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Elvehjem Museum of Art

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The Elvehjem Museum of Art *artscene*

University of
Wisconsin-Madison
Volume 5, Number 2



Robert Cumming, *Small Constellation I*, 1987, oil painting.

Small Constellation I of 1987, the Artwork of the Month for April, is the Elvehjem's major acquisition of the year. This large (72 x 116 inches) oil painting, purchased with funds from the Elvehjem Endowment, is by American artist Robert Cumming (born, 1943). Cumming works in a wide variety of media, including photography, sculpture, printmaking, drawing and writing, in addition to painting, a trait that has been traced to the influence of Conceptual art and its emphasis on process and experimentation. His most recent work in several of these media has been marked by a scaling up of their physical size, but his choice and treatment of images has remained fairly constant since the 70s. This consists of taking commonplace objects—chairs, saw blades, or, as here, a glass of water—and endowing them with a monumentality which transforms them into a more symbolic context. In this, influences on his work as diverse as Georgia O'Keeffe's "romanticism" and the Dadaist tradition have been cited. At the same time, Cumming has much interest in the signs and symbolism of early cultures, including ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and cosmology. His most recent paintings, like *Small Constellation I*, are framed in a dog-tooth molding which in profile resembles the Egyptian hieroglyph for "water," and is also a time-honored ornamental

motif in architecture. *Small Constellation I* presents a juxtaposition of images—a glass of water with a spoon in it which "sits" on a trompe-l'oeil shelf, partly implied by the shaped canvas that flares out at the bottom, against a deep blue background with striations suggesting deep space; hovering above is a black, connect-the-dots constel-

lation, the lower portion of which resembles the facade of a barn-like structure with two open doors, which is transformed into a Mickey Mouse headdress by two large round ears projecting from it, the open doors becoming eyes. The meaning behind this combination of an everyday object ele-

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See calendar listings for tours, lectures, concerts and opening dates of exhibitions.

NEW AT THE ELVEHJEM

African Sculptures

vated to grand scale and the universalization of an image of pop culture is obscure, and can best be "explained" in the artist's own words: "The (object) personifications of such abstract concepts involving time, the universe, mystery of the past and uncertainty of the future, what becomes of us after death, etc. are at the heart of things (the paintings) here, I think. I like the interchange; the disproportionate match-ups, even things that get lost in the translation; the mixed metaphors, and malapropisms." Another writer has observed that "Cumming's perception of the ordinary as monumental [the glass of water] and the monumental as absurd [the Mickey Mouse constellation] is reminiscent of the fanciful sculptures of Claes Oldenburg."

In May, the Artwork of the Month is actually a group of wooden sculptures from Central Africa (modern-day Zaire). All belong to the Luba-Hemba stylistic tradition which was evolved by tribes living in the vicinity of the Zaire (Congo) River to the west of Lake Tanganyika. These sculptures date to before 1930 (pre-Bembe period), and one to possibly as early as the 1860s or 70s. They all served important ritual functions in the life of a particular family or a whole tribe, and include ancestor figures and several carytid chieftain stools, the latter of which were symbols of the authority of the tribal leader. Ongoing research on the pieces, particularly the scarification patterns and hairstyles of the individual figures, will undoubtedly provide more precise dating and tribal identity for them in the near future. These sculptures were recently acquired through the Laura and Gaird Horsfall Endowment Fund.



Wood sculptures from central Africa (modern-day Zaire).



Richard Bosman, *South Sea Kiss*, 1981, color woodcut. Photograph courtesy Brooke Alexander.

The Elvehjem

EXHIBITIONS

Bosman Prints

The Elvehjem is pleased to exhibit *Prints by Richard Bosman: 1978-1988* which opens May 13 and will run until July 9. The Madison Print club will sponsor a lecture by the artist on his works on May 14 at 3:30 p.m. In addition the Elvehjem will be publishing a catalogue raisonné of Richard Bosman's prints of the period, with an essay by the curator of the exhibition, Andrew Stevens.

The works are often drawn from popular sources such as comic books and adventure novels, and present single scenes from narratives. As in his paintings, mysterious images are rendered with an expressionist freedom that is as visceral as the subject matter depicted.

