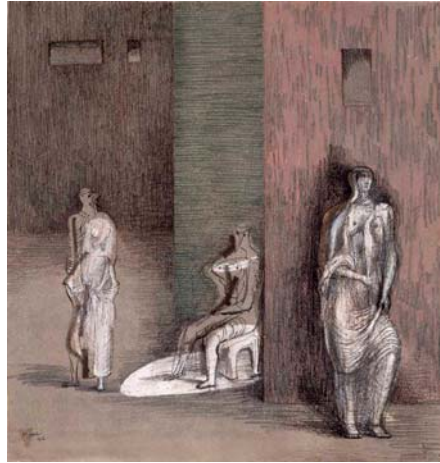




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Left image: Wright S. Ludington **Right image:** Henry Moore, *The Figures in a Setting* 1942.
Ink and wax crayon on gray paper. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Wright S. Ludington.

Shaping the History of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art ***Drawn to Modernism*** Exhibition Celebrates SBMA's 70th Anniversary

On View April 16 – July 24, 2011

“The whole point of collecting is not only one’s enjoyment, but the learning of what happened in this world creatively over the years: how one thing led to another.”

- Wright S. Ludington

March 9, 2011 - On June 5, 1941 at exactly 11:43 am (determined by an astrologer as the most auspicious time), the Santa Barbara Museum of Art opened its doors to the public in a building that was previously the Santa Barbara Post Office. Therefore, 2011 marks the organization’s 70th anniversary and provides the opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge the collection of works and the individuals who were instrumental in shaping SBMA into the cornerstone of art and culture in the Santa Barbara community.

Wright S. Ludington (1900-1992), one of the Museum’s founders, was also, without argument, its most important benefactor. His generosity and impeccable taste played a decisive role in shaping the collection as we know it today. His interests were wide-ranging, running from classical antiquities to Asian art to European modernism – the cutting-edge art produced from the middle of the 19th century to the end of World War II. Ludington’s commitment to the art of his own time laid the foundation for one of the most important collections of modern art on the West Coast.

The exhibition ***Drawn to Modernism Selected Gifts from Wright S. Ludington*** celebrates the Museum’s 7th decade by highlighting Ludington’s extensive gifts of European modernist works on paper. This selection of nearly 50 works, including drawings, prints, and several sculptures, demonstrates the breadth and depth of his interests, which extended from the classical, Paris-based modernism to Northern and Central European expressionism, to one of the most unusual and distinctive facets of his collecting, an exceptional group of drawings by British artists.

Exceptional examples of the works of such artists include **Henry Moore's** *Three Figures in a Setting* (1942) (see image above), a drawing reminiscent of his Shelter Drawings series – those works inspired by the artist's observation of Londoners sheltering from the Blitz in the Underground in the early 40s. The shadowy setting suggests the oppressive darkness of the shelters, while the figures – transformed from individuals into towering, impersonal sculptures in vaguely classical drapery – have a timeless, universal quality, symbolic of the anxiety and despair of war-torn Europe.



Left image: Pablo Picasso, *The Frugal Repast* 1904 (published 1913). Etching. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Wright S. Ludington.

Right image: Henri Matisse, *Head of a Woman (Lydia Dekatuskaya), Number II* ca. 1937. Pen and ink on white laid rag paper with watermark. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Wright S. Ludington.

The exhibition also includes fine examples of **Pablo Picasso's** works on paper, including *The Frugal Repast* (1904, published 1913), representing the artist's first major effort as a printmaker. Considered a masterpiece of this period, the etching depicts a haggard couple, contemplating a meager meal of wine and scraps of bread.

Another notable artist included is **Henri Matisse** and his work *Head of a Woman (Lydia Dekatuskaya), Number II* (ca. 1939), which captures a young Russian woman who became Matisse's model (and later secretary and housekeeper) in the 1930s. Matisse noted of his drawings at the time, "My line drawing is the purest and most direct translation of my emotion. [...] Once I have put my emotion to line and modeled the light of my white paper..., I can take away nothing further."



Left image: Example of early sculptural gifts by Wright S. Ludington including (right) Auguste Rodin, *Head of Jean d'Aire* 1886 (cast 1963). Bronze. Bequest of Wright S. Ludington.

Middle image: Early gift of Wright S. Ludington of Antoine Bourdelle, *Hawks Arise*, 1909. Gilt bronze. Bequest of Wright S. Ludington.

Right image: Wright S. Ludington

Wright S. Ludington: A Collector's Life

Descended from a family that originally came to the New World on the Mayflower, Wright Saltus Ludington was born in Philadelphia to a father who made his fortune in publishing and a mother who collected Impressionist paintings. Two formative experiences during his youth helped determine the course of his life: summers spent in Europe with his family exposed him at an early age to the art and architecture of great European cities, while winters spent in Santa Barbara in his teenage years, during which he attended the Thacher School in Ojai, inspired his love of the landscape and lifestyle of southern California. He inherited property in Montecito from his father in 1927 and settled in Santa Barbara for the rest of his life.

Ludington began to collect in 1924, thanks to a small inheritance from his mother. His first purchase was a small portrait head by André Derain, soon followed by paintings by Picasso and Braque. He also began buying classical antiquities at around this time; although his collecting would eventually extend into other areas, modern art and antiquities remained his lifelong passions. Indeed, we can see how his love of Greek and Roman sculpture informed his taste in modernism: he gravitated towards depictions of the human figure with an emphasis on the harmony, grace and wholeness typical of classicism, and many of the artists whose drawings he collected were also known for their sculpture. Most of the prints and drawings he bought in the 1920s and 1930s were the work of the artists now known as the School of Paris – Picasso, Matisse, Derain, Joan Miró, Salvador Dali – or avant-garde artists of the late nineteenth century, such as Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec. Upon the 1941 founding of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Ludington donated most of his holdings in these areas to the Museum.

Military service in London during World War II introduced Ludington to the cutting edge of British art; he spent much of his free time browsing the galleries and even struck up a friendship with Graham Sutherland, one of the most original British artists of his generation. He quickly developed an interest in the work of these highly individual artists who were little known in the United States and seldom collected outside Britain. To the earlier drawings of Percy Wyndham Lewis and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska – leading figures in Vorticism, Britain's iconoclastic and short-lived modernist movement (1913-1915) – he added contemporary work by Sutherland, Henry Moore, Paul Nash, John Piper and Ceri Richards. Most of these entered the Museum's collection in the years immediately following the war.

Although Ludington continued to collect art until late in life, he had donated most of his works on paper to the Museum by the end of the 1950s. It is no exaggeration to say that from the first, they have formed a vital part of the core of the collection.

Related Programming

Free Audio Tour: Guide By Cell

Enjoy a free Guide by Cell audio tour of selected highlights of the exhibition using your cell phone. Listen to a selected group of artists, art historians and curators offering their personal insights on Wright Ludington and his collection. Details are in the Museum galleries.

Gallery Tours

With admission to SBMA, you are always invited to participate in a free docent-led gallery tour beginning every day at noon in the lobby at the State Street entrance. Visit www.sbma.net/information/gallerytours.web for more information.

Blog

Visit our blog at <http://blog.sbma.net/> for more information about the artists, exhibition, and related programming.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution that presents internationally recognized collections and exhibitions and a broad array of cultural and educational activities as well as travel opportunities around the world.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA.

Open Tuesday - Sunday 11 am to 5 pm. Closed Monday.

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