NANCY HOLT: SIGHTLINES

Nancy Holt, Sun Tunnels: Sunset, 1976, Great Basin Desert, Utah, detail of a composite of four photographs Sun Tunnels: Sunset and Sunrise, 1976 reproduced from original 35mm transparencies. Courtesy of the artist

Tufts is proud to present the major exhibition Nancy Holt: Sightlines this winter, an in-depth examination of the early projects from 1966 to 1980 of this important American artist (and Tufts alum, class of 1960), whose pioneering work falls at the intersection of art, architecture, and time-based media. Although Holt’s work has regularly appeared in surveys and anthologies on the Land Art movement, many of her forays into film and video, landscape architecture, and environmental ecology have gone surprisingly unexamined. The exhibition includes some 40 works and archival documents and was organized by the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery of Columbia University and curated by Alena J. Williams; the Tufts presentation has been organized by Director of Galleries and Collections Amy Schlegel.

Nancy Holt was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1938 and grew up in New Jersey. Shortly after graduating from Tufts in 1960 as a biology major, she moved to New York, where she lived and worked until 1995. Currently, she resides in Galisteo, New Mexico. The artist will give a slide presentation on Tuesday, January 24 at 5:30 p.m., immediately preceding the public opening reception at 6:30 p.m.

LENORE MALEN: I AM THE ANIMAL

Lenore Malen, still from The Dance Language of the Bees, 2009, courtesy of the artist

New York artist and educator (on the faculty at Parsons/The New School for Social Research) Lenore Malen visually poses big, provocative questions in her immersive three-channel video installation, I Am The Animal, an ode to the emerging discipline of “post-humanities.” I Am The Animal attempts to simulate the spatial and temporal flow of the bee hive into the landscape—and re-imagines the hive as human culture. Original footage is intercut with archival and found footage, beginning in a documentary fashion then increasing its pace and overlay of imagery alluding to genetics and robotics. The title is a homage to Jacques Derrida’s last book The Animal That I Am, and is both a philosophical inquiry into the way humans anthropomorphize non-human animals and a plea against the industrialized treatment of them. We know that animals have a special intelligence, a sixth sense that humans do not have. Animals are able to presage earthquakes and other natural disasters. Nearly every culture ascribes anthropomorphic and spiritual characteristics to animals. In many mythologies, animals are trickster figures that prod us out of our human cocoon, the status quo, and serve...
The New Society

The Tufts University Gallery’s Contemporary Art Circle, in coordination with Tufts Alumni, Los Angeles and the Tufts Entertainment, Arts, and Media Network (TEAM), presents a professional networking event and reception at the home of Anne Troutman (P77, P13) and Aleks Istanbullu (P13), in Santa Monica, CA on Saturday, February 25, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. (Anne and Aleks’s home is a former church creatively repurposed by the architect couple and pictured at left.)

The event will feature several alumni who have put their BA, BFA, and MFA degrees (from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston joint degree program) to different uses. They will each speak about how their creative life has manifested in and out of academia, while at Tufts and since graduating. Contemporary Art Circle founder Kenneth Aidekman (A75) will speak about his favorite exhibition at the Tufts University Art Gallery and Director of Galleries and Collections Amy Ingrid Schlegel, Ph.D., will speak about her career path and favorite exhibition at Tufts. Refreshments will be served.

There is no charge to attend this event, however, attendance is limited to 30 alumni. RSVPs will be accepted on a first-come first-served basis. If you live outside of the Los Angeles area and are planning to attend the College Art Association conference in L.A., (Feb. 22 to 25), please RSVP as soon as possible, but no later than Friday, February 17 to: Hannah Swartz, Contemporary Art Circle administrator: hannah.swartz@tufts.edu; or call (617) 627-3094. The address and directions will be sent to you after you RSVP.

THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 6:30 P.M., NEW YORK CITY

Details to be announced

In conjunction with Armory Arts Week in New York City, March 7 to 11, 2012, the Contemporary Art Circle is hosting a cocktail reception on Thursday, March 8 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at a location to be announced. Please stay tuned and look for an electronic invitation, which will be sent in late January.

