SCHMUCKER ART GALLERY ANNOUNCES NEW ACQUISITIONS:

Carrie Mae Weems (American, b. 1953), *Tell me, I beseech you, when I casted my vote to you, did I cast it to the wind?*, 1996, chromogenic print on Kodak Professional paper, 48 cm x 58.4 cm

John Biggers (American, 1924-2001), *Untitled (Collapsed figure)*, 1965, lithograph on cream wove paper, 45.7 cm x 40.6 cm

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Schmucker Art Gallery has recently acquired two works by prominent African-American artists, John Biggers (1924-2001) and Carrie Mae Weems (b. 1953). The purchases were made possible by the Michael J. Birkner ’72 and Robin Wagner Art and Photography Acquisition Fund, with additional support generously provided by Dr. Deborah Smith P’11, P’13. The works will be on display in Schmucker Art Gallery in the fall of 2017 in an exhibition titled *Recent Acquisitions, 2007-2017: Selections from the Gettysburg College Fine Arts Collection*.

Carrie Mae Weems’ *Tell me, I beseech you, when I casted my vote to you, did I cast it to the wind?* was created in response to the 1996 Democratic National Convention held in Chicago. Weems appropriates a photograph of 1856 by early French photographer Gustave Le Gray (1820-1884), tints it with a purple hue, and lays the provocative title over the image. This work closely follows Weems’ 1995-1996 series titled *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried*, wherein the artist enlarges nineteenth-century daguerreotypes of black slaves and Africans. Weems prints the source photographs in deep red or blue-toned filters and etches text onto the glass placed over the photographs. In this series, Weems exposed the role of photography in the theorizing of racial inferiority in the nineteenth century and called into question the original intent of the photographs. The artist explains, “When we’re looking at these images, we’re looking at the ways in which Anglo America—white America—saw itself in relationship to the black subject. I wanted to intervene in that by giving a voice to a subject that historically has had no voice.” *Tell me, I beseech you…* implores the viewer to consider racial equality, justice, and the underrepresentation of marginalized voters in the United States.

Carrie Mae Weems has received many honors and awards throughout her career. She was named a MacArthur Foundation Fellow (2013), honored at the Guggenheim International Gala (2014), received the W.E.B. DuBois Medal (2015) from Harvard University for her contributions to African American life and culture, and received an honorary doctorate from School of the Visual Arts, New York (2016). Weems received an Award for Distinction by the College Art Association in 2016, which honors the outstanding achievements and accomplishments of individual artists, art historians, authors, conservators, curators, and critics whose efforts transcend their individual disciplines and contribute to the profession as a whole and to the world at large. Her retrospective,

Untitled (Collapsed Figure) (1965) is a haunting and powerful lithograph by accomplished artist John Biggers; he depicts a soldier slumped over, seemingly asleep or possibly dead with his hands eerily bound together behind his back. The long barrel of his gun is propped between the figure’s wrists and rests against his shoulder. The soldiers’ palms and bottoms of his bare feet evoke a sense of vulnerability as well as imprisonment and pain. Biggers’ oeuvre includes beautifully executed drawings and lithographs, the quality of which earned him inclusion in the Museum of Modern Art’s landmark exhibition Young Negro Art in 1943. Over the course of his career, the artist completed many murals, predominantly in public spaces where African-American viewers would have direct access to the work. At Hampton Institute (now Hampton University), Biggers studied with well-known African-American artists Charles White and Elizabeth Catlett. He was influenced equally by Harlem Renaissance authors, American Regionalists, and Mexican muralists. Moreover, his travel to West Africa in 1957 resulted in the publication of a book of drawings and writings about his African experience. Biggers was dedicated to representing African and African-American symbols and myths and committed to representing black identity and experience in America. In 1995, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Hampton University Museum organized a major retrospective of Biggers’s work; the exhibition also traveled to the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The Michael J. Birkner ’72 and Robin Wagner Art and Photography Acquisition Fund generously provides first-hand access to significant works of art and curatorial opportunities for Gettysburg College students. This gift impacts not just the campus culture, but also benefits the entire Gettysburg and Adams County community. The fund ensures that students, faculty and the larger community will continue to have opportunities to experience diverse, challenging, and relevant art exhibitions. Recent acquisitions supported by the Michael J. Birkner ’72 and Robin Wagner Art and Photography Acquisition Fund include a photograph entitled The Ashes Series: Chair (2003-2013) by Iraqi-born contemporary artist Wafaa Bilal, a significant print titled Exodus of Confederates from Atlanta, Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated) (2005) by MacArthur Foundation Achievement Award recipient Kara Walker, and a large-scale drawing by internationally renowned, New York-based contemporary artist Michael Scoggins titled Battle of Gettysburg (2014).

The 1,600-square-foot Schmucker Art Gallery is a lively art space that displays nine to ten different exhibitions each year. Included in the gallery calendar are shows by local, national, and international contemporary artists, Gettysburg College faculty and students, and exhibitions of works selected from public and private collections. The Schmucker Art Gallery is located on the main floor of Schmucker Hall (conveniently located at the intersection of N. Washington and Water streets) and is fully accessible. Free parking is available in one of the visitor parking lots on campus, or free two-hour parking can be found on the streets adjacent to Schmucker Hall. The main entrance is through the quadrangle side of the building. All events are free and open to the public. Gallery hours are Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Building is accessible.
Founded in 1832, Gettysburg College is a highly selective four-year residential college of liberal arts and sciences with a strong academic tradition. Alumni include Rhodes Scholars, a Nobel laureate, and other distinguished scholars. The college enrolls 2,600 undergraduate students and is located on a 200-acre campus adjacent to the Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania.

For more information, please contact Shannon Egan, Director of Schmucker Art Gallery, at segan@gettysburg.edu or (717) 337-6125. For information on how to support a museum-quality art collection for teaching and student engagement at Gettysburg College, please contact Kevin McGuire, Major Gifts Officer, at kmcguire@gettysburg.edu or (717) 337-6503.

Images:

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