IMCA’s interim museum location has reopened!

Please visit our newly refreshed website for information about the exhibition currently on view and everything else you need to know to plan an in-person visit. At this time advance booking is not required.

In Remembrance: William T. Wiley

William T. Wiley, a founder of the Bay Area Funk art movement, died on Sunday, April 25, 2021 at the age of 83. He was born in Bedford, IN and raised in Indiana, Texas, and Washington before moving to California to study at California School of Fine Arts (now San Francisco Art Institute), where he received his BFA in 1960 and MFA in 1962. Over the course of his career, Wiley pursued artistic expression in almost every conceivable medium—from painting, collage, found object construction, sculpture, and printmaking, to music, performance art, theater, and film.

At the age of 23, Wiley presented his first solo exhibitions at the Staempfli Gallery (New York, NY)
and the Hansen Fuller Gallery (San Francisco, CA). And a year after receiving his MFA, he joined
the first-generation art faculty at UC Davis with fellow artists Robert Arneson, Roy DeForest,
Manuel Neri, and Wayne Thiebaud. Some of his students included Deborah Butterfield, Stephen
Laub, Bruce Nauman, and Richard Shaw, who subsequently became important and influential
artists. “During the 60s, Wiley was grouped in with a loose movement largely centered around the
Bay Area known as Funk art, which marked a turn away from the styles associated with Abstract
Expressionism toward figurative modes that were cartoonish, surreal, and often crass. Several of
Wiley’s colleagues, including Manuel Neri and Robert Arneson, were also a part of that
movement, and their art was later included in Peter Selz’s 1967 Berkeley Art Museum
exhibition Funk!” (artnews.com)

Wiley was the recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship in 2004 and five years later the Smithsonian
American Art Museum presented, What’s It All Mean: William T. Wiley in Retrospect, a
retrospective exhibition of his career. In 2019, Hosfelt Gallery (San Francisco, CA) presented a
solo exhibition of his work entitled, Sculpture, Eyes Wear Tug Odd. Gallerist Todd Hosfelt said,
“You could never describe Wiley as simply one type of artist. Wiley was wily and worked fearlessly
in film, performance, installation, sculpture, even watercolor when it was considered old-fashioned
and unfashionable. He played harmonica and sang and used some of his sculptures as
percussion instruments. He even cast himself as Mr. Unnatural in a series of theatrical
performances he made while wearing a dunce cap to accentuate his character. He also made
self-portraits of himself in the dunce cap.” (datebook.sfchronicle.com) A comprehensive exhibition
of Wiley’s work, William T. Wiley and the Slant Step: All on the Line, is scheduled to open in
January 2022 at the Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at UC Davis.

Poet, art critic, and curator, John Yau wrote about Wiley for Hyperallergic, “He is a consummate
draftsman for whom the doodle, words, drawing, and the brushstroke are equally important. He
invites the viewer to sort through various languages, from abstraction to figuration, and from
written words to sounds—recognizing that none of it fits neatly together. Wiley’s practice requires
that he constantly unmask himself and become vulnerable. In contrast to a studio practice in
which thinking leads to action, to deciding to do this or that, his makes his ruminations the subject
of much of his work. He is an iconoclast and, in this regard, shares something with his peer Peter
Saul; with an older artist he befriended, H. C. Westermann; and with Philip Guston. Like them, he
is motivated by both aesthetic and ethical reasons to address what I would call the American
psyche. Like them, Wiley wants to tell stories.”

Among the many public collections holding works by Wiley are the Art Institute of Chicago (IL), di
Rosa Center for Contemporary Art (Napa, CA), Dallas Museum of Art (TX), Denver Art Museum
(CO), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (CA), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MA), Museum of
Modern Art (New York, NY), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (CA), Smithsonian American
Art Museum (Washington, DC), Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, MN), and Whitney Museum of
American Art (New York, NY).

