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**HUNTINGTON EXPANDS COLLECTIONS STRATEGICALLY,
ACQUIRING NINE KEY WORKS OF ART**

*Five of the nine objects will debut in the redesigned
American art galleries in 2009*



Red Buttons, 1936, Reginald Marsh, egg tempera on board.
Collection: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

San Marino, Calif. —The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens enriched its American and European art collections strategically in the first three quarters of 2008, with nine key acquisitions representing a range of media, including paintings, sculpture, and furniture. Five of the works will be presented at The Huntington for the first time in May 2009, when the Virginia Steele Scott Galleries of American Art reopen to reveal a completely redesigned space in which the collection will be displayed in an area twice its previous size. The newly acquired European works are for display in the Huntington Art Gallery, which reopened in May 2008 after a major renovation and reinstallation project.

American art

Purchased this month was *Red Buttons (1936)*, an exemplary, colorful egg tempera painting by **Reginald Marsh** (1898–1954). Marsh was introduced to egg tempera by fellow artist Thomas Hart Benton. Around the time that he discovered the medium, which is made of powdered

pigments mixed with egg yolk as a binder, Marsh began to gravitate toward the subject matter that would define his mature work—New York City and its crowds, movement, and the vitality of popular culture in the 1930s. Because egg tempera dries quickly, Marsh worked with a rapidity that suited his quick-moving subject matter. Almost immediately, he began producing, with a new sureness, compositions that had a power and completeness he had not been able to approach in his earlier works. *Red Buttons* is a perfect example of Marsh's interest in a slice of daily life, with its depiction of two stylishly dressed women standing side by side just inside a Childs Cafeteria in New York. The somewhat anxious postures of the two women seem to suggest that they are waiting for their dates to arrive. In creating *Red Buttons*, Marsh employed his most successful medium in what was arguably the most successful year of his working life.

To provide a link between The Huntington's early-20th-century paintings of urban American life (by artists such as John Sloan, George Luks, and Alexander Kruse) and 19th-century genre paintings (by George Caleb Bingham, Eastman Johnson, and David Gilmour Blythe, among others) The Huntington acquired *Scraping a Deerskin (1904)* by **John George Brown** (1831–1913). This nostalgic image of rural New England reflects a cultural yearning in America for a rustic way of life that was rapidly disappearing. The theme of rural labor echoes works by Brown's contemporaries Johnson and Winslow Homer, while the meticulous detail and rigorous geometry of the composition connect it to the work of antebellum genre painters such as Bingham.

Brown was born in England but emigrated to America as a young man and worked in New York with such artists as Homer, Albert Bierstadt, and Frederic Edwin Church. Although best known for his images of urban street children, Brown received critical acclaim for the realism of his rural scenes.

Another American painting acquired in 2008 is *Bird's Nest (1944)* by **Charles Sheeler** (1883–1965). The large-scale work demonstrates Sheeler's interest in depicting domestic architecture from unusual vantage points. Sheeler was associated with Precisionism, a style that emphasized the abstract patterns created by America's built environment. He began his career studying with William Merritt Chase in Philadelphia and embraced modernism after encountering the work of Cézanne, Picasso, and Braque while in Europe in 1908. Later he began working in a Cubist-influenced style. Sheeler developed his Precisionist techniques in the 1920s, when he reconciled his interests in both Realism and Cubism by concentrating on the design elements of architecture and machinery. In *Bird's Nest*, he depicts his own home from an oblique point of

view, focusing as much upon the patterns created by the plant life that surrounds the building as on the structure of the house. The more gestural treatment of the foliage may have been his response to the developing movement of Abstract Expressionism. The painting will be a pivotal addition to The Huntington's representation of early American modernism, joining works by Stuart Davis, Arthur B. Davies, Luigi Lucioni, and Edward Steichen.

Relating to the major acquisition announced in March of *Zenobia in Chains* (1859), by **Harriet Hosmer** (1830–1908), another American marble sculpture, *Bust of a Woman* (1869) by **William Wetmore Story** (1819–1895) also was acquired this year. The beautifully carved, serene portrait dates from Story's most creative and productive period, when he was considered one of America's finest sculptors. The son of an associate justice of the Supreme Court, Story initially followed his father into law, but realized after a trip to Italy that art was his true calling. In Rome he joined a group of American and English expatriates, among them Hosmer and fellow American sculptors Hiram Powers and Chauncey Ives, plus writer Nathaniel Hawthorne and poet Robert Browning. During this period, Story produced sculptures of historic and mythological figures, including the *Libyan Sybil* and *Cleopatra*, both of which were exhibited in 1862 at the International Exhibition in London. (Hosmer's *Zenobia in Chains* and Ives' *Pandora*, another work now at The Huntington, were also displayed there.)

The critically acclaimed, monumental marble sculpture *Zenobia in Chains* had been believed lost until a few years ago, when it was discovered in a private collection. It will go on public view for the first time in nearly a century when the American art galleries reopen in May.

European art

The Huntington's European art collections were expanded this year with three significant works. This month a dramatic oil-on-copper history painting by French artist **John Francis Rigaud** (1742–1810) joined the collection. *The Queen Dowager of England, Widow of Edward the IV, delivering her Son, the Duke of York, to the Cardinal Bouchier, Archbishop of Canterbury* (ca. 1786) depicts the moment the widowed queen is handing over her younger son to join his 12-year-old brother, who had succeeded his father as Edward V, in the Tower of London, ostensibly for their safety. Edward wears black and lingers in the background of the picture, looking anxious. After entering the fortress, the two princes were never seen outside again and were presumed murdered. The bodies of two children were discovered in 1674 when construction was

underway in the White Tower. What happened to the princes is one of the most famous mysteries in English history and is a major episode in Shakespeare's "Richard III."

