

TACOMA ART MUSEUM

MEDIA RELEASE

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TACOMA ART MUSEUM RECEIVES GIFT OF KEY WORKS BY NORTHWEST ARTISTS IN THE VASILIKI AND WILLIAM DWYER COLLECTION



Tacoma, WA — [Tacoma Art Museum](http://TacomaArtMuseum.org) (TAM) has received a major promised gift from Seattle art collector Vasiliki Dwyer on behalf of her family and late husband William Dwyer, whose work as a federal judge had broad impact in the Pacific Northwest. The gift includes 22 works by important Northwest artists, and significant funding for the care and interpretation of the collection. The museum's board of trustees accepted the promised gift on June 28, 2016.

"We are exceedingly grateful for the extraordinary gift of the Dwyer collection," said Stephanie Stebich, Executive Director of Tacoma Art Museum. Stebich praised the gift as a beneficial contribution to TAM, the City of Tacoma, and the broader arts community. "TAM's remarkable collection has been built largely through transformative gifts like this one. The Dwyer's gift joins

major recent contributions from the Benaroya family, the Haub family, Dale Chihuly, Paul Marioni, and Anne Gould Hauberg."

The Vasiliki and William Dwyer Collection is the second large-scale bequest of Northwestern art and funds from prominent Seattle art collectors to TAM since January. Among the works are paintings by notable artists such as [William Acheff](#), [Kenneth Callahan](#), [Richard Gilkey](#), [William Ivey](#), [Leo Kenney](#), [Frank Okada](#), and [Ambrose Patterson](#); sculptures by [Julie Speidel](#) and [Margaret Ford](#); a key collage by [Paul Horiuchi](#); mixed media by [John Franklin Koenig](#) and [Wesley Wehr](#); encaustic by [Joseph Goldberg](#); and photography by [Johsel Namkung](#).

Vasiliki Dwyer has been a lifelong learner and arts lover who studied art history, drawing, and watercolor. Born in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, she said "I decided in third grade that I wanted to travel the whole world and learn as much as possible. Travel became my passion, along with music, art, and literature." She frequently visited the Montreal Museum of Art and took classes at McGill University. After relocating to Seattle, she attended University of Washington's law school, where "I sat next to Bill Dwyer in Evidence class. It was spring, we fell in love, and we couldn't seem to make it to our finals." The couple moved to New York where their life was full of music, opera, and museums. Vasiliky worked at the United Nations and Bill finished law school. They also lived in Europe for two years, where she began to collect international works

of art. The couple made Seattle their longtime home base, and filled a large home with art, music, and the joys of rearing three children. When the time came to downsize, they sold and made gifts of many works of art. “I kept my Northwest collection because many of these artists were great friends,” Vasiliki said.

Having visited TAM after its 2014 expansion, Vasiliky said, “I decided that the appropriate place for my Northwest collection is TAM. I was delighted with what had been done and I loved the building, the people, and the management. I knew my collection would be in good hands. It is absolutely the perfect place for my collection in honor of my family and my husband.” She added, “All of these artists are being kept together. I’m very happy about that.”

The Dwyer’s were active supporters of the gallery scene in Seattle. Vasiliki frequently visited Richard White Gallery in Pioneer Square, and White introduced her to many artists, leading to growing friendships among the arts community. She continued to purchase works from [Foster/White](#), [Woodside/Braseth](#), and Davidson galleries among others, and visited with artists in their studios, buying works directly.

John Braseth, Director of the [Woodside/Braseth Gallery](#) in Seattle, recalled “Vasi and Bill Dwyer were the rare couple that that took time out of their extremely busy lives to make art viewing a regular priority. They were in the right place and the right time to collect important art by the most influential living artists in the Pacific Northwest. They became friends with many of the artists, including Bill Ivey, Leo Kenney, John Koenig, Richard Gilkey , Frank Okada, Paul Horiuchi, Margaret Ford, and Julie Speidel just to name a few.” He added, “I’m not surprised by this generous gift from the Dwyers and I’m especially pleased that the collection will stay intact and be shown regionally and loaned perhaps nationally and internationally. It was always a joy to have this wonderful and glamorous couple visit our gallery on Saturday afternoons. Their excitement and enthusiasm for art and life is infectious.”

TAM’s Curator of Collections and Special Exhibitions, Margaret Bullock, underscored the relevance of these works to the museum’s vision. “TAM’s mission is to build a collection that reflects and interprets the rich art history of the Pacific Northwest and broader western region. This gift better enables us to achieve that vision. These new works will deepen TAM’s existing representation of artists who have been truly significant in developing the unique artistic identity of the Pacific Northwest. Other artists in the collection have been on our wish list, so we are very pleased to be able to add them.”

A Washington native, [William Dwyer](#) grew up in Seattle and practiced as a prominent trial lawyer there for more than three decades, building a reputation for intelligence, humility, compassion, and fairness. In 1976, he was hired by the State of Washington in a lawsuit responding to the abrupt departure of Seattle’s American League baseball team; the settlement led to a baseball franchise and the Seattle Mariners. He served the public as a federal judge for 15 years, leaving a noteworthy legacy. In 1991, he ruled against government issued logging permits on public land, saving hundreds of thousands of acres of ancient forests and supporting endangered species such as the Northern spotted owl. Like Vasiliki, his personal interests were broad; he was a partner in an oyster house, an active outdoorsman, a published novelist, and an actor with a love of Shakespeare. Bill and Vasiliki were married for 49 years.

In the world of museums, a “promised gift” is a contractual agreement between a donor and a museum identifying specific items that will be donated to the museum upon the donor’s passing. In this way, the items become a part of the museum’s collection while still available for the enjoyment of the donor. The donor has the security of knowing the works will be well cared for and shared with the community for the benefit of future generations; and the museum can begin to plan for the future use of and education around the works.

The promised gift of the Vasiliki and William Dwyer Collection highlights TAM’s growing reputation and builds recognition of the City of Tacoma as an ever-brightening cultural arts beacon.

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Image Credit:

Julie Speidel, *Dromara*, 1996. Bronze with steel base. 33 x 13 x 8 inches. Promised gift of the Vasiliki and William Dwyer Collection, Tacoma Art Museum. Image courtesy Speidel Studio.

About Tacoma Art Museum

Celebrating 80 years, Tacoma Art Museum is an anchor in the city’s downtown and a gathering space for connecting people through art. TAM’s collection contains nearly 5,000 works, with an emphasis on the art and artists of the Northwest and broader western region. The collection includes the largest retrospective museum collection of glass art by Tacoma native Dale Chihuly on continued view; the most significant collection of jewelry by Northwest artists; key holdings in 19th century European and 20th century American art; and one of the finest collections of Japanese woodblock prints on the West Coast. In 2014, TAM welcomed a gift of 295 works of western American art in the Haub Family Collection, one of the premier collections in the nation and the first major western American art museum collection in the Northwest. The Haub gift also included \$20 M for new galleries and endowed funds. In January 2016, TAM announced the gift of the Benaroya Collection, including 225 works of art. The Benaroya gift also includes nearly \$14 M in funding for new gallery space to showcase the collection and an endowment for a dedicated curator and care of the collection. The Haub Family Galleries opened in 2014; the Benaroya addition is expected to open in fall 2018.

HOURS – Tuesdays–Sundays 10 am–5 pm, Third Thursdays 10 am–8 pm; Third Thursdays free from 5-8 pm.

ADMISSION – Adult \$15, Student/Military/Senior (65+) \$13, Family \$40 (2 adults and up to 4 children under 18).

Children 5 and under free. Members always free.

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