Thank you to our Fiscal 2012 Supporters!

Conceptualist ($250)
Susan and Gary Aidekman
Mary F. Bucci McCoy
Diane Burko
Abbie Dean
Elizabeth and John Edelglass
Donna Harkavy
Jeanne and Scott Koles
Patty Rosenblatt
Mara Williams

Realist ($500)
Sylvan Barnett
Ruth Fields
Laura Roberts and Ed Belove
L. Parker Stephenson

Expressionist ($1000)
Ellen and Ken Aidekman
Shirley Aidekman Kaye and Ben Kaye
Hope and Mel Barkan
Margery Bendelson
John Foster
Robyn and Sol Gitelman

as of January 1, 2012

Spring 2012 Event Preview

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 5:30 TO 7:30 P.M., LOS ANGELES, CA

The Creative Life, In and Out of Academia

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This semi-annual publication is produced by the Tufts University Art Gallery staff, designed by Jeanne V. Koles. Comments and suggestions may be directed to: Hannah.Swartz@tufts.edu or 617-627-3094.
OCTOBER GALLERY TALK WITH KEN GONZALES-DAY AT FREED TORRES COLLABORATIONS, NEW YORK

On a blustery mid-October Friday evening in New York City, Circle supporters and guests were treated to an in-depth conversation with Los Angeles artist Ken Gonzales-Day about his current body of work, Profiled, selections of which were on view concurrently at Tufts and at Freed Torres Collaborations, a commercial gallery in the Chelsea art gallery district of New York.

Gonzales-Day, a professor of art at Scripps College in Claremont, CA, eloquently spoke about his visits to museum collection storage vaults in Europe and the United States, where he photographed portrait busts and figurative sculpture in situ. These images were then digitally composed in provocative pairings and juxtapositions to suggest either a narrative of conversation or of confrontation. The compositions prompt viewers to consider, and recontext, western stereotypes about racial categories of representation. Gonzales-Day then couched his research interests in terms of contemporary debates over racial profiling, particularly in present-day Los Angeles, where he has lived since the late 1990s.

Gonzales-Day’s accompanying book Profiled, published in 2011 by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Walls Annenberg Photography Department, as the first in a series of PAC Prize editions, is available for purchase through LACMA; email artcatalogs@lacma.org.

I kept my hives for two years until an allergy forced me to give them away. During summers I spent countless hours sitting beside the hives observing them. When I watched them it made me think about our own blind animality—our hive mind. Someone wrote that the hive is like an enormous animal that spans miles across and then retreat. Similarly, our world consists of complex nets of relationships, affects, and becomings. I watched the bees build their house collectively by extruding wax from their abdomens. They’re inventors. Their inventions are their bodies and the assemblages they make with them. But for humans, invention takes place outside our bodies.

L.M.: In May 2008 I began raising bees in Upstate New York, knowing nothing about how difficult it would be, or how much it would change my thinking. Bees and all insects, for that matter, were always very scary creatures to me, truly alien, and I’ve spent most of my life fearing them. After the performance at the Cor I bought two “packages” of bees on a total impulse and then met local beekeepers to learn how to tend to them. At the same time I secretly hoped that I would become part of the place-bound rural utopia that I fantasized. When it came to setting up my hives the beekeepers were incredibly generous. It was a barter economy, but complicated because the beekeeper’s had strong political beliefs ranging from socialism to libertarianism. They invited me to see their hives; they passed on to me as if each one were a sovereign state. In 2009 I produced a 22-minute documentary about these men and women who have devoted their lives to the hives, and are now trying to save the species. I focused on the ecological threats that plague the bees from climate change and globalization to habitat loss.

A.S.: It’s a leap from exploring the hive as a motif in your artwork to actually keeping bees. Why did you do this?

L.M.: It’s fascinating to think how social insects—ants and bees—shed a window on the evolutionary roots of human behavior and politics. I tend to see them as a kind of window into human society, to see what we can learn from them. It’s fascinating to think how the hive is an emergent and emergent phenomenon. The hive is an emergent phenomenon. It’s fascinating to think how the hive is an emergent phenomenon. It’s fascinating to think how the hive is an emergent phenomenon.

