



# AMERICA'S FIRST MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The Phillips Collection is home to a growing, world-class collection of nearly 5,000 works of modern and contemporary art. Housed in Duncan Phillips's boyhood home and additions to it, the museum organizes internationally acclaimed exhibitions, offers lively programming for adults and children, and conducts important scholarly research on the history of art. Phillips referred to the museum as an "experiment station," and today it retains the

founder's personal stamp in a gathering of art that combines tradition and daring. One of the great pleasures of the Phillips is the unconventional way in which works by artists of different nationalities, periods, and styles coexist side-by-side in visual conversations within its galleries. Special exhibitions and frequent changes in the arrangement of the permanent collection mean there's something fresh to see on every visit to the Phillips.

## THE COLLECTION

Duncan Phillips (1886–1966), the grandson of a Pittsburgh steel magnate, built the extraordinary collection you see today. The museum opened its doors in 1921 as The Phillips Memorial Gallery in honor of Phillips's father, Duncan Clinch Phillips, who died in 1917, and brother, James, who died in the 1918 flu epidemic. Recognizing the healing power of art, Phillips sought to share his "living" collection in a welcoming space and to inspire others to find beauty in the artist's unique way of seeing the world.

Phillips's marriage to painter Marjorie Acker (1894–1985) and close friendships with artists helped develop his taste, and he worked enthusiastically to train his eye. Within a few years, the museum's holdings increased with works from both American and European artists, including Pierre Bonnard, Georges Braque, Honoré Daumier, Arthur Dove, Paul Klee, John Marin, and Vincent van Gogh. A major coup was the 1923 purchase of Pierre-Auguste Renoir's sumptuous *Luncheon of the Boating Party* and the 1942 purchase of Jacob Lawrence's *Migration Series*.

As a collector, Phillips was notable for his willingness to deviate from the art museum standard of displaying works together based on nationality and geography. The Phillips Collection became a leader in American art, with a collection of works that are deeply personal, yet connected to the great traditions of past and present, including the first works to enter a museum collection by Milton Avery, Georgia O'Keeffe, and many others.



Marjorie and Duncan Phillips, c. 1922

Guided by Phillips's belief in the universal language of art as a unifying force for social change, the museum has continued to acquire works by important voices of the day, including Whitfield Lovell, Linn Meyers, Leo Villareal, Simone Leigh, and Zilia Sánchez, and also organize special exhibitions and public programs that use modern art as a catalyst for starting conversations, building community, and creating empathy.

## THE BUILDING

Duncan Phillips originally exhibited his collection in specially built galleries at his family home, an 1897 Georgian Revival house in Washington's Dupont Circle neighborhood. The grand oak-paneled Music Room was added to the house in 1907. Over time, the building was adapted to include more galleries and offices, particularly after the Phillips family moved out in 1930.

In 1960, Phillips added a modernist wing, which was renamed the Goh Annex in 1989 when it was renovated and expanded. In 2006 the Phillips opened the new Sant Building, as well as the two-story Center for Art and Knowledge, a space for lively programs and classes on modern and contemporary art. The intimate scale of the original galleries has been replicated in the additions to the museum.

**Clockwise from top:** Isabelle De Leon, Amy K Bormet, Clarissa Corey-Bey, and Rikayyah Wilson perform in the Music Room, University of Maryland Center for Art and Knowledge in the former Phillips Carriage House, Sculptures by Ellsworth Kelly and Barbara Hepworth in the Hunter Courtyard

