

# FRIENDS OF ART NEWSLETTER

*Fall 2009*



*Left: Grafton Trout discusses the fine points of his prized Malaysian sculpture with FOA executive director, Tom Rhea.*

*Below: Wayne Craig explains the intricately woven texture of a necklace to former FOA president, Peggy Intons-Peterson.*



## **Collectors Group Debut**

*Collectors meet to share prized objects*

On Sunday, May 17, 2009, the Collectors Group held its first open reception in the Fine Arts Library from 12:30 to 2 pm before public hours. Those attending were asked to bring a representative example from their collections and to speak briefly about its significance. With about eleven people in attendance, the group size was optimal for viewing objects and for the time allotted for speaking. The selected objects covered a good range from weavings and prints to comic books and intricate Malaysian carvings.

Between 1.30-2 pm guests convened in the lobby for breakfast pastries and coffee and informal socializing in the library exhibition foyer. FOA Collectors Group members were pleasantly surprised with the turnout. With increased advertising for future events we expect increased attendance. A full calendar of Collectors Group events may be found on page 6 of this newsletter. Check the Events tab of our website for updates at [www.fa.indiana.edu/foart](http://www.fa.indiana.edu/foart).



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## New Member Special Offer

Become a student member of Friends of Art for \$20.00, and you'll receive 10% off your purchases for an entire year—including textbooks and special orders!\* In addition, you will receive information about Friends of Art events and trips. And, if you join by September 11th, you'll receive a coupon for 25% off any regularly priced in-stock artbook!

\*Sorry! does not include food. Sale items receive an additional 5% discount.

## Letter from the President

*FOA President, Erika Dowell*

This edition of the newsletter is full of great events planned for the fall. I especially encourage members to sign up for the Chicago trip. It includes some very special opportunities to learn more about art collecting with a visit to several westside art galleries and a preview at the Hindman Auction House. A special thanks is due to the IU Art Museum's Nan Brewer who was instrumental in organizing this out-of-the-ordinary Chicago trip.

In less glamorous, but still very important news: The Friends of Art Board will meet for a strategic planning retreat on September 26. If any member would like to contribute questions or programming ideas for the Board to consider, please email foart@indiana.edu before September 22. We welcome your comments.

Erika Dowell

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# FOA Travel

## Chicago: Gallery Walk with Thomas Robertello

Friday, October 30 – Sunday, November 1, 2009

**3 Days, 2 Nights in Chicago, only \$370 per person, includes:**

- Round trip ground transport to and from Chicago
- 2 night stay at Palmer House Hilton Hotel (double occupancy, add \$180 for single supplement), one block from the Art Institute
- Guided walking tour of the west side gallery district, and an auction preview at the Hindman Auction House
- Admission to the Art Institute of Chicago, including the spectacular, newly-opened Modern wing by Renzo Piano

Note: The Chicago trip will require a 25 person minimum. Our first penalty deadline for hotel is on September 15. Please indicate your intent to travel by this date. Full payment is due by September 30. Details are subject to change. Please check our website for updates: [www.fa.indiana.edu/foart](http://www.fa.indiana.edu/foart).



*"The light-filled galleries show the Art Institute's marvelous collections of postwar and contemporary art in their full glory, including many works that have been buried in storage for decades. Most of all, the addition manages to weave the various strands of Chicago's rich architectural history into a cohesive vision, one that is made more beautiful by its remarkable fragility." Nicolai Ourousoff in the New York Times, May 13, 2009*  
Photo: Michelle Litvin for The New York Times

This fall, the Friends of Art will take a new approach to their usual trip to Chicago. We have asked Thomas Robertello, owner of the Robertello

Gallery, to act as guide and host for a walk through the gallery district on Chicago's near west side. He will take us for a unique, behind the scenes look at the operations of several contemporary art galleries. We will meet the owners and hear them discuss their operations, preparing for exhibitions, selecting, keeping and promoting new artists, and surviving in a perilous economic environment. This initiative has been designed around the interests of the new Friends of Art Collectors Group, exploring how contemporary collectors build their collections.

