

A Giant's Gift

DAVID ROCKEFELLER '36, G '37, LL.D. '69, has made a \$100-million gift to Harvard, the largest by an alumnus in University history. Reflecting the convergence of his own lifelong interests and current Harvard priorities, the gift will support two broad initiatives. The first is international experiences for students—in particular, aiding undergraduates venturing abroad, and underwriting innovative faculty-developed classroom and other programs with an international component. Rockefeller has designated \$70 million for these purposes. The second is the arts—particularly engagement with visual arts, in the form of the Harvard Art Museum's new study centers that will be created during the wholesale remaking of the Fogg complex. Some \$30 million is devoted to this project and related arts programming, as a task force appointed by President Drew Faust explores the place of the arts in the curriculum and across the institution. (On the Fogg renovation, a multihundred-million-dollar renovation expected to begin in 2009, see page 58 and "Art of the Future?" May-June, page 60; for the task force's mission, see "Approaching the Arts Anew," January-February, page 59.)

The gift was announced on April 25, in time for a dinner meeting of the Committee on University Resources—Harvard's leading philanthropic supporters and fundraising volunteers. It also coincided with pre-frosh weekend, when students admitted to the class of 2012 visited campus before deciding what college to attend; news of added funding for international travel and the arts could hardly be discouraging.

In the news release announcing the gift, Rockefeller said, "Harvard opened my eyes and my mind to the world....Harvard provided me with an intellectual framework to understand what I was seeing and experiencing that has stayed with me for my entire life....I hope my gift will help enable future Harvard undergraduates to experience similar opportunities to learn about the world in which they live."

Faust praised Rockefeller for a "magnificent act of generosity from an extraordinary friend of Harvard....Harvard has had occasion to thank David Rocke-

feller many times before, but never more so than today, for his profound commitment to learning experiences that hold the promise to transform people's lives."

The news release (www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2008/05.01/99-donor.html) also noted that Rockefeller has previously given \$40 million in gifts to Harvard, including \$25 million to create the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS, www.drclas.harvard.edu; he provided the initial grant in 1994 and, most recently, another \$10 million in May 2006). The former chairman, president, and CEO of Chase Manhattan Bank and chairman of the Rockefeller Group served on Harvard's Board of Overseers from 1954 to 1966, and as the board's president from 1966 to 1968.

Faust welcomed Rockefeller to Massachusetts Hall late that afternoon, noting "just how much it means to have David devoted to this institution for such a long time." In a brief conversation, he recalled the genesis of his support for the Latin American center in a luncheon conversation with Neil L. Rudenstine, Harvard's then newly appointed president, in which they concurred that it was "rather shocking" the University had done so little scholarly work on the region. They agreed to create the center and, Rockefeller said, "I'm awfully glad we did," citing its "astounding" progress. He attributed its programmatic growth—for example, in providing student experiences abroad—to the involvement of "excellent people" on campus and in the center's Latin American offices. Faust noted that the discretionary innovation funds Rockefeller is providing would enable her to work with faculties across the University, many of them already engaged around the world, to see "what kinds of undergraduate opportunities could be built in" to their programs—for which he expressed great enthusiasm.

The arts, he said, are "another area of special interest to me," dating from his childhood. As an undergraduate, he noted, he spent much time at the Fogg; its director, Paul Sachs, played a vital role in his

mother's creation and staffing of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

AS ROCKEFELLER explained in his *Memoirs* (2002), his engagements with Harvard, with the world, and with art have been constant themes throughout his life. "Mother strongly influenced my choice of colleges," he wrote. "[She]...wanted one of us to go to Harvard," the school of her favorite brother, Winthrop Aldrich, A.B. 1907, LL.B. 1910. "I was her last hope"—a hope fulfilled when he enrolled in 1932. By that time, he had seen more of the world than most Americans, including a 1927 trip to France and a 1929 family journey to the Middle East. During the summer following his freshman year, Rockefeller studied abroad, living in Munich to master German (one of the two modern languages he needed to fulfill Harvard requirements at the time)—and so got his first glimpse of Nazism. His host family took him on weekend outings to study Bavarian art and architecture, further developing an interest already influenced by his father's collections and his mother's role in founding MoMA.

In the book, Rockefeller devoted one chapter to "my lifetime pursuits as an internationalist" ("globalization" had not yet joined the popular vocabulary), and another to his lifelong involvement in the



David Rockefeller

world "South of the Border." That exposure, he wrote, has ranged from a second honeymoon in Mexico in 1946 to high-level work as a banker and policymaker promoting economic development and cultural interchanges as Latin America experienced decades of political turmoil and debt-fueled growth and financial upheaval, followed by democratization and private-sector expansion, and today's uncertain prospects. He also examined the region through the lens of brother Nelson's "Good Neighbor" programs (at the behest of President Franklin D. Roosevelt) and fellow Overseer John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress. His own work with intermediary institutions has extended from recommending new economic strategies that local governments might adopt, to helping introduce Americans to

"the diversity, beauty, and sophistication of Latin American artists, musicians, and writers" (for example, subsidizing the English translation of Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*).

