

Press Release

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HIGH MUSEUM OF ART BUILDS COLLECTION WITH STRATEGIC ACQUISITIONS IN 2025

Strengthens holdings in focus areas including contemporary sculpture and design, 20th-century African American art, African ceramics, and modernist photography

ATLANTA, Dec. 17, 2025 — The High Museum of Art continued to strategically expand its collection in 2025 with 361 new acquisitions, including a rare, recently rediscovered Jacob Lawrence painting, a monumental bronze sculpture by acclaimed contemporary artist Simone Leigh, a table and stool designed by Isamu Noguchi, more than 50 Ralph Eugene Meatyard photographic prints, its third Matisse painting, and the first painting by Minnie Evans for the folk and self-taught art holdings. With its purchase of a massive ceramic sculpture from her “Boundless Vessels” series, the High also became the first U.S. museum to acquire a work by Nigerian artist Ngozi-Omeje Ezema.

The sculptures by Leigh and Ezema are currently fixtures of the museum’s modern and contemporary art and African art galleries. More than 30 of the Meatyard prints are featured in the High’s exhibition [“The Family Album of Ralph Eugene Meatyard,”](#) open now through May 10, 2026, and the Minnie Evans painting is on view in [“The Lost World: The Art of Minnie Evans”](#) through April 19, 2026. The Noguchi furniture will be included in a major retrospective of the artist’s work, [“Isamu Noguchi: ‘I am not a designer’”](#) (April 10-Aug. 2, 2026), organized by the High and debuting in Atlanta before traveling nationally.

“As we look ahead to our centennial in 2026, our curators have strategically acquired artworks that not only support where we’ve traditionally built strengths as an institution but that also signal where we’re heading in the next 100 years,” said Director Rand Suffolk. “They bolster what’s uniquely special about our existing holdings and also bridge gaps in our collecting to foster audience growth and engagement.”

Chief Curator Kevin W. Tucker added, “These acquisitions reflect key priorities for the High in seeking out excellence and distinctiveness that support curatorial initiatives in the development

of an international slate of collections, exhibitions and new scholarship. Each is the result of not only the direction established by our curators, but the legacy and continuing generosity of the museum's patrons from Atlanta and beyond."

Major 2025 acquisitions include:

African Art:

Ngozi-Omeje Ezema

Nigerian, born 1979

"Togetherness," 2022

Ceramics, acrylic, monofilament fishing line and metal

127 1/4 x 72 inches

Purchase with Fred and Rita Richman Special Initiatives Endowment Fund for African Art, 2025.47

Currently on view in Gallery 403 on the Skyway Level of the Stent Family Wing

With this purchase, the High became the first U.S. museum to acquire work by Ezema, a distinguished contemporary ceramic artist who challenges the conventions of pottery in her sculptural and installation practices. "Togetherness" is the largest example in her "Boundless Vessels" series, in which the artist suspends small, leaf-shaped terra-cotta pieces and expertly configures them at various elevations to produce densely hung mobiles in the shape of ceramic vessels — monumental abstractions of these objects typically made from clay. Ezema conceptually relates these works to the social expectations of women, likening the limitations placed on them to the presumed form and function of a vessel. "Togetherness" is part of the High's ongoing initiative to acquire works by Nigerian artists and to present ceramic works by African women artists, and it complements the museum's strong examples of ceramic vessels, from seventh-century terra-cotta forms to contemporary decorative sculpture. Ezema's work is currently the centerpiece of the High's African art galleries dedicated to women, ceramics and the physicality of the ceramic process, highlighting the relationship between the human body and the work.

American Art:

Jacob Lawrence

American, 1917-2000

"Night (And then they go to sleep)," from the Harlem series, 1943

Watercolor, gouache and graphite on paper; no. 12 of 30

14 1/2 x 21 1/2 inches

Purchase with funds from Alfred Austell Thornton in memory of Leila Austell Thornton and Albert Edward Thornton, Sr., and Sarah Miller Venable and William Hoyt Venable, the David C. Driskell African American Art Acquisition Fund, and the Margaret and Terry Stent Endowment for the Acquisition of American Art, 2025.111