Many of the prints seem familiar, not because they are direct illustrations of scenes from literature, but because they manipulate the same conventions that are integral parts of that fiction. Consequently, a print like *South Sea Kiss* brings to mind *Lord Jim* as well as *Mutiny on the Bounty*, while *Double Trouble* is haunted by the ghosts of detectives from countless pulp novels and mystery films. The images are familiar, and Bosman's extracting them from their sources allows the viewer to



Richard Bosman, *Car Crash (grey state)*, 1981, color woodcut. Photograph courtesy Brooke Alexander.

recognize just how pervasive these images are; they have become icons of modern life.

The prints are often violent, but Bosman's interest is not in shocking the viewer; when accused of being obsessed with the gruesome, the artist replied, "They're not really gruesome—there's no

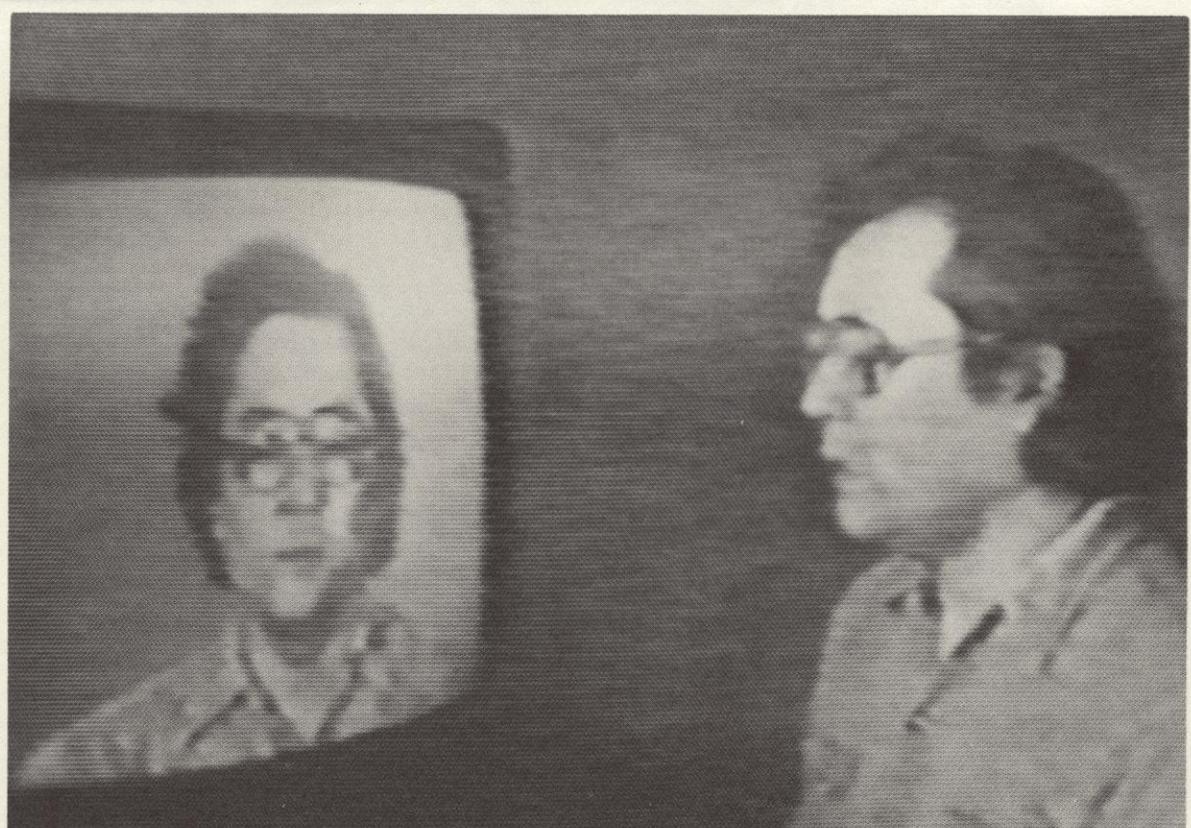
real blood. Nothing is real, it's just paint and everything is a fiction." The fiction of the works is pointed up by the style; although figurative, Bosman's prints are not realistic by any means. Like the fiction they derive from, they exaggerate for emphasis, and make the viewer aware of that exaggeration.

Japanese Video Art

Waveforms: Video/Japan, which opened in March, gives a glimpse of the range of innovation currently being produced. Though there is little commercial support, the producers of these videos use a wide range of techniques and intentions.