As a follow-up on Saturday morning, we have arranged for an auction preview at the noted Hindman Auction House on West Lake Street. We will receive a tour from auction assistant Kate Pettinati who will discuss the complex art of bidding while viewing some of the objects to be sold at the Marketplace auction taking place the following day. Those interested may attend the actual auction beginning at 1 pm on Sunday before our group departs at 3:30. These activities are only a small part of the exciting calendar of events planned for the new Collectors Group. Be sure to check our website for updates and look for a full listing elsewhere in this newsletter.

### *Modern Wing of the Art Institute*

As in previous years, the Friends of Art group will be staying at the newly remodeled Palmer House Hotel, mere steps away from the Art Institute of Chicago. Work has finally been completed on the highly-anticipated new Modern wing designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Renzo Piano. The Modern Wing provides a new home for the museum's collection of 20th- and 21st-century art. Now a decade in the making, this 264,000 square-foot building makes the Art Institute the second largest art museum in the United States. The building houses the museum's world-renowned collections of modern European painting and sculpture, contemporary art, architecture and design, and photography. The extraordinary scope and quality of these collections are a revelation; each displayed more comprehensively than ever before. The Modern Wing allows the Art Institute to take its rightful place as one of the world's great collections of modern and contemporary art.

*Chicago, continued on Page 7*



# SoFA Gallery

## The Canary Project

September 4 – October 9, 2009

Renowned as innovators in the field of interdisciplinary and activist art, **The Canary Project** produces visual media and artworks about the single issue of climate change. This exhibit brings together works by the principal members of the Canary Project, Edward Morris and Susannah Saylor, and more than a dozen Canary Project artists. Collectively these works explore ways in which the prospect of catastrophic climate change challenges the limits of human comprehension and agency. The exhibition posits that these challenges can be a source of inspiration, melancholic beauty, engagement or defeat.

The show will feature a new installation by Saylor/ Morris that juxtaposes objects that Morris and Saylor selected from various collections at Indiana University, with Saylor's large-scale photographs of landscapes where, according to scientists, impacts of climate change are evident. The interlacing of archival objects and recent photographs represents an extreme collapsing of time and a suggestion of what is at stake in this present moment. Objects on view include material from collections at the Mathers Museum, the Biology Department, the Lilly Library and the Deem herbarium, all at Indiana University.

Other work employed in this exhibit includes an installation by Saylor/ Morris titled *Quartet for the End of Time* that uses poker as a metaphor for negotiation and decision-making; a gallery intervention by Joshua Kit Clayton that will involve conversations with gallery viewers and planned focus groups; and an inaugural Canary Stories audio piece by Amanda Burr.

In conjunction with the exhibition, Saylor and Morris will be teaching a class for the first 8 weeks of fall semester titled *Engagement Art/ Activism: Response and Intervention on Climate Change*.

## Faculty Exhibits

*William Itter Retrospective at the SoFA Gallery opens*

*October 16, 2009*

One of the first paintings William Itter completed upon arriving in Bloomington, Indiana, to teach in 1969 represented a breakthrough. In fact, Itter describes "Snowflake Deco" as his "Rosebud" because of the way the invented forms began to recall for him a distant memory, of traveling through

Radio City Music Hall as a child over Christmas with his grandfather. It was his earliest experience of being overwhelmed by visual forms, in that impressive Art Deco interior. The way the invented forms of the painting took on the emotional weight of the memory was a revelation, he has since been at pains that his inventions should always bear a trace of a lived visual experience. He calls his paintings his souvenirs.

This breakthrough opened the way to the inclusion of other visual memories, such as the rising moon/setting sun passages in "Mesa" (1973) or the experience of low tide at "Chasm Quay" (1985) in the south of England that found him photographing the incredibly corrugated rock formations exposed by the receding water. The viewers of Itter's densely articulated paintings might be skeptical of how much nature has inspired them, in spite of the rich desert colors and the sunset light that suffuses the late watercolors. In his early work, he favored a more artificial and theatrical light, a more architectural or industrial form, and a hard, metallic sheen to his color transitions, all of these qualities seen in "Fugue in Red and Grey" from 1975.

The tangle of overlapping, intersecting pipes never quite sorts itself out in a rational way, as they would in a Sheeler painting. As always in Itter's work, behind and through all the forms, we see the effect of light but never the actual source. But a key aspect of the work was brought to light in 2004 by a request from a choreographer at IU, Laura Poole, who wished to use a version of the painting as a backdrop to a theatrical dance piece. Its use as a theatrical backdrop seems an obvious notion for so much of the work of this period. In all the cascading layers of "Mesa" don't we sense the low illusionist lighting and shallow space separating the flats and scrimms of a stage set? But more integral to Itter's work (and his career) is the intuition of an articulated space that one wishes to move through.

