

Report from the Director and the President

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is known as a place where the art of the past is cared for, studied, and displayed, but it is also a living entity that must evolve with the times. This evolution encompasses such diverse activities as acquiring works of art to strengthen the collection; enhancing installations; creating new galleries from unused or obsolete spaces within the building; refurbishing public areas; expanding programming for audio guides; adding new images and features to the Museum's Web site; outfitting our auditoriums with state-of-the-art equipment; improving dining facilities; equipping the new admissions desks in the Great Hall with new technology; cleaning the facade of grime that had accumulated for more than a century; upgrading the building's electric and mechanical infrastructure; and installing more extensive and sophisticated security systems. Work in all of these areas continued during the past year.

Last fall, a new gallery for the display of the Museum's collection of Italian Renaissance bronzes—one that is unsurpassed in the United States but that had not been on view in five years—opened adjacent to the Vélez Blanco Patio. At The Cloisters, the reconstructed twelfth-century cloister from St.-Guilhem-le-Désert reopened after nearly two years of construction and repair work. Winter saw the opening of four reinstalled galleries for Egyptian art, the highlight of which was the reconfiguration of the Old Kingdom tombs of Perneb and Raemkai to more closely resemble their original settings. In addition to enhancing the display by introducing more natural light and new cases, a main objective was to create a more compelling and informative introduction to the Museum's outstanding collection of Egyptian art.

As we have noted in past reports, designs for new galleries for Hellenistic, Etruscan, and Roman art have been under way. In February, we officially launched the "21st-Century Met" plan. This building-from-within program includes transforming the space that previously housed the public restaurant into a light-filled atrium that will become the new Leon Levy and Shelby White Court for Roman and Etruscan art. Because this construction necessitates the temporary closing of exhibition space and other areas in the same wing, it presents a unique opportunity to undertake a series of overdue interior construction projects. These include adding 9,000 square feet of new gallery space for nineteenth-century art, modern art, and modern photography directly above the Oceanic galleries; redesigning and reinstalling the Islamic galleries; and substantially upgrading the Ruth and Harold D. Uris Center for Education, which will create greatly improved facilities for school groups and a 300-seat auditorium, among other features. Some improvements to the Uris Center have already been made, including a new entrance from the garage and temporary student assembly areas. We also will be renovating much of the American Wing, at the north end of the Museum.

All the new spaces will be contained within the existing building. Upon completion of construction, the Museum will remain

within its current footprint, and the fountain on the southern end of the Fifth Avenue plaza will have been restored with new piping. We do not expect this work to inconvenience visitors or disrupt traffic on Fifth Avenue.

Before embarking on detailed design work, the Museum obtained the approval of all appropriate City agencies. A lawsuit brought last fall by a small number of neighbors seeking to halt or delay the projects was dismissed by the trial court in the spring; this decision is being appealed. These neighbors expressed concern that the number of visitors to the Museum will greatly increase when the renovations are complete; we do not expect this to be the case. Attendance has remained fairly steady over many years—ranging from a high of 5.3 million visitors to the main building in 1996–97, to a low of 4.1 million visitors in 2001–2—despite the opening of several new galleries and highly popular exhibitions. Attendance in the main building for 2003–4 was 4.5 million visitors.

The purpose of the great majority of these projects is, of course, to improve the galleries in which works of art are displayed and enjoyed by our visitors, whether these works are part of the permanent collection or on loan for a special exhibition. The Metropolitan is exceedingly fortunate to be able to mount major exhibitions that provide opportunities for advancing scholarship while also delighting the eye. A noteworthy example was "Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)," seven years in the making, which brought together more than 350 masterpieces of Byzantine art from some thirty nations. These extraordinary works, some seen rarely and others never before shown outside the churches and monasteries that have preserved them through succeeding centuries, are among their countries' most revered treasures. The first major exhibition devoted solely to the great artistic flowering of the late Byzantine period, it was also the last in a series of three exhibitions at the Metropolitan focusing on specific eras in the history of Byzantium.

