



Miami Art Museum

For Immediate Release

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2005 A Banner Year for MAM's Permanent Collection Botero, Cornell, Young Donations Among Distinguished December Additions

Nine works by American master Joseph Cornell (1903-1972), a Fernando Botero still life and 11 works by Miami artist Purvis Young have just been donated to the Miami Art Museum, along with important works by ten additional local, national and international artists.

"With prior donations from the George and Helen Segal Foundation, the MAM Collectors Council and other donors, 2005 was already a banner year for MAM's permanent collection. The works we were given in December make the year's growth in our collection even more exciting," MAM's Assistant Director for Programs/Senior Curator Peter Boswell said. "The Botero still life, from one of the earliest stages of the artist's career, is a first for MAM. Jean Goodman's donation expands our collection of international art in a highly significant way.

"The gift from The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation gives MAM significant holdings of this important artist's work," Boswell added. We are honored to be recognized by the foundation with these important gifts and pleased by the rich connections they provide with other works, such as the Marcel Duchamp's *Boîte-en-Valise*, in MAM's growing permanent collection."

"We are also delighted with the growing strength of our collection of Miami artists, particularly the substantial gift of ten Purvis Young paintings from the Rubell Family collection. We are grateful indeed to the many collectors and donors who are helping us create a world-class collection for Miami's flagship art museum."

MAM's collections were also enriched by December donations of:

- a Will Barnet etching from Serg J. Rioux
- a drawing by Jesse Bransford from Jeffrey Pechter;
- an artist's book by John Cage and Lois Long given by Manuel E. Gonzalez;
- a group of prints completing the museum's holdings of the *Absence Series* by Elizabeth Cerejido, all given by Liza and Dr. Arturo F. Mosquera;
- a Gene Davis micropainting given by Barbara Schwartz;
- a Lynne Golob Gelfman painting given by David and Linda Frankel;
- a major sculpture by Donald Lipski that is a promised gift of Terri Hyland
- a video work by Wangechi Mutu that is a partial and promised gift of Toni and Carl Randolph;
- a digital photograph by Ivan Toth Depeña donated by Chris Ingalls;

- a Susan Rothenberg lithograph from Rose Ellen Meyerhoff Greene and Gerald Greene; and
- an additional Purvis Young painting from José W. Pérez and Patricia Adams in honor of Cheryl Hartup and Joel Weinstein.

Among the most popular artists working today, Fernando Botero is best known for his paintings and sculptures of massive, swollen figures. While various interpretations have been ascribed to his subject's corpulent condition, Botero insists it arises primarily from artistic concerns with volume and composition. Botero first developed his style of inflated volumes in still-life works, in which fruits and vegetables take on the same degree of monumentality as any other pictorial element. *Untitled Still-Life* 1967 was executed in a crucial period for the artist, during which he shifted from a rough and relatively abstract visual language into the smooth, polished style he is known for today.

After graduating from Medellín University, Botero studied painting at the Academia de San Fernando, Madrid and the Academia di San Marco in Florence. His work is included in major collections throughout the world and has been exhibited in venues such as the Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen; the São Paulo Museum of Art; the National Museum of Fine Arts, Buenos Aires; the Hermitage, St. Petersburg; the Contemporary Museum of Art in Caracas; and the Reina Sofia National Art Center in Madrid.

According to Boswell, MAM plans to exhibit the untitled Botero still life as part of its summer 2006 permanent collection exhibition, *Big Juicy Paintings (and more)*, which will be on view from June 16 to September 17, 2006.

The gift from the Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation includes one of the artist's famous assemblage boxes and eight collages, supplements an earlier gift of six works the foundation donated to MAM in 2003.

Most of the recently donated Cornell works are not titled or dated, Boswell said, but are likely from the 1960s, when the artist did most of his collages and when he produced a number of boxes that were more minimal than his earlier works.

