

A MEETING PLACE FOR THE ARTS

A History of the University of Michigan Museum of Art

1850S

Collecting began not long after the University was established, by Henry Simmons Frieze, professor of Latin. The collection began as an adjunct to the Latin Department and intended to serve as illustrations for Frieze's lectures on classical art and archeology. These materials, which consisted mostly of engravings, photographs and plaster and terra-cotta copies of classical sculpture, became the nucleus of what was then called the Museum of Art and Antiquities.

1862

The University received as a gift its first important original work of art, a marble statue of Nydia by Randolph Rogers. The gift, received from the Rogers Art Association, a committee of both Ann Arbor citizens and university community members, was also the first of a number of donations of art that would greatly enhance the collection.

LATE 1800S

During the subsequent years, the collection was greatly expanded through the generosity of donors from within, as well as outside of, the university community. Gifts were received from Randolph Rogers, several graduating classes and most significantly, in 1895 the University received as a bequest the collection of Henry Clay Lewis, banker and avid art collector of Coldwater, Michigan.

1883

After spending 25 years confined to a few rooms of Mason Hall (initially called the North Building), the collection was moved to a special designated section of the newly constructed library (no longer extant).

1898

Despite an expansion that doubled the space available, the collection was growing rapidly and soon after, calls for a new, larger, purpose-built space were made to the Regents of the University.

1910

The collections were moved to purpose-built galleries in Alumni Memorial Hall, but the building was shared with the Alumni Association and its various offices as well as with the newly established Department of Fine Arts, which then assumed responsibility for the University's art collections. In this new space, a rotating schedule of visiting exhibitions was presented for the next 35 years by the Ann Arbor Art Association, an organization made up of community and University members that was supported in part by the University. Between 1910 and 1945, the permanent collections were developed and expanded with numerous gifts. The holdings included an extensive collection of graphic arts and began to include non-Western works of art.

1946

The Museum of Art was established as a separate administrative unit (having previously been combined with the archaeology collections) and John Paul Slusser, professor of drawing and painting in the College of Architecture and Design, became the Museum's first director. The Museum still shared its quarters in Alumni Memorial Hall. It was not until 1967 that the Museum of Art became the sole occupant of the building after a major building renovation funded in part by the Margaret Watson Parker bequest. The collecting focus was on contemporary works.

1957

The Regents of the University appropriated a special acquisition fund to the Museum in order to broaden the collections and rival the art museums of other major universities. Under the directorship of Charles Sawyer, several major acquisitions were made with these funds, including Joos van Cleve and Lucas Gassel's *St. John the Evangelist on the Patmos*, Guercino's *Esther before Ahasuerus*, Jan Sanders van Hemmessen's *The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant* and Jacopo dal Casentino's *Enthroned Madonna and Child with Saints and Angels*.

1970s, 1980s, 1990s

During this time period, both the Museum's programming and collections expanded. Under Director Brett Waller's leadership (1973–1980) an active docent program was initiated—a program that has developed and thrived ever since. It was during Evan Mauer's tenure as director (1981–1988) that the Museum began to collect African art and expand its holdings in photography and several other areas. Both photography and African art continue to be active collecting areas today.

1994

Director William Hennessey secured the Museum's largest gift of art: four Picasso paintings from the Carey Walker Foundation that immediately became highlights of the collection.

2000s

By the beginning of the 21st century, the Museum's collection had tripled in size (since 1967, the last year the Museum increased its space). The Museum now holds impressive and growing collections of African and Asian art, as well as an extensive works on paper collection ranging from medieval illuminated manuscripts and old master drawings to the contemporary photography of Walker Evans and Ansel Adams.

Under Dr. Steward's leadership an unprecedented capital campaign was undertaken. The fruit of this effort is an historic expansion and restoration project that is the realization of a long-held dream to bring the Museum spaces up to par with its superb collections, exhibitions and programs. Brad Cloepfil of Allied Works Architecture met the challenge by bringing the original Beaux-Arts facility back to its former grace; doubling the gallery, education and social spaces; and building a new wing that embodies accessibility and transparency and is a literal and metaphorical beacon for the arts.