IMCA is pleased to include three works by William T. Wiley in its collection, including Voo Doo
Scramble, 1969, pictured above right, and a portrait of Wiley by Robert Arneson, W.T.W. Witness
(William T. Wiley), 1980, above left.
Elanor Colburn (1866 – 1939), born Eleanor Ruth Gump in Dayton, OH, moved with her family to Chicago, IL as a child. She was interested in art from an early age and studied at the Art Institute of Chicago with William Merritt Chase (1849 – 1916) and Frank Duveneck (1848 – 1919). The artist married Harry Eaton in 1886 and together they had a daughter known later as the artist Ruth Eaton Peabody (1893 – 1966). The couple divorced in 1895 and three years later, she married Joseph Elliott Colburn. But the second marriage was not meant to be, either. An announcement in the January 11, 1912 edition of The New York Times reads, “Mrs. Eleanor Ruth Colburn felt the call of art so strongly that she was compelled to leave her husband.” Her “passion for the ocean,” as well as a “wish to be free of domestic responsibility in order to focus on her art,” according to her friend Lucie Hartrath, prompted the artist’s separation from her second husband in 1912. They were divorced by 1915.

In 1924, Colburn moved with her daughter to Laguna Beach and built a studio-home on South
Coast Highway where they lived, painted, and taught art. Together, they became active in the local arts community and Colburn served as director of the Laguna Beach Art Association from 1926 to 1929. The style of Colburn’s early works were impressionist, consistent with her training under Chase, but by the late 1920s she was influenced by Post-Impressionism. Colburn began experimenting with new approaches, particularly Dynamic Symmetry—a mathematical composition theory and natural design methodology formulated by Jay Hambidge—which she employed in her painting, Bathing Baby, pictured above. Colburn’s pencil lines, evidence of this process, are visible in the painting. Colburn changed the spelling of her first name to Elanor in 1927.

_Bathing Baby_ is one of several works by Elanor Colburn in IMCA’s collection and is currently on view in _Radiant Impressions_, curated by Jean Stern. Listen to Stern discuss Colburn and the painting in a recent, recorded conversation with Erin Stout, IMCA curatorial and research associate.

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**Viola Frey (1933 – 2004)** was one of the most influential sculptors of the 20th century. Born and raised on a farm near Lodi, a small town in the northern part of California’s Central Valley, she was interested in art from an early age. Frey attended Stockton Delta College for a year and then transferred to the California College of Arts and Crafts (now California College of the Arts) in Oakland, graduating in 1956. She also studied at Tulane University (New Orleans, LA).

She emerged in the art world of the 1950s where painting, craft, and design occasionally intersected and merged, but were most often siloed as discreet practices. After studying and working in New Orleans and New York City, Frey returned to San Francisco in the 1960s to devote herself primarily to ceramics. At the time, California was home to a vital and vibrant
ceramics community including Frey's contemporaries Robert Arneson, Ron Nagle, Ruth Rippon, Richard Shaw, and Peter Voulkos.

In 2015, art critic David Pagel wrote about Frey, “Like many things Californian, that myth of start-up originality overlooked a considerable bit of history. More than twenty-five years before the artists from the 1980s were celebrated for putting California on the map of the international art world—by hunkering down on their home turf—Viola Frey did something similar, but with significantly less fanfare: As a 26-year-old, she turned her back on the East Coast and everything it had to offer in terms of a career and moved back to California, where she was born, in 1933, and where she stayed—and thrived—until she died in 2004. . . . Frey’s decision to make her life as an artist in California also captures the major attributes that have identified art made on the West Coast over the last half century. These include: free-thinking independence; irreverent humor; unpretentious accessibility; sensuous physicality; simple enjoyment; awkward gracefulness; aw-shucks humility; subterranean sophistication; defy-the-odds optimism; and, above all, a loving embrace of everyday ordinariness—the sense that real beauty resides not in life’s high points, but in those otherwise overlooked moments between big events, big dramas, and headline-grabbing sensations, when unexpected loveliness bubbles up, often in the least likeliest of places and at the least likeliest of times.”

