

NINA CULLINAN PAPERS

Filmed by the Archives of American Art,
Smithsonian Institution. Lent for filming
by Miss Nina Cullinan, Houston, Texas in
March, 1979.

NINA CULLINAN PAPERS

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1965-68, 1970

Correspondence

THE HOUSTON POST

March 8, 1965

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OVETA CULP HOBBY
President and Editor

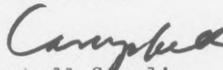
2410 POLK AVE.
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77001
FAIRFAX 3-3131

Dear Miss Cullinan:

The photographer finally got around to making your print this morning and it turned out that the picture you admired was a fake. We took a head off one print and pasted it down on another. The photographer said he was sorry and asked me to please send you the three prints from which this bit of cheating was done. The days of yellow journalism are still with us, I guess, but sometimes the women's department people think of the victim's vanity.

Please come see us.

Best wishes,



Campbell Geslin.

No. Post

Feb. 24 '65



MR AND MRS MARCEL DUCHAMP ARE HONORED AT RECEPTION
With James Johnson Sweeney, Director of Museum, and Mrs Sweeney

—Post Photos by Dell Van Dusen







THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

JAMES JOHNSON SWEENEY DIRECTOR

March 8, 1966

Dear Nina,

We came across this in our files.
And because of the abbreviated address we
wonder if the original ever reached you?

With all best.

Sincerely,



Miss Nina Cullinan
3694 Willowick Road
Houston, Texas 77019

JJS:cew
Encl.

1001 BISSONNET HOUSTON TEXAS 77005

THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

HOUSTON TEXAS 77005

SUPPORT YOUR MUSEUM



Miss Nina Cullinan
3694 Willowick Road
Houston, Texas 77019

LAWRENCE S. KUBIE, M. D.
3900 N. CHARLES STREET
BALTIMORE, MD. 21218

November 10, 1965

Miss Nina Cullinan
Willowwyck
Houston, Texas

My dear Miss Cullinan:

For me the highpoint of my visit to Houston was the opportunity to visit the Museum of Fine Arts early on Saturday morning, and to wander through that beautiful show with Mr. Sweeney. I know that you are in no small part responsible for it and I want to express to you my deep appreciation. It gave me an entirely new idea of how pictures can and should be shown. The only trouble is that now I do not think I will ever be content with a show that is hung differently.

It was also a pleasure and privilege to meet you. I hope to have that opportunity again.

Cordially and gratefully yours,

Lawrence S. Kubie, M. D.

LSK: jh

*file under
Hessie Years*

Unfortunately,
the Zero X
machine will
not digest
paper larger
than this —
So I couldn't
superimpose
"SAN FRANCISCO
EXAMINER" —
Maybe you
could paste
that part over
the blutrec
picture of the

Astrodome -

Wendy will
really be
terrifically
pleased about
a bracelet -

Many thanks
for the invitation
- am afraid I
will probably be
in the middle of
dinner then -
will see you at
the ball -
love, Marion

Texas Art - Iron to Astrodome

Alexander Fried

What is art? This is an old question—with many answers, and in the end, with no answer.

Art, according to some modern aesthetes, is any sense experience at all that makes you feel you want to call it an art experience. Hence art is what it is and where you find it.

In a visit to Houston, Texas, for the recent opening of a new concert hall opera house, I discovered a surprising quantity of visual art experiences, on many levels, and in surprising places.

For a city like Houston to have an art museum is nothing unexpected — something short of a top-rank museum, but an extensive one, with many important merits and big-city direction.

For a 20-year-old college, the University of St. Thomas, to hold an exhibit called "Made of Iron" also would not seem unusual — except that the show was so beautifully, comprehensively chosen, in its 500-piece range from antiquity through the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque, Oriental, folk arts, etc. to our own day when the mashed body of an automobile also is sculpture.

That the new Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts has hung in its superb, lofty lobby a swooping sculpture of silvery rods and gilt wires by Richard Lippold, of New York, was standard procedure. The ingenious Lippold has placed sculpture in New York's Philharmonic Hall as well.