This crucial insight to the career of Itter's art can be explored through three constants in his life: his teaching, his collecting and his drawing. As early as his first teaching post in Pittsburgh, Itter was haunting the junk stores and antique shops of the city, making incredible finds. He has always valued highly the nuances of beautiful handwork, Mission furniture, Navajo weaving, oriental rugs, and African cooking vessels, but he has the strongest affinity for form that serves a function: beautiful, intelligent making that serves a utility. His love for Navajo blankets serves as a parable for all his pictorial interests, as he followed the paradox of image, iconography and sculpture that existed simultaneously in the blanket. Primarily sculp-



tural as a beautiful weaving, the blanket bore an image of a complex and clever treatment of geometric patterns, thus pictorial, with unfinished squares on the edges that would become complete and whole when drawn around the body and worn, thus again becoming sculptural.

The fullest treatment of these ideas can be seen in the constant, almost relentless, pursuit of form in his drawings. Very simple ideas, like curved lines meeting straight, take on a merciless elaboration that stretches over months and years. Cubes rotated and stepped down in size, meeting a set of arches. Cubes pierced and slotted with missing parts matched to reciprocal positives. These forms might be done in outline, then carefully shaded with a light from underneath or behind. In their elaborations, new, unexpected patterns would emerge, both flat and dimensional. Itter said, "I never thought of line as an outline, but as a contour to shape the page, to create a function for the line."

The constant challenge was to create a coherent space for the forms to exist in, and then to apply a color that would articulate that space. Shortly after arriving in Bloomington, Indiana, Itter embarked on a long summer and fall of setting up and drawing elaborate still lifes made of an odd variety of geometric scraps he found discarded in the woodshop. The painstaking dispositions of these forms in space were treated in careful outline, rich graphite shading and color casein, always with an eye to the paradoxical alignments that would cancel or contradict the spatial description, snapping the penetration of space back to the surface of the picture plane. The addition of color allowed for an exponential increase in complexity.

No matter how complex his ideas about painting, Itter felt challenged to condense these ideas to their essence when formulating assignments for his fundamentals class. Itter said, "When students would ask what preparation they'd need to take my drawing class, I'd tell them they needed color and sculpture. When they would ask what they needed in order to take color, I'd tell them drawing and sculpture," and so on. In practice, each area is so embedded in the other as to make the distinctions difficult. "In the simplest terms," Itter said, "with drawing, the edge or contour is used to create the



*William Itter, Mesa, 1973, oil, 80" x 86"*

surface. With color, you start in the midst of the surface, moving outward to create the edge."

We return again to the role of nature in Itter's work. As vast as the word is, nature has a kaleidoscope of aspects that apply here. There is the mathematical distillation of measure and proportion, the Golden Section. On a chemical or molecular level, there is a treatment of bilateral symmetry, right- and left-handedness. In the most ephemeral way, there is the iron logic of light as it reveals

and shapes form with color, but also allows for the puzzles of shadows, illusions and camouflage.

In moving across the energetic surface of an early painting like "Mesa," we see the setting sun change into the rising moon. The pyramids of Egypt change into mountain peaks. Flat-topped mesas become city spires. And beyond any description of content, we see the positive become negative, atmospheric and linear perspective, described in a shifting chromatics. The Renaissance window is slammed shut in a very modern way. In short, all the restless transformations, the growing and the dying of life. The mind, the body and the heart are all equally implicated, in their diverging and contradictory ways, in the full spectrum of nature.

## Recognition

### *Becky Hrisomalos Receives Meier Award*

The IU Art Museum is happy to announce Becky Hrisomalos as the recipient of the Patti and Joel Meier Docent Award for 2009–2010. This annual award was created to honor the Meiers' dedication to museum education by recognizing a docent for his/her outstanding contributions to the museum's tour guide program. About forty-five docents voted this year on the one peer they felt best exemplified the qualities of commitment, attitude, leadership and skill.

