

ABBY ALDRICH ROCKEFELLER CURATORSHIP OF ASIAN ART ESTABLISHED

CAMBRIDGE, MA (April 5, 2007)—David Rockefeller has agreed to establish a new Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Curatorship of Asian Art within the Harvard University Art Museums, Thomas W. Lentz, the Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director, announced today. This new position has been made possible because of significant appreciation in the endowment originally contributed in 1957 by David Rockefeller S.B. '36, LL.D. (honorary) '69, when he established the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Professorship of Asian Art in honor of his mother. The Rockefeller Curator will join the Department of Asian Art at Harvard's Arthur M. Sackler Museum, led by Alan J. Dworsky Curator of Chinese Art Robert D. Mowry.

Lentz added, "I am deeply grateful to David Rockefeller for agreeing to extend the reach of his gift. It allows the Art Museums to capitalize on one of its greatest strengths—our Asian collections—by providing resources to bring this collection to greater light as a tool for teaching, research, and outreach. We are also deeply honored to pay tribute to Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, a seminal figure in the art and museum world, with a curatorship in her name here at Harvard."

The Art Museums' Department of Asian Art houses one of the finest collections of Asian Art in the United States and the finest such collection at a university-based museum anywhere in the world. The holdings include more than 17,000 works, with particular strengths in the fields of Chinese archaic jades, bronze ritual vessels, Buddhist sculptures and ceramics; Korean paintings, sculptures, and ceramics; and Japanese lacquer, calligraphy, and woodblock prints.

The Rockefeller curatorship is broadly defined and will provide resources for a senior curator to study, research, exhibit, and publish on any discipline within the Asian Art collection (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indian). The curator will also collaborate with relevant faculty from the Department of the History of Art and Architecture.

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (1874–1948) was the wife of John D. Rockefeller Jr. and a prominent arts patron in her own right. She and her husband began to collect Asian art in the early 1920s. Hundreds of her Japanese woodblock prints were later given to the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, where a gallery was named for her. Also in the early 1920s, she started collecting American folk art. Her impressive collection of 18th, 19th, and early 20th century art and artifacts formed the basis for the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Museum at Colonial Williamsburg, an important colonial town in Virginia, which her husband began restoring in the late 1920s.

Mrs. Rockefeller made perhaps her greatest mark in the area of modern art. She began seriously to collect the work of contemporary European and American artists in the mid-1920s, and joined a group of like-minded collectors in 1928 to establish the Museum of Modern Art in New York. MoMA, as it is widely known, opened in 1929. Mrs. Rockefeller served as a trustee until 1945. She and the Fogg Art Museum's legendary associate director, Paul Sachs, selected Alfred Barr as MoMA's first director.

The Rockefeller Curatorship continues a grand tradition of generosity by David Rockefeller at Harvard, including the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, the Peggy and David Rockefeller Professorship for the Study of Latin America, The Peggy Rockefeller Visiting Scholar Fellowship, and the David Rockefeller Professorship in Latin American Studies, among many other gifts.

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