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# PRIVATE ART/PUBLIC VISIONS

May 1- May 27, 1989



ERIC FISCHL, *Self Portrait with April at the Beach*, 1983. Oil on canvas, 48 x 48". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright, Seattle.

**Western Gallery**  
Western Washington University  
Bellingham, Washington

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## Private Art/Public Visions

The facilities of the Western Gallery, occupying 4,500 sq. feet of exhibition space, opened in January 1989. The construction of the gallery represents the fruition of a long awaited goal of the Department of Art and the College of Fine and Performing Arts at Western Washington University. Located in the south wing of the Fine Arts Complex, the Western Gallery is a center for the discussion and exhibition of issues in contemporary art. It is, therefore, appropriate that we feature in this exhibition, PRIVATE ART/PUBLIC VISIONS, five of the major contemporary art collectors in the Northwest: Robert and Honey Dootson; Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Hedreen; Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Sarkis; Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright; and, a private collector from Vancouver, B.C. From their own private discussions on contemporary art and with remarkable foresight and conviction, these collectors have acquired for their own residences major works by some of the artists who came to the critical foreground in the eighties. Only through their extraordinary generosity has the Western Gallery been able to assemble such a strong statement on the decade of the eighties.

Artists of the eighties have been involved with the production of objects which share public values and generate meanings deeply woven into our culture. Many artists today no longer perceive art as a private visual experience separate from everyday life. This late modernist attitude of the sixties emphasized only the formal and material aspects of object-making. A change occurred in the mid seventies when some artists began to stress conceptualization as the prime factor in art; others introduced their own bodies as a medium or placed large scale structures on the land. The siting of sculptural work in relation to plazas and landscape, as in Western's Outdoor Sculpture Collection, is typical of this shift from an aesthetic realm, such as the pure white walls of the gallery or museum, to the real world. Artists of the mid seventies made the initial inquiries into art as a means to investigate other nonart experiences. Today, a painting or sculpture of the eighties proclaims its relationship to a larger cultural context.

Sandro Chia's portrait of a young man in this exhibition is laden with history; references abound from classical myth, old master rebels as Caravaggio, the Futurists, to the new models of Italian culture. Similar to Chia,

John Alexander, Robert Jessup, David Salle, and Mark Tansey readdress past culture, whether the authority of art and philosophy or socio-political structures as church and state. The iconic imagery of popular culture also plays a role in the graffiti inspired work of Keith Haring, in the comic book style of narration of Richard Bosman, in the film stars of Cindy Sherman, and in the commercial illustrations used by David Salle. These popular symbols assist in creating different levels and even conventions of reality.

Given the state of world events from urban affairs to international politics, it is not surprising that artists of the eighties have made strong political and social statements. Interacting with his own milieu, John Ahearn executes sculptural portraits of people in his community in order to create a sense of unity and continuity. Depending on the work's placement within his own neighborhood or on the established man's wall, the content of the sculpture changes; on the one hand, it is a celebration of roots while on the other hand, it is a reminder of differing backgrounds. In Robert Longo's *Black Palms*, he is committed to reality, to finding contradictions within our ongoing culture, such as industrialization and romanticism, and to presenting mechanisms within our lives today.

In delving into the sexual, communal, and political aspects of society, some artists have adopted the strategy of a persona or autobiography. Cindy Sherman's photographs represent her in stereotypical roles, particularly in the manner of low grade movie or soap opera stars. In contrast to Sherman, Elvira Bach tends to stress an aggressive sense of beauty and power in her female figures. Eric Fischl's paintings evoke personal references to sexual and social changes common from youth to adulthood.

Language is one way we measure reality. Keith Haring, Susan Rothenberg, and John Walker have worked with ancient, popular or private forms of writing, such as hieroglyphics, graffiti, hand signals or diaristic notation, to underline the psychological undertones of language. For example, Susan Rothenberg's primal imagery suggests the childhood game of hand shadows played in the dark. Yet she has forced the viewer to rely more upon his memory than any learned association for the content of the painting.

The overlapping of hand and head in Rothenberg's painting and the in-

terlocking of human and animal shapes in Italo Scanga's sculpture create a vacillation between the dominance of one shape physically or metaphorically over another. Anthropomorphic and natural references in the Italian Arcangelo's abstract work are buried deep in rituals of creation, generative principles, and psychic experiences of sensing physical and spiritual space. Nature remains a vital resource for artists in a totally urban society.

