OU and Philbrook Receive Adkins Collection

Norman – Ted M. Riseling, chairman of the Adkins Foundation Board, announced today that the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa and the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma have been jointly selected to receive the Eugene B. Adkins collection of art. The joint partnership by Philbrook and OU was among many proposals submitted by leading museums across the country.

The Adkins Collection, valued at approximately $50 million, is among the most important private collections in the nation of works by the Taos artists as well as Native American works of art. It includes more than 3,300 objects in a number of categories, including 1,100 two-dimensional works, 370 pieces of pottery, over 1,600 examples of jewelry and silverwork, and nearly 250 pieces of other Native arts.

The selection of the Philbrook-OU partnership was announced at a press conference in Tulsa at the Philbrook Museum of Art today, which included Riseling; Randall Suffolk, executive director of the Philbrook Museum of Art; and David Boren, president of the University of Oklahoma. Other trustees of the Adkins Trust in addition to Riseling include William A. Goff, Lawrence M. Knoles, Corrine Walton Lewis, Betsy E. Willis, and the Trust Co. of Oklahoma.

In making the announcement, Riseling said, “The Adkins Foundation Board is extremely pleased with the proposal from the University of Oklahoma and Philbrook Museum of Art. We are looking forward to working with both institutions to provide a home for this magnificent collection and are excited about the educational opportunities the proposal provides. We feel very fortunate to share this collection with the people of Oklahoma and the many visitors who will be able to enjoy Mr. Adkins’ generosity.”

“The Eugene Adkins Collection further solidifies the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at OU as one of the leading university art museums in the
entire nation,” Boren said. “It also means the university’s museum will have a collection of work done by the master artists of the Taos art colony which is unexcelled by any art museum in the country.”

The university will add a new 6,500-square-foot gallery on an additional floor above the original art gallery building of the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art to house the collection and to honor Eugene Adkins. OU also will add a curator for the collection, additional graduate fellowships, and an Adkins Presidential Professorship in the history of Western American art.

Boren added, “We are also especially excited that the decision of the trustees will enhance the partnership between OU’s Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art and the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa. By joining as partners and alternating exhibitions of pieces from the collection which each will have, the people of Oklahoma will continuously have the opportunity to view the major master works from the collection. Philbrook and OU will also increase shared internships and scholarly research on the collection and will consider additional joint initiatives in the future. By partnering in one joint Oklahoma application to the trustees, OU and Philbrook helped assure that this magnificent collection with historic ties to Oklahoma will remain in our home state.”

Suffolk stated, “Philbrook will establish the Adkins Collection and Study Center to focus on the exhibition and study of Native American art and artifacts, using the Eugene B. Adkins collection and Philbrook’s own exceptional Native American collection as organizational cornerstones.”

The George Kaiser Family Foundation has generously agreed to provide Philbrook with approximately 10,000 to 15,000 square feet of space in the historic Brady District to house the Adkins Center. The Center will include public gallery space for the presentation of objects and special exhibitions derived from the Adkins collection and Philbrook’s own; research facilities that advance public engagement with the collections via the adaptive use of technology; and incorporate the Lawson Library with a collection of 1,100 volumes focusing on Native American history and culture.

“The most important aspect of the Adkins Center is the generative potential of its resources. Indeed, it is the synergy and opportunities created among the Eugene B. Adkins collection, Philbrook’s Native American collection, and our Lawson Library that will distinguish the Center as a unique resource of international importance,” Suffolk said.

“For Tulsa, the Center’s presence means that the cultural life of our community is directly enhanced. It means our residents will have further
access to outstanding examples of artistic achievement. As a hallmark of Philbrook’s commitment to education and outreach, its presence means our children will be inspired to expand their understanding of artistic creation; to gain new appreciation for other cultures; and to acquire new perspectives on our nation’s history. And, it represents a mission-driven opportunity to lend momentum to our city’s revitalization efforts.”

The Adkins Collection contains more than 400 paintings by such distinguished American artists as Maynard Dixon, Worthington Whittridge, Andrew Dasburg, Alfred Jacob Miller, Victor Higgins, Charles M. Russell, Nicolai Fechin, John Marin, William R. Leigh, Leon Gaspard and Joseph H. Sharp. The collection also includes impressive examples of Native American painting, pottery and jewelry by such famed Native American artists as Jerome Tiger, Maria Martinez and Charles Loloma.

Few Oklahoma families have deeper roots in Oklahoma than the family of Eugene Brady Adkins. His father, Eugene Sloan Adkins, born in Chouteau, owned and ran the Adkins Hay & Feed Co., which he established in 1917 in Muskogee. His mother, Bess Brady Adkins, was a member of the pioneer Tulsa Brady family. His grandfather, W. Tate Brady, who came to Indian Territory at age 17, was one of Oklahoma’s most prominent early-day citizens – a developer, entrepreneur and civic leader in Tulsa. Tate Brady opened a mercantile store on Main Street in 1890, and in 1900, built the famous Brady Hotel, Tulsa’s original first-class hotel.

The Brady home, where Eugene Adkins’ mother grew up, was modeled after Robert E. Lee’s mansion and remains one of Tulsa’s most impressive residences. The home is located in Brady Heights, and residents have been fund raising in Oklahoma’s Centennial year to place a monument at the entrance to the neighborhood recognizing the “Tulsa Spirit,” a term coined by Tate Brady.

The Adkins collection will complement the already outstanding collections held by the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, including those acquired within the past 12 years: the Weitzenhoffer Collection of French Impressionism; the Richard H. and Adeline J. Fleischaker Collections, the museum’s first major collection of Taos art; the Thams Collection of Southwestern masterpieces; the Tate Collection of masterworks by the Taos Society of Artists; and the R.E. Mansfield Collection by some of the world’s most celebrated Native American artists.

Philbrook Museum of Art’s commitment to Native American art and culture dates to the very founding of the museum. Since opening in 1939, Philbrook has collected, exhibited and published historical and contemporary Native American works, supported by a range of
educational public programs. The first objects acquired by the museum came from Waite Phillips, whose personal commitment to Native culture was reflected in the observation: “Oil fortunes were made out of Indian lands. I have a deep feeling of gratitude to the American Indian and I want to see his culture preserved.” Following in that tradition, major private collections have enriched and expanded the holdings of the museum over the years.

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