# **Grinnell College Museum of Art**







# A YEAR OF TRANSITIONS

With our 20th anniversary behind us, we faced a new year like no other. For the Grinnell College Museum of Art, it has been a year of staff changes, and rapidly evolving conditions created by the coronavirus pandemic. We've drawn on new reserves of creativity to continue to share exhibitions, collections and programs through it all.

The year began with a celebration of our collection in the exhibition For Campus and Community, coupled with a month-long Artists@ Grinnell residency by Saint Louis multi-media artist Damon Davis. In January, we installed Davis' prodigious creative output from his residency, premiering a number of sculptures and digital paintings generated during his time in Grinnell.

January also introduced our two new guards to our Museum staff. In the past, we have relied on Campus Safety officers or contract guards. Jodi Brandenburg and Peggy Brown work solely for the Museum, keeping visitors and the art safe and accessible to all. In early March, we welcomed Amanda Davenport as our administrative support assistant. Amanda had about two weeks to begin to learn the Museum and Grinnell College systems before we all moved to working from home.

Kay Wilson retired on June 5, capping 37 remarkable years as curator of the collection. Happily, she was able to help orient Jocelyn Krueger, our new collections manager/registrar before she left. Jocelyn spent her first two and half months learning our collection without being able to see any of it in person — a rather peculiar beginning — but we are so glad she is in Grinnell. You can learn more about all the new staff later in this report.

With the Museum and campus closed, we moved our exhibitions and outreach programs online. Tilly Woodward worked with 5 alumni artists to create a virtual version of Nature, Made. Sadly, their work never made it onto our walls because of the shut down; instead, we were able to provide recordings of all 5 artists speaking about their art on our website. Tilly has created online exhibition materials for Our Voice: The Coretta Scott King Children's Illustrator Awards (we will exhibit the traveling show next summer), and used both online exhibitions as part of summer outreach for kids. Check out the activities and lesson plans on our website and give some of them a try. You can also do yoga with Jackie Hutchison accompanied by art from the Grinnell College Museum collection. Our student staff have been invaluable in assisting with online content, along with Amanda Davenport and Temitayo Wolff '19 providing captioning, and Dan Strong, associate director and curator of exhibitions, managing the web

With July, we began another transition with staff slowly beginning to move back to work on site. Dan Strong has curated our fall exhibition, Let Yourself Continue, which most of you will experience online as we will be closed to all but students on campus. Milton Severe, director of exhibition design, is redesigning our space for the safety of visitors, staff and art. We hope the surge of virus in lowa soon slows and we can gradually open up for visitors. We miss seeing art on our walls, but we miss sharing our space with everyone even more.

# Prof. Eric McIntyre, Music Department, performing one of his original compositions inspired by the Museum's collection.

# THE MUSEUM AND TEACHING

Much of what we do at the GCMoA can be seen as instruction of one sort or another. The account of our Outreach efforts in this report records a wide range of teaching and learning in community. We work with student assistants and interns every semester, adding museum work to their skill set. Here are additional examples of on campus teaching we do with collections and exhibitions.

In July 2019, most of the staff presented a week-long seminar for faculty interested in using the collection in their teaching. Faculty members from the departments of anthropology, art history, computer science, English, French and Arabic, history, music, and the Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment explored the collection, particularly works slated to be on view in *For Campus and Community* in the fall. The results included assignments, class visits and discussions in the Museum, and the composition and performance of original pieces of music inspired by works in the collection. Thanks, Professor Eric McIntyre!

Anthropology professor Josh Marshak made great use of the Museum's African art collections throughout the year. Kay Wilson related the following observation following one of his

classes: "In a class studying the history of the African Congo, examining the art objects from the Congo in the Grinnell College Art Collection, a student said: What I have learned is that the people of the Congo were highly civilized. They spoke several languages including French. They had a deeply spiritual religion. They built a complex civil society to maintain orderly life for all members, young and old. We see from these beautiful art objects that they were skilled and sophisticated human beings. Yet when they were captured, taken from their homes and transported to another country they were called savage, primitive."

