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[Press Kit and Images](#)

**The Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts Unveils a Major Transformation of the Harriet and Warren
Stephens Galleries**

*New Works Are Now on View, Including Recent Acquisitions, Extraordinary Loans, and Significant Gifts to
the Museum's Permanent Collection*



May 20, 2026 (LITTLE ROCK, Ark.) – Three years after its grand opening, the [Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts \(AMFA\)](#) reveals a major transformation of the Harriet and Warren Stephens Galleries, showcasing new acquisitions and major gifts from the museum's permanent collection on view for the first time. Complementing masterpieces from the AMFA vaults, additional works loaned from other collections and cultural institutions were intentionally selected for inclusion in the galleries to present works by international artists rarely seen within the state.

Each gallery focuses on a central theme and highlights the strengths of the [AMFA Foundation Collection](#), inviting guests to gain a deeper understanding of art and artists across history in an approachable way.

New curatorial research is introduced via expanded text panels, and new acquisitions are indicated as such on wall labels. Works by American artists that are included in an [America 250](#)-themed audio tour playlist accessible on the museum's [mobile guide](#) are also denoted on wall labels throughout the galleries. The current installation will remain on view through February 2027, and admission to AMFA is always free.

"AMFA's latest installation in the Stephens Galleries underscores the intentionality behind how the museum's permanent collection continues to grow. By making modern and historical voices from around the world accessible to our community, the museum can continue to educate and inspire generations of guests," shares Dr. Victoria Ramirez, AMFA's Chief Executive Officer. "Transformative projects like these are extremely complex endeavors, so we extend our sincere gratitude to all the individuals who have gifted works to the collection, and to Terri and Chuck Erwin for their steadfast support in helping to make this installation possible."

A key collecting area for AMFA is contemporary craft, and in honor of a recent gift from [John and Robyn Horn](#), a number of new works by leading craft artists who are masters of their media are part of the new installation in the galleries. Examples include a carved porcelain wall sculpture by Marc Leuthold, a blown glass platter by Benjamin Moore, and a glazed porcelain sculpture by Yih-Wen Kuo. These works are on view next to exciting new acquisitions, such as a powerful woodcut print by Little Rock native LaToya M. Hobbs donated by Catherine and Michael Mayton, and titian paper bead embroideries by Argentinian artist Diego Miccige.

Craft interventions and media mixing are continuous curatorial practices throughout the galleries, often pairing or grouping classic and contemporary works to showcase the evolution of artistic expression and the modern-day relevance of historical themes. One such example is a carved mahogany sculpture of a table by Wendell Castle from the 20th century, placed next to a series of 17th- and 18th-century oil portraits of European noblemen, and a 21st-century acrylic painting – a new acquisition by Ronald Hall – reframing a figure from a Black Panther protest as a Surrealist portrait.

Other interesting pairings on view in the Galleries are designed to accentuate fan favorites and key holdings of the AMFA Foundation Collection. For example, guests will see that *Standing Bull*, AMFA's monumental painting by abstract expressionist Elaine de Kooning, has a wonderful new neighbor in *Pac* by color field painter Sam Gilliam, on loan from Masterworks in New York. As a trailblazer for female artists in midcentury New York, de Kooning and her work directly precede Gilliam's experimentation with abstract expressionism at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, resulting in the innovative painting techniques for which he is most well-known.

Another pointed pairing in the galleries is a new 18th-century portrait in oil by George Romney – on loan from The Schorr Collection in London – that is now hanging next to AMFA’s masterpiece *Lady Willoughby de Broke*, also by Romney. These works are posed together on a rich burgundy wall, drawing the eye and enticing guests to linger and compare the two.

AMFA’s presentation of modern and contemporary art also continues to expand, as evidenced by the installation of a new four-paneled monochromatic work by James Hayward, donated by [Martin Muller](#), and a geometric painting by Carmen Herrera on loan from Masterworks. Other new acquisitions commemorate recent AMFA exhibitions, like a boldly colored photograph by Kwame Brathwaite ([Kwame Brathwaite: The 1970’s](#)) and a cubist oil painting by Esphyr Slobodkina ([Architects of Being: Louise Nevelson and Esphyr Slobodkina](#)).

