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**ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO TO RECEIVE LARGEST GIFT OF ART
IN THE MUSEUM'S HISTORY**

**Stefan T. Edlis and Gael Neeson Collection of 42 Iconic Contemporary Works Includes
Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Gerhard Richter, Roy Lichtenstein**

CHICAGO – Douglas Druick, President and Eloise W. Martin Director of the Art Institute of Chicago, announced today the largest gift of art in the museum's 136-year history: the Edlis/Neeson Collection, 42 iconic masterpieces of contemporary art donated by the Chicago-based collectors and philanthropists Stefan T. Edlis and his wife, Gael Neeson. The gift includes nine works by Andy Warhol, three paintings by Jasper Johns, one Robert Rauschenberg Combine, two paintings by Roy Lichtenstein, four paintings by Gerhard Richter, and a painting and sculpture by Cy Twombly. Works by Brice Marden, Eric Fischl, Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst, Charles Ray, Takashi Murakami, Katharina Fritsch, Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince, and John Currin complete the exceptional gift.

"We are so grateful to Stefan and Gael for the extraordinary gift of the very best works from their collection of contemporary art, which cements the status of our already strong contemporary holdings. Against the backdrop of our encyclopedic collection, the Edlis/Neeson gift allows us to build one of the richest narratives of art under one roof," Druick said when making the announcement. "The Art Institute has a world-class collection built through transformative gifts like Stefan and Gael's, going back to the museum's founding in the era of Impressionism. The Edlis/Neeson Collection will join the ranks of cornerstone gifts and bequests from

Bertha Palmer, Frederic Clay and Helen Birch Bartlett, Martin A. Ryerson, Arthur Jerome Eddy, and Ed and Lindy Bergman, all of which have made the museum what we are today."



Mayor Rahm Emanuel said, "With this gift, Stefan Edlis and Gael Neeson have not only ensured that people from around the world will visit Chicago for decades to come, but that the city will continue its rise in the ranks as one of the great global art destinations. This collection is a generous gift to the people of Chicago, who, by calling the city home, recognize and revel in its energy, cultural resources, and rich history. More importantly, it confirms what I have long maintained—that arts and culture are key to the economic vitality and spiritual enrichment of our city."

Madeleine Grynsztejn, Pritzker Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, said, "I join Chicago's cultural community in applauding this generous gift of artwork from Stefan and Gael. They are incredible collectors who have been supportive of many organizations throughout the city, including the MCA Chicago where their leadership and generosity have benefited us for over 30 years. This is a tremendous gift for the City of Chicago and we are so pleased that these works will remain in our vibrant arts community and be enjoyed by future generations."



The Edlis/Neeson Collection includes an outstanding selection of internationally recognized masterpieces that capture the collectors' passion for art created at mid-century and beyond: the important work that paved the path to Pop Art, Warhol and the full flowering of the movement, and its imprint on later artists. The heart of the collection is nine works by Andy Warhol, including two self-portraits (1964 and 1966), *Twelve Jackies* (1964), *Big Electric Chair* (1967–68), and the later works *Mona Lisa Four Times* (1978) and *Pat Hearn (diptych)* (1985). Jasper Johns is represented by three archetypal paintings: *Target* (1961), *Figure 4* (1959), and *Alphabet* (1959).

Two later Roy Lichtenstein paintings—*Artist's Studio "Foot Medication"* (1974) and *Woman III* (1982)—trace the legacy of Pop Art into the 1970s and 1980s, a story carried into sculptures by Jeff Koons, included here with *Christ and the Lamb* (1988) and *Bourgeois Bust – Jeff and Ilona* (1991). Works by Gerhard Richter from both the 1960s (*Hunting Party* and *Stadtbild*) and the 1980s (*Davos* and *Venedig*) offer a view into his evolution as a painter and complement the Art Institute's own rich holdings of Richter. The revival of figurative painting is also a part of the collection, seen in Eric Fischl's *Slumber Party* (1983) and John Currin's *Stamford After Brunch* (2000). Twelve photographs—six by Richard Prince and six by Cindy Sherman—touch on the gender and identity issues critical to art from the 1980s and beyond.

The Edlis family—a widowed mother and her three children, Lotte (18), Stefan (15), and Herbert (3)—arrived in the United States from Vienna in March 1941. Their journey from their home in Austria had begun four weeks earlier and took them via train through occupied France and Spain, then via ship from Lisbon to a midtown pier in Manhattan. Another branch of the family had been prominent members of Pittsburgh society since the turn of the century, and Edlis's cousin Jerome provided the necessary guarantees and used his connections to urge the Viennese consul to ensure the European refugees residence, which was very difficult to obtain due to the immigration

quota system. They settled in New York with Edlis's mother's family, and though their resources were few, jobs were plentiful and it was a happy upbringing.

At the age of 18, Edlis was drafted into the United States Navy and served in the Pacific. At the end of World War II, he found himself with a military discharge and a girlfriend in San Francisco, making a life in the Bay Area. While there, he worked in a small shop that pioneered the molding process of newly developed plastic compounds—a position that began his career in plastics manufacturing. He moved to Chicago in 1950 and at 25 memorably claimed to be 35 and a plant manager to land a position (which understandably did not last long). Fifteen years later, he had acquired enough experience, capital, knowledge, and customers to build the small but highly profitable Apollo Plastics Corporation, which he sold to a former business associate in 2000. It is still operating successfully in the same location under the leadership of the associate's sons.

