

# ART WALK



SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

5151 Park Avenue  
Fairfield, Connecticut 06825-1000

SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

## THE GALLERY OF CONTEMPORARY ART

The Gallery of Contemporary Art at Sacred Heart University is an example of the University's commitment to providing a comprehensive experience in higher learning to its students. It provides an integral visual component to a liberal arts education that reflects the time-honored Catholic intellectual traditions of actively supporting the arts of its time and providing an ongoing search for the truth by encouraging dialogue with contemporary culture.

This visual component is realized in a variety of ways and exists throughout Sacred Heart University's campus as well as far beyond its boundaries by presenting an annual series of exhibits and artist's talks that have been recognized for their quality and originality locally, regionally and nationally. In collaboration with the University's administration and faculty, The Gallery of Contemporary Art has instituted ground-breaking programs that attract audiences from the campus and the community at large.

To assist you in appreciating a selection of the art displayed on our campus, The Gallery of Contemporary Art is pleased to include in this brochure the essay *Looking at Contemporary Art*. We hope your visit to our campus and your experience viewing the art that is such a large part of Sacred Heart University will be both enjoyable and enlightening.

### **The Gallery Of Contemporary Art**

SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

5151 Park Avenue, Fairfield, CT  
(203) 365-7650  
<http://artgallery.sacredheart.edu>

**Sophia Gevas**, Director

#### **Gallery Hours:**

Monday through Thursday from Noon to 5:00 pm  
Sundays from Noon to 4:00 pm

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Details on the front cover, top to bottom:

David Philips, "Nothing Gold Can Stay" 1992

Tom Rose, "Memory Theater" 1996

Claire Dunphy, "Prayer Rock" 1992

Detail right:

Judith Steinberg, "Links" 2004



## THE ART WALK

This Art Walk brochure has been created to enable you to take a self-guided art tour through the Sacred Heart University campus. It details each permanent installation of Voluntary Percent for Art Program works created to celebrate the growth of our campus.

Additionally, the locations of our Sculpture on the Grounds works—works on loan from area sculptors—are indicated on the enclosed map with accompanying images and an artist's statement or descriptive text.

For further information about The Gallery of Contemporary Art's exhibits, programs and installations, please visit us on the Web at: <http://artgallery.sacredheart.edu>.

## VOLUNTARY PERCENT FOR ART PROGRAM

Initiated in 1992, Sacred Heart University's Voluntary Percent for Art Program is modeled after the State of Connecticut's Percent for Art Program. As an example of the University's unique and extraordinary commitment to the arts, funds are set aside from the budget of each new building to commission a site-specific artwork to enhance the grounds outside or the inside lobby of public areas.

Each outdoor work provides a signature meeting place for students and creates an atmosphere that encourages intellectual pursuits. To date, the University has commissioned two interior works and five exterior site works.

## SCULPTURE ON THE GROUNDS

In 1995, in an effort to enhance the grounds of Sacred Heart University, the Director of The Gallery of Contemporary Art contacted Socrates Sculpture Park in Long Island City, New York, to discuss a cooperative program that could benefit all parties.

Socrates Sculpture Park is an outdoor park that rigorously screens applicants and grants residencies to young sculptors, enabling them to use machinery and space they couldn't afford to construct works that are subsequently exhibited in the Park for one year. At the end of the year, Socrates Sculpture Park requires that the artists remove their works.

After the Director of the Gallery of Contemporary Art met with the Socrates Sculpture Park Director and reviewed work on display, some of the artists were invited to install their works on the Sacred Heart University campus. This accomplished two beneficial results: the arrangement provides the artists with valuable storage space and the University is able to feature a selection of significant sculpture around the campus. These works appear at strategic points throughout the campus. They are identified and described in the map insert.

## THE COLLECTION

The Collection is comprised of a wide range of donated art works—paintings, prints and sculpture. It also includes the works in the Voluntary Percent for Art Program.

Works in The Collection are installed on campus so that students, faculty, staff and visitors encounter original works of art everywhere—in public areas, such as hallways and common rooms, as well as in private offices throughout the University. As a result, art has become a part of the daily lives of everyone at Sacred Heart University.

