

DOCENT DATES

February 2

Eik Kahng on Van Gogh exhibit (in auditorium pending approval)

February 16

Miya Ando, Virtual Studio Visit and Conversation, Zoom

March 2

Belinda Rathbone on George Rickey (Zoom or auditorium pending approval)

March 16

April 6

May 4

May 18



Jay DeFeo (1929-1989), *The Jewel*, 1959, oil on canvas, 10' x 4 1/2', LACMA. She broke the boundary between painting and sculpture and led the way for later painters to expand the shared ground. One of the San Francisco Beatniks, musicians, artists, and poets, with whom DeFoe shared her Filmore Street studio where she was known as the most fearless and committed in artistic experiments, devoting 8 years

to *The Rose* (1948-1956), a huge painting/sculpture which ultimately weighed over a ton and won her international acclaim when it was shown at the Whitney in 1995. *The Jewel* is currently on display at The Broad in Los Angeles. Submitted by Ricki Morse

Dear Docents,

We are the face of the museum. A year plus at home combined with a trend toward relaxed attire in general has impacted the way we dress in our role as docents. While it's true that men no longer wear suits and ties, and "casual Fridays" are everyday now, we need to be mindful of what it is we're trying to accomplish. Just as members of an orchestra wear all black to avoid distracting the audience, our goal as docents is to keep the focus on the art, deflecting attention away from our attire. Wearing athletic shoes to help with back support for an hour-long tour is acceptable if necessary. We understand that. But as creative men and wom-



Patty Santiago,
Docent Council
President

en, we don't need to sacrifice our identity in order to dress in a manner that shows respect for the museum, the art, and for our visitors.

To update our current Dress Code as written in the bylaws, the Docent Council Board has reviewed and approved the following revision:

"Docents should dress in a professional manner in attire that is clean, neat, and appropriate for public and educational tours. Please keep the demographic you are touring in mind and consider your audience when choosing your attire."

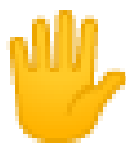
This change in the bylaws requires a vote by all active docents. We will not be meeting in person for the near future, so you will be able to vote by email. In addition, many docents have advocated for the Dress Code to be part of the Standing Laws and not the Bylaws. Consequently, the Board also approved the following motion for your vote:

A motion to move Section 3.1 Docent Dress Code from the Bylaws "Categories and Responsibilities of Membership" to "Standing Rules" section D.

An email will be sent out later this week for you to participate in this issue and record your vote.

Patty ■

From our Membership Chair
Pattie Firestone



Stop, take a minute, send me your Research and Public Hours.

Thanks!

Pattie

Pattie.Firestone@gmail.com, 301-520-5775 (mobile)

Vincent van Gogh,
Sheaves of Wheat
1890. Oil on canvas
Dallas Museum of Art,
The Wendy and Emery
Reves Collection.

Through Vincent's Eyes
February 27, 2022



From our VP
DOCENT SPRING TRIP
Dallas and Crystal Bridges April 26-May 2, 2022



Karen Howsam

The SBMA docents have long enjoyed visiting local museums together. Each spring, we offer a travel opportunity to go as a group and explore other museums around the country. This year, during spring break, **April 26-May 2, 2022**, the plan is to visit the Dallas Museum of Art and other exciting museums, going onto Bentonville, Arkansas to tour the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and many interesting venues around it. If you recall, last April 8th I arranged a virtual tour of the Crystal Bridges Museum for our ZOOM docent meeting.

Please contact me at karenhowsam@icloud.com by February 10 if you're interested. and for details."

Dallas April 26-29

Arrive American Airlines 1981 @ 5:50 pm (KH booked it!)

Dallas Museum of Art/April 27 @ 11:00 am

Nasher Sculpture Center and Garden April 27 @ 1:00 pm (Good restaurant for lunch)

Crow Museum of Asian Art April 27 @ 2:30 pm

Arrive American Airlines 2277 Crystal Bridges, Bentonville, Arkansas, April 29 @ 11:35 am

Relax or walk the trail to town

Tour Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art April 30 @ 10:00 am

Tour Kusama exhibit/Cost of \$12.00 to visiting docent

Tour Frank Lloyd Wright house April 30 @ 1:30 pm and 1:45 pm

May 1 The Momentary 10:00 am

May 2 Departure American Airlines 2217 4:40 pm to Dallas

American Airlines 1483 Dallas to SBA, arrival 7:45 pm

You may make your own reservation on American Airlines (\$520) and a reservation at the hotel of your choice. Suggestions:

Dallas, Texas:

