

National Gallery of Art

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The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: Selected Works Press Event

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Curator:

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Release Date: September 11, 2009

CONCEPT OF INNOVATION ILLUMINATES MEYERHOFF COLLECTION OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART, ON VIEW IN NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, EAST BUILDING, OCTOBER 1, 2009 THROUGH MAY 2, 2010

**Roy Lichtenstein, *Bedroom at Arles*, 1992**

oil and Magna on canvas

Collection of Robert and Jane Meyerhoff

Washington, DC—Ten themes—Scrape, Concentricity, Line, Gesture, Art on Art, Drip, Stripe to Zip, Figure or Ground, Monochrome, and Picture the Frame—reveal surprising juxtapositions among the 126 paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints selected from the famed collection of Robert and Jane Meyerhoff, amassed between 1958 and 2004, the year of Jane Meyerhoff's death. While six American masters—Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Brice Marden, Robert Rauschenberg, and Frank Stella—figure prominently, all of the leading abstract expressionists and several younger artists are also represented. *The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: Selected Works* will be on view in the East Building of the National

(202) 842-6353

Gallery of Art from October 1, 2009, through May 2, 2010.

"The Meyerhoffs built one of the greatest collections ever to focus on American painting of the postwar era, striking not only in its depth and quality, but also in the passion and acumen with which it was assembled," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "This exhibition probes the visual logic behind the choices made by the collectors and by the artists whose work they collected."

Some 190 objects from the Meyerhoff collection were shown at the National Gallery of Art in 1996. The new exhibition will present 24 works that were acquired after 1996. The entire Meyerhoff collection, which includes nearly 300 works of art, will become part of the Gallery's permanent collection. Since 1987, the Meyerhoffs have already generously donated 47 works.

This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

The Exhibition

Rather than being divided by artist, movement, or decade, the works in the exhibition are arranged according to a different logic. Each of the ten categories explores one principal visual theme or material device of 20th-century art, as demonstrated and continuously reconfigured by the artists in the Meyerhoff collection.

Scrape: While modern artists did not invent scraping or any other technique of the brush or palette knife, they did repurpose scraping from a technique of removal and deposit to a positive means of creating particular appearances. The works in this section present a compendium of scraping techniques and effects, and include paintings, such as Hans Hofmann's *Autumn Gold* (1957) the Meyerhoff's first purchase in 1958; Willem de Kooning's *Untitled VI* (1983); and Clifford Still's *1951-N* (1951); as well as two important lithographs by Jasper Johns.

Concentricity: There is no more powerful location than a center and no clearer way to mark it than by concentricity. Aspects of this phenomenon are explored in works that include Josef Albers' *Homage to the Square* (1950), Kenneth Noland's *Mandarin* (1961), Robert Rauschenberg's *Autobiography* (1968), Richard Serra's *Torus*

IV (2000), and Frank Stella's *Marquis de Portago* (first version—1960).

Line: Jackson Pollock's achievement of a fully abstract, non-enclosing line broke with the traditional use of the line to describe contours and shapes. This section reveals the seemingly endless variety of treatments of line by artists as diverse as Mel Bochner, Jean Dubuffet, Julian Lethbridge, Roberto Matta, Frank Stella, Andy Warhol, and others.

Gesture: Gesture painting, which celebrates the artist's physical action, ranges from the heroic gesture, as epitomized by two seminal canvases by Franz Kline and Willem de Kooning, to the frozen gesture of Roy Lichtenstein's brushstroke sculptures, to the constructed, interlinked gestures of Frank Stella or Anthony Caro.

Art on Art: Art has always been about, around, and for other art. Works in this section reveal their makers' sources, influences, and references, including Jasper Johns' autobiographical painting *Spring* (1986) and related works on paper; Philip Guston's controversial, yet prescient *Courtroom* (1970); and Roy Lichtenstein's riff on Theo van Doesburg's progressive abstraction of a cow.

Drip: The drip has been a key pictorial element in modern painting, from Arshile Gorky's delicate veils of thinned paint to Jackson Pollock's famous technique of pouring paint on a horizontal canvas. Artists in this category, including Grace Hartigan, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, and Brice Marden, celebrate the varied possibilities of the often unavoidable drip in their canvases.