Italian painting as it developed in post-Renaissance Lombardy was the subject of "Painters of Reality: The Legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombardy," documenting the region's distinctive emphasis on observation of the natural world from the fifteenth century through the eighteenth century. Through Caravaggio, this naturalist approach came to Rome and became of key importance to Baroque art there and throughout Europe. The exhibition marked the first time that this great school of Italian painting was presented in the United States in such depth.

A landmark retrospective of El Greco, the first in more than twenty years, was a highlight of the fall season. One of the most original artists of the sixteenth century, El Greco sought to create a new and spiritually more intense relationship between the viewer and image. In his time El Greco's highly personal style often astonished his contemporaries, but it is only in the last 150 years that he has come to be appreciated as one of the great creative geniuses of Western art. The exhibition was organized by

the Metropolitan and the National Gallery, London, with contributions to the catalogue by an international team of scholars.

Another retrospective celebrated Child Hassam, a pioneer of American Impressionism. Recognized for his brilliant handling of color and light, Hassam became the foremost chronicler of New York City at the turn of the twentieth century. He was unusual among the American Impressionists for his frequent depictions of burgeoning cities and is perhaps best known for his series of paintings showing flag-draped Fifth Avenue during World War I.

“The Douglas Dillon Legacy: Chinese Painting for the Metropolitan Museum” was a fitting tribute to the foresight and generosity of the Museum’s former president, who later also served as chairman of the board of trustees. Thanks to Douglas Dillon’s sustained support, the Museum was able to create one of the world’s preeminent collections of Chinese paintings and calligraphy, of which more than sixty examples were on view in this exhibition.

For the first time, The Costume Institute and the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts collaborated on an exhibition in The Wrightsman Galleries, the Museum’s French period rooms. “Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the 18th Century” focused on dress and its interplay with art, furniture, and the broader decorative arts in France between 1723 and 1789. Featuring a rarely seen collection of men’s and women’s clothing displayed on mannequins arranged in amusing vignettes, the exhibition provided a witty gloss on the mores of aristocratic life in the decades before the French Revolution.

The revival of luxe in early-twentieth-century French decorative arts was superbly illustrated in “Ruhlmann: Genius of Art Deco,” the first major retrospective devoted to all aspects of the career of the preeminent exponent of high-style French Art Deco. By the 1920s Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann was the most prestigious and sought-after designer of his day. Combining aesthetic refinement, luxurious materials, and impeccable craftsmanship, his works rank among the finest decorative arts of any era.

The evolution of the widely anticipated outdoor work of art for New York City initiated in 1979 by the husband-and-wife collaborators Christo and Jeanne-Claude was the subject of the exhibition “Christo and Jeanne-Claude: The Gates, Central Park, New York.” Featuring preparatory drawings and collages by Christo, along with photographs, maps, and technical diagrams, the exhibition documented the work of art—consisting of 7,500 saffron-colored gates—that will be on view in Central Park in February 2005.

A recent gift of more than one hundred works from the Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Foundation is celebrated in an exhibition presented in three parts through June 2005. The son of Henri Matisse, Pierre Matisse was a New York art dealer who collected works by, among others, Chagall, Giacometti, Miró, Magritte, and his artist father. This gift, described more fully in last year’s report, enormously enhances the Museum’s collection of modern art.

Thanks to the generosity of several trustees and donors, as well as those who supported the Acquisitions Fund Benefit last December, the Museum was able to acquire many significant objects despite the serious budget constraints of the past year. Highlights among the recent acquisitions are discussed and illustrated in the fall 2004 *Bulletin*.

In January 2004, The Fund for the Met, having surpassed its goal of \$650 million set in 2000, announced a continuation of the campaign with a new goal of \$900 million. This next phase will secure funding for the 21st-Century Met program described above, as well as for the endowment and acquisitions. In fiscal year 2004, the capital campaign raised more than \$50 million—including \$11 million for the endowment and \$6 million for acquisitions—toward the \$900 million goal, bringing the total of gifts and pledges to \$645 million and planned gifts to \$63 million.

