Ahead of the curve

When the *Newark Museum* was founded in 1909, its first director was John Cotton Dana (1856–1929), who was also the director of the city's library system. Among the museum's art-loving trustees were a varnish magnate (Franklin Murphy, who would also serve as New Jersey's governor), a department store mogul (Louis Bamberger), and a gallery owner (Frederick Keer).

The newborn museum was housed in a large suite of galleries on the fourth floor of the library's palatial Renaissance revival building on Washington Park in the heart of Newark's industrial downtown.

Dana was troubled by the dominance of European art in American museums and felt strongly that an American museum needed to support American artists. "Art has always flourished where it was asked to flourish, and never elsewhere," he wrote. The first official fine arts exhibition in the Newark Museum was of "paintings and bronzes by American artists" in 1910, although the library's museum committee had been mounting exhibitions since its establishment in 1904.

Good to their word, Dana and his trustees purchased their first painting in 1910, *Harlem River* by Ernest Lawson (Fig. 1). The Lawson was one of three oil paintings by contemporary artists acquired in that year, all offered by trustee Frederick Keer from his art gallery on Broad Street. This was the first Lawson acquired by a museum in the Northeast, and would establish Newark's early role as a champion of the "art of today."

The museum continued its promotion of living American artists, mounting an exhibition of "American paintings by twenty living artists" in early 1913. That same year, one of the first one-man museum exhibitions by a living American artist was held in Newark, when the paintings of Max Weber were shown. Weber was referred to as "an exponent of the modern movement in American art" in the museum's annual report. Interestingly, his work was displayed alongside the watercolors of a prominent Japanese artist Soken Ito.
The Newark Museum: now and then

Demonstrating Dana's interest in presenting a global vision of contemporary art, the museum would subsequently acquire a number of Weber paintings, supported by trustee Felix Fulld, none of which was from this first exhibition. In 1986 the museum purchased an early cubist painting, The Blue Vase, to represent the kind of work that would have been in that landmark installation (Fig. 4). Dana's influence on Weber's career stayed with the artist. As he wrote to Dana's successor, Beatrice Winser, in 1939: "I am proud of being represented in your museum. The Dana spirit which it was my privilege to imbibe in the early years of life is deeply and eternally implanted in my heart."

The most ambitious modernist painting acquired by the museum in its early years was Joseph Stella's Voice of the City of New York Interpreted of 1926 to 1922. The Italian-born Stella was the leading voice of Italian futurism in American art. His Voice of the City comprised a massive five-part ensemble more than twenty-two feet long (Fig. 2). It was an allusion to the city, which to him was the defining ingredient of the modern world. Stella showed his five panels throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Offers were made by other museums for individual panels, but the artist refused to split them up. To him, the five were a single vast portrait of the city that had captured him and held onto him throughout his life. Ultimately, through his Newark-based gallery, Rabin and Krueger, he engineered a deal for the Newark Museum to purchase all of them in 1937 for $2,500.

In 1954 the museum mounted an exhibition drawn largely from its own burgeoning holdings of modern art called Enjoy Modern Art. The wonderfully blunt premise of the exhibition was to assume that most museum visitors were puzzled by modern art and didn't like it; and then teach them how to understand the visual language of the modern artist. The introductory text affirmed that "modern art can be enjoyed, if prejudices are forgotten." These words hark back to Dana himself, who often found himself puzzled by what contemporary artists in the early 1900s were doing, but nonetheless insisted that it was important for his museum to show them.

Included as part of this display were seven works by Alexander Calder that had recently returned from Sao Paulo, Brazil, where they had been part of the American section of an international exhibition. One of those pieces, Triple Gang (Fig. 3), had been in the 1952 Venice Biennale, at which Calder won the grand prize for sculpture—the first American artist to be so highly recognized in Venice since James McNeil Whistler in 1895. In any case, the museum enjoyed Calder's Triple Gang enough to purchase it in 1956.

