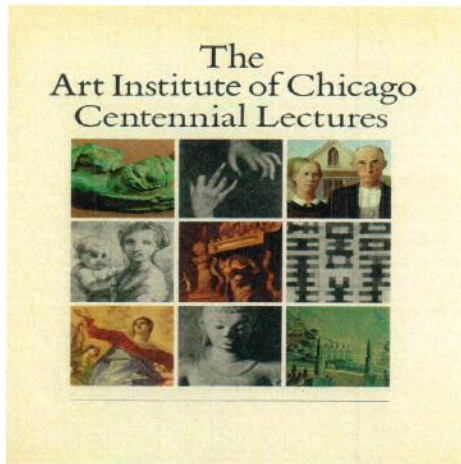


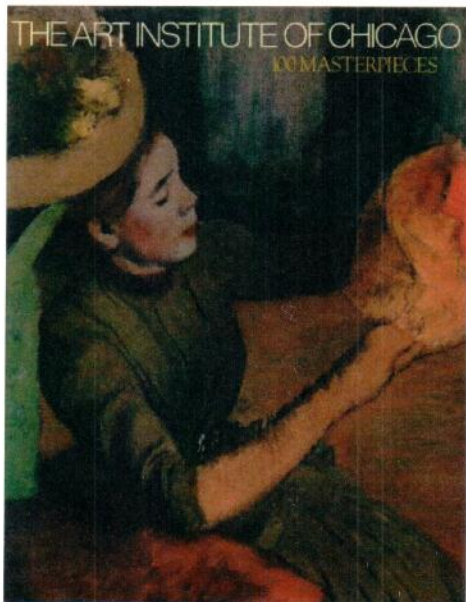
The Art Institute of Chicago
Silver Lions
February 2, 2017

"CENTENNIAL GIFTS"
by
David C. Hilliard

In the 1970's and 80's, the Art Institute Year End Gifts Committee would meet in the Director's office each year just before Christmas to view the year-end donations. Usually five or six trustees and a similar number of curators would gather together and bond. These Year End parties filled us with joy: word would spread throughout the museum of the latest prizes!



But the greatest years surrounded our celebration of the Art Institute's 100th Birthday in 1979. I was President of the Auxiliary Board in those days and we hosted the Centennial Ball and honored our great curators by launching and publishing a year long series of 22 lectures by eminent scholars from Europe and America. Each curatorial department was asked to invite two lecturers to come to Chicago during the anniversary year. Speakers included Ellis Waterhouse, John Shearman and John Szarkowski, to name a few. It was a scholarly Centennial gift!



And, we published a Centennial book: The Art Institute's first "100 Masterpieces," catalogue with a special limited edition of 100 copies each signed by Miró, Chagall, O'Keefe and de Kooning! In 1977, I asked John Maxon, Vice President for Collections, if he anticipated any major acquisitions we should add to the book before it went to press. He said "If you mean paintings equal or better than those already in the book, my answer is "Not likely!" But what magnificent gifts the Art Institute received. John Maxon died shortly after our conversation (an unrelated event!), and the first major gift honored him! Here are ten images to remind you of those days:



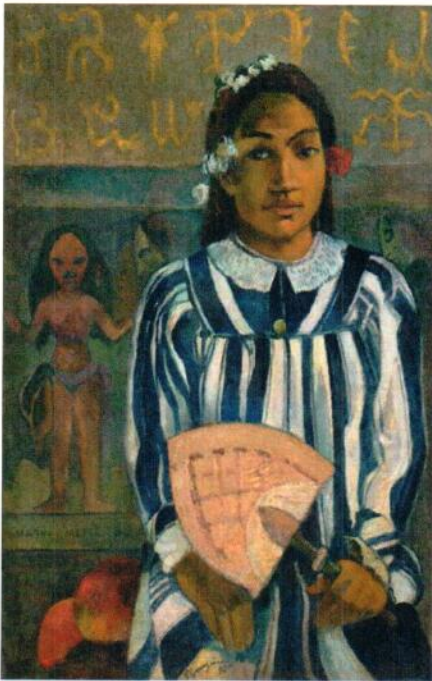
1. Fragonard's "Portrait of a Man," 1768/70, was given by Mary and Leigh Block in honor of John Maxon and is one of Fragonard's greatest fantasy portraits, a rare and important feature of Fragonard's genius.



2. Goya's "Boy on Ram," 1786-97, was given by Mr. and Mrs. Brooks McCormick in 1979, and is one of Goya's major works as painter to King Charles III of Spain.