So it was that Rockefeller found himself agreeing with Rudenstine in 1991 that "the vast majority of Americans knew little about their closest neighbors, and relatively few American universities provided their students with much more than a superficial introduction to Latin American history and culture." From that meeting came the idea for a focused University-wide center. Rockefeller provided both initial funding and models for engaging regional leaders to invest their own time, energies, and resources—and at Rudenstine's suggestion, the center bears his name. Among the many institutions he

has created or led, Rockefeller has since cited it as the one whose progress he has found most satisfying.

In the April 25 news release, Rudenstine said of this first University-wide center of its kind, "The goal was to involve Harvard faculty and students from all the professional schools—as well as the Faculty of Arts and Sciences[FAS]—to collaborate with colleagues and students throughout Latin America on a wide range of new initiatives...in research and education, as well as a full program of lectures, conferences, cultural events, and other activities." (A University source said DRCLAS had catalyzed other donors' large gifts to centers focused on Europe, Asia, and elsewhere.)

The center has also fostered the growth of experiences abroad, particularly among College students—a priority since the beginning of this decade, when FAS began actively encouraging some sort of international experience as a universal goal for undergraduates. During the 2006-2007 academic year, for example, about 1,500 undergraduates pursued internships, re-

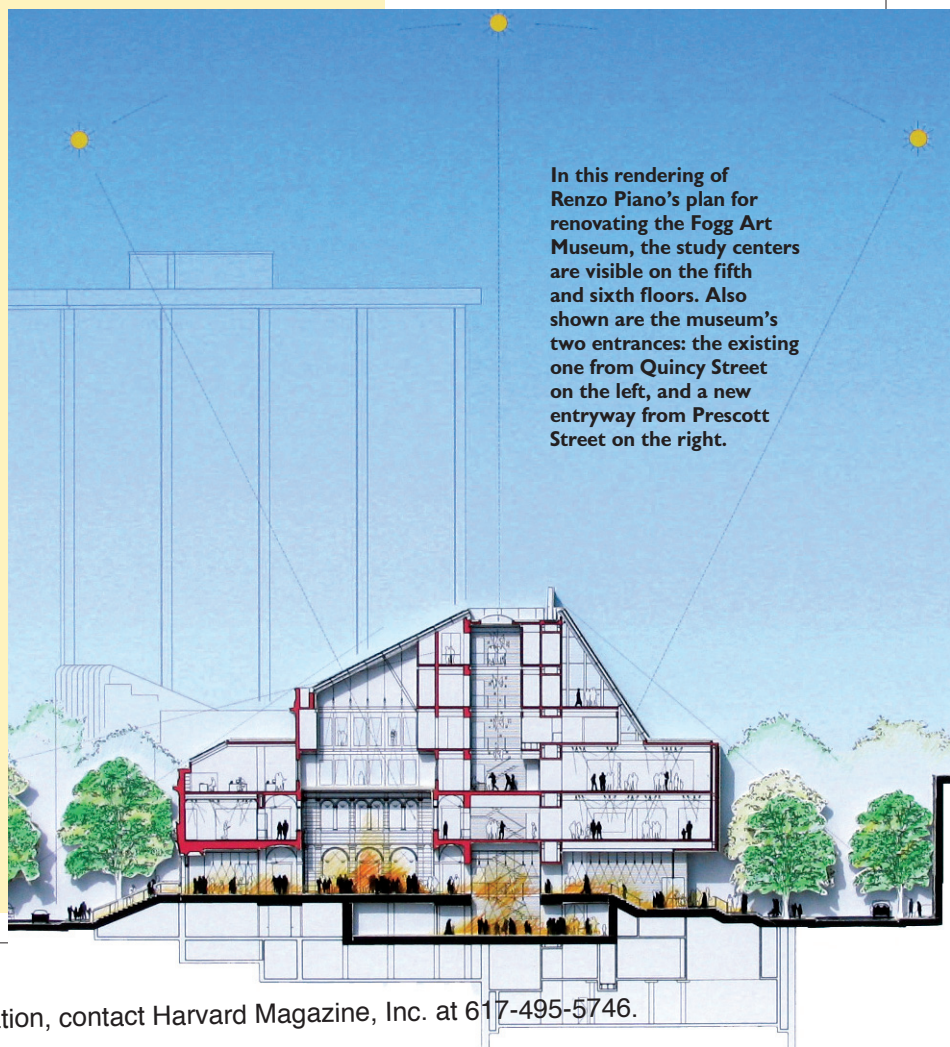
Open Access to Art

Of the \$30 million that David Rockefeller has donated to arts education, \$25 million will underwrite study centers on the fifth and sixth floors of the new Harvard Art Museum. These three rooms (one for each of the named collections) will allow students and faculty members to request artworks from storage and study them at close quarters.