Modern American artists had a curious role in the emergence of another conversation in the twentieth-century museum: folk art. In 1930, for its new building on Washington Park in Newark, the museum hired Holger Cahill to organize an exhibition called American Primitive: An Exhibit of the Patina of Nineteenth Century Folk Art. The first museum exhibition in the country to study paintings by self-taught artists. Two American artists, Robert Laurent and Elie Nadelman, were lenders, and Laurent ultimately sold the museum several works from his collection. The frontispiece of the 1930 exhibition catalogue, a painting of a little girl holding flowers from about 1840, was lent to the exhibition by yet...
the accompanying catalogue. Hawkins, with his opulent use of enamel on Masonite and his mastery of composition and color, is only really "folk" by virtue of his lack of formal training. Paintings like his City Hall (Fig. 6) of 1983 appeal to the modern eye in much the same way that nineteenth-century folk paintings appealed to modern artists in the early twentieth century.

Likewise, works by African-American artists have long been a collecting focus for the museum. The first to enter Newark's collection was the 1920 Good Shepherd by Henry Ossawa Tanner, lent to the museum by a New Jersey collector in 1928, and made a gift in 1929 (Fig. 7). This picture appears to have been the first Tanner to enter a museum collection in the New York area and exemplifies the artist's religiously inspired works, infused with their distinctive atmospheric blue-green coloring. Like many early African-American artists, Tanner moved to Europe to escape the racism that inhibited his success as an artist. He remained in Europe until the end of his life.

A completely different story accompanies a recent acquisition by Newark-born artist Willie Cole. Cole, who has worked in a wide range of materials such as textiles and clay, achieved international recognition for his work with found objects and assemblages. Newark purchased its first Cole sculpture, Domestic Shield V, in 1992. Using nothing more complex than an old ironing board and a hot iron, Cole produced an iconic sculpture that evokes uncomfortably intercon-

another artist, William Zorach (Fig. 5). Zorach had found the picture in an antiques shop in Maine, and the museum purchased it from him in 1931.

The influence of so-called folk art on modern art, and the very definition of folk art itself, has been a topic of exploration through decades of curators at Newark. The museum has continued to acquire twentieth-century folk/self-taught/outsider/visionary art in order to expand the conversation begun in 1936. The work of William L. Hawkins, for example, was first introduced to Newark's visitors in the 1995 exhibition A World of Their Own: Twentieth-Century American Folk Art. The show included modern folk works from Newark's collection and inspired numerous acquisitions of work by other artists included in
rected images of slave ships and African-American domestics. In 2013, the museum purchased one of Cole’s first large-scale bronze sculptures, *Sole Sitter*, based on a series of smaller works produced from women’s shoes (Fig. 8). With its increased scale and dark brown patina, *Sole Sitter* further transforms everyday objects into a work of striking visual power. A sly commentary on consumerism and materiality, the work also—and quite intentionally—brings to mind African sculpture of the sort Cole first experienced in the Newark Museum galleries as a child growing up in Newark. “I surround myself with images of African sculptures, so even though my sculptures are not based on a specific tradition or aesthetic, the influences of these images get embedded in my subconscious and re-emerge almost effortlessly in my work,” he says.

For over a century, Newark’s museum has shown and collected art that expresses the emotions and world views of American artists of every stripe, placing them in a global context of art and artifacts that touch on all aspects of the human experience.

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*Fig. 5. Girl with Flowers*, artist unknown, c. 1860, Oil on canvas, 36 ¾ by 29 inches.

*Fig. 6. City Hall by William L. Hawkins* (1895-1990), 1983. Enamel on Masonite with wood frame, 51 by 55 ¾ inch (including frame).

*Fig. 7. The Good Shepherd* by Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859-1937), 1932. Oil on canvas, 32 by 25 ¾ inches.

*Fig. 8. Sole Sitter by Willie Cole* (1955-), 2013. Bronze, height 72, width 27, depth 62 inches.
The Newark Museum has never been like other museums. There are times when it looks like other urban art institutions, and surely it was inspired by other American museums, but Newark was created in 1909 with a progressive agenda that would forever shape its character and history. Today the Newark Museum continues the legacy of its founding vision, once radical, now mainstream: to be an institution of service to the people of New Jersey, not a treasure house for its industrialists and civic leaders.

