

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ACQUIRES IMPORTANT WORKS BY JASPER JOHNS AND MARTIN PURYEAR

New York, July 11, 2008—The Museum of Modern Art has acquired Jasper Johns' *Tantric Detail* trio of paintings and a major sculpture by Martin Puryear, Director Glenn D. Lowry announced today.

Tantric Detail I (1980), *Tantric Detail II* (1981), and *Tantric Detail III* (1981), by Jasper Johns (American, b. 1930), have been widely exhibited, analyzed, and studied, and are among the works that Johns has kept in his own collection. Each measures 50-1/2 inches high—roughly equivalent to the torso area between the neck and the knees of a six-foot tall person, the height of the artist—and is symmetrically dissected by a central vertical line, underscoring the reference to the body. Together, they eloquently speak to the moment of Johns's transition from a predominantly abstract practice toward one that bears subtle infusions of art-historical and personal references. Bringing the number of paintings by Johns in the collection to 19, this trio complements the Museum's already extraordinary holdings, especially as they specifically address the themes of transience and mortality also evoked in other works. The paintings are a promised gift of MoMA trustee Donald L. Bryant, Jr. and Board President Marie-Josée Kravis and her husband Henry.

Martin Puryear's *C.F.A.O.* (2006-2007), which was featured in MoMA's recent retrospective of the artist's career, enters the collection as a gift from the Museum's Painting and Sculpture Committee in honor of John Elderfield, the Museum's Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture and organizer of that exhibition, who this summer becomes the Museum's Chief Curator Emeritus of Painting and Sculpture. For this work, Puryear (American, b. 1941) affixed an oversized impression of a ceremonial mask from the Fang people of Gabon, West Africa, to an old wheelbarrow that he found while an artist-in-residence at Alexander Calder's studio in Saché, France, a combination that suggests themes of colonization and cultural exchange between different societies ("C.F.A.O." stands for Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale, the name of a French trading company founded in the late nineteenth century that sailed between Marseille and West Africa, including ports in Sierra Leone, where Puryear lived during a 1964-66 tour with the Peace Corps). As an artist whose work has been defined by an allegiance to abstraction and the hand-made object, this new approach suggests an attitudinal shift toward materials, ideas of authorship, and literal references in his work.

"Each of these works represents a key historical moment in the artist's career," said Mr. Lowry. "The Museum is grateful to the generous trustees and supporters who have made these acquisitions possible, and it is perfectly fitting that John Elderfield is being honored with such a significant and elegant work of art."

“These acquisitions strengthen the Museum’s collection in important ways,” said Mr. Elderfield. “The works by Johns reinforce our strong commitment to his work, and with the Puryear we have acquired a new and innovative work by the artist.”

Other new additions to the Museum’s collection of painting and sculpture include contemporary works by William Anastasi, Mark Bradford, Katharina Fritsch, Manfred Pernice, Franz West, Hannah Wilke, and Terry Winters.

No. 73

Press Contacts: Kim Mitchell, 212-333-6594 or kim_mitchell@moma.org
Margaret Doyle, 212-408-6400 or margaret_doyle@moma.org