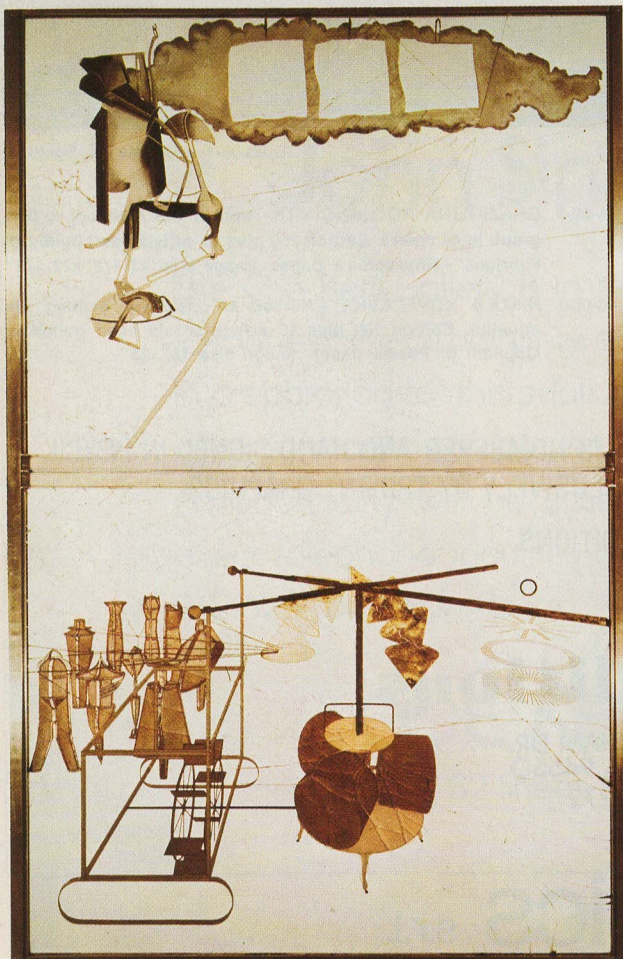




Above: Established in 1876, the Philadelphia Museum of Art has been housed since 1928 in an imposing temple of Greek style and Roman mass. The museum overlooks the Schuylkill and the early nineteenth-century Neoclassical Waterworks at the river's edge.

Below: Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors Even (The Large Glass)*, 1915–23, is one of the museum's major modern works. Oil, varnish, lead foil, lead wire, and dust on glass, 109 ¼ x 69 ⅞".



Below: Philadelphia-born Thomas Eakins painted *The Concert Singer (Veda Cook)* shortly after his career as director of the Pennsylvania Academy ended in controversy. 1892. Oil on canvas, 75 ¼ x 54 ¼". Philadelphia Museum.



Portrait: Philadelphia

Philadelphians cherish a legacy of venerable cultural institutions—and a lively community of young artists—with the reticent pride of the city's Quaker founders

by Judith Stein

As befits a city on the verge of its tricentennial, cultural life in Philadelphia proceeds with stately gait, has selective hearing, and is often revitalized by the young. Charles Willson Peale, the great progenitor of Philadelphia art and artists, founded the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts—America's oldest public art institution—in 1805. Today the academy is one of five major art schools attracting teachers and students to Philadelphia, many of whom settle in the area. Nurtured by the city's deep cultural roots, contemporary art flowers in Philadelphia. Artistic irreverence has also been a part of the city's heritage since 1882, when Thomas Eakins removed the loincloth from a male model at the academy in order to trace the origin of a leg muscle for his female students.

The wide range of art institutions in Philadelphia today is due to a diverse group of art benefactors. The philanthropists of the Fairmount Park Art Association, for example, have since 1872 stocked public places with such sculpture as Remington's *Cowboy* and Lipchitz's *Government of the People*. But some potential demonstrations of civic

generosity have been thwarted when the social elite slighted collectors for their new money or their avant-garde tastes.

