

Rare gift coming to the CSU art museum

The donation of a major art collection, with links from Hollywood to Fort Collins, spurs \$3 million expansion effort.

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By Kathleen Duff
KathleenDuff@Coloradoan.com

Rarely is the story behind an art collection as intriguing as the art itself, but that's the case with a unique donation to the University Art Museum at CSU.

The back story of the collection sounds more like an old movie script, traveling across Europe and Asia, winding into Old Hollywood and landing, of all places, in Fort Collins.

Remarkably, the story could come to a happy ending with a 6,000-square-foot, \$3 million expansion of the popular university museum at 1400 Remington Ave.

In fall 2009, longtime Fort Collins residents David and Sharon Neenan invited Colorado State University art historians, including Linda (Linny) Frickman, to the home of some of their friends who had moved from California.

"They opened the door, and we thought we were going to faint," said Frickman, director of the University Art Museum.

The small group from CSU en-

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ONLINE GALLERY

See photos from the Hartford-Tandstad Collection at coloradoan.com.

Art

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tered what appeared to be a "regular Fort Collins home" to find an extraordinary art collection full of more than 200 rare and unique pieces. Among the pieces were "a large romantic landscape painting by renowned French painter Claude Lorrain, a portrait of King Louis XIV by Pierre Mignard that served as the model for the well-known portrait of the king in the collection of Versailles, and a unique early 16th-century oil on panel of the Madonna and Child ... attributed to Fiorenzo di Lorenzo," as described by university officials.

"We were astounded and overwhelmed by what we saw in that home," Frickman said, still excited to this day by the discovery.

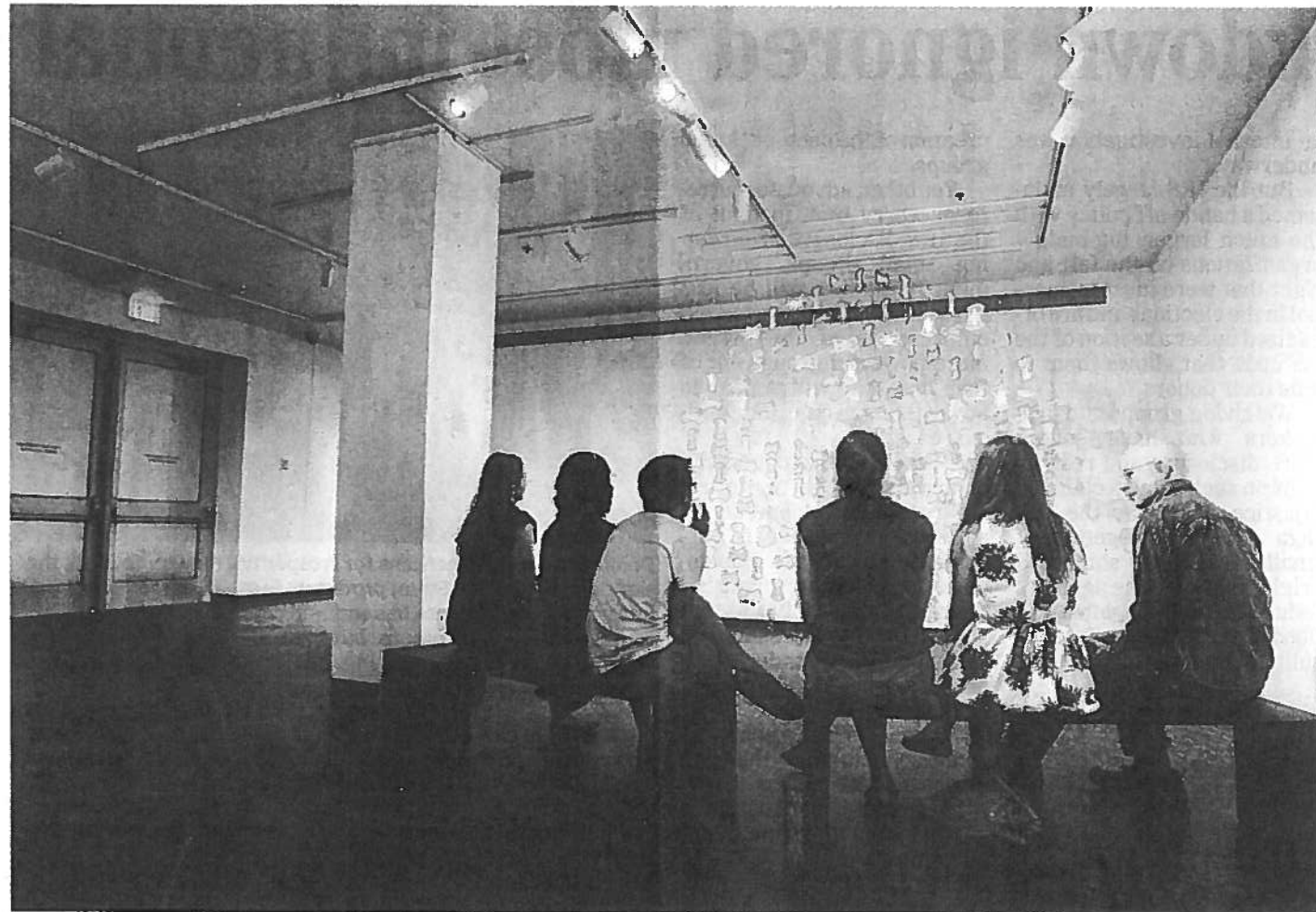
The home was veritably jammed with paintings, drawings, watercolors, sculpture, furniture and decorative arts. Some pieces were purchased from the Spencer-Churchill collection (families of Princess Diana and former Prime Minister Winston Churchill) in England; others came from Asia. All were remarkably well documented.

