

This May Surprise You.

For its 35th birthday party, AMUM wants to delight you with wonderful, unexpected objects from its collections.

AMUM is known primarily as a venue for contemporary art, a reputation that is entirely justified, because it was founded in 1981 as the University Gallery with a mission to show the work of living artists.

That mission has always been flexible even though the building was designed with no facilities for collections. The University Gallery quickly provided spaces for the University's group of Egyptian antiquities and a loaned collection of African art, and it accepted the Art Department's cache of etchings, lithographs, and screen prints.

In addition, the new gallery acquired gifts from worldly Memphians who collected modern and traditional art from the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia. *This May Surprise You* shows a selection of their donations and some happy consequences of those gifts. Together, they are driving AMUM's mission expansion and, it is hoped, a physical expansion that will enable creative use of its collections in public programs and pedagogy.

This May Surprise You introduces heretofore unseen or rarely seen works in the collection: textiles from native cultures of the Americas, works by Josef Albers, an eyewitness account of Aztec culture, African textiles and objects, Japanese armor, a rare Japanese illustrated book, 20th century prints by Japanese modernists and a small introduction to AMUM's holdings of Memphis artists' work.

AMUM's local benefactors include prominent philanthropists along with many others whose names will be less recognizable, but who are no less important to the museum. One of AMUM's most generous patrons, William Huff, is from Pittsburgh, but he was drawn to Memphis because it was home to his great uncle, the 19th century artist Samuel Hester Crone. Huff's gift of Crone's works on paper inspired another great nephew, John Basil Crone of Memphis, to donate immensely important early portraits, by Uncle Sam. Clarence Day's gift of the Joseph Albers' portfolio, *Six Variants*, was a precedent for Huff's recent donation of two Albers' paintings and three additional portfolios. Robert and Martha Fogelman's gift of 200 plus African objects inspired an endowment that supports that collection. The Federal Express Corporation's contribution of works by Memphis artists encouraged further gifts, which will be seen in a forthcoming exhibit.

This exhibit does not include so many things—Mediterranean antiquities, Central and South American antiquities, 19th and 20th century prints from many parts of the world, Napoleonic and Soviet propaganda posters, Mexican folk art. These objects, too, are the result of Memphians' generosity to AMUM and to the people of Memphis.

Thank you, Memphis, for our 35 candles and all they represent and promise.

