

## Collecting Philosophy

One of the core activities of Mount Holyoke College Art Museum is the continued development and refinement of its permanent collection, with a particular focus on supporting the institution's teaching mission through strategic and thoughtful acquisitions.

Our Acquisitions Committee seeks—through gift or purchase—**great works of art and exemplary objects of material culture** that build on the **Museum's current holdings and enhance educational experiences** in virtually every program of study. When working with classes in the Museum, our curators and educators regularly use objects that are disparate in function, aesthetic complexity, mode of interaction, and cultural context but share thematic relationships. To this end, our Acquisitions Committee **prioritizes acquisitions that relate to universal themes explored across academic disciplines**. Examples include but are not limited to: ritual and devotion, war and protest, indigeneity, race, gender, and identity, nature and the environment, and migration. Works of art with **strong narrative content, ambiguity, and fine detail**—objects that tell or inspire stories—are especially valuable for close observation, discussion, and interpretation.

Since its founding, the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum's collection has represented world cultures, and this continues to guide our acquisition efforts. More specifically, the Museum now places vital importance on **developing its holdings in works by artists and makers from diverse cultural, ethnic, and social groups**. Through its commitment to acquiring global contemporary art, the Museum participates in today's complex dialogues and illustrates diverse, contemporary perspectives. The Museum is reimagining its exhibitions and collection displays so that students from many different backgrounds, both from the campus and surrounding communities, may see themselves reflected in the objects on view. We are dedicated to **layering and expanding the narratives of art history** in our galleries in order to present a broad representation of human creativity through remarkable, **global objects**.

The importance of building the Museum's collection is matched by the responsibility of researching, housing, and preserving the thousands of individual objects in its care. Before weighing the art historical and interpretative value of a proposed gift or purchase for the collection, the Museum's Acquisition Committee must consider its physical characteristics and legal liabilities. Works proposed for acquisition should represent **artistic excellence** and/or quality in all aspects of design and execution; must be in, or capable of being returned to, an **acceptable state of preservation**, unless the deteriorated physical condition is integral to the meaning of the work; and must comply with all applicable local, state, federal, and international laws governing ownership and import of works of art and material culture.