L.M.: I observed this. Every minute the entire hive adjusts its activity according to the position of the sun, the humidity, the nectar flow, and many other things. We humans may parse our days into ever-smaller intervals of time, and also in lockstep, but we don’t perceive it as such. We think of time more as an abstraction. But time or duration is at the root of everything we do and are, and that’s why, if we were dealing with bees in relation to humans, I needed to make a film. Duration is intrinsic to film.

A.S.: If you look at this work in terms of the source material, YouTube clips and a network society and culture, an “insect logic” is an apt metaphor for how we can expand the way we see media, in terms of non-human technological actors.

L.M.: It’s fascinating to think how social insects—ants and bees—shed a window on the evolutionary roots of human behavior and politics. In his analysis of western politics the philosopher Giorgio Agamben refers to Aristotle’s distinction between bare life (Zoë) and lived life (Freedom). The things we commonly call space and time are merely extremes of the contraction and dilation of a single duration. The universe for Bergson is an open vibrational whole, a flow of matter-movement that contracts to form the fixed and discrete entities of the spatial world and dilates to form the temporal dimension of a universal past surging through the present and into the future.

A.S.: How do your bee-keeping practice help you understand some of the biological, philosophical, and theoretical texts that you were concurrently reading as you were developing this project? 

L.M.: It’s fascinating to think how social insects—ants and bees—shed a window on the evolutionary roots of human behavior and politics. I tend to see them as a kind of window into human society, to see what we can learn from them. It’s fascinating to think how the hive is an emergent and emergent phenomenon. The hive is an emergent phenomenon. It’s fascinating to think how the hive is an emergent phenomenon. It’s fascinating to think how the hive is an emergent phenomenon. It’s fascinating to think how the hive is an emergent phenomenon.
bias (good life or political life). Also, Foucault wrote that "for millennia, man remained . . . a living animal with the additional capacity for a bios (good life or political life)."

A.S.: Could you elaborate on your readings?

L.M.: First, Agamben. Around the time I began reading Agamben’s most recent book, published to wide acclaim, is Honey Bee Democracy (Princeton University Press, 2010). I was invited in the spring of 2010 to participate in a semiotics conference at The University of Michigan organized by the linguist Craig Colligan: Nature-Code-Culture Machine. At the conference I screened a video in which members of The New Society imitated a wide range of bee behavior in a series of dramatic roles. I called this The Dance Language of the Bees. (Stills from this 2009 video are scattered throughout this book.) Von Frisch’s 1973 book recounts research done in the 1940s when he discovered that bees communicate to their hive mates by means of the “dances” they run upon returning from foraging flights. The bees do this on the vertical plane of the dark hive and separately in space and time from the actions on which it’s based. Von Frisch defined this dance as a language, that is, a particular kind of system for encoding and decoding information, and the book for which Von Frisch won a Nobel Prize challenged a lot of thinking about animal’s incapacity for language.

Because of my work with bees and because I had read Karl Von Frisch’s Dance Language and Orientation of the Bees, I was invited in the spring of 2010 to participate in a semiotics conference at The University of Michigan organized by the linguist Craig Colligan: Nature-Code-Culture Machine. At the conference I screened a video in which members of The New Society imitated a wide range of bee behavior in a series of dramatic roles. I called this The Dance Language of the Bees. (Stills from this 2009 video are scattered throughout this book.) Von Frisch’s 1973 book recounts research done in the 1940s when he discovered that bees communicate to their hive mates by means of the “dances” they run upon returning from foraging flights. The bees do this on the vertical plane of the dark hive and separately in space and time from the actions on which it’s based. Von Frisch defined this dance as a language, that is, a particular kind of system for encoding and decoding information, and the book for which Von Frisch won a Nobel Prize challenged a lot of thinking about animal’s incapacity for language.

I also read the biologist Tom Seeley’s Wisdom of the Hive and Honeybee Ecology. Tom’s beautifully written books deal largely with the social organization of the hive and its ability to solve, as he puts it, “cognitive problems” as a social group. I interviewed Tom twice and he appears in my films.