A titan of American modernism and 20th-century art, Lawrence is best known for his series of genre and history paintings produced between 1938 and 1956, coinciding with his meteoric rise as the first African American artist whose works were acquired by The Museum of Modern Art. A rare and early example of his genre paintings, “Night (And then they go to sleep)” is a recently rediscovered work from his pivotal “Harlem” paintings of 1943, the last and only time it was seen in public. Illustrating a quiet, sentimental scene of a family at home in the city, the painting features figures with masklike faces as they cuddle under a block-patterned quilt. The work’s striking iconography reflects the diverse traditions inherent to African American art and its makers across media and geography. Acquiring this work affords the High a leading place in new scholarship on Lawrence’s most formative artistic pathways, his relationship to Southern arts and culture, and the cross-disciplinary presence of numerous aesthetic traditions in his monumental oeuvre. When it goes on view in a major reinstallation of the American art galleries for the High’s centennial, the work will enter a dialogue with the museum’s growing strengths in American modernism and 20th-century African American art and with the critical history and place of the South in the broader landscape of American art and culture.

Decorative Arts and Design:

Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904-1988), designer

Herman Miller Furniture Company (established 1923), manufacturer

“Dinette Table (IN-20),” designed ca. 1948, manufactured 1949-1951

Birch, zinc-plated steel, and aluminum

26 1/4 × 50 × 35 1/2 inches

Purchase with funds from Sarah Eby-Ebersole and Daniel Ebersole, Margot and Danny McCaul, andCarolynn Cooper and Pratap Mukharji, 2025.247

“Stool (IN-22),” designed ca. 1948, manufactured 1949-1951

Birch, zinc-plated steel, and aluminum

17 1/4 × 17 3/4 × 13 3/4 inches

Purchase with funds from the Decorative Arts Acquisition Endowment, 2025.248

The IN-20 Dinette Table and IN-22 Stool by Noguchi represent the celebrated 20th-century sculptor-designer’s only dedicated dining designs for Herman Miller and one of his final projects for the manufacturer. They stand out among Noguchi’s mass-produced furnishings for their unique synthesis of his signature, striking biomorphic silhouettes with a sensitivity to the space-saving priorities of many postwar consumers, and they exemplify his sincere desire to extend inventive sculptural form-making into diverse facets of everyday life. The Dinette Table pairs a flat wooden fin or rudder-like leg with two steel hairpins. The accompanying Stool mirrors this arrangement, with one elegant wooden leg balanced by a single metal tube that resembles an inverted hairpin, which hugs the stool’s rudder before terminating at two points on the floor. The table and stool complement a growing group of significant design works by Noguchi in the High’s collection, including early examples of his famed IN-50 Coffee Table and the original plaster model for “Play Mountain” (1933). The new acquisitions join those works as prominent features in the major monographic survey [“Isamu Noguchi: ‘I am not a designer,’”](#) opening at

the High this spring.

European Art:

Henri Matisse

French, 1869-1954

“Homme assis (Seated Man),” 1900

Oil on canvas

25 1/2 × 18 1/8 inches

Doris and Shouky Shaheen Collection, 2025.58

Currently on view in Gallery 206 on the Second Level of the Stent Family Wing

“Homme assis (Seated Man)” is both the third Matisse painting to enter the High’s collection and the museum’s earliest work by the artist. The intimate portrait marks a significant period of Matisse’s experimentation with intense color, painterly brushwork and both academic and nonacademic styles, all of which were crucial for his development over the next decade. With only a few lines and swaths of teal, mauve and cobalt, Matisse captures a bearded man sitting with his legs crossed at the knee and hands resting on his right shin. Matisse’s signature outlines create a stark contrast between the figure, who gazes off to the right, and his flat, undefined surroundings. The work joins the two other Matisse paintings in the High’s Doris and Shouky Shaheen Collection of European Paintings, in addition to four prints and a sculpture by the artist in the High’s holdings. Juxtaposed in the museum’s galleries with his later figurative paintings “Portrait of a Little Girl” (1916) and “Woman Seated at the Piano” (ca. 1924), “Homme assis” meaningfully contributes to the High’s presentation of Matisse’s development in portraiture and provides insight into the years leading to his Fauvist debut in 1905. Remarkably, this painting remained in the artist’s family for more than 100 years before being acquired by a private collector in 2023 and is thought to have been exhibited only once.

