

For Immediate Release

Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection of More than 375 Ceramic Masterworks, Library, and Archive to Come to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Major Collection of Post-1940 Ceramic Art Enters MFAH Collection of Modern and Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design

Houston, Texas, April 4, 2007—A significant collection of ceramic art and its accompanying library and archive, amassed over three decades by the New-York based collectors Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio is to enter the collection of modern and contemporary decorative arts and design at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Dr. Peter C. Marzio, director of the MFAH, announced today. The acquisition of the collection is made possible by a substantial gift of works of art, an artist archive, and the library from the collectors and by a leadership gift from the Caroline Wiess Law Endowment Fund.



Comprising more than 375 artworks by major international figures such as Kenjiro Kawai, Jean-Pierre Laroque, Adrian Saxe, Peter Voukos, Beatrice Wood, and Betty Woodman, many of whom are represented in depth, and including examples by leading artists Sir Anthony Caro, Lucio Fontana, Claes Oldenburg, and Grayson Perry, among others, this collection's acquisition places the MFAH in the forefront of museum ceramic collections worldwide and positions the MFAH as a major center for the research of contemporary ceramics. It adds luster to the museum's already distinguished collection of modern and contemporary decorative arts and design, and a new dimension to the museum's exceptional post-1940 collection of Modern and contemporary painting and sculpture. Further, the collection brings a new component to the museum's holdings in ceramic art, which include pieces from the pre-Columbian Americas, one of the nation's finest collections of Worcester porcelain, superb examples from colonial America as well as 19th-century Texas and the United States, and also notable examples from ancient and modern Asia.

“This collection represents an entire era of ceramic art and design,” said Marzio, “and is unrivaled on many fronts—in the roster of the artists, the outstanding examples of their work, and the history and documentation that accompany it. The addition of this collection is a major step forward for the MFAH and is an unparalleled resource for scholars and the public alike.”

An exhibition offering a first look of selected highlights from the collection is planned for May 2008 in the museum’s Cameron Foundation Gallery.

“The quality of the individual pieces in this collection is breathtaking.” said Cindi Strauss, MFAH curator of modern and contemporary decorative arts and design. “The links between the Garth Clark Mark Del Vecchio collection and the museum’s larger collections, both historical and contemporary, present incredible opportunities for exhibitions and study.”

The Collection

The collection encompasses a global roster of established and emerging artists working in the 20th and 21st centuries with a specialty in the ceramic arts, as well as painters and sculptors who created in the ceramic medium. Artists from the United States, England, Canada, Ethiopia, South Africa, Japan, China, Taiwan, Mexico, Uruguay, Argentina, France, Spain, Italy, The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Latvia, Hungary, and Turkey are represented.

The collection includes a diverse range of aesthetics from abstract and sculptural forms to narrative works. Installation pieces, prints and drawings by many of the artists, and a group of work whose roots are in industrial design are important subsets to the overall collection. The core of the collection comprises American material that traces the aesthetic and technical developments through in-depth representation of artists such as Ralph Bacerra, Marek Cecula, Ken Ferguson, Anne Kraus, Ron Nagle, Richard Notkin, and Beth Cavener Stichter. Important works by Laszlo Fekete, George Jeanclos, Kitamura Junko, Geert Lap, Bodil Manz, Lawson Oyekan, Richard Slee, and Akio Takamori are also represented.

About the Collectors

Garth Clark, born in South Africa in 1947, is an internationally recognized scholar, author, and collector of modern and contemporary ceramic art. He has written or contributed to over three dozen books, including *Shards: Garth Clark on Ceramic Art*; *Gilded Vessels: The Life and Art of Beatrice Wood*; and *The Artful Teapot*. Among the many honors and awards accorded him are the Mather Award for art criticism given by the College Art Association, the Art Critics Award of the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Art Book of the Year Award from the Art Libraries Society of North America for his volume on George E. Ohr. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Art, London, from which he graduated with a Master of Arts degree in ceramics in 1976. Together with Mark Del Vecchio, he owns and directs the Garth Clark Gallery for ceramic art in New York City, where he now resides. Mark Del Vecchio has been an

influential dealer in ceramics for over 30 years and is the author of the critically acclaimed book *Postmodern Ceramics*.

Clark and Del Vecchio offered their comment about the acquisition, saying “We feel that this is a perfect fit with an institution that mirrors our own collecting philosophy—international, multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural, focused on achievement, and not on traditional boundaries. While the collection is a good start, it is only a beginning and we are committed, as are our friends and colleagues, to making sure that it will grow and remain a treasure house of modern and contemporary ceramics that is without peer in the world.”

MFAH Collections

Founded in 1900, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is the largest art museum in America south of Chicago, west of Washington, D.C., and east of Los Angeles. The encyclopedic collection of the MFAH numbers more than 53,000 works and embraces the art of antiquity to the present. Featured are the finest artistic examples of the major civilizations of Europe, Asia, North and South America, and Africa. Italian Renaissance paintings, French Impressionist works, photographs, American and European decorative arts, African and Pre-Columbian gold, American art, and European and American paintings and sculpture from post-1945 are particularly strong holdings. Recent additions to the collections include Rembrandt van Rijn’s *Portrait of a Young Woman* (1633), the Heiting Collection of Photography, the Helen Williams Drutt Collection of contemporary jewelry, a major suite of Gerhard Richter paintings, an array of important works by Jasper Johns, a rare, second-century Hellenistic bronze *Head of Poseidon /Antigonos Dason*, and major canvases by 19th-century painters Gustave Courbet and J.M.W. Turner.

MFAH Campus

The MFAH collections are presented in six locations that make up the institutional complex. Together, these facilities provide a total of 300,000 square feet of space dedicated to the display of art. The MFAH comprises:

- Two major museum buildings: the Caroline Wiess Law Building, designed by Mies van der Rohe, and the Audrey Jones Beck Building, designed by Rafael Moneo
- Two facilities for the Glassell School of Art: one with studio spaces for children and another with studio spaces for adults
- Two house museums that exhibit decorative arts: Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens features American works, Rienzi features European works
- The Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden, created by Isamu Noguchi

General Information:

For information, the public may call 713-639-7300, or visit www.mfah.org. For information in Spanish, call 713-639-7379.

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Photo credits (from left to right):

World's First Unified Souvenir, Laszlo Fekete, 1995, stoneware and porcelain, The Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection

Large Vessel, Richard DeVore, 1981, porcelain, The Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection

Stack, Peter Voukos, 1973, stoneware, The Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection

Tall Open Vessel, Kitamura Junko, 1998, stoneware, The Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection