



Williams College Museum of Art

The Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) houses over 12,000 works that span the history of art. The museum's principle mission is to encourage multidisciplinary teaching through encounters with art objects that traverse time periods and cultures. An active, collecting museum, its strengths are in modern and contemporary art, photography, prints, and Indian painting. The museum is also noted for its stellar collection of American art from the late 18th century to the present. With the largest collection in the world of works by the brothers Charles and Maurice Prendergast, the museum is a primary center for study of these American artists in a transatlantic context of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Special exhibitions curated by museum staff, faculty, students, and guest curators focus on new scholarship and alternative perspectives. The museum commissions new art, emphasizes the development of innovative exhibitions that place art in a broad cultural context, explores the connections between past and present, and strives to raise critical questions about the interpretation of art and art history.

The Williams College Museum of Art is a collaborative partner with the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art and the Yale University Art Gallery for *Sol LeWitt: A Wall Drawing Retrospective*. WCMA also provides leadership for Kidspace, a collaborative project with MASS MoCA and the Clark. Kidspace is a contemporary art gallery and art-making space for children, families, and the general public.

History of the Williams College Museum of Art

Karl Weston, the museum's founder and first director, established the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) in 1926 to provide Williams students with the opportunity for firsthand observation of fine works of art, a privilege he maintained was essential to the study of art. For 22 years Weston taught art history and solicited gifts from alumni for the museum's collection. In 1948 he was followed in both roles by his former student S. Lane Faison, Jr., whose 28-year tenure saw a significant expansion of the art department and the collection.

In 1977, faced with inadequate exhibition, office, and storage space, Director Franklin W. Robinson formed a Visiting Committee of distinguished art professionals, mostly Williams alumni, to advise on building and programming expansion. Charles Moore was hired as architect and, in 1981, a six-year building phase began under newly appointed Director Thomas Krens. The staff was increased, exhibition space doubled, facilities raised to professional standards, a vigorous schedule of changing exhibitions launched, and an education program for schoolchildren inaugurated. In addition, scholars were hired to start work on a catalogue raisonné of the works of Maurice and Charles Prendergast, which

marked the beginning of a long-standing relationship with the Prendergast Foundation.

In 1989 Linda Shearer became director, and the Prendergast catalogue raisonné was completed. Under her direction, the museum increased its interdisciplinary and curricular use of its holdings, and renewed its emphasis on the museum's permanent collection. 1989 also marked the beginning of WCMA's relationship with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. WCMA's Mellon Academic Program is now an integral part of the museum's mission. In 2001, on the occasion of its 75th anniversary, the museum commissioned "Eyes, 2001" a permanent outdoor sculpture by renowned artist Louise Bourgeois. For the museum, the work symbolizes an ongoing dedication to the best contemporary art while providing students and visitors a unique outdoor meeting place. In 2005, Lisa Corrin was appointed director and has continued to champion WCMA's mission as a teaching museum.

In 2009, an additional grant from the Mellon Foundation endowed the Mellon Curatorial Fellowship. This position provides first-generation college graduates and underrepresented constituencies an opportunity to develop the skills and experience needed to excel in the museum field. Through this fellowship, WCMA hopes to redefine the traditional profile of museum curators and directors.

WCMA has published six collection catalogues since 1979, including *Williams College Museum of Art: Handbook of the Collection* (1979), *The Art of Charles Prendergast from the Collections of the Williams College Museum of Art and Mrs. Charles Prendergast* (1993), *Art of India* (1994), *The Art of Leisure: Maurice Prendergast in the Williams College Museum of Art* (1999), *American Dreams: American Art in the Williams College Museum of Art*, and *Encounter: The Williams College Museum of Art* (2006). In addition, WCMA publishes exhibition catalogues that accompany our self-organized loan exhibitions, many of which travel nationally and internationally. Some of these exhibitions include: *Introjection: Tony Oursler, mid-career survey, 1976–1999* (1999); *Carrie Mae Weems: The Hampton Project* (2000); *Prelude to a Nightmare: Art, Politics, and Hitler's Early Years in Vienna, 1906–1913* (2002); *Kara Walker: Narratives of a Negress* (2003); *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film* (2005); *Jackson Pollock at Williams College: A Tribute to Kirk Varnedoe '67* (2006); *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain* (2006); *Drawing on Hopper: Gregory Crendson/Edward Hopper* (2006); *Making It New: The Art and Style of Sara and Gerald Murphy* (2007); and *Liu Zheng: The Chinese* (2008). WCMA has received recognition from the International Association of Art Critics for the following four exhibitions: *Introjection: Tony Oursler, mid-career survey, 1976–1999*; *Prelude to a Nightmare: Art, Politics, and Hitler's Early Years in Vienna, 1906–1913*; *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film*; and *Making It New: The Art and Style of Sara and Gerald Murphy*. The museum was accredited by the American Association of Museums in 1993 and re-accredited in 2004. WCMA strives to present innovative exhibitions that challenge assumptions about art, history, and the world in which we live.