Akira Matsumoto uses a hand-held camera in *Alley of Alley* to document the stark, scrupulously clean streets, shrines, and facades of the poorest section of Osaka. Far from Matsumoto in subject and technique, Ko Nakajima uses extremely sophisticated computer graphics techniques to create a video collage combining and animating views of Mt. Fuji. Taka Iimura's work exemplifies an approach to the medium which is experimental in *Moments at the Rock*, which infuses Ayers Rock, the center of the universe according to Aboriginal tradition, with an energetic animism, while in *Double Identities* he calls attention to the loss of identity suffered by his own image on the television screen.

However, this description of some of the videos does scant justice to the range of the works involved, which stretch from interpretations of traditional Japanese



Still taken from Taka Iimura, *Double Identities*, 1986.

culture, to animated dancing crabs, and videos that would be at home on MTV. The overall effect is that of a sampler of inventive video, which gives an taste of

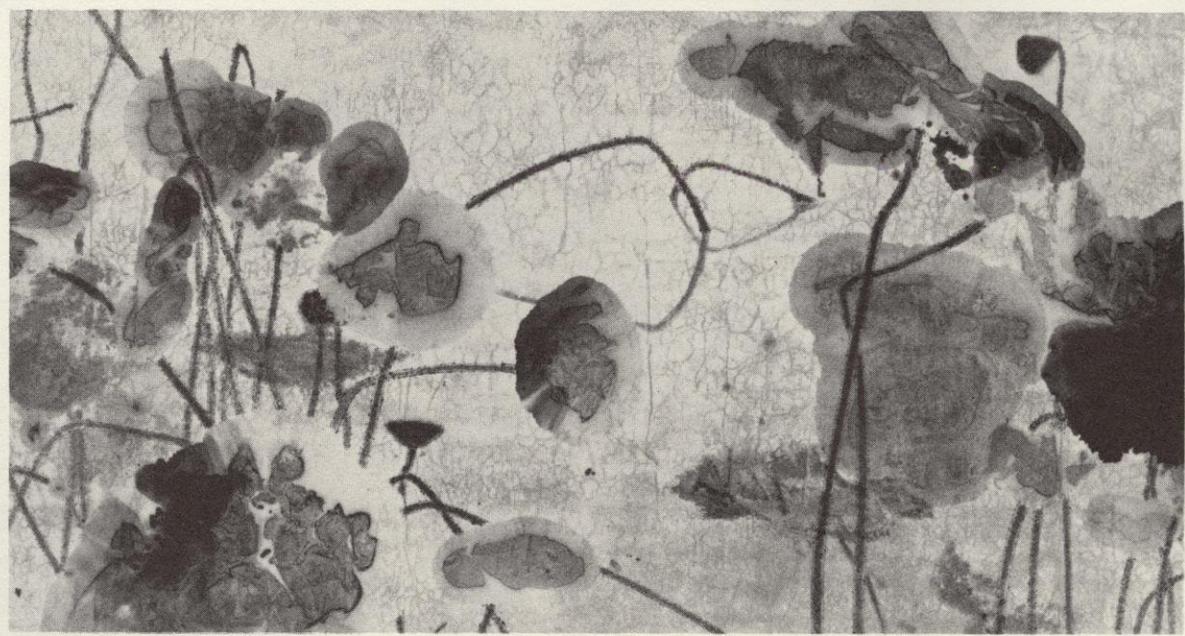
current Japanese culture. *Waveforms* is on view through April 30 in the Whyte Gallery.

The Elvehjem

EXHIBITIONS

Modern Chinese art is also on view at the Elvehjem in an exhibition of painting on paper which will be displayed until May 7. These monumental works look upon the long tradition of painting in China, re-invigorating it with fresh perspectives. *Contemporary Chinese Painting* introduces the American public to a cross section of this creative outpouring during the period 1984-1987. With the exception of Wu Guanzhong (b. 1919), one of the leading artists and theoreticians of the new "modernism" in Chinese painting, all the artists selected for the exhibition are under fifty-five and began their real artistic activity after the long and futile period of the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath. The Elvehjem is indeed fortunate to have been selected to host this show from the People's Republic of China which has been brought to the United States as part of a series of artistic exchanges.

The Imagery of Dissent: Protest Art from the 1930s and 1960s has been extended to April 30. This exhibition features eighty-five graphics from a selection of American publications which show how dissident artists projected their visions for change



Yang Yanping, *Autumn Lotus I*, 1985, ink and color on paper.