Edward Maxedon, the museum's curator of education, states, "Becky is a paragon of object-based, inquiry-driven docenting. She is equally proficient giving tours to college students, adults and kids of all ages. Becky was one of the first docents to be recruited and trained to give tours for people with low vision. Her dedication and support over the years have been invaluable to all of us in the program."



# IU Art Museum

## Form and Surface: African Ceramics, Baskets, and Textiles from the William Itter Collection

September 26 – December 13, 2009

The transformation of modest materials into extraordinary objects is the subject of *Form and Surface: African Ceramics, Baskets and Textiles from the William Itter Collection*, opening on September 26 in the museum's Special Exhibitions Gallery. The exhibition and its accompanying publication feature clay vessels brought together by painter and retired IU Hope School of Fine Arts faculty member William Itter, who has assembled one of the largest and finest collections of African ceramics in the country. Itter's smaller, but equally beautiful collections of baskets and textiles complement the pottery by extending the dialogue between form and decoration that makes these crafts so appealing. Well over one hundred examples of pots, baskets and textiles from all over sub-Saharan Africa will be on display.

Visitors to the exhibition will quickly see what drew Itter to African ceramics, which he began collecting in 1990. Inventive forms and their imaginative surface embellishments create visually exciting objects that display technical mastery of a medium as well as sophisticated understanding of the interrelationship of formal elements – those building blocks used by artists working in all media throughout the world. The skill and care devoted to the creation of these vessels is all the more remarkable in light of their mundane uses, because most were made for the transport, storage, preparation, or serving of food, water, or beverages such as beer. – Diane Pelrine, Class of 1949 Curator of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas

*Special related event for Collectors Group on Sunday,  
November 8*

A special Collectors Group event will bring together William Itter and gallery owner Doug Dawson, one of the premiere dealers of African art in the country. The two will discuss the qualities of African textiles, basketry and ceramics that guided Itter in building his extraordinary collection of African objects. The event takes place in the IU Art Museum conference room from 1:30 to 3 pm. Event is free but requires pre-registration by calling 855-1036 or 855-5300. Group size limited to 30.

## Schedule of Events for Friends of Art Collectors Group

2009 – 2010

- **September 23, 2009** 7 to 8:30 pm in Room 1C at the Monroe County Public Library: Douglas Sanders, a professional art conservator with 15 years' experience and currently employed by Indiana University, Bloomington, will present a talk "Preserving your Personal Collections." There is no fee for attendance. The lecture will provide general education for ensuring long life to private collections of artwork, memorabilia and artifacts. Contact lists of regional conservation professionals as well as suppliers of storage and display materials will be provided. Participants may bring in small, specific items for guidance and advice, time allowing.
- **September 26, 2009** William Itter's collection of African artifacts opens at IUAM
- **Sunday, November 8, 2009** William Itter and gallery owner Doug Dawson, one of the premiere dealers of African art in the country, will discuss the qualities of African textiles, basketry and ceramics that guided Itter in building his extraordinary collection of African objects. The event takes place in the IU Art Museum conference room from 1:30 to 3 pm. Event is free but requires pre-registration by calling 855-1036 or 855-5300.
- **Mid-October 2009** Meet and Greet for Collectors Group. Location to be announced.
- **October 30 – November 1, 2009** Friends of Art bus trip to Chicago, featuring exploration of Gallery district, hosted by Thomas Robertello. Hindman Auction house will offer a preview of their annual Marketplace auction on Saturday, and travelers may attend the auction on Sunday.
- **January 13, 2010** Betsy Stirratt hosts talk on collecting student and faculty artwork at SoFA Gallery
- **January 2010** Fine Arts Faculty Show opens
- **Saturday March 6, 2010** Friends of Art will tour three/ four faculty studios. Participants and details will be announced.
- **April 2010** Friends of Art bus trip to Chicago to view "Matisse and the Methods of Modern Construction" which runs March 20 – June 6, 2010. Gallery walks or other collecting activities (such as SoFA show)



Crowned by Renzo Piano's ingenious "flying carpet," a steel roof structure over skylights that illuminates the galleries with filtered natural light, the third-floor installation celebrates the depth and breadth of the collection and highlights many works that have recently been treated by conservation or reframed.

