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DEBRA AND DENNIS SCHOLL TO GIFT ONE OF THE LARGEST PRIVATE ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTIONS IN U.S. TO THREE MUSEUMS ACROSS NORTH AMERICA

Prominent Miami-based art collectors give 200 contemporary Aboriginal Australian artworks to The Frost Art Museum FIU, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Nevada Museum of Art.

MIAMI, FL. – (October 18, 2017) For more than a dozen years, prominent Miami-based art collectors Debra and Dennis Scholl have focused their collecting attention on Aboriginal Australian contemporary works. This passion has enabled the couple to bolster the West's appetite for the extraordinary works by commissioning and then touring thematic shows to museums across the country. Now, they pledge to build a permanent bridge to narrow the cultural divide by gifting 200 pieces from their collection to three museums with which they are closely aligned: The Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum FIU in Miami; The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; and the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno.

The Scholl gift includes works by the most prominent Australian Aboriginal contemporary painters today, including Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjari, Paddy Bedford, Gulumbu Yunipingu, and Nongirringa Marawili. These trailblazing artists were inspired by their ancient cultural traditions to forge one of the most dynamic painting movements of recent times. Firmly rooted in Aboriginal life, their works resonate profoundly with the abstract painting of the 20th and 21st centuries.

The Frost Art Museum FIU and Nevada Museum of Art will each receive approximately 90 works. The Met will receive 19 works that will be integrated into the holdings of the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas and the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art.

After a long history of collecting international contemporary art, the Scholls' interest in Aboriginal Australian work was piqued when they began making wine in South Australia's Barossa Valley. During one of the couple's trips to the region, Rachel Kent, chief curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, directed Dennis to the Art Gallery of New South Wales to see the work on display.

"I turned the corner into the gallery and it was as if I had been struck by lightning," Dennis Scholl said. Debra and he immediately began to acquire the work from art centers across Australia, collectives where Aboriginal Australian artists come together in a contemporary setting to do what they have for 50,000 years: create culture.

"This is the longest art making tradition known to mankind," Dennis Scholl said. "For these communities, visual arts are a primary means of communication. That visual language, and the cultural stories being conveyed through the work, are an important part of the global conversation."

Dennis Scholl said that for far too long, Australian Aboriginal art received an exclusively ethnographic treatment. By collecting – and commissioning – works, and consulting closely with curators and scholars to organize exhibitions and books of the art, the Scholls have helped disrupt that approach and place it in the context of contemporary art globally.

Pg. 2; DEBRA AND DENNIS SCHOLL TO GIFT THE LARGEST, PRIVATE ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTION IN U.S. TO THREE MUSEUMS ACROSS NORTH AMERICA

Since 2014, the Scholls have lent the work to three sizeable museum exhibitions. Organized by the Nevada Museum of Art, the shows have toured or will tour to 16 museum venues. *No Boundaries* (2015-16) is comprised of contemporary desert painting by men. The men and women work separately in art centers, so the women's paintings are presented in *Marking the Infinite*, currently on tour. A new exhibition opening in 2019 entitled *The Inner World* will show 105 commissioned memorial poles from communities across Arnhem Land, in far northeast Australia.

Because the audience response to the exhibitions was so positive, the Scholls decided to give a portion of their collection to three museums they care about deeply. The Frost Art Museum is located at Dennis Scholl's alma mater, Florida International University, and is named for Phillip and Patricia Frost, who have been mentors to the Scholls throughout their careers.

"With this major donation from Dennis and Debra Scholl of contemporary work by Aboriginal artists, the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University will benefit from this remarkable opportunity to showcase these important contemporary works to our visitors, faculty, and students. The Scholls' passion for these artists and their work, steeped in ancient cultural traditions, will inspire our visitors as we increase the breadth, variety, and global reach of the art we exhibit," said Dr. Jordana Pomeroy, director of the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum FIU.

The decision to gift a portion of the collection to Nevada Museum of Art reflects its deep commitment to this work and to the exhibitions they have presented with the Scholls. The museum has contributed significant scholarship to the endeavor through their Center for Art + Environment. Also, this gift will allow a substantial part of the collection to be available permanently in the West.

