKS EXPANDING SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS IN PHOTOGRAPHY, CONTEMPORARY ASIAN ART, AND EARLY MODERN PAINTING

Worcester, MA—July 16, 2018—The Worcester Art Museum (WAM) announces the acquisition of four works, as it continues to strategically build its collections of European, Asian, and North American artists in a variety of media. Two early 20th-century German paintings, one by Max Slevogt and another by Richard Müller, bring balance to WAM's collections and bridge gaps in the pathway to Modernism. At the same time, contemporary works by Bharti Kher and Stan Douglas add to the Museum's Asian art and photographic collections. Together, these acquisitions support the Museum's overarching vision to connect its strengths in areas such as Old Masters with modern and contemporary art, and to highlight connections between the work of artists across different countries and continents.

Max Slevogt's painting *Selbstbildnis im Garten (A Self-Portrait in the Garden at Godramstein)* (1910) is an important contribution to the Museum's late 19th- and early 20th-century European collections and connects WAM's monumental portrait, *Lady Warwick and Her Son*, by John Singer Sargent with its other holdings of Impressionism. Slevogt (1868–1932), one of Germany's leading Impressionist painters, is often paired with artist Lovis Corinth, who is well-represented in the Museum's collection with a number of works on paper and two major paintings. This work brings Slevogt's signature style—and his particular interest in landscape painting—to bear on a self-portrait. The work is now on view.

In tandem with the Slevogt work, the Museum has acquired the 1918 painting ***Liebe und Tod (Love and Death)*, by Austrian artist Richard Müller** (1874–1954). Considered an exceptional talent from a young age, Müller's career began as a graphic artist, and it was on that basis that he was admitted to the Dresden Art Academy at age 19. Later, he was hired to teach at the Academy, and among his students were the celebrated artists George Grosz and Otto Dix. Müller's paintings often drew stylistically from his early work as an illustrator, as is the case with the piece WAM has acquired. With its powerful allegorical narrative—and the armor representing the fallen warrior—the work connects to the Museum's outstanding Higgins Collection of arms and armor, and will support WAM's ongoing interpretive installations that connect its arms and armor collections to both the wider art historical tradition and to the underlying political and social histories. *Liebe und Tod (Love and Death)* will go on view at the Museum in Fall 2018.

London-born, New Delhi-based artist **Bharti Kher** (b. 1969) is known for her sculptures and installation pieces, many of which draw on traditional Indian cultural or ritual elements, and incorporate both human and animal forms. The installation ***A vegetarian lion, a slippery fish*** (2013) is an assemblage of 70 small-scale figurines, in various stages of wear and deterioration, on a wooden table. The figurines range in representation from Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist deities and saints to generic figures, such as dancers, children, and a snake charmer. The artwork reflects Kher's ongoing exploration of how humans imbue objects, icons, and symbols with

social meaning. The first contemporary piece from India in the Museum's collection, it highlights how spirituality has influenced contemporary artists and will introduce exciting new dialogue between contemporary art and WAM's strong collection of historic Asian religious art. The work will also serve as a core component in the reinstallation of the Museum's Arts of South and Southeast Asia Gallery.

Stan Douglas's *Bumtown* (2015) is a large-format, photo-based chromogenic print mounted on Dibond aluminum. Saturated in black and grays—a nod to the artist's interest in film noir—the work is part of a group of photographs informally known as the *Night Photographs*. Douglas (b. 1960) is perhaps best known for his videos and photographs that connect to lost histories through memory. He created *Bumtown* by suturing archival photographs of 1940s Vancouver with digital-imaging using an advanced 3-D computer software called Maya, a program typically used in animation. The resulting *Night* series reinvents low-income, hardscrabble neighborhoods that once existed in Vancouver, Canada, and have since been razed. Among these, *Bumtown* is an aerial image of a railroad traversing the water. The use of technology to blur the line between the archival photographs and the contemporary imaging creates an uncanny relationship between the real and the unreal, like an elaborate theater set. At approximately 10 x 5 feet, this photograph becomes the largest photo-based object in the museum's collection and reflects an ongoing interest in diversifying the Museum's collection of conceptual photography.

"These four stellar acquisitions reflect our ongoing efforts to diversify WAM's collections, bringing in contemporary pieces, works by artists of color and of other cultures, and works that challenge our preconceptions about art history," said Matthias Waschek, C. Jean and Myles McDonough Director of the Worcester Art Museum. "Bharti Kher and Stan Douglas bring different cultural and aesthetic visions to their work, which in turn give us new opportunities to connect to our diverse New England audiences. And while Max Slevogt and Richard Müller both come from more traditional European painting backgrounds, each represented an aesthetic departure from those traditions. It is also important to acknowledge the Museum's fortunate history of generous donors, whose support for our acquisition endowment makes these purchases possible."

About the Worcester Art Museum

Founded in 1896, the Worcester Art Museum's encyclopedic 38,000 piece collection covers 51 centuries of art. Highlights include the Medieval Chapter House, Renaissance Court, and Worcester Hunt Mosaic, as well as the recently integrated John Woodman Higgins Armory Collection of arms and armor. The Museum is internationally known for its collection of European and American art. It was the first in America to acquire paintings by Monet and Gauguin and one of the first to exhibit photography as fine art. As the one of the first U.S. museum to focus on collaborating with local schools, it has been at the forefront of engaging audiences and giving them a meaningful and personal experience for over a century.

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