Stripe to Zip: Stripes have been associated since the Middle Ages with marginality, transgression, pollution, and revolution. It is only fitting that postwar artists including Ellsworth Kelly, Agnes Martin, Mark Rothko, and others would develop a love affair with this optically jarring pattern. Barnett Newman, who famously coined the term "zip" to describe his signature vertical stripes, plays with the many possible variations in his portfolio of lithographs *18 Cantos* (1964).

Figure or Ground: In the struggle to break free of the traditional hierarchy of figure over ground, many artists have turned to the grid and other all-over patterns. Variations on this device are

demonstrated in the works of Howard Hodgkin, Brice Marden, and Terry Winters. Color and value contrast in Ad Reinhardt's *Abstract Painting* (1950) are so minimal that definable spatial relations become an elusive mirage.

Monochrome: Though frequently used to describe pictures of a single color, this category explores the alternative definition of monochrome: no color or no-chrome. Artists such as Ellsworth Kelly, Brice Marden, Robert Rauschenberg, and Mark Rothko push gray to its tonal extremes of black and white, reveling in the importance of texture and light when color is held to a minimum.

Picture the Frame: One of the principal dreams of modernist painting was an autonomous, self-evident, almost self-generating picture that had no need of external support to secure its coherence and status. In this final section, Burgoyne Diller, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, and Joel Shapiro, with others, challenge or celebrate the boundary of the edge, mocking and dissolving the need for the frame.

The exhibition spills beyond its own galleries to mingle with works in the Gallery's permanent collection and with the architecture of the East Building. Several works will be installed throughout the atrium and Upper Level, including Roy Lichtenstein's *Bedroom at Arles* (1992), Ellsworth Kelly's *Red Curve* (1987), and Claes Oldenburg's *Soft Drainpipe—Red (Hot) Version* (1967). Some 20 works previously donated by the Meyerhoffs, including Barnett Newman's *Stations of the Cross* (1958-1966), will also be on view in the Concourse and Upper Level galleries.

The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection

In 1987 the National Gallery of Art announced that Robert and Jane Meyerhoff of Phoenix, Maryland, near Baltimore, had signed an agreement with the National Gallery of Art providing the terms for the eventual donation of the entire collection to the Gallery. To date, the Meyerhoffs have given 47 works to the Gallery. Upon the donation of the remainder of the collection, a foundation will operate the galleries in Phoenix: the art will be displayed both there and in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and the Meyerhoffs' galleries will become a center for the study of postwar art.

Curator and Catalogue

Harry Cooper, curator of modern and contemporary art, National Gallery of Art, is curator of the exhibition and principal author of *The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: Selected Works* published by the National Gallery of Art and featuring 165 full-color illustrations. The 160-page hardcover catalogue will retail for \$50.00 and will be available in September for purchase in the Gallery Shops. To order, please visit the Web site at <http://shop.nga.gov/>; call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail mailorder@nga.gov.

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The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering the East and West Buildings. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 x 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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THE ROBERT AND JANE MEYERHOFF COLLECTION: SELECTED WORKS OCTOBER 1, 2009–MAY 2, 2010

Themes and Quotes

Scrape:

"For about a year now, I have been unable to [do] anything in my painting but scrape off, pile on and then remove again. In this process I don't actually reveal what was beneath." —Gerhard Richter, 1992

Concentricity:

"The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end." —Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Circles," 1841

"The viewer is persuaded by his senses that he occupies the center of the world around him—a world he changes at will as he moves through it." —Rudolf Arnheim, art theorist, *The Power of the Center*, 1988

Line:

"A line on its own has almost become a work of art." —Theo van Doesburg, artist and critic

"Lines connect or divide, measure, mark, or merely extend themselves. In their more unruly moments they coil and bend, even snarl and knot. They can also scribble or write." —Nancy Foote, art critic, "Drawing the Line," 1976

Gesture:

"Since the painter has become an actor, the spectator...must become a connoisseur of the gradations between the automatic, the spontaneous, the evoked." —Harold Rosenberg, art critic, "The

(202) 842-6353

American Action Painters," 1952

Art on Art:

"Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal." —T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, 1920

"Whatever else art is good for, its chief effectiveness lies in propagating more art." —Leo Steinberg, art historian, "The Glorious Company," 1978

Drip:

"If Picasso drips, I drip." —Arshile Gorky, 1934

"You can't do a painting without a drip." —Andy Warhol, 1961

Stripe to Zip:

"Music establishes an order between man and time. The stripe establishes an order between man and space." —Michel Pastoureau, historian, *The Devil's Cloth*, 1991

"I feel that my zip does not divide my paintings. I feel it does the exact opposite." —Barnett Newman, 1970

Figure or Ground:

"You can never have the use of the inside of a cup without the outside—the inside and outside go together. They're one." —Alan Watts, philosopher, c. 1970

"Actually all is space, form as well as what we see as empty space." —Piet Mondrian, "Toward the True Vision of Reality," 1941

Monochrome:

"It is gray we need . . . made of bright and black, able to shed the former, or the latter, and be the latter or the former alone." —Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*, 1953

Picture the Frame:

"Art is limitation. The essence of every picture is the frame." —G. K. Chesterton, cultural critic, *Orthodoxy*, 1908

"The rectangle is a great human invention." —Brice Marden, 1978

General Information

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[The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: Selected Works](#)

October 1, 2009, through
May 2, 2010

Chief Press Officer
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Biography

HARRY COOPER
CURATOR AND HEAD OF MODERN AND
CONTEMPORARY ART
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON



Harry Cooper, curator of modern and contemporary art at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, is the organizing curator of The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: Selected Works. ([click here to order press image](#))

Before joining the Gallery in February 2008, Cooper was the curator and head of the department of modern art at the Harvard University Art Museums, where he had held various curatorial and academic positions since 1997. While at Harvard, he organized more than a dozen exhibitions, including Frank Stella 1958 (2006), Medardo Rosso: Second Impressions (2003), and Mondrian: The Transatlantic Paintings (20. Cooper also lectured in the department of the history of art and architecture at Harvard University on a wide variety of subjects, such as abstract expressionism, Paul Cézanne, and Philip Guston.

A native of Bethesda, Maryland, Cooper began his career as a

researcher at the Wilson Quarterly of the Smithsonian Institution and at the National Association of State Boards of Education, Alexandria, Virginia. From 1985 to 1990 he taught junior high school in the Washington, DC, area, focusing on students with learning disabilities. From 1993 to 1995 Cooper worked as an exhibition specialist on the Piet Mondrian retrospective at the National Gallery of Art. He has published many essays and articles, as well as book reviews and art criticism, in his field. Special interests include abstract painting, theory and criticism of sculpture, technical analysis of art, and relationships between art and music. He has taught at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, and Columbia University, New York, and lectured widely.

Cooper received a PhD in 1997 from Harvard University, an MA in 1992 from Johns Hopkins University, and an AB in American history and literature in 1981 from Harvard University. Cooper also holds a certificate in drawing and painting from the Corcoran Museum School of Art, Washington, DC.

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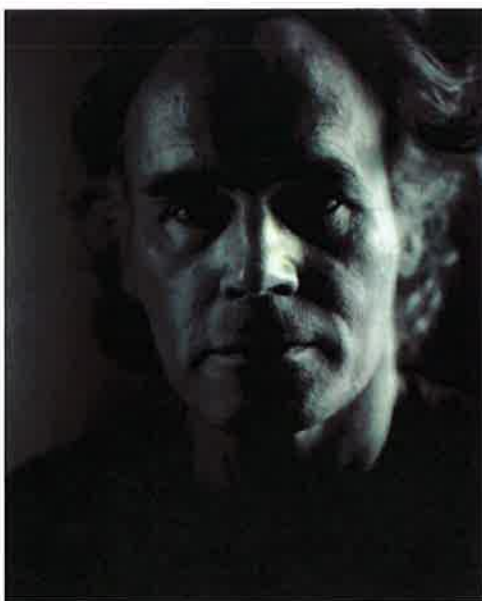
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PUBLIC PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART CELEBRATE *THE ROBERT AND JANE MEYERHOFF COLLECTION: SELECTED WORKS* OCTOBER 1, 2009, THROUGH MAY 2, 2010



Artist Brice Marden appears at the National Gallery of Art on Sunday, November 22, at 2:00 p.m. in conjunction with the exhibition, *The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: Selected Works*. Photo by Kurt Markus.

