

BACKSTAGE PASS



COLLECTING ART IN KANSAS CITY

Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art • September 7–November 4, 2007

Amassing an important permanent collection for future generations is central to the identity and mission of the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art. Since the Museum's debut in 1994, the collection has grown more than four-fold and now numbers nearly one thousand works from the 20th and 21st centuries, including paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, photographs, new media- and installation-based works. Diverse in media, content, and historical significance, the core of the Kemper Museum's holdings is the collection of Museum founders and benefactors Bebe and Crosby Kemper. Longtime philanthropic pillars in the Kansas City community and passionate patrons of the arts, the Kempers have generously demonstrated their commitment to the arts by building a world-class art collection that continues to grow in depth and significance.

In addition to the Kempers, there is a profusion of art collectors in metropolitan Kansas City who take responsibility and pride in fostering the patronage, understanding, and appreciation of the arts. Their reasons for collecting are as varied as their life experiences and aesthetic predilections. Some are well seasoned and have deep roots in supporting and living with art, while others are just beginning to travel the fulfilling path of building an art collection. Whether young or old, newcomer or connoisseur, these individuals share a thirst for the emotional and spiritual benefits that only art can provide.

To celebrate these collectors and the fruits of their labor, the Kemper Museum presents *Backstage Pass: Collecting Art in Kansas City*. Featuring sixty paintings, sculptures, and photographs, this exhibition pairs artworks from private collections with examples by the same artists represented in the Kemper Museum's permanent collection. As a result, museumgoers may experience two remarkable works by nationally and internationally known artists and see important works normally housed in private homes throughout the city.

Backstage Pass showcases noteworthy paintings by prominent American artists Richard Estes, Helen Frankenthaler, Joan Mitchell, and Frank Stella, highlighting the level of commitment and intensity shared by many area collectors. Equally important are the collections that include works

by artists that reside in the Kansas City area, such as Wilbur Niewald, Roger Shimomura, and Michael Sinclair. Portraits by Andy Warhol and Kansas City-based Mike Lyon illustrate the gratifying relationship that often develops between artist and patron—arguably one of the most enjoyable facets of championing living artists.

The great diversity and quality of the featured works are truly a testament to Kansas City's rich history of supporting the visual arts on local, national, and international levels. Early on, key individuals such as Dorry Gates and Susan Evans of the EG Gallery; Ted Coe, former director of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; Myra and Jim Morgan of the Morgan Gallery; Jack and Connie Glenn; and ceramic collectors Lennie and Jerry Berkowitz were instrumental in inspiring budding collectors who went on to develop significant holdings. A second wave of supporters who valiantly encouraged art collecting includes Dick Belger; Byron and Eileen Cohen and their daughter, Toma Wolff of the Byron C. Cohen Gallery for Contemporary Art; collectors and art advocates John and Sharon Hoffman; and gallerists Sherry Leedy and Jan Weiner. Moreover, Kansas City is fortunate to have many collectors who also champion other aspects of the arts, for example David Hughes, who leads the Charlotte Street Foundation and Urban Culture Project; Brad and Linda Nicholson, who bolster Review Studios for artists; and John O'Brien, proprietor of the Dolphin Gallery and a pioneer of the Crossroads Arts District.

In direct correlation with *Backstage Pass*, the Kemper Museum fosters education and interest in art collecting through its Collectors Forum program. By offering organized visits to artists' studios, commercial galleries, exclusive private collections, and trips to major art fairs, the Collectors Forum provides a platform for members to discuss how to begin and/or advance their interest in and passion for collecting art. Through the Collectors Forum and the special exhibition *Backstage Pass*, the Museum shares in Kansas City's history and collective strides toward encouraging and empowering those open to welcoming the many joys of collecting art into their hearts and homes.

