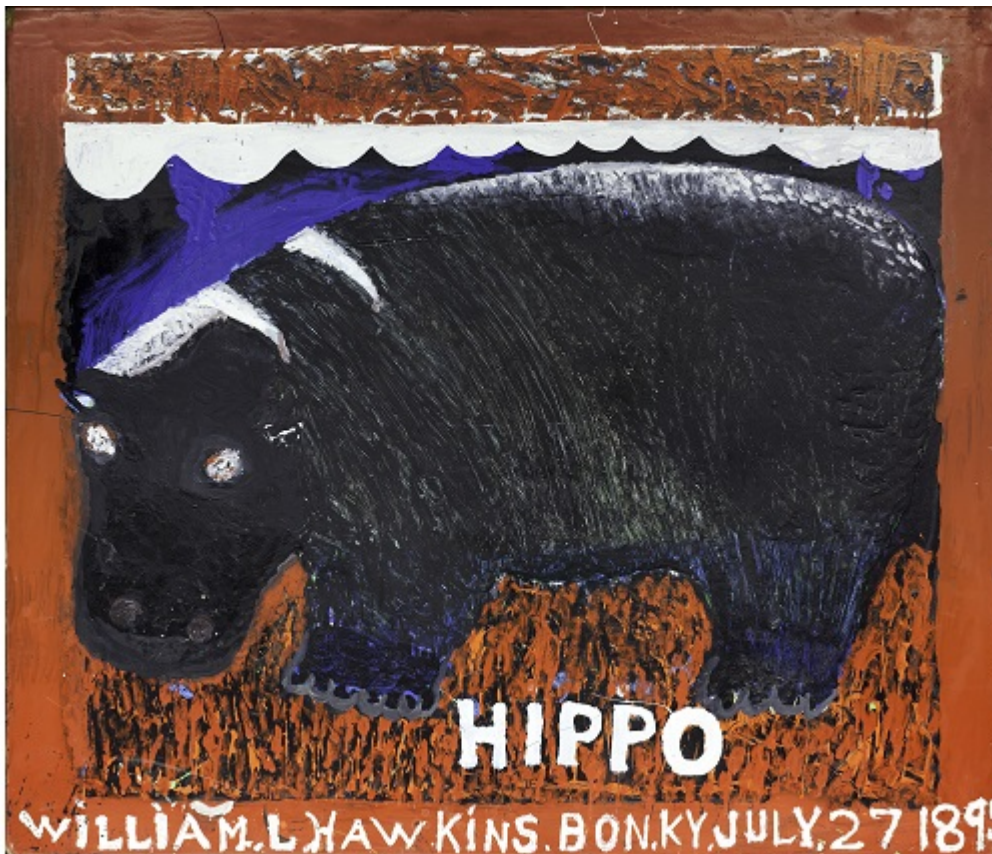


UPDATE: [Resources and information on COVID-19 testing and more.](https://coronavirus.tufts.edu)
(<https://coronavirus.tufts.edu>)

American outsider art joins Tufts University permanent collection

Donation of 38 pieces from Andrew and Linda Safran, to be exhibited in Fall 2018, aims to make room for self-taught artists in art history canon



"Hippo" by William L. Hawkins, part of the Andrew and Linda Safran Collection and an example of American Outsider Art (Tufts University Permanent Collection)

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MEDFORD/SOMERVILLE, Mass. (Feb. 26, 2018) – Tufts University has added a collection of 38 pieces of American outsider art to its permanent collection, thanks to the generosity of Andrew and Linda Safran.

A public exhibit, "Expressions Unbound: American Outsider Art from the Andrew and Linda Safran Collection," opens in August and will run at Tufts University Art Gallery during the Fall 2018 semester. The exhibit will include educational components designed to introduce art and art history students and scholars to American contemporary self-taught work often referred to as "outsider art." The exhibit will also include a 50-page full-color catalog showcasing each piece.

Artists such as William Hawkins, Thornton Dial, Sr., Howard Finster, Bessie Harvey, Purvis Young, Mary T. Smith and Jimmy Lee Sudduth, are included in the gift. They join other artists in Tufts' permanent art collection such as Auguste Rodin, John Singer Sargent, Louise Nevelson, Helen Frankenthaler, Isamu Noguchi and Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons.

"At Tufts, we believe that anyone with passion and engagement can make a difference and contribute to or change the conversation – in society, in science or in scholarship – regardless of background or opportunity," said James Glaser, dean of Tufts' School of Arts and Sciences. "Outsider art embodies that inclusive and democratic spirit. This addition to the permanent collection will allow Tufts students, faculty and all other members of our community who are art lovers, to study and enjoy these artists' works."