Lesley Wright invited the six students in her Introduction to Museum Studies class to be active participants in the creation of content for an exhibition based on a template provided by the Smithsonian Institution. The exhibition, *Grinnell Works*, tells the history of work in Grinnell using photographs and artifacts. Each Museum Studies student researched 3 topics, identifying images for the exhibition, and writing succinct labels. The exhibition opened on March 5 at Drake Community Library with staff from the Smithsonian in attendance, then closed just 10 days later and moved online for the pandemic.

# EXHIBITIONS 2019-2020

June 15-July 20, 2019

#### Fiber Artists of Iowa

Guest curated by Deborah Zeitler, sponsored by The Craft Guild of Iowa City and the Iowa Federation of Handweavers and Spinners.

June 15-July 27, 2019

#### Prairie Gems

Biennial exhibition from the Jewel Box Quilt Guild.

August 23-December 14, 2019

For Campus and Community:

The Grinnell College Art Collection

Curated by Kay Wilson and Dan Strong.

November 5, 2019-February 17, 2020

#### Maré de Dentro:

#### Life in Rio de Janeiro's Favelas

With support from the Institute for Global Engagement, Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, and Bard College. (Presented in Burling Gallery)

January 24-April 4, 2020 [closed March 14]

#### Excavations:

#### The Prints of Julie Mehretu

Organized by Highpoint Editions, Minneapolis

January 24 -March 14, 2020

Damon Davis

#### Cancelled:

#### BAX 2020

Moved online:

Nature, Made

Work by 5 alumni artists, curated by Lesley Wright.

Postponed to 2021, with an online version in 2020:

**Our Voice:** 

Celebrating the Coretta Scott King
Illustrator Awards

Organized by the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature, Abilene, Texas.



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# MUSEUM OUTREACH

The year began with the flurry of summer programs. The Everyday Joy & Kindness project brought new partners to our work, folding in over 370 people from multiple communities to celebrate the life of Mollie Tibbetts with joy and beauty. Participants generated six murals and an installation located at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, Grinnell Middle School, and the rotunda of Bucksbaum Center for the Arts. The Bucksbaum installation will ultimately be installed in the newly remodeled Brooklyn Opera House in Mollie's hometown.

Ongoing partnerships with the Grinnell Education Partnership, Drake Community Library, neurodiverse groups, area schools and preschools expanded as well. As the school year began, programming focused on ways to consider issues of race, mapping, the architecture of migration, and identity through our exhibitions. Interdisciplinary panels, gallery talks with faculty, and community conversations with visiting artist Damon Davis provided new lenses for connecting with the art, ourselves and each other.

And then, everything changed. When our physical space closed, we made an adroit shift to creating virtual exhibitions and outreach. Art is essential in normal times, and more essential in extraordinary times when we need to find ways to consider and process what is most difficult in life, and to connect with beauty. As well, partnerships are essential in normal times, and more essential when facing unexpected challenges, and it was through our partnerships that we were able to continue to serve multiple communities.

The GCMoA YouTube Channel now houses a library of videos that engage viewers with exhibition tours, artist's talks, yoga in the gallery and staff picks, and our website offers a growing selection of activity guides that help people look at, think about, write about and make art. Our interactive approach to social media platforms expanded to include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok, with posts often created by our student interns. We provided museum "visits" to college classes and developed virtual summer programming intertwining art, literature, and science delivered via Webex for area education partners with funding from AmeriCorps/VISTA, Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation, and a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

We worked closely with Karen Neal and her team of VISTAs at Drake Community Library to ensure that area children could still benefit from summer arts and literature programs, especially in this time of isolation and educational disruption. By combining forces, we were able to create a plan to organize and distribute 1,200 bags filled with art supplies, books and activity guides for area children.

We miss the contact and the nuanced interactions and conversations, the creative engagement and expression that are the hallmark of our outreach. At times our current work feels like teaching from underwater, with a blurred sense of connection. The work has been an act of hope and will.

