

TACOMA ART MUSEUM

MEDIA RELEASE

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RARE WORK BY 19TH CENTURY ARTIST COMES HOME TO THE NORTHWEST: MAJOR PURCHASE BY TACOMA ART MUSEUM



Tacoma, WA — [Tacoma Art Museum](http://TacomaArtMuseum.org) (TAM) is pleased to announce the purchase of a significant, rare landscape painting by artist [Grafton Tyler Brown](http://GraftonTylerBrown.com) (1841–1918), whose works are highly sought by museums. The artist has strong Northwest connections; Brown painted *A Canyon River with Pines and Figures (Yellowstone)*, circa 1886, while living in Portland, Oregon. He traveled extensively throughout the Pacific Northwest and the broader western region.

The stunning scene depicts the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone with pine forests in the foreground, rugged sunlit rock walls leading the eye into the distance, and the Yellowstone River winding through the canyon. At nearly five feet wide, it will have a big impact in the galleries at TAM, where it will be unveiled on Wednesday, May 25, in the Liliane and Christian Haub Gallery. The painting has arrived in time to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service, and is a fitting tribute to this American institution. Yellowstone is commonly regarded as the world's first national park.

“We are delighted to acquire Brown’s stunning landscape painting. This is our first significant purchase to complement the Haub Family Collection of Western American Art since the opening of the Haub Family Galleries in November, 2014. We are grateful for the community support that made it possible to acquire this exceptional museum quality work,” stated Stephanie Stebich, TAM’s Executive Director. “This painting beautifully links TAM’s focus on the art of the

Northwest with the art of the broader western region. It helps us to tell a more complete story of Northwestern art and artists.”

Brown was one of few 19th century African American artists to work in the landscape genre. His coveted works are among the collections of the [Smithsonian American Art Museum](#), [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#), and [Oakland Museum of California](#), as well as the [Washington State History Museum](#) in Tacoma which has a Brown painting of Mt. Tahoma (Rainier). The first retrospective exhibition of his work, [Grafton Tyler Brown: Visualizing California and the Pacific Northwest](#), was presented by the [California African American Museum](#), Los Angeles in 2003. It traveled to Baltimore, San Francisco, and the Washington State History Museum.

“Grafton Tyler Brown has long been on TAM’s curatorial wish list, but his works have been rather scarce on the market until recently,” said Margaret Bullock, curator of collections and special exhibitions at TAM. “This is a lucky confluence of both the chance to acquire an evocative major work by this artist and having the funds to make it possible.” The Tacoma Pierce County Black Collective and the museum’s Art Acquisition Fund supported the purchase.

Brown was born in 1841 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. As a teen, he sought training as a [lithographer](#) in Philadelphia, and became a painter after moving to the West. Primarily a self-taught painter, he honed his skills by looking closely at and copying the works of other artists. The attention to detail that he’d learned as a draughtsman can be seen in the geological and environmental elements of Brown’s landscape images, alongside more loosely painted passages that showcase his fluid brushwork and sense of color.

By the mid-1800s as the [California Gold Rush](#) was in full swing, Brown had traveled to San Francisco and established a lithography company, creating distinctive designs for maps, sheet music, mining stock certificates, membership certificates, book illustrations, and invoices for companies such as [Wells, Fargo & Co.](#); [Ghirardelli Chocolate Company](#); [Levi Strauss & Co.](#); and [J.A. Folger & Co.](#) (Folger’s Coffee). Recently, Wells Fargo included a piece of letterhead featuring Brown’s work among a \$1 million gift of historical artifacts from its corporate collection to the new [Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) (NMAAHC). The Wells Fargo artifact collection, including Brown’s work, is scheduled as an inaugural exhibition when NMAAHC opens later this year.

In the 1870s, Brown sold his company and moved to Canada, then to Portland, Oregon, where he opened a studio and joined the leadership of the Portland Art Society. He traveled throughout the Pacific Northwest and broader western region, including the areas that became [Yellowstone](#) and [Yosemite](#) national parks. In the 1890s, he moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, where he remained until his death.

Along with Brown’s painting, TAM welcomed 20 additional significant gifts of Northwest art to its collection:

- Four mural studies from 1944 by [Kenneth Callahan](#), featuring scenes of the timber industry. TAM’s collection includes two large mural panels related to the studies, on view in the museum’s Art Resource Center, and 14 additional works by Callahan. Identified as

one of Seattle's Northwest Mystics – a group of four painters who shared a muted palette and a strong artistic interest in modern ideas and Asian aesthetics – Callahan's work was included in the first Whitney Biennial exhibition in 1933, an auspicious start to a distinguished career.

