New Staff and Gallery Guides

IMCA is pleased to announce the appointment of Katlyn (Kate) Heusner as the new executive director of development responsible for leading the museum’s fundraising agenda. Kate comes to IMCA with over a decade of experience in visual arts organizations and universities and was most recently the managing director of development at the Rady School of Management at UC San Diego.

IMCA is also delighted to recognize its 2021 – 2022 cohort of UCI student Gallery Guides, who serve as public facilitators at the museum, as well as student ambassadors for IMCA on campus. Gallery Guides welcome and orient visitors, protect the art on view, share information about IMCA, and engage visitors in conversation about the art, artists, and ideas presented in exhibitions. Pictured from upper left standing near one of their favorite works in IMCA’s current exhibition, The Resonant Surface: Movement, Image, and Sound in California Painting:

Kim Lara is a fourth-year student majoring in History with a specialization in Education and minoring in Archaeology. She is from South Gate, CA.

Natalie Soibatian is a third-year transfer student from Norco College majoring in Criminology. She was born and raised in Southern California.
Alexandria Ryahl is a second-year graduate student in Visual Art at the Claire Trevor School of the Arts, specializing in research and text-based forms.

Morgan Matthews is a third-year student from Charleston, SC. She is an Art major with a double minor in Art History and Digital Art.

Katherine Li is a third-year International Studies major, planning to minor in Art History. She was born and raised in the Los Angeles area.

IMCA also extends its gratitude to UCI undergraduate students Yidan Cao and Catherine Do, who worked as Gallery Guides this past summer during Radiant Impressions.

Dynamism and Flux

IMCA’s current exhibition, The Resonant Surface: Movement, Image, and Sound in California Painting, examines the sensory experience in painting via four thematic sections. In the third section on dynamism and flux, curator Erin Stout considers the role of imagination in perceiving the world. Artists included in this section often embraced improvisation and forces outside of their control to produce unexpected results. This artistic practice was central to the formation of The Dynaton, a group of three artists—Wolfgang Paalen (1905 – 1959), Gordon Onslow Ford (1912 – 2003, his Constellations and Grasses, 1957, pictured above), and Lee Mullican (1919 – 1998)—
who exhibited their work together in San Francisco during the late 1940s. The name “Dynaton,” which is Greek for “the possible,” encapsulated their objective to visualize alternative realities by using painting methods that helped to liberate their imaginations.

_Constellations and Grasses_ is an example of Onslow Ford’s “line-circle-dot” paintings. Stout explains that the basis for this series came to the artist during a walk through a California redwood forest where he realized that the line, circle, and dot were at the core of all art and creation. Using these basic forms, he then painted automatically—without forethought—while passing into a meditative state. Despite Onslow Ford’s departure from representation to explore what he referred to as “inner-worlds,” his lines, circles, and dots suggest natural phenomena. “In _Constellations and Grasses_, Onslow Ford has balanced the very small and the very large, or the microcosmic and the macrocosmic within a two-dimensional space. As the title suggests, the abstract image plays with representational phenomena like cosmic constellations and earthly fields of grass. The radiating concentric circles also suggest ripples of water across a pond, or waves of sound,” says Stout.

IMCA is pleased to include Gordon Onslow Ford’s _Constellations and Grasses_ in its collection.
Featured Work: *Untitled*

Lee Mullican (1919 – 1998) was born in Chickasha, OK. He attended the Kansas City Art Institute after transferring from the University of Oklahoma in 1941. After graduating in 1942, he was drafted into the US Army and served four years as a topographical draughtsman. In 1959, he was awarded
a Guggenheim Fellowship and spent a year painting in Rome, Italy. He returned to California and joined the faculty of the UCLA Art Department in 1961, where he taught for nearly 30 years.