Rachael Blackburn Cozad
Director

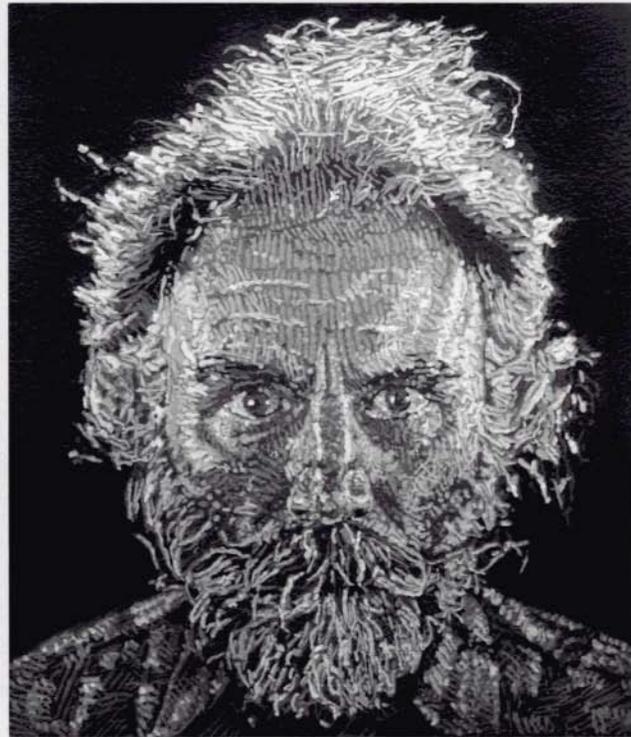
Christopher Cook
Curator



By devoting a large portion of our collecting to local art, we get to enjoy having an impact on artists in our community. Those personal relationships have made our entire collection more rewarding and meaningful.



—Linda and Brad Nicholson



Portraits of Linda and Brad Nicholson, Ellen and Jerry Wolf, and Eileen and Byron Cohen by Bruce Mathews.
above: Chuck Close, *Lucas Paper/Pulp*, 2006; stenciled handmade paper print in nine colors, 48 x 40 inches (image/sheet), edition of 50; Published by Pace Editions Inc., Collection of Melissa and Matthew Rubel
left: Roger Shimomura, *Eternal Foreigner*, 2005; acrylic on canvas, 71 1/2 x 24 inches; Collection of Linda and Brad Nicholson, photo: Dan Wayne

Art has enriched our lives. It just makes us happy and lifts our spirits, so collecting has been great fun and very joyful. We have enjoyed getting to know all the artists and dealers we work with. Each new work of art we collect is a whole new learning experience.

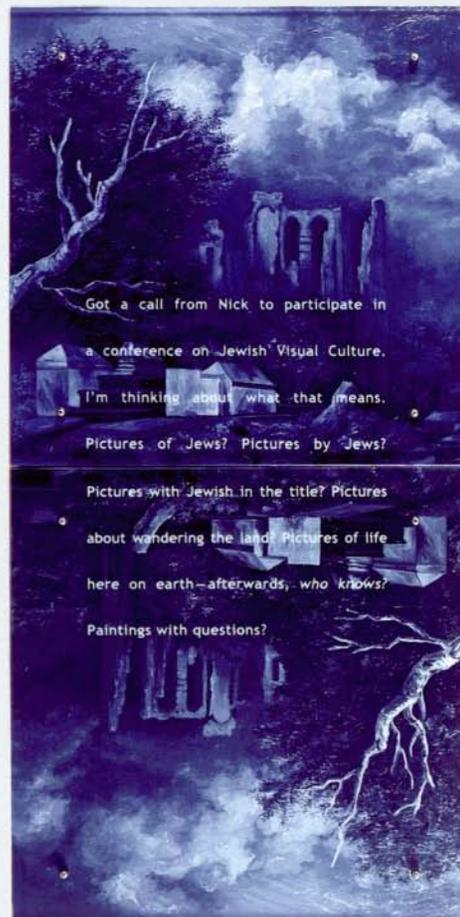
—Ellen and Jerry Wolf



Without doubt, the best part of collecting has been knowing and spending time with the artists we collect and that we are interested in—they have enriched our lives and our children's lives immeasurably. We also have