Individual gifts included an additional \$5 million from trustee Eliot C. Nolen for education, making a total gift of \$10 million, and \$3 million from Florence and Herbert Irving to create an endowment for the Thomas J. Watson Library and name its Reading Room. Gifts of \$1 million for various purposes were received from board chairman James R. Houghton and his wife Maisie; vice chairman E. John Rosenwald, Jr., and his wife, Patty; trustee Bruce C. Ratner; and Sir David and Lady Gibbons. Other significant gifts were made by honorary trustee Sandra P. Rose to endow the position of Frederick P. and Sandra P. Rose Associate Director for Education, held by Kent Lydecker; Janet Ruttenberg for acquisitions of prints, in honor of curator Colta Ives; and Barbara and Martha Fleischman, Heidi and Max Berry, and Maureen and Richard Chilton, all in support of the programs and activities of the American Wing. In addition, \$13 million was received in the past year from the Estate of Bill Blass; the bequest from the estate totals \$19 million to date.

As a new initiative to enhance revenues, the Museum began opening on Monday holidays such as Columbus Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Presidents’ Day, which has proven to be very popular, especially for families and out-of-town visitors. We continued to offer visitors the opportunity to see selected special exhibitions on Mondays, when the Museum is usually closed, for a \$50 fee. This, too, has been well received and has helped contribute to revenues. (Further information about the Museum’s budget is contained in the Report of the Chief Financial Officer.)

While the Metropolitan Museum is renowned for its collections and exhibitions, it is also one of New York’s premier concert halls. A highlight of the past season was the yearlong celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of our Concerts and Lectures series. In 1954 Isaac Stern, Marian Anderson, and Arthur Rubinstein were among the artists performing. Over the succeeding years dozens of musicians and singers made their New York debuts at the Museum, including Andrés Schiff, Garrick Ohlsson, Cecilia Bartoli, and Les Arts Florissants, to cite only a few. From the start, the series championed performers early in their careers; these have included Glenn Gould, Daniel Barenboim, Richard Goode, Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zuckerman, Emanuel Ax, and Yo-Yo Ma. Other artists, such as Andrés Segovia and Leon Fleisher, have given master classes at the Museum. As part of our commitment to music, the Met has also commissioned works, beginning in the early 1960s and continuing today. A recent co-commission, John Tavener’s “Lamentations and Praises,” was performed at The Temple of Dendur in The Sackler Wing and later received two Grammy Awards.

In June we announced the creation of a new and expanded curatorial department, Nineteenth-Century, Modern, and Contemporary Art, embracing European paintings from the nineteenth century up to the present, as well as international

twentieth-century sculpture, drawings, prints, decorative arts, and design. Gary Tinterow, the Museum's longtime Engelhard Curator of 19th-Century European Painting, became Engelhard Curator in Charge of the new department. William S. Lieberman, the distinguished curator who for twenty-five years had led the Department of Modern Art, will continue to play a major and active role as Jacques and Natasha Gelman Special Consultant for Modern Art. In addition, the new Department of Scientific Research, under the direction of scientist in charge Marco Leona, was established in February. In the Department of Photographs, Malcolm Daniel was elected curator in charge.

Susana Torruella Leval and Jeffrey W. Greenberg were elected trustees; Sheikh Nasser Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah and David Tobey were elected honorary trustees; and Sally Minard was appointed as the representative of *ex officio* trustee the Honorable William C. Thompson, Jr., Comptroller of New York City, on the board of trustees. The board mourned the death of trustee emeritus Laurence A. Tisch, whose generosity to the Museum is acknowledged by The Tisch Galleries for special exhibitions.

Trustees and staff were also deeply saddened by the deaths of William B. Macomber, Jr., who served as president of the Museum from 1978 to 1986, and Clare Le Corbeiller, curator emerita in the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, a much-respected scholar and notably generous colleague, whose involvement with the Museum began more than fifty years ago.

We wish to thank the outgoing chairman of the Volunteer Organization, Lucinda Ballard, and her assistant, Angela Duff, for their significant contributions over the past two years. We welcome the new chairman, Susan Eddy, and extend our profound appreciation to all the volunteers who give of their time and skills so generously year after year. To the Museum's many members and friends, we express our gratitude and our commitment to maintaining the high standards you have come to expect of this institution.

Philippe de Montebello
Director

David E. McKinney
President