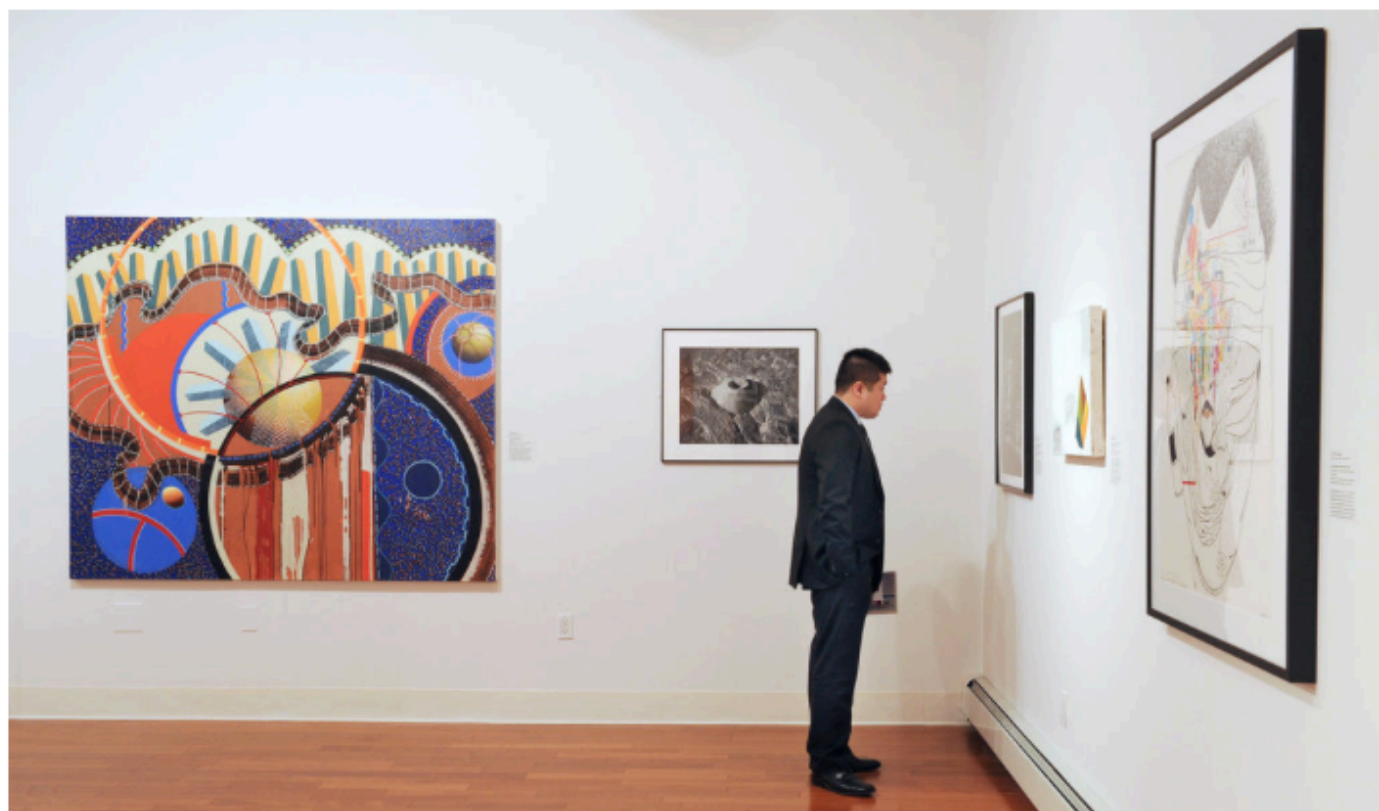


Showing Gifts to Mark an Anniversary

Hofstra University Museum Celebrates 50 Years

By KARIN LIPSON FEB. 15, 2013



Works in the exhibition, "50/50: Celebrating 50 Years of the Hofstra University Museum."

Kathy Kmonicek for The New York Times

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HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. — The Hofstra University Museum, founded in 1963, had a decision to make as its 50th anniversary approached: Of the more than 5,000 works in its collection, which would be put on display to celebrate the event?

The museum had mounted a show in 2010, for the 75th anniversary of the university, that drew from the entire collection. “We didn’t want it to be the same show again,” said Karen T. Albert, the associate director of exhibitions and collections. So museum officials chose to focus largely on more recent gifts.