In a culture oriented to the processing of information, artists have few barriers to the past and present survey of human activities. In order to understand and to perceive a world quickly approaching the year

2000 - our old notion of the "future" - the artist has uncovered multiple, shared experiences only to layer them again in a new realignment. Many of these artists focus on common factors in our culture, but they call into question our accepted or inherited answers.

In conjunction with this exhibition on art of the eighties, we have invited the internationally known critic Donald Kuspit to share some time with us here at Western Washington University. His lecture on "The Possibilities and Problems of Art in the 1990s" will begin a long series of critical discussions on art just before the turn of the century.

Sarah Clark-Langager  
Director, Western Gallery



SANDRO CHIA, *Diavoletto*, 1980. Oil on canvas, 63 x 51".  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Hedreen, Seattle.



## Works in Exhibition

### ARCANGELO

*Sotto il Noce*, 1984  
carbon, varnish and tempera on cotton  
94 1/2 x 87 1/2

### JOHN AHEARN

*Tito*, 1984. Painted cast plaster relief  
47 1/8 x 47 1/8 x 10 1/2  
Collection of:  
Robert and Honey Dootson, Bellevue

### JOHN ALEXANDER

*The Unholy Alliance*, 1987  
oil on canvas, 77 x 82  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Hedreen, Seattle

### ELVIRA BACH

*I and My Shadow-Or...*, 1983  
acrylic on canvas, 65 x 51

### DAVID BATES

*The Fish Market*, 1983  
oil on canvas, 72 x 96  
Collection of:  
Robert and Honey Dootson, Bellevue

### RICHARD BOSMAN

*Man Falling Out of Window*, 1982  
oil on canvas, 54 x 42  
Collection of:  
Robert and Honey Dootson, Bellevue

### SANDRO CHIA

*Diavoleto*, 1980. Oil on canvas, 63 x 51  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Hedreen, Seattle

### ERIC FISCHL

*Self Portrait with April at the Beach*, 1983  
oil on canvas, 48 x 48  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright, Seattle

### JEDD GARET

*Mom and Dad*, 1983  
acrylic on canvas, 73 x 57  
Collection of:  
Robert and Honey Dootson, Bellevue

### KEITH HARING

*Untitled*, 1985. Ink on terracotta,  
29 x 24 d.  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright, Seattle

### ROGER HERMAN

*Path*, 1988. Oil on canvas, 36 x 36  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Sarkis, Seattle

### ROBERT JESSUP

*Neptune*, 1986  
oil on canvas, 60 x 50  
Collection of:  
Robert and Honey Dootson, Bellevue

### ROBERT LONGO

*Black Palms*, 1983. Lacquer on wood;  
acrylic and oil on wood  
120 x 96 x 29 1/2  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright, Seattle

### MICHAEL LUCERO

*Untitled (Reclining Blue Nude)*, 1984  
glazed ceramic, 18 x 25 x 18  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright, Seattle

### HELMUT MIDDENDORF

*Red Maniac*, 1983  
acrylic on canvas, 75 x 98 1/2

### ELIZABETH MURRAY

*Why Painting (Or Traveler's Umbrella)*  
1987. Oil on canvas  
3 sections; total, 83 3/4 x 129 1/2 x 23  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright, Seattle

### SUSAN ROTHENBERG

*Untitled (Grey Head)*, 1980-81  
acrylic and flashe on canvas, 110 x 114  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright, Seattle

### DAVID SALLE

*The Egypto-Roman World*, 1987  
acrylic and oil on canvas, 102 x 104  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright, Seattle

### ITALO SCANGA

*Animal Head*, 1982  
polychromed wood, 60 5/8 h.  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Sarkis, Seattle

### Head#42, 1985

polychromed wood, 19 3/4 h.  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Sarkis, Seattle

### CINDY SHERMAN

*Untitled#120*, 1983  
color photograph, 34 1/8 x 21 1/8  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright, Seattle

### MARK TANSEY

*Utopic*, 1987  
oil on canvas, 68 x 70  
Collection of:  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Hedreen, Seattle

### JOHN WALKER

*Oceania*, 1984. Oil on canvas, 96 x 120  
Collection of:  
Robert and Honey Dootson, Bellevue

All measurements are in inches, height preceding width.



**JOHN WALKER**, *Oceania*, 1984. Oil on canvas, 96 x 120".  
Collection of Robert and Honey Dootson, Bellevue.



**MARK TANSEY**, *Utopic*, 1987. Oil on canvas, 68 x 70".  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Hedreen, Seattle.