John Cotton Dana embraced a definition of art that was radical in its day. He was leery of the fine arts (i.e., painting and sculpture) and felt their dominance in museums intimidated potential visitors. Dana was convinced that in the ordinary objects of everyday life, there was art, whether in the craftsmanship or the design. "Study your teacups," he wrote. "The drinking vessel of every day use is an object on which those endowed with the creative art faculty have spent time, care, labor and high skill for many thousands of years. It has taken a million forms and has been adorned in a million ways."

The first decorative arts exhibition at the Newark Museum was Modern American Pottery, which opened in 1910. Twelve American potteries joined 230 objects to the fledgling museum’s exhibition space in the Newark Free Public Library. It is significant that New Jersey’s celebrated porcelain manufacturer, Lenox, included thirty-four pieces in this display. Of course, there were teacups (see Fig. 1), and hand-decorated dinner plates, which were shown alongside modest handcrafted vases by such now-famous names as Grueby, Marblehead, Newcomb, Paul Revere, and Van Briggle.

Dana particularly liked ceramics because it was art that ordinary people could grasp and that they could find in local stores and purchase for their own homes. The fact that the Marblehead vase purchased by Newark in 1911 for eight dollars is now a rare and valuable artifact worthy of the mightiest museum collection is nothing more than an accident (Fig. 2). Needless to say, the collecting of contemporary ceramics in Newark has never abated. In 2002 the museum became the first American institution to acquire a work by British ceramic artist...
exhibition of American handcrafted jewelry in 1914, and even published a twelve-page catalogue to accompany that display. The museum's interest in jewelry would have been logical, given the city's role as the largest manufacturer of gold jewelry in the United States. Oddly enough, the museum did not mount an exhibition about Newark's own jewelry industry until early 1929, just months before Dana's death. Even stranger, the museum didn't purchase jewelry from any of these early exhibitions. Dana may have felt that precious metals were too elitist or just too costly for his collecting agenda. Indeed, during his twenty years as director, only three pieces of modern silver were acquired for the permanent collection, and nothing at all from Newark's own Tiffany and Company factory, or from any of the jewelry manufacturers in the city.

Grayson Perry (Fig. 3). Combining a classic Chinese vase shape with three distinctly English ceramic decoration techniques—applied springing, sgraffito, and transfer-printing—Perry has created a modern work of art that pays homage to tradition while simultaneously commenting on a culture that conceals social ills behind placid suburban facades. Perry's ceramic vessel was included in the 2003 exhibition and publication Great Pot: Contemporary Ceramics from Tradition to Fantasy, which focused on the vessel tradition in studio ceramics from the 1930s to the turn of the millennium.

Dana's fascination with the artistic potential of household objects led to a series of exhibitions during the 1910s, ranging from regional industry (The Clay Products of New Jersey, 1915) to international (Modern German Applied Art, 1912). He valued handcraft and industrial design equally, and celebrated both in his exhibitions. Just as he purchased ceramics from the 1910 exhibition for the museum, he acquired a wide range of materials from the 1912 German design exhibition, as well as from the second version of this exhibition mounted in 1922. Born in the mid-nineteenth century, Dana would have appreciated Otto Prutscher's cut-glass goblets, a dramatic updating of an age-old Bohemian glass tradition (Fig. 4). Jewelry played an important role in the 1912 German design exhibition. Dana also produced an
Ironically, the first jewelry purchased by the museum were two necklaces by Georg Jensen Silversmiths, acquired in late 1929 directly from the Jensen shop on West Fifty-seventh Street by Beatrice Winser. John Cotton Dana's assistant, who was appointed director at his death. One of the necklaces was a gold set with moonstones, the other a lavalier set with labradorites (Fig. 5). Winser paid 25 percent off the retail price of $810 for the latter—substantially more than the museum normally paid for decorative arts objects at that time.