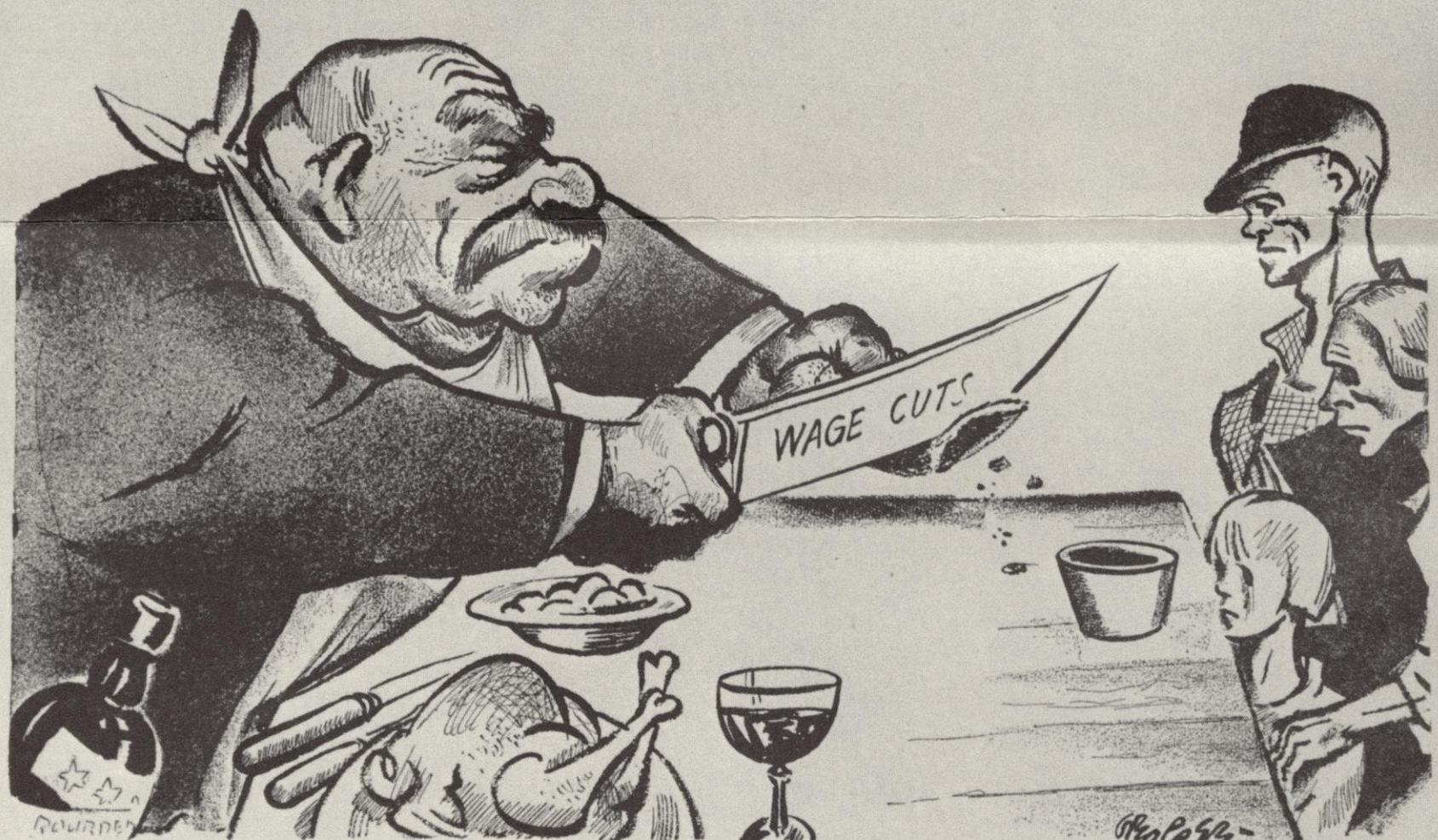
into visual expression.

Two new exhibitions open later in May. *Visage of Nepal* presents photographs taken by Kevin Bubriski in the course of his years in Nepal. On view from May 6 through July 16 in the Mayer Gallery, the photographs reflect the culture of a nation in

transition, documenting a country which few westerners see. *Contemporary Prints from the Permanent Collection* opens on May 27 and runs through August 13 in Birmingham Gallery IV. It displays prints from the 1980s acquired by the Elvehjem in the past four years.

JULY, 1931

15



SLICING A SMALL PORTION A LITTLE THINNER

William Gropper

William Gropper, *Sllicing a small portion a little thinner*, from *New Masses*, July, 1931.

