

ACKLANDARTMUSEUM

For Immediate Release: 15 April 2015

Media contact: Emily Bowles, Director of Communications, 919.843.3675, emily.bowles@unc.edu

More information: ackland.org/exhibition/duchamp

Ackland Art Museum announces Landmark Acquisition of a Twentieth-Century Masterpiece

Newly-acquired work by Marcel Duchamp to be on view April 24

CHAPEL HILL, North Carolina — The Ackland Art Museum at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill announced today that it has acquired what is widely considered to be a masterpiece of twentieth-century art by Marcel Duchamp. One of the seminal artists of the period and a contemporary of Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse, Duchamp (1887-1968) decisively affected the most radical and conceptual tendencies in art of his time, offering pointed, witty, and enigmatic critiques of visual representation, the status of the work of art, the role of creativity, and the place of art institutions.

The newly-acquired work of art by Duchamp, entitled *From or by Marcel Duchamp or Rose Sélavy*, is a so-called “boîte” (box) containing 80 meticulously crafted, small-scale reproductions of the artist’s works. These range from his avant-garde paintings, such as the famous *Nude Descending a Staircase* which scandalized the New York art world at the Armory Show in 1913, to his provocative “ready-mades,” including the 1917 *Fountain*, an inverted urinal signed with the pseudonym “R. Mutt.” This exhibition has been made possible by the Ackland National Advisory Board.

Marcel Duchamp worked on preparing these miniature reproductions in France in the years around the outbreak of World War II. He then smuggled them out of occupied Paris when he immigrated to the United States in 1942.

Envisioned by the artist as “a box in which all my works would be collected and mounted like a small museum, a portable museum, so to speak,” Duchamp issued more than 300 of these custom-built boxes—in seven series with slight variations—between 1941 and 1968. The first series incorporated a leather carrying case, hence the common title “boîte-en-valise.” The Ackland’s box is a virtually pristine example from the sixth series, an edition of 75 created in 1966.

“Much of contemporary art makes no sense without acknowledging and experiencing the foundational role of Marcel Duchamp,” commented Peter Nisbet, the Ackland Art Museum’s chief curator and interim director. “We are thrilled to add this essential dimension to the Ackland’s collection with this very significant acquisition, a work that literally encapsulates virtually an entire oeuvre by a true master of modern art.”

The work will be on view from 24 April through 7 June 2015, as part of the Ackland’s *Adding to the Mix* exhibition series. Since 2011, *Adding to the Mix* shows have presented recent acquisitions in the context of resonant works already in the Ackland’s collection. In this case, the context is provided by the Ackland’s entire surrounding installation of the “Western Tradition” of painting and sculpture which Duchamp so effectively challenged and subverted.

Also on View: *The Land of No Things: Selected Works by the MFA Class of 2015*

Also on view from 24 April through 7 June 2015 will be an exhibition of the work of eleven artists completing their Master of Fine Arts degrees at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

“Presenting this box in parallel with an exhibition of the newest contemporary art by the most recent generation is our deliberate invitation to our visitors to engage with the continuing vitality of Duchamp’s enigmatic and inexhaustible legacy in today’s creativity,” said Nisbet.

The group show, entitled *The Land of No Things*, is curated by arts writer and independent curator Chris Vitiello. It examines the conflicted position that the artists in the show feel as cultural producers in an era of hyper-production and environmental exhaustion. “These artists are wary of objects while also being, as visual artists, individuals who express themselves by producing objects. If they could make no things, they would.”

Included in the exhibition are works by Peter Barnett, Anna Delgado, Mijoo Kim, Katy Mixon, Naomi Elizabeth O’Donnell, Eric Pickersgill, Shane Smith, Sydney Steen, Allison Tierney, Amy White, and Gesche Wüffel.

An opening reception will be held on Thursday, 23 April 2015, from 5:30 to 7:00 PM. The reception is free and open to the public.

About the Ackland

The Ackland Art Museum is located on the historic campus of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Ackland’s holdings consist of more than 17,000 works of art, featuring significant collections of European masterworks, twentieth-century and contemporary art, African art, North Carolina pottery, and folk art. In addition, the Ackland has North Carolina’s premier collections of Asian art and works on paper (drawings, prints, and photographs). As an academic unit of the University, the Ackland serves broad local, state, and national constituencies.

Admission and Hours

Admission to the Ackland Art Museum is always free, with donations accepted.

The Ackland is open Wednesday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and Sunday 1:00 to 5:00 PM. The Museum is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Location

The Ackland Art Museum is located on South Columbia Street, just south of East Franklin Street, on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Detailed directions are available at www.ackland.org or by calling 919.966.5736.

Parking is available at several nearby municipal and private parking decks, and at meters on Franklin Street. Detailed parking information and a map are available at www.parkonthehill.com.

#####