Included in the 1914 art jewelry exhibition was Frank Gardner Hale, among the best known of Boston's arts and crafts jewelers. In 2004, to rectify Dana's scruples about precious metals, the museum purchased a lavalier by Hale, featuring a Chinese carving in lapis lazuli mounted in yellow and white gold (Fig. 6).

The Newark Museum, revived interest in the city's once-flourishing jewelry industry led to the organization of an exhibition in 1997 entitled The Glitter and the Gold: Fashioning America's Jewelry with an accompanying publication. Active acquisition of Newark-made jewelry for this project led to an expansion of departmental collecting goals, to embrace all jewelry, European and American. As part of this expansion, the decorative arts department began acquiring contemporary studio jewelry to honor the institutional commitment to the "art of today."

Among the most important acquisitions in this vein was the millennial purchase of The Grand Barbarini's Treasure, a 1998 jewel by William Harper (Fig. 7). Loosely inspired by ancient fibulae, the jewel itself showcases Harper's skills as a goldsmith and enamelist, incorporating semi-precious gems for their coloristic effects in ways that are completely modern, and yet also hark back to the world of art jewelry at the turn of the twentieth century. Particularly interesting is Harper's decision to create a series of boxes, which he refers to as casks, to house the brooches when not being worn (Fig. 8). These visually complex casks evoke both the nkisi nkondi figures of the BaKongo peoples and the mysterious sculptural boxes of Joseph Cornell (1903-1972).

Thus, 106 years after its founding, the Newark Museum continues to push boundaries and to make connections across the material world, shedding new light on art and culture for the benefit of an increasingly diverse and global audience.

2 C. Tristram Meyer was the first craft artist to be awarded the Turner Prize for Art in 1993. Married and a father, he is also known for his cross-stitching, and in 1993 was presented with a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) by HRH Prince Charles, dressed in homage to Charles' wife, the Duchess of Cornwall.
3 John B. Smith. The Jewelry Industry in Newark. A brief survey of the industry in Newark; with notes on the history of jewelry throughout the age (Newark Museum, Newark, N.J., 1929).
4 These were a silver fligger Mehlilah case by the Beadel School in Jerusalem, the role of which was to establish a "Jewish style" in the arts and crafts movement; a silver covered box by Otto Stieber, one of a group of modern German objects from the 1923 German applied arts exhibition; and a silver bowl by New York silversmith Peter Mülle-Munk from a show entitled Modern American Design in Metal.
Fig. 5. Pendant necklace by Georg Jensen Silversmiths, Denmark, c. 1928. Silver, lapis lazuli, height 2 ½ inches; width 2 ½ inches (pendants); length 23 inches (chain).

Fig. 6. Pendant necklace by Frank Gardner Hale (1876–1945), Boston, Massachusetts, c. 1923. Gold, lapis lazuli, height 2 ½ inches; width 2 ½ inches (pendants); length 23 inches (chain).

Fig. 7. Grand Barborian's Tepozte by William Harper (1944–), New York, New York, 1998. Gold, enamel, silver, pearl, turquoise, opal, topaz, and chalcedony, height 9 inches, width 7 inches.

Fig. 8. Grand Barborian's Tepozte Box by Harper, 1998. Wood, plastics, leather, glass, metal, paper, and metal, height 7 ½ inches, length 16 inches, depth 13 inches.
Although John Cotton Dana was adamant that he did not want his new museum to collect Old Masters or European antiques, he was not isolationist in his collecting vision. The first acquisition by the new museum in 1909, the Rockwell Collection, was an enormous assemblage of Japanese material, mostly of the Edo and Meiji periods, purchased with funds appropriated by the City of Newark for that purpose. This acquisition established two fundamental premises for the museum's evolution over the next century: the definition of "art" included what would have been called "applied art" at the time; and all of the objects were seen as "modern" (although that definition embraced well over a century). Moreover, Dana and his trustees were also making a clear statement that an art museum should not be exclusively dedicated to the art of Western culture.

