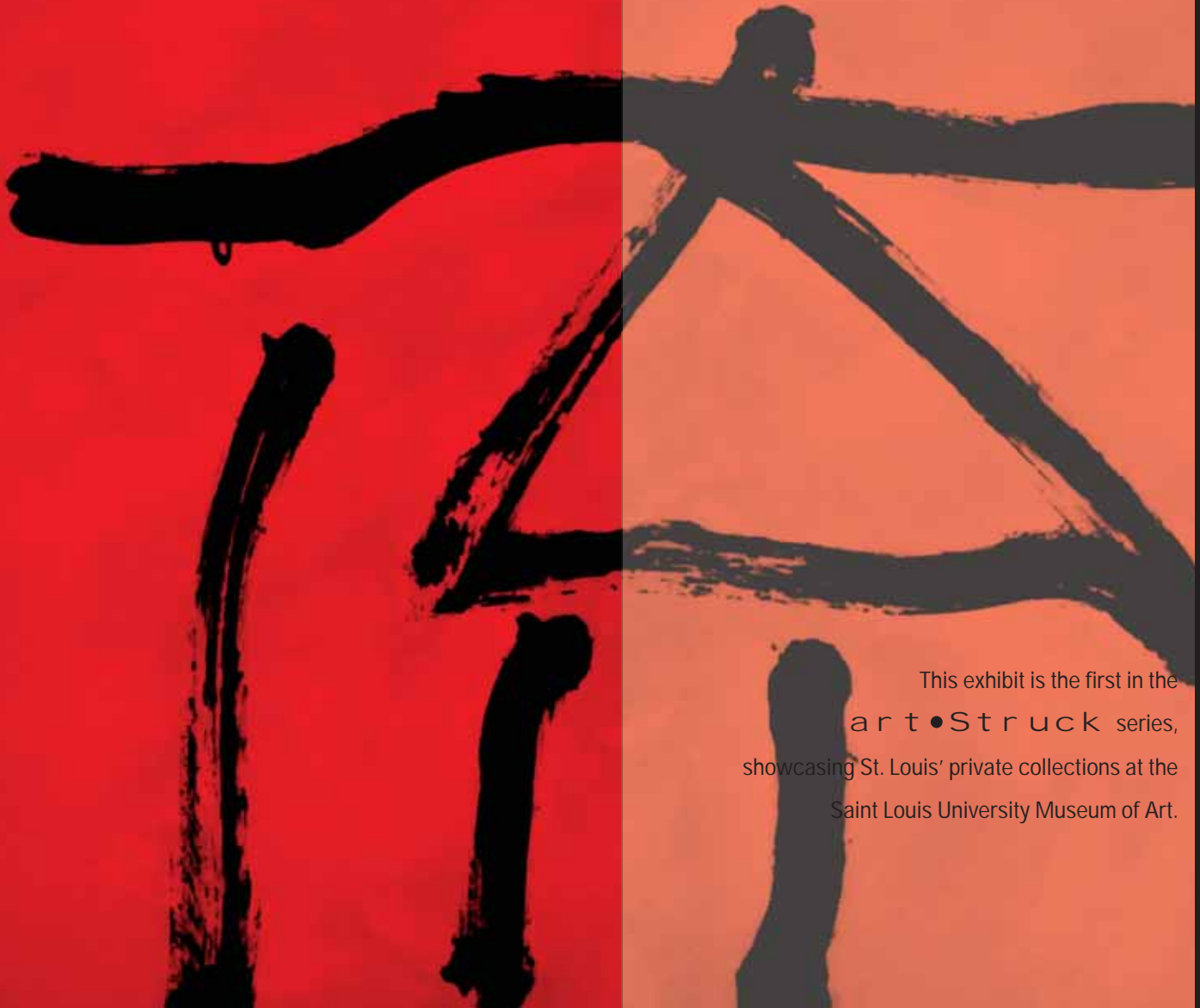


The William D.
Merwin Collection

Saint Louis University Museum of Art

art • struck

Robert Motherwell, *Dance 111 (Red) State 11, 1979*



This exhibit is the first in the
art•Struck series,
showcasing St. Louis' private collections at the
Saint Louis University Museum of Art.

