



'In one stroke,' UT Dallas dramatically expands its horizons with a major gift of rare art and a new museum

Michael Granberry

The University of Texas at Dallas has acquired the Barrett Collection, which consists of more than 400 rare works of Swiss art. Officials say it's the single largest donation ever made to UTD and the largest gift of art to any school in the University of Texas system.

UTD officials call it an "unparalleled collection" of paintings, sculpture, drawings and prints and "the largest and finest private collection of Swiss art ever formed."

But that's not all. University officials say they intend to house the collection in a new, on-campus museum, named after the family that donated the artwork. One outside expert called landing the collection and the new museum a major coup for UTD.

"It's very significant," said Eric M. Lee, director of the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth. "It's very comprehensive. It consists of a large number of works by Swiss artists from the 18th century to the early 20th century."



Cuno Amiet, *Self Portrait*, 1921, oil on canvas, 30 5/16 x 28 1/4. (The Barrett Collection)

It is, Lee said, "an encyclopedic collection."

In addition, Lee called the construction of a new, on-campus museum extraordinary. He said the UTD acquisition, coupled with the museum, offer further evidence that the art scene in North Texas is "exploding."

UTD officials declined to give a dollar amount for the collection but said the previous largest gift to the school was a \$35 million donation from the late Margaret McDermott. This, they say, exceeds that amount.

Dallas residents Richard and Nona Barrett began acquiring the collection in the 1990s. Nona Barrett died in 2014. Richard Barrett has since remarried, and he and his new wife, Luba, have continued to expand the collection.

UTD officials say the collection includes pieces by every major artist born in Switzerland, from Caspar Wolf (1735-1783), the first painter of the Swiss Alps, to Cuno Amiet(1868-1961).

The Barrett gift comes at a time when UTD is rapidly expanding its arts profile. In 2014, philanthropist Edith O'Donnell gave \$17 million to UTD to establish an institute of art history. The year before that, UTD dedicated in her name the \$60 million Edith O'Donnell Arts and Technology building.

In 2017, the then-105-year-old McDermott, who died earlier this year, created the Richard Brettell Award in the Arts, which every other year, beginning last year, will bestow an award of \$150,000 upon an artist "whose body of work demonstrates a lifetime of achievement in their field."

Brettell occupies the Margaret M. McDermott Distinguished Chair of Arts and Aesthetic Studies and the Edith O'Donnell Distinguished University Chair at UTD. He's also art critic of *The Dallas Morning News*.

"The University of Texas at Dallas is one of the great universities of Texas and one of the youngest, but it's a science and technology university, therefore there are very few works of art on campus or accessible to students," Brettell said. "So, to have a great collection, unlike that in any other university in the United States or indeed anywhere outside of Switzerland, is a huge deal."

The aim of the Barretts, he said, was to "link up with the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History and create a museum that would inspire scientists."



The late Nona Barrett and Richard Barrett, photographed at the Nasher Sculpture Center on Feb. 6, 2014. (Kristina Bowman/Special Contributor)

UTD's model, Brettell said, is the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "Our founders wanted us to be the MIT of Texas, but MIT doesn't have a museum, and now, we'll have a museum of substantial character."

Brettell said the museum will be in excess of 50,000 square feet and take three to four years to build. University officials say they've secured a \$10 million challenge grant to match \$5 million already raised, toward an estimated \$25 million.

Hobson Wildenthal, executive vice president of UTD, called the Barrett gift a "profoundly significant" moment for the Richardson school.

What the school aspires to be, in his words, "is a totally well-rounded major university, which, by necessity, incorporates art and humanities along with science, engineering and management. This will be emblematic of our intent and ambitions, so in one stroke, it should begin to change the community's perception of what we're all about. And what we're all about, really, is becoming a fully-fledged, great research university that touches on every element of culture and knowledge."

Representative works in the Collection include:

- Swiss Carnation Master, *St. Hubert and St. Catherine of Alexandria*, c. 1490, oil on panel
- Jean-Etienne Liotard, *Portrait of the Empress Maria Theresa*, 1762, pastel on vellum
- Caspar Wolf, *View across Lake Seeberg to the Muntigalm*, 1778, oil on canvas
- Heinrich Füssli, *The Expulsion from Paradise*, 1803-5, oil on canvas
- Angelika Kauffmann, *Ulysses on the Island of Circe*, 1793, oil on canvas
- Arnold Böcklin, *Loneliness*, 1875, oil on canvas
- Alexandre Calame, *Vue du Handeck*, c. 1837, oil on canvas
- Ferdinand Hodler, *Landscape with Rhythmic Shapes*, 1908, oil on canvas and *Woman with Flowers (The Song)*, 1909, oil on canvas
- Felix Vallotton, *Femme au Miroir*, 1909, oil on canvas
- Cuno Amiet, *Self-Portrait*, 1921, oil on canvas and *Portrait of Anne Amiet with Red Background*, 1913, oil on canvas
- Giovanni Giacometti, *Bagnanti (Alberto and Diego)*, 1919, oil on canvas
- Augusto Giacometti, *Amaryllis*, 1942, oil on canvas



Cuno Amiet, *Women in the Garden*, 1910, oil on canvas, 33 $\frac{13}{16}$ x 50 $\frac{3}{4}$. Courtesy of the Barrett Collection



Angelika Kauffmann, *Ulysses on the Island of Circe*, 1793, oil on canvas, 52 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 67 $\frac{7}{8}$. Courtesy of the Barrett Collection (The Barrett Collection)



Augusto Giacometti, *Amaryllis*, 1942, oil on canvas, 64 5/8 x 50 1/8. Courtesy of the Barrett Collection. (The Barrett Collection)



Alexandre Calame, *Vue du Handeck*, c. 1837, oil on canvas, 75 1/16 x 57 5/8. Courtesy of the Barrett Collection (The Barrett Collection/The Barrett Collection)



Caspar Wolf, *View across Lake Seeberg to the Muntigalm, 1778*, oil on canvas, 25 9/16 x 34 5/8. (The Barrett Collection)