

ASIAN ART MUSEUM
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SAN FRANCISCO COUPLE DONATE CONTEMPORARY CERAMICS TO ASIAN ART MUSEUM

Gift from Phyllis Kempner and David Stein expands museum's collection of contemporary art

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 2, 2015—The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco has received a significant gift of 19 contemporary artworks from local philanthropists, the first installment of a promised donation of more than 100 pieces, the museum announced today.

The gift is particularly timely: The museum, home to one of the greatest collections of Asian antiquities outside Asia, has recently made a concerted effort to enhance its modern and contemporary holdings.

San Francisco couple Phyllis Kempner and David Stein have given the museum 10 Japanese ceramics, one Korean ceramic, one bronze sculpture and a number of prints. Kempner and Stein say they plan to eventually donate the entirety of their extensive Japanese contemporary ceramics collection, which will considerably enhance the museum's holdings in this area.

The pieces arrive as the museum celebrates its “summer of contemporary,” a period focusing on objects made in the past 50 years. One of the highlights of the couple's gift, *Vase*, a porcelain from 1985 by Kim Yik-yung of Korea, is included in *First Look: Collecting Contemporary at the Asian*, a special exhibition showcasing the museum's recent acquisitions. Kim's piece emphasizes the whiteness of porcelain clay used in traditional Korean ceramics and the aesthetics of modern forms, overlapping the traditional and the contemporary. *First Look* is on view Sept. 4 through Oct. 11, 2015.

“Collectors have many meaningful reasons for giving: generosity, a desire to increase an artist's exposure, a love for a particular genre or a deeply felt connection to an institution,” says Jay Xu, director of the Asian Art Museum. “For Phyllis and David, it was all these things, and we're grateful for their generosity.”

Image: David Stein and Phyllis Kempner with *Blue and black bowl*, 1990–2014, by Maeda Masahiro, and *Kodo (Beat)*, 2011, by Mihara Ken, two of their gifted ceramics. Photo by Quincy Stamper.

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Other highlights include *Kodo (Beat)*, an unglazed stoneware piece from 2011 by Mihara Ken; a 2014 blue and black porcelain bowl by Maeda Masahiro; and a faceted stoneware vase by Tadashi Nishihata dating to 2013. All three works are currently on view in the museum's Japan galleries.

The couple—both psychologists and longtime San Franciscans are no strangers to the art world, having been involved with SFMOMA's Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art for many years. A dozen years ago or so, their collecting shifted noticeably to Asia, and particularly to ceramics.

"When we started, we were mostly drawn to traditional forms," Kempner says. "But we've become increasingly interested in the more sculptural area. We tend to like either very expressionistic work or quite minimal reductive pieces."

"We care a lot about the Asian, its present and its future," Kempner says. "And we expect to be giving a certain number of pieces every year." Stein adds that he hopes they might inspire other collectors to do likewise. But primarily, he says, "we hope that it helps the museum build a real niche collection in contemporary ceramics."

ABOUT THE ASIAN ART MUSEUM

The Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is one of San Francisco's premier arts institutions and home to a world-renowned collection of more than 18,000 Asian art treasures spanning 6,000 years of history. Through rich art experiences, centered on historic and contemporary artworks, the Asian Art Museum unlocks the past for visitors, bringing it to life while serving as a catalyst for new art, new creativity and new thinking.

Information: 415.581.3500 or www.asianart.org

Location: 200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Hours: The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10 AM to 5 PM. From Feb. 26 through Oct. 8, 2015, hours are extended on Thursdays until 9 PM. Closed Mondays, as well as New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

General Admission: FREE for museum members, \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors (65+), college students with ID, and youths (13–17). FREE for children under 12 and SFUSD students with ID. General admission on Thursdays after 5 PM is \$5 for all visitors (except those under 12, SFUSD students, and museum members, who are always admitted FREE). General admission is FREE to all on Target First Free Sundays (the first Sunday of every month). A surcharge may apply for admission to special exhibitions.

Access: The Asian Art Museum is wheelchair accessible. For more information regarding access: 415.581.3598; TDD: 415.861.2035.