The Rockwell Collection was aesthetically and functionally diverse, from religious images (Fig. 1) and secular ornaments (Fig. 2) to prints, paintings, ceramics, metalwork, and textiles. The lack of a hierarchical distinction between fine art and craft would influence every aspect of the museum's subsequent history.

Newark's interest in the range of modern Japanese art continued right through the 1950s as the first curator of Asian Art, Eleanor Olsen, continued to purchase contemporary prints and decorative arts by living artists (Fig. 3). More recent exhibitions focusing on the full range of the Japanese collections have included *Japan, the Enduring Heritage* (1983) and *Poetic Pastimes* (2012).

The second major direction for the Asian collections came in 1911, with the Edward N. Crane memorial exhibition of 150 objects from the then little-known Himalayan country of Tibet. The Tibetan material had been gathered by Dr. Albert L. Shelton, a medical missionary, who happened to have met Crane, a founding trustee of the Newark Museum, aboard ship en route to the United States. Dr. Shelton was interested in selling his Tibetan collection to fund his missionary work in the war-torn Batang region. After Crane's unexpected death in the summer of 1911, the entire collection was purchased by his wife and brother and donated to the museum in his memory. The exhibition of Tibetan material would be the first of its kind in an American museum.

In 1920 the museum purchased another 250 pieces of Tibetan material directly from Dr. Shelton following his harrowing trip from Batang to the United States, establishing Newark's holdings...
as a comprehensive survey of both religious and secular Tibetan objects unique in the nation. Just two years later, on another difficult journey, Dr. Shelton was murdered by bandits.

In 1935, using American artists under an appropriation from the federal ERA (Emergency Relief Administration, a forerunner of the Works Progress Administration), the museum created a Buddhist altar as the centerpiece of its Tibetan collection. That altar was visited twice by the fourteenth Dalai Lama, in 1979 and 1981, who noted that it was constructed in the year he was born. In 1988 the original altar was deconsecrated

Middle Kingdom, called rather plainly China and the Chinese. The goal of this project was twofold, as outlined in a promotional leaflet released during the exhibition’s planning stages: to showcase great works of Chinese art and craft and to “develop an intelligent and sympathetic view of China” in the minds of a public who were all too aware of the political turmoil that had followed the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912.

Characteristically for Dana, the museum not only borrowed old objects from numerous sources and used its own collection, but it also commissioned new objects that reflected the best of surviving craft traditions in post-imperial China. A traditional small-town silk jacket made in 1923 reflects the conservatism of southern China, in contrast to tight high-collared dresses (cheongsam) that fashionable women wore in cosmopolitan Shang-

Fig. 1. Aizen Myo-oo Takanobu: Ikki, late sixteenth century. Oak, lacquer, paint; height 43 inches.

Fig. 2. Inro, with netsuke and okimono, Japanese, Edo period, mid-seventeenth century. Wood, lacquer, mother-of-pearl, gold; height 10 1/2, width 3 inches.

Fig. 3. Bowl by Shirotani, Hamada (1894-1978), Japanese, 1946-1951. Stoneware; height 3 3/4, diameter 7 1/2 inches.

Fig. 4. Tara, Bodhisattva of Compassion, Nepalese, twelfth-twelfth centuries, with mandorla, Tibet, thirteenth-fourteenth centuries. Gill copper, cast and hammered, silver wire and gemstone inlay, paint; height 28, width 12, depth 6 1/2 inches.

and a new altar was designed as part of the museum’s newly-built Asian art galleries. Parts of the old altar were saved, and encased in the structure of the new one, which was decorated by Tibetan artist Phuntsok Dorje and finally consecrated by the Dalai Lama himself in 1990 (Fig. 6).

Chinese art was equally central to the Newark Museum’s mission. There were over one hundred Chinese porcelains in the founding collection purchased from George Rockwell in 1909, and hundreds more Chinese objects entered the collection over the next fourteen years. In 1923 the museum mounted its first major show on the
hai at the same time (see Fig. 8). Despite its timeless shape, the high-contrast color scheme and the use of machine-made European lace trimming place this jacket firmly in the moment of its creation.