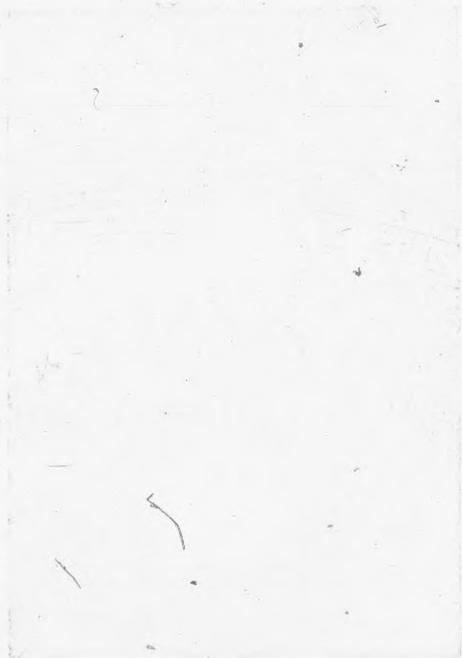
* * *

WHAT MAY PUZZLE YOU, though, is that I even found art experiences, more or less valuable, at NASA, the government's Manned Spacecraft Center; and at the famous Houston sports Astrodome. Art? There?

On a NASA tour, I saw big models of portions of spacecraft — sheer bundles of machinery — that had precisely the look of modern mechanistic sculpture.

And when, peering into a mock space-rocket cabin, I saw uncanily wax dummies of astronauts, in space suits, and tightly sealed amid Honeycombe of gadgetry, the sensation was much like seeing surrealist social commentary sculptures by artists like Kienholz.

But whereas the Kienholz sort of commentary concentrates on what is really fragile in life, NASA sculpture



HOUSTON'S UNIQUE SPORT ASTRODOME

It looks and acts like "Pop" art sculpture

puts superman wings of optimism into its flights of infinite imagination.

* * *

AS TO THEIR ASTRODOME, Houstonians call it the biggest "Pop" in the world. That it is. It is also the world's biggest "Pop" art construction, with added suggestions of hard-edge visual art and kinetic sculpture.

Even Texans see the fun of the Astrodome. The tour guides' commentaries were three quarters proud and one quarter satirical.

Under the girdered roof of the Astrodome, the Houston

Astros play baseball. The boogie, the spirit of the boogie, in all sorts of standard rhythms and color schemes. It has blues, through to funk, more than the visual, in the crisp feeling of the stadium's climate.

In its fantastic collage of possibilities, the Astrodome houses college football, bloodless bullfights, polo, boxing conventions, circuses, rodeos and livestock shows and church revivals. Its seating capacity is changeable, up to 60,000 seats.

What invites hilarity, in its glib feat of engineering, is its use of plastic, vividly green "Astroturf" to cover the playing fields — a synthetic pseudo-grass that is laid out in patches gripped together by zippers.

Kinetic art — the art of movement — joins the "Pop" art effect when a Houston ball player hits a home run, and the 82 million scoreboard flares up like a gigantic pinball machine, for a 30-second electric light show, picturing cowboys, Indians and general hurrah.

* * *

OF COURSE, the Houston Museum and the University of St. Thomas art department are serious matters. A few years ago the museum got architect Mies van der Rohe to build it an addition. The main new element is a vast, tall, glass-faced gallery, which in its scale, light and design may well be the most beautiful, large museum gallery in the world.

Director of the museum is that genial, if fanatical, partisan of avant-garde art, James Johnson Sweeney. However, the museum is versatile, running a liberal course among old masters, the South Seas, pre-Columbians, and the moderns from Cezanne to a big figure cutout that is surely the silliest Picasso I've seen anywhere.

Sweeney is so persuasive that, as part of a month's civic art festival to honor the new Jesse Jones Hall, he was able to charm banks and business firms into posting sculptures by such moderns as Calder, Tinguely and Manisul at key indoor and outdoor points all over Houston's downtown.

The late Jermaine MacAvey, of San Francisco, was for some time director of exhibits at St. Thomas. Now the director, formerly associated with her, is the French-born art patroness Dominique de Menil. Her "Made of Iron" appears to have been only one of a series of scholarly sensitive exhibits that any museum could be proud to put on.