The result is two exhibitions now on view, with a third scheduled for the spring. The anchor exhibition, “50/50: Celebrating 50 Years of the Hofstra University Museum,” at the university’s Emily Lowe Gallery through March 28, features 50 paintings, prints, drawings, photographs and works of African and pre-Columbian art. It was organized by Ms. Albert from the more than 600 artworks donated since 2006 by collectors, alumni, artists and their families, retired professors and assorted friends of the university — with considerable overlap among those categories.

The second show, “The Lyon, the Which and the Warhol,” will be up through May 19 in the David Filderman Gallery. This exhibition (its title is derived from the children’s book by C.S. Lewis) combines photographs of the Chicago Outlaws



An oil enamel on canvas painting
by Stanley Twardowicz.
Kathy Kmonicek for The New York
Times

motorcycle club taken during the 1960s by Danny Lyon; Polaroids and other photos by Andy Warhol; and works by other photographers and artists, including Edward Weston, Chuck Close and Jim Dine, that constitute the “Which.” With its sizable Lyon and Warhol gifts, the exhibition, curated by Kristy Caratzola, the museum’s collections manager, also emphasizes pieces donated since 2006.

That time frame corresponds to the tenure of the museum’s current executive director, Beth E. Levinthal. A former head of the Heckscher Museum of Art, in Huntington, Ms. Levinthal assumed the Hofstra post in mid-2006. Since then, she said, the museum has honed its collecting priorities, identifying areas “we wanted to bolster and give more attention to,” and seeking gifts along those lines.

For example, Ms. Levinthal said, the museum has been paying more attention to contemporary Long Island artists. Among those represented in “50/50” is Stan Brodsky, a well-known Huntington artist (and the subject of a 2008 Hofstra exhibition), who donated a painting — an abstraction incorporating Hebrew letters — in honor of the museum’s anniversary. Ms. Levinthal selected the painting alongside Ms. Albert on a visit to the artist’s studio.

Two paintings by Stanley Twardowicz, who was considered one of the early Abstract Expressionists, also demonstrate the Long Island connection; a longtime member of the Hofstra fine arts faculty who lived in Huntington, he died in 2008.

The paintings are among six works his widow, Lillian Dodson, donated to Hofstra in 2011. “Stanley taught there for many years, and it was his backyard as well,” Ms. Dodson said in a phone conversation from Port Townsend, Wash., where she now lives. An artist herself, she taught ceramics courses at Hofstra for years: “It was like a home to me,” Ms. Dodson said.

Ms. Levinthal, who had Mr. Twardowicz as her adviser when she studied art as a Hofstra undergraduate, said, “There’s an intimacy to some of the gifts, in terms of relationships.” Other gifts, she said, reflect “just the passion of a collector who wants to share with the community.”

That was the case with Dr. Pascal James Imperato, who with his wife, Eleanor, donated four works from Mali in 2010. Carved from wood and dating from the early- to mid-20th century, the pieces — two masks, an intricate door lock and a

small equestrian sculpture — are all on view.

“We wanted to provide these objects with a safe harbor in an institution where they could be enjoyed by other people,” said Dr. Imperato, who worked as an epidemiologist in West Africa in the 1960s and has written on African art and culture. (He is now dean and distinguished service professor of the School of Public Health of SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn.)

No doubt the most recognizable name among the donors is that of George Stephanopoulos, the political commentator for ABC, whose photography gifts appear in both shows. Mr. Stephanopoulos has been acquainted with Hofstra at least since 2008, when he covered a presidential debate held on campus. “He’s been giving to the museum for every year since,” Ms. Levinthal said. (An intermediary helped the process along, she said.)

Mr. Stephanopoulos’s gifts include the entire set of images from “The Bikeriders,” a 1968 book by the photographer Danny Lyon that chronicled the subculture of the Chicago Outlaws motorcycle club. Having the complete series in hand “was part of the impetus” for “The Lyon, the Which and the Warhol,” said Ms. Caratzola, the curator. (The Warhols were a 2008 gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts in New York; almost all the “Which” works have been in the Hofstra collection since before 2006.)

A sequel exhibition, opening May 28, will include different selections from “The Bikeriders” and the Warhol collection, including more Polaroid pictures. Today’s students, Ms. Caratzola said, instinctively understand the attraction of the vintage Polaroids, developed within moments in the camera. Young people “have the same instant gratification by taking a picture with their smartphone,” she said.

“50/50: Celebrating 50 Years of the Hofstra University Museum,” through March 28 at the Emily Lowe Gallery, Hofstra University, Hempstead; “The Lyon, the Which and the Warhol,” through May 19 at the David Filderman Gallery, in the Joan and Donald E. Axinn Library, Hofstra. Admission: free. Information: (516) 463-5672; hofstra.edu/museum.

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