

The Collection

The High Museum of Art, Atlanta is a renowned art institution in the that connects with audiences from across the southeastern United States and around the world through a broad range of historic and contemporary art. While its program is international in scope, the High's connections to its region and diverse communities help inform and enrich the development of its collection, exhibitions, and related educational endeavors.

Featuring more than 18,000 works that span seven curatorial departments, the High's collection reflects a broad spectrum of media and cultures and boasts particular strengths. Among these are superior holdings of American, African, and European art, an important historic decorative arts and international contemporary design department, prominent holdings of modern and contemporary art, and a renowned photography department. In addition to stewarding one of the largest concentrations of vintage civil rights-era prints in the United States, in 1996, the High launched its "Picturing the South" program to commission emerging and established photographers to create new work inspired by the Southern landscape. The folk and self-taught department is recognized as one of the most significant of its type at a public institution, with extensive representation of art of the American South.

Since the opening of the Richard Meier–designed Stent Family Wing in 1983, the High has launched a series of focused initiatives that have brought hundreds of exceptional works of art into the museum's collection, increasing both the quality and diversity of its holdings while ensuring their care for future generations. A 2005 campus expansion by Renzo Piano more than doubled the museum's footprint, allowing more of the collection to be displayed and interpreted.

African Art

Begun in 1953, the High's African art department includes a diversity of art forms dating from prehistory to the present. The holdings of nearly 1,200 works, including more than 500 donated by Fred and Rita Richman, feature extraordinary examples of mask and figurative sculptures, enriched by textiles, beadwork, metalwork and ceramics. Antiquities include works from the region of ancient Djenne, one of Africa's oldest cities, and examples from the Mali Empire, one of the largest and most important kingdoms the world has ever known. Highlights include:

- Fang Artist, Gabon, "Fang Female Reliquary Figure, Byeri," ca. 19th century
- El Anatsui, "Taago," 2006
- Djenne Artist, Mali, "Portrait of Sogolon, Mother of Sundiata, Founder of the Empire of Mali," ca. 13th–16th century

American Art

With acquisitions beginning in the early 20th century, the Museum's American art department features

more than 1,200 paintings, sculpture, drawings and prints dating from the 18th through the 20th centuries. Building upon the foundational collection given by J.J. Haverty in the mid-20th century, the holdings range from early portraiture to the splendor of the Gilded Age and include examples by John Singleton Copley, John Henry Twachtman, Harriet Hosmer, Edmonia Lewis, Mary Cassatt and John Singer Sargent. The department also features key works by progressive artists of the early modern age through abstract painters of the mid-20th century. Recent major gifts have added strength in 19th century paintings and drawings and neoclassical marble sculpture. Highlights include:

- Frederick Child Hassam, "Tuileries Gardens," ca. 1897
- Thomas Wilmer Dewing, "A Reading, or Woman in a Windsor Chair," ca. 1907
- Georgia O'Keeffe, "Red Canna," 1919

Decorative Arts and Design

The decorative arts and design department explores the intersections between art, craft and design; handcraft and technology; and innovation and making. The holdings include the most comprehensive survey of American decorative arts in the southeastern United States, comprising nearly 2,500 pieces dating from 1640 to the present, with major examples of 19th and 20th century work. The international contemporary holdings continues to expand with the addition of significant works by Joris Laarman Lab, Jaime Hayon, Ron Arad and nendo. Highlights include:

- Herter Brothers, "Cabinet," ca. 1875
- Gerrit Thomas Rietveld, "Red/Blue Chair," 1922-1923, designed 1918
- Ron Arad, "Blo-Void I," 2006

European Art

Begun in the early 20th century, this department features more than 1,000 paintings, sculptures and works on paper that span from the 1300s through the mid-20th century and includes gifts of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. Among the holdings are important works by 19th and 20th century artists including Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, Émile Bernard and others.

Highlights include:

- Claude Monet, "Houses of Parliament in the Fog," 1903
- Albrecht Dürer, "Knight, Death, and the Devil," 1513
- Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, "Elles" (series of 12 lithographs), 1896

Folk and Self-Taught Art

Established in 1994, the High's folk and self-taught art department holds one of the most significant public collections of American self-taught art in the world. Now comprising more than 1,200 works, the department includes the largest museum collections of work by Thornton Dial, Bill Traylor, Howard Finster and Nellie Mae Rowe and reflects a rich diversity emphasizing the inclusivity of art. Highlights include:

- Nellie Mae Rowe: 184 paintings, works on paper and sculptures
- Bill Traylor: 38 drawings
- Thornton Dial: 32 assemblage, sculptures and works on paper

Modern and Contemporary Art

With foundational acquisitions beginning in the mid-20th century, this rapidly growing department encompasses the history of art since 1945, comprising nearly 3,000 works in all media and from multiple geographic locations and cultures. Significant acquisitions of work by Rashid Johnson, Anish Kapoor, Ellsworth Kelly, Julie Mehretu and Kara Walker have elevated the High to one of the Southeast's preeminent destinations for modern and contemporary art. Highlights include:

- Ellsworth Kelly, "Blue, Green, Red," 2005
- Julie Mehretu, "Mogamma (A Painting in Four Parts): Part 2," 2012
- Kara Walker, "The Jubilant Martyrs of Obsolescence and Ruin," 2015

Photography

Begun in 1974, the photography department is one of the nation's leading programs with a collection of more than 8,000 works. Holdings include 19th- and 20th-century images with special strengths in photographs of the South, American and European modernist traditions, as well as documentary and contemporary photography. Highlights include:

- Hiroshi Sugimoto, "Lightening Fields 182," 2009
- Evelyn Hofer, "Bicycle Girl, in the Coombe, Dublin," 1966
- Walker Evans, "Roadside Gas Sign," 1929