

Preface

I am very pleased to have been asked to write this preface to the centennial issue of *Phoebus* which has been dedicated to the American art holdings of the University Art Museum. A primary objective of the museum is to provide students, faculty and the general public with the opportunity to appreciate and study original works of art. For this particular project, paintings, graphics and sculpture by ten artists in the collection have been selected for study by nine graduate students and one former faculty member in the School of Art. These selections represent the museum's broad range of material which traces significant trends in American art from the work of the early limners to the present.

The University Art Museum was established officially in the fall of 1965 to insure the protection and professional care of an increasing number of art works on the ASU campus. The origin of the collection, however, actually dates back to 1950 when prominent Phoenix attorney Oliver B. James made the first of his many anonymous gifts to what was then Arizona State College. With the assistance of the chair of the Art Department, Paula Kloster (Wasser), and the support and encouragement of then College President, Dr. Grady Gammage, Oliver James, until his death in 1955, continued to donate items of major significance to the university. The collection grew to include over 140 works in the areas of American and Latin American paintings, American and European sculpture, and an important selection of American and European prints. The impetus, to paraphrase the museum's benefactor, was to build something of great educational and cultural value to the College, the community, the state and to the entire Southwest. To this day, the Collection of American Art founded by Oliver B. James remains the nucleus of the University Art Museum's American holdings which have been added to significantly by various donors over the years.

Most notable about ASU's collection is the historic breadth of the American holdings. The collection is comprised of works dating from colonial times to the

present, and the range of subject matter includes representative examples of portraiture, landscape and still life painting, as well as modern and contemporary abstractions. Prime examples of work by Gilbert Stuart, Thomas Sully, Albert Pinkham Ryder, Frederic Remington, J. Alden Weir, Childe Hassam, Robert Henri, John Sloan, William Glackens, George Bellows, Marsden Hartley, Charles Sheeler, Winslow Homer, William Gropper, Reginald Marsh, James Abbott, McNeil Whistler, Ives Tanguy, Jacques Lipschitz, Gaston Lachaise, Romare Bearden, Fritz Scholder, and Robert Rauschenberg represent just a sampling of the holdings. Moreover, major movements and styles within the history of American Art are well represented, as well as a full range of media and techniques, making the collection ideal for study and research by both artists and art historians.

Guided by three directors in its 35 year history, Paula Kloster (Wasser) between 1950–1964,* Dr. Hugh Broadley from September 1965–July 1967, and since August 1967, Rudy H. Turk, the collections have expanded by gift and purchase. It currently includes a comprehensive collection of American and European prints; a singular collection of 19th century American crockery; and an extensive collection of American contemporary ceramics, including 28 extraordinary ceramic pots by the Native American potter Maria Martinez.

The Latin American collection is also a formidable one in quality and scope. Diego Rivera, Rufino Tamayo and David Alfaro Siqueiros are represented and their works hang with a sizable collection of *Santos* and *Bultos* stemming from both Spanish and Indian cultures. The European holdings include a study collection of Renaissance paintings, and a small, but impressive collection of African masks and sculpture has been developed.

Although the permanent collection remains predominantly American, the administrative staff is committed to the presentation of all art styles in all media from all periods. Thus an ongoing program of temporary exhibitions, organized by the museum's staff or by sister institutions, attempts to fill in the gap, and meet the needs of ASU students, faculty and the general public.

Not only have the collections expanded significantly over the years, so has the physical facility. Initially the works were hung in the lobby, the public lounge, the corridor on the first floor, and over the stacks in various reading rooms on the second floor of Matthews Library (currently known as Matthews Center). James was pleased with this initial arrangement, as indicated by the

following statement written to Walter R. Bimson, Chairman of the Board of the Valley National Bank, in July of 1950: "As for myself, I am 100% in accord with this attitude that library and museum facilities and collections should be put to the most extensive use; and that there is such close cultural and functional affinity between a library and an art museum or gallery that the two can well and really should be regarded and handled as Siamese twins."

As the collections grew both physically and in value, however, it became obvious to the curators that not only was there an increased need for security, but also for proper lighting, storage and exhibition space. Within Dr. Broadley's tenure, in 1966 the University library was moved to its present facility, Hayden Library, and a special gallery space on the second level of Matthews Center was established for the permanent American Collection. During this time President Durham, as President Gammage before him, was very supportive of the collections which he hoped would develop in an "ASU Louvre." Under Rudy Turk's direction, over the past 20 years, room by room and floor by floor of Matthews were garnered and remodeled for the growing collection. In the near future the University Art Museum will expand into a new space within the Fine Arts Complex scheduled for completion in late 1988. This facility will provide the collection with a home it richly deserves.

Lucinda H. Gedeon
Curator
University Art Museum

*Mrs. Kay Gammage, then Assistant Development Officer, maintained the collection between Ms. Kloster's and Dr. Broadley's appointments.

