



Portrait of a Great Lady, Artist Unknown

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "Highlights of the Permanent Collection"
Where: International Museum of Art & Science, 1900 Nolana
When: April 22-August 23, 2019
Hours: 9am-3pm Tues-Wed-Thurs, 9am-5pm Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun
9am-8pm on first Thursdays
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Lasting Relevance

This thoughtful selection of artworks from the museum's permanent collection offers art aficionados several eras of art at once.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Embracing the idea of the museum as a depository for the history of art, IMAS is now sharing a selection of their fine art collection with their "Highlights of the Permanent Collection" exhibition. Not slowing down after the opening exhibition of their folk-art collection, these works offer a glimpse of the sculpture, painting, ceramics, and prints that have been gifted or purchased directly by the museum. Complemented by a thoughtful installation, the variety of epochs, movements, and styles included in this selection create a pleasant viewing experience, and in addition to a general historical synopsis wall text that offers information about art eras represented in the show, viewers with smart phone QR Readers can also access specific information about most of the artists whose work is on display.

Although the inclusion of works is limited, there is the feel of historical flow. Paintings from the 16th through the 18th centuries underscore the exhibition's ambiance, suggesting an artistic anchor to the exhibition. These works reflect the initial direction of European/western painting

through style and subject. During that period, the effect of light and shadow to create the 3-dimensional illusion of space became important, and the painted surface was regarded as a window to the natural world, resulting in the custom of framed, window-shaped, paintings. Biblical scenes and portraits of nobility were common in countries grounded in Catholicism. Later on, beyond religious patronage, works such as such as William Strang's "A Love Song" demonstrates the 19th century's Romantic movement; its enraptured nude female is serenaded by a lover on one side, and wilted cherubs sit on the other. This dramatic depiction of humanity's relationship to nature tells more about the artist's emotional state than it does of actual reality. Mamie Brown's four charming watercolor paintings reference American Impressionism although they were painted late in 1930. Celebrating natural light and pure color, she allows us to again see the rural landscape as it once existed in this region.

Most of the pieces in "Highlights" are from the Modern and Contemporary era, with abstraction and idea moving away from illustration and appearance. Bruno Andrade's abstract painting, "Third Coast #22, lies in striking contrast to the 17th century "Landscape" by an unknown painter. A display showing Richard Hysln's ceramic vessels alongside small bronze sculptures by Emilio Greco subtly demonstrates the contemporary shift to more democratic thinking regarding art categories. The crafts versus fine arts borders are slowly dissolving; fine crafts that are idea-based as opposed to process-based cross over the line into art. Another example of dissolution of boundaries is found in Judy Schneider's "The Wild Ones", a framed batik combining watercolor and gouache.

An exhibition such as this one may also provide the opportunity to see which works stand the test of time by still having something relevant to say to us several decades after their creation. Surrealist painter Salvador Dali's "Stillness of Time" makes the cut. This lithograph depicts one of his famous melting watches, and for me, of the many interpretations of Dali's melting watch image, the most appealing disregards the inner dream state. The current relevance of the melting watch is that it reflects a concept of quantum physics. In this 20th century theory, time is malleable, not fixed, and simple machines like wall clocks and pocket watches are primitive, old-fashioned, and even impotent in our post-Einstein world.

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