

For Immediate Release  
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**The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Presents First Look at Major Acquisition; *The Scholar's Eye: Contemporary Ceramics from the Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection* Opens May 18, 2008**



Richard DeVore,  
*Vessel*, 1981, Porcelain



Lucio Fontana, *Concetto Spaziale*  
(*Spatial Concept*), 1968, Porcelain



Jean-Pierre Larocque,  
*Untitled [Head]*, 1996,  
Stoneware

Houston—New York-based scholars and gallerists Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio have been leaders in the ceramic field for over 25 years, assembling one of the most important private collections of contemporary ceramics in the world. In the spring of 2007, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, acquired their collection of over 375 objects, as well as the accompanying library and artist archive. The acquisition places the MFAH in the forefront of museum ceramic collections worldwide and positions the MFAH as a major center for the research of contemporary ceramics. *The Scholar's Eye: Contemporary Ceramics from the Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection*, organized by Cindi Strauss, MFAH curator of modern and contemporary decorative arts and design, opens at the MFAH on May 18, offering audiences a first look at selected highlights from this extraordinary collection. Approximately 40 international works will be on view, ranging in aesthetics from the functional to abstract, sculptural to narrative.

“Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio’s ambitious work as gallerists, educators, and scholars has transformed the entire ceramics field, challenging and revolutionizing the public’s perception of the medium,” said MFAH director Dr. Peter C. Marzio. “Over the course of three decades, Mr. Clark and Mr. Del Vecchio have also used their expertise to build one of the finest ceramics collections in the world. It was a major coup for the museum to acquire this collection, and we are pleased to present a portion of it to the public for the very first time.”

“*The Scholar’s Eye* illustrates the breadth of the Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio collection, introducing Houston audiences to the power and beauty of ceramic art and design,” said Strauss. “The marvelous diversity found in the field is highlighted by outstanding works on view, dating from the 1940s to today.”

### **The Collection**

The collection encompasses a global roster of established and emerging artists working in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries with a specialty in the ceramic arts, as well as painters and sculptors who also worked in clay. Artists represented are from the United States, England, Canada, Ethiopia, South Africa, Japan, China, Taiwan, Mexico, Uruguay, Argentina, France, Spain, Italy, The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Latvia, Hungary, and Turkey.

The collection includes a diverse range of aesthetics from abstract and sculptural forms to narrative works. Installations, prints and drawings by many of the artists, and a group of work whose roots are in industrial design are important subsets to the overall collection. The core of the collection comprises American material that traces the aesthetic and technical developments of the past four decades through in-depth representation of artists such as Ralph Bacerra, Marek Cecula, Ken Ferguson, Anne Kraus, Ron Nagle, Richard Notkin, and Beth Cavener Stichter. Important works by Laszlo Fekete, George Jeanclos, Kitamura Junko, Geert Lap, Bodil Manz, Lawson Oyekan, Richard Slee, and Akio Takamori are also represented.

### **About the Collectors**

Garth Clark is an internationally recognized scholar, author, and collector of modern and contemporary ceramic art. He has written or contributed to over three dozen books, including *Shards: Garth Clark on Ceramic Art*; *Gilded Vessels: The Life and Art of Beatrice Wood*; and *The Artful Teapot*. Among the many honors and awards accorded him are the Mather Award for art criticism given by the College Art Association, the Art Critics Award of the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Art Book of the Year Award from the Art Libraries Society of North America for his volume on George E. Ohr.

Together with Garth Clark, Mark Del Vecchio is a founding director and partner of the Garth Clark Gallery for ceramic art in New York City. Del Vecchio has been an influential dealer in ceramics for over 30 years and is the author of the critically acclaimed book *Postmodern Ceramics*. He was the recipient of the American Craft Museum’s Visionaries Lifetime Achievement Award, and was co-chair of the organizing committee for the 1999 Ceramic Millennium Leadership Congress in Amsterdam.

### **Selected Objects from *The Scholar’s Eye***

- ***Stack, 1973, Peter Voulkos***

American ceramic sculptor Peter Voulkos is widely recognized as the leader of the post-war American ceramics revolution. Voulkos brought a high level of experimentation to his work, inventing an unstructured style of forming and

marking clay that garnered him comparisons the Abstract Expressionist painters.

- ***Parisienne Chainsaw Massacre, 1982, Adrian Saxe***

A California artist, Adrian Saxe interprets and critiques social and cultural conventions through his ceramic forms. His ornate vessels often feature unexpected embellishments and juxtaposition, as can be seen in *Parisienne Chainsaw Massacre*.

- ***Six Mexican Pieces. Biting., 1993, Andrew Lord***

Andrew Lord is a British-born, New York-based sculptor, known for rough-surfaced ceramic objects that distort traditional forms. The suite of six pieces demonstrates his use of exaggeration and pock-marked, exaggeratedly worked sculptures.

- ***The Achaians-Xanthos from the series Trojan War, 1993-1994, Sir Anthony Caro***

Anthony Caro is one of the most influential sculptors in post-war Britain. His *Trojan War* series consists of more than 40 pieces that illustrate Homer's *The Iliad*. *The Achaians-Xanthos* is made from stoneware and steel, and depicts one of the two immortal horses which drew Achilles's chariot in the story.