Folk and Self-Taught Art:

Minnie Evans

American, 1892-1987

“Temple by the Sea,” 1955

Oil on canvas

16 3/4 × 20 1/2 inches

Gift of the Kallir Family in memory of John Kallir, 2025.60

Currently on view in [“The Lost World: The Art of Minnie Evans,”](#) in the Special Exhibition Galleries on the Second Level of the Stent Family Wing

As the first painting by the acclaimed American self-taught artist to enter the museum’s collection, Evans’ “Temple by the Sea” further distinguishes the High as having the most significant institutional holding of her work. The painting joins 16 Evans drawings in the museum’s collection, nine of which were acquired beginning in 2021. This new acquisition is the first to coincide with the High’s exhibition [“The Lost World: The Art of Minnie Evans,”](#) on view through April 19, 2026. Evans is estimated to have created between 300 and 400 works in her

lifetime, the vast majority of which were drawings. She likely made fewer than two dozen paintings, of which this work is the most reproduced example in her oeuvre and represents one of the rare instances when Evans painted in a more representational style. The architectural site depicted is possibly inspired by the Hindu “Temple in the Sea,” originally built by Sewdass Sadhu, an indentured laborer brought to Trinidad from India, in 1952 — three years prior to the painting’s date. Evans traced her ancestry to Trinidad, so it is conceivable that she would have seen coverage of Sadhu’s temple and felt a connection to it. She paints her version in a coastal setting, an environment similar to her home in Wilmington, North Carolina.

Modern and Contemporary Art:

Simone Leigh

American, born 1967

“Cupboard,” 2024

Bronze

88 1/2 × 85 × 45 inches

Purchase with funds from the David C. Driskell Endowment, D. Lurton Masee Jr. Endowment for Contemporary Art, the Blonder Family Acquisition Endowment Fund, Robert O. Breitling, Jr. Acquisition Endowment Fund, Friends of Contemporary Art, Sarah Eby-Ebersole and Daniel Ebersole, John Wieland, and the Rakes Family in memory of Wade A. Rakes, 2025.62

Currently on view in Gallery 412 on the Skyway Level of the Wieland Pavilion

An acclaimed contemporary artist, Leigh is known for her ceramic and bronze sculptures that tell stories of Black resistance against colonialism, racism and sexism and incorporate ideas from Black feminist theory to address omissions of African and diasporic artists and traditions from the historical record. “Cupboard” is one of the High’s most significant acquisitions of contemporary art by a woman artist and is among only a few figurative contemporary sculptures in the collection. The work depicts a powerful female figure rising from a dome-shaped bronze skirt cast from raffia leaves. Combining historical and architectural references with figuration, “Cupboard” presents an abstracted vision of the body, building upon Leigh’s ongoing investigation of Black female-identified subjectivity. The work refers to the (still-standing) 1940s-era Mississippi restaurant Mammy’s Cupboard, the rounded exterior of which was built to resemble the wide hoop skirt of the Black “mammy” stereotype. The intersectionality of African art, ancient statuary traditions and American and European sculpture conventions in Leigh’s work expands the acquisition’s resonance with other artworks in the High’s contemporary collection and complements the museum’s holding of African figurative sculpture from Congo.

Photography:

Ralph Eugene Meatyard

American, 1925-1972

36 prints from the “Gnomon Press Monograph Set,” 1958-1969

17 prints from the “Georgetown Street series,” ca. 1955

Gelatin silver prints

Various dimensions

Purchase and gift of Christopher and Diane Meatyard

Currently on view in [“The Family Album of Ralph Eugene Meatyard”](#) in the Lucinda Weil Bunnell Gallery for Photography on the Lower Level of the Wieland Pavilion

Since his untimely death in 1972, Meatyard has come to be regarded among the most pioneering and inventive artists of the photographic medium and for his expressive, surreal works. These new acquisitions, offered to the High by the Meatyard estate, comprise the 36 prints the artist chose for inclusion in his monograph, what he considered his most important work, published by Gnomon Press in 1970. Meatyard generally did not produce more than three prints of any image, so the Gnomon Press prints are exceptionally rare. They are on view in the High’s exhibition [“The Family Album of Ralph Eugene Meatyard”](#) (through May 10, 2026).

In addition to the 36 prints from the Gnomon Press set, the artist’s estate donated 17 prints from Meatyard’s first body of work, “Georgetown Street,” an early documentary project about an African American community in Lexington, Kentucky, where he lived and worked.

These new acquisitions, joining 10 other Meatyard works in the museum’s collection, make the High one of the leading repositories of his photographs in the world. Most of the museum’s large monographic photography holdings, by artists including Harry Callahan, Walker Evans, William Christenberry and Peter Sekaer, represent more traditionally modernist approaches to the medium. Meatyard’s unorthodox work balances these, allowing the collection to better reflect the plurality of photographic practice in the mid-20th century.

About the High Museum of Art

Located in the heart of Atlanta, the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features a collection of more than 20,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially that of artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from prehistory through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit www.high.org.

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