#### FOCUS:

#### **Damon Davis Residency and Exhibition**

With support from Grinnell College's Center for Humanities, Artists@Grinnell, and a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Damon Davis's residency in Grinnell took place from September 8 to October 5, 2019. From his base in a college apartment, he immersed himself in the daily routines of the city and the College, interacting with citizens as well as students, faculty, and staff. A crew from PBS spent three days on campus filming Davis as he engaged in public conversations, worked in the studio, and visited the Conard Environmental Resource Area, in preparation for an episode of Masters in the Making.

Valuing a full month apart from his busy life in Saint Louis, Davis worked on music and video projects and produced some 60 large-scale digital prints, several mixed media sculptures, as well as a series of life casts of himself in wax and concrete. These works were featured in an exhibition the following semester, curated by Dan Strong and installed by Milton Severe with input from Damon Davis. Tilly Woodward, with her extensive background as an artist, served as primary staff coordinator of all of Damon's activities and facilitated his art production throughout his stay. Life casting was new to Davis, so it was especially valuable for students to see an artist take risks with the creative process, and valuable for Davis to have support of the museum staff. Through the Fund for Public Art, the Museum acquired two of Davis's digital



Damon Davis speaks with students and faculty in front of his piece *All Hands on Deck*, 2015, lithograph with graphite on paper. Grinnell College Art Collection, Marie-Louise and Samuel R. Rosenthal Fund.

painting which will be installed in the Humanities and Social Studies Center.

We are grateful to the following students, faculty, and staff for their contributions to the success of the residency: Prof. Stephen Andrews, Prof. Jeremy Chen, Bojana Crnomarkovic '20, Anna Ford '11, Elizabeth Hill, Lizzy Hinman '20, Joe Lacina, Guhn "Tommy" Lee '22, Molly Skouson '22, Prof. Nicky Tavares, Hannah Taylor '20, Judith Tong '20, Vrinda Varia. Françoise Verges, Grace Wallace '22



Right: Artist unknown, Southeast Asia, Seated Buddha, n.d. Carved stone. Gift of Lolya Lipchitz and Harold Kasimow.

Below: Jacob Lawrence, *To Preserve Their Freedom* (from *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*), 1988.
Serigraph, 22 x 32 inches. Grinnell College Art Collection, Marie-Louise and Samuel R. Rosenthal Fund.



# THE COLLECTION

#### **Purchases**

Among the 23 works of art purchased for the collection with endowed funds are works by Carrie Moyer, Aida Muluneh, Alec Soth, and Nate Lewis. We were also able to acquire 13 prints by Jacob Lawrence based on the series of paintings he did of the Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture. You can find all of these if you search our collection.

#### Gifts

Donors increased the collection with prints, photographs, paintings and blown glass – 84 gifts in all. Our thanks to John and Roslyn Goldman, Katherine Michaelson, Maryanne Ellison Simmons, Jim '63 and Ann Soble, William Thompson '91, Paul Turner, and Laura Chrisman. Dr. Chrisman's gift includes 17 prints and paintings by her father, Byron Randall, a noted West Coast artist of the 20th century. Most of the donors are not alumni but have become friends of Grinnell College through the strength of the art collection, which is a great endorsement of the work Kay Wilson did for many years and of the relationships Dan Strong continues to foster among collectors, printmakers, and galleries.

#### **Public Art**

Longtime Grinnellians Lolya Lipchitz and Professor Emeritus Harold Kasimow gave the College a large stone Buddha from Southeast Asia. The sculpture, originally acquired by Lolya's father, the sculptor Jacques Lipchitz, presided over the Lipchitz Kasimow living room for many years and was well known to student and faculty guests. Their move out of their home prompted them to offer the sculpture to Grinnell and Milton Severe oversaw the delicate process of getting all 1,600 pounds of stone out of an old house and into a lovely new space in the renovated ARH, contributing to the public art on campus.