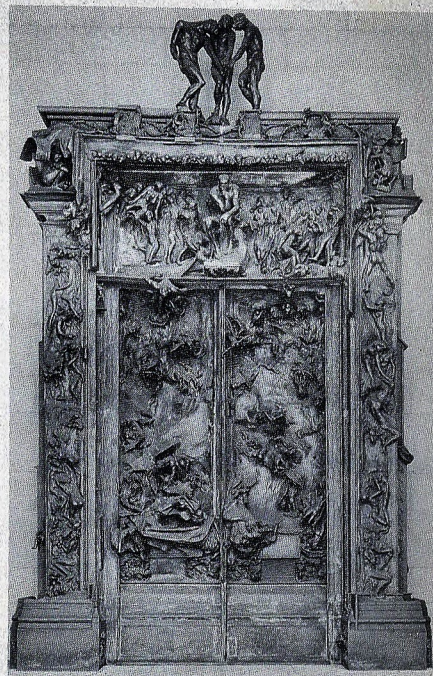
This was the case with the extraordinary collection of Dr. Albert C. Barnes, who once offered his art to his alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania, which declined the gift. Happily, all citizens (except children under twelve) now have access to the Barnes Foundation in nearby Merion, where they can view more than a thousand works of art, including about two hundred Renoirs, seventy-five Matisse's, thirty-five Picassos and some one hundred Cézannes.

Founded during the Centennial Exposition of 1876, the Philadelphia Museum of Art moved into its lofty neoclassical pile overlooking the Schuylkill river in 1928. Innovative period rooms installed under then-director Fiske Kimball are still among the finest in any American museum. The PMA boasts several important collections, most notably the city-owned Johnson Collection of European paintings, which includes Rogier van der Weyden's *Crucifixion* and Jan van

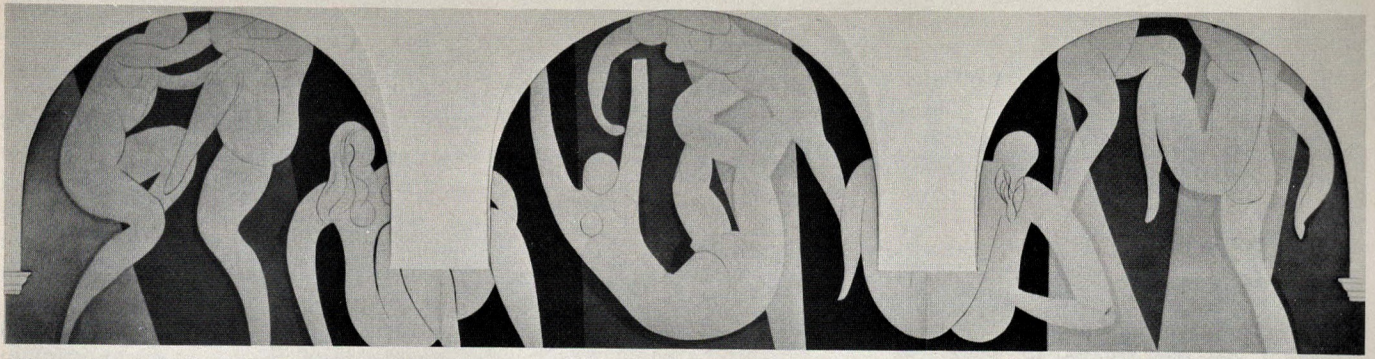
Eyck's *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata*; and the stellar Arensberg Collection of such modernist icons as Duchamp's *Nude Descending the Staircase* and Brancusi's *The Kiss*. Yet with all these treasures inside, a few single-minded visitors stop only to jog up and down the imposing front steps, in imitation of Rocky, the fictional prizefighter from South Philadelphia.

The new director of the PMA, Jean Sutherland Boggs, is committed to broadening support for museum activities, and has initiated a television series on the workings of the museum, as well as cooperative ventures with the opera, ballet, and library. The museum also administers two subsidiary institutions: the nearby Rodin Museum, a 1928 gift to the people of Philadelphia from movie magnate Jules Mastbaum; and the Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial in South Philadelphia, founded in 1898 to offer free art instruction.

For some time, the PMA has had an informal agreement with the University (of Pennsylvania) Museum to collect only Western art after A.D. 500. While



Above: Commissioned in 1880 to produce bronze doors based on a theme from Dante for the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, Rodin worked on The Gates of Hell until his death in 1917. The first bronze cast, made in 1924–26, belongs to Philadelphia's Rodin Museum. 20'10 1/4" x 13'2" x 2'9 3/4".