But I named this video project after Derrida’s The Animal That Therefore I Am. Derrida makes reference to animals in many of his texts, including the much earlier, The Beast and the Sovereign from 1973. In The Animal Derrida interrogates himself. The book playfully (there’s so much play in it) begins with a passage about his discomfort when emerging naked from the shower one day to find himself being looked at by his cat. You could call it a critique of his own selfishness—self and observing self—and also a critique of notions of subjectivity that by definition excludes everyone other. Derrida also writes eloquently about his profound distress at the suffering of animals that comes from this self. He says: “a subject is not a morally or legally neutral process but is structured by a number of symbolic and literary constraints that are potentially violent and exclusionary toward all beings deemed to be non-subjects, especially animals.” I love this book despite its difficulty.

Student Advocacy Council (from left to right) Hannah Swartz (Council staff coordinat or), Dana Aidekman, Andrea Rosen, Margarett Belkic, Anna Antonio. Awards: Anna Antonio. Artwork by MFA candidate Yeojin Kim.

It is satisfying to help get people connected with a resource on campus that they might not otherwise know about.

—Anna Antonio (A14)

Student Advocacy Council (from left to right) Hannah Swartz (Council staff coordinator), Dana Aidekman, Andrea Rosen, Margarett Belkic, Anna Antonio. Awards: Anna Antonio. Artwork by MFA candidate Yeojin Kim.

Taking the Student Pulse: Tufts University Art Gallery’s Student Advocacy Council

Hannah Swartz, Gallery staff and Student Advocacy Council liaison

Student Advocacy Council (from left to right) Hannah Swartz (Council staff coordinator), Dana Aidekman, Andrea Rosen, Margarett Belkic, Anna Antonio. Awards: Anna Antonio. Artwork by MFA candidate Yeojin Kim.

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We also ask respondents to pick three
adjectives that best describe the physical
space of the Gallery. Some adjectives
mentioned were “spacious,” “inviting,”
and “relaxing.” Other questions are
tended to elicit reactions to the content
of exhibitions, for example: During your
visit, what did you learn or discover? Were
you moved or shocked by anything?

When asked what visitors learned during
their visit, one person responded that the exhibition Richard Bell: Uz vs. Them, taught her
“about the extent of racism in Australia,”
while another commented that she “learned
she was productive studying in the Tufts
Gallery.”

While visitors were often hesitant at first,
we’ve found that once engaged, they are
happy to share their opinions, insights, and
personal narratives as they relate to the
Gallery and its exhibitions. It has been
a fun task for the Ambassadors to speak
more extensively with visitors to ascertain
their impressions, which otherwise might go
unspoken. It has also been a rewarding
experience for “behind-the-scenes” Gallery
employees providing visitor services and
security.

Hence the last edition of this newsletter,
the Gallery launched the implementation
phase of its Audience Research Plan, which
aims to identify the three primary segments
of our audience so that we can devise
more audience-centered programmes
going forward. Going well beyond the
demographic information typically
surveyed at museum entrances, our survey
is designed to understand visitors’ expectations about the
Gallery, their experience of the Gallery’s physical spaces,
and the impact particular exhibitions made upon them.

This fall, Gallery staff members Hannah Swartz and Dorothee Perin
wrote and tested this visitor survey, then re-wrote and re-tested it.
Five outgoing, friendly, and mature Gallery Ambassadors (student
employees providing visitor services and security) were selected for
the Survey Team and trained on how to approach visitors and ask the
questions in a uniform and objective manner while also engaging
visitors with interest and curiosity.

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engaged, they are happy to share their opinions, insights, and
personal narratives as they relate to the Gallery and its exhibitions. It has been
a fun task for the Ambassadors to speak more extensively with visitors
to ascertain their impressions, which otherwise might go unspoken. It has also been
a rewarding experience for “behind-the-scenes” Gallery
staff to learn about the impact of our exhibitions on visitors. While most of the surveying is
designed as a face-to-face conversation, a number of visitors and our “virtual audience” have participated in the
survey online. Thank you if you are one of those people!