In November of 2019, with the Museum's Leadership Council in attendance, President Raynard Kington dedicated *Broken English*, a sculpture in steel and bronze by Gregory Miguel Gómez '80 for the plaza in front of the Humanities and Social Studies Center. Gómez based his sculpture on the opening lines of William Butler Yeats' poem "The Second Coming," and the confluence of form and text makes it a fitting monument for the new building. The creation of the work of art was made possible by donor John Chamber '77 in memory of his late wife, Jean Chambers. Visit brokenenglish.sites.grinnell.edu/ to learn more.

In May 2020, despite the pandemic, the College completed the installation of *Grinnell Crossroads*, a work of public art by Macarthur Award winning landscape architect Walter Hood. President Kington first approached Hood about commissioning a piece in 2016. Through visits to Grinnell and discussions with Hood Design Studios in Oakland, California, a plan evolved to beautify an empty lot at the corner of Highway 146 and Highway 6, and to recapture some of the earlier history of the site. The sculpture is now open as a greenspace in Grinnell, with more information about the project at grinnellcrossroads.sites.grinnell.edu.

# BY THE NUMBERS

JULY 1, 2019 TO JUNE 30, 2020

New acquisitions: 84 gifts and 23 purchases

Works from the collection exhibited this year: 112

Loans from Grinnell to other museums: 20

Attendance: 9,344 (closed March 15-June 30, 2020 for Pandemic)

Faulconer Gallery: 7,410 | Print room: 600 est. | Off-Site events: 1,334

Departments using the Museum: 13 (54 classes in all)

Exhibitions: 6, plus 2 online

Works loaned to the Museum for exhibitions: 182

One-time in-person programs: 94

Off-campus organizations we work with: 18

Regular and repeating programs: 24 (for a total of 292 events)

Visiting artists, curators, scholars: 8

Grinnell faculty and staff who spoke or performed: 12

Number of online exhibitions, tours, talks, activities (March 15-June 30): 50

Social media posts (March 15-June 30): 84

Reach (Average): 746

YouTube Views: 1,888 (a total of 23 videos)

Virtual Gallery Talks: 899 | Virtual Gallery Tours: 349 | Virtual Yoga: 498 | Staff Picks: 142

Number of student employees and interns: 34

#### We thank all our student employees, assistants and interns!

Maya Adachi '21 Ryuta Kure '21

Winifred Austin '21 Kate Kwasneski '21

Evelyn Berryhill '20 Eunice Lee '23

Cally Carr '21 Guhn (Tommy) Lee '22

(2020 summer VISTA)

Bryant Miller '23

Yesheng Chen '21

Lauren Miller '21

Margaret Coleman '20 Emmarose Mills '23
Kevin Donahue '21 Vishva Nalamalapu '20

Claire Eide '19 Harley Rivers '19

(2019 summer AmeriCorps)
Nicole Rosengurt '20

Elizabeth Fraser '23
Phoebe Schreckinger '19
Chloe Gonzalez '23

Lizzy Hinman '20
Anika Hsu '22

Batyah Selis '21

Molly Skouson '22

Veronica Thomas '21

Junmin Hua '21

Esther Hwang '19

Keli Vitiaoli '19

Melena Johnson '23 (2019 summer AmeriCorps)

Rick Johnson 'D20 Alana Walker '22

Zoe Kaufman '23

### MUSEUM STAFF NOTES







Peggy Brown



Amanda Davenport



Jocelyn Krueger

#### Welcome to our new staff members!

Jodi Brandenburg, Museum Guard, comes to the Museum with a long history of customer service and a love of creativity. She prides herself on helping people. She worked for Grinnell College for three years in Catering, and came to know the College community well through her work. In turn, people at the College appreciate that she is friendly, patient and kind. Jodi has 2 young adult children, and shares that, "I love what I do every day and look forward to coming to work."

Peggy Brown, Museum Guard, is originally from southern Louisiana, and is influenced by art and music that resonates with New Orleans culture. Five years ago, she moved to a hobby farm in Montezuma, Iowa, after living in Alaska for over 21 years. Working at the museum, she appreciates being surrounded by the life, joy, struggle, and provocation of the various art exhibitions, and interacting with students, faculty,

staff, and townspeople. Check out her "Staff Picks" video to see some of the art in our collection that excites her.

