

A Brief History of the University of Houston Public Art Collection

On September 6, 1966, University of Houston Board of Regents and then President Philip Hoffman voted to establish a policy that would dedicate one per cent of the construction cost of all future building projects for works of art. The University of Houston was in the process of undergoing an unprecedented building boom and it was thought that a public art program would greatly enhance the campus as well as the prestige of the University. UH was also the first state institution to establish a percent for art program and currently has one of the largest and most impressive university art collections in the country.

The first works purchased for the collection were *Orbit I* and *Orbit II* by Japanese born Masaru Takiguchi who was a guest artist teaching in the Art Department for the 1969-70 term. *Orbit I* was installed in the lobby of the Science & Research Building and *Orbit II* for Krost Hall of the Bates School of Law. The large scale bronze *Albertus Magnus* by the German artist Gerhard Marcks was the first work purchased for outdoor placement and located at the entrance to the Law Center complex. By 1976 the University had 14 works in the collection. Today, the collection numbers over 450 works located not only on the Main Campus, but on the Clear Lake, Downtown, Victoria and Sugar Land campuses as well. We are continually adding to the Collection.

In 1996 one of the most ambitious commissions was for the Moores School of Music Opera House by internationally known, New York based artist Frank Stella. The artist created *Euphonia*, an exuberant celebration of color and rhythm that transformed the barrel vaulted ceiling of the lobby, the wall of the mezzanine and the catwalk in the auditorium. Jacob Hashimoto, Carlos Cruz-Diez, The Art Guys, Lawrence Argent, Lin Emery and Bert Samples are some of the recent artists commissioned. In 2008 UH received a generous gift of 150 Polaroids and black & white photographs from the Andy Warhol Foundation.

With the help of the University's System Wide Art Acquisition Committee comprised of UH Regents, UH System faculty and staff, local museum curators, directors and community representatives, the collection continues to expand and include work by local, regional, national and international artists.

A new web site has been developed that will continue to expand with the ever growing collection. A map and walking tour of the central campus is available online at <http://uh.edu/uh-collection>, we are also on Facebook as University of Houston public Art Collection. For further information you can contact Michael Guidry, Curator of the University Art Collection at mguidry3@uh.edu or 713-743-5315.



Detail, Carlos Cruz-Diez, *Double Psychromie*, 2009