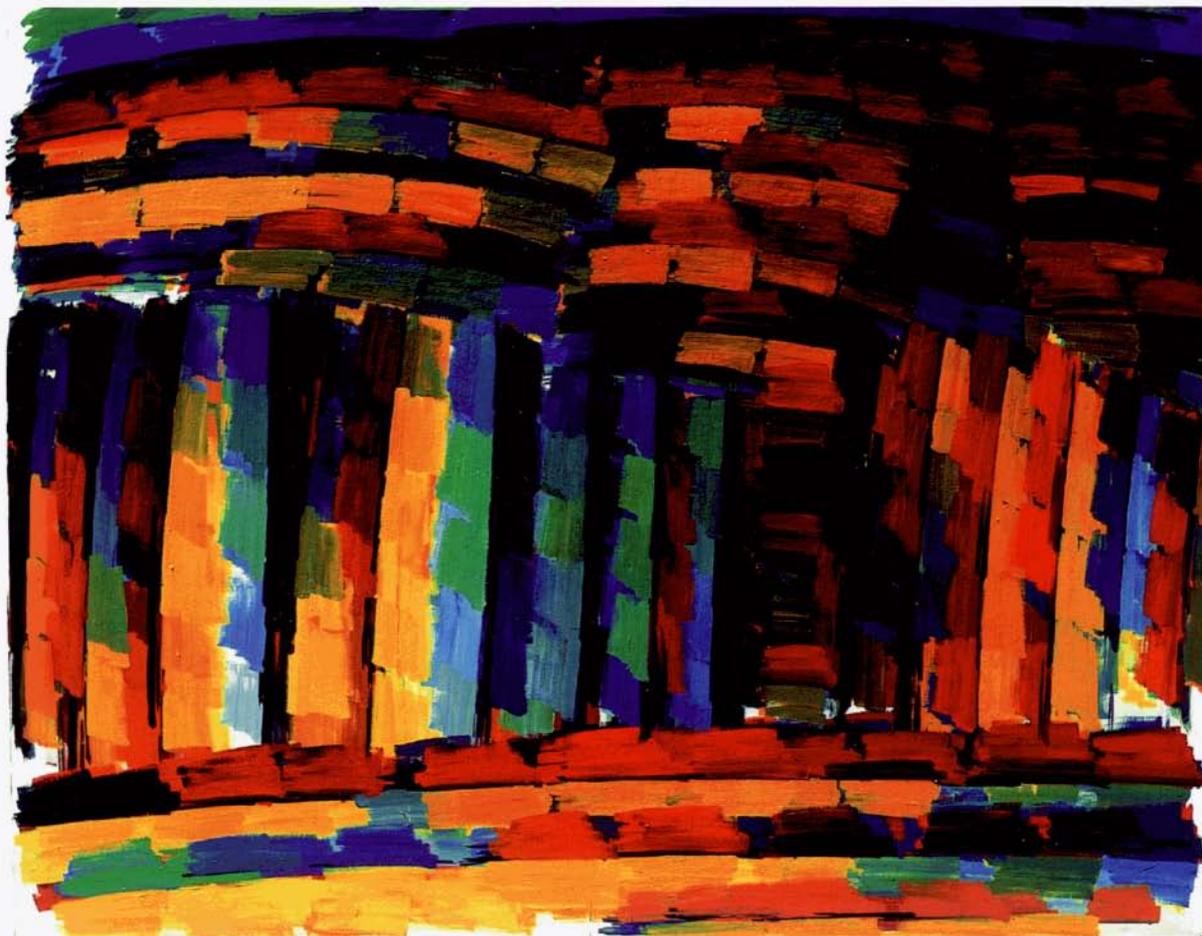
enjoyed knowing and befriending many dealers, collectors, museum directors, and curators all over the country and world. It has been great fun sharing ideas and thoughts and passions. We have spent nearly forty years trying to share this experience with anyone we can motivate!

—Eileen and Byron Cohen



left: Duane Hanson, *Window Washer*, 1983–84; bronze, mixed media, accessories, 71 x 36 x 36 inches; Collection of Gloria and Dick Anderson. photo: E. G. Schempf

above: Ken Aptekar, *Got a call from Nick*, 1999; oil on wood, sandblasted glass, bolts, 60 x 30 inches; Collection of Jane and Josh Sosland



Wilbur Niewald, *Current River II*, 1965; oil on canvas, 54 x 69 inches; Collection of J. Scott Francis

CALLING NEW AND ENTHUSIASTIC COLLECTORS—The Kemper Museum's Collectors Forum for 2008 is currently in development! Join us next spring for an exciting season specifically designed to sharpen your skills in experiencing and collecting contemporary art. Kemper Museum Director Rachael Blackburn Cozad and Curator Christopher Cook will lead a variety of special events, including tours of exclusive private collections and artists' studios, an informative printmaking demonstration, and two unique travel opportunities.

Itineraries will be sent to current Collectors Forum members; prospective members, please call the director's office at 816-753-5784 or email info@kemperart.org to add your name to the list. Collectors Forum is open to all Museum members.

LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

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Jo and Bob Loyd
Cindy and Larry Meeker
Linda and Brad Nicholson
Drs. Antonio and Luz Racela
Melissa and Matthew Rubel
Jane and Josh Sosland
Frank and Helen Wewers
Ellen and Jerry Wolf
Toma and Andy Wolff

Thank You

Special thanks to M&I Wealth Management for sponsoring the members' exhibition preview. Additional thanks to the Bradley W. and Linda J. Nicholson Foundation and an anonymous donor for supporting the exhibition.

The Kemper Museum acknowledges the generous support of Arvin Gottlieb Charitable Foundation, UMB Bank, n.a., Trustee; Hallmark Corporate Foundation; Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation; David Woods Kemper Memorial Foundation; William T. Kemper Foundation—Commerce Bank, Trustee; Missouri Arts Council, a state agency; and Richard J. Stern Foundation for the Arts—Commerce Bank, Trustee. Generous in-kind support is provided by the Kansas City Marriott Country Club Plaza and Midwest Airlines.

front cover: Frank Stella, *Untitled*, 1968;
acrylic on canvas, 55 x 55 inches;
Collection of Pam and Gary Gradinger
photo: Dan Wayne

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of contemporary **art**

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