#### **Amanda Davenport, Administrative Support**

Assistant, is from the Meskwaki Settlement near Tama, Iowa. She is currently a graduate student at the University of Minnesota with interests in Indigenous language revitalization, second language education, and community-based research. In her research, Amanda promotes Indigenous education and cultures, particularly Meskwaki language, knowledge, history, and arts, and thrives on bringing community members together to create community-based solutions to identified issues. Previously, she served as the Language Preservation Specialist for the Meskwaki Nation for six years, where she planned, developed, and managed community language revitalization projects. GCMoA's purpose to create opportunities to learn through art resonates with Amanda. She grew up around

Meskwaki artists and artisans and appreciates the creative process. To that end, she is enthusiastic about the museum and its goal to ignite an appreciation for the arts and its role in cultural education.

#### Jocelyn Krueger, Collections Manager/

Registrar, comes to Grinnell College from Indiana State University where she served for 5 years as the Permanent Art Collection Curator and sole full-time staff with the art collection. She is an artist and author working in a wide variety of media on topics ranging from voting while trans, how debt can shape identity, and the image of saving someone from drowning as a metaphor for the human condition. She grew up in Iowa, earning her BA from the University of Iowa and MFA from Indiana State University. She is happy to return to the state, where she lives, gardens, arts, and reads with her family.

#### **Farewell to Kay Wilson**

Kay Wilson ended her wonderful 37-year career as curator of the collection with her retirement on June 5, 2020. The pandemic made it difficult to honor her service, but the work of the Museum will be forever influenced by all she did to establish at Grinnell a presence for a serious art collection, with a focus on social commentary. As she often noted, one use of printmaking is the dissemination of multiple copies of messages to those in power. Prints can be the voice of the people. Beginning in 1983, she ran the Print and Drawing Study Room in Burling Library, built the

collection, and brought exhibitions to campus. She established lasting relationships with faculty and collectors, built a strong collection of eastern European prints, and mentored countless students. After the Faulconer Gallery opened in 1999, she curated major exhibitions of the work of African-American artist John Wilson, organized the first print retrospective for William Kentridge, and brought art to Grinnell by contemporary Iraqi, Estonian, and Moroccan artists. We wish Kay all the best in retirement!

#### Other staff news

Tilly Woodward attended the ICOM (International Council of Museums) Conference in Kyoto, Japan, and presented on the programming for Reckoning with The Incident: John Wilson's Studies for a Lynching Mural. She focused on how she engaged students, faculty and staff in an intensive digital storytelling workshop in which each participant started from images in the exhibition, combined with personal narratives, photos, and music, to create digital stories that accompanied the exhibition. Broad in perspective and inclusive of many voices, the stories provided a compelling interpretive platform for viewers to consider the importance of art in processing their own experiences of race and violence.

**Lesley Wright** began a 2-year term as president of the Association of Midwest Museums in July 2019.

#### Staff:

Jodi Brandenburg, Museum Guard

Peggy Brown, Museum Guard

Amanda Davenport, Administrative Support Assistant

Jocelyn Krueger, Collections Manager/Registrar

Milton Severe, Director of Exhibition Design

Daniel Strong, Associate Director and Curator of Exhibitions

Tilly Woodward, Curator of Academic and Community Outreach

Lesley Wright, Director

#### Stay connected with the Museum:

**Grinnell.edu/museum** 

Facebook: www.facebook.com/FaulconerGallery/

Instagram: www.instagram.com/gcmuseumofart/?hl=en

TikTok: www.tiktok.com/@gcmuseumofart?lang=en

Twitter: twitter.com/GCMuseumofArt

YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCdGw5Ye13d83gmVYSxSLpVg

 $\label{thm:continuous} \textbf{Grinnell College is now a Smithsonian Affiliate. Follow our partnership at }$ 

www.grinnell.edu/campus-life/arts-culture/smithsonian-exhibits

Grinnell College Bucksbaum Center for the Arts 1108 Park Street Grinnell, Iowa 50112

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