The National Gallery of Art exhibition of selected works from the Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection (October 1, 2009, through May 2, 2010), is organized according to ten dynamic themes that reveal surprising juxtapositions among the 126 paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints. The famed Meyerhoff collection, built around works by six American masters—Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Brice Marden, Robert Rauschenberg, and Frank Stella—also includes works by leading abstract expressionists and today's younger artists. The Gallery has planned a variety of programs to celebrate the collection and explore the themes and artists

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represented in the show.

All programs are offered free of charge and take place in the East Building Auditorium unless other noted. Seating is on a first come, first served basis. For more information, call (202) 737-4215, visit www.nga.gov, or inquire at the Gallery's Information Desks.

Lectures

Medici of the Modern: Robert and Jane Meyerhoff

Wednesday, November 18, 2:00 p.m.

Tuesday, November 24, noon

Thursday, December 3, noon

Wednesday, December 16, noon

Sally Shelburne, lecturer, National Gallery of Art

Public Symposium

A New Look at Postwar Art: The Collection of Robert and Jane Meyerhoff

Saturday, November 21, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Illustrated lectures by noted scholars including Graham Bader, Yve-Alain Bois, Harry Cooper, and Sarah K. Rich

The Diamonstein-Spielvogel Lecture Series

Brice Marden on Art

Sunday, November 22, 2:00 p.m.

Brice Marden, artist, in conversation with Harry Cooper, curator and head of modern and contemporary art, National Gallery of Art

Concerts

Richard Stoltzman, clarinetist

Yehudi Wyner, pianist

Sunday, November 22, 6:30 p.m.

Music by Carter, Reich, and Wyner

First concert in the 64th American Music Festival

Presented in honor of *The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: Selected Works*

Ensō String Quartet

Wednesday, November 25, 12:10 p.m.

Music by Reich and Jalbert

Second concert in the 64th American Music Festival
Presented in honor of *The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection:
Selected Works*

National Gallery Orchestra

Sunday, November 29, 6:30 p.m.
Music by Aikman, Corigliano, and Lerdahl
Third concert in the 64th American Music Festival
Presented in honor of *The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection:
Selected Works*
East Building Auditorium and Atrium

Joel Fan, pianist

Wednesday, December 2, 12:10 p.m.
Music by Carter, Bolcom, Gandolfi, and Kirchner
Final concert of the 64th American Music Festival
Presented in honor of *The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection:
Selected Works*

Verge Ensemble

Sunday, March 7, 2010, 6:30 p.m.
Presented in honor of *The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection:
Selected Works and Editions with Additions: Working Proofs by
Jasper Johns*
Newly composed music by Roger Reynolds
(Location TBD)

Gallery Talks

The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: Selected Works (60
minutes)
Sally Shelburne: September 30, October 1, 6 at noon; November 10,
22 and December 9, 17 at 2:00 p.m.; November 21 at 1:00 p.m.
David Gariff: October 10, 11, 15, 22 and November 16, 18, 20, 25 at
1:00 p.m.
Diane Arkin: October 16, 19, 26, 30 and December 7, 11 at noon;
November 17, 19 at 11:00 a.m.; December 7, 11 at noon
Talks begin at East Building Information Desk

American Café

Continuing its popular themed menus inspired by exhibitions, the

Garden Café at the National Gallery of Art will be transformed once again, this time as the American Café, in honor of *The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: Selected Works*. **The American Café** and the renowned contemporary American masterpieces presented in the Meyerhoff Collection together showcase a rich and varied American tradition in both the visual and culinary arts. Created by Chef David Rogers of Restaurant Associates at the National Gallery of Art, the new menu highlights regional American cooking along the East Coast, from New England to Florida, and will be served November 2, 2009 – January 27, 2010.

For more information about the Gallery and its restaurants, please visit www.nga.gov/dining.

Gallery Shops

A beautiful 160-page hardcover catalogue published by the National Gallery of Art accompanies the exhibition. *The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: Selected Works* features an essay by Harry Cooper, curator of modern and contemporary art, National Gallery of Art, on the ten themes of the exhibition and 165 full-color illustrations. It will retail for \$50.00 and will be available in September for purchase in the Gallery Shops, along with a wide selection of related books and gift items. To order, call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail mailorder@nga.gov.

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