Spring wood Suites

Homewood Suites

Dallas Marriott Downtown

The Adolphus

The Ritz Carlton

Bentonville, Arkansas

Double Tree Suites by Hilton

Victoria Bed & Breakfast

South Walton Suites

Four Points Bentonville

21C Museum Hotel



Pushing Sculpture To The Limits of Painting: From Jay DeFeo to Wyatt Kahn

By Ricki Morse



On the wall outside the Contemporary Gallery hangs a newly acquired work by Wyatt Kahn, a New York artist whose work feels sculptural but is defined as painting. Kahn is inspired by the sculptural paintings and drawings of a revolutionary San Francisco painter who first broke these boundaries, Jay DeFoe, a woman who broke many boundaries and was admired by her fellow Beatnik artists as “fearless.” Her revolutionary work, *The Rose*, 1948-1956, and *The Jewel*, 1959 (our cover page), dissolved the separation of sculpture and painting.

Jay DeFeo Mines the Materials of Art Making

The daughter of an Austrian-American mother and Italian-American father, Jay DeFeo grew up in San Francisco while her father was attending medical school at Stanford. The family traveled California while he worked as a traveling doctor for the Civilian Conservation Corp, often visiting grandparents in Colorado and in Oakland. When she was ten years old, her parents divorced and she remained with her mother in San Jose, attending high school there, mentored by her art teacher who took her to museums and introduced her to modern art. She attended UC Berkeley, studying art and marrying a fellow artist. She designed and made jewelry, helping to support their move to a large studio on Fillmore Street and becoming a central figure in the heart of the artistic Beatnik scene, where she now had the space to make larger work and to share her ideas and experiments with other artists.

It was here she began *The Rose*, an 8 year project. The surface was built up, sculpted, gouged, reshaped, by combining mica as a malleable filler with the paint. Though encouraged to show it, she insisted it wasn't finished, trusting her instinct to determine the course of the growing work. Friends helped her remount the in-process work onto a larger base, which ultimate grew to 10 feet by over 7 feet and weighed a ton. The work ended when they were evicted from their studio, and also became the end of the marriage. In 1969 *The Rose* was shown briefly at the Pasadena Museum of Art and the San Francisco Art Museum of Art (later to become SFMOMA), then stored behind a wall at the San Francisco Art Institute for 25 years until, in a historic restoration, it was acquired by the Whitney Museum of American Art and returned to public view, becoming the focal point of a DeFeo retrospective and establishing her as a major voice in contemporary art. *The Rose* is on display today on the 7th floor of the new Whitney Museum.

Though known widely for *The Rose*, De Feo's work continued to expand, characterized by a unfaltering



Jay DeFeo working on *The Rose* in her studio, 1964.



Jay DeFeo, *Origin*, 1956, oil on canvas, UC Berkeley Art Museum. *Origin* references birth and growth while defining a deep three dimensional space in undulating movement, thrusting upward, heralding her scope as an artist.

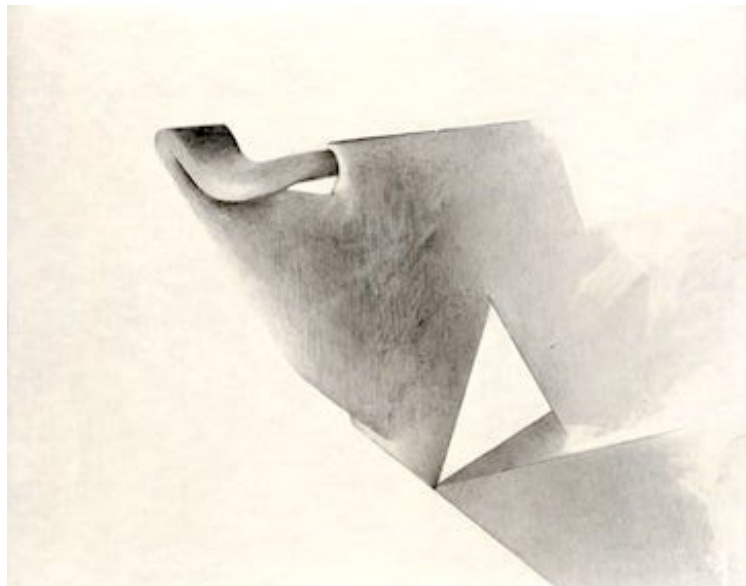
were done only with 9H pencil which took forever to kind of build gradually until you got sort of a layering over a layering over a layering. Like the chains in the jewelry period, this was another experience of that nature - very slow, meditative, certainly not commercial. I mean when you spend over three months on just playing around with a 9H pencil - but it was a necessity in my life and it sort of bridged a transition between an old life and a newer life."

commitment to the project at hand. After taking a break from making art for four years, which she characterized as "finally having an adolescence," she returned to learn photography, became accomplished in the darkroom, combined photography with drawing, and returned to painting in oils. Even in her photography we see her commitment to form in space, providing a sharp edge and a third dimension, suggesting an undefined depth. In the image here, the black shadow crossing the stairway provides an edge of light, extending the unseen space, providing a setting for a small curled fallen leaf.