We hear a great many things about Texas. My report from Houston is that it has an art life, too.

Dear Miss Cullinan.

This is a terribly belated
note of thanks to you for your
magnificent gesture of giving
Cullinan Hall to us.

I was out of the city when
the San Francisco exhibition opened



Miss Anna Cullinan
3694 Willowick Drive
Houston, Texas

and have seen it just recently. It's
a breathtaking show, and there
can be no other space which
could house it so handsomely.

Both you and M. Summey
are to be congratulated!

Monday,
the twentieth

Sincerely,

Louise

Louise Ferraro
3711 San Felipe Road
Houston

The spirit behind Cullinan Hall was to
find the best available architect - so why
not continue this spirit into decorations
which are Art Forces themselves? Love -
September 30, 1968

Mrs. Fred Buxton
Museum of Fine Arts
5700 Main
Houston, Texas

Dear Mary,

Edward Gilbert, with his characteristic generosity, has offered to donate his services to the Museum for its Fantasy-Polyethylene Ball. He has greatly enjoyed his association with the Ball Committee and the Staff and he feels privileged to work in Cullinan Hall. He has, in fact, delayed his return to important business in England in order to supervise the final details for October 4th.

I have, however, purchased Mr. Gilbert's wash drawings and would like to present them to the Museum with the hope that these drawings will be the nucleus of a collection of future designs; and that, say ten years hence, a retrospective exhibit of all Museum Balls be shown in the Blaffer room. There have been beautiful and imaginative parties in Cullinan Hall conceived by gifted Houstonians, and I am only sorry that there are, to my knowledge, no pictorial records. Perhaps some could be painted from memory!

Because the English Speaking Union has taken an initiative in providing the services of a distinguished Briton, is it beyond the realm of possibility for the Alliance Francaise and the Pan American Round Table to offer the talents of well known French and South American designers in the future years? It occurs to me that Cullinan Hall, designed by one of the greatest living architects, could present a challenge each fall to creative designers wherever they may be in the world.

Very sincerely yours,

Mrs. Kenneth Dale Owen

cc: Miss Nina Cullinan ✓
cc: Mr. Ford Hubbard

MEMO

from the
Desk of

Maxine Cook

10-14-68

I would appreciate your
looking over the enclosed Museum
history and making any, changes,
additions, deletions etc. you like.

Thank you,

Maxine Cook

THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS OF HOUSTON

HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM

The Museum of Fine Arts is an organization which dates back to the founding of the Houston Art League in 1900. The building was opened to the public in 1924 and became the first art museum in the state. A group of public-minded citizens founded the parent organization of the Museum for the purpose of placing pictures in school rooms and as its activities expanded, plans were made for organizing a museum. The ground was given jointly by the Hermann Estate and Mr. and Mrs. Joseph S. Cullinan. Under the leadership of Mrs. Henry B. Fall and the fund raising acumen of the late William Clifford Hogg, the first unit of the building was opened on April 12, 1924. This was followed by three additional units, made possible by funds raised by Mr. Hogg, opened in January 1926. The name of the organization was changed to The Museum of Fine Arts of Houston. In the fall of 1953 the Museum opened the Robert Lee Blaffer Memorial Wing, given by Mr. and Mrs. John H. Blaffer, and the Frank Prior Sterling Wing, given by Mrs. Harris Masterson and her family in memory of Mrs. Masterson's father, Frank Prior Sterling. The second floor of the Sterling Wing houses the Hogg Brothers Collection of Paintings by Frederic Remington, American Indian artifacts and Pre-Columbian art from Mexico and the first floor of this is now the Masterson Junior Gallery, made possible by the gift of the same donors. In 1954 funds for the Cullinan Wing were given by Miss Nina Cullinan, and at the same time gifts from Mrs. Harry C. Wiess and Mr. and Mrs. Jesse H. Jones were presented to remodel the older portions of the Museum.

The primary objective of the Museum is the promotion and perpetuation of a Fine Arts spirit in Houston. The Museum serves this purpose through its collection and preservation of art works, research, and study for the advancement of knowledge, and exhibition and education for the diffusion of knowledge.