The Art Institute's entire modern European collection of paintings and sculptures has been reconsidered in the reinstallation, including several works that date to the original Armory Show and other landmark exhibitions in the history of the museum and the city. New acquisitions and recent gifts, as well as special loans to celebrate the inauguration of the Modern Wing, are also on view.

## New Board Members Join the Friends of Art

*Mimi Dollinger*

I am an IU graduate, and have lived in Bloomington for the past 21 years, with sabbatical stints in Hong Kong and Japan. A former administrator for both the Girl Scouts of the USA and the American Diabetes Association, I have also volunteered in financial management, fund raising, and publicity for other non-profit organizations. Currently I am the Book Review Editor and a Copy Editor for Business Horizons, the journal of IU's Kelley School of Business. I have a special interest in Asian art, and Japanese art in particular.

*John Wilson*

I attended the University of Kansas, graduating in 1974 with honors, receiving the Who's Who in American Universities representing the School of Education for the University of Kansas and a Bachelor of Arts in Education degree. I returned to the University of Kansas in 1976 to study for my BFA (received 1977) and continued working toward a MFA until 1978. I moved to Bloomington in the spring of 2007 when I purchased Pygmalion's Art Supplies. I have been involved in the retailing of art materials since 1979 in the position of buyer and manager at various retail establishments in Kansas and Missouri. I am an active professional artist with works in many private and corporate collections as well as several museums in the Midwest. In 1985, I became a member of the Hand Print Press, a group of professional printmakers which is an auxiliary of the University of Missouri-Kansas City, raising funds for lectures, visiting artists, and equipment for the art department.

## Coming Events

*Friends of Art Calendar*

- **September 4, 2009** The Canary Project: Works on Climate Change. Opening reception 7 to 9 pm, includes performance by Joshua Kit Clayton "Focus Softens Circles, preceded by "33 Provocations on Climate Change," a lecture by Edward Morris and Susannah Saylor in Radio/TV 251 at 5:30 pm.
- **September 5 – 6, 2009** Visit the Friends of Art booth at the Fourth Street Festival of the Arts and Crafts.
- **September 23, 2009** Doug Sanders will present a talk on preserving home collections to the FoA Collectors Group at the Monroe County Public Library, Room 1C, 7 – 8:30 pm.
- **September 26, 2009** *Form and Surface: African Ceramics, Baskets, and Textiles from the William Itter Collection*. A major collection of African objects comes to the first floor Special Exhibitions gallery of the IU Art Museum. Also, in the Hexagon Gallery, *Modern and Contemporary Craft from the IUAM: Recent Acquisitions*.
- **October 16, 2009** *William Itter: A retrospective – Paintings and Drawings 1969–2009* opens at the SoFA Gallery. Opening reception from 7 to 9 pm.
- **October 30 – November 1, 2009** Friends of Art bus trip to Chicago to view new modern wing. Visit to several westside art galleries hosted by gallery owner Thomas Robertello, and an auction preview at Hindman Auction. Cost \$370 per person.
- **November 8, 2009** A special Collectors Group event brings together William Itter and gallery owner Doug Dawson, one of the premiere dealers of African art in the country. The two will discuss the qualities of African textiles, basketry and ceramics that guided Itter in building his extraordinary collection of African objects. The event takes place in the IU Art Museum conference room from 1:30 to 3 pm. Event is free but requires pre-registration by calling 855-1036 or 855-5300.
- **November 2009** Friends of Art trip to Indianapolis Museum of Art to view *Sacred Spain: Art and Belief in the Spanish World*.
- **April 2010** Friends of Art bus trip to Chicago to view "Matisse and the Methods of Modern Construction" which runs March 20 – June 6, 2010.

# Reply Form

To join the Friends of Art, renew your membership or to sign up a friend, select a category & return this form with a check made payable to: **Friends of Art/ IU Foundation**. Mail this form to:

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- Yes, I want to visit Chicago for the gallery walk with Thomas Robertello (\$370 per person).
- Renew or begin my membership at the indicated level:
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Your membership entitles you to receive:

- Invitations to IU Art Museum & School of Fine Art events.
- A 10% discount at the Friends of Art Bookshop & IUAM Gift Shop.
- Opportunities to travel at reduced group rate fares.
- Invitations to special events for Friends of Art members.
- Subscription to the Friends of Art Newsletter.

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