

UNH Art Gallery Exhibitions Feature Contemporary Artists and Female Visionaries

By [Lori Gula](#)
UNH News Bureau
603-862-0574

October 9, 2002

DURHAM, N.H. -- Six contemporary artists and seven female visionaries will be featured in two exhibits at The Art Gallery of the University of New Hampshire. "Series" and "True Grit: Seven Female Visionaries Before Feminism," run from Oct. 31 to Dec. 15, 2002.

Series

Some subjects are too intriguing to be relegated to a single canvas. Six contemporary artists in this exhibition explore various themes through series. Gordon McConnell paints quintessential cowboy scenes in black and white, resembling old movies and childhood memories of the Wild West. Through narrative sequences, John Hull looks at the modern culture of desolate rural communities.

Stephen Lack uses the series format to relate action sequences such as an exploding helicopter and a speedboat accident. He relies on movement and drama to draw the viewer in. Charles Parness explores the theme of self-portraiture through his series of colorful and outrageous depictions of himself.

Martha Diamond is an abstract painter who uses color, composition and structure to suggest the weighty mass of a skyscraper, or the long lines of a bridge. Photographer Luigi Cazzaniga focuses on groups in his work. One series looks at grouped vegetables, the other analyzes groupings of people and their mode of interaction.

These contemporary artists use series to emphasize and expand the meaning of their images. For each artist that

expansion boils down to a uniquely American vision of adventure and progress.

True Grit: Seven Female Visionaries Before Feminism

True Grit surveys the seminal works of seven women artists -- Lee Bontecou, Louise Bourgeois, Jay DeFeo, Claire Falkenstein, Nancy Grossman, Louise Nevelson and Nancy Spero -- who asserted themselves artistically even before the term "feminism" was a part of societal vocabulary. These influential artists created bodies of work that are lasting, engaging and laden with meaning.

"My most persistently recurring thought is to work in a scope as far-reaching as possible, to express a feeling of freedom in all its necessary ramifications -- its awe, beauty, magnitude, horror and baseness--This total freedom is essential," Lee Bontecou (b. 1931) says about her work. She is an assemblage artist who creates three-dimensional works from steel and other materials.

Louise Bourgeois (b. 1911) is among the most prominent sculptors of the second half of the 20th century. Born and educated in Paris, her sensual, abstract sculptures show the influence of the European Modernists she met in France and later knew in New York during World War II. Now in her eighties, she continues to produce new work. "If you consider art a privilege instead of something that society will use, you have to save and suffer for your art, for what you love; you have to deny yourself in the cause of art," she says.

Born in Hanover, N.H., Jay DeFeo (1929-1989) was a central figure in the California avant garde. Her best known work is her monumental painting, *The Rose*, now in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art. As both a painter and sculptor, DeFeo's organic and geometric work was influenced greatly by prehistoric art, mysticism and architecture.

Claire Falkenstein (1908-1997) worked in three dimensions; her work was both abstract and organic. Her work is concerned with structure and flow, revealing her interest in molecular structure, topology and cosmology.

An eclectic artist, Nancy Grossman (b. 1940) has

worked in mixed-media collages, landscape paintings, leather-covered sculpture, wooden assemblages and drawings. Grossman has consistently explored the human condition and physical environment.

Among this group's best known artists is Louise Nevelson (1899-1988) of Rockland, Maine. Nevelson assisted Diego Rivera on a mural and began working sculpturally in clay and plaster. She found her medium of choice in wood, focusing on found objects. To her, wood was alive and allowed her to be spontaneous.

Nancy Spero (b. 1927) is interested in giving women a voice. Working mainly on paper, Spero addresses social themes in a storytelling format. Spero comments on her work saying, "But who was this artist? Me! That's why all these tongues; in French 'tongue' is 'langue,' tongue and language -- I was sticking my tongue out and trying to find a voice after feeling silenced for so many years."

These seven artists found their voices through their work, and in so doing, greatly influenced countless artists who followed in their footsteps. The exhibition was (CATE), Los Angeles. Its presentation at UNH is funded in part by the S. Melvin and Mary Jo Rines Art Exhibition Fund.

Public Events

- Oct. 30: "A Conversation with Sculptor Nancy Grossman," with Mara Witzling, professor of art, art history and women's studies. 4 p.m., Paul Creative Arts Center, Room A219. Sponsored by The Art Gallery, the Department of Art & Art History, the College of Liberal Arts, the Center for the Humanities and the Women's Studies Department.
- Oct. 30: Preview Reception. 5 to 7 p.m. Open to the public.

ArtBreak Series

The following programs are part of the ArtBreak Series, which runs Wednesdays, noon to 1 p.m. in The Art Gallery, unless otherwise noted:

- Nov. 6: Poetry reading by UNH graduate students

Amanda Glenn, David Gruber and Brian Patrick Heston.

- Nov. 13: Demonstration by muralist and faux finisher Christine Butcher of Vivaldi Designs. Room A219.
- Nov. 20: Slide lecture: "Pushing the Limits of the Pictorial: Series and Cycles in the Visual Arts," by David Smith, UNH professor of art history. Room A219.
- Dec. 4: Slide lecture by exhibiting New York painter, Charles Parness. Room A219. Sponsored by The Art Gallery and the Department of Art & Art History.
- Dec. 11: Performance by the Pavane Renaissance Dance Ensemble, presenting 16th century dances from the courts of Europe.

The UNH Art Gallery is at the Paul Creative Arts Center, 30 College Road, Durham. Hours are Monday through Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 1 to - 5 p.m. The Art Gallery is closed Fridays, university holidays, and during exhibition changes, including Nov. 11 and Nov. 28-Dec. 1. Admission is free. School and other groups are welcome; tours are free with advance reservation. Call 862-3713 to schedule.

News Editors: Color slides are available upon request from Amanda Tappan, education and publicity coordinator, The Art Gallery, at (603) 862-3712 or art.gallery@unh.edu.

[Back to UNH News Bureau](#)