

ART & DESIGN

Philadelphia Museum of Art Finally Gets a Hopper

Inside Art

By ROBIN POGREBIN FEB. 25, 2016

It's hard to believe that the Philadelphia Museum of Art has never had a Hopper.

But every institution has its gaps, and now the Philadelphia Museum is filling in this particular one with “Road and Trees,” Edward Hopper’s 1962 depiction of a copse silhouetted against the sky.

“When Hopper was painting, the museum wasn’t really focused on acquiring contemporary American art,” said Timothy Rub, the museum’s director. “Now, it’s almost too difficult for museums to acquire,” he added, given the high prices and scarcity of prime works.

In light of this, the museum is particularly grateful to be receiving the Hopper — along with 50 other significant pieces — from the collection of Daniel W. Dietrich II, a philanthropist who died in September.

Among the other artists represented in the gift are Cy Twombly, Philip Guston, Paul Thek, Eva Hesse and Albert Pinkham Ryder.

Mr. Dietrich was, in particular, a great fan of Thomas Eakins; thus his contribution features 12 works by that artist — 10 paintings and two drawings. Among them are oil sketches that relate closely to major works in the museum’s already significant Eakins collection.

The bequest includes archival Eakins material — photographs, pencil studies, his palette and brushes — and platinum print portraits of Walt Whitman that relate to an oil painting of that poet and the frontispiece of the complete edition of his “Leaves of Grass.”

In addition, Mr. Dietrich donated \$10 million for an endowment to support the museum’s work in contemporary art.

“It’s a real game changer,” Mr. Rub said. “All sorts of new things become possible as a consequence of an endowment like this.”

Evolving Rooms

Upon receiving a commission to do an installation for the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, Samara Golden imagined a series of simple rooms containing little except laptops and neatly folded towels, evoking monotony and isolation.

“Like a nightmare of having everyone in their own rooms with no entrance or exit, living a disconnected life — despite being connected via the Internet,” Ms. Golden said. “Then I just always need to change things and make it feel more complicated.”

It was the gallery space itself that inspired her to rethink her approach: 18 ceiling vaults with skylights.

“It almost looks like a cathedral; the light is really beautiful,” she said. “I’ve just never been able to work in a space like this before.”

So instead, Ms. Golden has created a room in each vault — “18 different ways of being and thinking,” she said — made up of three types. The plain, hotel-like rooms with laptops are lit with cold LED bulbs; the rooms with curtains are warmer, with

coffee tables full of leftover drinks and desserts.

The rooms with stained-glass windows are cozy and cluttered, with crocheted blankets thrown over the sofas, spilled drinks on the coffee table, piles of clothes on the floor and laundry baskets full of socks. “It’s really messy in there,” Ms. Golden said.

Kirchner as Draftsman

When Galerie St. Etienne opens its booth at the Art Dealers Association of America’s art show, which runs Wednesday through March 6 at the Park Avenue Armory, it will feature watercolors, pastels and drawings by the German Expressionist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.

The works belonged to the financier Robert Lehman, who died in 1969, and are among the few in his extensive collection that were not acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (although they were, until recently, on extended loan to the museum).

Mr. Lehman’s family is now selling 30 pieces, which focus on Kirchner’s development as a draftsman from 1905 through his Swiss exile in the 1920s. Mr. Lehman purchased the works as a group in 1959 from a German dealer, who obtained them from the artist’s estate.

“Drawings were the essence of his life,” said Jane Kallir, a director of the gallery. “And the sketches are the essence of his drawings.”

Galerie St. Etienne will show all 30 works, along with several Kirchner original lithographs and other drawings, in an exhibition opening on March 29. (Works by Kirchner are also in the Neue Galerie’s current “Munch and Expressionism” show.)

“He wanted to create a new pictorial language that would go beneath the essence of the visible world,” Ms. Kallir said, adding that Kirchner used his sketches to capture “what he termed ‘the ecstasy of first sight,’ the emotions that are evoked when you first see something.”

Early Selfies

In Tanya Bonakdar's booth at the Art Dealers show, that gallery will show a new body of work by the London-based artist Gillian Wearing, who in 1997 won the Turner Prize. The solo presentation includes nearly 150 original Polaroid self-portraits from Ms. Wearing's personal archive dated 1988 to 2005.

"Her early work was tapping into a prediction of social media," Ms. Bonakdar said. "It's sort of selfies before they were known as selfies, instant the way Instagram is instant, documenting herself in this intimate way."

Sculpting Script

In the late 1960s Ed Ruscha started making drawings first out of graphite, then gunpowder, depicting script letters that looked sculptural, tangible. Now more than 45 of these works — including one from the artist's collection — have been gathered for a show that opens on May 6 at Edward Tyler Nahem Fine Art in New York.

"Developing out of the line of cursive handwriting," said Dieter Buchhart, the show's curator, "he found a way to transform that line into a three-dimensional object."

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