In the 1980s, Frey became well known for her monumental ceramic sculptures—like *Woman in Blue and Yellow II (May Lady)*, pictured above. She had long admired the strength and independence of her grandmothers, who served as inspiration for her commanding female figures. Frey experimented with scale and color glazes that brought an unexpected dynamism to her work. Taken together, the artist made keen and pointed observations about gender and the power issues playing out in mid-20th century America while “helping change the notion that ceramics was inherently a medium for craft, not art.”

Frey’s gallerist, Nancy Hoffman, writes, “Frey is a figurative artist who delighted in painting or drawing figures, faces, profiles, eyes, hands, limbs. She applied her energetic, vigorous color and drawing-line to the form of the human figure which she would hand build over a period of approximately one year. Her women represent everywoman, her men everyman. The monumentality of scale in the figures brings us back to the sensation of childhood when adults were towering pillars in the forest of humanity.”

The Artists’ Legacy Foundation recently published a care manual for Viola Frey’s large-scale sculptures, which features *Woman in Blue and Yellow II (May Lady)* from IMCA’s collection. Through their archival research, the Foundation learned that much of the creative knowledge for constructing these sculptures was previously undocumented and partnered with several organizations, including IMCA, to create this comprehensive resource. During the installation and deinstallation of the sculpture in IMCA’s exhibition, *First Glimpse: Introducing The Buck Collection*, museum staff carefully documented their processes and discussed best practices for the safe handling of the work with Rosa Lowinger Conservation and the Artists’ Legacy Foundation. IMCA subsequently shared its documentation with the Foundation and is honored to be included in the official care manual for public and private collectors of Frey’s large-scale sculptures. To learn more, subscribe to the Foundation’s newsletter, which explores new ways to provide access to Viola Frey’s archives and body of artwork.
UCI Alumni Spotlight

Barbara T. Smith (b. 1931), a foundational figure in West Coast performance art, was born in Pasadena (CA), did undergraduate work in painting, art history, and religion at Pomona College, and received her MFA from the University of California, Irvine in 1971. Smith, along with fellow graduate students Nancy Buchanan and Chris Burden, was also a founding member of F-Space, an experimental exhibition space in Santa Ana (CA).

Writing for the Los Angeles Times in 2011, Sharon Mizota reviewed works by Smith included in two exhibitions for Pacific Standard Time (PST): Art in LA 1945 – 1980. UCI’s University Art Gallery presented The Radicalization of a ’50s Housewife, “an important commemoration of a major work that until now had not found its way into the art historical canon, feminist or otherwise. As Juli Carson noted in her brochure essay, perhaps Smith was too much of a ‘free radical’—for her, liberation meant breaking down the male/female dichotomy altogether—to be fully embraced by mainstream feminism. . . . If Smith’s dramatic turn from classic housewife to free-thinking artist doesn’t fit comfortably into standard feminist narratives, it does make sense in relation to the work of her peers at UCI, where she enrolled in the MFA program in 1969 shortly after her divorce.

Best Kept Secret: UCI and the Development of Contemporary Art in Southern California, 1964 – 1971 at the Laguna Art Museum, attempts to define a scene around the students and teachers at the school, including works by James Turrell, Chris Burden, Nancy Buchanan, Vija Celmins, Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, and others."

Smith was represented by Jean Robert Milant, who founded the gallery/publisher/workshop Cirrus Gallery & Cirrus Editions Ltd. in 1970, creating and presenting groundbreaking prints and seminal exhibitions of painting, sculpture, installation, performance, video, and new media. In its early years, Cirrus worked with Smith and contemporaries such as John Baldessari, Chris Burden, Vija Celmins, Guy de Cointet, Ed Moses, Bruce Nauman, and Ed Ruscha, evidencing the gallery’s longstanding commitment to California-based artists.

