**THE PRESIDENT’S VIEW**

By Bruce Hansen

**Why an art museum?** There are many differing views about the purposes and value of art museums in our society. But are museums important and are they worth the expense? Some would say they don’t butter any parsnips.

As Stephen Weil points out in his book *Making Museums Matter*, museums of art particularly, and museums more generally, are critical to the health and well-being of our communities and society. Museums, of course, engage in preservation, scholarship, and public service institution that is an effective and valued museum is a public service institution that through its competencies and programming strives to improve the quality of our lives and our communities. It can help us understand ourselves and our future.

In his book *Weil* thinks the most important skill of a museum “…will be the ability to envision how the community’s ongoing and emerging needs in all their dimensions – physical, psychological, economic, and social – might be served by the museum’s particular competencies.” We must be open to what they offer us.

**Boozhoo (hello)!** I would like to provide you with some information about the objects recently installed in the “Nelson Case,” which is the beautifully-designed glass case located on the balcony level. It is called the Nelson Case because it is primarily for the display of the Richard E. and Dorothy Rawlings Nelson Collection of American Indian Art. The Nelson Case was created in 2001, the Tweed organized an exhibition entitled *Shared Passion* which premiered a number of objects from the Nelson collection. In its entirety, this collection numbers about 402 works created predominantly by Native peoples in the Lake Superior region.

The Nelsons collected beadwork, quillwork, baskets, bags and pouches, birch bark items, and other cultural objects regarded as tourist art. A simple definition of tourist art is art that is made for the sole purpose of selling to tourists. The catalog for *Shared Passion* notes, “As traditional Indian ways of life were overtaken by Eurocentric influences, methods were transferred to objects for sale or trade to the outside, resulting in unique mixtures of traditional techniques and new forms (80). Some of the older pieces currently on display, such as the birch bark diary or the sweet grass seatchaw, are categorized as tourist art.

While I agree they are a unique mixture of old and new, they also prove that Native ways of life were not overtaken. In the exhibit narrative, I argue that Native people resisted new ways by the very act of continuing to engage in traditional practices, such as making birch bark baskets. I find this continuity and adherence to one’s cultural remarkable and empowering. Many Native artists today choose to express their cultural identity in their art works.

**THE MUSEUM OF ART**

1201 Ordean Court
University of Minnesota Duluth
Duluth, MN 55812-2496

Phone: 218-726-8222
Fax: 218-726-8503
E-mail: tweed@d.umn.edu
Web: www.d.umn.edu/tma

**MUSEUM HOURS**

Tues 9am-8pm
Wed-Sat 9am-4:30pm
Closed Sundays & University Holidays

www.d.umn.edu/tma

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Dec 13 6:30-8pm Tweed evening: American Indian Art
Jan 10 6:30-8pm Book Club: Barbara Shapiro
Jan 19 6:30-7:30pm Gallery Talk: Un-Typing Casta
Feb 7 6:30-8pm Tweed evening: Baroque & Renaissance Paintings
Mar 17 6:30-8pm Book Club: Dave Hickey

**ADVISORY BOARD**

Patricia Burns
Mary Ebert
Tom Ellison
Debra Hannu
Bruce Hansen
Jane Jamis
Robert Luff
Sharon Molenus
Alice B. O’Connor
Terry Roberts
Dan Shogren
Minam Sommerness

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Florence Collins
Barb Gaddie
Bevry Godfline
Son Levy
Peggy Mason
Mike Seyfer
Dee Dee Wilkes

**MELVIN Losh (Leech Lake Ojibwe, b. 1946), Bandolier Bag. Hand-stitched beads on cloth and felt. 42 x 12.” (Collection of Tweed Museum of Art, LMD-00091. Gift of Dorothy Rawlings Nelson).**

**KARIN L. NAUDEN**

**CURATOR’S COMMENTARY ON THE NELSON CASE**

By Karissa White

**TWEED MUSEUMS**

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE TWEED MUSEUM ADVISORY BOARD

*Continued on page 2...*
An excellent example is the intricately beaded ban- dolier bag made by Ojibwe artist Mel Losh who came to the Tweed Museum just this past August to show it to us. As Curator, it is my job to contextualize the art in the Tweed Museum’s collection based on my education and research. As an Anishinabe (Ojibwe) person, it is also my job to provide a background that attempts to accurately reflect Native peoples’ lives, but there are challenges to this task. For one, Native peoples and communities are very culturally diverse and our experiences and beliefs are not all the same. I wanted to emphasize this important fact in the exhibit text as well. I am honored for the opportunity to work with the Nelson collection and this display case as one of my first duties in the Curator position, and I look forward to many more. Miigwech (thank you) for reading!

**End of Year Donation!**

FROM DIRECTOR KEN BLOOM

Singing the praises of the museum is a favorite activity of mine coming from a great pride in the staff and our guests and colleagues who participate in and support our programs. Our offerings reflect the interests of students, scholars, visitors and our community at large as well as the museum’s collection and missions and stances. The Tweed’s collection is outstanding in terms of its range and quality, derived from Duluth, the Range and North Shore. Our collection of 10,000+ artworks results from the gifts and money donated by neighbors for over 65 years.

