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The Morgan Acquires Drawings by Major Twentieth-Century African-American Artists from the South

New York, NY, November 14, 2018 — The Morgan Library & Museum is delighted to announce the acquisition of eleven drawings by five major twentieth-century African-American artists from the South. Largely self-taught, these artists—Thornton Dial, Nellie Mae Rowe, Henry Speller, Luster Willis, and Purvis Young—use drawing to express their personal and cultural identity, finding inspiration in their own lives, as well as in common experiences and folk imagery. The Morgan acquired the drawings through a gift-purchase agreement from the Souls Grown Deep Foundation, whose mission is to preserve and promote the works of African-American artists from the Southern United States.

This acquisition supports the Morgan’s goal to expand the scope and depth of its collection of modern and contemporary drawings by including works from the vernacular, nonacademic traditions of the visual arts. It recognizes the important contribution made to the history of drawing by artists working outside the conventional channels and the role and significance of the medium of drawing as a vehicle to express a particular identity.

In addition, this acquisition encourages more in-depth study of the dialogue between vernacular, nonacademic traditions in the visual arts and the production of mainstream artists. Canonical twentieth century artists from Pablo Picasso and Jean Dubuffet, to Jasper Johns and Rosemarie Trockel found inspiration in the creations of the non-academically trained to infuse their work with a new energy. The major retrospective *Dubuffet Drawings*, held at the Morgan in 2016, made clear the importance of the dialogue between the mainstream and alternative traditions in twentieth-century art.

“We are working toward building a more representative collection,” said Colin B. Bailey, Director of the Morgan Library & Museum. “These drawings are an invaluable contribution to the study of

modern and contemporary drawing, and we are proud to expand the body of works that the Morgan exhibits to the general public and makes available to researchers of all types in the Morgan's Drawing Study Center."

Dr. Maxwell L. Anderson, President of the Souls Grown Deep Foundation adds, "Our core mission is to advocate for artists of the African American South represented in our collection. We could not be happier to announce that the Morgan Library & Museum will now have significant holdings of these artists in their permanent collection. These acquisitions will broaden the exposure of drawings by these important American artists among audiences around the country and provide new opportunities for exhibition, research, and other partnerships."

These works also complement objects in other collecting areas at the Morgan, notably African-American folk songs in the Printed Music Department, and African-American poetry and first editions of Harlem Renaissance writers such as Langston Hughes, abundantly represented in the Carter Burden Collection of modern American literature in the Printed Books Department. The Morgan is planning to feature these new acquisitions in an exhibition in 2021.

About the Souls Grown Deep Foundation

The Souls Grown Deep Foundation is the only nonprofit organization dedicated to documenting, preserving, and promoting the artwork by artists from the African-American South. The Foundation was established with the largest and foremost collection of works by African-American artists from the Southern United States, which it is working to disburse into the collections of museums around the country to make the work accessible to the widest possible audience. The Foundation advances its mission by advocating the contributions of these artists in the canon of American art history, accomplished through collection transfers, scholarship, education, public programs, and publications. Through grants and other initiatives, the Foundation has also extended its mission to serve those communities that gave rise to the visual traditions of the artists represented in its collection. For more information, visit www.soulsgrowndeep.org.

The Morgan Library & Museum

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, the Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, music venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. A century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its newly renovated campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, and the 2010 refurbishment of the original library, the Morgan reaffirmed its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

The Morgan Library & Museum | 225 Madison Avenue | 212.685.0008 | themorgan.org

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