

PRESS RELEASE

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**Williams College Museum of Art Presents  
JACKSON POLLOCK AT WILLIAMS  
COLLEGE**

April 14–October 1, 2006

Williamstown, MA – The Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) proudly presents, **Jackson Pollock at Williams College**, a unique opportunity to see three of Pollock’s famous “drip” paintings in the Berkshires. These works are extremely fragile, due to the materials with which they were painted, and rarely travel. One of Pollock’s paintings, traveled to the Williamstown Art Conservation Center for treatment; the other pieces were used for purposes of comparison. The works will hang at WCMA until October 1, 2006.

**Jackson Pollock at Williams College** features *Number 2, 1949*, from the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute Museum of Art; *Number 13A, 1948: Arabesque*, from the Yale University Art Gallery; and *Number 7, 1950*, from New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). *Number 2, 1949* is being displayed on a specially designed free-standing plinth. The back of the painting is exposed so that visitors can literally “see” beneath the surface of this monumental, sixteen-foot painting. This is the first time in history one of Pollock’s paintings has been displayed in this revealing way. “We are grateful that our colleagues at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Museum of Art have agreed to let us show *Number 2, 1949* with both sides visible,” says director Lisa Corrin, who came to WCMA this past October to

assume the directorship. “It will make this an unprecedented viewing experience for scholars, students, conservators, and the general public alike.”

The exhibition demonstrates the range of Pollock’s drip technique, and likewise merges the expertise of conservators and curators to shed light on Pollock’s complex “drip-painting” method, choice of unconventional materials, and his stylistic evolution. It also examines the best methods of preserving, authenticating, and experiencing Pollock’s work. The exhibition also considers Pollock’s use of the “frieze format” for the first time in Pollock scholarship, and how it affects the composition, style, and ultimately, the meaning of those works.

This exhibition is a curatorial collaboration between WCMA’s new director, Lisa Corrin, and Tom Branchick, director of the Williamstown Art Conservation Center. They are assisted by Jason Vrooman, a Williams graduate student and the Judith M. Lenett Fellow. The Lenett Fellowship is awarded to a graduate art history student to combine a “hands on” conservation treatment and art history research.

Pollock used the same commercially dyed red fabric as a background for both *Number. 2, 1949* and *Number 13A, 1948: Arabesque*. In March, Branchick removed a consolidant varnish coating that was applied in 1959 by conservators, “with the best of intentions,” from the background of *Number. 2, 1949*. This coating altered both tone and reflectance of the intended presentation surface. The Yale Pollock, *Number 13A, 1948: Arabesque*, was never varnished and served as the “control” picture from which Branchick and Vrooman can compare and contrast the surfaces of these two works. The two paintings were not made sequentially, and Vrooman has attributed Pollock’s repeated use of the red oxide dyed fabric to his interest in American Indian sand paintings and the Mexican muralists José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. *Number 7, 1950*, from the MoMA, was created in a similar style, and served as further comparison of Pollock’s unique painting style.

The analysis at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center and the exhibition at WCMA will add to the scholarship of Kirk Varnedoe and Pepe Karmel, who, in 1998, published a pivotal study of Pollock’s work for a major retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York.

“This is an exceptional opportunity for Williams and for the Berkshires,” stated Lisa Corrin. “We are enormously appreciative of our colleagues at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, the Munson-Williams Proctor Arts Institute Museum of Art, the Yale University Art Gallery, and MoMA for their help in making this important project a reality and so quickly. How fortunate for our community to have these masterpieces of modern art on display again at WCMA for the first time in over fifty years.”

In December 1952, critic Clement Greenberg organized **A Retrospective Show of the Paintings of Jackson Pollock**, a landmark early survey of Pollock’s work dating from 1943-1951, which opened at Bennington College and then traveled to Williams. That exhibition included *Autumn Rhythm: Number 30. 1950*, now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and *No. 2, 1949* from the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute Museum of Art, now widely accepted as some of Pollock’s greatest achievements.

**Jackson Pollock at Williams College** is organized as a special tribute to Kirk Varnedoe, Williams Class of 1967. Varnedoe was the Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). In addition to organizing MoMA’s groundbreaking Pollock retrospective, he also curated retrospectives of American painters Cy Twombly and Jasper Johns. He taught at the New York Institute of Fine Arts and was awarded a MacArthur “genius” Fellowship in 1984.

"Kirk Varnedoe was an extraordinarily bold and visionary curator of modern art," Williams President Morton Owen Schapiro said. "How appropriate it is, then, to honor him here at the college he loved so dearly with this imaginative and striking exhibition." Friends of Kirk Varnedoe hope to establish a professorship at Williams in his honor. He died of cancer in 2003 at age 57.

### **Related Events:**

#### **The Judith M. Lenett Fellowship Lecture by Jason Vrooman '06**

Wednesday, May 3, 2006

4:00 pm at the Williams College Museum of Art

5:00-6:30 pm reception

“Jackson Pollock: Beneath the Surface, A Tribute to Kirk Varnedoe ’67” will be held at Williams College on **May 13, 2006**. The schedule of events is as follows:

**11:00 am**

Gallery talk at the Williams College Museum of Art  
by Jason Vrooman, Graduate Student in the History of Art, Class of 2006

**2:00-6:00 pm**

The Plonsker Family Symposium at Brooks-Rogers Auditorium, Bernhard Music Center at Williams College

Welcome: Morton Owen Schapiro, President of Williams College

Introduction: Lisa Graziose Corrin, Director, Williams College Museum of Art and co-curator of Jackson Pollock at Williams College

Speakers include:

Adam Gopnik, Essayist at large for the New Yorker  
Pepe Karmel, Associate Professor in the Department of Fine Arts, New York University

Tom Branchick, Director, Williamstown Art Conservation Center

Helen Harrison, Director, Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center

Ellen G. Landau, Professor at Case Western Reserve University

S. Lane Faison, former director of the Williams College Museum of Art, and Steve Gordon ’55

Please RSVP for the Plonsker Family Symposium to Judy Pellerin at [jpellerin@williams.edu](mailto:jpellerin@williams.edu), or call 413-597-2037.

The Williams College Museum of Art is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. Admission is free and the museum is wheelchair accessible. Contact: Suzanne Augugliaro, Public Relations Coordinator  
413.597.3178; [WCMA@williams.edu](mailto:WCMA@williams.edu); [www.wcma.org](http://www.wcma.org).