



News Release

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Contact: Mariah Cherem

KAM Communications

(517) 353-9834

cheremma@msu.edu

www.artmuseum.msu.edu

Kresge Art Museum Launches Online Access to Database of 7,000+ Object Collection

Kresge Art Museum, MSU

EAST LANSING, MI — Beginning January 31, a few clicks of a mouse will connect professors, scholars, students and the general public to a wealth of information on Kresge Art Museum's collection. A link on KAM's website (artmuseum.msu.edu) provides a portal to information on over 7,000 artworks, linking to holdings of the museum that extend far beyond what can be found on the gallery walls.

"Making the collection accessible on the web has been a long-term goal," said Susan J. Bandes, Kresge Art Museum director. "Over half of the pieces in the collection are works on paper. Because of conservation concerns, each cannot be displayed for more than a few months at a time. The web is a way to make this portion of the collection available beyond the museum walls. We hope that faculty and students will use the collection database as they do the library's on-line search capability, that faculty will look for objects we can bring out for their students to study, that students will find research subjects, and that the richness of the collection will become better known."

"Data on the KAM collection has been recorded in a database for several decades," Bandes continues. "Over 25 years ago, we belonged to a consortium of Michigan art museums that used the first software system available to art museums, DARIS, overseen by the Detroit Institute of Arts. As newer and more sophisticated systems developed, the DARIS became obsolete and each art museum chose a database management system that met their particular needs."

In addition to the public information available via the web, museum staff use this same system to track locations, insurance values and other vital information on over 7,000 objects in the KAM collection. Director Bandes noted, "It will certainly help when the time comes to move the collection into the new Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum."

Louise Siddons, Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Art and Art History, has previewed the KAM collection database, and is enthused about its potential to enrich her students' learning experiences. "Already I've been using the database to research future class assignments," notes Siddons. "I'm particularly excited about the way it makes the museum collection available to my seminar students, who I hope will write about objects in the collection for their final research papers."

Siddons also notes that online access to KAM's thousands of objects may impact her personal research. "I was just saying to a colleague that most of the material I work on finds me, rather than me finding it. Browsing through the database is the perfect way to let curious and thought-provoking artworks come to the surface that I would never have found through more directed methods. It's so much more exciting to use a local collection than something like ARTstor, because you can discover things that you can then go and see in real life."

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Carolyn Loeb, Associate Professor of Art History and Director of Exhibition, Gallery, and Performance Space for the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities, sees great potential in the database's continuing development. "The KAM collections database is a great resource! It's very easy to use. It opens up the museum to online exploration -- you can wander beyond what's hanging on the walls today, and you can do so anytime, from anywhere. As more images are added, its usefulness and attraction for students and the public will continue to grow."

As Loeb notes, the KAM collection database is a work in progress. New information, updated attributions, publications and more images will be added. Approximately 1,000 images are currently in the database. More will be added, as time and funding allows.

To try out the new online collection access, visit KAM's website at artmuseum.msu.edu and click on "Search KAM's Collection." Visitors can search by keyword, or use more advanced options available under "advanced search."

Kresge Art Museum is located in Kresge Art Center, at the intersection of Physics and Auditorium Roads between the Alumni Chapel and the MSU Auditorium on the campus of Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI. Museum hours are Monday through Friday, 10 to 5 p.m., Thursday until 8 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. For additional information, call (517) 355-7631 or visit www.artmuseum.msu.edu.

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