



MEDIA RELEASE: For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Erin Wood, Marketing Communications Manager
937-271-1341 (cell) | ewood@daytonart.org

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**SARA AND MICHELLE VANCE WADDELL GIFT MAJOR FEMINIST ART COLLECTION
TO THE DAYTON ART INSTITUTE**

Gift includes the naming of the Sara M. & Michelle Vance Waddell Gallery for Feminist Art and a four-year funded curatorial position.

(DAYTON, OHIO) – October 29, 2025 – The [Dayton Art Institute](https://www.daytonart.org/) (DAI) is honored to announce a transformational gift from **Sara and Michelle Vance Waddell**, who will donate a major collection of feminist art, which includes hundreds of works by local, national and international women artists, to the museum. The gift builds on the success of the DAI’s 2024 exhibition

Riveting: Women Artists from the Sara M. and Michelle Vance Waddell Collection, deepening the conversation that began when audiences were first introduced to the breadth and vision of the remarkable collection.

In recognition of this extraordinary gift, the museum will establish the Sara M. & Michelle Vance Waddell Gallery for Feminist Art, a space dedicated to showcasing the voices and visions of women artists. The Vance Waddells will also fund a curatorial position for four years. After that period, the DAI and the Vance Waddells will revisit the possibility of endowing the position in perpetuity.

“Art museums have a responsibility to tell the full story of human creativity,” said DAI Director & President Michael R. Roediger. “Sara and Michelle’s generosity and vision help us rebalance that narrative by centering women artists whose significance and accomplishments have too often been overlooked. Soon, Dayton will be recognized as a home for bold, visionary women artists.”

The Vance Waddell Collection is recognized nationally for its scope, quality and focus on feminist and socially engaged art. The collection spans painting, sculpture, photography, textiles and mixed media, with most works created in the late 20th and 21st centuries. Artists represented include Cindy Sherman, Carolee Schneemann, Elizabeth Catlett, Ana Mendieta and many others, alongside groundbreaking regional and emerging artists. This gift will most transform the DAI’s contemporary holdings, expanding the museum’s ability to represent diverse perspectives and narratives within modern and contemporary art.

“This is a transformational gift for the Dayton Art Institute,” said Head Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs Jerry N. Smith. “With the addition of this remarkable collection and the support of a curatorial position, the DAI is taking a bold step forward in championing women artists regionally, nationally and internationally. We are ensuring that their impact continues to grow as we amplify their achievements through dynamic exhibitions and the long-term creation of traveling exhibitions. Within a dedicated gallery and across our collection galleries, the Vance Waddell collection will allow for fresh interpretations and the making of dynamic spaces that help us present a fuller and richer story of art, especially the art of our time.”

The DAI currently features one work from the Vance Waddell Collection on view: a striking cast-glass sculpture by artist Niki Johnson (American, born 1977), titled *A Vision in White* (2009). The sculpture depicts former First Lady Michelle Obama’s arms draped in white fabric and speaks to the media’s fascination with her body. Guests can view the work in the DAI’s contemporary gallery.

“This is a game-changing moment for the DAI and for our community,” said Roediger. “Sara and Michelle’s gift not only strengthens the museum’s collection but makes a lasting impact on how we tell the stories of women artists, both globally recognized figures and those emerging here in our region. It transforms how we can represent women’s voices in the story of art and

ensures that future generations will experience and be inspired by these stories for years to come.”

The museum anticipates that additional works from the collection will begin appearing on view in early 2026, including within the newly named Sara M. & Michelle Vance Waddell Gallery for Feminist Art.

ABOUT SARA AND MICHELLE VANCE WADELL

Sara Vance Waddell is a community advocate, philanthropist, animal rights and social justice advocate and art collector. Together with her wife, Michelle Vance Waddell, she has assembled one of the largest and most significant collections of women’s art in the Midwest. Their collection, which includes local, national and international artists, has been exhibited at the Dayton Art Institute and the Lubeznik Center for the Arts, and will soon travel to the Museum of Contemporary Art Connecticut.

Sara Vance Waddell is a dedicated arts advocate serving on numerous boards, including the National Museum of Women in the Arts, the Carolee Schneemann Foundation and the Brooklyn Museum’s Council for Feminist Art. She is Trustee Emeritus of both ArtWorks and the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, and is a member of ArtTable, an organization dedicated to advancing the leadership of women in the visual arts. Over her career, she has received numerous honors, such as the Enquirer Woman of the Year (2010), the Civic Leadership Award (2011) and induction into the Brown County Hall of Fame (2022) as its first living recipient.

“I collect difficult work,” said Vance Waddell. “I don’t have too many pieces of work where you go: ‘That’s so beautiful.’ I hear the words, ‘it’s powerful, it’s riveting, it makes you think.’”

ABOUT DAYTON ART INSTITUTE

MISSION: *Through art, we create transformative and diverse experiences, strengthen community connections and inspire imagination.*

VISION: *Through art, we will be a community leader recognized as a welcoming, thought-provoking and collaborative place that nurtures inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility.*

The Dayton Art Institute (DAI) is one of the Miami Valley’s premier fine art museums, offering a full range of programming in addition to exhibiting its collection. The museum is currently open Wednesdays, 11 AM–5 PM; Thursdays, 11 AM–8 PM; Fridays & Saturdays, 11 AM–5 PM; and Sundays, noon–5 PM. Go to www.daytonartinstitute.org/visit for the latest museum information and updates. Museum admission is \$15 adults, \$10 seniors (60+), active military and groups (10 or more), \$5 students (18+ w/ID) and youth (ages 7–17), free for children (ages 6 & younger) and free for museum members. Admission includes access to all Special Exhibitions, Focus Exhibitions, The Lange Family Experientcenter and the museum’s collection galleries. Some events and programs may carry an additional charge and include museum admission as part of that price. Free parking is available at the museum, and the facility is fully

accessible. The DAI's Museum Store and Leo are open during regular museum hours, offering unique shopping, as well as drinks and tasty treats. The Museum Store also offers online shopping at www.daimuseumstore.org. For more information about the DAI, visit daytonartinstitute.org or call 937-223-4ART (4278). The Ohio Arts Council helps fund this organization with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The DAI also receives support from Culture Works and the Montgomery County Arts and Cultural District.

For more information about planning a visit, including current museum hours and updates, go to www.daytonartinstitute.org/visit or call 937-223-4ART (4278). Connect with the Dayton Art Institute on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#) for additional information, behind-the-scenes photos and videos, and exclusive offers.

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