



Contact: Sharon L. Vasquez
Voice: (313) 577-5342
E-mail: sharon.vasquez@wayne.edu
Fax: (313) 577-5355

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Wayne State receives substantial gift from local business owner and art collector to support teaching and research in the area of contemporary art

Wayne State celebrates the gift from James Pearson Duffy at the Elaine L. Jacob Gallery, April 24.

Detroit — Wayne State University is pleased to announce a \$4.5 million future estate gift from Detroit businessman and art collector James Pearson Duffy. The gift creates an endowed fund in the College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts' Department of Art and Art History that will attract professionals of national or international renown to share their expertise and engage university students in the field of contemporary art.

In addition to the estate gift, Duffy donated more than 1,000 works to the University Art Collection in late 2008, adding to the hundreds he donated previously. To recognize his generous contributions and his long-standing tradition of supporting artists in Detroit and at Wayne State, the university's Board of Governors approved naming the art department as the James Pearson Duffy Department of Art and Art History.

"This extraordinary gift is the embodiment of Mr. Duffy's support of Detroit's arts scene," said Dean Sharon L. Vasquez of the College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts. "His particular affinity for the young, aspiring artists of the Detroit area who attend Wayne State has made his long association with the university mutually enriching. Because his many gifts of art and financial support have been based on his belief in the importance of artists and the power of artistic expression, it is especially fitting that his name is linked forever with the Department of Art and Art History."

The Duffy Endowment supports a faculty position in contemporary art as well as a guest artist program giving students the opportunity to study with contemporary artists of the highest caliber. Such an endowment enhances the reputation of the department and the university, helps recruit talented faculty and students and further advances the role of contemporary art in the region and nation. Funds also will assist the department's efforts to host ancillary events such as public lectures and exhibitions and offers opportunities to cooperate with neighboring art institutions.

A majority of the works donated by Duffy are from the Cass Corridor movement, which emerged in the late 1960s as young artists living along Cass Ave. — most of whom were Wayne State faculty and students — created a lively artist community. Seeing a need to provide assistance in ways that validated these artists' talents as well as improve their financial situation, Duffy started purchasing works from exhibits and studios, and soon began commissioning works for his home and later his business, Edward W. Duffy & Co., a Detroit pipe-fittings supply company founded by his uncle. Over time, the commissions led to site-specific works that melded the urban aesthetic of Cass Corridor art with the gritty industrial fabric of the Duffy & Co. warehouse. This collaboration of artists and patron resulted in the creation of a pioneering alternative space that attracted collectors, curators, art dealers, journalists, scholars and artists from across the United States and overseas.

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Duffy's belief in the integrity and importance of the artists who did so much to change his life led him to begin donating funds to Wayne State in the 1980s to enrich the education of students from humble backgrounds. For nearly two decades Duffy continued that support, initially for visiting artists and then for foreign travel grants.

A reception celebrating the naming of the **James Pearson Duffy Department of Art and Art History** and the opening of the exhibition ***Time and Place: Art of Detroit's Cass Corridor from the Wayne State University Collection*** will be held April 24, 2009, 5–8pm at the Elaine L. Jacob Gallery, 480 W. Hancock Street (between Cass and Second) in Detroit. Parking is available on the street and at surface lots in the vicinity of Cass and Warren. Over half of the works of art included in the exhibition were gifted by James Pearson Duffy to the University Art Collection. For more information on this event, please contact 313 577-5342.

The James Pearson Duffy [Department of Art and Art History](#) is dedicated to the understanding, production and presentation of works of art in all media. It seeks to explore and develop visual literacy as well as technical, critical, and conceptual skills. The curriculum combines history, theory, practice and technology with interdisciplinary learning that aims to nurture a balance between technical proficiency, experimentation with new ideas and studying the visual arts as a means of understanding the intellectual and cultural history of humanity. By receiving comprehensive training in the visual arts within the context of a liberal arts education, students are encouraged to master the various avenues of creative investigation and learning within the department as well as in other departments of the college and the university at large. Each student is thereby able to progress from fundamentals to creative and intellectual maturity and given the tools of professionalization in a variety of different areas while immersed in the rich diversity of cultural and research opportunities offered by the university as a whole.

Wayne State University's [College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts](#) is educating the next generation of visual artists, musicians, communication professionals and professional actors and dancers. The college offers 16 undergraduate and 12 graduate programs through its five departments of Art and Art History, Communication, Dance, Music and Theatre, with students benefiting from expert faculty and state of the art resources. [Wayne State University](#) is a premier institution of higher education offering more than 350 academic programs through 12 schools and colleges to more than 33,000 students. Wayne State has the Carnegie classification *RU/VH*, the nation's highest rating for research universities.

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