Above: Henri Matisse's *La Danse* graces three lunettes in a vaulted hall at the Barnes Foundation in suburban Merion. Also in the collection amassed by patent-medicine millionaire Albert C. Barnes are canvases by Renoir, Cézanne, Matisse, Seurat, and others. 1933. 11'8 1/2" x 47'.

never binding, this accord has clarified the separate strengths of the two institutions. When Philadelphians want to see Benin bronzes, Sumerian artifacts, and American Indian crafts, they visit the University Museum.

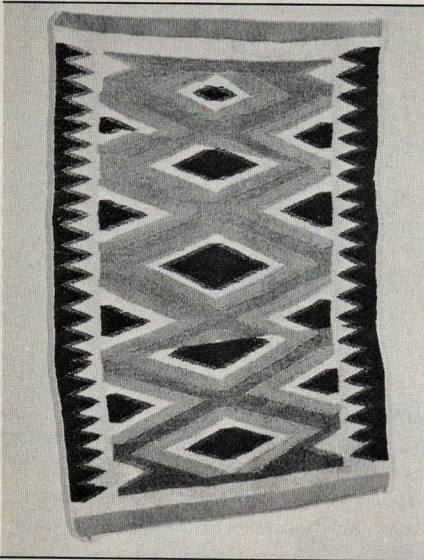
The PMA's lack of enthusiasm for the new—a bias profoundly shaken by Anne d'Harnoncourt, the museum's curator of twentieth-century art for the past eight years—stirred board member Mrs. H. Gates Lloyd to found the Institute of Contemporary Art on the Penn campus in 1963. Today the ICA occupies the galleries of Penn's Fine Arts Building, a great stride from the Institute's early years, when it was barely given office space. Feminist theorist Ti-Grace Atkinson, who helped establish the ICA at Penn, re-

cently reflected that after helping to bring contemporary art to Philadelphia, all of life's other tasks pale by comparison.

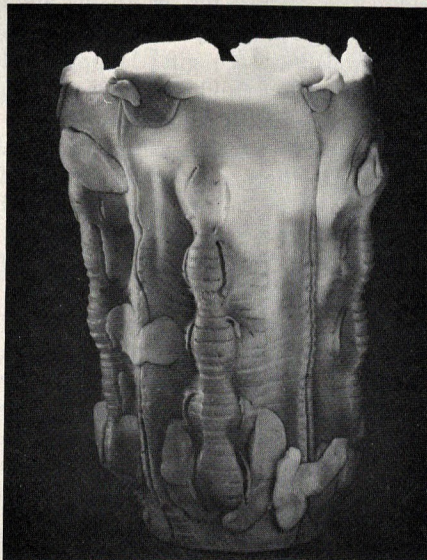
The ICA is now the sole Philadelphia institution dedicated to the "cutting edge" of contemporary art. Under former head Suzanne Delahanty and current director Janet Kardon, U.S. Commissioner for the 1980 Venice Biennale, the ICA has attained international stature. Kardon, who evolved from art patron to museum professional, is widely admired for her insightful and superbly documented exhibitions. Her 1979 exploration of the pattern and decoration movement, *The Decorative Impulse*, was one of the first in an American museum. It ran concurrently with *Material Pleasures*, a

selection of work from the Fabric Workshop, a unique Philadelphia-based silk-screen studio founded by Marion Stroud Swingle.

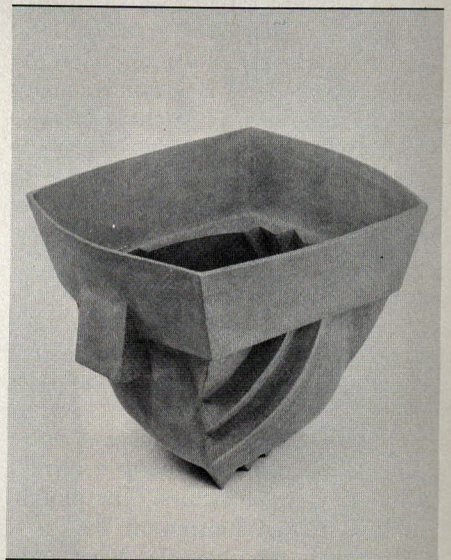
Many galleries of contemporary art have opened in the last fifteen years, although patronage is often spotty, and some artists complain that they must achieve visibility in New York before they are taken seriously in their hometown. In the heart of Center City, galleries cluster around the well-to-do business and shopping area of Rittenhouse Square. The Marian Locks Gallery is joined in its regional emphasis by the Eric Makler, the Gross McCleaf and the newer A. J. Wood galleries. The Makler Gallery (a separate enterprise run by Eric's parents) has a more international focus, and Janet



Above: At the Fabric Workshop, artists from other media, like painter Charles Fahlen, work in silk-screen. *Fresh Start*. 1978. Silk-screen on felt, 25 1/2" x 15 1/2".