Also new to the galleries are three 17th-century French works on paper, part of a major gift of over 80 historical prints, study drawings, and paintings from Tobin Sparling and Dr. Michael Mistic of Little Rock. Marking the third major gift of art AMFA has received in the last year, the donation also includes a 19th-century landscape painting by Barbizon artist Louis Français, a circa 1941 oil painting by Belgian surrealist Suzanne van Damme, a biblical-themed woodcut by Bernard Salomon from 1553, an engraving by Jean Le Pautre of fireworks over Versailles from 1676, a 19th-century study drawing of dogs by Rosa Bonheur, and a collage by Marcel Duchamp, one of the most influential artists of the 20th century.

Dr. Catherine Walworth, the Jackye and Curtis Finch, Jr., Curator of Drawings at AMFA, worked closely with Sparling to make selections for the two-part gift from the couple’s vast art collection. “It is remarkable to see Tobin’s strategic mind at work – he has tracked the way images circulated in a pre-digital world, mapping the development of printmaking over centuries and accumulating examples from key historical innovators, as well as drawings and other unique works by a range of prominent artists,” Walworth says.

Sparling is currently a volunteer AMFA docent and serves on the AMFA board of trustees. He holds advanced degrees in rare books librarianship, art history, and law from Columbia University, and worked as a rare book catalog librarian at the Yale Center for British Art from 1977 until 1981. From 1981 until 1985, he was a specialist in the Print Collection of the New York Public Library. Sparling then became a law professor, retiring to Little Rock in 2019 to be closer to Mistic’s family.

An artist himself, Mistic is a Gulf War veteran who served for 33 years in the National Guard and retired as a lieutenant colonel with honors. He worked for over 30 years in the U.S. Veterans Health Care System, culminating in his role as a nurse practitioner managing a long-term care unit.

Current Exhibitions

A Month of Sundays: Art and the Persistence of Time

February 19 – September 6, 2026

Will Barnet: Seasons of Life

May 2 – October 11, 2026

On Breathing: Eija-Liisa Ahtila

December 13, 2025 – May 24, 2026

Anne Lindberg: passage

April 22, 2023 – July 4, 2027

Nathalie Miebach: Under a Restless Sky

August 2, 2025 – March 28, 2027

Upcoming Exhibitions

65th Young Arkansas Artists

May 23 – July 26, 2026

Aftermaths: Mat Collishaw

June 6 – November 15, 2026

Material Nature: John and Robyn Horn Collection

August 15, 2026 – April 25, 2027

The Age of Anxiety: German Expressionism in Art and Film

October 9, 2026 – January 10, 2027

Soviet Cinema: Mikhail Dlugach and 1920s Poster Design

October 24, 2026 – March 14, 2027

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Sponsors

The Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts extends its gratitude to The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Roy and Christine Sturgis Charitable and Educational Trust for grant awards supporting stewardship and conservation of the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts Foundation Collection.

The permanent collection installation is supported in part by Terri and Chuck Erwin, with additional support by Jackye and Curtis Finch Jr.

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Artwork

James Hayward (San Francisco, California, 1943 - 2026, Moorpark, California), *Athenian (Naples Yellow/Cerulean Blue/Phthalo Green/Mars Orange)*, 1989, oil and wax on canvas on four wood panels, 80 x 280 in. (Each: 80 x 70 in.), Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts Foundation Collection: Gift of Martin Muller. 2025.031.069.a-d.

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About the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts

Founded in 1937, the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts is the largest cultural institution of its kind in the state, offering a unique blend of visual and performing arts experiences. AMFA is committed to featuring diverse media and artistic perspectives within its permanent collection as well as through rotating temporary exhibitions. AMFA's international collection spans eight centuries, with strengths in works on paper and contemporary craft, and includes notable holdings by artists from Arkansas, the South, and across the United States and Europe.

With a vibrant mix of ideas, cultures, people, and places, AMFA extends this commitment to diversity through the innovative Windgate Art School, a dynamic children's theatre and performing arts program, and community-focused educational programs for all ages. Located in Little Rock's oldest urban green space, MacArthur Park, AMFA's landmark building and grounds are designed by Studio Gang and SCAPE, in collaboration with Polk Stanley Wilcox Architects.