- A 1982 pastel, charcoal and dry pigment work by [Norman Lundin](#), *Blackboard, Blue Cup and Orange Tablecloth*. Lundin is professor emeritus at University of Washington where he has taught since 1964. He has had numerous solo exhibitions at museums and galleries, and his work has been included in multiple TAM exhibitions such as the 2013 exhibition *Creating the New Northwest*, 2012 *Best of the Northwest*, and 1995 *New to the Northwest Collection*, among others.
- [Robert Helm](#)'s 1990 oil on panel *Bone Yard*. One of Washington's most acclaimed artists, Helm was known for finely detailed surrealist images painted on wood, wood inlays, and the exceptional craftsmanship of his frames which are often integral to the painting. He exhibited work across the United States and internationally. He earned a Master of Fine Arts degree at University of Washington and taught there from 1971-1984. TAM featured a retrospective of his work in 1995. The museum's collection includes a number of Helm's works; among them is a portfolio of 18 prints that accompany poems by Northwestern writer [Loretta Anawalt](#).
- A selection of 13 works on paper including watercolors and prints by the important historical artist [Alexander Phimister Proctor](#), augmenting Proctor's bronze sculptures in TAM's Haub Family Collection of Western American Art (on view in the Haub Family Galleries). This gift from the Proctor Foundation highlights the artist's work in Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska.
- One work of studio art glass, [William Morris](#)'s 1992 *Lace Urn*, a blown glass vessel in a metal stand. Morris is known for his innovative techniques in creating textured and unique glass surface finishes. *Lace Urn* compliments other studio art glass works by Morris in TAM's collection.

A selection of these works will be rotated into the exhibition [What's New at TAM? Recent Gifts to the Collection](#) in early June and on view through September 18, 2016.



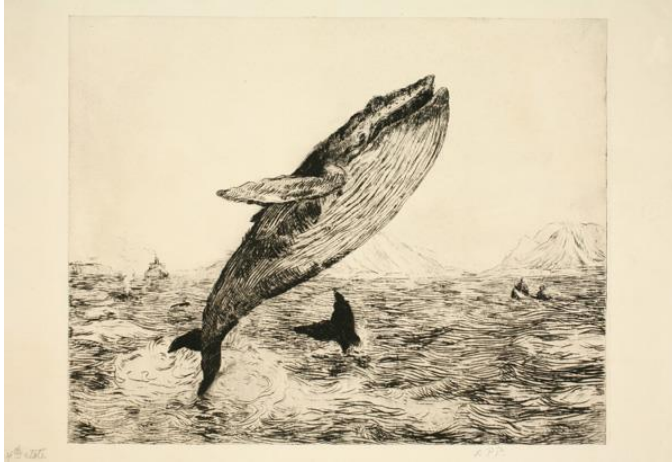


Image Credits:

Grafton Tyler Brown, *A Canyon River with Pines and Figures (Yellowstone)*, circa 1886. Oil on canvas, 35¾ x 56 inches. Tacoma Art Museum, Museum purchase with funds from the Art Acquisition Fund and the Tacoma Pierce County Black Collective, 2016.5.

Robert Helm, *Bone Yard*, 1990. Oil on panel with wood inlay frame, 39 x 60 inches. Tacoma Art Museum, Gift of William K. and Barbara N. Street, 2016.2.2.

Kenneth Callahan, *Mural Studies (Logger with Red Hat)*, circa 1944. Oil on paper, 14½ x 24 inches. Tacoma Art Museum, Gift of Gaye Piggott, 2016.1.3.

Alexander Phmister Proctor, *Untitled (Breaching whale, Alaska)*, not dated. Etching, 7⅞ x 9⅞ inches. Tacoma Art Museum, Gift of Proctor Foundation, 2016.3.12.

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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 more than 4,700 works, with an emphasis on the art and artists of the Northwest and broader American west. 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

ADMISSION – Adult \$14; Student (6-17), Military, Senior (65+) \$12; Family \$35 (2 adults and up to 4 children under 18). Children 5 and under free. **Third Thursdays free from 5–8 pm.** Members always free.

CONTACT – 253-272-4258, <http://www.TacomaArtMuseum.org>