

PRESS RELEASE

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SEATTLE ART MUSEUM ANNOUNCES INAUGURAL ACQUISITIONS FROM NEW FUND FOR CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL ART

Major new fund from the Friday Foundation brings six pioneering works to the museum collection

SEATTLE - The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) has made the inaugural acquisition selections from its Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Acquisition Fund for Global Contemporary Art. The six works of contemporary art from around the world, by artists of color and women, join the museum's collection and will go on view in the coming years.

The works of art are by Dr. Chila Kumari Singh Burman, Dawn Cerny, Dana Claxton, Woody De Othello, Senga Nengudi, and Naama Tsabar. The selections align with SAM's broader acquisitions strategy, bringing more works by Black, Indigenous, and artists of color as well as women into its global collection.

The Friday Foundation celebrates the legacy of Seattle philanthropists and collectors Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis. In October 2020, the foundation announced its gift of \$2 million to endow the acquisition fund at the Seattle Art Museum. In February 2021, the foundation gave an additional \$200,000 to inaugurate the fund so the museum could begin acquiring artworks without waiting for endowment distributions.

Altogether, the Friday Foundation has donated a total of \$14.5 million to SAM over the last two years, including \$2 million to its Closure Relief Fund and \$10.5 million to support SAM's art conservation programs, including care for 19 iconic works of art from the Lang Collection gifted to the museum. These works go on view at the downtown museum beginning October 15, 2021, in *Frission: The Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Collection*.

"These inaugural acquisitions point towards the future of SAM's collection and underscore the visionary leadership of the Friday Foundation," says Catharina Manchanda, Jon & Mary Shirley Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art. "From the support during the critical moment of the pandemic closures, to the extraordinary gift of major works of art and robust support for conservation and care, and now to the acquisition of groundbreaking works of contemporary art, we see the legacy of the Langs is supporting the past, present, and future of the Seattle Art Museum."

[ABOUT THE INAUGURAL ACQUISITIONS](#)

Chila Kumari Singh Burman (British, born 1957)
Kali (I'm a Mess), 2020



For over 30 years, Dr. Chila Kumari Singh Burman has used a variety of mixed media to advocate for female empowerment, racial equity, and to promote her Punjabi heritage; she was also part of the British Black arts movement in the United Kingdom. Burman makes artwork that has an affective and sensory charge, and she recently moved to the medium of LED neon.

Kali (I'm a Mess) was part of a recent commission by Tate Britain to reenvision their formal portico. She superimposed Bollywood posters onto columns and affixed fluorescent Hindu deities. Entitled *remembering a brave new world*, the installation opened to coincide with Diwali, the five-day Indian festival which celebrates the triumph of light over darkness. At Tate Britain, this image of Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction and protection, was installed over the iconic statue of Britannia

perched atop the building's pediment. With her small fangs and tongue exposed, this Kali is both fearsome and playful. The artist uses Kali and the accompanying expression as a potent symbol of liberation that speaks to larger political and social concerns of 2020.

Dawn Cerny (American, born 1979)
Screen from Leisure Activity Area at Eden Lake, 2020



Seattle-based Cerny creates sculptures that imply the body and bring the aesthetic of the home—notably the suggestion of furniture that serves as a display for other objects—into art spaces. Her work captures the spirit of the tentative and in-between, conveying different psychological and emotional states. Sagging, slumping, and leaning, her sculptures offer makeshift support for other functional

and “proper” things: a painting, a glass jar, a ceramic vase.

A centerpiece of *Les Choses*, Cerny's recent solo exhibition at SAM in honor of her 2020 Betty Bowen Award, *Screen from Leisure Activity Area at Eden Lake* is one of Cerny's most accomplished works. Unlike conventional screens, which separate a space or hide objects from view, this work is an armature that allows us to see through it. Made in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, the work's title and bright colors suggest leisure and play but the sculpture itself, with its draped bands suggestive of bandages and small hanging screens, takes us far from Eden as it brings to mind partitions between hospital beds.

Dana Claxton (Hunkpapa Lakota [Sioux], born 1959)
Headdress—Shadae, 2019



Claxton creates photo-based work that investigates hybrid identities through dress and adornment. *Headdress—Shadae* is from her *Headdress* series of illuminated photographs, for which she invited young Indigenous women to bring regalia and other objects of adornment and personal significance to her studio. The sitters were then dressed to the point where their faces were partially or fully obscured. This portrait deviates from Western notions of a physical likeness, and instead becomes a symbolic and spiritual portrait—each an object of personal and cultural significance.

