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The National Gallery of Art Acquires Pistoletto's Playful *Donna che indica*, Kentridge's Affecting *Portage* and Nares' Video *Street*; Also Entering the Gallery's Collection are a New Dutch Masterpiece, Rare Medieval Sculptures, and a Sweeping Landscape



Michelangelo Pistoletto, Italian, born 1933  
*Donna che indica (Woman Who Points)*, (1962/1982)  
 silkscreen print on polished stainless steel  
 National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the Collectors Committee

Washington, DC—This spring, the National Gallery of Art acquired 16 works including its first piece by Michelangelo Pistoletto (b. 1933), a winter scene by Dutch master Jan van Goyen (1596–1656), and a group of "Nottingham alabasters" dating to the mid-15th century. The Collectors Committee fund for photographs, drawings, and prints also supported the acquisition of a hypnotic video by James Nares (b. 1953) and a signature work by the South African artist William Kentridge (b. 1955).

"We are delighted with the acquisition of these key works," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "They constitute a broad span of subject matter across a range of mediums, schools and eras. We have enhanced our holdings of medieval sculpture and Dutch paintings, and strengthened our collection of 20th- and 21st-century art by living artists."

#### ***Virgin and Child and Four Saints (c. 1440–1460)***

The acquisition of this group of alabaster sculptures, composed of five figures and a canopy, from the renowned English center of production in Nottingham bolsters the Gallery's presentation of medieval art. Finding such a group with a known provenance is quite rare today. The region around Nottingham in the English Midlands fostered a robust production of devotional sculptures carved from alabaster from as early as 1160, but the wave of iconoclasm that accompanied Henry VIII's Reformation brought a halt to production in the 16th century. Banned images like these were either destroyed or exported. This group found its way to Spain around 1461, when the chapel that housed them there was consecrated.

These sculptures were purchased courtesy of the Milmore Fund.

#### ***An Ice Scene near a Wooden Observation Tower (1646) by Jan van Goyen***

Jan van Goyen's *Ice Scene near a Wooden Observation Tower* is a beautifully preserved panel, measuring 36.5 x 34.3 centimeters, by one of the leading exponents of the Golden Age of Dutch landscape painting. In summer, this observation tower would have helped ships navigate shallow waters; in winter, it served as the focal point for communal gathering. On this cold and cloudy day, a number of local villagers have come to meet and chat, while others skate or ride in a horse-drawn sledge. To feature this architectural structure, Van Goyen painted a vertical composition, a rarity in his work. This verticality also helps to emphasize the dramatic expanse of sky above the flat, tonal landscape.

This painting was purchased courtesy of The Lee and Juliet Folger Fund.

#### ***Dawn in the Valleys of Devon (c. 1832) by William Turner of Oxford***

William Turner of Oxford (1789–1862) painted this romantic panorama in watercolor, a remarkable feat considering its complexity and size, 29 1/2 x 42

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3/4 inches in its original frame. Such giant watercolors were created to compete with the scale and beauty as well as intellectual content of oil paintings. Turner harmoniously captured the sun breaking through clouds, its light skimming treetops, grassy meadows and a quiet river. Known for his landscapes, Turner often chose subjects from his travels. He was active in the Royal Academy and then later in the prestigious Old Water-Colour Society, exhibiting many works in both contexts. This acquisition represents a major addition to the Gallery's British collection.

This painting was purchased courtesy of the Florian Carr Fund.

***Donna che indica (Woman Who Points) (1962/1982) by Michelangelo Pistoletto***

Michelangelo Pistoletto considers his Mirror Paintings the foundation of his art. *Donna che indica (Woman Who Points)* is an outstanding example of the artist's later Mirror Paintings.

Pistoletto created this silkscreen print on two sheets of polished stainless steel, together more than eight feet in both height and width, showing a woman pointing at a distant object we cannot see. The result is a witty illusion that incorporates the spectator and gallery in the reflected space. In *Donna che indica (Woman Who Points)* a two-inch division between the panels reveals the wall, interrupting this seamless illusion.

Trained by his father—a painter and art restorer—in the techniques of old master painting, Pistoletto began to work with photo-based images and such materials as tissue paper, varnish, and polished steel during the early 1960s. His Mirror Paintings quickly brought him international acclaim and were included in exhibitions of pop art in Paris and New York. In the mid-1960s he created sculptures incorporating rags, candles, bricks, and newspaper; other artists of his generation in Italy embraced similarly humble or "poor" materials.

This painting was purchased courtesy of The Collectors Committee.

***Untitled (Know nothing, believe anything, forget everything) (1987/2014) by Barbara Kruger***

In this work by Barbara Kruger, admonishing texts are emblazoned across an appropriated photograph of a woman lying prostrate and receiving a mysterious medical treatment to her eye through a funnel-like device.

Kruger's hallmark works from the 1980s confront the clichés of representation, particularly those found in the mass media. This classic Kruger warns against the pleasures and perils of the "truthy" photography-based mass media, and the knowledge, beliefs, and memories that it imparts.

Gift of the Collectors Committee, Sharon and John D. Rockefeller IV, Howard and Roberta Ahmanson, Denise and Andrew Saul, Lenore S. and Bernard A. Greenberg Fund, Agnes Gund, and Michelle Smith.

***Portage (2000) by William Kentridge***

*Portage* echoes a theme that South African artist William Kentridge has returned to time and again: migration, exodus, the plight of the dispossessed in apartheid-era South Africa and the struggle of refugees worldwide. The accordion-style book unfolds to nearly 14 feet in length, revealing a single-file line of silhouetted figures torn from black paper and collaged onto unbound pages of the French encyclopedia *Le Nouveau Larousse Illustré*. The figures proceed mainly on foot, most carrying possessions on their backs, in their arms, or over their heads. Some silhouettes seem like hybrids—a man with a megaphone for a head, a bust of a figure propped up on makeshift stilts—furthering *Portage*'s ambiguous narrative and, in the artist's words, its "uncertain ending." The figure on the last fold seemingly walks off into a blank, indeterminate, and unknown space.

*Portage* was purchased courtesy of The Collectors Committee discretionary fund for photographs, drawings, and prints. Funds from Sylvia K. Greenberg and Cathryn Dickert Scoville also contributed to this acquisition.

***Street (2011) by James Nares***

James Nares' *Street* is a 61-minute video homage to this British-born American's adopted home of New York City. Made with a high-definition camera, it was shot from a moving car in six-second bursts, the technological threshold for recording at such high definition. Nares then slowed down the footage, edited it to create a continuous flow, and asked Thurston Moore, cofounder of the rock band Sonic Youth, to score it.

The result is a hypnotic ode to city life that seems suspended somewhere between still and moving images. Details that normally escape one's attention—the movement of a hand, the emergence of a smile, a glance upward—assume the power of profound truths.

As a painter, filmmaker, and photographer, Nares has long been fascinated with time and motion and has used his art to illuminate the beauty of the moment. In making *Street*, he was influenced by some of the earliest American movies, early 20th-century "actuality films": short films with no plot, story, or characters that captured real-time glimpses of everyday life.

*Street* will be screened daily through July 6 in the West Building Project Room (on the Ground Floor adjacent to the West Building Lecture Hall).

In addition to the Collectors Committee, this acquisition was made possible with funds from The Sarah and William L. Walton Fund and the Marlene Nathan Meyerson Family Foundation.

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