We ask these questions to understand
why visitors come to the Gallery and
what sort of person they are. We want
to know: Are you curious and love to learn
about all things? Are you interested in
contemporary art? Do you have a personal
interest in this subject? Do you have an
academic/professional interest in this
subject? Did you want to be in a quiet,
relaxed atmosphere?
A Conversation with Nancy Holt

Nancy Holt, artist, and Gail Bambrick, staff writer, Tufts Magazine. Gail Bambrick can be reached at gail.bambrick@tufts.edu.

In the middle of the desert in southeastern Utah, many miles from the nearest interstate, four large concrete cylinders lie in an X-pattern, like lost sections of giant pipes at rest. On Dec. 21, at sunrise and sunset, sunlight streamed perfectly through them, just as it has during the winter and summer solstices for the past 36 years. Called Sun Tunnels, they are the creation of Nancy Holt, JD, an artist whose work encompasses sculpture and site-specific installations, film and photography.

Holt’s art has been exhibited widely, from the Museum of Modern Art in New York to the Tate Modern in London. Now her work is coming to the Tufts University Art Gallery, with the exhibition Nancy Holt: Sightlines (...), which focuses on 40 works from the 1960s and ’70s, a formative period for Holt’s art.

Sightlines includes a selection of six photographs from a much larger series titled Western Graveyards, taken during her visit to old cemeteries in Virginia City, Nev., and Lone Pine, Calif., in 1968. Each aging grave is touchingly unique and frequently surrounded by a fence, each one different from the others in materials and design. “People sing songs about how free they feel in open spaces, yet when you are stumbling along pushing through dense reeds in a New Jersey swamp, you realize that the swamp is part of the landscape, and inseparable from their environments, art that could be neither bought nor sold.”

Among these is Holt’s renowned Sun Tunnels, four 22-ton concrete pipes, 18 feet long and 9 feet 3 inches in outer diameter, created between 1973 and 1976. For several days before and after the winter and summer solstices, sunlight streams through the tunnels at sunrise and sunset. The top half of each tunnel is pierced by holes of varying diameter, relative to the magnitude of the stars in one of four constellations, Draco, Perseus, Columba and Capricorn. On any sunny day sunlight shines through the star-holes

Since its launch in 2003, the Tufts University Art Gallery has played multiple roles: as a guide to the gallery’s numerous exhibition spaces and programs; as a source of information for visitors; as a marketing tool for current exhibitions and programs; as an archive for exhibition history; as an online home to Tufts University Permanent Art Collection highlights. In the intervening nine years, the site has grown exponentially to encompass the Gallery’s range of publications, to provide a portal for the press, to promote the Contemporary Art Circle, and to encourage ways for visitors to get involved. All this growth has occurred within the wireframe of early website technology.

For the past several years, the Gallery has undertaken a multi-pronged website research effort with the goal of reinterpreting the master site architecture and redesigning the website to reflect current web technologies and the patterns and habits of web users today. Ultimately, our aim is to retain and enhance the density of information on our website, while making it more user-friendly and intuitive to navigate. We prepointed the site’s main demographics and created areas on the site that we felt would best serve these demographics, whether it was Tufts’ students, faculty and staff, joint degree program thesis candidates, alumni, the press, or local visitors. We envisioned new features that will make it easier for those visiting the site with their mobile phone to incorporate events and happenings directly into their calendars. We reworked language to best express our unique exhibition programming. We have increased our focus on ways for people to get involved with the Gallery – both at a bricks-and-mortar level and through the increasingly important avenue of social media. For instance, we have created sections just about student involvement (from employment to volunteer opportunities), have provided more examples of how faculty members might incorporate the stars’ integral process of the arts and the importance of the stars into their teaching and the emphasis the work of one’s environment.