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I would like to thank Nancy Singer, my friend of 23 years for her encouragement and guidance. It was Nancy who sparked my passion for collecting. Without her, this collection would not have existed. Nancy was my mentor, my inspiration, my advisor, and most importantly, my friend.

It was her enthusiasm and love for art that left me "Art Struck." Nancy died in 2003. Had she lived, I know she would be very proud of this exhibit.

William D. Merwin

In the late 1970's, Dr. William Merwin decided to build an addition to his home. He had become friends with Gertrude and Bill Bernoudy in the mid '70's, and was a guest in their home that was beautifully decorated in exquisite art. Bill was an architect who had studied with Frank Lloyd Wright.

Bill Bernoudy was hired as the architect for the home addition, and in April of 1980, the construction began. In the summer of that year, Dr. Merwin felt some "real art" was needed for the addition, specifically to display over the new fireplace. Admittedly, he was focused more on aesthetics than on art, however, he was familiar with the artist, Robert Motherwell. It was the Bernoudys who suggested that he contact local art dealer, Nancy Singer.

Nancy worked from her home. She displayed art throughout, and underneath each piece, she stacked books and articles of interest. She was enthusiastic, passionate, and eager to share her love of art. Her enthusiasm was contagious. The day of their first meeting, Dr. Merwin purchased his first "real" piece of art (a Motherwell), and became a "convert" to collecting.

With Nancy's guidance and encouragement, Dr. Merwin continued to research and read about art, and for the next five years, he purchased his art from Nancy. In addition to St. Louis art dealers, she also introduced him to dealers in Kansas City, Chicago, Santa Fe, Dallas, New

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York, Los Angeles, and San Antonio, as well as Christie's and Sotheby's.

Dr. William Merwin is a native Texan. He is a graduate of Southern Methodist University and obtained his DDS from Baylor College of Dentistry. He completed his oral and maxillofacial surgery residency at the University of Oklahoma. It was at the University of Oklahoma, where he met Dr. John Versnel, then chairman of the department of oral and maxillofacial surgery at Saint Louis University College of Dentistry. Dr. Versnel invited him to join his practice in St. Louis.

Dr. Merwin later became chairman of the department of dentistry at St. Mary's Hospital in Richmond Heights, MO and also of the former Deaconess hospital, located in southwest St. Louis. He practiced in Clayton until his retirement in the early 1990's.

Dr. Merwin remains an avid art collector, and travels to museums and galleries worldwide. ■

The Jesuit college from which I was graduated all too many years ago had a motto far more impressive than its campus, at least the campus at that time. "Wisdom," the college asserted, "had built herself a home." It was a nice enough home as I recall, though I really had expected Wisdom would have been a bit more coherent in choosing her décor.

Dr. William D. Merwin has not made any similarly audacious assertions though does admit that he became a collector, in part, because he had an addition built onto his home. That was the catalyst, but not the end. From this rather simple need emerged a passion for gathering images and the ideas that they represent. Bill's urge to collect was and is far more than mere acquisition. Rather, it is collecting as an extension of one's very person, collecting as an expression of how one lives life well. Collecting that represents experience and learning, talent and study. Art blended with life and experience shaping choice – this is what makes a private collection personal. And this is, in part, what we mean when we say "art struck" – an encounter with deeply personal choices now made public.

Bill Merwin has not gathered art to himself in pursuit of grand aesthetic principles, nor has he collected according to well-articulated mission statements. Rather, Bill's collection is *his collection*: a reflection of his tastes and interests. However, this is not to say that Bill's collecting instincts were uninformed. In fact, the very opposite is true. Bill collected the art but not before he collected the artist, not before he collected the narrative of the artifact, and

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not before he even collected the environment that helped to shape the creation of a particular piece.