The Elvehjem

April

2 Sunday

Concert, "Sunday Afternoon from the Elvehjem," Wausau Conservatory of Music Faculty, Gallery V, 1:30 p.m.

Lecture, Carlton Overland, Curator of Collections, Elvehjem Museum of Art, "Provenance: Do Good Blood Lines Make a Masterpiece?" Room 160, 7:30 p.m.

9 Sunday

Concert, "Sunday Afternoon from the Elvehjem," Whitewater Brass Quintet, 1:30 p.m., Gallery V.

Lecture, Tse-Tsung Chow, Professor of East Asian Languages and Literature and History, University of Wisconsin-Madison, "Traditional Chinese Painting and Calligraphy," Room 150, 3:30 p.m.

11 Tuesday

Lecture, Italo Scanga, Sculptor, "Recent Work," Room 140, 3:30 p.m.

12 Wednesday

Symposium, "Exposed to the Elements: Outdoor Sculpture Today," Mary Beebe, Director of the Stuart Collection, University of California, San Diego; Jennifer Dowley, Director of the Headlands, Sausalito; David Furchtgott, Executive Director of International Sculpture Center, Washington, D.C.; Patricia Fuller, independent Curator and Consultant, Greenville, North Carolina; and Cesar Trasobares, Executive Director of Metro-Dade Art in Public Places, Miami, Florida, Room 160, 4:00 p.m.

13 Thursday

Concert, "Evening Concerts at the Elvehjem," Javier Calderon, guitar, Madison, 7:00 p.m., Gallery V.

16 Sunday

Concert, "Sunday Afternoon from the Elvehjem," Wisconsin Arts Quintet, Stevens Point, 1:30 p.m., Gallery V.

18 Tuesday

Lecture, Jun Kaneko, "Recent Work," Room 160, 7:30 p.m.

20 Thursday

Trip, Art Institute of Chicago.

21 Friday

Meeting, Wisconsin Art Education Association Spring Conference Registration, Whyte Gallery, 12:00-4:45 p.m. (262-3282).

22 Saturday

Meeting, Wisconsin Art Education Association Spring Conference Registration, Whyte Gallery, 8:00 a.m.-12 noon (263-3282).

23 Sunday

Concert, "Sunday Afternoon from the Elvehjem," Pro Arte Quintet, Madison, 1:30 p.m., Gallery V.

27 Thursday

Lecture, Norton Dodge, "Soviet Art: 1956-1986," Room 140, 7:30 p.m.

30 Sunday

Concert, "Sunday Afternoon at the Elvehjem," Wingra Woodwind Quintet, Madison, 1:30 p.m., Gallery V.

Exhibition, *The Imagery of Dissent: Protest Art from the 1930s and 1960s*, closes.

Exhibition, *Waveforms: Video/Japan*, closes.

May

4 Thursday

Lecture, Alice Aycock, Sculptor, "Recent Work," Room 160, 7:30 p.m.

6 Saturday

Exhibition, *Visage of Nepal*, opens in the Mayer Gallery and runs through July 16.

7 Sunday

Concert, "Sunday Afternoon from the Elvehjem," Pro Arte Quartet, Madison, 1:30 p.m., Gallery V.

Exhibition, *Contemporary Chinese Paintings*, closes.

11 Thursday

Concert, "Evening Concerts at the Elvehjem," Milwaukee Music Ensemble, 7:00 p.m., Gallery V.

12 Friday

Trip, Chicago International Art Exposition at Navy Pier.

13 Saturday

Exhibition, *Prints by Richard Bosman: 1978-1988*, opens in Galleries I and II and runs through July 9.

14 Sunday

Concert, "Sunday Afternoon at the Elvehjem," Conroy Fritz, piano, Waukesha, 1:30 p.m., Gallery V.

Lecture, Richard Bosman, Painter and Printmaker, "Prints by Richard Bosman," Room 140, 3:30 p.m.

18 Thursday

Meeting, Elvehjem League, 2:00 p.m. Andrew Stephens, Assistant Curator of Prints and Drawings is the guest speaker.

21 Sunday

Concert, "Sunday Afternoon at the Elvehjem," Paganini Trio, Milwaukee, 1:30 p.m., Gallery V.