When it came time to engage a designer for the new website, we considered many options before determining to work with Tufts University’s Arts and Sciences Information Technology Services. We are lucky to be able to build on one of ITS’s existing templates, taking advantage of the university’s major recent investment in transforming the general Tufts’ website into a sharply-designed tool. We are able to incorporate functionality that would otherwise be outside the budget of an organization of our size and have worked together closely with ITS’s Kristen Barrett to ensure that the template works for the special needs of a rich and visually dynamic contemporary art museum website.
Is the Future of Art in Science?
Ken Adekman, Gallery Advisory Board co-chair and Contemporary Art Circle member

Before 1991 fine art on the Tufts campus was limited to the exhibition of a small number of prints, sculptures and paintings dispersed around Westcott Library and Ballou Hall. If you wanted to view additional art that was not projected on a screen or reproduced in a book you had to take a trek to Cambridge or take the T into Boston. For those of us who loved art this state of affairs was tantamount to sensory deprivation.

In 2012 the Tufts University Art Gallery will turn twenty-one. From day one, it has produced groundbreaking exhibitions, provocative installations and inter-disciplinary educational projects that have garnered glowing reviews from Boston media and national press. It has connected the words "Tufts" and "art" through exceptional exhibitions of fine art, some born at Tufts, others imported from elsewhere. It also installs and maintains works from the University’s collections. As a result, Tufts has become a major site for art in Boston and offers its services in collaborative projects. At the intersection of art and science, Tufts has established a foothold for Macintosh in the business world.

Apple founder Steve Jobs dropped out of Reed College after a single college experience. He had no need to take this course. He was simply curious. When the student will become an avid collector or museum-goer, but each one deserves a healthy exposure to art as a vital part of his or her total college experience.

There are many reasons to be optimistic about the direction in which Tufts is moving, its focus on strengthening basic sciences and research. While this emphasis is not intended to hurt the humanities, it is a wake-up call for those of us who value art as an essential element in a liberal arts education. As has been the case with other departments, the Gallery has struggled to make do with less funding. But, the Gallery serves additional roles. Its main job is to present outstanding exhibitions of fine art, some born at Tufts, others imported from elsewhere. It also installs and maintains works from the University’s permanent art collection, a job made difficult because of condition issues that arise over time.

The Gallery is also a living classroom for museum studies students and an exhibition space for School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston thesis candidates. Finally, it defines and promotes Tufts’ cultural and academic values to students, neighbors, and the extended community.

I’m proud of what the Gallery has done for Tufts. It has produced consistently outstanding exhibitions and established a strong presence on campus. Still, there’s much to be done to fulfill the Gallery’s responsibility to infuse Tufts with art. This will require greater financial resources. Our Tufts Contemporary Art Circle participants have helped fill the breach. Grants from art institutions also help. But, those of us who feel strongly about art on campus must voice our concerns to the University. How do we go about it?

One option is for the Gallery to latch onto the rising star of science and offer its services in collaborative projects. At the intersection of disciplines there is potential for artists to learn about new dynamic tools for expression and for scientists to communicate the excitement of their discoveries. Creativity is something scientists and artists share. Why not plan a program that takes advantage of the cutting edge of both disciplines?

An example might be the creation of an artist-in-residence program within a scientific research laboratory. Such a plan would inspire the artist’s creativity while helping the scientist communicate the excitement of a theory that is otherwise too complex for the lay person to grasp.

Alternatively, we can raise the flag of the humanities with the argument that Tufts has a responsibility to provide exposure to fine art to all of its students as part of a fully rounded education. Not every student will become an avid collector or museum-goer, but each one deserves a healthy exposure to art as a vital part of his or her total college experience.

Apple founder Steve Jobs dropped out of Reed College after a single semester. He could not justify spending his parents’ life savings on tuition. He remained on campus and audited several courses, including a class in calligraphy. Jobs had no particular artistic talent. He had no need to take this course. He was simply curious. When the Macintosh operating system was developed it was distinguished by an unprecedented graphics capability. Jobs applied his knowledge of calligraphy and unique fonts to the new technology. The result was a powerful application called desktop publishing which Apple used to establish a foothold for Macintosh in the business world.

In the rush toward pragmatic, goal-oriented education we must not calligraphy and unique fonts to the new technology. The result was a powerful application called desktop publishing which Apple used to establish a foothold for Macintosh in the business world. In the rush toward pragmatic, goal-oriented education we must not forget the contribution art makes to the quality of our lives. After all, isn’t that what education is about?