In recognition of this primary interest of Bill's – the collection of narrative as well as the collection of artifact – you will find vignettes accompanying particular works in this exhibit booklet. These stories are Bill's stories and the few sentences that attend the art illustrate, to some degree, what captured Bill's interest: the struggle of Chuck Close to create despite physical obstacles; the poignant story of Joe McDonald, whose family lives in Kansas City; or even the admission that his first purchase was for the purpose of filling the space above a newly constructed fireplace – these sparked the desire to know more, to learn about, and to possess, not just the art but the story of the art and its creation or creator. Implicit in each work on display is a narrative that establishes dimension, depth, and connection with another.

The offer of a private collection for public display is a generous one. There is risk for the collector whose tastes are liable to interpretation and challenge as well as congratulation. There is the challenge for the museum to keep personal and intimate a collection now presented in large gallery spaces. The most important consideration, however, has been to insure that our patrons will perceive in some way here what Bill's friends have known for years – that to step into Bill's home is to experience image and imagination blended into an atmosphere of life. ■

Bill Merwin's collection now displayed at the Saint Louis University Museum of Art includes many of the best known contemporary artists working during the past 30 years: Jasper Johns, Jim Dine and Kiki Smith. The broad range of styles and the various printmaking techniques represented by his collection are characteristic of the diverse nature of printmaking and illustrate Merwin's love for the medium.

Historically, many of the great artists worked not only as painters and sculptors, but also as printmakers. Artists such as Rembrandt, Goya and Picasso are as well known for their prints as they are for their paintings. This is certainly true for many of the artists represented in this exhibition. The tradition of the painter/printmaker continues to assert an influence in the careers of many contemporary artists, due in large part to the 1960s opening of printmaking workshops, primarily in the United States, such as Universal Limited Art Editions, Tamarind and Gemini. This renewed interest in printmaking has precipitated new generations of avid print collectors, as is evidenced by this collection.

It is a mistake to regard these prints merely as reproductions of an artists' work, a misconception held by some people. These are original prints made by leading contemporary artists. They were invited to spend time at the various print shops and work in collaboration with master printers. This process of creating multiple images in limited editions gave the artists the opportunity to explore new possibilities and avenues of expression and to take advantage of the printers' expertise. In speaking about printmaking, Johns, one the most fascinating artists of our time, observed that "the process of printmaking allows you to do things that make your mind work in a different way than, say painting with a brush does ... things which are necessary to printmaking become interesting in themselves and can be used in painting where they're not necessary but become like ideas." ■

Reference: Katrina Martin (director and producer), *Hanafuda/Jasper Johns* (film) 1980.



merwin : Close is special to me because he only does portraits of family and friends. I am fascinated by the work of Chuck Close. Today he is so sought after that you have to get in line to buy one of his drawings. His original works were photo realism-type works. They're huge works. You have to view his work at a distance ... actually step away from it, and then it looks like a photograph of somebody. In 1988 Chuck Close suffered a stroke that left him a quadriplegic. He later regained limited movement in his upper arms and began painting dots and squares that he called "little pictures" that he subsequently transposed onto a grid. The very first piece he did after rehab was a portrait of Roy Lichtenstein.



Jasper Johns, *The Critic Sees*, 1967



Chuck Close, *Self-portrait*, 1995

merwin : Everyone wants his work! Johns is probably one of the most important artists working today. *The Critic Sees* was inspired by the comments of a critic who alleged that Johns' sculpture work was not original, but only copied from pieces of pre-existing work. As a creative rebuttal to "the critic," Johns created a sculpture with these glasses and inside the glasses was the printed word, "mouth."





Robert Motherwell, Dance 111 (Red) State 11, 1979

merwin : n 1980 I decided to build an addition to my home. I had no "real" art. I wanted to place a Robert Motherwell piece over my new fireplace, and mentioned my idea to my architect, who suggested I contact local art dealer, Nancy Singer. Nancy's passion and enthusiasm was contagious. The day I met her, I left with a Motherwell under my arm and a friendship that I will cherish for the rest of my life.



