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Margaret McDermott, Arts Patron Who Donated More Than 3,000 Works to Dallas Museum of Art, Dies at 106

BY *Alex Greenberger* POSTED 05/03/18 1:55 PM

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Margaret McDermott, who was, for years, one of the most notable art collectors in Texas's Dallas area, has died, according to the Dallas Museum of Art, where she had been a trustee for 57 years. She was 106.

McDermott appeared on *ARTnews's* "Top 200 Collectors" list each year between 1990 (when the list was started) and 1994. She was widely known for her collection of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and modernist work, which she assembled with her husband, Eugene, who died in 1973. In the coming weeks, the DMA will put on view an exhibition of some of the collection's most notable works that were bequeathed to the museum.

Over the years, McDermott donated to the DMA more than 3,100 works of art, including Aristide Maillol's sculpture *Flora* (1911) and Vincent van Gogh's painting *River Bank in Springtime* (1887). Among McDermott's promised gifts was the Claude Monet painting *Water Lilies – The Clouds* (1903), which has been considered the most important Impressionist painting owned by a Texas collector. She is an integral figure in the museum's history: she helped merge the DMA (then known as the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts) with the Dallas Museum for Contemporary Arts, allowing the institution to start assembling a significant collection of newer objects.

An acquisition fund was also set up in Margaret and Eugene's name, and through it the museum has added works to the collection by Juan Gris, Piet Mondrian, David Smith, John Singleton Copley, Henri Matisse, Gustave Caillebotte, Paul Signac, and Marsden Hartley, among many others, as well as examples of art from Ghana, India, China, and Peru. (Eugene, who was a cofounder of the manufacturing company Texas Instruments, also endowed the museum's directorship.)

"Margaret McDermott's contributions to the Dallas Museum of Art are unparalleled," Agustín Arteaga, the DMA's director, said in a statement. "She touched every area of the Museum, including a remarkable collection, an amazing facility, a superior staff, and significant support of our endowment. She set an outstanding example of unwavering generosity and personal engagement with the DMA, which served as encouragement for her peers and has inspired generations of philanthropists to invest in our institution and to serve our community. She loved the Museum and everyone loved her, beyond the imaginable. She was knowledgeable, smart, witty, and fun. We will all miss her."

McDermott's philanthropy also went beyond the DMA, and has helped shape some of the city's most notable arts initiatives. McDermott gave one of the lead gifts that allowed for the creation of Dallas's Santiago Calatrava–designed Trinity River bridges, and was the first major donor to the city's AT&T Performing Arts Center. She was also the founding benefactor of the Dallas Institute for Humanities and Culture.

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