

Are you witty enough to get quoted?

Review local restaurants ▶

ZAGAT



Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Getty gets NEH grant to organize huge contemporary art archive

March 22, 2012 | 7:01 am



The Getty Research Institute landed a huge (literally) prize last year when it bought the Harald Szeemann Archive and Library -- one of the world's leading private collections of books, pictures and documents concerning modern and contemporary art.

But with the trove compiled by Szeemann, a Swiss museum director and independent curator who died in 2005, came the enormous headache of organizing and cataloging more than 1,000 boxes of stuff. Laid end to end, the Getty said, the photographs, papers, correspondence and books would span more than eight football fields (end zones not included).

Even the world's richest visual art institution would need help with a job like that -- and Uncle Sam is pitching in with a \$230,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The grant, announced Wednesday as part of a \$17-million funding round from the NEH, will allow the Getty to hire two full-time staffers to work on the archive for two years, said Andra Darlington, head of special collections cataloging. They're expected to catalog and write descriptions for about three football fields' worth of the "most significant" elements, she said, including files Szeemann created on all his projects and on artists he worked with or thought were important. The equivalent of a table of contents will be posted online, so scholars can see what's available -- but digitizing the archive isn't on the immediate agenda.

Darlington notes that the 1,000 containers in which Szeemann kept his archive were all wine boxes. "When we were packing, we asked [Szeemann's] widow and daughter if he consumed all the wine. They assured us he did not, although he liked wine."

Separate from the NEH grant is work on an estimated 36,000 photographs from the collection and Szeemann's 30,000 volume library; Darlington said the pictures should be sorted out and available to researchers by fall, and the books are gradually being catalogued and making their way onto shelves.

Overall, the NEH announced 208 grants totaling \$17 million -- an average of about \$82,000 each. California's share was 16 grants totaling \$1.4 million (placing it third nationally behind Massachusetts' \$2.9 million and New York's \$2.6 million).

One of the smaller grants, \$40,000, went to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. It will fund planning for a major exhibition, "Benton, Hollywood and

History," on how Thomas Hart Benton's historical paintings intersect with Hollywood's interpretation of American history.

UC Santa Barbara was Thursday's biggest Golden State recipient of NEH grants: three totaling \$370,000, including \$330,000 to digitize portions of its 17th century English Broadside Ballads Archive. The university is trying to provide online access to all known examples of "broadside ballads" -- printed sheets of songs, woodcut illustrations and other printed material that circulated widely during the 1600s.

UCLA got \$185,000 for archival work on nearly two football fields' worth of materials "documenting Mexican American civic participation and daily life in Los Angeles during the late 20th century," a project headed by Chon Noriega, director of the university's Chicano Studies Research Center.

USC got \$305,000 for cataloging, digitizing and conducting a workshop this summer on its International Mission Photography Archive, which documents the work of Christian missionaries during the early 1900s.

UC Riverside got \$25,000 for work, led by art historian Conrad Rudolph, on facial recognition software that researchers hope will become a tool for identifying people in paintings.

The NEH's grant making continued to emphasize making works available online -- including \$280,000 to the Washington, D.C.-based Folger Shakespeare Library to digitize and post 10,000 illustrations from 17th century books in English. The library also received \$75,000 to plan two traveling exhibitions "on William Shakespeare and the ways that his life and works have been reimagined over time" (Culture Monster hopes they won't forget "Forbidden Planet").

The four biggest grants were \$600,000 to Filmmakers Collaborative Inc. of Waltham, Mass., for a two-hour documentary about the 1935 Pacific crossing of the China Clipper, a Pan American Airways flying boat; \$550,000 to New York City-based API Arts and Outreach Inc. for a documentary on 19th century American music, with a focus on the music played at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair; and \$500,000 to the Buffalo-based Western New York Public Broadcasting Assn. for a 90-minute documentary about the life and career of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead.

Among the other grants:

\$265,000 to the Walters Museum in Baltimore for a digital archive of 112 Flemish manuscripts from the 13th to 16th centuries.

\$190,000 to the Indianapolis Museum of Art to digitize 23,000 documents concerning the work of architect Eero Saarinen, landscape architect Dan Kiley and interior designer Alexander Girard on the Miller House of Columbus, Ind.

\$93,000 to the Boston Symphony Orchestra to digitize its concert programs from 1888 to 2011.

\$300,000 to Detroit-based Con/Vida Popular Arts of the Americas, for a traveling exhibition on folk art of northeastern Brazil.

