

THE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTION

The 2007 expansion has enabled the downtown Seattle Art Museum to present a fuller picture of the artistic movements that defined the 20th and 21st centuries. SAM's examination of modern art begins in the early 20th century, with the dual phenomena of abstraction and surrealism as crucial developments for the subsequent nine decades. Works by Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Josef Albers, Giorgio De Chirico, Francis Picabia, and Frida Kahlo presage later developments in modern and contemporary art. Paintings by Willem de Kooning, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Otto Freundlich, and Fernand Leger are among the collection's early-20th-century masterworks.

SAM has a significant collection of **Abstract Expressionism**, which flowered in America after World War II. Works such as Arshile Gorky's *How My Mother's Embroidered Apron Unfolds in My Life* (1944) and Jackson Pollock's *Sea Change* (1947) provide links to prior artists associated with abstraction and surrealism, as well as signal a break from the approaches of Abstract Expressionism. Mark Rothko's *#10* (1952), a luminous composition of rectangular shapes floating in fields of vivid, atmospheric color, evokes an intense physical and metaphysical presence. **Minimal** artworks by artists such as Agnes Martin and Carl Andre, who stripped art to its bare essentials, clarify the subtle connections between form, material, scale and composition.

Pop art is also well documented in the collection, with works by artists such as Jim Dine, Andy Warhol (including the larger-than-life *Double Elvis*, 1963) and Roy Lichtenstein. Pop art's continuing relevance is also demonstrated in a collection of works by young Japanese artists such as Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara, who have breathed new life into the genre.

Within its **photography** collection of more than 2,100 prints, SAM traces the medium's ability to capture the fascinating differences and similarities between people, from Edward S. Curtis' extensive portfolio of photographs of Native Americans (including *A Snake Priest*, 1900) to Nicholas Nixon's *The Brown Sisters* series, which traces familial traits while simultaneously documenting the relentless march of time. Other highlights include work by Robert Frank, Helen Leavitt and Max Yavno, who brought the subtleties of everyday American life into focus, and photographs by E. J. Bellocq, Diane Arbus and Danny Lyon, who captured compelling portraits of hidden worlds. Works by Tina Barney, Catherine Opie, David Robbins and Joel-Peter Witkin are also exhibited in the inaugural installation.

Since its founding in 1933, the Seattle Art Museum has been committed to supporting the work of **Northwest artists**. Acquisitions made by SAM's founder and director Richard Fuller, a dedicated supporter of local artists, form the basis of the museum's Pacific Northwest collection. The collection of modern and contemporary Northwest art has now grown to well over 2,000 objects by nearly 600 artists. Artworks in every medium are represented: painting, sculpture (including significant collections of ceramics and glass), printmaking, photography and drawing.

Included in the inaugural installation are seminal works by such luminaries as Mark Tobey (including his monumental *Parnassus*, 1963), Morris Graves (such as the early *Moor Swan*, 1933), Kenneth Callahan and Guy Anderson, as well more works by Malcolm Roberts and Nancy Mee. Works by the couple Jacob Lawrence and Gwendolyn Knight, including Lawrence's *The Studio* (1977) and Knight's portrait *Jacob* (1986), are exhibited in their own gallery, which preserves the legacy of the two painters and what they gave to the city of Seattle through their art, teaching and support of SAM.

Also featured in SAM's Modern and Contemporary art collection is a significant collection of **glass art**. Many of the works on view were created by pioneers of the American studio glass movement, and were recently gifted from the Jon and Mary Shirley Collection. The collection concentrates especially on works by artists closely associated with the Northwest's Pilchuck Glass School, which is the world's most comprehensive center for working glass artists. Exemplary works by Seattle's Dale Chihuly (including the celebrated *Pink Macchia*, 1986), Joey Kirkpatrick and Flora Mace, William Morris and Ginny Ruffner are displayed along with works by artists' who trained and worked in Italy, such as Pilchuck instructor Lino Tagliapietro, Richard Marquis, Laura de Santillana and Benjamin Moore.

The often large-scale and space-intensive nature of **contemporary art** resides in a dramatic, double-height space featuring a brooding group of works by Anselm Kiefer, Andy Warhol, Do-Ho Suh, Joseph Beuys and others. One striking contemporary work, Cai Guo-Qiang's *Inopportune: Stage One* (2004), is suspended from the ceiling near the museum's new entrance. The artist interprets explosions in a sculptural form, outfitting nine white Ford Taurus cars with festive, pulsing lighting rods. In a rising and falling arc, the sequence reads like a stop-action film, beginning and ending with a car on the ground, suggesting a continuous cinematic loop.

Organized by Michael Darling, The Jon and Mary Shirley Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art.