"Perhaps no artworks exemplify "art + environment" more succinctly than contemporary Aboriginal paintings from Australia. This extraordinary gift from Dennis and Debra to our Museum is truly transformational. We are forever grateful to the Scholls, and our entire Museum community applauds them," said David B. Walker, executive director/CEO for the Nevada Museum of Art.

The major gift to The Met enhances the Museum's commitment to telling an expansive narrative of art. "The Scholls' gift of dynamic and monumental works from the current generation of Australian Aboriginal artists will encourage our visitors to engage in thoughtful dialogues and will allow us to connect works of art in our galleries from this region—and across time—as only The Met can do," commented Daniel H. Weiss, President and CEO of The Met. "Such vivid works foreground the innovation that has been a hallmark of Aboriginal art for many centuries."

"We feel that this work is some of the finest contemporary art being made on the planet today. We are excited to share it with these three communities," the Scholls said.

The Frost Art Museum FIU, The Met, and the Nevada Museum of Art have entered into an agreement to share the works liberally with each other. By dispersing the collection among the three institutions, new opportunities for enhancing education and programming across communities emerge.

This is the second large body of art work donated by the Scholls in recent years. In 2012, they donated 300 works of international contemporary art to the Perez Art Museum Miami in anticipation of its opening.

To download high-resolution images from the Scholl Collection, please follow this link: <http://bit.ly/SchollGiftImages>.

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About the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University

One of the largest free-standing art museums in Florida, the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University was founded in 1977 and is the Smithsonian Affiliate in Miami. The museum's new lakeside building debuted in 2008, designed by Yann Weymouth (the chief of design on the I.M. Pei Grand Louvre Project). With 46,000 square feet of energy efficient exhibition, storage, and programming space, the museum was honored with LEED silver certification.

The museum's mission is three-fold: to be a campus resource for the entire FIU community; to offer interdisciplinary training in the arts for the next generation of artists and art historians; and to serve as a premier cultural destination for the residents of Miami, and the 15 million visitors to one of the world's most vibrant cultural destinations - home to global cultural events including Art Basel.

The Frost offers programming that complements its exhibitions with a wide range of educational initiatives. The Steven and Dorothea Green Critics' Lecture Series has featured internationally renowned speakers including: Christo, Susan Sontag, Frank Stella, Helen Frankenthaler, John Cage and Marina Abramović. The Kenan-Flagler Family Discovery Gallery serves as an innovative programming space that encourages children's involvement in art through hands-on exploration. Admission to the museum is always free. The Frost is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, and is located at 10975 SW 17 Street. Open Tuesday-Saturday 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., and Sunday noon-5:00 p.m. Closed on Mondays and most legal holidays. The Sculpture Park is open every day. More information at frost.fiu.edu or 305-348-2890.

About Nevada Museum of Art

The Nevada Museum of Art, Donald W. Reynolds Center for the Visual Arts, E. L. Wiegand Gallery is the only art museum in Nevada accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). A private, nonprofit organization founded in 1931, the Reno-based institution is supported by its membership as well as sponsorships, gifts and grants. Through its permanent collections, original exhibitions and programming, and E.L. Cord Museum School, the Nevada Museum of Art provides meaningful opportunities for people to engage with a range of art and education experiences. The Museum's Center for Art + Environment is an internationally-recognized research center dedicated to supporting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. The Center houses unique archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents, including Cape Farewell, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Lita Albuquerque, Burning Man, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Ugo Rondinone, and Trevor Paglen. Learn more at nevadaart.org.

About The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Met presents over 5,000 years of art from around the world for everyone to experience and enjoy. The Museum lives in three iconic sites in New York City—The Met Fifth Avenue, The Met Breuer, and The Met Cloisters. Millions of people also take part in The Met experience [online](#).

Since it was founded in 1870, The Met has always aspired to be more than a treasury of rare and beautiful objects. Every day, art comes alive in the Museum's galleries and through its exhibitions and events, revealing both new ideas and unexpected connections across time and across cultures.

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Pg. 2; DEBRA AND DENNIS SCHOLL TO GIFT THE LARGEST, PRIVATE ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTION IN U.S. TO THREE MUSEUMS ACROSS NORTH AMERICA

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