



New Orleans Museum of Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NOMA Presents *Style, Form and Function: Glass from the Collection of Jack M. Sawyer*

***More than 200 pieces from New Orleans collector on view Feb. 8 to April 26;
Frederick J. Brown and Studio Ceramics also open Sunday***

[Hi-res images available upon request.]

NEW ORLEANS, La. (Tuesday, February 3, 2009)—Opening to the public on February 8 and continuing through April 26, the New Orleans Museum of Art presents *Style, Form and Function: Glass from the Collection of Jack M. Sawyer*. This major exhibition showcases more than 200 works, many of which are the miraculous survivors of a 30-foot storm surge that inundated Sawyer's home in Waveland, Miss., on August 29, 2005.

The pieces in the exhibition represent Sawyer's range of interests. While the collection has always been strong in 19th century examples, it also expanded over the years to include excellent works of the Art Nouveau style, the Vienna Sezession movement, Art Deco and Functionalist designs of post-World War II Scandinavia and Italy, and even studio glass from the 1960s to the present.

Style, Form and Function: Glass from the Collection of Jack M. Sawyer will be on view in the first-floor Ella West Freeman Gallery. The New Orleans Museum of Art remains free to Louisiana residents through the generosity of The Helis Foundation. Hours are Wednesdays, noon to 8 p.m., and Thursdays to Sundays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

A Members' Preview of *Style, Form and Function: Glass from the Collection of Jack M. Sawyer* is scheduled for Saturday, February 7, from 6-9 p.m. Also opening February 8, with a preview on February 7, is ***Frederick J. Brown: New Portraits of Jazz Greats***, an exhibition of paintings depicting 20th century musical giants including the likes of **Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra** and **Billie Holiday**.

See further in the release for details on another new decorative arts exhibition, *Expression, Innovation and Design: Studio Ceramics from the Permanent Collection*, also opening Sunday.

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Public Programs

Sunday, February 8, 2 p.m.—Sunday Lecture

- “Nothing But the Best: The Jack M. Sawyer Collection,” a lecture by Curator of Decorative Arts John W. Keefe (2 p.m., Stern Auditorium)
- A slide-illustrated lecture will highlight the Sawyer Collection, as well as discuss the history of glass collecting
- Free admission to Louisiana residents with photo identification

Wednesday, February 18, 5-8 p.m.—Mid-Week in Mid-City

- “The Jack M. Sawyer Collection,” a gallery tour by Curator of Decorative Arts John W. Keefe (6 p.m., Ella West Freeman Gallery)
- Cash bar (5-8 p.m., Great Hall)
- Free admission to Louisiana residents with photo identification

More about Jack M. Sawyer

- Jack M. Sawyer began collecting glass in the 1960s. Today he maintains that glass remains as great a source of mystery and visual pleasure as it was when he began collecting nearly half a century ago.
- Decorating a house in the 1960s, Sawyer was originally seeking attractive, reasonably priced decorative accessories.
- Like many another intelligent and astute collector, Sawyer was far ahead of prevailing wisdom in his realization that worthy pieces of glass could be acquired for little money.
- Sawyer, a respected television broadcasting executive with WVUE and WYES, and later a successful realtor, collected glass for his residences in New Orleans and on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.
- One of Sawyer’s earliest acquisitions was a cameo glass vase by the noted French Art Nouveau glassmaker Emile Gallé (1846–1904) for the now-incredible sum of \$8.
- An earlier exhibition, *COLLECTORS CHOICE: Selections of Glass, 1830–1930, from the Collection of Jack M. Sawyer*, was presented at NOMA in Spring 1989. Some of the pieces in *Style, Form and Function* were included in *COLLECTORS CHOICE*, while others have never been seen publicly before.
- At the time of *COLLECTORS CHOICE*, Sawyer announced his intention to bequeath the glass to NOMA. Later he decided that it would be far more enjoyable to give the collection to the Museum during his lifetime and thus be able to witness integration into the distinguished permanent collection.

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- On August 29, 2005, Jack Sawyer's house in Waveland, Mississippi, was totally flooded from a 30-foot storm surge. A barrier of storm debris impeded the flood waters, so that his house slowly filled with water, which then slowly receded. All of the glass objects in the house floated off tabletops and shelves, were swirled around, then gently deposited in new locations. Only about ten percent of the collection was broken beyond repair, leaving nearly six hundred works intact.

More about *Expression, Innovation and Design*

Also opening Sunday, *Expression, Innovation and Design: Studio Ceramics from the Permanent Collection* highlights an important chapter in the history of American ceramics. Although the Museum's collection of American studio pottery is national in scope, it should not be surprising that a number of its pieces are by Southern artists. The selection of work in *Expression, Innovation and Design* provides a record of the breadth of expression present in the studio pottery movement as well as a wide generational spread. The works also reflect the vigor and flexibility of the studio pottery movement.

Since 1986, the Museum has built a nationally important collection of American art pottery from 1884 to 1965. As that collection was assembled, the Museum was aware of a succeeding studio pottery phenomenon and sought out examples of that movement as well. A number of significant collectors in the region emerged and supported the Museum's quest, including **Eva Ingersoll Gatling** of Alabama, **Hugh J. Smith Jr.** of New Orleans, **Harriet von Breton** of Mississippi, and **Robert and Margaret Willson** of Texas. Several practicing ceramists also responded with gifts of their work, all of which are part of this exhibition.

Expression, Innovation and Design remains on view in the second-floor Lupin Cameo Gallery through June 7.

About NOMA and the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden

The New Orleans Museum of Art, founded in 1910 by Isaac Delgado, houses more than 30,000 art objects encompassing 4,000 years of world art. Works from the permanent collection, along with continuously changing temporary exhibitions, are on view in the Museum's 46 galleries Wednesdays from noon to 8 p.m. and Thursdays to Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission to the Museum is free to Louisiana residents through the generosity of The Helis Foundation.

Admission to the adjacent Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden, featuring work by 58 artists, including several of the 20th century's great master sculptors, is always free during regular Museum hours.

The New Orleans Museum of Art and the Besthoff Sculpture Garden are fully accessible to handicapped visitors and wheelchairs are available from the front desk.

For more information, call (504) 659-4100 or visit www.noma.org.