The present study centers, in the Mongan Center of the Fogg Museum and on the third floor of the Busch-Reisinger Museum, are primarily for works on paper. The new rooms will offer not only access to more of Harvard's collection (though some pieces, such as large paintings, will probably remain off-limits), but also a chance for visitors to compare works of art from all three museums in a single room. "It's almost like people can come in and curate their own little show," says Emily Hankle, a study-room supervisor in the Mongan Center.

Thomas W. Lentz, Cabot director of the Harvard Art Museum, describes the study centers as integral to the museum's educational mission, on a footing with the gallery space itself. "The prominence we're giving study centers is going to make this museum different," he says. Lentz knows from experience just how valuable the opportunity to see art up close can be. As a Harvard doctoral student in the early 1980s, he decided to specialize in Persian art in part because, on visits to the Islamic department, he was able to scrutinize the paintings he studied. He kept those experiences in mind when planning the new museum. "With great works of art, and through great works of art," he explains, "we can teach in ways that others can't."

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In this rendering of Renzo Piano's plan for renovating the Fogg Art Museum, the study centers are visible on the fifth and sixth floors. Also shown are the museum's two entrances: the existing one from Quincy Street on the left, and a new entryway from Prescott Street on the right.

search, public service, or term-time or summer-school studies abroad—more than double the number four years earlier.

DRCLAS placed 128 students, mostly undergraduates, in study-abroad and “experiential-learning” programs in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, and Peru in the 2006-2007 academic year. Several dozen now visit those countries each summer for eight-week internships. Assisted by resident staff in Santiago and, more recently, São Paulo, and in Cambridge, they have found appropriate placements and local families to live with, gaining the sort of cultural immersion the College intends (see “Tying Knots: Glimpsing Global Harvard in Chile,” May-June 2004, page 65, and on Brazil, “Global Gains,” January-February, page 64.)

Thesis-research fellowships and University grants support some of this travel, but many of the programs cost up to several thousand dollars, even as participants lose earnings from summer jobs that might help defray other expenses. Rockefeller’s new gift makes international experience need blind, as are College admissions and financial aid during the academic year, supporting as many as several hundred international student experiences annually.

Other elements of the Rockefeller gift will help fund professors in developing courses that meld students’ classwork with travel to relevant international sites, and support the infrastructure—the Office of International Programs (www.fas.harvard.edu/-oip) and the Office of Career Services—that undergirds productive international opportunities, and the placement and care of students pursuing them.

ROCKEFELLER HAS also written of his immersion in art. During a 1935 summer auto tour of Europe, he and a classmate took in 30 museums in six countries. Reflecting on a life of increasingly bold collecting, and of administrative and financial leadership at an ever-expanding MoMA, he recalled how his mother taught him and his siblings how works of art “might provide a challenging or reassuring glimpse of the world around us. It was often a deeply enthralling experience.” He also detailed how he recoiled

HARVARD PORTRAIT



Joanna Aizenberg

When Joanna Aizenberg looks at the skeleton of a sea sponge lying on her desk, she sees more than an oddly shaped tube. “The sponge makes this nearly perfect glass structure,” she says. “Almost every construction principle that we use is used by nature here, but on a scale 1,000 times smaller.” The McKay professor of materials science and professor of chemistry and chemical biology puts the design principles she sees in nature—in sponges, rocks, and sea urchins—to human ends. For instance, the brittle star (a relative of the starfish) can change the pigment of its crystal optical lens like a pair of light-sensitive sunglasses. By mimicking its design, Aizenberg invented a synthetic lens that she could tune to certain wavelengths of light. Her research draws on chemistry, biology, engineering, and math, the last of which she has excelled at since childhood. While growing up in Russia, she won mathematical Olympiads and precociously sent problems of her own devising to a popular science magazine. Unfortunately, the Russian educational system discouraged exploration beyond her chosen field of physical chemistry. She found more freedom while earning her Ph.D. in structural biology at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel—where her fascination with crystalline structures in sea life began—and as a postdoctoral student at Harvard. She returned to Harvard in 2007 after several years at Bell Labs, where working with students serving summer fellowships convinced her that she wanted to teach full time. She has also lectured at the New York School of Design, where she tells students that they can find everything they study in nature. Even in a sea sponge.

from some of the most disturbing modern works—“[s]trange videos, distorted and grotesque paintings, graffiti, and perverse photography”—but came to accept that “Perhaps...this latest generation of ‘modern’ artists had more to offer than I was giving them credit for. I know that would have been my mother’s reaction.”