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Many people ask how the Museum acquires works of art. It is a tribute to Museum friends that the excellent collections have been formed almost entirely through gifts and bequests of works of art, or purchase funds made available by individuals and groups. Historic and contemporary painting, sculpture and graphic art, as well as Egyptian antiquities, Greek and Roman art objects, American-Indian art and the decorative arts such as textiles, laces, furniture, ceramics and jewelry are to be found in the collections.

In 1944 Edith A. and Percy S. Straus of New York City bequeathed their internationally distinguished collection to the Museum. Some of the outstanding artists of the Italian Renaissance are the Master of the Straus Madonna, Fra Angelico, Sano di Pietro, Vivarini, Giovanni Bellini, and Francesco Guardi. These are to be found in the Wiess Gallery along with a group of small bronzes representing sculptors such as Vittorio Ghiberti, Antonio del Pollaiuolo, Benvenuto Cellini, and Andrea del Verrocchio.

The Robert Lee Blaffer Memorial Collection was begun by Mrs. Blaffer late in 1947, and has been added to by her family. Saint Catherine and Saint John the Baptist by Giovanni di Paolo, Portrait of Elizabeth van der Meeren by Frans Hals, and two scenes of the Grand Canal by Canaletto emphasize the careful selectivity of this collection. Among the more outstanding recent paintings are Madame Cezanne in Blue by Paul Cezanne, Still Life with Bouquet by Renbir, and La Promenade by Edouard Vuillard.

The Samuel H. Kress Collection, given in 1953, is composed of significant paintings marking the epoch of the High Italian and Spanish Renaissance. Gentileschi, Cavallino, Bellotto, Murillo, and Goya are but a few of the recognized masters to be found in the Jones Galleries.

The Bayou Bend Collection of watercolors, prints, and drawings, initiated in 1939, is a widely representative study of the graphic arts. The Bayou Bend Collection of Indian Art of the Southwest was begun in 1944, and is considered one of the finest of its kind. Its forte lies in the prehistoric and historic Pueblo pottery of New Mexico, a most complete group of the sacred Kachinas, Navajo sandcast silver, and paintings of the Kiowa and Omaha tribes.

Although quite small, the classical collection contains many fine examples of prehistoric and Cycladic pottery, Greek tanagra figurines, Roman and Syrian glass, and Greek and Byzantine gold jewelry.

The Hogg Brothers Collection of the works of Frederic Remington was bequeathed to the Museum in 1943. It consists of 65 paintings and watercolors by the pioneer artist of the Old West and is considered one of the finest public collections of Remington in the United States.

The collection of contemporary art is beginning to grow and it is planned to be representative of the American and European artists who are working and creating for us today in the twentieth century.

The permanent collections are supplemented every year by twenty or more special exhibits. These exhibitions cover all phases of art; prints, painting, sculpture, ceramics, photography and design in which every trend of art, modern and historic, is represented.

MANAGEMENT

The policies of the Museum are governed by a board of trustees, the advisory committee and the Mayor of Houston, ex-officio. The officers of the board are elected by the trustees, who also appoint the director who is the administrative head of the organization.

FINANCE

The Museum is dependent almost entirely upon membership dues and income from endowments. A small appropriation of the operating expense of the Museum is made annually by the City of Houston. The greater support comes from dues and private gifts. The Houston Independent School District assigns two teachers for special work at the Museum and for lectures in the public schools. The expenses of this project are paid directly by the Houston Independent School District.

HOURS

The Museum is open from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and noon to 6:00 p.m. Sunday. From October to May the Museum is open until 10:00 p.m. each Wednesday. The Museum is closed on Monday. No charge for admission is made at any time.

ACTIVITIES

The Museum Education Department offers art classes for both adults and children. In cooperation with the Houston Independent School District, the Museum offers gallery tours, conducted by Junior League docents, for 6th grade children four days a week and scholarship classes for Houston children weekdays after school. A free sketch class and story hour for children is offered each Saturday.

The Museum regularly schedules a series of motion pictures, concerts, and lectures during the year. Special gallery tours for children and adults may be arranged by appointment.