Frickman said, "These are the kinds of things you would only see at a major metropolitan museum."

Reflecting their Hollywood ties, their home also contained memorabilia from their famous friends, such as a photo of Clark Gable in an automobile with the original check written to purchase the vehicle and Shirley MacLaine's cigarette holder from the movie "Irma la Douce."

How did such a rare collection end up in Fort Collins?

The owners of that home, Larry Hartford and Torleif Tandstad, were longtime art appraisers and business partners. They began collecting their own pieces several dec-



CSU fiber arts graduate students critique Sandra Clark's art piece on display at the University Art Museum at CSU. The museum, in the University Center for the Arts at 1400 Remington Ave., is looking to expand. V. RICHARD HARO/THE COLORADOAN

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

University officials said any and all contributions are welcome to help with the expansion; however, CSU also is making naming opportunities available ranging from the University Art Museum itself for \$2.5 million to the planned Study Gallery for \$66,000.

The gallery is currently closed for two weeks for reinstallation of galleries. It will reopen June 4.

Information: Linda Frickman, (970) 491-7634, or Jonathan Clifton, (970) 491-5120.

ades ago while living in Los Angeles and acting as chief appraisers for some of the

most important collections in the western United States, including one owned by Paramount Studios. The duo also collected friends for whom they helped identify significant or beautiful art to purchase. Some of those close friends were the most famous movie stars of their time, including Gable, Jack Benny and Gene Kelly.

With classic Hollywood becoming a fading memory, traffic woes mounting and following an earthquake that damaged their home, Hartford and Tandstad decided to leave California. But where should they go? They met Barbara and Richard Ward, longtime Fort Collins residents who were visiting their daughter, Patricia, who was married to Gene Kelly. The Wards invited Hartford and Tandstad to visit Fort Collins,

and within days of coming here, they decided to relocate to Northern Colorado.

A love of teaching and sharing

As deep as their love for art, Hartford and Tandstad also were dedicated to sharing and teaching. In addition to the art pieces, they amassed a 6,500-volume research library. Seeking to share their passion, the duo turned in 2011 to CSU, with whom they had developed a relationship after that first meeting, and asked if the art museum would like to display their collection of rare drawings as a loan exhibit.

Seeing how CSU staff exhibited the drawings in a quality facility with respect to cultural stewardship, knowing that students used the collection as a teaching

tool and bolstered by the fact that the exhibit was open to the public for all to enjoy, Hartford and Tandstad made the decision to gift their entire collection to the university. They made the bequest in honor of their mothers, Della Von Routt and Bertha Midtbust Tandstad.

"I hope in the future all the boys and girls at the university will be able to have this as a learning tool," Hartford said in an interview prior to his death in December. "Then, I will feel my life was worthwhile."

But there is a catch

Because of the size and significance of the legacy gift, Hartford and Tandstad said the collection would go to CSU if the University Art Museum is expanded to accommodate the art as well as the

research library.

"Though major museums expressed interest in acquiring selected works, it was important to the donors to keep the collection together," said Jonathan Clifton, director of development, College of Liberal Arts. The gift was made to CSU in cooperation with the Tessa Foundation, created by Sharon and David Neenan.

CSU has been collecting contributions and will launch a public campaign to raise the \$3 million for the expansion, which will extend the building from the east or rear entrance. Four separate galleries will be used to display the collection in rotating exhibits. The expansion includes classroom space to teach art history and museum-studies seminar as well as give students the opportunity for individual research in a library.

Frickman said Hartford and Tandstad amassed art they felt passionate about or pieces that stimulated them intellectually as well as aesthetically. The pieces will give students a chance to view art from a culturally diverse perspective.

"Students usually see art on a computer screen or projected in the classroom," Frickman said. "Instead, they will be able to see a work in person, its texture, its scale, the artist's brushstrokes."

Clifton added that the expansion is dedicated to preserving the historical aesthetics of the building, which was the former Fort Collins High School.

"This enhances Fort Collins as a community of distinction," he said.

Marie Livingston, museum advisory board member and an economics professor emeritus, said the collection benefits the entire community by offering a major cultural attraction.

"This is a treasure for Fort Collins," she said. "We know that this will be a unique cultural resource for the entire community. It is truly a legacy gift for future generations in Fort Collins."