



Abstraction-Then and Now-Opens at Guild Hall

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by Pat Rogers

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EAST HAMPTON, NY

Two simultaneous exhibitions end posting the history of Abstraction Expressionism open today at Guild Hall Museum. A solo show of paintings by Wimberley captures a current take on the art movement while the group show “Abstraction: Selections from the Guild Hall Museum’s Permanent Collection” presents works by artists who introduced abstraction expressionism in America.

In addition to providing a historical look, the group show demonstrates the variations that abstraction can take, said Christina Mossaides Strassfield, Guild Hall’s museum director and chief curator.

“I think that it’s very exciting,” said Strassfield. “We’re celebrating artists of our area and celebrating the abstract expressionist we were making art out here.”

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“Shattered Color” by Lee Krasner, 1947. Oil on canvas, 21 x 26 inches. Guild Hall Museum Gift of Roseanne and Lawrence Larkin.
Photo courtesy of Guild Hall.

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When culling through selections of the museum’s permanent collection to find the best mix, Strassfield recalled a time when abstraction expressionism was controversial.

“The museum went against the grain to exhibit this work,” she said. “People were pooh-poohing it. We did it back then as representing the art that was happening in our area, and represented through Frank, we are still presenting art that represents our community and getting to see one example of what abstract expressionism looks like today.”

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“F-L-76” by Conrad Marca-Relli, 1976. Canvas collage, 60 x 52.5 inches. Gift of Anita Marca-Relli in memory of her mother and father, Mercedes Parra and Percy Gibson. Photo courtesy of Guild Hall.

Exhibiting artists in “Abstraction: Selections from the Guild Hall Museum Permanent Collection” include Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, Willem de Kooning, Ibram Lassaw, Conrad Marca-Relli, Alfonso Ossorio and others. The works represent a variety of abstract expressionism including color theory, traditional abstraction and more, said Strassfield. Painting, sculpture and collage are all part of the show.



“Caryatids V” by Ibram Lassaw, 1969. Bronze and alloys, 19 x 10 x 10.5 inches. Gift of the artist. Photo courtesy Guild Hall.

Strassfield was inspired to curate an exhibition on first generation abstract expressionists after seeing the work of Frank Wimberley, whose solo show also opens today. Wimberley was the 2010 winner of Best in Show at Guild Hall’s Annual Artists Members Show. As prize, Best in Show winners receive a solo show at Guild Hall Museum.



“Jonathan” by Frank Wimberley, 1987. Acrylic on canvas, 34 x 34 inches. Courtesy of Spanierman Gallery LLC.

Wimberley remarked he was inspired by the art of Pollock and other early abstract expressionists while Strassfield was visiting Wimberley’s Sag Harbor studio to prepare for his solo show, she said. In surveying the work, Strassfield said that she was struck by the intense colors, the distinctive layering and the way the painting’s history become an integral part of the finished work.

“The layers of paint, the under painting, the scrapping and the painting over it draws you in,” she said. “The textures graduate. The paintings are very moving and I think people will feel that.”



“Oilstick” by Frank Wimberley, 2012. Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 inches. Courtesy Guild Hall Museum.



“Stained Impasto” by Frank Wimberley, 2012. Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 inches. Courtesy Guild Hall Museum. Photo by Gary Mamay.

BASIC FACTS: “Abstraction: Selections from the Guild Hall Museum Permanent Collection” and “Frank Wimberley: Winner of the 2010 Annual Guild Hall Artist Member Exhibition” have opening receptions tonight from 5 to 7 p.m. Also opening at the museum are “John Berg” and “Fritz Leddy, Part II.” All four shows remain on view through Jan 6, 2013.

The museum is located at 158 Main St, East Hampton, NY 11937. www.guildhall.org.

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