Jim Dine, A Magenta Robe, A Rose Robe, 1979

merwin : "A Magenta Robe, A Rose Robe" is the second or third purchase I made. The piece shown here is an etching and aquatint, then hand-painted in oil. Dine also calls these robe images self-portraits or Jewish robes, and has created variations on this theme since he first painted The Robe in Jerusalem in 1964. I have been fascinated by his work and have two other pieces: Little Nude I and The Summer.

Kiki Smith, *Moth*, 1996

mer win : *Constellations* was the first Kiki Smith piece I purchased. The work is a painting of three women — presumably Kiki and her two sisters. I subsequently loaned the piece to the Saint Louis Art Museum, and was invited to a dinner party to meet Kiki Smith. When I asked her if she was thinking of her sisters when she created *Constellations*, she told me that she hadn't thought of that before, but would take credit for it. Her remark puzzled me. Kiki is a very timid person. It was interesting at the reception at the art museum. Whenever she thought someone might ask her to speak, she sort of fled the room. She is a very shy person.

When I saw *The Moth* I was fascinated with it. I bought it as well as two other of her works. She is different. Personally, I think that right now, Kiki Smith is one of the up and coming artists.

mer win : On one side, Lichtenstein uses brush strokes. The other side is Brancusi's famous head, *Sleeping Muse*, sculpted around 1910. I've always regretted that I never bought one of Lichtenstein's more recognizable comic strip illustrations where he uses his signature style of Benday dots, lettering and speech balloons.

Roy Lichtenstein, *Two Paintings Sleeping Muse*, 1984



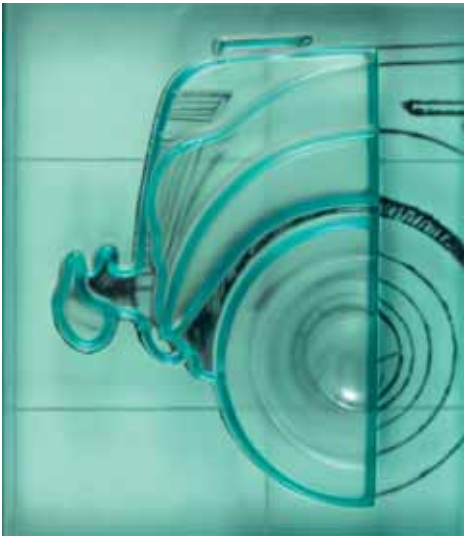
David Hockney, Joe with Green Window, 1980

merwin : Joe McDonald is featured in the foreground. While modeling in New York, MacDonald, a native of Kansas City, became a friend of David Hockney, and traveled with him to Europe several times. I have friends who knew the MacDonald family in Kansas City, and that connection caught my attention. Sadly enough, Joe died from complications arising from AIDS in 1984.



Jasper Johns, Fools House (Black State), 1972

merwin : Very often Johns labels the objects contained in his prints to tell you what the images are, and this is apparent in the Fool's House. He labels the painted objects with a written word and an arrow accompaniment. This piece is meant to be rolled into a cylinder. If you did that, then you would see The Fool's House spelled out in the image.



Claes Oldenburg, Profile Air Flow Test Mold Front End (car), 1972

merwin : David Hockney is, by far, the most highly publicized British artist of his generation. Many of Hockney's lithographs are portraits of his friends. Celia Birtwell, an English textile designer and close confidant, was his favorite subject. While standing upright, Hockney painted *Celia (in a Polka Dot Skirt)* on a lithograph plate and drew the image with a long-handled brush. Notice the random ink spots on the left side of the sketch that dot the image.



David Hockney, Celia in a Polka Dot Skirt, 1981

merwin : Oldenburg took common things and made art out of them. Oldenburg owned a 1936 Chrysler Airflow, which served as the inspiration for this piece. Using the car as a model he created a smaller configuration of it to create a plastic mold. The plastic turned color and, just like the carmakers, he had to recall them.