CULLINAN HALL

On July 16, 1954, a formal contract was signed by representatives of The Museum of Fine Arts of Houston and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe to confirm the famed architect as the designer of Cullinan Hall, a \$625,000 addition to the Museum which would be open to the public October 11, 1958. Mies van der Rohe was chosen as architect of Cullinan Hall by a building committee appointed by the Board of Trustees of the Museum, of which Frank G. Coates was president. Money to build a new hall and to maintain it was given by Miss Nina J. Cullinan in memory of her parents, the late Joseph Stephen and Lucie Halm Cullinan, who were early benefactors of the Museum. Miss Cullinan, in offering her financial gift, was concerned that the structure be designed, and its construction supervised, by an architect of international reputation for designing public buildings of the museum type. She did not stipulate what architect. Miss Cullinan's only other request concerning the building was that the more than 10,000 square feet of exhibition space be made available on occasion to the Contemporary Arts Association of Houston in addition to that Museum's existing building.

The basement and main floor construction is flat slab reinforced concrete, and the superstructure a welded structural steel frame. The roof is supported by four 82 foot long, five foot deep plate girders above the roof plate. This system allows a column-free, flexible exhibition hall, approximately 10,000 square feet in area. The ceiling of the main floor is 30 foot high. The building is enclosed with neutral gray tinted plate glass in steel bar frames supported by steel wide flange mullions on the north, east and west, except for the outer bays on the north which are of brick. Other materials used are Roman travertine for the entrance stairs and terrace, green Venetian terrazzo floors and stairs and plaster walls and ceilings. General lighting for the main hall is from the perimeter of the ceiling and outlets for supplementary exhibition lighting are provided in the floor and ceiling. The building is completely air-conditioned. The lower level of Cullinan Hall contains storage and service facilities as well as studios for the Museum School and minor exhibition space along the curving brick corridor. The stairs at the east and west sides of the hall allow circulation to the basement and to second floor mezzanines leading to the existing second floor galleries and will also connect with the future second floor. The raised terrace on the north forms the new main entrance to the Museum. The east and west entrances are for the Museum School and receiving respectively.

FUTURE PLANS

Future plans call for the erection of a two-story building, four sides of glass, which would connect Cullinan Hall, making Cullinan a sort of enclosed patio between the earliest building and the latest.



DOMINICK & DOMINICK,
INCORPORATED

First City National Bank Bldg., Houston, Texas 77002

Telephone CA 4-8363

Dear Miss Cullenan :

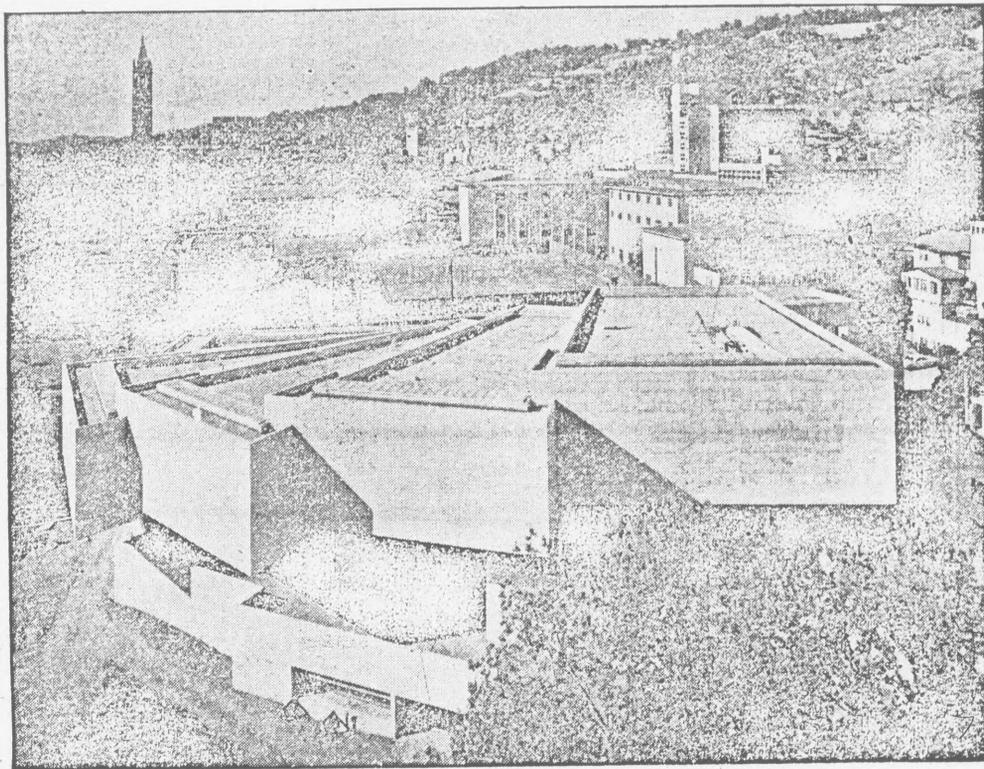
This is the article
we discussed from the
Los Angeles Times.

