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From the Hill

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Colby College

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Art in a New Light

$1.3-million museum addition will showcase hidden treasures

By Kevin Cool

Hugh Gourley, director of the Colby Museum of Art, passed from one room to another in the storage area of the museum’s lower level and with a sweep of his hand noted the hundreds of works housed there. “It’s safe to say some of these paintings have never been on view in our museum,” he said. “We just haven’t had the space to exhibit them.”

A year from now, many of the paintings in that storage room will be on display in a new wing specifically designed to accommodate the museum’s burgeoning collection. The product of a $1.3-million challenge grant from an anonymous donor, the 8,000-square-foot wing is part of a $3-million project that also includes endowment funds for security, conservation, traveling exhibitions and student assistantships. Construction on the $1.3-million building is scheduled to begin in June and be completed by next summer.

The wing will house six galleries on two levels and include roughly 150 of the museum’s heretofore unseen gems. “This will allow us to show art from the mid-eighteenth century to the present, which we’ve never been able to do,” Gourley said. “There will be a gallery for eighteenth-century portraits, another for nineteenth-century paintings, one for primitive American art, as well as rooms for American impressionists and early twentieth-century artists.”

An expanded exhibition from The John Marin Collection also will be located in the wing, accommodating about two dozen etchings, paintings and photographs added to the collection in recent years, Gourley says. “We have the largest Marin collection of any academic museum in the country. The new gallery is three times as large as the current one [where the Marin works are exhibited].”

Los Angeles architect Frederick Fisher designed the new wing, opting for a simple Georgian structure. “Most of the collection is early American and we wanted a building that was consistent with that,” said Fisher. “We imagined it as a house from that time period because most of this art was created for domestic environments.”

Gourley says patrons will be pleased to finally see some of the museum’s finest pieces on display. “Paintings are meant to be seen,” he said. “Our collection will be much more visible now, not only here but in traveling exhibitions as well.”

Online, Not In Line

Despite a 70 percent voter turnout and 1,401 ballots cast, there were no lines at the polls in Cotter Union when Student Government Association elections were held April 8. Voting was conducted exclusively on the Internet as Colby students participated in the first paperless election in the College’s 185-year history.

Students could vote from any computer on the campus’s local network, whether in their dorm rooms or public computer clusters. Students abroad this semester had to vote by proxy since the ballot was not on a Web page visible from outside the campus network. A code was used to ensure that eligible students could vote only once.

In the top race, Benjamin Langille ’99 of Lawrenceville, N.J., and running mate Braden Sicchitano ’99 of Wellesley, Mass., won the race for SGA president and vice president.

The SGA’s online election was held the same week that Yahoo! Internet Life magazine announced that Colby is, once again, one of “America’s 100 Most-Wired Colleges.”

C O L B Y S P R I N G 1 9 9 8  

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Colby Loses a Good Friend

Wilson C. Piper '39, a life Colby trustee and a stalwart supporter of the College for more than 50 years, died January 31 in Hanover, N.H., at 79.

A native of Caribou, Maine, Piper graduated from Colby Phi Beta Kappa, earned a law degree at Harvard and worked for the next 30 years at the Boston law firm of Ropes & Gray where he was a prominent tax attorney.

Piper's broad and deep association with Colby included service on the Alumni Council; the Boston Colby Alumni Association, which he led as president for several years; and the College's Board of Trustees, which he joined in 1959.

President Robert E.L. Strider lauded Piper's commitment to Colby in 1975 when Piper was presented an honorary degree. "It is impossible to single out his most important contributions," Strider said. "To all his labors for his College he has brought wisdom, insight and tolerance for the inscrutable mysteries of academe."

The author of Colby's revised by-laws in 1958, Piper had leadership roles in all of the College's capital campaigns over the past 40 years. He received a Colby Brick Award for outstanding service in 1974 and in 1983 was presented the Ernest C. Marriner Distinguished Service Award. Piper Residence Hall was named for him in 1986.

The Clara Piper Professorship and Research Fund, established in 1990 in memory of his mother, Clara Collins Piper '14, supports scholars in international relations and environmental studies.

Predeceased by his sister, Prudence Piper Marriner '41, he is survived by his wife of 53 years, Mary "Peg" Piper; two daughters, Elizabeth Piper Deschenes '75 and Stephanie Piper; a son, Charles '70; and a nephew, John Marriner '70.

And in the Category of Best Lecture Title

"Hurin', Cheatin' and Leatin' in Comparative Perspective: East Asian Poetry and Country Music"
Rob Lafleur, visiting assistant professor of history

"The Wolf, the Whore and the Asylum: The Story of Rome's Foundation"
Cornell Professor David Mankin, Peter A. Vlachos Lecture in Classics

Canvassing the Neighborhood

Krista Brown '99 hopes one day to be a doctor, so perhaps it is appropriate that she has been busy this year making people feel better. The bio-chemistry student from Ketchum, Idaho, has delighted classmates and faculty with gifts of her impressionist paintings.

While she studied in the Colby in Dijon program last fall, Brown's paintings of provincial French scenes were so popular with friends that she decided to produce a 12-month calendar. When Director of Off-Campus Study Jon Weiss saw the calendar he agreed to pay for enough copies to give them as souvenirs to students and professors in the Dijon program.

Brown also painted a winter scene featuring Miller Library and Johnson Pond and an impressionist interpretation of Cotter Union.

Self-taught but interested in pursuing more formal training, Brown says she has been encouraged by her work with Assistant Professor of Art Bevin Engman. "I don't know a lot about technique, I just paint," Brown said. "I especially enjoy doing paintings for other people. It sort of inspires me.

She hasn't lost her desire to enter the medical field, says Brown, but she admits that "if I concentrated as hard on my bio-chim books as I do on my paintings, I'd have a better G.P.A."