Sophia Gevas  
*Director*  
*The Gallery of Contemporary Art*

**Suzanne Benton**  
**"Sun Queen" 1975**

Bronze

Oakview Campus, University Collection



ARTIST'S STATEMENT: *Believing that the purpose of art is to explore humanity, and that art comes alive when it relates to people's lives, my art draws upon multi-cultural themes and often engages the participation of others... Its diverse themes are steeped in myth, ritual and archetype.*

"Sun Queen" was created during an artist-in-residency at ARTPARK. Benton combines the making of masks with storytelling performances and workshops. Her work has been acclaimed worldwide, and her works are represented in over 500 private and public collections.

**Helene Brandt**  
**"Path of Expanding Vision" 1994**

Aluminum

Merton and Seton Residence Halls  
Voluntary Percent for Art Commission

ARTIST'S STATEMENT: *"Path of Expanding Vision" is both a meditative space for introspection and a pathway that leads through different doorways that metaphorically express varied and ever-broadening ways of looking at the world. It is my hope that "Path of Expanding Vision" affords students who take a moment to sit and reflect the same pleasures that I have experienced resting against the columns of Greek temples and gazing out at the surroundings which they frame.*

*"Path of Expanding Vision," sitting on an island with its maple tree, can be viewed as an oasis, a passageway between the security of the residence hall and the larger expanding world represented by Sacred Heart University.*



**Robert Dente**

**"Morning Skies" & "Evening Skies" 1999**

Acrylic on Integral Foam Vinyl Sheets

Angelo Roncalli Hall

Voluntary Percent for Art Commission

ARTIST'S STATEMENT: *The objective of this work is to convey points of view that surpass one's ordinary perspective and provide a support for contemplation. The viewer experiences a subtle disorientation by having the sensation of looking up and down, far and near simultaneously. The poetic reasoning behind this metaphor (of shifting focus between earth and sky or the actual and the ethereal) is meant to reflect the human enigma in our connection to each realm.*



The two murals consist of painted rectangular panels. "Morning Skies" represents the secular life while "Evening Skies" (which forms a subtle cross shape within the rectangular panels) represents the religious or spiritual life.

**Claire Dunphy**  
**"Prayer Rock" 1992**

Acrylic paint & rocks found during excavation  
Scholars Commons, University Collection

*EXCERPTS FROM ARTIST'S STATEMENT: Rock art is an ancient art. A frequent theme of rock art, whether cave painting or petroglyph, is animals and the relationship of people to them. The challenges and mysteries of the natural world were a part of daily life. Now, at the end of the 20th century, we are being asked to remember that we are part of the natural world, to reconstruct it and rescue it.*

*The stars unify the composition and accompany the animals because world mythologies place animals among them. The purple outline creates a kind of optic vibration against the blue background so that the animals are not visually static. The animals are drawn essentially the same size to suggest that all life forms, whether bear or butterfly, have the same important roles in keeping our planet healthy.*



**Sherinatu Fafunwa**  
**"Yemoo" 1990**

Clay, board, weaving & paint  
Ryan-Matura Library, University Collection



*ARTIST'S STATEMENT: My work speaks from dual cultures: West Africa and the United States.*

*The forms of my work center around the dual phenomena of vulnerability and stability, containment and lack of accessibility. Their biomorphic forms symbolize life energies that rest at a pinpoint-sized gravitational center on the pedestal plane.*

*Many of my smaller forms escape the literal definition of "vessel" because their natural balance point places their opening off to the side, but they maintain their symbolic reference due to their interior spaces.*

*The intention is two-fold: to speak across cultures, and to convey a sense of permanence and timelessness.*

**Ann P. Lehman**  
**"Stacked Enlightenment" 1999**

Copper & stone  
Quad, University Collection



ARTIST'S STATEMENT: *Exploring the extent and variety to which metal can be manipulated interests me enormously. Its strength and beauty awe me.*

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the tenure of Dr. Anthony J. Cernera as President of Sacred Heart University, the Student Government commissioned Lehman to create a sculpture.

The work, which portrays a stack of books, a globe and a telescope, is placed in the Quad and represents the President's vision and the University's mission.

