

Arts & Entertainment

A weekly guide to music, theater, art, movies and more, edited by Rebecca Wallace



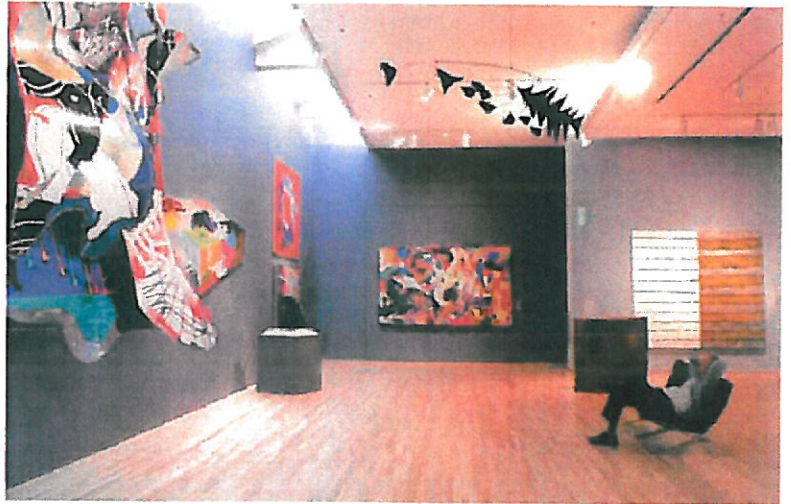
Featured in the revamped gallery are, clockwise from left: the eerily realistic sculpture "Slab Man" (with museum volunteer Barbara Bloom); a breezy area of abstract works; the Janet Fish still life "Goldfish and Autumn Leaves"; and the cartoonish — but actually 3-D — John Cederquist sculpture "Space Age Wave Machine."

The gallery renovation could not be complete without Dave.

Amid the new acquisitions, freshly painted walls and general reorganization of the contemporary gallery at the Cantor Arts Center, Dave is back, standing just where he did before. He leans against the wall on a vinyl resin-Fiberglas hand. His elbows are dirty. He's probably the most popular dirty-elbowed guy around.

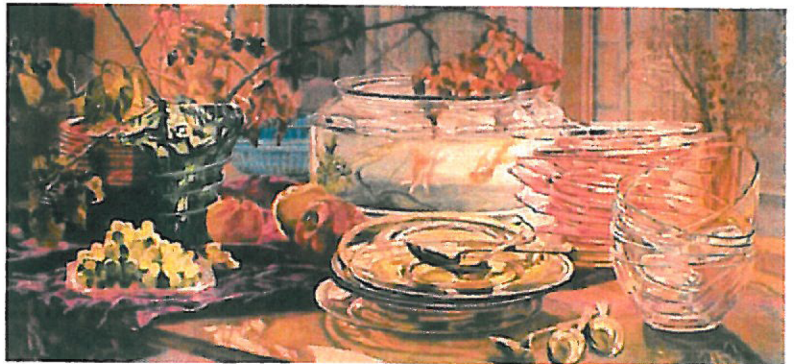
Though eerily realistic, Dave is a 1970s sculpture by the late artist Duane Hanson, dressed like a cement worker with tools and boots. His real name is "Slab Man," but because his shirt has a "David" nametag, folks at the Stanford University museum call him Dave. Think working-class Michelangelo.

Dave had been off display for a (continued on next page)

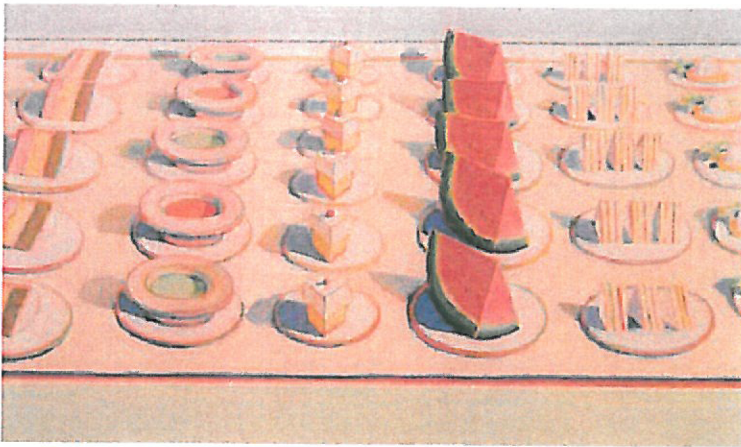


CONTEMPORARY FLAIR

New colors and new acquisitions spruce up Cantor museum's contemporary gallery



by Rebecca Wallace
photographs by Veronica Weber



The remodeled gallery contains not only new acquisitions but also long-time museum favorites, such as the painting "Lunch Table" by Wayne Thiebaud.

Cantor

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while, but when the contemporary gallery reopened on Dec. 15, he was back drawing visitors again.

"It's like seeing an old friend," a man says on a recent afternoon.

Curator Hilarie Faberman pauses in the midst of giving a reporter a gallery tour. Dave, she confesses, has been off having a little work done. A while back, a museum security guard was bending to tie her shoe and noticed that Dave's wrist had split. He was taken away for repairs (and got a new watch in the process).