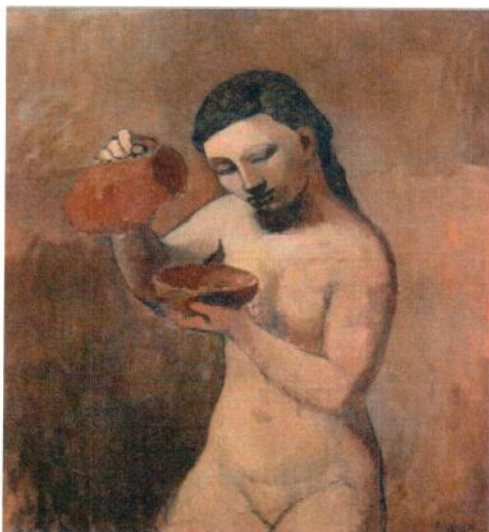
3. Next came Claude Lorrain's drawing 1649/1655 from the collection of Queen Christina of Sweden. When this work was presented to the committee, Harold Joachim said "We have the opportunity to purchase a great drawing by Claude Lorrain, 'Panorama From the Sasso.'" He then picked it up in its frame and held it so we could all see it, and then he said . . . nothing! He just let the drawing speak for itself. He relied on us to understand. . . or, as we quickly learned, to ask questions! In the end, Helen Regenstein bought it for the Art Institute.



4. Gauguin, "The Ancestors of Tehamana," 1893, is a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Deering McCormick and instantly became a centerpiece of our distinguished 19th century French collection.



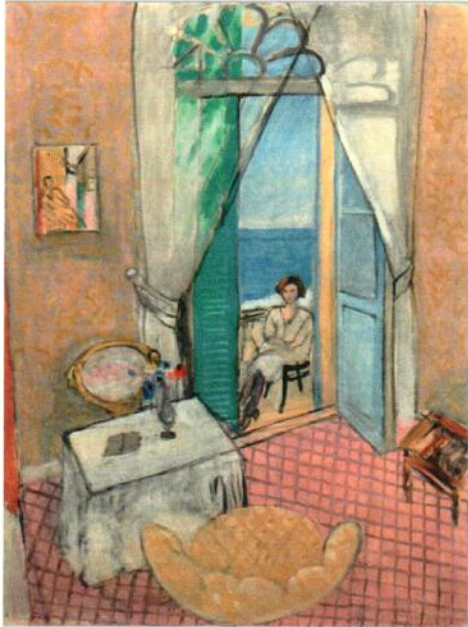
5. Vuillard – "Landscape, Window Overlooking the Forest," an 1899 decorative mural painting, 12 feet long, it forms an important chronological link between Seurat's "Grande Jatte" and Monet's late "Water Lillies."



6. Picasso, "Girl with Pitcher, Summer 1906," came from the famous Edward James collection in London. It is one of the highlights of Picasso's Rose Period. Mary Block bequeathed 4 great works, 3 of which were agreed upon: a major Degas pastel, a Seurat oil sketch for the Grande Jatte and an important painting by Paul Klee. But the 4th clause of the bequest permitted the Art Institute to choose anything it wanted! So Jim Wood chose this stunning Picasso!



7. Braque, "Landscape at L'Estaque," acquired at auction from the Block Collection by the Centennial Fund and other donors in honor of Mary Block. This 1906 painting is a definitive example of fauvism.



8. Matisse, "Interior at Nice," 1919 or 1920, a gift of Mrs. Gilbert W. Chapman in 1956, but not received by the Art Institute until the Centennial. A key example of one of Matisse's major themes.

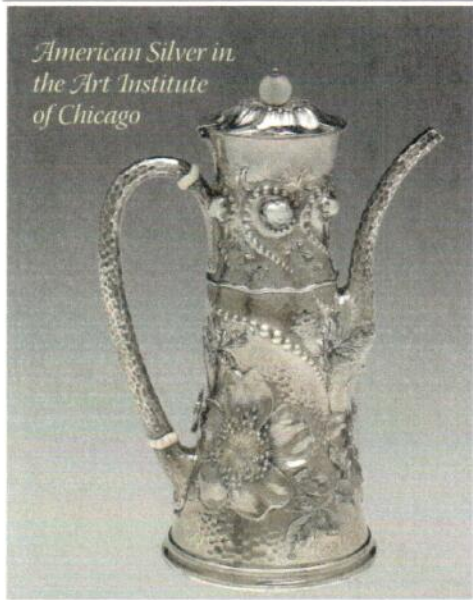


9. Miró, "The Kerosene Lamp." In 1978 Helen Regenstein was the lead donor, among many other donors, in the purchase of this great 1924 Miró drawing. Ed and Lindy Bergman gave a dinner party for all the donors in their home which was filled with their important art collection (now largely at the Art Institute).

Helen Regenstein and I were talking together when someone walked up and said "So, Helen, is this your son (pointing at me!)" (Remember, this was years ago!!). Helen looked at me and . . . hesitated! She then denied being my mother, but from then on I felt like part of the family.



10. And last chronologically, De Kooning's "Untitled," of 1948/49, a bequest from Mary and Earle Ludgin. This painting marks a defining moment in de Kooning's career in the late 1940's when he began "Action Painting."



We continue to celebrate! I am especially pleased to introduce Liz McGoey, Ann S. and Samuel M. Mencoff Assistant Curator of American Decorative Arts, who will introduce you to the new and exciting catalog of the Art Institute's major American Silver collection.

Liz has received numerous awards and grants, including (1) a Smithsonian Predoctoral Fellowship; (2) a Decorative Arts Trust Research Grant; (3) a Henry Belin du Pont Fellowship; and (4) a New York Public Library Fellowship. In addition to her role as editor and author of *American Silver in the Art Institute of Chicago*, she has also published

on topics related to 20th century American art and design.