Through the 1930s and 1940s, major gifts of Chinese art expanded the museum's holdings, although they were increasingly overshadowed by the rising celebrity of the Tibetan collection. In 1980 the China Institute in New York showcased Newark's collection. Then, anticipating the nineteenth anniversary of China and the Chinese, the museum reinstalled its Chinese galleries, organizing objects along thematic lines of connoisseurship, materials, and homage to the past. Contemporary works, such as three recently purchased painted albums by contemporary artist Xia Yifu, were incorporated into the

Fig. 5. Wine table with dragon motif, Chinese, Wanli period (1573–1620). Lacquer, wood, gold, mother-of-pearl, height 96, length 95, depth 32 inches.

Fig. 6. The Newark Museum's Tibetan altar, decorated by Phunzok Dorje (1966–), 1991.
mix. To emphasize the living traditions in Chinese art, two rare Qianlong porcelain instruments (Fig. 7) were displayed alongside a blue-and-white porcelain "boom box" by contemporary artist Ma Jun.

In spite of the suite of Asian galleries in the museum’s north wing, the collections far outstrip the space available to display them. In 2013 the museum organized an anniversary exhibition of 175 of its best Ming and Qing dynasty objects in Ming to Modern: Elevating the Everyday in Chinese Art. Part of this installation was an extensive section devoted to European and American art pottery and studio ceramics clearly influenced by China. Moreover, many of the works in Ming to Modern had not been exhibited before, although some had been in the museum’s collection since the 1920s. Among the biggest surprises was the discovery of a lacquered wine table from the Wanli period of the Ming dynasty (Fig. 5). One of only three known examples in the world, the table had been donated in 1941. Since its beginnings, the Newark Museum has collected and shown art and artifacts from every part of what the West knows as Asia. Then, as now, as this small sampling suggests, the museum’s goal has been to document the significance of objects in everyday life, and to underscore the survival of living artistic traditions.

Fig. 7. Musical instruments. Chinese, Qianlong period (1736–1795), Qing dynasty (1644–1911). Satsuma with Lushan motifs (left) and Pipa with hat and Lushan motifs (right). Both are porcelain with underglaze blue decorations; length of Satsuma 19 ¼ inches, of Pipa 17 ½ inches.

Fig. 8. Lady’s jacket, Chinese, 1923. Silk damask with appliquéd trim; height 39 inches.
One of the insistent themes that put the Newark Museum ahead of the curve in the years running up to World War I was that art was not confined to canvas and marble, nor to the geopolitical confines of Europe. John Cotton Dana consistently resisted received western notions of art as he sought out beauty in everyday objects that touched human lives in every corner of the globe.

The first acquisition of an African artwork came in 1917 with the gift of two Zulu beaded aprons accompanied by a photograph of a Zulu woman wearing one of them (see Fig. 5). The strong geometry and color scheme of the larger of the two aprons would have appealed to Dana's keen interest in modern graphic design. Although likely produced in the nineteenth century, to his eye the Zulu beadwork would have appeared very contemporary. Moreover, the aprons would have readily supported his goal of increasing public understanding of world cultures through the study of objects that reflected good design and artistic innovation. The museum's early interest in South African art, especially beadwork, has continued to grow, becoming a strength of the African art collection. Most recently, in 2009 the museum purchased a splendid bridal outfit from the 1960s, its provenance intact, demonstrating the evolution of beadwork as a living artistic tradition in South Africa as well as the importance of acquiring such work as a complete ensemble rather than individual pieces (Fig. 3).
The Newark Museum now and then

The development of the African collection paralleled that of other non-western holdings in the museum, with important gifts and purchases in the first twenty years of the young institution's life. Major purchases in 1924 came from the holdings of Walter C. Hill and Walter Dominitz, two collectors who were acquiring African art at the turn of the twentieth century. Expanding both the geographical range and cultural breadth of the collection, these acquisitions included a Kota reliquary figure purchased from Hill's executor (Fig. 2). Like the Zulu beaded apron given in 1917, this masterpiece from Gabon has a distinctly modernist aesthetic that would have caught Dana's eye and linked it aesthetically with works in other collections in his museum.

