



David Rockefeller Gives RISD Museum \$2.5 Million to Support Decorative Arts and Design

\$2 million endows a curatorial position

\$500,000 supports new David and Peggy Rockefeller Gallery

Rockefeller promises substantial gift of artwork from his estate

Providence, RI — The RISD Museum has received from David Rockefeller a \$2.5 million gift, the most recent gift in a long legacy of support from the Rockefeller family, to fund and expand the Museum's collection of decorative arts and design. Mr. Rockefeller's generous pledge includes the endowment of a curatorial position to lead the department and funds to underwrite a named gallery within the Museum's suite of European art galleries. Mr. Rockefeller has also made a promised gift of decorative artwork from his estate, including European furniture, porcelain, and silver.

Mr. Rockefeller notes, "Both sides of my family—Aldriches as well as Rockefellers—have had a long and happy relationship with the RISD Museum. My mother even took a few courses there in the late 19th century, before she married my father. When my late wife, Peggy, and I discussed the idea of creating a room to reflect our collecting interests, we thought immediately of RISD. I am very pleased this gift will provide the Museum with a new gallery, but, more importantly, it will complement the innovative educational program the Museum has recently established. My family and I are very excited about the gift and its potential impact."

John W. Smith, Director of the RISD Museum, says, "With this generous gift, David Rockefeller continues his family's nearly century-long relationship with the RISD Museum, once again making important and lasting contributions to the Museum and Rhode Island. This legacy of support, beginning with significant gifts of art from his mother and aunt—both born and raised in Providence—builds upon the rich and compelling narrative of the Rockefeller family's critical role in developing the Museum's permanent collection. It is rare for a museum to be able to share with one family such a long and important history of generosity."

The RISD Museum's decorative arts and design collection has wide appeal for visitors and is among the most heavily used by faculty and students at RISD, Brown, and other nearby colleges. An interpretative approach to the collection encourages deep engagement and, as a result, the objects are the focal point and impetus for new research, learning across ages and disciplines, and the creation of new works of art and design.

The establishment of the David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of Decorative Arts and Design enables the continued growth of the Museum's exhibition program and interpretative approach,



A promised gift of artwork from David Rockefeller's estate includes an eighth-century, Tang dynasty figure of a standing court lady that was displayed in Mr. Rockefeller's office at 30 Rockefeller Plaza.

Credit: David Rockefeller Collection.

preservation and conservation efforts, and stewardship and collection in this field. Elizabeth A. Williams, who joined the RISD Museum in January 2013 as curator of decorative arts and design, is the first curator to hold this new title, beginning January 2015. This is the Museum's third endowed curatorial position, established just months after a 2014 endowment supporting the Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, a position that chief curator Jan Howard now holds.

The David and Peggy Rockefeller Gallery, to be located on the Museum's floor devoted to European art, will enhance this suite of galleries in important ways—allowing visitors to more fully appreciate the development of European art and craftsmanship from medieval times to the late 19th century. Mr. Rockefeller's support makes possible the renovation of an existing 400-square-foot corner gallery in the RISD Museum's Radeke building, in preparation of future installation of his promised gifts. Furthermore, it allows the Museum to highlight David and Peggy Rockefeller's connoisseurship and passion for collecting, building upon the rich and compelling narrative of the Rockefeller family's critical role in developing the Museum's collection.

Mr. Rockefeller's promised gift of about 43 works includes rare furniture and decorative arts from England, silver objects used for dining and entertaining, and figurative and functional European porcelain.

"We are thrilled that Mr. Rockefeller has chosen to share treasures from his collection with us," Smith says. "Their beauty and rarity will add immeasurably to our already impressive collection of decorative arts and design, and fill voids—particularly in our collection of English works—with objects of a quality we could never otherwise hope to acquire."

Williams adds that the promised gifts from the David and Peggy Rockefeller Collection will significantly enhance the Museum's collection of European porcelain—much of which Mr. Rockefeller's aunt, Miss Lucy Truman Aldrich, donated to the Museum in the early 20th century.

"Of particular note is a pair of mid-18th-century soft-paste porcelain River Gods made by the French Vincennes manufactory," Williams says. "These are extremely rare—possibly one of only two extant pairs—and hold special meaning, as they were obtained by Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller from the collection of David's aunt, who displayed them in her Providence residence."

Objects such as the intricately decorated "Rockefeller Service," collected over many years by Mr. Rockefeller's parents, John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, will significantly expand the Museum's existing holdings of Chinese exportware porcelain. The Qing Dynasty Rockefeller Service, which numbers more than 120 pieces, is considered one of the finest examples of *famille rose* Chinese exportware services.

The promised gift also includes a pair of elaborately carved gilded mirrors in the Rococo style, measuring a monumental height of more than seven and a half feet; a pair of George I burr walnut armchairs, each with a tapestry seat and five cabriole legs; a pair of brilliantly hued Korean wedding chests with detailed paintings of various animals, representing Daoist, Confucian, and folk symbolism; and a Tang dynasty figure of a standing court lady, featuring a rare deep blue glaze. This eighth-century ceramic figure was a prized possession of Mr. Rockefeller's mother, and was later displayed in Mr. Rockefeller's office at 30 Rockefeller Plaza.



