

Narrative Vase Joins Collection

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newwave@tulane.edu

The Newcomb Art Gallery at Tulane University has added to its collection a rare piece of Newcomb Pottery. The 1901 high-glaze vase shows storm clouds breaking over a flooded Mississippi River with several rooftops peaking above a sharply defined horizon. The scene is believed to represent the aftermath of a hurricane that struck coastal Louisiana on August 14, 1901.



This rare Newcomb Pottery vase was purchased at auction with acquisition funds contributed by Robert C. Cudd III and Carol Downes Cudd. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Entering the Gulf after crossing the lower half of Florida, the storm left Buras, La., in Plaquemines Parish with four feet of water in its downtown area and nearby Port Eads, La., with nothing but its lighthouse. In New Orleans, there were numerous levee breaks in the river's protection system, which severely flooded the city.

"Because Newcomb College did not begin its fall academic sessions until October, the later part of hurricane season, this incident would have been fresh in the minds

of all New Orleanians — including vase decorator Alice Raymond Scudder,” says Sally Main, senior curator. “Working on this piece gave her an opportunity to tell a story — to record for posterity this particular event in the history of the city.”

The storm likely took on more gravity in light of the previous year's hurricane that devastated the city of Galveston, Texas, killing more than 8,000 people. Records from the U.S. Weather Bureau in New Orleans show that the Sept. 8, 1900, storm caused heavy damage along the Louisiana and Mississippi coastline. Such a “close call” may have heightened Scudder's sensitivity to her subject matter.

It is one of only two works of [Newcomb Pottery](#) in the Newcomb Art Collection with a narrative composition, unusual for pottery widely known for its depictions of indigenous Louisiana flora. The work will be on view during the 2009–2010 exhibition season.



A closer look at the 1901 high-glaze vase shows a scene believed to be the flooding Mississippi River and the aftermath of a severe hurricane that struck coastal Louisiana that year.

A native of New Orleans, Scudder (Mrs. Ray G. Coates) matriculated to the Newcomb Art School in 1899. She graduated in 1901 and enrolled as a graduate student a year later. Tulane University's 1905 yearbook listed Scudder as a pottery worker, and her

name appears again in the 1907 Newcomb Art School rosters as well as the printed catalogue from the 1914-1915 academic year.

In addition to her studies at Newcomb, Scudder was a student at the New York School of Applied Design for Women. She also trained with William Merrit Chase and Uruguayan artist Francis Luis Mora at the Art Students League in New York. Primarily a landscape painter, Scudder rarely worked in clay — making the recently acquired piece even more significant.

The vase, acquired at the Neal Auction Co.'s spring estates auction held on April 18 and 19, was purchased with acquisition funds contributed by Robert C. Cudd III, a Tulane alumnus, and Carol Downes Cudd, a Newcomb College alumna and National Advisory Board member for the Newcomb Art Gallery.

Located in the Woldenberg Art Center on the Tulane University campus, the [Newcomb Art Gallery](#) is free and open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. On Wednesdays, the gallery remains open until 8 p.m. For more information, call 504-314-2406.

Teresa Parker Farris is marketing coordinator for Newcomb Art Gallery.