Above: Philadelphia has long been hospitable to contemporary crafts. Rudolf Staffel, *Light Gatherer*. 1976. Translucent porcelain, 9" high. Helen Drutt Gallery.



Above: *To Josiah W.* was hand-built by Philadelphia ceramist William Daley, in collaboration with his wife, Catherine. 1980. Stoneware, 18" high. Helen Drutt Gallery.

Fleisher specializes in art with an ethnographic edge, although both galleries also handle a few local artists. More experimental, and less marketable, work appears in the artist-run Nexus gallery and in Muse, a women's co-operative.

Galleries such as Eyes, on lower South Street, and Rosenfeld, in Olde City, pioneered on the low-rent fringes of Center City. These auxiliary art districts offer a variety of spaces where a small but committed audience views performance work by painter Woofy Bubbles or the Bricolage collective. Other avant-garde work is screened at the Walnut Street Theatre, the nation's oldest theater, founded in 1809.

The faculty and art students at Penn, Tyler, Moore, the academy, and the Philadelphia College of Art, who show in the galleries and patronize the performances, constitute a lively and cosmopolitan art community. While many display a clear tropism toward New York, only ninety miles away, most share the pleasures of a small but select group, wise enough to recognize a superior working environment when they see it.

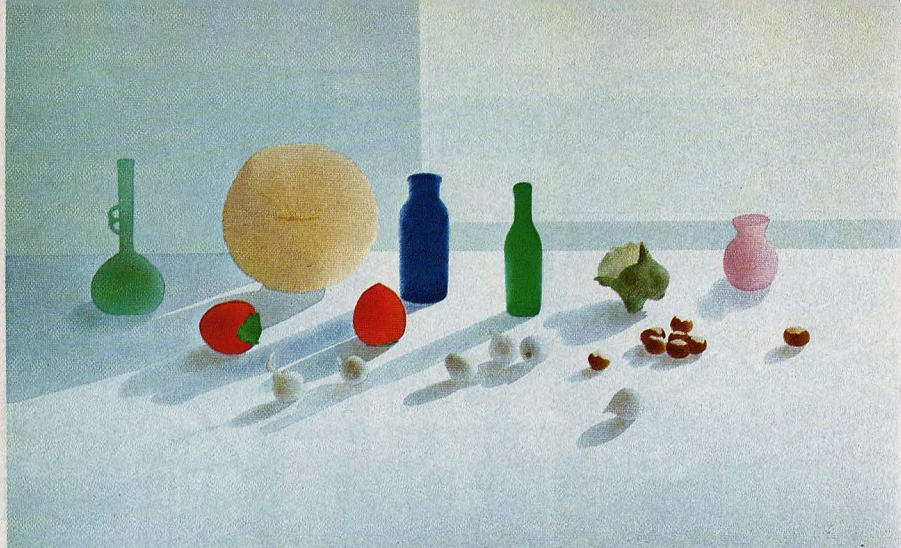
A significant proportion of contemporary Philadelphia work still manifests what art historian E. P. Richardson termed the city's traditional "passion for the actual." At the academy, curator Frank H. Goodyear, Jr. has been addressing this public penchant in an ongoing series of shows. The finale of the academy's 175th anniversary celebration is an exhibition of paintings by Jamie Wyeth. Realism also characterizes the cityscapes of Larry Day, the studio interiors of Elizabeth Osborne, the western mountains of Diane Burko, and the figurative sculpture of Walter Erlebacher and Arlene Love. Other influential instructors, such as landscapist Neil Welliver at Penn, and still life painter John Moore at Tyler, have similar subjective concerns for the real.