The back garden of the Saint Louis Art Museum is home to an Oldenburg creation, *Giant Three-Way Plug* (Cube Tap).

Bates, David
Stringer of Sheephead (1994)

Berrosal, Miguel
Caballo Casinaide
Christopher Columbus

Blomdahl, Sönja
Untitled

Borofsky, Jonathan
Flowers at No. 2984233 (1986)
Self-Portrait at 2,783,685 and 2,686,889 (1981-82)

Chia, Sandro
Children's Holiday (1984)
Lightstruck (1983)

Chihuly, Dale
Cinnamon Macchia with Lemon Yellow Lip Wrap (1993)

Christo
Wrapped Motorcycle/Sidecar, Project for Harley Davidson 1933 VL (1997)
Package on Radio Flyer Wagon (1993)

Close, Chuck
Self-portrait (1995)

Cragg, Tony
Untitled

De Koening, Willem
The Man and the Big Blond (1982)

De Palma, Brett
Achilles

De Palme, Brett
Drawing, from Achilles (1988)

Di Suvero
Longing

Dill, Lesley
Copper Poem Hands, "I felt my life with both my hands To see if it was there."
Emily Dickinson (1993)
Red Poem Suit (1992)
Black Flower Hand (1997)
Leave Me Ecstasy (1997)

Dine, Jim
A Magenta Robe, A Rose Robe (1979)
The Summer - Heart (1992)
The Summer - Robe (1992)
The Summer - Venus de Milo (1992)
Little Nude I (1982)

Francis, Sam
Untitled (1974)
Of Vega (1972)

Graves, Nancy
The Clash of Cultures (1988)

Grooms, Red
Untitled (1981)

Haines, Peter
Dream Figure, Horizontal (1983)

Hockney, David
Celia in a Polka Dot Skirt (1981)
Table Flowable (1991)
Views of Hotel Well II (1985)

Joe with Green Window (1980)

Hodgkin, Howard
David's Pool at Night (1985)

Johansson, Berit
Vase

Johns, Jasper
The Critic Sees (1967)
The Critic Smiles (1969)
Target with Four Faces (1968)
Fools House - Black State (1972)

Katz, Alex
Song (1980-81)
Ada Four Times (1979-80)
Ada Four Times (1979-80)
Ada Four Times (1979-80)
Ada Four Times (1979-80)

Kelly, Ellsworth
Cyclamen V (1964)

Levi, David W.
Artichoke Jar

Lichtenstein, Roy
Two Paintings Sleeping Muse (1984)

Little, Ken
Bronze
Please
Grit
Hey
Hi
So
Here

Littleton, John and Kate Vogel
Imago Bag 71 #5449

Marioni, Dante
Red and Black Duo

Motherwell, Robert
Dance 111 (Red) State 11 (1979)
Mediterranean Light (1991)

Noland, Kenneth
Ply on Ply (1987)

Oldenburg, Claes
Profile Air Flow Test Mold Front End - car (1972)
Geometric Mouse Pyramid Doubled (1976)
Roan from Pages and Fuses (1974)

Rosenquist, James
Caught One Lost One for the Fast Student or Star Catcher (1989)
Gold Trashcan (1977)

Sauer, Jane
Mute/Muted/Mutation

Smith, Kiki
Untitled (Head)
The Little Match Girl
Yes (1997)
Constellations
Moth (1996)

Sorman, Steven
Again Now (1992)

Stackhouse, Robert
Viking Prow (1996)
Blue Flyer (1996)

Stella, Frank
Swan Engraving Circle I State V (1983)
Untitled
Cipango (1973)
Les Indes Galantes III (1973)

Vasarely, Victor
Fleho

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Botanicals on the Park

Steinway & Sons Piano Gallery

Tiffany & Co. Plaza Frontenac

Ladue News

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Nan and Ollie Boilleau

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