Fittingly, the second element of his gift is a major boost to the Fogg renovation and the reconfiguration of the University’s three art museums—one of the nation’s largest collections, and pre-eminent teach-

David Rockefeller with the Brazil staff of his eponymous Latin American Studies center, during a visit to the São Paulo office in 2006

ing institutions as well. The new study centers and seminar rooms will be the centerpiece of the museums’ efforts to bring students and their teachers into direct contact with important works of art. Rockefeller’s support is the first announced for what promises to be an expensive, intricate effort expected to take as long as five years.



DRCLAS BRAZIL OFFICE STAFF

A smaller fund will support implementation of future recommendations by the president’s arts task force, possibly involving fellowships for student artists, expanding visits by performers to campus, and longer artistic residencies at Harvard.

English Evolves—and Reverts

At the Faculty of Arts and Sciences meeting on April 8, Gurney professor of English literature and professor of comparative literature James Engell, speaking on behalf of the department he chairs, moved that it shed its current title (English and American literature and language) in favor of a streamlined one (English). The change, Engell explained, represented a reversion to earlier practice, before the department adopted the current, longer name to reflect a daring scholarly advance: American literature would be elevated to “worth-reading” status, alongside British works.

Engell did not read aloud an accompanying written statement explaining the rationale for the name change in much greater detail. Lest it be lost to the historical record, we quote it at length:

There are several reasons why this proposed change is at once timely and important, but the key reason has to do with the evolution of our field. The current name, by using the two terms English and American, necessarily implies that “English” refers to the literature and language of England. That is somewhat awkward, of course, in relation to Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, but the real problem lies in the explosion of English as a world literature and a world language. To cite a single example, the influential *Norton Anthology of English Literature* (8th edition, 2006) includes works by Claude McKay (b. Jamaica), Louise Bennett (b. Jamaica), Kamau Brathwaite (b. Barbados), Wole Soyinka (b. Nigeria), Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (b. Kenya), Salman Rushdie (b. India), Nadine Gordimer (b. South Africa), A.K. Ramanujan (b. India), Derek Walcott (b. Santa Lucia), Chinua Achebe (b. Nigeria), Alice Munro (b. Canada), V.S. Naipaul (b. Trinidad), Les Murray (b. Australia), J.M. Coetzee (b. South Africa), Anne Carson (b. Canada), and many other distinguished writers who do not by any means fit into the national boundaries suggested by “English and American” literature. But they all very much belong in a Department of English—indeed they are among the most exciting figures in such a department....

The proposed change simplifies our department’s name, brings it in line with comparable departments at other universities, and avoids misleading parallels. But above all it accurately reflects the state of our field and brings us into the 21st century.

Indeed, Engell noted, the department’s sole junior-faculty search for the coming academic year seeks to attract a scholar of “transnational anglophone” works.

The measure passed unanimously. A separate proposal, to reduce the quorum necessary to conduct faculty business, also passed. But as the April 8 meeting itself lacked a quorum, both pieces of legislation had to be presented to the subsequent meeting on May 6 to secure formal adoption.

ROCKEFELLER’S pledge to Harvard equals two other pledges he has announced in recent years; \$100 million each to Rockefeller University, the scientific research institute in Manhattan, and to the Museum of Modern Art. All are testamentary gifts, to be funded in full upon his death; unusually, he is also providing each institution with annual cash payments now, so they can begin implementing the programs he wants to support before the endowment and current-use elements of his philanthropies are actually transferred.

The Rockefeller family has long been associated with the first two institutions. In a way, David Rockefeller’s landmark \$100-million gift to Harvard puts his signature on another institution—where the tradition of family engagement began squarely with him.

In his memoir, he described himself as a B student at Harvard, the result of diligent application in spite of what he deemed lackluster academic preparation. Socially, the transition was harder. Had he gone to boarding school, as did many classmates who were the sons of wealthy parents, “my life at Harvard would have been more immediately pleasurable and certainly very different from what it was,” he wrote. “Upon reflection almost 70 years later, however, I do not believe the rest of my life would have been as interesting or constructive as it has been. Having to deal with my early insecurities at Harvard and to struggle for academic achievement and social acceptance made me a more open-minded and tolerant person.”

For that contribution toward what he called “a wonderful life,” Rockefeller has now made a remarkable repayment.