A second Philadelphia flair, which coincides in part with the obsessions of Chicago imagists, is shared by a group of young artists who studied during the 1970s with Italo Scanga at Tyler; with Cynthia Carlson, Raphael Ferrer, and the late Ree Morton at PCA; and with Charles Fahlen at Moore. Many recent graduates, such as John Ferris, Marcy

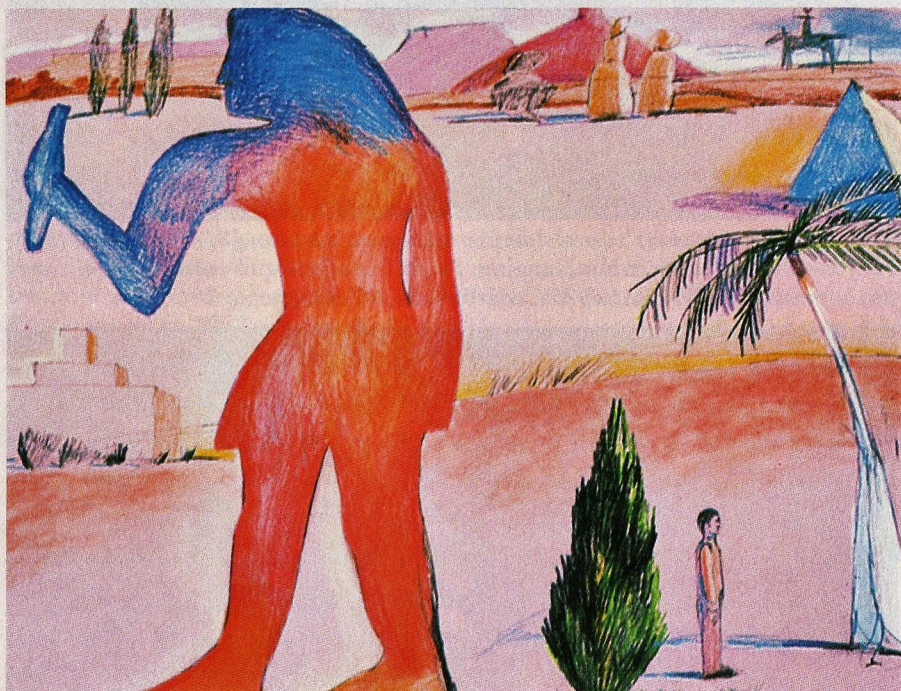


The Pennsylvania Academy's varied American holdings include (above) Horace Pippin's 1942 oil, John Brown Going to His Hanging, 24x30", and (below) University of Pennsylvania faculty member Neil Welliver's 1976 Cedar Breaks. Oil on canvas, 8x8'.





Top: Elizabeth Osborne's *Table with Pomegranates* evinces the city's "passion for the actual." 1979. Watercolor, 30x40". Fischbach Gallery, N. Y. **Middle:** Other local artists favor the cartoon imagery of Tom Judd's *Don Quixote*. 1980. Pencil and pastel on paper, 20x26". Eric Makler. **Bottom:** Photographer Ray Metzker's *Sand Creatures* series was shown at the academy's Morris Gallery. 1968-75. Light Gallery.



Hermansader, Tom Judd, and Maurie Kerrigan, favor fantasy landscapes and whimsically primitive scenarios dished out with technical aplomb.

Photography is flourishing again in Philadelphia, city of the first American daguerreotype and of Muybridge's studies on locomotion. Nationally known photographers Ray Metzker and Bill Larson live and work in the city; and The Photography Gallery, Mancini, and Paul Cava put on high-quality shows.

The oft-heralded crafts revival is old news in Philadelphia. Moore, Tyler, and PCA have well-established and extensive crafts curricula. Native ceramists William Daley, Rudolf Staffel, and Lizbeth Stewart are among the artists represented by the redoubtable Helen Drutt, whose gallery serves as a national center for excellence in crafts.

The Print Club, like the University Museum, is one of those Philadelphia art institutions which tend to be better known outside the city. The club has been a rare voice of encouragement for the production of contemporary prints since 1915. It has now expanded its exhibits to include such media as photography and color Xerox.

Given the diverse resources of Philadelphia's art institutions, and the vitality of contemporary work produced and shown in the city, it is remarkable that more natives are not sufficiently mindful of the city's worth. Perhaps the explanation lies in what Penn sociologist Digby Baltzell has called the Quaker "instinct for disparagement." Visitors to the city during its 300th birthday celebration next year will find that Philadelphia's art life is the best-kept secret in the East. □



Judith Stein is arts reviewer for public radio station WUHY in Philadelphia.