"We are delighted that the Safrans chose Tufts as the home for their collection, especially considering the personal resonance that these works hold for their family," Glaser continued. "This is a wonderful way to commemorate Andrew Safran's service to Tufts."

Andrew is a Tufts alumnus, an emeritus university trustee and a member of the board of advisors for The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Both Andrew and Linda are parents of a Tufts alumna as well.



"Statue of Liberty," by B.F. Perkins (Tufts University Permanent Collection)

American outsider art is characteristically created by artists who have not had a formal art education. In many cases, these individuals created art for their own benefit and did not necessarily consider themselves to be artists. The art they created represents their personal expressions and experiences. This collection contains artwork created in both urban and rural regions, by individuals who, in many cases, were most prolific in the latter part of their lives when they had more time available after leaving their lifetime jobs.

"Although these images appear to be simple in appearance, the artists are communicating deeply personal and passionate expressions," said Linda Safran about the art movement. "These are visual expressions of individuals creating artwork in the realms of poets, dreamers, preachers, philosophers, mystics, craftspeople and journalists. They may or may not have agendas, but they all have passion."

The works in this gift are particularly meaningful to the Safrans, who selected the art together. The Safrans were first drawn to the "stunning color and imagery."

"We really admired the simplicity, as well as the visual impact of our first acquisition, 'Hippo' by William Hawkins. It was compelling and it drew us in. We immediately wanted to know more about the artist and his work," said Linda. "As we began to explore the work of more and more outsider artists we saw that they had such passion and so much desire to create, that they made use of readily available materials in order to share their experiences and their visions."

"Andrew and I were of very like minds in making all the selections for this collection, and completely agreed on what it is we wanted to live with and enjoy each day," Linda continued. "It was an amazing and fun-filled hunting and gathering experience over the years which enriched our lives and our home."

Long overlooked by many traditional contemporary art collectors, American outsider art began to grow in collecting popularity during the 1980s and 1990s. During that time, various gallerists began to show many of these artists, and their work was featured by many dealers in an annual outsider art fair. Collectors, such as the Safrans, took note of the beauty and relevance of this work in the conversation of contemporary art. The pieces included in the Safrans' gift were collected from 1989 to 2000.



Andrew and Linda Safran

In recent years, closer examination of the work by art historians has led scholars to confirm American outsider art's importance in the American art history canon. This re-evaluation has led to more exhibitions featuring this artwork at major art institutions. The exhibit "Outliers and American Vanguard Art," which opened last month (<https://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2018/outliers-and-american-vanguard-art.html>) at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., features the work of some of the artists that are included in the Safran Collection gift.

"This gift from the Safrans is truly groundbreaking," said Dina Deitsch, director and chief curator of Tufts University Art Galleries. "There is nothing like it in the university collection to date, nor in academic collections in the area. They have gifted us an entire coursework of artwork to teach, allowing this and future generations of art students to appreciate self-taught artists' passion and ability."

The Safrans chose Tufts University as the new home for their American outsider art collection because of their long involvement with the university and because they realize the dedicated commitment of Tufts to continue the development of quality arts education, particularly at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts.

"We are thrilled that these works are now a part of the Tufts permanent collection to be studied and enjoyed by the Tufts community and so many others. This is the perfect fit," said Linda Safran.

The School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts, originally founded in 1876, became part of Tufts (<http://now.tufts.edu/news-releases/school-museum-fine-arts-boston-now-part-tufts-university>) in July 2016, adding a practice-heavy curriculum based in the Fenway and Mission Hill neighborhoods of Boston to faculty members on Tufts' Medford/Somerville campus with a focus on art history research and scholarship. Together, the programs serve art students with diverse interests. Deitsch, who joined Tufts in summer 2017 (<http://now.tufts.edu/news-releases/dina-deitsch-serve-director-and-chief-curator-tufts-university-art-galleries>), oversees art exhibitions across all Tufts campuses.

The exhibit "Expressions Unbound: American Outsider Art from the Andrew and Linda Safran Collection," will run Aug. 29 through Dec. 16 at the Tisch Family Gallery in the Aidekman Arts Center on Tufts' Medford/Somerville campus. A public reception celebrating the exhibit will be held on Thursday, Sept. 6 from 6 – 8 p.m. More details will be announced closer to the exhibit opening date.

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About Tufts University

Tufts University, located on campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville and Grafton, Massachusetts, and in Talloires, France, is recognized among the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate and professional programs across the university's schools is widely encouraged.