

MASTERS OF THE MODERN



Madeleine P. and Harvey R. Plonsker. Photo by JoAnn Carney.

IN APPRECIATION

The Williams College Museum of Art deeply appreciates, recognizes, and thanks Madeleine and Harvey Plonsker '61 for so generously gifting their collection of European modern prints on the occasion of Harvey's fiftieth reunion. For many years the Plonskers have supported WCMA's teaching mission and the role of the arts at Williams. In addition to donating numerous works of art, Madeleine and Harvey have contributed to the museum in other ways: Madeleine has devoted countless hours to the Fellows Program as a Steering Committee member, and Harvey has served on the museum's Visiting Committee. In 1994, they established the Plonsker Family Lecture Series in Contemporary Art, one of the cornerstones of the museum's education program, to which their son, Ted Plonsker '86, has been an annual contributor. This annual lecture continues to bring some of the world's most challenging and creative minds to our campus to speak and interact with our faculty and students. This legacy will continue to shape teaching and learning at Williams for years to come. We thank them for honoring our work with this new gift of art and for working in partnership with us to build a collection that embodies Williams standards of excellence.

Lisa G. Corrin
Class of 1956 Director

OUR COLLECTION

At the time of our marriage, we decided to collect works of art by established artists as opposed to works by emerging artists. We agreed to focus on twentieth-century art, and since we were young and had limited funds, we set a parameter to collect works on paper. A family friend with a spectacular prints and drawings collection inspired us to go in this direction.

Initially, we worked with a young European-born dealer. Over the years, she became our mentor and helped us develop an eye for the pivotal works of each artist we collected. With her guidance, we broadened our interests to include German Expressionism, the basis of the early twentieth-century portion of our collection.

Collecting art has been a life-long passion for us. We have branched out to collect photography—also in the realm of works on paper. When the walls of our house were completely covered with art, we added some sculpture to our collection as well.

We collect art for our personal enjoyment, but we fully understand that our acquisitions are only on loan to us, so to speak, for our lifetime. It is now the occasion to begin sharing our collection, gathered over fifty years. That is why we are presenting our gift, *Masters of the Modern*, to the Williams College Museum of Art.

Madeleine P. and Harvey R. Plonsker

WILLIAMS
COLLEGE
MUSEUM
OF ART

arts
at Williams

The museum is FREE
and open to the public.

10am–5pm Tues–Sat
1pm–5pm Sun



WILLIAMS
COLLEGE
MUSEUM
OF ART

the gift of madeleine p. and
harvey r. plonsker, class of 1961

june 11 — october 2, 2011

THE MADELEINE P. AND HARVEY R. PLONSKER '61 COLLECTION

"What is important to me in my work is the identity that is hidden behind so-called reality. I search for a bridge from the given present to the invisible. . ."
Max Beckmann, 1938

This exhibition features prints and drawings selected from seventy-two works of art recently gifted to the Williams College Museum of Art by Madeleine and Harvey Plonsker '61. While this is not the Plonskers' first donation, it is certainly the most significant. A vital addition to the museum, this gift immediately strengthens WCMA's holdings of European modernist prints, and, in particular, the museum's collection of works by German Expressionists. The Plonskers' gift will transform how we teach modern art and the history of printmaking.



Max Beckmann (German, 1884–1950), *Die Gähnenden*, 1918, drypoint. Collection of Madeleine P. and Harvey R. Plonsker, Class of 1961. © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn (TL.2011.11.75)



Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes (Spanish, 1746–1828), *Mala Noche*, 1799, etching with aquatint. Collection of Madeleine P. and Harvey R. Plonsker, Class of 1961. (TL.2011.11.30)

At the museum, we have long enjoyed great but limited examples of German Expressionism. With this gift, we will be able to demonstrate this movement in much greater detail. Max Beckmann's prints, for example, represent a very personal and idiosyncratic vision of the modern metropolis. In the series from which most of the Beckmann prints in this exhibition are drawn, the figures vacillate between abandon and introspection, joy and agony, or exhilaration and boredom as in, for example, *Die Gähnenden* (left). These images reflect Beckmann's beliefs that true reality lies hidden behind a screen of external distractions and that modern art could expose underlying truths about the nature of existence through penetrating examinations of everyday experience. Many of Beckmann's contemporaries, including psychologist Sigmund Freud, held similar views about reality and the power of art.

Harvey and Madeleine collect what they love, and they live surrounded by works of art. Modern art is seldom polite and is, more often, confrontational. The Plonskers have never shied away from acquiring complex works such as these Beckmann prints, while at the same time collecting exuberant works by artists such as Henri Matisse. They have collected works by some artists in depth, including prints and drawings by Emil Nolde, Francisco de Goya, and Lyonel Feininger. The gift of this rich collection will allow the museum to move beyond generalizations about periods of art history in our teaching and exhibitions and to delve into specifics of how particular artists evolved and responded to their world over time.

We look forward to integrating this generous gift into our teaching across disciplines. We are deeply grateful to Madeleine and Harvey for collecting and donating these works to Williams to inspire our faculty and students for years to come.

John R. Stomberg
Deputy Director and Chief Curator
Lecturer in Art



Above: Joan Miró (Spanish, 1893–1983), *Série Noire et Rouge*, 1938, etching with drypoint. Collection of Madeleine P. and Harvey R. Plonsker, Class of 1961. © 2011 Successió Miró / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. (TL.2011.11.10). Cover image: Egon Schiele (Austrian, 1890–1918), *Kümmernis*, 1914, drypoint. Collection of Madeleine P. and Harvey R. Plonsker, Class of 1961. (TL.2011.11.11)