In celebration of its 50th anniversary, Cirrus is presenting a new work by Barbara T. Smith, Rocks, Weeds, Dirt. “One of the first artists to adopt the media of xerography, Smith reengages at Cirrus with flatbed photographic technology, placing rocks, weeds, and dirt on the glass of an optical scanner—reprising early works in which she positioned fabric, objects, photographs, and her body on the glass of a leased Xerox 914 photocopy machine. Rocks, Weeds, Dirt uses the physicality of mineralogical and vegetal materials to speak to the artist’s deep sense of commonality in the world. The work recalls the allusion to weeds in Smith’s seminal work at Cirrus in 1971, Field
Smith presented *Field Piece (1968–72)*, pictured above, at F-Space in 1971, before the full installation was shown at Cirrus Gallery. “The work was comprised of 180 semi-flexible, fiberglass, nine-and-a-half-foot tall columns in translucent colors—clear, orange, pink, yellow, and violet—that glowed via an internal light source, forming a dense, delicately industrial forest. Each column also contained a speaker, activated by sensors underneath a foam floor by the audience (also linked to the light) to emit a vibrating drone sound, making the viewer an integral part of its network.” (artsy.net)

Smith’s works are held in the collections of the Archives of the Venice Biennale (Venice, Italy), California Institute of the Arts (Valencia, CA), Hammer Museum at UCLA (Los Angeles, CA), J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles, CA), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (CA), Otis College of Art & Design (Los Angeles, CA), and Pomona College Museum of Art (Claremont, CA), among others. She is also represented by The Box Gallery in Los Angeles (since 2007) and Andrew Kreps Gallery in New York.

**THIS WEEK: Virtual Performative Program featuring Barbara T. Smith**

**Thursday, June 3 | 7 pm (PDT)**

*The Art of Performance @ UCI 6th Edition: Ritual, Performance, Utopian Consciousness and the Videophone* is co-curated and co-directed by Ulysses Jenkins and Deborah Oliver. Featuring Barbara T. Smith and Ulysses Jenkins, with Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz of Mobile Image, this program features pioneering artists who were early experimenters with still-frame videophone technology of the early 1990s. The evening focuses on the artists’ inquiry into the past, present, and future of telecommunications through performance and dialogue in a cultural art context.
Staff Pick
A devoted wanderer, I am often compelled to explore just a bit further. What might be discovered around the next turn? My curiosity and wonder draw me to Channel Pickering Townsley’s *Bend of the River*, 1919.

Invited in, I follow.

A calm, quiet morning, I imagine the slight rustling of leaves, the faint call of a distant meadowlark, and the untamed churning of the river. Gold patches radiate on branch and chaparral, while long, violet tree-shadows slowly form as the Sun begins to burst over the horizon. Intense contrasts of blue and yellow lead to a well-worn, sunlit path that follows the bend. A faraway cottage perches on the bank.

I reluctantly depart the solace of the painting, leaving no footprint, broken twig, or sign of my presence. The scene remains untouched, pristine into perpetuity.

Dora James
Education Coordinator, IMCA
Margaret Kilgallen (1967 – 2001) was born in Washington, DC and received a BA in printmaking from Colorado College in 1989. In the early 90s, she moved to San Francisco where she came to significance working in and around the city’s Mission District. Kilgallen and a group of loosely affiliated artists—including Chris Johanson, Alicia McCarthy, Ruby Neri, and her husband and frequent collaborator, Barry McGee, among others—became known as the Mission School. “Like her peers, Kilgallen was incredibly resourceful; she was an optimist open to the world around her, finding beauty in discarded panels and paper and gathering knowledge from the disparate traditions of sign painting, printmaking and book restoration. She was deliberate in her pursuit of an eclectic array of techniques and influences. . . . Among the most iconic elements of Kilgallen’s work are the monikers and images that stand in for her heroines, each of whom were characters from underappreciated subcultures, women whose achievements occurred on the margins of the mainstream.” (mag.citizensofhumanity.com)

“Kilgallen, a book conservator at the San Francisco Public Library, drew upon old typography, hand-lettered signs, and the gritty urban environment of the Mission, where she lived and worked, to evoke a wistful, rough-edged West Coast landscape. She used leftover latex house paint in vintage circus-poster colors like blood red, ochre, and bird’s-egg blue-green, and, when she wasn’t painting straight on the wall, worked on found wood. She represented women as stoic, defiant, and usually alone—surfing, smoking, crying, cooking, playing the banjo. She admired physical endurance and courage.” (newyorker.com)