Promised gifts from David Rockefeller's estate include a rare pair of five-legged George I burr walnut armchairs with tapestry seats and a pair of brilliantly hued Korean wedding chests.

Credit: David Rockefeller Collection.

At right: Elizabeth A. Williams, newly named David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of Decorative Art and Design.

A Legacy of Support

- Gifts of Asian textiles by Lucy Truman Aldrich (1869-1955), eldest daughter of Rhode Island senator Nelson Aldrich, sister of philanthropist Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, aunt of David Rockefeller, and member of the RISD Museum's governing board. Between 1934 and 1955, Aldrich gave more than 700 garments and textiles to the RISD Museum, forming the nucleus of the Museum's renowned Asian textile collections. In 1951, Miss Aldrich dedicated a gallery for the display of these textiles in memory of her sister, Abby.
- In 1937, Miss Aldrich gave the Museum a collection of more than 170 works of 18th-century European porcelain from England, Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Italy, and China. The Lucy Truman Aldrich Porcelain Gallery is furnished with pieces from her collection, as well as those given by her sister, Abby.
- In 1934 and 1938, gifts of more than 700 Japanese prints were given to the Museum by Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (1874-1948), a daughter of Rhode Island senator Nelson W. Aldrich, wife of John D. Rockefeller Jr., mother of David Rockefeller, and sister of Lucy Truman Aldrich.
- In 1952, Mrs. Rockefeller's sons, David and Nelson, and her sister, Lucy, commissioned architect Philip Johnson to design a room for the continuous exhibition of Mrs. Rockefeller's Japanese prints at the RISD Museum. The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Japanese Print Gallery reopened in June 2014 after renovations supported in part by David Rockefeller.
- David Rockefeller provided substantial support for the Radeke Restoration Project (2006-2014), a major renovation of the RISD Museum's core structure, the 1926 Eliza Radeke Building—for which his uncle, William T. Aldrich (1881-1966), was the original architect. (Mr. Aldrich was also a RISD faculty member and trustee, and served on the Museum's governing board from 1914 to 1940.) The Rockefeller Asian Art Galleries, located on the top floor of the Radeke building, opened in June 2014.

About David Rockefeller

David Rockefeller was born in New York City in 1915, the youngest child of John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. He graduated from Harvard College in 1936 and earned a PhD in Economics in 1940 from the University of Chicago. He served with the US Army in North Africa and France during World War II. Mr. Rockefeller joined the Chase National Bank in 1946 and rose through the ranks to become chairman and chief executive officer of the Chase Manhattan Bank in 1969. He retired in 1981.

Under his leadership, Chase expanded its international presence and operations, modernized its management and facilities, and implemented innovative programs—an art collection, community outreach, minority hiring, and a philanthropic foundation—which made the bank a leader in corporate social responsibility and set the standard for the American business community.

Mr. Rockefeller's concerns as a banker and businessman reflected his schooling in the Rockefeller philanthropic tradition—a focus on fundamental problems, meticulous attention to detail, and a preference for collaborative action with others. These ideals also guided his private philanthropy. Mr. Rockefeller assumed a leadership role in many institutions founded by his grandfather and parents—especially The Rockefeller University and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), and at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, which he and his brothers had created in 1940.

Mr. Rockefeller served as the chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations, The Americas Society/Council of the Americas, the Trilateral Commission, and the Partnership for New York City. He founded the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in recognition of his wife Peggy's deep interest in the future of American Agriculture, and helped to establish the Center for Latin American Studies—an innovative university-wide initiative at Harvard University named for him.

Mr. Rockefeller has four daughters and two sons, 10 grandchildren, and nine great grandchildren. His wife of 55 years, the former Margaret McGrath, died in March 1996.

About the RISD Museum's Collection of Decorative Arts and Design

The RISD Museum's decorative arts and design collection encompasses European and American decorative arts from the medieval period to the present. The collection is well regarded for outstanding examples of 18th-century American furniture displayed in the Charles L. Pendleton House, the country's first American museum wing devoted to decorative arts, and a large gift of 18th-century European porcelain from benefactor Lucy Truman Aldrich—selections of which are on view in The Lucy Truman Aldrich Porcelain Gallery. The Museum's decorative arts and design collection also includes particular strengths in French wallpaper; Chinese export porcelain; silver from Providence's Gorham Manufacturing Company; 19th-century furniture, ceramics, and glass; and 20th-century examples of design and studio furniture.

About the RISD Museum

The RISD Museum—southeastern New England's only comprehensive art museum—was established in Providence in 1877, alongside the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). The Museum's permanent collection of about 100,000 objects includes paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, costume, furniture, and other works of art and design from all over the world, from ancient times to the latest in contemporary art.

Information: 401 454 6500 or risdmuseum.org.

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