

The Weiner Collection – A Passionate Eye

This exhibition celebrates Ted Weiner, 1911-1979, a rags-to-riches oilman who collected a treasure trove of modern art which is now the nucleus of the Palm Springs Art Museum's permanent collection.

The force, vigor and determination embodied in many of the works of art serve as a convenient metaphor for Ted Weiner. He was a strong and powerful person and he related to these strong pieces. The collection includes approximately 61 pieces most of which are sculptures. It is one of the most important collections of modern art ever assembled in the Southwest.

He was a self-made oilman who came from poverty, dropped out of school and worked as a laborer before striking oil. He was introduced to impressionist and modern art in the homes of his East Coast friends and investors. They triggered a curiosity that inspired him to learn more by exploring galleries and museums in New York. He then began to acquire works of art, eventually amassing at that time one of the most important collections of modern sculpture in the United States.

Weiner's treasures included a rare carved limestone head by Amedeo Modigliani, several large figures by Henry Moore, a surrealist bronze by Jean Arp and a ceramic owl by Pablo Picasso. Weiner had no formal training and no advisors to help him choose his works of art. He started from a total blank slate. He realized that he had an eye for art and in a little over a decade he amassed one of the top collections in the United States. This happened in the 1950's when most of the artists were alive and showing in galleries in Europe and the United States. He turned out to be an astute businessman with a nose for oil and for art. The Weiner collection gives us a close look at modern art, particularly cubism and surrealism. He did not limit himself to the modern masters, he collected works by emerging artists and younger sculptors as well as artists from a variety of periods and styles.

From Fort Worth to Palm Springs

In 1961 Lucile Weiner forged the family's connection to Palm Springs when she took an apartment in Palm Springs to help her manage her chronic bronchitis. Ted visited often, loved to play golf, and eventually bought a family home in Palm Springs. He was welcomed to the museum board by collectors Walter Annenberg and Joseph Hirschhorn. His relationship with the museum became even more important when the city of Fort Worth turned down Weiner's offer of his property in Fort World and his art collection. The city of Fort Worth said that the maintenance costs for the property and for the art were too high for them to manage. Instead Weiner lent much of his collection

to the Palm Springs Art Museum. Over time the Weiner family has gifted many of these masterpieces to the museum. The first Weiner sculpture exhibition at the PSAM in 1969 was well received and helped elevate the status of the Museum. A second exhibition featuring 34 pieces was in 2007 when Steve Nash became Director of the Museum.

In addition to sculpture, A Passionate Eye features some two-dimensional pieces including “Le Village”, a ceramic mural by Chagall, a painting by Roger de La Fresnaye and drawings by Franz Kline. The collection reinforces the fact that Weiner was focused on sculpture – heavy, bold, and masculine objects that reflected his own character.

Touring Suggestions

Discuss Relationships

Ted Weiner and Jacques Lipchitz, Ted Weiner and Alexander Calder and Ted Weiner and Henry Moore. These artists all became close personal and family friends of the Weiners.

Relationships between artists: Chagall and Picasso (contemporaries, used same potter); Reg Butler and Henry Moore (Butler was Moore’s assistant); Reg Butler and Germaine Richier (often showed their work together); and Ossip Zadkine and Manuel Felguerez who was Zadkine’s gallery assistant).

Impact of WWII on Artists:

Reg Butler’s, “Manipulator”. He was a conscientious objector and became a blacksmith during the war years. After the war he left architecture where he was known as Cottrell Butler and became Henry Moore’s assistant. Note the direction of the eyes in both artists’ work.

Jacques Lipchitz, fled from France to US, Spent war years in Texas. Relate his expulsion to sculpture of Hagar and Ishmael

Germaine Richier’s, “Horse with Six Heads”. She spent the war years in Switzerland, and felt guilty to be safe. Powerful angst filled work

Isamu Noguchi’s, “Tetsubin”, Noguchi was safe in US during the war. Had a Japanese father and an American mother. He went to Japan after war and learned classic tea ceremony, reconnected to his roots.

Ossip Zadkine’s, “The Van Gogh Brothers”, lived in Paris and fled to US during the war, was unhappy until he could return to France.

Gerhard Marcks, was a leader at Bauhaus in Germany and was forced out because his work was deemed degenerate art.

Movements Represented in Weiner Collection – great variety

Cubism: Roger de La Fresnaye's painting "Landscape with Woman, Cow and Dog";
Lipchitz's "Draped Woman" and "Harpist"; Zadkine's "The Van Gogh Brothers"

Surrealism: Jean Arp's "Growth", Jack Zajac's "Deposition II"

Classic: Modigliani's "Head"; Eugenio Pellini's "Judas"; Degas's "Woman Stepping out
of the Bath" (Earliest work in the collection); Henri Laurens' "Les Ondines"

Paintings: Franz Kline's "Black and White Drawings"; Alexander Calder's gouache,
"Chapeau Phygien"

Abstract: Isamu Noguchi's, "Tetsubin"; Eduardo Paoluzzi's, "Chinese Dog"

Modern: Giacomo Manzu's, "Standing Cardinal"

Abstract Expressionism: Peter Voukas', Ceramic vase, "Pottery #1"

Many Religious Subjects

Giacomo Manzu – Standing Cardinal, Eugenio Pellini – Judas, Rouault – Jesus, Gene
Owens –The Bush was not Consumed (burning bush), Jacques Lipchitz – Sacrifice and
Hagar in the Desert,

Jack Zajac – Christ Emerging from the Stone