**David Philips**  
**"Nothing Gold Can Stay" 1992**

Pink granite, concrete, bronze, pavers & gold leaf  
Scholars Commons  
Voluntary Percent for Art Commission

ARTIST'S STATEMENT: *"Nothing Gold Can Stay" (inspired by a Robert Frost poem of the same title) is an exploration of memory. Leaves are cast in bronze using the "lost wax" method, and each vein and detail is immortalized in a lifeless but perfect duplicate of an original leaf. As the real leaves of the trees turn golden and fall from the trees, covering the sculptural cast leaves, they will turn brown and wither away, leaving, once again, the bronze "memory" of a leaf.*

*I have merged precise and organic stone and concrete forms along with bronze images of fallen leaves. The sculpture contrasts permanence with transience. "Nothing Gold Can Stay" is composed of two groupings of five concrete/bronze seating bollards. The entrances to the residence halls feature a bronze medallion with the sugar maple leaf motif, placed in the brickwork, one leaf for Scholars Commons #1, two for Scholars Commons #2, and so forth.*



**Tom Rose**  
**"Memory Theater" 1996**

Aluminum, concrete, stone, pavers, water & plantings  
William H. Pitt Health & Recreation Center  
Voluntary Percent for Art Commission



ARTIST'S STATEMENT: *Both the concept and the reality of "garden" have interested me for many years and have informed my work. Indoor/outdoor, interior/exterior, are metaphoric equivalencies implying the hidden and the revealed. Architecture, with its physical structure and its function as sign, provides a language of form which has been the core of the work. The garden is as much a fiction as a real place and in its construction the goal is transformation.*

*By providing a trellis for shade, water for sound and reflection, benches and stones for seating, the place is a comforting outdoor room in good weather and is a visually arresting space during winter months. The place is meant to be used as a welcome retreat to meet friends, talk and share a moment in a busy day.*

**Judith Steinberg**  
**"Links" 2004**

Corten steel, stone & concrete  
Christian Witness Commons  
Voluntary Percent for Art Commission

Steinberg works in abstract forms that combine a fluid organization of architectural references with the organic forms of nature.

Her meandering stone wall, reminiscent of the stone walls that have existed in Connecticut for hundreds of years, is pierced by the elemental forms of geometry that form the basic building blocks of visual language: the circle, the square and the triangle. The fluid combination of the organic and man-made elements makes reference to the ideal relationship of our place in the natural world. Created to separate the wetlands behind it from the student recreation area in the courtyard, the wall is also meant to provide natural seating for spectators and a place for students to congregate.



**Shaw Stuart**  
**"Arcadian Memories" 1992**

Wood, hydrocal & collage

William H. Pitt Health & Recreation Center Board Room  
University Collection



ARTIST'S STATEMENT: *My present work is concerned with the idea of cloistered space affected by the passage of time...which shows in the layers of plaster and dirt with messages partially seen and fading away.*

Stuart creates spaces that appear aged and yet are timeless: mysterious and evocative arched doorways with clerestory colonnades and partial staircases.

The artist donated "Arcadian Memories" to Sacred Heart University in 1997.

**Will Turey**  
**"Poetry in Motion – Start to Finish" 1996**

Stained glass & wood

William H. Pitt Health & Recreation Center Lobby  
Voluntary Percent for Art Commission

The stained glass murals are created to represent the all-important spirit of motion in athletics. This intangible ingredient is necessary from start to finish in the athletes' quest for excellence. The beauty of the human body's movement is most evident in its purest form, when it is viewed in silhouette, like sculpture in motion. The images — of a female runner and a male basketball player — represent both collegiate and intramural sports.

These glass murals are meant to inspire motion in the viewer and to encourage the spirit of participation in the viewer's life.



## LOOKING AT CONTEMPORARY ART

Some contemporary art has a special need to be analyzed in order to grasp its meaning. However, this is true of any field. One does not usually like what is easy or common in one's field of concentration. The exceptional is more interesting. For example, a professional chess player has little interest in an amateur game. When the uninitiated are faced with art, they simply like what is most familiar, and many times are impressed with what they believe is most difficult. Without an understanding of the process and elements of an art work, it is difficult to make an informed opinion. The following definitions and questions assist in understanding the works presented.

Looking at a work of art takes time and concentration. An artist usually has a concept, or theme, with which he or she begins. There are steps to follow in order to see some of the decisions made in the process of creating a work.

What emotional response is generated? What is felt intuitively? Listen to these feelings and ask if there is a reason for the reaction.

