

## **Met Museum Acquires Gilman Trove of Photos** By RANDY KENNEDY

**T**he Metropolitan Museum of Art said yesterday that it had acquired the Gilman Paper Company Collection of photographs, an archive that includes hundreds of works from the medium's earliest years and that is widely considered to be the most important private photography collection in the world.

The more than 8,500 photographs, some purchased by the Met and some donated by the foundation that owns them, will greatly strengthen the museum's photography holdings and make it, along with the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, one of the world's pre-eminent institutions for 19th-century photographs. "It's undoubtedly the most important thing that has happened at the Met in the area of photography and is probably the most important thing that is likely ever to happen," said Malcolm Daniel, the museum's curator of photography. "For at least the last 15 years, the acquisition of the Gilman collection has been our No. 1 priority and goal."

Officials at the Met, who plan to announce the acquisition today, offered The New York Times an account of the sale yesterday, but would not say how much the collection cost or how much of it was a gift. Harold Holzer, a Met spokesman, said a legal agreement between the museum and the Howard Gilman Foundation prohibited disclosing the dollar value.

When asked whether the museum or the seller had requested that clause, he declined to comment, saying it would violate the "spirit of the agreement."

Hans Kraus, a Manhattan photography dealer, said the collection's value on the open market could exceed \$100 million. "In terms of its importance and breadth, it is unparalleled as a private collection," he said.

The collection was built by Howard Gilman, a paper magnate, beginning in the late 1970's. It has had a long association with the Met, which often added to its own photography collection in consultation with the Gilman collection's curator, Pierre Apraxine.

"They were tailored so that they fit together like a jigsaw puzzle," Mr. Daniel said. "So it always made sense that it would end up here."

But after Mr. Gilman died in 1998, the collection did not come quickly to the Metropolitan, as it had been expected to. Years of negotiations began with Mr. Gilman's estate and his foundation, whose fortunes suffered after Mr. Gilman's death. The Museum of Modern Art and the National Gallery of Art in Washington were also interested in the collection, but agreed not to pursue it while talks continued with the Met, said Maria Morris Hambourg, who founded the Met's department of photography in 1992 and had been trying to arrange the acquisition even before that.

"There were so many times when clouds formed," said Ms. Hambourg, now a consultant to the museum. "It required such tenacity and patience."

In 1993 the Met showed more than 250 masterpieces from the collection in a highly praised exhibition called "The Waking Dream," staged in special exhibitions galleries that until then had normally been reserved for old master paintings. The public will not have to wait long to see many more of the images: a rotating selection of work from the collection will be on view at the Met beginning April 17 and continuing for a year, officials said. Other works from the collection will be on view in two special exhibitions scheduled for later this year.

Coinciding with a retrospective of the work of Diane Arbus that opened at the museum last week, the acquisition of the Gilman collection underscores the Met's intentions to elevate its presence in the photography world.

When Ms. Hambourg came to the museum in 1985, she said, the museum's director, Philippe de Montebello, asked her to give him a frank assessment of its photographic holdings. She said she responded, "Well, to say it's spotty would be an understatement." The museum's only real prizes at that point were a collection of Mathew Brady photographs and about 450 works by Alfred Stieglitz and his contemporaries that Stieglitz donated to the museum in 1933.

But in 1987, the Ford Motor Company gave the museum \$1.8 million - at the time the largest corporate gift ever made in the United States to acquire art - to buy hundreds of photographs that the New York collector John C. Waddell had kept in a vault in his apartment, including work by modernist masters like Walker Evans, Man Ray and Paul Strand. Mr. Waddell also donated many more of his photographs.

Ms. Hambourg was later able to strengthen the museum's 19th-century holdings by acquiring other photographs, including a collection of important British works by photographers like William Henry Fox Talbot, Roger Fenton and Julia Margaret Cameron. But the Gilman acquisition puts the museum on another level, she said, calling the collection "a virtual museum of the best fruits of photography's first century."

It includes some of the earliest photographs, like experimental works by Talbot, one of the medium's inventors. There are rare masterworks by Fenton, portraits by Cameron, and Lewis Carroll photographs of children, most notably his portrait of Alice Liddell, the girl immortalized by his Alice stories. Among the works from the Civil War era is a portrait of a 51-year-old Abraham Lincoln, in Springfield, Mo., soon after he received his first nomination for the presidency; portraits of politicians by Brady; and extensive holdings of American daguerreotypes.

The collection includes examples of pictures made using nearly every major photographic process that was developed over the years: photographs from negatives on paper, glass and film, and prints made using a wide range of techniques.

The acquisition is also strong in early-20th-century work, including that of Edward Steichen, Eugène Atget, Aleksandr Rodchenko, El Lissitzky, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, August Sander, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Brassäi, Man Ray and Strand.

"I would hate to start ranking," Mr. de Montebello said of the museum's collection now, "but I think there's no question that there are certain areas - certainly in the 19th century - where we become untouchable."



*"The Pavillon de Flore and the Tuileries Gardens" (1849), a daguerreotype by Marie-Charles-Isidore Choiselat and Stanislas Ratel*

*"Portrait of a Youth" (1850-1860's), a salted paper print from a glass negative, by an unknown artist.*



*"Self-Portrait" (circa 1855), a gelatin coated salted paper print from a glass negative, by Adrien Tournachon.*



*"Kno-Shr, Kansas Chief" (1853), a daguerreotype by John H. Fitzgibbon.*



*"Winter Landscape" (1909), a gum bichromate and platinum print, by George Seeley.*