Claxton is one of the leading First Nations photographers and filmmakers in Canada and head of the University of British Columbia's Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory. *Headdress—Shadae* was included in the 2019 Toronto Biennial.

Senga Nengudi (American, born 1943)
Ceremony for Freeway Fets, 1978

Nengudi, born Sue Irons in Chicago, is a leading member of the Black avant-garde in the United States and has been at the vanguard of performance art since the 1970s.



Ceremony for Freeway Fets is a celebrated work from 1978. The performance was part of a public art project for the California

Department of Transportation, and the centerpiece was a nylon sculpture installed on the support columns of a Los Angeles freeway overpass. Fellow artists from the Studio Z collective and musicians, loosely directed by Nengudi, animated the vacant space in her attempt to create "an African village." The piece combined elements of Japanese theater with free jazz and references to the Yoruba masquerade of Gelede. Photographed by Roderick "Kwaku" Young, the eleven photographs capture the improvisational spirit and ephemeral nature of the event.

Woody De Othello (American, born 1991)
Two Way Connection, 2021



Sculptor and painter Othello is originally from Florida and now lives and works in the San Francisco Bay area. His work is inspired by his Haitian heritage, the California Funk art movement, and everyday domestic objects.

Two Way Connection is part of a new body of work from his residency at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Made during the COVID-19 pandemic, his sculptures reflect how we listen with our bodies. The sculpture merges the shape of a vessel with eyes, ears, mouths, and hands, topped by an old-fashioned telephone receiver, into an anthropomorphic form placed on a sculpted side table. At a time when we were collectively deprived of closeness and human touch, and the majority of communication relied on the phone and computer, Othello responds with sensuousness and tactility.

Naama Tsabar (Israeli, born 1982)
Transition (2019)



Tsabar creates installations, performances, and sculptures using materials such as loudspeakers, amplifiers, and other elements of club culture. Addressing the implicit gender roles and coded behaviors of music and nightlife scenes, the artist appropriates and subverts the gestures of virility and power associated with rock and roll. Tsabar probes the culture of rock music from multiple angles, creating sensuous performances and installations that merge sculpture and instrument.

Transition is a sculpture and fully functioning speaker made of wood, cables, and a disassembled Boss Katana 100 guitar amplifier. Its red and white lines are cables that would ordinarily be part of the functional interior of an amp. The work is connected to a power outlet, and a second cable can be connected to an electric guitar, microphone, or mp3 player—activated by

designated musicians or performers. The artist looks to expand and redefine the role of the viewer, as *Transition* awaits activation.

Image captions: *Kali (I'm a Mess)*, 2020, Chila Kumari Burman, 6mm 12v silicone LED neon, galvanized weld mesh, 12v switch mode transformers, IP67 plastic box, 137 13/16 x 70 7/8 x 1 3/16 in. Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Acquisition Fund for Global and Contemporary Art,

T2021.31 © Artist or Artist's Estate. *Screen from Leisure Activity Area at Eden Lake*, 2019-20, Dawn Cerny, wood, handblown glass made at Pilchuck, cardboard, aqua resin, fiberglass, plaster tape, wire, yarn, screen material, epoxy clay, paint, 76 1/2 x 41 x 93 in. Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Acquisition Fund for Global and Contemporary Art, 2021.14 © Victoria Haven and Dawn Cerny. *Headdress- Shadae*, 2019, Dana Claxton, LED Firebox, transmounted chromogenic transparency, 60 x 40 in. Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Acquisition Fund for Global and Contemporary Art, T2021.39. © Artist or Artist's Estate. *Ceremony for Freeway Fets*, 1972, Senga Nengudi, chromogenic print. Framed dimensions: 8 prints: 13 x 19 in., 1 print: 14 2/8 x 18 1/2 in., 2 prints: 19 x 13 in. Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Acquisition Fund for Global and Contemporary Art, 2021.15. © Artist or Artist's Estate. *Two Way Connection*, 2021, Woody De Othello, ceramic and glaze, 58 1/2 x 21 x 23 in. Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Acquisition Fund for Global and Contemporary Art, T2021.36. © Artist or Artist's Estate. *Transition*, 2019, Naama Tsabar, wood, amplifier grill cloth, cables, disassembled Boss Katana 100 guitar amplifier: knobs, wires, circuit board, ports, speaker, 63 x 40 5/8 x 6 1/2 in. Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis Acquisition Fund for Global and Contemporary Art, 2021.13. © Artist or Artist's Estate.

ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and rededicated as the Asian Art Museum in 1994, and it reopened on February 8, 2020, following an extensive renovation and expansion. SAM's desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM's downtown expansion celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time periods.