In the same year that the Kota reliquary figure came to the museum Susan Runyon Cheney Watson, a Newark native, donated the remarkable suite of gold jewelry from East Africa shown in Figure 1, along with its original silver sequined velvet case. It had been given to her in 1884 as the wife of the American consul to Zanzibar from 1870 to 1886 by Seyyid Barghash bin Said, the sultan of Zanzibar.

One of the first exhibitions focused solely on African art ever held at an American museum took place at the Newark Museum in 1926. Close on its heels were two separate exhibitions in 1928. The first, primarily showing West and West Central African objects in the museum's collection, made a point, according to the museum's press release, of emphasizing "the ability of Africans as artists" and how they applied their sense of design not only to sculpture but to everyday objects as well. This was in distinct contrast to western perceptions of the...
Dana's 1928 shopping journey through Europe and North Africa marked another significant milestone for the museum's African collections: textiles. Since the 1910s Dana had collected Western and Asian textiles as emblematic of a country's handcraft, industrial production, and artistic sensibilities. African textiles greatly expanded the richness of this vision, and this aspect of the collection grew significantly under the stewardship of curator Anne Spencer, who worked at the Newark Museum from 1974 until 1999. Spencer developed the collection to include superior examples of most African weaving traditions and also led her to collect factory-made print cloth, often referred to as "Dutch wax," for the museum in 1981. Such textiles have circulated on the continent since the mid-nineteenth century, first produced by factories in Holland and England for African patrons. In 1982 Spencer mounted a landmark exhibition entitled In Praise of Heroes: Contemporary African Commemorative Cloth, which focused on a sub-genre of this cloth that focused on political and cultural leaders. The show and its catalogue, which featured more than 150 cloths from twenty-seven sub-Saharan countries, paved the way for further collecting by gift and purchase throughout the 1980s and 1990s (see Fig. 6). In 2014 the collection was further enriched by...
scholar Jo Sullivan, a major lender to the 1982 exhibition, who donated her collection of Afri-
can commemorative cloth to Newark.

In 2009 Christa Clarke, currently the Senior Curator of the Arts of Global Africa, approached London-based artist Yinka Shonibare, known for his signature use of Dutch wax textiles, to create a major work in honor of the museum's centennial. The result was Party Time: Re-imagine America, an installation in the dining room of the museum's 1885 Ballantine House (Fig. 7). A meditation on industrial era indulgence and excess, nine headless figures dressed in hand-sewn Victorian costumes made from factory-print cloth disport themselves around a lavishly set dinner table, seated on chairs that are upholstered in the same textiles. Shonibare's use of this cloth complicates our understanding of African "authenticity." While generally seen as

catalogue along with an innovative reinstallation, Newark's approach to the arts of Africa has become as global as the art itself has.

Ahead of the Curve: The Newark Museum, 1999–2015 is the latest exhibition at the Winter Antiques Show at the Park Avenue Armory in New York, January 23 to February 1.

ULYSSES GRANT DIETZ in the chief curator and curator of decorative arts at the Newark Museum.

Fig. 4. Shawl pins, Algeria, late nineteenth or early twentieth century; Silver; length 25 inches.

Fig. 5. Apron, Zu, c. 1880. Glass beads and thread; 58 by 12 inches. Gift of Berthaold Antiques.

Fig. 6. "Mono Cross," printed textile by Orixa Mall, Bamako, Mali, late twentieth century. Roller-printed cotton, 43 by 72 inches. Purchase, Members' Fund.

Fig. 7. Party Time: Re-imagine America by Yinka Shonibare (1952–), temporary installation in the dining room of the Newark Museum's Ballantine House, 2009. Mixed media. Purchase, Helen Meekerson Brady Cutting Fund.