John Berggruen Gallery wrote about Mullican for its 2007 exhibition *Paintings 1952 – 1968*. “Since he began painting in the late 1930s, Lee Mullican’s work has remained notoriously difficult to pin down to any one particular genre. Mullican's art was influenced by everything he saw in the environment around him, by both the phenomenal and the mundane, and made no distinction in its depiction of the grandiose and minute components of existence. . . . Perhaps the most identifiable characteristic evident in all of Mullican’s canvases is his preference for the printer’s ink knife over the brush as a primary decorative tool—the effect of which can be seen in the sharp, repetitive, and obsessively applied lines of paint.”

This striation technique is apparent in *Untitled* (circa 1950), pictured above. While the precision of the paint application appears to be meticulously pre-planned, Mullican insisted that his process was grounded in spontaneity. “Like Onslow Ford, Mullican employed repetitive and serial mark-making,” says Curator Erin Stout, “to circumvent the so-called rational mind and foreground bodily sensation and unconscious thought in both process and final outcome.”

Read more about Lee Mullican in this 1992 – 1993 oral history interview with art writer and oral historian Paul Karlstrom from the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution.

IMCA is pleased to include several works by Mullican, including *Untitled* in its collection.
Phil Dike (1906 – 1990) was born and raised in Redlands, CA. At the age of 17, he was awarded a scholarship to Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles where he studied under fellow Californians Frank Tolles Chamberlin (1873 – 1961) and Clarence Hinkle (1880 – 1960). Drawn together by their investigation of *plein air* painting, Dike counted Millard Sheets (1907 – 1989) and Phil Paradise (1905 – 1997) among his artist friends. After graduation, Dike traveled to New York City where he furthered his education at the Art Students League, enrolled in private lessons under the tutelage of George Luks (1867 – 1933), and immersed himself in the city’s vibrant arts scene.

The summer of 1930 found Dike living outside of Paris, attending the American Academy of Art at Fontainebleau, and traveling throughout Europe and North Africa. Later that year, Dike returned to California as one of the leading figures in the watercolor movement and to the Chouinard Art Institute as a drawing and painting instructor. By the age of 28, he was receiving national attention and wide acclaim, in part due to his involvement with the California Water Color Society. By 1935, he was also working at Walt Disney Studios where he taught composition and color theory and contributed to animated films such as *Snow White* and *Fantasia.*
After World War II, Dike left Disney and returned to teaching and painting full time. In 1946, he and Rex Brandt (1914 – 2000) formed the highly successful Brandt-Dike Summer School of Painting in Brandt’s studio/home, Blue Sky, in Corona del Mar. The house overlooked Balboa Bay and the entrance to Newport Harbor, providing Dike with direct access to his subject matter of choice, “wind-swept beaches, crystal clear waters, fleets of small sailboats, and lively beach life” (Janice Lovoos and Gordon T. McClelland, Phil Dike, 1988). It was also at this time that Dike’s watercolors slowly moved away from representational painting towards abstraction, evidenced by calligraphic techniques and abstracted geometries introduced into his work. The expressive use of color and the syncopation of the triangular sails in Sail Symphony (completed by 1953), pictured above, invoke the sense of movement, tempo, and musicality suggested by the title of the painting.

In 1950, Dike joined the faculty of Scripps College and Claremont Graduate School as a professor of art, retiring in 1971.

IMCA is pleased to include Sail Symphony among other works by Phil Dike in its collection.
Staff Pick

*SHE PLAYS THE JAROCHO* (2012) by multimedia artist Sonia Romero makes me think of love and longing. The musician holds a small guitar featured in *el son jarocho*, a type of folk music from Veracruz, Mexico with Spanish (Andalusian and Canary Islander), African, and Indigenous roots. I love listening to *son* and imagine that the woman in the linocut print is professing her feelings to an unseen lover. With her strong back facing the viewer, she focuses on the person listening to her serenade on the other side of the fence. Flowers that bloom in the tall bush on the left reach through the slats of the picket fence. They are complemented by the falling flower print in the musician's sundress. The fabric may reference the floral embroidery on black aprons worn in traditional ballet folklórico dance. With the wind gently blowing the blue clouds above, it looks like a perfect day to be in love.