The vision of the museum depends upon this partnership: The University provides the basics, and the sponsors and guests make up the difference in operation and programs. We are especially grateful for the money you drop into the donation box in appreciation for what you come to experience.

The Tweed is run by remarkably passionate people, yet the staff is small relative to its size. Though Tweed offers excellent curatorial and volunteer support, as well as solicitations, for free, Museums operate and require your support.

Please consider an end-of-year cash donation to the Tweed to sustain the community vision of the Museum.

**Midwestern Moderne by Bill Shipley**

Although Fletcher Martin is not a household name in American art history, he was a significant artist for a number of reasons from the 1920’s into the early 1970’s. In 1954 and again in 1957, he was a guest artist in the UM’s Summer Art Program. At the University of Iowa in 1940, he joined the art department there to succeed Grant Wood. A year later, he became director of the Kansas City Art Institute to replace Thomas Hart Bent- ton. Both Benton and Wood are in this exhibit with litho- graphic prints from the late 1930’s to the early 1940’s. Fletcher Martin lived in Woodstock, New York in his midcareer and established himself as an art teacher who had considerable influence on mid-century figurative painting, often with a narrative story about his- torical Americans and commentary on the culture of the time. His painting from 1957 titled Ore Boat at Interstate Bridge shows Martin’s love of color and his insistence on fantasy and whimsy as much as his desire to describe an industrial scene of Duluth harbor. He is famous for writing his full name in large script at the top of his paints- ings, a way to announce himself as the master of the whole painting adventure.

Two paintings with Minnesota connections are also in this compact show: a 1950’s oil painting by Gene Ritchie Monahan (signed Gene Ritchie) as it was not until 1954 that she married George Monahan) and a 1955 painting by Fletcher Martin. The Monahan work shows a winter scene of a West Duluth Roundhouse probably on or near what is now Rail- road Street. It is a solid com- position with smoke or steam coming from the working train scene and an unusual subject for the artist who made a career painting portraits and teaching art in Minnesota, Canada, and New York.

George Morrison’s (1919-2000) painting is something of a grid-like pattern work with some line work from the church and church forms locked together in repeated rect- angles of color, often with an undercoat of another color or coming through the sur- face. It is an outstanding example of his mature work, and the Tweed is fortunate to have numerous paintings and drawings by the artist. From the 1930’s on, a gallery in New York called Associated American Artists hired artists to make lithographs for a “print of the month” club subscription. Two of these prints by Thom- as Hart Benton and three by Grant Wood celebrate American and midwestern values and stories—a demo- cratic and idealistic endeavor.

**The Restoration of Miereveld by Camille Donan**

Fresh from a multiple year conservation campaign in its custom Dutch ripple frame, Portrait of an Elderly Lady (1629), attributed to Michel Janszoon Van Miereveld (Dutch, 1567-1641) occupies a place of prominence amidst Dutch, French and Italian paintings from the Tweed col- lection. The Dutch noblemen- an gazes at visitors from half- closed eyes, resplendent in voluminous black, translucent white ruff and intricate lace cap and cuffs. Gold shimmers from her massive chain and jewelry, while red glow softly from the embroidered gloves held in her left hand. Almost 400 years old, she now appears much as originally due to the expertise of conserva- tors and a master craftsman. Restoration was doubtful at first. Conservators at Midwestern Conservation Center con- firmed the paint and ground were unstable, complicated by the highly unorthodox pri- or structural repairs. The cos- metic treatment history was obscured by multiple layers of varnish, toned varnish, gesso, retouching and over- paint. Conservator Kristy Jeff- ferson first stabilized the flaking paint, then established ex- ploratory windows where the vanish, grime and retouch- ings were removed. With the removal of the top disfigur- ing layers, original tones and the paint, sketch-like pattern on the dress were revealed.

Kurt Nordwall, senior preparator at Minneapolis Institute of Arts, spotted the painting in its gilded frame. Kurt knew the frame was not appropriate to the period painting from his study of 16th and 17th cen- tury Dutch frames. Using his designed knives and his own methodology, Kurt carved and replicated the ripple pattern creating a Dutch ripple frame suited to the painting. Now the subtle dark tones and layering of the frame meld into the paint- ing, creating a rich tableau of Dutch culture in the early 1600s. Hear Kristy and Kurt tell the full story of the painting’s conser- vation and its custom frame at the Tweevening event Tues- day, April 11th at 6:30 p.m.

**Museum Store**

The Museum Store is aglow with lights and wonderful ideas for your Holiday shopping and to wear the artful decorations, jewelry and more that are new this year in the Museum Store! You can wear the art with a beauti- ful silk Japanese or art deco scarf from the Met or with a silk tie in a Klee, Wright or Escher pattern. For children there are books, crafts and t-shirts, including an Egyptian counting book, Scandinavian picture stories and Origami. The locally sourced Miel line of honey soap and lip balm has just been added. Jewelry and pottery items from local artists are always in stock. Proceeds go directly to the Museum’s programming.

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