

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

September 23, 2009

Abstraction in the Public Sphere: New Approaches

A Symposium in Celebration of George Rickey

September 25 and 26, 2009

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

Decorative Arts Gallery, Snite Museum of Art

8:30–9:15 a.m.

coffee

information table

Annenberg Auditorium, lower level, Snite Museum of Art

9:15–9:30 a.m. **Welcome and Introduction of Dr. Rosenthal**

Charles Loving, Director and Curator, George Rickey Sculpture Archive

Snite Museum of Art

9:30–10:30 a.m. **Keynote Address** (45 minutes presentation, 15 minutes for questions)

“Generations of George”

Nan Rosenthal

Rickey Scholar and Emeritus Senior Curator of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art and Emeritus Curator of 20th-century Art at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Nan Rosenthal retired last year from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she curated exhibitions of the work of Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Terry Winters, Anselm Kiefer, and for the Met’s Roof, shows of the sculpture of Ellsworth Kelly, David Smith, Joel Shapiro, Roy Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. Prior to the Metropolitan, she was Curator of Twentieth-Century Art at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, where she mounted a Johns drawings retrospective and an exhibition of the Raymond and Patsy Nasher Sculpture Collection. Before that she was Professor of Art History at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She has also been a visiting professor at Princeton, the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, and Columbia.

Her book on George Rickey was published by Harry N. Abrams in 1977. She has collaborated on three facsimile reconstructions of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy’s Light Machine of 1930. She has also published extensively on the French artist Yves Klein, subject of her Harvard doctoral dissertation.

10:30–10:45 a.m. Break

10:45–12:00 Session 1 – George Rickey and Modern Art

Introduction, Joseph Becherer, Chief Curator and Vice President

Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Joseph Antenucci Becherer is Chief Curator and Vice President at Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In addition, Joe is Professor of Art History at Aquinas College. He has organized recent exhibitions of Goldsworthy, di Suvero, Moore, Segal, Hunt, Rodin, Abakanowicz, Klinge, Oldenburg and van Bruggen and Plensa.

10:55 to 11:15 a.m.

“Concept and Creation of Motion in the Sculpture of George Rickey”

Jens Zorn, Professor of Physics

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Rickey understood that motion draws our attention; he knew that complexity in motion sustains our interest; his work shows that recognizing patterns in that motion provides us with aesthetic satisfactions. We’ll explore the nature and physical principles of those motions and demonstrate the methods that Rickey used to achieve them.

Jens Zorn, Professor of Physics at the University of Michigan, is active in making sculpture that commemorates scientific achievement. His works on permanent, public display include sculptures at MIT, the University of Nevada, the National Autonomous University in Mexico City, and four at the University of Michigan.

11:15 to 11:35 a.m.

“Passages of Light and Time: George Rickey’s Life in Motion”

Shannon Kephart

Kephart will share insights from the essay that she prepared for the Snite Museum of Art's recently-published catalog of its George Rickey Sculpture Archive-- *Passages of Light and Time: George Rickey's Life in Motion*. A desire to discover and display movement mapped Rickey's life, both through his artistic pursuits and his travels. This talk will highlight Rickey's commitment to "movement itself" by discussing the development of his sculptural work alongside his itinerant life, with each new place captivating his mind and illuminating his sculptures. (Symposium attendees will receive a complimentary copy of the publication.)

Kephart holds an M.A. in art history from the University of Notre Dame.

11:35 to 12:00

Response, questions and answers: Philip Rickey

12:00–1:45 p.m. **Lunch Break**

Audience members will be given a list of area food vendors for lunch on their own

1:45–2:50 p.m. **Session Two - Issues in Postwar American Modernism**

Introduction, Professor Erika Doss, chair, American Studies, University of Notre Dame

1:55 to 2:15 p.m.

“Women and Postwar Public Art: The Gendered Terms of Abstract Sculpture”

Michele Bogart

Professor of art history

SUNY Stonybrook

This talk explores the shifting institutional worlds of public sculpture in New York City during a period in which George Rickey was active and his art highly visible. It highlights the activities of a group of women who played a significant role in generating these changes, by establishing organizational mechanisms for bringing abstract sculpture to the public’s attention.