27 Saturday

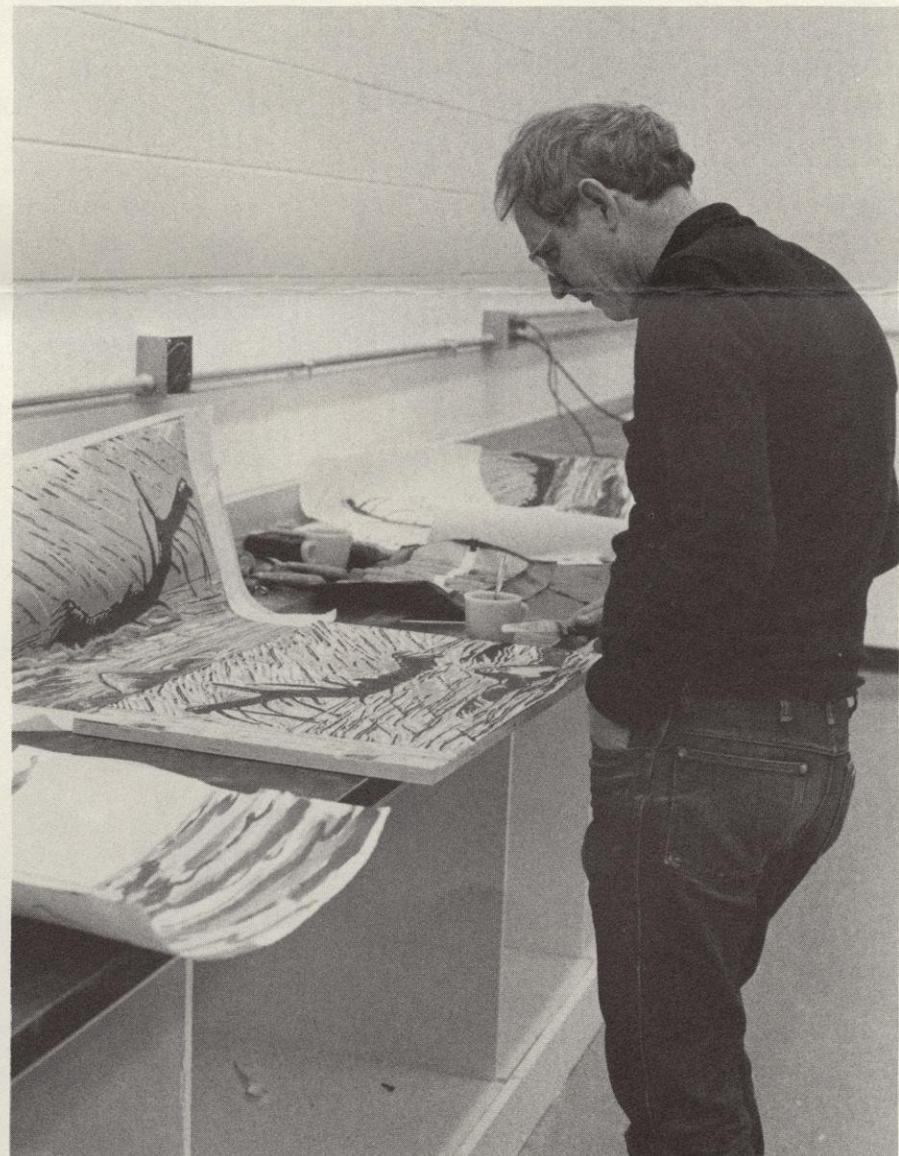
Exhibition, *Contemporary Prints from the Permanent Collection*, opens in Gallery IV and runs through August 13.

29 Monday

The Elvehjem is open on Memorial Day from 9:00 a.m. until 4:45 p.m.

Every Sunday at 3:00 p.m. (or following the Concert), Docents will give ten-minute talks on the Artwork of the Month: **Henryka Schutta** (April 2), **Irmgard Carpenter** (April 9, May 21 and 28), **Gertrude Herman** (April 16), **Sallie Olsson** (April 23 and May 7), and **Sybil Robinson** (April 30 and May 14).

On Thursdays Docents will lead drop-in tours on the collections and exhibitions. The tours given by **Jane Pizer** (April 6 and May 4), **Cathy Bertucci** (April 13), **Jane Eisner** (April 20), **Sallie Olsson** (April 27 and May 11), **Rona Molofsky** (May 18), **Beverly Calhoun** (May 25) will begin at 11 a.m. in Paige Court.



The artist Richard Bosman looks at a block to *Flood* done when he was Artist-in-Resident at Tandem Press. Photograph courtesy Tandem Press. Photo credit: Liz Loring.