Boswell noted that the works in this gift reflect common themes in Cornell's work, including balls, orbs and hoops symbolic of planets and their orbits; open windows, symbolic of freedom; birds, long distance travelers who serve as intermediaries between heaven and earth; and women, frequently noted actresses, ballerinas, and singers.

Cornell is best-known for the shadow box constructions he created from the 1930s to the 1960s. The box in the foundation's latest gift includes the shadowed silhouette of a cockatoo, a bird which figures prominently in many of Cornell's box assemblages, set behind an empty wooden perch. Together with the silver ring at the bottom of the box, the silhouette suggests that the bird once confined in this "cage" has somehow escaped and found its liberty, Boswell observed.

Cornell had worked intermittently in collage from the 1930s to the 1950s, but engaged in it more extensively in the 1960s when color images became common in magazines. Cornell's work in collage in the 1960s is different in feeling from his shadow boxes, though they share common imagery and themes.

Among the subjects depicted in the collages in this gift are an egret, a female nude, the US flag, two girls skipping rope and two separate collages of the same façade depicting different vistas through an open window. Among the collages is an experimental piece in blue pigments which Cornell baked in his home oven to achieve the different "geographical effects" on the work's surface, Boswell said.

Joseph Cornell was a close friend of Duchamp's and helped him assemble his earliest *boîtes-en-valises*, small portable cases containing miniature replicas of many of Duchamp's best-known works. Cornell had

an enormous impact on subsequent artists. He was admired by many of the Abstract Expressionists for his interest in mythology and the cosmos and his evocation of vast space, even though his work did not resemble theirs. His work was subsequently recognized by Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and the Pop artists for its use of common objects and commercial imagery.

MAM will exhibit the newly acquired Cornell works in its summer 2006 permanent collection exhibition, *Big Juicy Paintings (and more)*, which will be on view from June 16 to September 17, 2006.

All of the pieces from the foundation's prior gift were on exhibit at MAM in *Between Art and Life: from Joseph Cornell to Gabriel Orozco*. The mixed media box from that gift, *A New Scale of Stellar Distances* is currently on exhibit in *Mapping Space* now in MAM's Plaza Level Gallery.

Purvis Young is an incredibly prolific artist who paints on any scrap of canvas, wood, metal or paper he can find, describing the life of Miami's Overtown in thousands of images with strong lines, painterly vigor and intense, expressionist color, Boswell said. People on the street, animals, city buildings, trains, boats and trucks appear within his complexly layered, richly hued abstractions. Almost always there are figures with arms reaching up, aspiring, struggling; heads symbolizing guardian angels of the city, trucks that carry goods through Overtown, rounded blue shapes symbolizing the "eye" of the system and trains that promise travel and escape. According to Young, the large heads and faces that float above his crowds represent the "good people," "angels" such as Bishop Tutu or Miles Davis, without whom Purvis says he could not do his art.

Young, a long-time Miami resident born in Liberty City, Florida in 1943, is a self-taught artist who has substituted intensive reading and personal study of the history of art for a formal education. He applies his own ideology to create his visual language. In the 1960s, he became interested in the mural movement and executed his first public project along Good Bread Alley in Overtown. Other mural projects include the auditorium of the Miami Public Library, the exterior walls of the branch library in Overtown, and the Northside Metrorail Station. He has also had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Palm Beach (1999) and Springfield (Ohio) Museum of Art (1998). His work was included in *Smithsonian Collection: Contemporary Folk Art* seen at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Tacoma (Washington) Art Museum, The Art Museum of FIU and Tampa Museum of Art (2000); *Self-taught Artists of the 20th Century: an American Anthology* at the Museum of American Folk Art, NY (1999) and *Passionate Visions of the American South* at the New Orleans Museum of Art (1993).

Miami Art Museum receives both private and public funding. More than 50 percent of its annual support comes from corporations, individuals, foundations and MAM members. MAM is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts; with the support of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, the Cultural Affairs Council, the Mayor and the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners.

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Editor's Note: Images of selected works are available on request.

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