The exhibition coincides with the release of Nancy Holt: Sightlines by the University of California Press, the first published retrospective account of Holt’s 45-year career. The book is edited by the exhibition curator, Alena J. Williams, a doctoral candidate at Columbia University. The multi-authored book charts Holt’s arystic trajectory from initial experiments with new and unconventional media like sound, light, and industrial materials to the culmination of her development of major site interventions and freestanding environmental sculpture. The book is available for purchase through the Tufts University Art Gallery ($25 for Tufts ID holders; $40 others).
A New President Gets A New Look for Gifford House
Laura McCarty, collections registrar and Amy Ingrid Schlegel, director of galleries and collections

One of Tufts most significant works of art in the permanent collection can now be seen without an invitation to the President’s Home. Helen Frankenthaler’s Orange Shapes in a Frame, a signature work by this important American artist, was recently relocated to the Shirley and Alex Aidekman Arts Center, where it greets visitors entering from the Talbot Avenue main entrance, just opposite the Balch Arena Theater box office.

A prominent figure in the Abstract Expressionist movement in New York during the 1950s, Frankenthaler developed a method of pouring paint over untreated canvas to allow pigments to soak into the fabric. Her “stain paintings,” such as Orange Shapes in Frame, emphasize the luminous and textual effects of her approach.

Frankenthaler’s masterful 1964 painting was given to Tufts University in 2000 by Placido Arango, a personal friend of the artist, and a University Trustee, during President Bacow’s first year in office. The monumental, nearly 8-foot high, painting resided in Gifford House during the ten-year Bacow Presidency, where it greeted tens of thousands of visitors. Now, it has a bit more breathing room, making this canonical “stain painting” seem even more expansive and monumental.

In anticipation of the arrival of Tufts’ new President Anthony Monaco on August 13, 2011, some overdue renovations were completed at Gifford House, the President’s home, in late summer 2011. This afforded an opportunity to give a new look to the home. Director of galleries and collections Amy Schlegel and Registrar Laura McCarty and John Rossetti worked with interior designer Tony Cappoli to install a new selection of art works for Tufts President Anthony Monaco, his wife Dr. Zoia Monaco, and their three sons on the main floor in time for the Presidential Inauguration on October 21, 2011. The Gifford House is one of the most important exhibit venues for work from the permanent art collection as the house has good environmental conditions as well as a steady stream of visitors. The new look at Gifford House embraces a light palette and a modern aesthetic.

One important American woman artist replaces another in the foyer. Elaine de Kooning’s Bacchus #20, a large-scale acrylic painting on canvas created in 1980, now greets visitors where Helen Frankenthaler’s Orange Shapes in Frame had been. The painting is part of a series of works inspired by a sculpture De Kooning viewed in the Luxembourg Gardens during her stay in Paris, France from 1976 to 1978. The exuberant style in which this canvas is painted exemplifies the energy of its subject, identified as Bacchus, the ancient Roman god of wine, fertility, and ecstasy. Like her husband, the Abstract Expressionist painter Willem de Kooning, Elaine de Kooning was interested in abstracting the human form through gestural mark-making with black lines and the direct application of pure, unmixed paint colors juxtaposed, rather than blended, on the surface, affecting a jarring optical sensation.

Given in 1984 by Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Gantcher, Bacchus #20 has remained one of many “hidden gems” of the Tufts permanent art collection. The painting hung for many years in the lobby of the Bray Laboratory on the Medford Campus before it rotated off view for conservation assessment (it is in great shape!) and has now been re-framed and shielded with UV-protective Plexiglas.

Other works currently on view in Gifford House include the 1972 silkscreen on canvas Kimiko Powers by Andy Warhol and Playground #4 by established Boston painter Joel Janowitz (both gifts of David and Barbara Slater). The dining room currently features the work of contemporary artist (and SMFA graduate) Robert Hernandez, a gift from the Kenneth A. Aidekman Foundation. The Untitled work by Hernandez is drawn with sharpie and pencil on birch plywood in a graffiti-like style in which images appropriated from the internet and other media sources are densely overlaid.

Check out our new website for more information about the Tufts Permanent Art Collection:

http://artgallery.tufts.edu/collection/index.htm