Faberman grins. "He still looks as groggy as he did before, but he's got a great wrist."

Faberman, the curator of modern and contemporary art at the Cantor, is clearly pleased not only with the sculpture but with the whole gallery's new look. Ever since the museum reopened in 1999, after shuttering due to the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, Cantor officials have been slowly renovating each gallery, she said. "We try every year to redo one of the big galleries."

Part of revamping the contemporary sector was replacing the whites and grays of the walls. Foggy blues and pale greens now enliven the space without overshadowing the colorful art. Movable wall sections have been placed here and there, creating new corners for various styles of artwork. The more fragile works on paper are sheltered from the windows, while the harder sculptures bask in cool winter daylight.

Many California artists are represented in the different sections of art, which include realism, Bay Area figurative art and works from the San Francisco school of abstract expressionism. They include Richard Diebenkorn, Elmer Bischoff and Nathan Oliveira, the longtime Stanford painter, sculptor and printmaker who died last month. There's also op art, which Faberman speculates that no one else in the Bay Area is showing much these days because it's "so retro."

"But I'm telling you, it's coming back!" she says enthusiastically. Behind her, the vivid Liquitex lines of Richard Diebenkorn's 1966 canvas "Equivalent" pop as if to make her point.

This gallery may not be the size of, say, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, but Faberman says

she enjoys the challenge of creating vibrant and unusual exhibits here. "The job of the curator who doesn't have an encyclopedic collection is to make interesting juxtapositions with what you have."

Sometimes those connections are made from across the room. On one side of the gallery, in the realism area, is the still life "Goldfish and Autumn Leaves" by Janet Fish, painted in oil on canvas in 1979-80. The painting is one of the Cantor's newer acquisitions that haven't been displayed before. It glows with lush grapes and apples, huge spoons and decorative leaves on a purple velvety tablecloth, with sunlight shining through a glass vase, bowls and plates.

This is definitely a realistic work, so much a part of the outside world that its painted sunlight seems to change in intensity as the sky outside moves from sunny to rainy. And yet "Goldfish" shares a kinship with the Al Held abstract acrylic painting across the gallery. "Torquod II," a 1985 work, somehow mirrors the composition of the still life, its triangles and other shapes spread carefully across the canvas in the same way the fruit and dishes are, Faberman says. Both also have powerful parallel lines.

"I'm just a dating service for works of art," she jokes.

Another newer acquisition is the unusual dyed wooden 1999 sculpture "Space Age Wave Machine," by California artist John Cederquist. It's one of his striking fine-art furniture pieces, a chest of drawers that appears two-dimensional but really isn't. The drawers actually open, as Faberman stealthily demonstrates. (There are perks to being a curator.)

The chest, which has a cartoonish flair with its strong lines, appears to have pipes that pump out clouds of waves, reflective of the traditional Japanese prints that Cederquist is influenced by, Faberman says.

Another work that is newly on display at the Cantor is Alice Neel's 1976 oil portrait "The Arab." The Robert and Ruth Halperin Foundation made possible the purchase of this painting, something Faberman is clearly grateful for.

"I never thought we'd have an Alice Neel painting. I'm very excited," she says, admiring the portrait of the wild-haired, mustachioed man who she says reminds her of a '70s baseball player. "So much brushwork and so much drama in it."

The museum also added small video screens as part of the renovation. The Neel video features documentary footage of Neel at work, a fistful of brushes in her right hand. Then who should walk into the studio but the wild-haired man himself, sitting down for his portrait. It's an unusual treat to look at a painting and then right next to it see a video of the painting being created.

Faberman looks wistfully at the man in the video. "We don't know who he was."

Some of the videos also allow visitors to hear the artists' own voices. Next to Diebenkorn's painting "Ocean Park No. 94," a familiar piece for Cantor devotees, Diebenkorn can be heard talking about the kind of light he favors in his studio. "The only thing I require in a studio is daylight coming from a direction where I don't get direct light, which really destroys things," he muses.

On this afternoon, other voices in the gallery come from a pair of Cantor volunteer docents, Julia Wall and Brenda Holston, who are examining the works and planning out upcoming tours.

They're both enthusiastic about the renovation. Holston says she enjoys seeing longtime Cantor fixtures, such as the Diebenkorns, in new corners and part of new juxtapositions. "To move something, you see it in a different light," she says.

Wall adds: "The repainting of the gallery has just made it seem lighter and more dynamic. It was a 'wow' moment when I saw it."

And, Holston notes, everyone seems wowed by having dear old Dave back in the gallery. "Everybody missed him." ■

What: The Cantor Arts Center's contemporary gallery (the Friederich Family Gallery) upstairs has been revamped and is showing many newly acquired works.

Where: The museum is off Palm Drive at Museum Way, Stanford University.

When: The exhibit is ongoing; hours are Wednesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Thursdays until 8 p.m. The museum is open New Year's Day.

Cost: Free

Info: Go to museum.stanford.edu or call 650-723-4177. Curator Hilarie Faberman is scheduled to give a free talk in the gallery at 6 p.m. Jan. 27. As part of a related exhibition, "Go Figure," the Cantor is also displaying figurative paintings and other contemporary works in the Oshman Family Rotunda and other areas of the museum, through August.