



News Release

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Marilynn Alsdorf accepts Joseph R. Shapiro Award.

Over a quarter of a million dollars raised to benefit the Smart Museum of Art.

October 24, 2006 – Last night, the University of Chicago’s Smart Museum of Art honored Marilynn Alsdorf with the Joseph R. Shapiro Award. The 450 guests who attended the award dinner at the Four Seasons Hotel were treated to a lively conversation between Ms. Alsdorf and former *Chicago Tribune* critic Richard Christiansen, Latin jazz by Marshall Vente, and remarks by the University of Chicago’s new president on the very week of his inauguration. Several past Shapiro Award winners were in attendance, including Susan and Lewis Manilow (recipients in 2004), Lindy Bergman (recipient in 2000), and this year’s event chair John H. Bryan (recipient in 1997). Established in 1995 in memory of Joe Shapiro, the dean of Chicago art collectors, the award is presented every two years to a distinguished collector of art whose activities are marked by an extraordinary level of vision and connoisseurship.

“We are honoring an art patron without equal in our time in Chicago,” said event chair John Bryan. “As an art collector of extraordinary depth and breadth and quality, as a benefactor to so many, many, many art organizations, and as a leader who has given so much time and talent to cultural institutions, Marilynn Alsdorf has no peer.”

During her conversation with Mr. Christiansen, Ms. Alsdorf related how she and her late husband, James W. Alsdorf, had begun collecting, visiting the art galleries in Chicago and buying their first artwork – a portrait by Amedeo Modigliani – at auction. In their years in the arts, they became acquainted with several artists and personalities, including Pierre Matisse, Alberto Giacometti, Fernand Léger, Jean Dubuffet, and Jasper Johns, and they followed their many interests to Chinese and then Indian antiquities and then Renaissance jewelry. On the subject of collecting, Ms. Alsdorf said “You have to love something before you buy it. Of course, a lot of people now are buying things for investments... Find something, some period or some venue, that you really like and do research on it. Find something that you’re passionate about and then start collecting. It will give you a lot of pleasure.”

The collection that Ms. Alsdorf and her husband began in the 1950s is today renowned for its breadth and quality. It includes remarkable holdings of Indian, Himalayan, and Southeast Asian sculpture, important works by 20th century masters, and significant examples of ancient Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Islamic art. A generous benefactor, Marilynn Alsdorf has played a significant role in building and shaping the holdings of The Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the University of Notre Dame’s Snite Museum of Art, and Northwestern University’s Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, as well as the University of Chicago’s Smart Museum of Art.

The University of Chicago’s Smart Museum of Art is recognized as one of the nation’s leading university art museums, noted for its vital, interdisciplinary approaches to both exhibitions and related educational programs. The Museum’s holdings include strong teaching collections ranging from antiquity to the present, with special distinction in modern, contemporary, and East Asian art. Richard Gray, an eminent art dealer and collector, is Chair of the Board of Governors of the Smart Museum.

A portion of the Smart Museum's general operating funds for 2006–2007 has been provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Smart Museum exhibitions and related programs are generously supported by the Smart Family Foundation; the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Tom and Janis McCormick and the Kanter Family Foundation; Nuveen Investments; the Rhoades Foundation; the Eloise W. Martin Fund; the Office of the Provost and the Visiting Committee on the Visual Arts, University of Chicago; and the Friends of the Smart Museum. Education programs are made possible by the Chicago Community Foundation and Kraft Foods. Family programs are supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

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Hours:
Tue, Wed, Fri 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Thurs 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Sat, Sun 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Galleries closed Mondays
Café and Museum Shop open daily
Admission is FREE