Edlis and Neeson directed those same energies into their shared passion for arts and culture, not only building a deep private collection but also being active patrons of Chicago's cultural community. Edlis has been a life trustee and leading donor at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago for decades, where he and his wife have donated iconic works of art, named the Edlis Neeson Theater, and established a major acquisitions fund. They are also supporters of Chicago's WBEZ radio station, which broadcasts some of its programming from the Stefan Edlis and Gael Neeson Foundation Talk Studio, and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

In Aspen, Colorado, where they spend a significant part of each year, they are founding members of the Aspen Art Museum and major supporters of the Aspen Music Festival and School as well as the Aspen Institute. The couple is also currently working to underwrite cultural coverage with the National Public Radio affiliate in Aspen. In New York City, they support the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Neeson is additionally a trustee of the New Museum.

"I have donated works of art to museums for years but have been frustrated by their lack of exposure," said Stefan Edlis. "The fact that the Art Institute proposed keeping the works on permanent view for 50 years in the Modern Wing was a totally convincing argument for gifting the collection to the museum. Gael and I are delighted that these works of art will be in the Art Institute's long-term plans."

The 42 works will be installed in early 2016 in the contemporary art galleries on the second floor of the museum's Modern Wing. Designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Renzo Piano and now six years old, the Modern Wing allows the museum to showcase its renowned collection of modern and contemporary art in spacious, flexible, light-filled galleries specifically designed to feature twentieth- and twenty-first-century art, architecture, and photography.



Robert Levy, Chairman of the Art Institute's Board of Trustees, added, "A gift of art of this importance and scope is incredibly rare, occurring perhaps once every 40 or 50 years. The fact that the gift is composed of contemporary art, as the Impressionist collection also was when first assembled, demonstrates that Chicago's collectors and institutions have always been progressive and forward looking. This momentum has made the city and the Art Institute the home for many of the world's greatest works of art, a distinction that we will continue to pursue in an increasingly globalized and ever-contemporary world."

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EDLIS/NEESON GIFT

James Rondeau, the Dittmer Chair and Curator of Contemporary Art at the Art Institute, selects highlights of the collection below and underscores the significance of the Edlis/Neeson Collection, saying, "As a curator, I now have the incredibly rare opportunity and privilege to reshape our presentation of the history of contemporary art. The works from Stefan and Gael—masterpieces in their own right—take on a new resonance when placed in direct dialogue with the Art Institute's collection, which already includes pivotal works by Gerhard Richter, Jasper Johns, and Cy Twombly, among others. The Edlis/Neeson Collection also enables us to give Andy Warhol his rightful place in our galleries. From the antecedents of Pop in early works by Johns and Rauschenberg to its reconfigurations in the hands of later artists, I am thrilled to see all of these works together, creating new energies and narratives of art for our visitors."



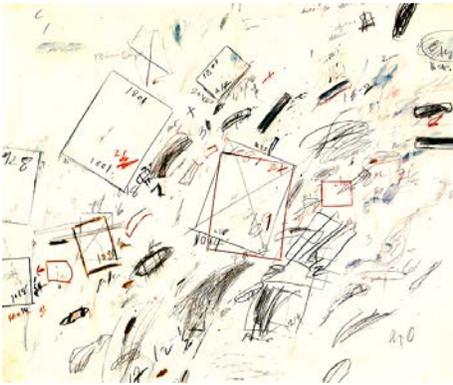
Jasper Johns. *Target*, 1961.

By incorporating found images and objects into his work in the 1950s and early 1960s, Jasper Johns was a catalyst in the shift away from the visual and critical dominance of Abstract Expressionist artists. The Edlis/Neeson gift includes three seminal Johns works from this era—*Figure 4* (1959), *Alphabet* (1959), and the iconic *Target* (1961). *Target* is an example of one of Johns' most recognizable and important motifs and captures the play between art, object, and sign that would pave the way for Pop Art.



Robert Rauschenberg. *Untitled*, circa 1955.

Robert Rauschenberg is represented in the gift to the Art Institute by *Untitled* (1955), one of the most significant Combines of his career. The Combines—hybrids of painting and sculpture incorporating found materials and images—challenged the two-dimensional limits of the canvas and attempted to bridge what Rauschenberg called "the gap between art and life." This pivotal piece belonged to Jasper Johns for decades; the string hanging from the toy parachute is argued to have inspired Johns' *Catenary* series.



Cy Twombly. *Untitled (Bolsena)*, 1969.

One of fourteen large canvases that Twombly produced by himself in the isolated Palazzo del Drago north of Rome during August and September 1969, *Untitled (Bolsena)* is both abstract and cryptically graphic—a crucial example of a transitional moment in twentieth-century art. The gift will also include Twombly’s sculpture *Untitled* (1953), which Edlis and Neeson acquired from the collection of Robert Rauschenberg. That sculpture is widely acknowledged as among the artist’s most important objects.



Andy Warhol. *Liz #3 [Early Colored Liz]*, 1963. The Stefan T. Edlis Collection, Partial and Promised Gift to the Art Institute of Chicago.

Andy Warhol is represented by nine iconic paintings, including two self-portraits; exemplary images of Jacqueline Kennedy, Liz Taylor, and the Mona Lisa; and a definitive electric chair. This gift allows the Art Institute to now claim the best collection of Warhol’s work in any encyclopedic museum in the world.



Cindy Sherman. *Untitled #92*, 1981.

The Edlis/Neeson Collection includes works by artists such as Cindy Sherman who, inheriting the formal and conceptual strategies of Pop Art, applied them to mass culture in innovative ways. Six works from Sherman’s most important series, the *Centerfolds* (1981), join six “appropriations” by Richard Prince to form a portfolio of contemporary photography within the gift.

A full list of the works of art and select images in the Edlis/Neeson gift are available upon request.

Images:

Stefan Edlis and Gael Neeson. Photo by Jeremy Lawson.
Andy Warhol. *Self-Portrait*, 1966.
Roy Lichtenstein. *Artist’s Studio “Foot Medication,”* 1974.

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