It is in her 9H series of meticulous drawings with a very hard pencil that she shares her experience of space, which she described in a later lecture at Mills College where she held a professorship. She said, *I suddenly felt very, very quiet and meditative. These are very tiny. They are sort of like Chinese silk in their final effect. They*

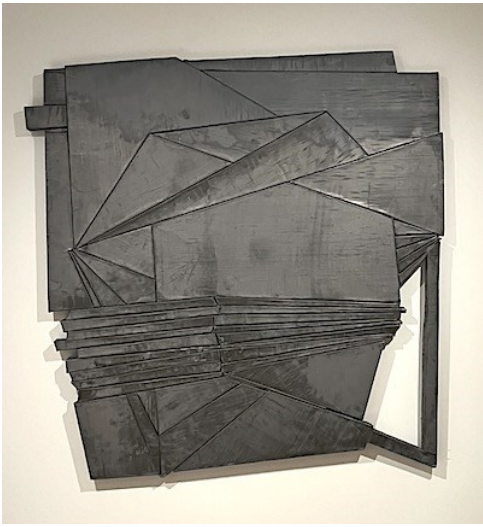


Jay DeFeo, *Untitled*, 1973, gelatin silver print, DeFeo Foundation.



Jay DeFeo, *Untitled (9H Pencil Series)*, 1981, graphite on paper, DeFeo Foundation. The image is virtually sculpted by thousands of strokes of lead pencil, rising and coiling off the paper.

Wyatt Kahn Reinvisions the Canvas as the Art Work Itself, extending into the space around it. Our *Untitled (Him/Her)*, like much of Kahn's work, invites quiet contemplation. His surfaces are subtle, often soft, the outlines definitive, sometimes piling up, implying movement. He thinks of his work as drawings, and in fact every work begins from drawings. The "Him/Her" subtitle refers to his original drawing on white velum for the work, which he continued to evolve into an abstracted form. He then cut wood panels into the shapes formed, wrapped them individually in lead sheets and reassembled them into a single image supported by a joined frame. We may or may not pick up clues to his original drawing, but its presence is essential to the work of exploring the relationship



Wyatt Kahn, *Untitled (Him/Her)*, 2018, lead on panel, SBMA purchase from Luria/Budgor Family Foundation

between representation and abstraction

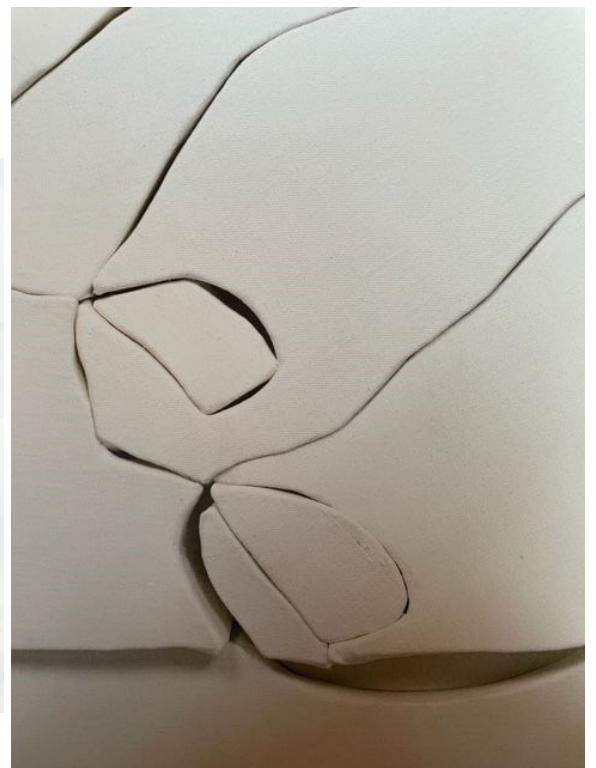
Wyatt Kahn (b.1983) grew up in New York City where he now lives with his wife, China Chow, an actress, and has his studio. His undergraduate work in sculpture at the Art Institute of the Univ. of Chicago was completed in 2006 with a BFA, and after his study at Hunter College he received his MFA in 2013. By this time he was already represented internationally by major galleries and had been given one man shows in New York City, London, Los Angeles, Zurich and Rome. His first museum show, "Object Paintings," opened at the Contemporary Art Museum Saint Louis in the Fall of 2015 when he was 32.