The Elvehjem

EDUCATION

Exposed to the Elements: Outdoor Sculpture Today

One of the most exciting and important educational activities this spring is the Elvehjem's symposium on large-scale outdoor sculpture. "Exposed to the Elements: Outdoor Sculpture Today" will bring five major leaders in large-scale outdoor sculpture together to discuss their own projects and developments in this art form. The speakers will be Mary Beebe, Director of the Stuart Collection at the University of California, San Diego; Jennifer Dowley, Director of the Headlands Center for the Arts in Sausalito, California; David Furchtgott, Executive Director of International Sculpture Center in Washington, D.C.; Patricia Fuller, an independent curator and consultant on contemporary sculpture, residing in Greenville, North Carolina; and Cesar Trasobares, Executive Director of Metro-Dade Art in Public Places in Miami, Florida.

Each participant will present a twenty to thirty minute slide lecture on his or her most recent work in large-scale outdoor sculpture. After the presentations, open discussion between the audience and the speakers will ensue. While they are on campus these specialists will examine the

feasibility of placing a large-scale sculpture in front of the Elvehjem. The symposium will take place Wednesday, April 12 at 4:00 p.m. in Room 160. It has been made possible through the generosity of Judy and Howard Hirsch.



Would a sculpture such as Han Van de Bovenkamp's *Mariner's Gateway* of 1986 be appropriate in front of the Elvehjem or not? Questions such as this will be addressed during the sculpture symposium.

Lectures

Topics as varied as an artwork's provenance and its relation to the history of taste, traditional Chinese painting, and contemporary prints and public sculpture are the subjects of the Elvehjem's lectures in April and May.

"Provenance: Do Good Blood Lines Make a Masterpiece?" is the title of Carlton Overland's curatorial lecture on Sunday, April 2. Provenance, the ownership and exhibition history of works of art, is often thought to be a tool used mainly to authenticate the age and originality of a particular object. However, the provenance of a particular work can sometimes provide insights into the history of taste and the economics of collecting, reflecting the changes in appreciation for an artist's, or even a school's, work in general. Recent discoveries on the provenance of the Elvehjem's Corot, *Orpheus Greeting the Dawn*, serve as a springboard for observations on the role of art dealers, private collectors, and museums, not to mention the fickle finger of fate, in making or unmaking "famous" artworks. Carlton Overland, Curator of Collections at the Elvehjem, will present his lecture at 3:30 p.m. in Room 140.

In conjunction with the exhibition *Contemporary Chinese Painting* Tse-Tsung Chow, Professor of East Asian Languages and Literature and History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will speak on "Traditional Chinese Painting and Calligraphy." In a comprehensive interpretation

Professor Chow will demonstrate that the essential critical principles of traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy are very similar. For example, calligraphy—its philosophy, materials, and techniques—is basic training for any traditional painting. He will relate works of art in the exhibition to their ancestral forms and suggest ways artists from the mainland have adapted their paintings to the social and political changes of the last forty years. Professor Chow will lecture on Sunday, April 9 at 3:30 p.m. in Room 150.

Richard Bosman, a contemporary artist known primarily for his paintings, will lecture in conjunction with *Prints by Richard Bosman: 1978-1988*.

In 1978 Bosman began to introduce the figure into his art, often suggesting narratives from popular fiction such as detective books by Dashiell Hammett and adventure novels by Jack London and Joseph Conrad. The artist will discuss the form and content of his recent work in a lecture sponsored by the Madison Print Club on Sunday, May 14, at 3:30 p.m. in Room 140.



Carlton Overland, one of the lecturers in April, is seen here discussing conservation issues with Barry Bauman at the Chicago Conservation Center.

MEMBERSHIP

Council to Honor Elvehjem Contributors

The Elvehjem Museum of Art Council has announced plans for an awards ceremony to be held at the Museum on Friday, April 28, 1989 in honor of those who have made major contributions to the Elvehjem during the past two years. The first awards dinner, held in 1987, was so well received that the Council decided to continue the event on a regular basis.



Mrs. Frederick Miller accepts an award for the Evjue Foundation from Acting Chancellor Cohen at the 1987 Council Honor Awards presentation.

Guests for the spring dinner will include members and donors at or above the Sponsor membership level, a category comprised of those giving more than \$1,000 in either FY 87 or FY 88, and others who have been especially supportive of the Museum. Members of the Chinese Delega-

tion have been invited as the theme of the dinner will be a celebration of the *Contemporary Chinese Paintings* exhibition.