Michele H. Bogart, is author of *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930* (1989/1997), recipient of the 1991 Charles C. Eldredge Prize; *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (1995); and *The Politics of Urban Beauty: New York and Its Art Commission* (2006), recipient of the International Society of Planning History’s 2008 prize for the best book in English based on original research. She has been a talking head for several public television documentaries airing in the US and Europe. From 1999 through 2003 she was Vice President of the Art Commission of the City of New York, the City’s design review agency and is presently Vice President of the Fine Arts Federation of New York.

2:15 to 2:35 p.m.

“Sculpture in Environment and Urban Renewal in New York City circa 1967”

Amanda Douberley

Ph.D. Candidate, Art History, The University of Texas at Austin

This paper will use *Sculpture in Environment, 1967*, the first city-wide exhibition of outdoor sculpture in New York, as a frame to consider the impact of urban renewal on ideas about public abstract sculpture.

Amanda Douberly is a Ph.D. candidate in Art History at the University of Texas at Austin. She is currently working on her dissertation, “The Corporate Model: Sculpture, Architecture, and the American City, 1946-1975” as a predoctoral fellow at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.

2:35 to 2:50 p.m.

Questions and answers

2:50 to 3 p.m. Break

3:00-4:30 p.m. **Session Three – Kinetic art Then and Now**
Introduction, Elyse Speaks

3:10 to 3:30 p.m.

“The Environmental Conditions of Kineticism”

Larry Busbea, Assistant Professor
University of Arizona

The paper will trace the idea of architectural and urban integration in the Optical, kinetic, and participatory art of the 1960s. In both Europe and the United States, artists like Julio Le Parc, Gianni Colombo, Len Lye, and theorists like Willoughby Sharp and Frank Popper sought to resuscitate the old idea of the *gesamtkunstwerk* (a term describing the cooperation of several arts in a single expressive aim).

Larry Busbea is Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Arizona. His research focuses on both normative and exemplary aesthetic practices in Post-World War II Europe and the United States with special emphasis on the intersections of art, architecture, and design. His book, *Topologies: The Urban Utopia in France, 1960-1970* was published in 2007 by MIT Press.

3:30 to 3:50 p.m.

“Abstract Publics, Mobile Publics: Openings to Art and Politics”

Jennifer Geigel Mikulay, Assistant Professor of Visual Culture
Herron School of Art and Design/IUPUI

Revisiting public reception of Alexander Calder’s *La Grande Vitesse* (1969), the first NEA-funded public art work, this paper develops ideas about the appeal of abstraction and motion across the sculpture’s lifespan. The paper also makes observations about how monumental abstract sculptures insert openings to imagine and form mobile publics.

Jennifer Geigel Mikulay is assistant professor of visual culture at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. She holds a joint appointment in museum studies and fine arts as part of IUPUI’s public scholars of civic engagement initiative. Her research centers on contemporary public art and civic culture.

3:50 to 4:10 p.m.

“Kinetic in Nature: Moving from George Rickey to Susumu Shingu to Olafur Eliasson”

Mary Caroline Simpson, Assistant Professor
Eastern Illinois University

Shingu’s 2001 traveling caravan of wind-activated sculptures gathered

meteorological data to generate environmental dialogue. Controlling and simulating natural phenomenon through electricity, Eliasson's allegedly eco-friendly waterfall spectacle generated NYC tourism in 2008. Can either be reconciled with Rickey's belief that true kinetic art relies on environmental conditions and has "no didactic purpose?"

Dr. Simpson (Ph.D., Indiana University 2001) is an Assistant Professor of Art History at Eastern Illinois University whose research focuses on female artists, critics, curators, gallery owners, and collectors active in Chicago between 1945 and 1970 *and* artistic responses to natural phenomenon and environmentalism in American art.

4:10 to 4:30 p.m.
Questions and answers

4:30–4:45 p.m. Break

4:45–5:00 p.m. **Keynote Address Introduction**
Charles Loving, Director and Curator, George Rickey Sculpture Archive
Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame

5:00–6:00 p.m. **"City as Living Laboratory"**
Mary Miss, artist

Mary Miss recently developed initiative entitled the "City as Living Laboratory: Sustainability Made Tangible through the Arts," is a program created to provide a framework for making issues of sustainability compelling to the public. In thinking of the city as a laboratory, Miss envisions a collaborative process amongst planners, scientists, engineers and the community, where artists and designers can help make a city's sustainability plans tangible to its citizens.