Scenes from national history were frequent subjects in late-18th-century British art, and Rigaud, well known as a designer and painter of large-scale interior decorative schemes, painted for the major galleries in England that supported history painting, such as Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, Macklin's Poet's Gallery, and Bowyer's Historic Gallery. *The Queen Dowager of England* joins Angelica Kauffmann's *King Edward and Queen Eleanor*, another recent acquisition in this genre, made in 2001.

A shimmering addition to the newly installed British art wing of the Huntington Art Gallery is *The Blue Sea (1897)* by **Joseph Edward Southall** (1861–1944). An admirer of John Ruskin's essays on art and architecture, Southall was determined to become an architect himself. But while traveling in Italy he was inspired to study the lost art of tempera painting. Widely used in Italy in the 14th and 15th centuries, the labor-intensive technique had subsequently been displaced by oil paints, which were easier to prepare and use. Believing that tempera demanded a higher degree of craftsmanship than oil painting, Southall became one of the founders of the tempera revival movement. *The Blue Sea*, worked in gouache and gum tempera and mounted in a gilded frame designed by the artist, is a superb example of his mastery of the complex painting technique. The intense colors appear to glow from within like stained glass, a result of numerous thin layers of dry, dense pigment. The Huntington owns one other work by Southall—an incredibly delicate portrait of a young girl drawn with a gold-tipped stylus, yet another testament to his fascination with intricate techniques and unusual media.

The Huntington has also acquired *Painted Bookcase (ca. 1867)* for display in the Huntington Art Gallery. The Gothic Revival cabinet, crafted of oak and pine and brightly painted, is decorated with six hand-painted side panels representing art, science, commerce, literature, music, and agriculture. Manufactured by the Art Furniture Co. in London, the bookcase is a variant of a design by Charles Locke Eastlake (British, 1836–1906), whose 1868 manual of interior decoration, *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery and Other Details*, included an illustration of a library bookcase very close to this example. Like William Morris, Eastlake believed that the objects with which people decorated their homes should be hand-made by skilled artist-craftsmen, rather than mass produced by machines. Eastlake's influence on design reform in the late 19th century, in America as well as in Britain, was probably as great in the field of interior decoration as that of Morris. With its ability to

demonstrate the transatlantic exchange of ideas, this painted bookcase represents a crucial moment in the development of modern design.

Another addition to the Huntington's collection of works of 19th-century British art and design is *Fountain Nymph (1861–71)* by **Alexander Munro** (1825–1871). The sculpture is part of a plaster model for a bronze fountain produced as a monument to Herbert Ingham, a member of Parliament and editor of the *Illustrated London News*. The fountain celebrated Ingham's role in installing the public water system in the town of Boston, Lincolnshire. The model depicts the torso and head of a young girl with loose, wavy hair. She bends slightly forward in a posture of quiet grace, her eyes downcast and face serene. Munro has modeled the clothing naturalistically, clinging to the figure's body as if it were wet from the fountain's spray. The arms of the figure, not included in this model, are meant to hold an urn. Munro belonged to the circle of artists known as the Pre-Raphaelites and was known for his ability to translate the poetic qualities of their work into sculptural form. *Fountain Nymph* joins recent acquisitions such as *Perseus Arming* (ca. 1882), by Alfred Gilbert, and *Teucer* (1904), by Hamo Thornycroft, which entered the collection in 2007 to enhance The Huntington's growing strength in sculpture of the later 19th century.

About The Huntington's Art Collections

The Huntington's art collections focus on two distinct areas—European art from the 15th to the early 20th century and American art from the late 17th to the 20th century. The collection of 18th-century British and French works is considered one of the finest in the nation. The holdings continue to grow by gift and purchase, with significant acquisitions both in European and American art in recent years.

Established by Henry E. Huntington in 1908, The Huntington's collection of European art presently numbers about 400 paintings, 300 sculptures, 2,400 objects of decorative art, and some 20,000 prints and drawings. The American art collection consists of about 220 paintings, 50 works of sculpture, 890 decorative art pieces, 6,500 prints and drawings, and 1,700 photographs.

About The Huntington

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens is a collections-based research and educational institution serving scholars and the general public. More information about The Huntington can be found online at www.huntington.org.

Visitor information

The Huntington is located at 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino, Calif., and is open to the public Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from noon to 4:30 p.m.; and Saturday, Sunday, and Monday holidays from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day through Labor Day) are 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Closed Tuesdays and major holidays. **Admission on weekdays:** \$15 adults, \$12 seniors (65+), \$10 students (ages 12–18 or with full-time student I.D.), \$6 youth (ages 5–11), free for children under 5. Group rate \$11 per person for groups of

15 or more. Members are admitted free. **Admission on weekends and Monday holidays:** \$20 adults, \$15 seniors, \$10 students, \$6 youth, free for children under 5. Group rate \$14 per person for groups of 15 or more. Members are admitted free. Admission is free to all visitors on the first Thursday of each month with advance tickets. Information: 626-405-2100 or www.huntington.org.

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