Page 2 makes reference
to Cullenan Hall.

Regards,

M. K.

From Alexander K. McLanahan



A topside view of the \$4.8 million Art Museum which opened Saturday at UC Berkeley. Mario J. Ciampi was designer.

Berkeley's Overwhelming Art Museum

BY HENRY J. SELDIS

BERKELEY—Amidst the architectural chaos of the UC Berkeley campus a truly distinguished \$4.8 million building designed by Bay Area architect Mario J. Ciampi, opened its doors Saturday.

No state funds went into the construction of the spectacular fan-shaped structure. Students are not likely to damage or destroy it since it was funded largely by \$4.4 million of their registration fees.

Plans for the unorthodox concrete structure were triggered in 1963 when the famous New York abstractionist

Hans Hofmann donated 45 of his canvases to the university and \$250,000 to house them. They began to take shape when Peter Selz, then curator of painting and sculpture at New York's Museum of Modern Art, accepted the directorship of the proposed University Art Museum. A year later a national competition won Ciampi the commission to design the building.

Its interior space is an overwhelming experience all its own. Ramps and stairs connect various gallery levels which contain 31,000 square feet in exhibition area. Looking up the interior

of the building from the ground floor one sees a fascinating maze of concrete troughs, somehow resembling naval command bridges, jutting into the enormous shell.

No doubt this great hall will prove to be ideal for those vanguard directions in art that seek to present creative processes divorced from material form and are breaking the barriers between the media of sound, sight and touch. The new University Art Museum may well turn out to be the one structure in the country ideal for monumental or ephem-

Please Turn to Page 49

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University Art Museum interior looking from the entrance toward central core and rising galleries and ramps.

Museum Opens at Berkeley

Continued from First Page

eral experimentations in art which are based on concepts that reject the traditional museum functions of acquiring, preserving and exhibiting art objects.

But nearly all of the often astoundingly fine works in the museum's opening exhibition (only partly installed during my preopening visit)—even those that would seem enormous in the largest gallery of, let's say the new Pasadena Museum, are reduced to postage size when seen from one of the building's interior ramps. Even the mural size canvas Sam Francis has painted for the occasion loses the impact of scale although its at once subtle and strong coloring and its glowing white space make it one of the few works here that can compete with the sculptural qualities of the museum's interior at all.

Partitions constructed to hold the majority of the paintings shown make a feeble contrast to the concrete walls. It takes those 45 Hofmann canvases hung on the museum's top floor to make you temporarily unaware of the architecture's strength and strangeness.

Of course, people the country over will come to see exhibitions here in years to come just because of the extraordinary personality of the building that contains them. Yet in exhibitions such as the ambitious, encyclopedic "Excellence" show to be on view here to Jan. 9, the individual work of art is—at least in most instances—completely overwhelmed by its surroundings.

No matter how much I admire the building in itself as a rather revolutionary architectural achievement, its suitability as a place to exhibit works of art—as we have known them to date—is not far greater than that of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum building on New York's Fifth Avenue, which will always be regarded more highly for its style than for its utility.