Bridget R. Cooks
Professor of African American Studies and Art History, UC Irvine
Interim Associate Director, IMCA

Teacher Resource Guide

The museum's Education Department is pleased to make available the second in a new series of Teacher Resource Guides, which are designed for grades 3 – 12 to provide context to and understanding of California’s multilayered and complex history, environment, and art. Each module offers images and essays about selected artworks, including suggested discussion questions, and activities that explore the visual arts and other curricula. All publications are free and available on request in either printed form or via download on IMCA’s website.
The newest guide features three works from *The Resonant Surface* including: *Constellations and Grasses* (Gordon Onslow Ford), *San Gorgonio in Spring* (Agnes Pelton), and *Synchromie en orange* [*Synchromy in Orange*] (Morgan Russell).

The Teacher Resource Guide for *The Resonant Surface* will soon be available in print. To request a print version, please check IMCA’s website for an announcement regarding availability or contact the Education Department at imca@uci.edu. Requests for Virtual School Visits can be submitted on IMCA’s website.

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**Making Together: Line. Circle. Dot.**

Visual artist Gordon Onslow Ford considered the line, the circle, and the dot as “three elements at the root of art.” Be inspired by his colorful and dynamic use of these forms in *Constellations and Grasses* (1957).

**Gather your Materials**

Liquid ink or paint (watercolor or acrylic); paintbrushes; a large sheet of paper, canvas, or cardboard; water; and paper towel or cloth.

*Alternative: If ink and/or paint are not available, use pens or markers.*

**Step x Step**

Join Sebastian Vizcaíno Cortés, IMCA community engagement assistant, and Milena Raeber, UCI
student museum educator, during this Making Together video where they demonstrate the activity below inspired by *Constellations and Grasses*.

- Using ink, watercolor, or acrylic paint, fill a large piece of paper, cardboard, or canvas with only dots.
- Start with small movements using just your wrist.
- Next, move your body—your shoulders, arms, waist, or even your legs if you are able—as you make dots through spontaneous gestures.
- Note how changing your physical expression changes the dots.
- Try this same experiment with circles, and then with lines.
- Take notice of how your state of mind or emotions shift as you incorporate movement into the process.

More inspiration:
Read *The Dot* by Peter Reynolds
Upcoming Public Programs

Virtual Workshop: Voice Talk with Odeya Nini
November 5, 12 – 1 pm PT
Free and open to the public. Advance registration is required. Register here.

Gallery Talk with Sofia Gutierrez and Morgan Matthews
November 12, 12 – 1 pm PT
Free, drop-in, and open to the public.

Una charla sobre arte / A Chat about Art
November 13, 3 – 4 pm PT
Free, drop-in, and open to the public.
18 de noviembre 3 a 4 p.m.
Libre y abierto al público. No se requiere registro previo.

Image Credits

Gallery Guides. Photos by Julie Delliquanti.

Gordon Onslow Ford, Constellations and Grasses, 1957, Casein on mulberry paper, 38 x 56 in. The Buck Collection at UCI Institute and Museum of California Art

Lee Mullican, Untitled, circa 1950, Oil on canvas, 24 x 20 in. The Buck Collection at UCI Institute and Museum of California Art

Phil Dike, Sail Symphony, completed by 1953, Watercolor on paper, 22 x 28 in. UC Irvine Institute and Museum of California Art, Gift of The Irvine Museum

Sonia Romero, She Plays the Jarocho, 2012, Linocut, 18 x 14 in. The Buck Collection at UCI Institute and Museum of California Art

Teacher Resource Guide.

Still from Making Together video by Sebastián Vizcaíno Cortés and Milena Raeber

Una charla sobre arte / A Chat about Art. Installation view of The Resonant Surface. Photo by Julie Delliquanti

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.
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