What does it look like? What medium or material is involved? Is the work two-dimensional (a painting, print, drawing)? Or is it three-dimensional (a sculpture)? Is there a subject matter? Does the title indicate anything about the work? What size is the work? Is it on a pedestal, or on the wall, or directly on the ground? Is there a mood that is evoked? Is there a story involved? Are there any historical or literary references?

## FORMAL ANALYSIS

**POINT OF VIEW.** The artist sets up a vantage point, even in abstract works. This affects response in subtle ways and it can create a sense of excitement, distance, tension, intimacy and so forth. Is the work meant to be viewed at eye level? Above? Below? Is it so large that one must enter it? Can one see through it? What does that imply?

The principles of composition include balance, emphasis, movement, contrast, proportion, unity, variety and repetition. The elements of design include line, color, shape, form (mass in sculpture), space, light and texture.

**COMPOSITION** is the particular combination of or lack of shapes, forms, colors, lines, light and texture. What shapes are present? How are they arranged? Are there verticals or horizontals? Is it idealized or distorted? What does the size and shape of the work suggest?

**BALANCE** can be symmetrical or asymmetrical. Symmetrical works can make one feel calm; asymmetrical can indicate tension, or movement. Does it seem to be equal on both sides? All sides? Is it equally balanced? Is it precariously balanced? Is it bursting out of its boundaries? Is some part of it emphasized?

**SPACE** can be evaluated in a picture plane or in a sculpture, using similar questions. Is it flat, so that one concentrates on the surface? Some works have depth, others are transparent. Is there an illusion of depth? Are there overlapping lines or forms? Space can also be symbolic. Does the eye travel erratically? Slowly? Progressively? How is scale or relative size expressed in the work?

**GEOMETRY** is used by artists in representational works as well as abstract works. Certain forms, such as circles, triangles or squares, are often the foundation of the artist's design, and give the work structure. Irregular

shapes can imply discord, excitement or tension. Regular geometric shapes can imply order or stability. However, color and arrangement may make quiet shapes come alive, or lend calm to irregular shapes. Texture, size and repetition can affect how the work is viewed. What shapes are dominant? Are they biomorphic, overlapping or repeated?

**LINES** can create patterns. Are they rhythmic? Do they suggest movement? Are they thick, thin, ragged, smooth, broken or controlled? What does this suggest?

**COLOR** can help achieve balance, create an illusion of depth, emphasize or animate parts of the composition. Colors also have symbolic meanings in certain cultures. Primary colors (red, blue and yellow) are viewed as strong, vibrant, hot or cold. Tones (or shades of color, lighter or darker) may be called warm, cool, muted or subtle. Colors react to other colors and to light. Blocks of color, or strokes and layers of color, produce different kinds of responses.

Is color important in this work? What kinds of colors are used? Where? Are there dominant colors? Are they repeated? Do they lead the eye in any particular direction? Would the work be different if the colors were different? Are there any associations or symbolic uses of color?

**LIGHT** emphasizes and helps create space, or animates part of a composition. It may also have symbolic value. Are cast shadows created by lighting a piece of sculpture? Are they dark? Opaque?

**TECHNIQUE** is the way an artist handles materials, how the work is finished: smooth, textured, varnished, etc. Smooth, highly finished works make the hand of the artist disappear. Rough, or seemingly careless, finish reminds us that we are looking at art made by some human hand.

**INTERPRETATION** is the attempt to consciously speculate upon the meaning of a work. It can be based upon the physical evidence, analysis and knowledge of art history and historical context, and what informs the mindset of an era.

What does the work mean? What is implied by all of the various elements and how they are put together? Was the initial intuitive response valid or has formal analysis altered the feelings? Is there something undefinable about the work?

**EVALUATION** The formal analysis is only one type of analysis and does not tell you all you may need to know about a work of art. There is biographical material about the artist, the larger context of his or her place in the art world, or place as part of a movement. The social and cultural history of the place and time in which the art was made is vital.

There are questions of aesthetics or the nature of art and beauty. What is art, what is truth, etc. The issue of the relevance of taste or originality is disputed today.

**JUDGMENT** about a work of art should be based upon an informed opinion. Judgment may have very little to do with personal preference. It is a carefully considered conclusion as to the success of a work of art, based on one's perception of what the artist intended and whether or not he or she succeeded. As a viewer, you complete the circle of creation. An artist creates, the work is a finished piece, and art is communication.

## NOTES