

Bennett, Steve. "McNay Celebrates 60th Anniversary with 'Rodin to Warhol.'" **San Antonio Express-News**. February 20, 2015.

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Like any cultural institution, the McNay Art Museum has been built on a bedrock of the generosity of benefactors.

The museum, which turns 60 this year, opened its doors in 1954 after the late Marion Koogler McNay left her collection of more than 700 works of art, her 24-room Spanish Colonial-Revival house, its lush 23-acre grounds and an endowment to establish Texas' first museum of modern art.

Over the years, names such as Oppenheimer, Lang, Lawson, Tobin, Stieren and Mathews have become synonymous with the McNay as prominent families helped to expand the McNay collection to more than 20,000 objects and to enlarge the facilities in which to display them.

"Gifts have been the foundation of the collection," said William Chiego, director of the McNay. "We've never had a huge acquisition fund, so we rely on gifts — beginning with Mrs. McNay's gift. And there's also the fact that what acquisition funds there are don't go as far as they used to. A lot of it has to do with knowing the collectors and dealers. You have to cultivate relationships."

Celebrating its 60th anniversary, the McNay is paying homage to the tradition of giving with "Rodin to Warhol," an exhibition of nearly 160 recent acquisitions and promised gifts.

"This exhibition represents about two years of acquisition," Chiego said. "Many of these pieces came into the collection or will come into it specifically to honor the 60th anniversary."

Art comes into the collection in a variety of ways, including straight gifts of works or entire collections, special purchases by patrons, dealers or support groups and, more rarely, museum purchases.

Sometimes arrangements are more complicated: "The Oaks of Chateau Renard," an 1875 painting by the 19th-century French artist Henri Harpignies, was on long-term loan to the museum, but in honor of the 60th anniversary it now is promised in memory of the late Walter F. Brown by his family. It is a featured work in "Rodin to Warhol."

Another painting in the show, which Chiego calls "one of the most important acquisitions of the past two years," was left to the McNay by scholar and author Jacques Barzun when he died in 2012 at age 104. It is a

1911 portrait of his mother by French painter Albert Gleizes, which hung in Barzun's San Antonio home for many years.

"It is a cubist portrait, a very important work," Chiego said.

Janet and Joe Westheimer have given "probably 20 to 25 pieces" to the McNay, according to Joe Westheimer, including an 1895 etching and aquatint by Henri Boutet donated in honor of the 60th anniversary and included in "Rodin to Warhol."

"My wife and I respect what the McNay does culturally for the city of San Antonio," said Westheimer, who has also promised an etching by Ashcan School founder John Sloan to the McNay. "We feel that by making a contribution to the McNay we are also supporting the city. The McNay is a good residence for the art we have collected, and we enjoy making that contribution."

According to McNay chief curator René Paul Barilleaux, "Rodin to Warhol" is not only a tribute to recent benefactors but also an opportunity to demonstrate the continued development of the collection in every area, as selected by the museum's four curators: prints and drawings curator Lyle Williams, Tobin Theater Collection curator Jody Blake, Chiego and Barilleaux.

"It's been a lot of fun because we don't often get a chance to collaborate on an exhibition like this," Barilleaux said. "There is a lot of variety in the show, and I would say that 98 percent of the objects have not been seen before, not in this public setting, so there's that element of surprise for our patrons and visitors."

Works in nearly every medium are included, ranging from paintings and sculptures to prints and drawings to scene and costume designs for the theater, as well as some decorative arts. Artists range from Pierre Bonnard to Jasper Johns, Charles Umlauf to John Valadez.

Visitors to the Tobin Exhibition Galleries in the McNay Stieren Center, which added 45,000 square feet to the museum in 2008, are greeted by "Bather #28," George McNeil's large, colorful painting that seems to be in perpetual motion.

"He was one of the early Abstract Expressionists, but somewhere along the way, like Willem de Kooning and Philip Guston, he decided to re-investigate the figure in his work," Barilleaux said. "He takes this classical theme — except the bather is in motion. The application of the paint is just so beautiful."

“Rodin to Warhol,” as the title implies, then proceeds in a roughly chronological fashion, winding its way through galleries from a graceful bronze portrait of the goddess Diana from 1882 by Jean Falguiere to works such as “West Coast Machiavelli,” a 2013 screenprint portrait of the late rapper Tupac Shakur by Los Angeles artist Oscar Magallanes.

The exhibition also has a good representation of works by regional artists, including Gary Sweeney, Hills Snyder, Ricky Armendariz and Jesse Amado, thanks to the generosity of San Antonio artists Ken Little and Cathy Cunningham-Little, as well as a strong showing of 20th-century Mexican prints thanks to collector Susan Toomey Frost.

And, yes, there are works by Rodin and Warhol, including the beautifully expressive “Head of Pierre de Wissant,” a terra cotta study by Rodin for his monumental “Burghers of Calais,” and a rare 1986 drawing — “Untitled (Boots)” — from the year before Warhol’s death.

“Roughly half the show is contemporary work — or I should say modern,” Barilleaux said. “What I found interesting about putting this show together is that we were able to create some relationships between pieces from different areas of our collection that you wouldn’t normally consider.”