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# A World Becalmed

Shh! This is an art gallery, not a library. "A Magnificent Stillness: American Art From a Private Collection."

BY COLIN W. SARGENT

Jack London describes silence—the shock after a deadly ship collision—as a “terrible quiet.” Federico Garcia Lorca is sly: “the silence of an overturned locomotive.” Rick Moody frightens with his 21st-century entry, the “reloading pause.” In the lovely hush of Portland Museum of Art’s exquisite **A Magnificent Stillness: American Art From a Private Collection**, the silence will knock you over. Fifteen paintings collected by Dr. Walter B. Goldfarb and his late wife, Marcia Finberg Goldfarb (1933-2013), bring



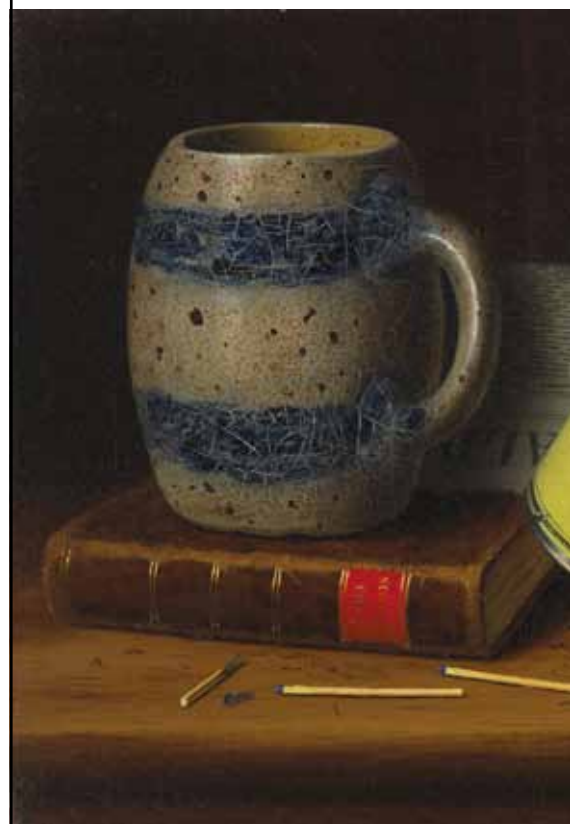


## THE ARTS

the world to a crashing halt. According to the *Portland Press Herald*, the Goldfarbs met while he was an undergrad at Brown and she was top of her class at Brown's Pembroke College. Her parents owned Maine Hardware. They married in Portland in December, 1955.

**M**oving here in 1968, he quickly rose to become a respected surgeon while she earned a second degree at Bowdoin and became "an expert at two-dimensional electrophoresis, the separation, identification and quantification of proteins in a variety of biologic and other industrial fluids...In 1985, Marcia left Ventrex to start her own biotech company, Anatec...with customers and contracts all over the world." Together as art lovers and collectors with a home on Bowdoin Street in the West End, this high-power couple built their collection with a dazzling, exacting eye.

"You learned this from the obituary, correct?" says Dr. Goldfarb when we called to learn why his collection was so astonishingly quiet. "I provided that information. I miss her so much I had to have her name on the collection." There's a pause. "But I'm the one with the eye." But why not whirlwind painters of motion like Warhol or Dahlov Ipcar? Surely it's too easy to suggest Dr. G. loves these exacting works in near absolute silence because he's a surgeon? "It isn't quite that easy," he says. "It's



hard to explain. I had a very busy practice at Maine Medical and Mercy. These paintings appealed to me. It's like love, you look across the room and it connects. It's chemical. I never thought of the quietude as I collected them, but I guess they have it. I'd come home, look at these paintings, and feel so at ease. I've attended lectures by John Wilmerding and Richard Estes," who guided him deeper into stillness until it excited his passions. "Wilmerding is the chairman of the board of trustees at the National Gallery, as well as a professor of art at Princeton, before that at Dartmouth. Very erudite as a scholar and collector, Dutch realist" in his tastes. "He was aware of my Fitz Henry Lane (I admit I still call him Fitz Hugh Lane), and in 2004, when the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in Manhattan included three Fitz Henry Lanes in a show, one of them was Wilmerding's. Because he knew about my paintings, one of them was mine.

"When Wilmerding, who vacations in Northeast Harbor, and Estes, who also has property there, appeared together at a lecture at the Holiday Inn By The Bay, someone asked Estes"—the pop star and a founder of photorealism—"how he did it. He said, 'You know, I just do it.' I've donated five of the fifteen paintings in this collection to Portland Museum of Art. I've gone to see the show almost every day since it's been up, because I miss it in my bedroom." ■



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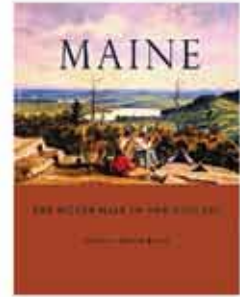


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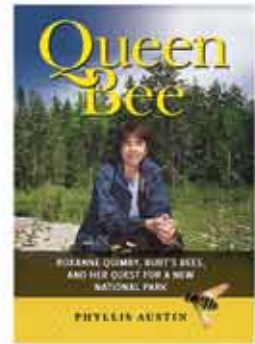
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