Grand Rapids museum will exhibit art from premier U.S. collection

Three-year agreement bringing in shows from New York's Whitney Museum of American Art

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The Grand Rapids Art Museum has entered into a partnership with the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, one of the world’s greatest collections.

The three-year partnership will give Grand Rapids art lovers a taste of work by the likes of Jasper Johns, Andrew Wyeth and Andy Warhol.

Robert Rauschenberg’s “Synapsis Shuffle,” from the Whitney, opens at the Grand Rapids museum Saturday in a three-part exhibition of the artist's work that began in January and continues through May 20.

Pamella DeVos, an honorary life trustee at the GRAM, who also is on the board of the Whitney, brought the institutions together. The arrangement was formed with the support of the Daniel and Pamela DeVos Foundation.

GRAM chief executive Dana Friis-Hansen said it’s an honor to have masterpieces of American art going back to the early 20th century come to town.

The exhibitions will inspire discovery, enjoyment, and learning about art, creative thinking, and culture,” Friis-Hansen said.

The Whitney is the world’s leading museum of 20th-century and contemporary art in the United States, focusing on work of living artists. Founded by sculptor and arts patron Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1930, it has more than 19,000 works by more than 2,900 artists in its collection in its current home on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

Construction is under way on a new home for the Whitney in the Meatpacking District in Manhattan.

Whitney Museum director Adam D. Weinberg, who visited ArtPrize 2009 and was a featured speaker for the inaugural event in Grand Rapids, said it's a pleasure to share the collection with art lovers outside of New York.

“We are delighted to be collaborating with the Grand Rapids Art Museum, a truly vibrant cultural center in West Michigan, on the presentation of three exhibitions which debuted at the Whitney,” he said.

Rauschenberg's “Synapsis Shuffle,” which was exhibited in only two other cities — New York and Paris — before Grand Rapids, is a monumental participatory work involving chance and performance.

The exhibition consists of 52 large-scale panels, each a collage of images taken from photographs the artist took during his global travels. The title of the work and the number of paintings refer to a deck of cards, a signal of the work’s installation method.

Each time the panels of “Synapsis Shuffle” are presented, they are meant to be “shuffled” by event participants, in displays of no more than seven and no fewer than three.

Upcoming exhibitions from the Whitney include:
