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ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES TOP ACQUISITIONS OF 2025

CHICAGO—The Art Institute of Chicago acquired more than 800 artworks this year, ranging from a rare 17th-century South Asian textile to an impressive Symbolist self-portrait. These artworks showcase global artistry that spans mediums, artistic movements, and eras, and support the Art Institute’s mission to collect art that expands the collection and inspires visitors.

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART



Christian Schad, *Portrait of Composer Josef Matthias Hauer*.

Rendering his subjects with icy precision and razor-sharp detail, Christian Schad quickly became one of the leading practitioners of “Neue Sachlichkeit” or “New Objectivity,” an avant-garde style known for its pointed cultural critiques and disavowal of the painterly excesses of German Expressionism. This portrait depicts Austrian composer Josef Matthias Hauer, a brilliant musician who was one of the first inventors of 12-tone musical composition. While Schad has been long esteemed and collected in Europe, this is his first portrait to enter a US museum.

PRINTS AND DRAWINGS



Léon Spilliaert, *Self-Portrait on a Blue Background*.

This drawing is among the largest and most arresting of Belgian artist Léon Spilliaert’s twenty self-representations from 1907 and 1908. Unlike those that situate the artist in his studio, this striking blue-hued drawing places Spilliaert in an abstracted netherworld, as if enveloped in his own thoughts. Not only is this drawing truly a marvel in his oeuvre, but it adds significantly to the Art Institute’s impressive collection of Symbolist self-portraiture, including those by James Ensor, Odilon Redon, Gustave Adolph Mossa, Max Klinger, and Edvard Munch.

ARTS OF THE AMERICAS



Kay WalkingStick, *The Silence of Glacier*

Depicting Glacier National Park peaks in the quiet before winter's first snowfall, *The Silence of Glacier* is painted across two joined wooden panels with a Northern Cheyenne beadwork pattern in the lower left corner. The colors of the pattern echo across the mountains, forest, and sky. Meanwhile, the stenciled paint has a spongy texture that differs notably from the landscape's brushwork and calls attention to the painting's surface. By layering the beadwork pattern over the landscape, Kay WalkingStick reclaims the Rocky Mountains as Native land and uplifts Indigenous sources of American abstraction.

PAINTING AND SCULPTURE OF EUROPE



Frans Francken II, *Esther Before Ahasuerus*.

This radiant scene of Queen Esther before her husband, the Persian king Ahasuerus, is the first Flemish early modern painting to be acquired by the Art Institute of Chicago in nearly 15 years. In this scene, Esther kneels before her husband, requesting a future audience with him so that she might reveal that his advisor, Haman, has issued a decree to slaughter all Jewish people in the empire. Esther risks her life by seeking this audience without invitation, and, ultimately, saves the Jewish population. This pivotal moment of courage and resolve is at the heart of the Book of Esther and the feast of Purim.

TEXTILES, ARTS OF ASIA



Tamil Nadu, India, *A Nayaka Nobleman with Courtiers and Courtesans*.

One of the most significant Indian textiles to come to the market in decades, this textile represents the highest achievement in the South Asian technique of kalamkari, or hand painted and dyed cotton. This rare hanging depicts scenes of noble life from a court located in the southeastern India region of Tamil Nadu. The costume and architecture reveal the protagonists to be members of the Nayaka dynasty, who ruled the region from two urban centers, Thanjavur and Madurai, during the late 16th century until the 18th century.

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN



Jaime Gutiérrez Lega, *Ovejo Armchair*.

The Ovejo Armchair is one of Colombian artist Jaime Gutiérrez Lega's most well-known designs, and is inspired by trips he took to the colonial town of Villa de Leyva known for its artisanal textile production. Upon seeing several local vendors selling sheepskin (ovejos) and chopped eucalyptus trees for wood burning, Gutiérrez Lega created a lounge chair made exclusively from wood and animal skin. Gutiérrez Lega's ability to blend modern design sensibilities with traditional craftsmanship is on full display, and is an important example of the ways Latin American designers developed new visual languages that responded to their immediate circumstances.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND MEDIA



Francesca Woodman, *Untitled*, from the "Caryatid" series.

Francesca Woodman's breakthrough 1980 series *Caryatid* addresses the intersections of photography, sculpture, and performance at architectural scale. After moving to New York, Woodman undertook an exploration of the caryatid: a figure, modeled in ancient Greece and Rome, that stands in place of a building column. She applied an innovative process that required long exposure times which lent the Caryatid works a soft, painterly quality. Woodman has posthumously grown into one of the more influential late 20th-century American artists worldwide, and a harbinger of the fusion of self-staging and media art that continues to thrive well into the 21st century.

APPLIED ARTS OF EUROPE



Jungfernbastei Workshop, Dresden or Meissen Porcelain Manufactory, Group of early Meissen stoneware and porcelain figures and vessels.

In the early 1700s, Meissen became the first European factory to successfully produce hard-paste porcelain that was previously exclusive to Asia. Its sculptural vessels and figures rivaled silver and precious stone in both prestige and craftsmanship, combining technical brilliance with artistic flair. Among the group of 13 exceptional and rare early Meissen ceramics acquired is a rare trio of Buddhist figures—one in Chinese porcelain, and two Meissen counterparts in Böttger stoneware and porcelain—demonstrating the factory's early reliance on Asian prototypes.