Mary Miss has reshaped the boundaries between sculpture, architecture, landscape design, and installation art by articulating a vision for the public sphere where it is possible for an artist to address the issues of our time. Trained as a sculptor, her work creates situations that emphasize a site's history, ecology, and aspects of the environment that often go unnoticed. Miss recently completed a project in Delhi, India and is currently working with the Indianapolis Museum of Art on a project focusing on the White River.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2009

Decorative Arts Gallery, Snite Museum of Art

9:30–10:15 a.m.
coffee
information table

Annenberg Auditorium, lower level, Snite Museum of Art

10:15–12:00 Session Four – Public Places, Public art

Introduction, Professor Erika Doss, chair, American Studies, University of Notre Dame

10:30 to 10:50 a.m.

“Art in Public Places: The Transformation of a Paradigm”

Dr. Harriet F. Senie, Director of Museum Studies, Professor of Art History,
The City College, CUNY, NYC

What was once called art in public places is now routinely called public art, as is a wide range of work with distinct intentions and formal solutions. The transformation of this singular paradigm into a composite category has complicated not only our expectations and understanding of “public,” but also the development of useful critical standards for the field.

Harriet F. Senie is director of museum studies and professor of art history at The City College and the CUNY Graduate Center. She is author of *The Tilted Arc Controversy: Dangerous Precedent?* (2002) and *Contemporary Public Sculpture: Tradition, Transformation and Controversy* (1992); and co-editor of *Critical Issues in Public Art* (1992; 1998). In 1987 she curated *George Rickey: Projects for Public Sculpture* for the Neuberger Museum at SUNY Purchase. Recently she co-founded Public Art Dialogue and is co-editor of its journal.

10:50 to 11:10 a.m.

"From Bangor to Honolulu, Fairbanks to St. Croix: Abstract Sculpture
from the Federal Government"

Jennifer Gibson, Office of the Chief Architect (PMDD)
Design Excellence and the Arts
General Services Administration, Washington, DC

Of the over 450 sculptures installed in federal buildings, the abstract works have prompted the greatest outcry. Today some of those works are beloved, others continue to provoke ire. Policies and procedures address the government’s responsibility to protect and preserve these works and now are particularly important as GSA begins a major effort to renovate and “green” its modern-era buildings.

As manager of the U.S. General Services Administration Fine Arts Collection, Jennifer Gibson is responsible for artworks installed in federal buildings throughout the country. She was previously a project director with GSA’s Art in Architecture Program. She has an M.A. and a Ph.D. in art history from the University of Virginia.

11:10 to 11:30 a.m.

“Type A’s Team Building (Align): A Case Study for 21st Century Public Art at the Indianapolis Museum of Art”

Lisa D. Freiman, Senior Curator of Contemporary Art
Director, 100 Acres: Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park
Indianapolis Museum of Art

This paper offers one response to the question of how today’s artists are expanding the notion of abstract public sculpture and its audience. In late 2006, the IMA invited the New York-based artist collective Type A to contribute to its developing sculpture park, *100 Acres*. *Team Building (Align)* will consist of two large metal rings suspended from trees, one above the other, oriented so that their two shadows become one at a specific moment in time keyed to the earth’s rotation in relation to the sun and the universe.

Lisa D. Freiman is chair of the Department of Contemporary Art at the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA). She also serves as director of the IMA's 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, which will open in June 2010. Prior to joining the IMA, Freiman worked as assistant professor of art history at the University of Georgia, Athens, and served in the curatorial department of the Institute of Contemporary

Art, Boston.

11:30 to noon

Response, questions and answers, Maxwell L. Anderson
The Melvin & Bren Simon Director and CEO
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana

12:00 to 12:10 p.m. **Closing Remarks**

Charles R. Loving, Director and Curator, George Rickey Sculpture Archive
Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame

Participants are encouraged to attend the Art Beat festivities that will take place in downtown South Bend.