Jenelle Porter, contributor to the exhibition catalog for Margaret Kilgallen: that’s where the beauty is, “generously situates Kilgallen in the context of her chosen home in the West, linking her drawing practice to her practice of surfing (both activities tracing free-flowing, liquid lines across intimidatingly blank surfaces) and attaching her oeuvre to a robust Bay Area art history known for its funky, diverse, left-wing public-mindedness. She also places Kilgallen in dialogue with two Bay Area natives: Joan Brown, an expressionist painter known for her images of women, and Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, the house graphic designer at the haute-hippie planned community Sea Ranch.” (bookforum.com)

During the last year of her life, Kilgallen was a teaching assistant for Stanford University professor Enrique Chagoya. She received an MFA on June 17, 2001 and on June 26, 2001 died of
complications from breast cancer at the age of 33, a few weeks after the birth of her daughter Asha.

Listen to Courtenay Finn, curator of Margaret Kilgallen: that’s where the beauty is on The Modern Art Notes Podcast.

Watch “Heroines: Margaret Kilgallen”, a short film made in San Francisco in 2000 in which the artist discusses the female figures she incorporates into many of her paintings and graffiti tags. Loosely based on women she discovered while listening to folk records, watching buck dance videos, or reading about the history of swimming, Kilgallen paints her heroines to inspire others and to change how society looks at women.

MAKING TOGETHER: Heroines
An art-making activity designed for ages 5+, or younger with assistance

Be inspired by the artwork and words of Margaret Kilgallen. “I do have a lot of heroines. I like to paint images of women who I find inspiring, and I don’t like to choose people that everybody knows. I like to choose people that just do small things, and yet somehow hit me in my heart.”

Gather Your Materials
Paint (acrylic, poster, or house paint, your color of choice) or paint pen, paint brush, cup of water, and a paper towel.
You will also need a surface on which to paint. This can be cardboard, kraft paper, a brown grocery or lunch bag, a page from an old book, or a scrap of wood.

Step x Step
Join Faith Lam, UCI student and Humanities Out There intern, for a Making Together video where she demonstrates the activity below.

- Think about a woman or women you admire. They can be someone you know, or someone you don’t. Kilgallen was known for painting Sarah “Fanny” Durack, a 1912
Kilgallen’s paintings often gave form to unique, unsung women. In a 2001 interview for PBS / Art 21, she said, “I often feel like so much emphasis is put on how beautiful you are and how thin you are and not a lot of emphasis is put on what you can do and how smart you are. I would like to change the emphasis of what’s important when looking at a woman.”

- **What are the qualities you admire most about your heroine?** Are they strong, intelligent, courageous, creative, kind, brave, funny, or inspirational?

- **Work from memory or a photograph and paint your heroine using a similar technique to Kilgallen.** Remember, the artist made her simple, graffiti-like works without sketches and celebrated the results that come from working completely by hand.

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**Image credits**


Elanor Colburn, *Bathing Baby*, 1930, Oil on canvas, 36 x 33 in. The Irvine Museum Collection at University of California, Irvine

Viola Frey, *Woman in Blue and Yellow II (May Lady)*, 1983, Ceramic and glazes, 104 x 26 x 17 in. The Buck Collection at UCI Institute and Museum of California Art © Artists’ Legacy Foundation / Licensed by VAGA at ARS, New York.


Barbara T. Smith, 1971, photograph by Jerry Muller. Courtesy of Barbara T. Smith

Channel Pickering Townsley, *Bend of the River*, 1919, Oil on canvas, 25 x 30 in. The Irvine Museum Collection at University of California, Irvine

Margaret Kilgallen, *Untitled (multiple paintings)*, 1999 – 2000, Acrylic on paper and board

Still from Making Together: Heroines video created by Faith Lam

IMCA’s ongoing collections research continues to provide new information, which will result in updates, revisions, and enhancements to object records. At the time of publication image credits are reviewed by IMCA’s curatorial staff and reflect the most current information the museum has in its database but may be incomplete.