

MoMA committee to vote on major drawings collection gifted by Judith Rothschild Foundation

The foundation has offered the museum a collection of more than 2,500 drawings by 400 international artists

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When the Museum of Modern Art's drawings committee meets on 10 May it will vote on a proposed gift of more than 2,500 drawings by 400 international contemporary artists that has been offered by the Manhattan-based Judith Rothschild Foundation.

The collection was formed in 2003 and 2004 by foundation head Harvey S. Shipley Miller, a MoMA trustee and member of the drawings department advisory committee. MoMA drawings curator Gary Garrels worked closely with Mr Miller to shape the collection, which was assembled with the intention of offering it to the museum as we reported in our December 2004 issue (p.14).

Details of the proposed gift remain to be determined. The collection, which is mostly post-1980 works in a variety of media, include examples by leading artists—including Johns, Richter and Polke—as well as younger artists working in the US and Europe. The overall value is in the tens of millions of dollars.

Mr Garrels, who leaves MoMA next month to become curator at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, says that a formal proposal will be presented to the 25-member committee on 10 May, and the committee—most of whose members are also MoMA trustees—will vote on the proposal at the same

session, with a simple majority deciding.

Members of the committee began to visit the Fortress, the Long Island City warehouse where the collection is housed, last month. Mr Miller, who declined to comment on the process, has not attended these sessions which have been hosted by his curator and collaborator on the project, André Schlechtriem. Among those to have examined the drawings are MoMA director Glenn Lowry, drawings committee chair Kathleen Fuld, and vice chairs Werner “Wynn” Kramarsky and Michael Lynne.

A museum spokesman would not say if the committee would consider all or part of the collection. It is relevant, however, that MoMA does not accept collections as gifts in their entirety, but rather assesses each individual work in the proposed gift. One insider who wishes to remain anonymous suggests that because the Rothschild collection is so vast, it may be divided into groups of works on which the committee will vote separately.

The Judith Rothschild Foundation was created from the estate of Mr Miller’s friend, the late New York abstract artist who died in 1993. Its main mission is to disburse grants promoting under-recognised artists, but as sole trustee, Mr Miller has become a benefactor of numerous museums, including the Metropolitan, the Whitney and the National Gallery. MoMA made him a trustee after his gift of a \$6.5-million collection of 1,400 Russian avant-garde artist books in 2001.

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