\$277,000 to Princeton University to digitize 34 avant-garde arts journals published in Europe and North America from 1848 to 1923, documenting the emergence of the modern era in literature, art and music.

\$270,000 to the University of Tulsa to create a digital archive of modernist journals published from 1901 to 1921, among them Camera Work and The Seven Arts.

\$305,000 to George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., for a mobile tour and website on the history and culture of the National Mall in Washington.

\$275,000 to the University of Nebraska to create a digital index and images of Walt Whitman's prose manuscripts held in 70 different repositories.

A \$6,000 summer research grant to the University of Illinois at Champagne-Urbana for musicologist Gayle Magee's study "Music in the Films of Robert Altman: From 'M*A*S*H' to 'A Prairie Home Companion.'"

A \$6,000 summer research grant to the University of Texas, Austin, for choreographer and dance scholar Rebecca Rossen's study "Jewish Identity in American Modern and Postmodern Dance."

A \$6,000 summer research grant to Bard College in Annondale-on-Hudson, N.Y., for photography and art history professor Laurie Dahlberg's study "Photography and the Transformation of a Gentleman's Art, 1839-1900."

Here are some other \$6,000 summer research grants whose titles make us want to know more:

"African American Modernism and the New Psychiatry" (University of Oregon, Eugene); "Romanticism and Suicide in Britain, 1770-1822" (Ohio University, Athens); "Stimulants and Trade in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800" (Siena College of Loudonville, N.Y.) and "Priests and Concubines in England, 1375-1559" (Michigan's Kalamazoo College).

RELATED:

[Getty acquires Harald Szeemann archive and library](#)

[Los Angeles to become home to Robert Mapplethorpe work and archive](#)

[Thomas Hart Benton and Hollywood show in works at LACMA](#)

-- Mike Boehm

Photos: Getty Research Institute chief curator Marcia Reed inspects the Harald Szeemann Archive in Switzerland last summer before it was packed up and shipped to L.A.; Thomas Hart Benton's painting 'The Kentuckian,' from LACMA collection. Credits: J. Paul Getty Trust

MORE FROM THE TIMES

Trademark squatting in China doesn't sit well with U.S. retailers

All red meat is bad for you, new study says

Dennis Rodman 'broke,' 'extremely sick,' his attorney says

Gripes about new iPad: The list goes on

Costa Concordia: More bodies recovered, salvage may take a year

FROM AROUND THE WEB

10 Things You Should Never Buy at Garage Sales | *Reader's Digest*

Heidi Klum and Seal's Unusual Marriage, Revealed | *Zimbio*

Why you Should Keep your Pet Out of the Bedroom | *Healthcommunities.com*

Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck Pick the Most Normal Baby Name Ever -- We Love It! | *iVillage*

Penniless Sarah Ferguson Lives like a Duchess | *Femguide*

[what's this]

Ads by Google


[Getty Images Picture](#)

Getty Images Carries Stock Footage, Music, & Stills. Find What You Need [GettyImages.com](#)

[Taste at the Palisades](#)

Lunch, Brunch, Dinner, Happy Hour Close to Getty Villa [www.ilovetaste.com](#)

Comments (3)





Donald Frazell · Top Commenter

Oh he# no. Art is visual, the more words and stuff needed the more diverted it is from its true purpose. Unifying mind body and soul, creating an intensity of living. Not tons of academic fluff. Oh for the old days, where Michelangelo burned all he considered not worthy of posterity. Now it's all about employing more MFAs to keep the degree mills going. This has nothing to do with art, and if Getty wants it, pay for it.

art collegia delenda est
fine art academeis must be destroyed.
No more pharisees, more prophets. Prophets don't beg for \$\$\$\$. They do. see the post impressionists, we live in similar times.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · March 22 at 8:53am



Franklyn Phillips

Only an idiot would blame Obama. Knee jerk reactionaries are so alike.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · Monday at 5:30pm



Yuval Kremer · Top Commenter

Outrageous...Obama will be "done in one".

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · March 22 at 8:08am



Yuval Kremer · Top Commenter

Obama giving away \$\$\$ to the Getty and USC...no wonder this country is broke! USC has a Multi-Billion (with a B) \$ endowment....I know...I went there...more welfare for the rich from Obama, the FAKE Liberal.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · March 22 at 8:14am

Facebook social plugin

In Case You Missed It...