- ***Balustrade Relief Vase 98-12, 1998, Betty Woodman***

Betty Woodman is an internationally recognized American ceramics artist who explores traditional vase or vessel forms. In *Balustrade Relief Vase*, Woodman has created earthenware forms to fill the negative space of an imaginary vase. Her wall reliefs reveal the influence of the Baroque architecture of Italy.

- ***Vessel, 2001, Bodil Manz***

Danish artist Bodil Manz typically works in cast porcelain to create paper-thin, modern pots, and is recognized as a master of eggshell porcelain. Manz decorates her vessels with related geometric patterns on the inside and outside, allowing the shadow of one design to enhance the other.

### **Public Programs**

Throughout the exhibition, tours for adults, Storytime Tours for children, and resources for educators are available. For further information, please visit [www.mfah.org](http://www.mfah.org).

### **Design Council**

The Design Council is a MFAH special interest group that was founded in 1998 for museum members interested in modern and contemporary decorative arts, design, and craft. For more information about the council, call Miranda Warren at 713-639-7893.

### **Hours and Admission**

The Caroline Wiess Law Building is at 1001 Bissonnet Street. Hours are Tuesday and Wednesday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Thursday 10 a.m.–9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.–7 p.m.; and Sunday, 12:15–7 p.m. The museum is closed on Monday, except for holidays. Admission to this exhibition is included with general admission to the museum. General admission is \$7 for adults and \$3.50 for children 6-18, students, and senior adults (65+); admission is free for children 5 and under. Admission is free on Thursday, courtesy of Shell Oil Company Foundation. Admission is free on Saturday and Sunday for children 18 and under with a Houston Public Library Power Card or any other library card.

### **MFAH Parking**

The museum's parking garage is in the MFAH Visitors Center, located at 5600 Fannin Street at Binz Street (entrance on Binz). Free parking is available in two lots on Main Street, at Bissonnet and at Oakdale.

### **Cafe Express-Museum**

Cafe Express-Museum offers convenient dining in the Beck Building of the MFAH. Hours are Tuesday and Wednesday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Thursday, 11 a.m.-9 p.m., and Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

### **MFAH Collections**

Founded in 1900, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is the largest art museum in America south of Chicago, west of Washington, D.C., and east of Los Angeles. The encyclopedic collection of the MFAH numbers more than 56,000 works and embraces the art of antiquity to the present. Featured are the finest artistic examples of the major civilizations of Europe, Asia, North and South America, and Africa. Italian Renaissance paintings, French Impressionist works, photographs, American and European decorative arts, African and Pre-Columbian gold, American art, and European and American paintings and sculpture from post-1945 are particularly strong holdings. Recent additions to the collections include Rembrandt van Rijn's *Portrait of a Young Woman* (1633), the Heiting Collection of Photography, a major suite of Gerhard Richter paintings, an array of important works by Jasper Johns, a rare, second-century Hellenistic bronze *Head of Poseidon/Antigonos Doson*, major canvases by 19th-century painters Gustave Courbet and J.M.W. Turner, distinguished work by the leading 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Latin American artists, and The Adolpho Leirner Collection of Brazilian Constructive Art.

### **MFAH Campus**

The MFAH collections are presented in six locations that make up the institutional complex. Together, these facilities provide a total of 300,000 square feet of space dedicated to the display of art. The MFAH comprises:

- Two major museum buildings: the Caroline Wiess Law Building, designed by Mies van der Rohe, and the Audrey Jones Beck Building, designed by Rafael Moneo
- Two facilities for the Glassell School of Art: one with studio spaces for children and another with studio spaces for adults
- Two house museums that exhibit decorative arts: Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens features American works, Rienzi features European works
- The Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden, created by Isamu Noguchi

Complementing the public exhibition spaces is a major on-site conservation center where artworks are conserved prior to presentation.

### **General Information:**

For information, the public may call 713-639-7300, or visit [www.mfah.org](http://www.mfah.org). For information in Spanish, call 713-639-7379. TDD/TYY for the hearing impaired, call 713-639-7390. For membership information, call 713-639-7550 or email [membership@mfah.org](mailto:membership@mfah.org).

### **Media Contacts**

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
 Frances Carter Stephens, Lynn Feuerbach, Dana Mattice, Megan Whitenton  
 713-639-7540 or [MFAHPR@mfah.org](mailto:MFAHPR@mfah.org)

Resnicow Schroeder Associates:

Martha Kang McGill  
 212-671-5169, [mmcgill@resnicowschroeder.com](mailto:mmcgill@resnicowschroeder.com)

#### Images:

Richard DeVore, American, 1933-2006, *Vessel*, 1981, Porcelain, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection, gift of Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio, 2007.818, © Estate of Richard DeVore

Lucio Fontana, Italian, born Argentina, 1899-1968, *Concetto Spaziale (Spatial Concept)*, 1968, Porcelain, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection, gift of Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio, 2007.856.1,2, © Fondazione Lucio Fontana

Jean-Pierre Larocque, Canadian, born 1953, *Untitled [Head]*, 1996, Stoneware  
 The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection, gift of Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio, 2007.931  
 © Jean-Pierre Larocque

Sir Anthony Caro, British, born 1924, *The Achaians-Xanthos* from the series *Trojan War*, 1993-94, Stoneware and steel, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection, 2007.793.A,.B, © Sir Anthony Caro