Wyatt Kahn in his NYC studio 2017.

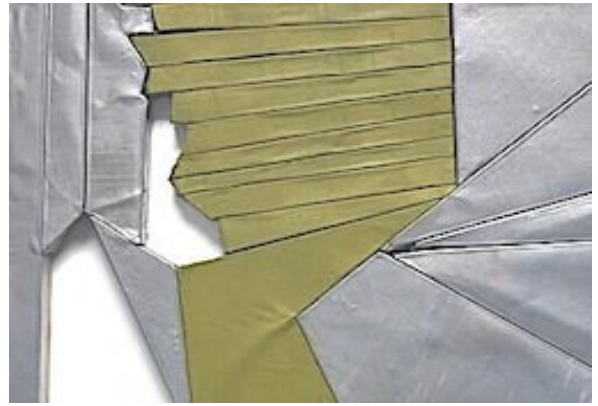
Kahn sees himself as part of evolving art history, not for his skill or precision, which he says he lacks, but for his grasp of movement and openings. Not in repeating what has been done but in probing toward another turn. Not in developing a school or a defined style, but in asking the next question. I began to "get" him as I lingered over the pages of his catalogues. The enlarged detail of his white on white panels touched me as human, embodying a surprising humility. He says his work allows the viewer to "experience the errors in the process that reveal my hand and the very human experience of imperfection."

In an interview with the curator of his Saint Louis CAM exhibition, Kahn shared his process in the studio, which always begins with a representational drawing. He begins the process of abstraction, altering the drawing by whiting out lines, sometimes making copy machine reproductions as the original drawing is crowded with changes. Years of these drawings are scattered throughout his studio, in different stages of moving from representation to abstraction. He calls these "unresolved draw-



Wyatt Kahn, *Weights*, 2016, linen on linen on panel, Lisa and Danny Goldberg Collection, Sydney. Right: Enlarged detail

ings.” When the drawing is “resolved,” he begins the process of producing an object. First he enlarges the drawing to the planned size of the final work and then draws the sections on a board, cutting the board with a circular saw or jigsaw into the shapes of the drawing, coding them for reassembly and attaching Baltic birch strips around the edges, producing panels. Then the process of covering the panels begins. It may be with thin sheets of lead, as is the case in our *Him/Her*. Or it may be stretched fabric, typically in two layers, the first a white cotton/linen blend and the second a slightly ivory linen. The individual panels are then assembled into a single composition and he



Wyatt Kahn, *Untitled (green)*, 2019, oil stick on lead on panel.

adds a backing. As he says, “That’s the process in a nutshell.”

In viewing Kahn’s paintings as sculptures, we are aware of the space around and through the work, as if it were free-standing, as well as the worked material and complex surfaces. In viewing them as paintings, we are aware of drawn representation, now abstracted, color, texture, frame, canvas. Human meaning is enhanced by the sense of the artist’s touch, the small imperfections, the coming together of the separate parts into a personal whole.

In his desire to “further the merger of abstraction and representation” we see formations from past works emerging in altered contexts in his recent work as well as the use of color. In the green work we recognize the piled parallel lines as similar to those in our *Him/Her*. Consistent throughout is the prominence of negative space, the sense of actual objects within the shapes, a clear connection to the world of representation.

The reflective lead surfaces not only add motion but also a warm, soft texture, rendering the surface something we can actually feel.

Wyatt Kahn, *Coti/Cosi*, 2018, oil stick on lead on panel.

Representation becomes more direct in his *Coti/Cosi*, 2018, painted following the birth of his daughter, the familial ties conveyed through textures, overlaid figures, the intricate interweaving of the shaped parts. The history of this image is a long as painting itself, from the Madonna and child to this crying baby with parents.

We are reminded that Kahn admired Jay DeFeo for “pushing painting to the limits of sculpture.” To this he adds, “I am trying to push sculpture to the limits of painting.” ■

References:

Jay DeFeo, *A Retrospective*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 2012.

Jay DeFeo, *Chiaroscuro*, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, 2013.

Wyatt Kahn, Galerie Eva Presenhuber Exhibition Catalog, JRP/Ringier, Zurich, 2017.

Wyatt Kahn, *Object Paintings*, Contemporary Art Museum Saint Louis, 2015.

Wyatt Kahn Interview video <https://www.xavierhufkens.com/artists/wyatt-kahn>, 2017.

THE LAST PAGE

THROUGH
VINCENT'S EYES
VAN GOGH
AND HIS SOURCES



The Van Gogh catalogue can now be purchased
online through the store:

<https://sbmastore.net/collections/exhibition-catalogues/products/through-vincents-eyes>

Editor Loriwindsormohr@gmail.com

