



COLLECTIONS STEWARDSHIP AT THE
SMITHSONIAN

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE
ADMINISTRATION
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS



Irving Penn, *Mouth (for David)*, New York, 1986, Copyright © by The Irving Penn Foundation





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UPDATES

about the

*NATIONAL
COLLECTIONS*

From top:

NMNH to Display T. Rex/National Museum of Natural History

The National Museum of Natural History reached a 50-year loan agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to transfer a *Tyrannosaurus rex* skeleton to the Smithsonian for eventual display in the museum's new dinosaur hall, scheduled to open in 2019. The skeleton is one of the most complete *T. rex* specimens ever discovered, with 80–85 percent of the skeleton recovered, including the skull. Known as the "Wankel *T. rex*," the rare fossil was found in 1988 by Kathy Wankel, a rancher from Angela, Montana, on Federal land near the Fort Peck Reservoir in eastern Montana. It previously was loaned to the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Montana. *T. rex* was one of the largest carnivorous animals ever to live on land, reaching 40 feet in length and weighing more than five tons. *T. rex* roamed much of western North America 68–66 million years ago, alongside herbivorous dinosaurs such as the horned *Triceratops* and duck-billed *Edmontosaurus*. Only a few nearly complete skeletons of *T. rex* are on display anywhere in the world, and the Wankel *T. rex* is one of the most famous and best-studied among them. The completeness and preservation of this specimen will allow new research while it is on display as a centerpiece in the new dinosaur hall. The creation of a new hall of prehistoric life in the National Museum of Natural History will be the largest and most complex renovation in the museum's history. It will feature specimens from the museum's unrivaled collection of 46 million fossils and present the latest scientific research in paleobiology. The existing dinosaur hall will remain open until spring 2014, when it will close to the public to begin construction. Select dinosaur fossils will remain on view in other public areas of the museum until the new hall opens.

iPad Music Application/Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum recently announced the acquisition of the iPad music application Planetary, developed by Bloom Studio Inc. Released in 2011, Planetary uses the visual metaphor of celestial bodies to represent the relationship between artists (stars), albums (planets), and tracks/songs (moons). Planetary represents an important branch of interactive data visualization, which was a first in the consumer marketplace. The additional gift of the Planetary source code provides Cooper-Hewitt with the opportunity to lead the museum field in collecting this type of "living object." Through the source code, the museum can reveal the underlying design decisions made through its creation and evolution. Further, anyone can now look at, download, and play with the source code that makes the application. The code can be replicated, modified, and transported to other hardware platforms and devices in order to preserve the richness and novelty of the software interfaces that were developed. This is especially important in the digital era, as the application would depreciate without the engineering resources to keep it updated.

Collections the Focus of July Congressional Hearing/Smithsonian Institution

On July 17, 2013, Secretary G. Wayne Clough, Deputy Under Secretary for Collections and Interdisciplinary Support Scott Miller, and Inspector General Scott S. Dahl testified before the Smithsonian's House oversight committee on the issue of collections stewardship. Between 2005 and 2011, five reports issued by the Smithsonian's Inspector General (IG) and one internal policy document

from the Smithsonian highlighted deficiencies in the Smithsonian's management of collections. The Smithsonian has taken steps to improve collections stewardship institution-wide. To date, the Institution has implemented 63 of the 67 IG recommendations to address the identified deficiencies. The Committee on House Administration Chairman Candice Miller (R-MI) issued the following statement at the conclusion of the hearing: "Tasked with the monumental responsibility of collecting, preserving, and displaying our national treasures, the Smithsonian Institution houses more than 130 million items—an inherently challenging task. Since the Institution's IG identified deficiencies with the management of its collection in 2006, Smithsonian leadership has made significant strides to improve its internal processes. I commend Secretary Wayne Clough for his leadership and dedication to the Smithsonian's mission and success, and I look forward to working with the Institution to ensure that its world class collection remains available to the public for many generations to come."

Irving Penn's Photographs/Smithsonian American Art Museum

The Smithsonian American Art Museum received a gift of 100 photographs by the legendary photographer Irving Penn (1917–2009), one of the most celebrated photographers of the 20th century. Penn is best known for the spare, elegant style he applied to the fashion, still-life, and portrait photographs he produced for *Vogue*. The photographs given to the museum include rare street photographs from the late 1930s and 1940s, most of which are unpublished; images of post-war Europe; iconic portraits of figures such as Agnes de Mille, Langston Hughes, and Truman Capote; color photographs made for magazine editorials and commercial advertising; self-portraits; and some of Penn's most recognizable fashion and still-life photographs. All the prints were made during the artist's lifetime and personally approved by him. This extraordinary gift was made by The Irving Penn Foundation. "My colleagues and I are very pleased that such a distinguished institution as the Smithsonian will be the home for this important collection and, through its exhibition and tour, will educate and inform future generations about Irving Penn's life work," said Tom Penn, executive director of the Foundation. The late artist earlier donated 61 works, spanning his career from 1944 to 1986, to the museum. The museum is planning an exhibition and tour of Irving Penn's work in fall 2015.

Deaccessioning to Manage a Collection/National Air and Space Museum

The National Air and Space Museum is offering to give away parts of the museum's collection to qualified museums and educational organizations to make room for new additions—a process known as deaccessioning. Some of the items are duplicates, some can't be displayed properly, and others are outside of the scope of the museum's objectives or goals. Among the items listed are wing assemblies, rocket valves, engine parts, spacesuits, and even whole satellites, helicopters, and rocket engines. For instance, there's a full-scale replica of *Explorer 1*, the first U.S. satellite to orbit the Earth. There's also a Sikorsky UH-34 helicopter. Although the model had a long service history with the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, the helicopter in the museum's collection never saw combat. "If we are going to tell the story of Marines flying in combat, we want an aircraft that flew in combat, so we are actively looking for a replacement," said Museum Specialist Roger Connor. In 2009, the Smithsonian parted with a WWII B-17 bomber that hadn't seen combat and needed restoration. The National Museum of the Mighty 8th Air Force in Savannah, Georgia, made it the centerpiece of its museum. Other objects previously deaccessioned include 60 model rocket motors, a 75' Atlas ICBM launch vehicle, and space food.