Funding for the dinner will be provided entirely by the Council in appreciation of these especially supportive friends of the Museum.



Mrs. W. Jerome Frautschi and Mr. Walter Frautschi lead the way to the dinner in the Paige Court.

JOIN THE ELVEHJEM

Membership enables you to become an integral and essential part of the Elvehjem.

Annual Benefits include:

- Invitations to openings, receptions and special events
- A subscription to *Artscene* for advance notice of exhibitions, education and membership programs, and special events
- 15% discount on Museum Shop purchases
- Discounts on trips to major exhibitions at nearby museum and galleries
- The Bulletin/Annual Report
- Discounts on art periodical subscriptions
- Reduced admission to Evening Concerts and other programs

Members in categories above Family receive additional benefits such as complimentary Museum publications.

Special Memberships include full-time students, senior citizens and non-residents.

As a Member you support:

- Acquisitions
- Exhibitions
- Publications
- Educational Programs
- Special Events and Programs

Yes, I want to become a Member of the Elvehjem Museum of Art.

(If you are already a Member, please pass this form on to someone you know who would like to join the Elvehjem.)

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Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone/Business Phone _____

Please find my check enclosed for \$_____

Charge my: Visa MasterCard

Card # _____

Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

Please contact me about becoming an Elvehjem volunteer.

Please return this form with your check payable to the:

Elvehjem Museum of Art
Membership Office
800 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53706

Thank You for Your Support!

Membership Categories

- Fellow \$1,000
- Partner \$500
- Associate \$250
- Founder \$100
- Dual/Household \$45
- Individual \$30
- Special Household \$40
- Special \$20

Check Special Category:

- Non-resident (Living beyond 75-mile radius of Madison)
- Senior citizen (age 62 and over)
- Full-time student

My additional gift for programming is \$ _____

The Elvehjem

Spring Trips

Sign up to travel to the 10th annual Chicago International Art Exposition at the Navy Pier! The organizers of the Exposition are celebrating their tenth anniversary by planning their biggest four-day exhibition ever. Two hundred of the world's most prominent art galleries will gather to exhibit art from 20 countries. Serious collectors and art enthusiasts alike can share in the excitement of past and present art movements. Trip participants will travel via motor coach on Friday, May 12, to Chicago's historic Navy Pier for a full day of viewing some of the finest art of this century. The trip is open to the public, but Elvehjem members receive a discount on the trip. Register by April 21 by returning the registration form in the spring trips brochure Members received in March. Or call the Membership Office at 263-2495 for more information.

Sunday Afternoon Concerts

As the ninth season of "Sunday Afternoon from the Elvehjem" draws to a close, we would like to thank all the League members for their dedication to hosting the receptions following the concerts. Bea Lindberg deserves special thanks for coordinating them. We are appreciative of the generosity of Elvehjem League members, several local bakeries and caterers who make these receptions possible. Those bakeries and caterers making month-long

contributions are Bakery and the Bagel, Collins House Catering, Kohl's II-University, The Langdon, Sentry Foods-Hilldale, and Upstairs Downstairs Catering.

The intimate gallery setting of our "Sunday Afternoon from the Elvehjem" concert series annually draws over 5,000 people to the Museum. The concerts are a unique opportunity for the audiences to enjoy chamber music performances while surrounded by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century paintings. The audience and musicians mingle at teas following the concerts. After enjoying tea and pastries, visitors listen to Docents' talks about Artworks of the Month and lectures given by guest speakers.

dents, Elvehjem members and Wisconsin Public Radio Association members. Tickets are available at the door or in advance at the Elvehjem Museum Shop and Vilas Hall Box Office. Join us for evenings of fine music at the Elvehjem!



Richard Bosman, *Man Overboard*, 1981, color woodcut.
Photograph courtesy Brooke Alexander.

Elvehjem Museum of Art
800 University Avenue
Madison, Wisconsin 53706



Gallery Hours:

Monday-Saturday 9 a.m.-4:45 p.m.
Sunday 11 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

Museum Shop Hours:

Monday-Saturday 9 a.m.-4:45 p.m.
Sunday 11 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

Kohler Art Library Hours:

Monday-Thursday 8 a.m.-9:45 p.m.
Friday 8 a.m.-4:45 p.m.
Saturday-Sunday 1-4:45 p.m.

For library hours during UW-Madison holiday periods call (608) 263-2258

Information: (608) 263-2246

Admission is free



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artscene

April/May 1989

Important Dated Information!