Among the countless large and small art galleries that have been built in the United States in the past 20 years there are only a handful conceived by architects—sometimes as famous as Mies van der Rohe, whose Cullinan Hall in Houston is perhaps the very best exhibition space in the country— who were big enough to allow the consideration of function to take priority over their own needs to express themselves in grandiose architectural gestures.

Yet it may well be that a growing familiarity with the new University Art Museum will make us less aware of its structural muscularity and more appreciative of the marvelous interior space that it provides. Yet it is hard to overcome the notion that the building will always be at its best when empty—or at least undivided by partitions, which are absolutely necessary for any painting exhibitions to be held in it.

While questioning the suitability of this building to its purposes, its existence must be hailed as the arrival of a new, badly needed focal point for a wide range of fine arts and film activities in the Bay Area. Through its University Art Museum Council, the

new museum will make its impact felt in the community. But its resourceful director, Peter Selz, is determined to see to it that the needs of students and faculty be its primary concern. It is for this reason that he aims to establish a substantial permanent collection which would allow students and teachers to have immediate access to first-rate examples from various periods of art history without crossing the Bay to San Francisco.

Selz and his dynamic young assistant director Tom Freudenheim are already planning an exciting list of exhibitions and publications apt to make their institution a major force on the California scene, which it had already been becoming through their activities in temporary quarters.

Other exhibitions, often focusing on young vanguard artists of the region, will be staged by Brenda Richardson, who already has several top shows to her credit and is emerging as a perceptive and sensitive art critic.

One of the most popular features of the new University Museum is apt to be its imaginative film program directed by 29-year-old Sheldon Renan.

Under construction for three years, the largest university museum in the country opens with a qualitatively and quantitatively memorable exhibition.

"Excellence: Art from the University Community" comprises 600 works of art from a wide variety of periods and cultures.

Loans for the exhibition have come from individuals, directly or indirectly connected with the University of California. There are loans from Norton Simon who is a regent and from J. Paul Getty who is an alumnus. A great Copley portrait comes from the collection of Alice Erving, a UC Santa Barbara art affiliate. Painter Sam Francis calls Berkeley his alma mater. The UCLA Art Council is well represented as is the University Art Museum's new national committee.

UC Berkeley's Lowie Museum of Anthropology and UCLA's Museum and Laboratories for Ethnic Art and Technology have been primary lenders of African, Oceanic and American works of extremely high quality. More than 150 works come from the museum's own permanent collection.

Reports of the festive and intellectually nourishing opening weekend which brought art experts and collectors from all over the country will appear in Monday's View section.

Selz asserts that the inaugural show indicated "the range of interest and the standard of quality which the museum has set for itself. The year 1970 might not seem the most propitious moment in the history of our country to open a museum but the contemplation of works of art from all periods of history, from all cultures of mankind, can lead to a greater understanding of our problems and place them in a universal context. The function of a museum in the broadest sense is to endow life with moral significance by means of a dynamic and meaningful presentation of works of art, no matter whether they are from periods long past or are now in the process of creation."

fetch \$200,000. So the people to sell, and a country, particularly the sort of thing that country as being a lot are great efforts made lectures."

The speaker should Watson, Surveyor of has been director of don for the past eight English gentleman, he's amused at the future at UCLA today

"I'm not really, to ing. I'd rather write should do. Yes, I su the word. There's a the States and the someone like Sir, Ke ma donna among I thought his Civilian

Francis Watson is viously a good lect Not only is he the the Wallace Collect Of Art at Oxford ar Professor for a year for longer!" When Angeles as represen said, "No, I'm going suppose I wouldn't what I am."

UCLA has been was the case of th for a change") and from his many job ture on painting o view painting. It books I ever wrote ized in the study tures will range l the Middle Ages t ry, but they'll co century. It was a number of travel tographic era. Th appears with the marily concerne ent. Venice is fr

He talks about might be old c good subject to t tries because he than any other n lers in the 18t at that time com Grand Tour of B wanted to bring English were Someone said a spoiled Canalet asked for his p this emphasizes ing the Seven i in the tourist, looked for work aletos downsta

We're talkin office on the t 18th-century n Oxford St., Lo Hertford Hou