

Aiming to Diversify Collection, SFMOMA Purchases 11 Works with Profits from \$50 M. Rothko Sale
BY *Claire Selvin* POSTED 06/26/19 4:55 PM

With funds from the sale of Mark Rothko's *Untitled* (1960) from its collection, which fetched \$50.1 million at Sotheby's in New York last month, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art has acquired 11 works by 10 artists as part of an ongoing initiative to fill in historical gaps and diversify its holdings. (SFMOMA told *ARTnews* that, without Sotheby's buyer's premium, it netted \$42.8 million from the sale.)

The artists responsible for the new pieces are Rebecca Belmore, Forrest Bess, Frank Bowling, Leonora Carrington, Lygia Clark, Norman Lewis, Barry McGee, Kay Sage, Alma Thomas, and Mickalene Thomas.

Among the works in this group of acquisitions, which will go on view at the museum in August, are Thomas's portrait of a transgender woman named Qusuquzah, *Qusuquzah, une très belle négresse 1* (2011), Bowling's monumental painting *Elder Sun Benjamin* (2018), and Belmore's large-scale ceramic sculpture *Tarpaulin No. 1* (2018).

Reached by *ARTnews*, SFMOMA declined to say how much of the funds from the Rothko sale were used for the purchases, and what remains in an endowment for future acquisitions.



Mickalene Thomas, *Qusuquzah, une très belle négresse 1*, 2011, rhinestone, acrylic paint, and oil enamel on wood panel.

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Neal Benezra, director of SFMOMA, said in a statement, “This is just the beginning of what we will be able to accomplish with this fund, which allows us to broaden the scope of the stories we are able to tell in our galleries.”

SFMOMA’s deaccession of an artwork by a white male artist already represented in its collection follows a similar step taken at the Baltimore Museum of Art, which purchased works by Jack Whitten, Amy Sherald, and others after selling pieces by Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Franz Kline, and others at Sotheby’s last year.

“The acquisition of these works, and many more to come, will enable the museum to better and more fully represent the art for our time and bring a much richer array of artists’ voices into the museum,” Gary Garrels, senior curator of painting and sculpture at SFMOMA, said in a release.

The full list of acquisitions follows below.

Tarpaulin No. 1 (2018) by Rebecca Belmore

Seascape with Star (n.d.) by Forrest Bess

Elder Sun Benjamin (2018) by Frank Bowling

The Kitchen Garden on the Eyot (1946) by Leonora Carrington

Estudo para Bicho Pássaro do Espaço (maquette) (1960) and *Bicho Pássaro do Espaço* (1960) by Lygia Clark

Twilight (1956) by Norman Lewis

Untitled (ca. 1993) by Barry McGee

Midnight Street (1944) by Kay Sage

Cumulus (1972) by Alma Thomas

Qusuquzah, une très belle négresse 1 (2011) by Mickalene Thomas

Update 6/27/19, 6:00 p.m.: *This post has been updated to include the exact amount SFMOMA received from its sale of the Rothko painting, which amounted to \$42.8 million without Sotheby’s buyer’s premium.*