

***Tang Teaching Museum,
Pioneer in Interdisciplinary Programming,
Celebrates 15th Anniversary
with Innovative Exhibitions, Programs, and Events***

Saratoga Springs, N.Y., April 21, 2015/October 20, 2015 – The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, known for its innovative interdisciplinary exhibitions and arts programs, is presenting a series of initiatives to mark the Museum’s 15th anniversary. The Tang combines visual arts with other fields—from economics, to astrophysics, to organic chemistry, and dance—to explore new ideas and perspectives. This approach has become a model for college and university art museums across the country. The Tang’s anniversary in 2015 is a springboard for enhancing the Museum’s programming and its leadership role in the national arts and academic communities.

Programs include: *Affinity Atlas*, an exhibition combining an international roster of contemporary works and an immersive “cabinet of curiosities,” with rotating displays by Skidmore faculty that forge unexpected connections between the works on view; a collaboration and residency with **Mark Allen and Machine Project** to create new installations, performances, and events at the Tang; and a reexamination of the work of **Alma Thomas**.

The Museum is also expanding its community engagement offerings, including artist-led workshops and seminars, programs focused on object-based learning for community groups and public school students, and exhibitions developed and curated by Skidmore students. Detailed information on anniversary initiatives follows below.

“A common thread that weaves together everything we do at the Tang is to envision new connections between objects and ideas—seeing and thinking in unexpected, even provocative, ways,” said Ian Berry, Dayton Director of the Tang Teaching Museum. “We bring artists, students, visitors, and experts together for transformative experiences with art and to further our understanding of what it means to be human. Having been part of the Tang since its launch 15 years ago, it’s inspiring to reflect on what we’ve accomplished—and even more exciting to look to the future.”

EXHIBITIONS

Affinity Atlas

September 5, 2015 – January 3, 2016

Affinity Atlas greets visitors with a cabinet of curiosities-like display of work spanning history and geography. Idiosyncratic treasures from the Tang Teaching Museum collection, together with recent works by contemporary artists, chart an exploratory path across disciplines.

Objects such as African pottery and Southwestern textiles are interspersed with contemporary ceramics, painting, sculpture, photography, and video by artists including Nick Cave, Michelle Grabner, Camille Henrot, Hew Locke, Vik Muniz, Toshiko Takaazu, Sara VanDerBeek, and Fred Wilson. Artworks, images, and objects spanning centuries and continents collide and coalesce in *Affinity Atlas*, forging fresh connections and revealing unexpected affinities through inventive visual juxtapositions.

The exhibition draws inspiration from the pioneering cultural theorist and art historian Aby Warburg's final work, the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. From 1925 until the year of his death in 1929, Warburg theorized about a collective psychology that connects humans across time and space. Forgoing the customary art historical narrative, Warburg instead chose to express his scholarly research through a constellation of some 2,000 images — a visual compendium of his life's research. Warburg named his “picture atlas” after Mnemosyne, the mother of nine Muses and the Greek goddess of the art of remembrance. At the heart of Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* lay an imaginative view of scholarly research that ushered in a new era in the study of images, and offered an innovative approach to visual knowledge.

Affinity Atlas is organized by Dayton Director Ian Berry and supported by Friends of the Tang.

Machine Project — The Platinum Collection (Live by Special Request)

September 19, 2015 – January 3, 2016

Machine Project — The Platinum Collection (Live by Special Request) features works generated by Allen and a group of artist collaborators on-site at the Tang Museum, responding to the campus and local community. The exhibition is both a reflection and a continuation of Machine Project's ongoing exploration of collaborative ways of working. While in residence, Allen is inhabiting the Tang in multiple ways: the gallery is augmented with a theater and Machine Project offices, the elevator becomes a listening station for the *Field Guide to Poets of the Machine Project Region*, and Allen himself is camping in a tent on the roof.

Founded in 2003 by Mark Allen, the Los Angeles-based collaborative Machine Project has worked with hundreds of artists and institutions over the last twelve years to create new ways of seeing and thinking about the world. The organization describes its mission as “collaborating with artists, thinkers, and local communities to produce non-commercial projects that investigate art, performance, technology, science, music, literature, and new ideas for creative engagement.”

Mark Allen is an artist, educator, and curator based in Los Angeles. He is the founder and executive director of Machine Project, a nonprofit performance and installation space investigating art, technology, natural history, science, music, literature, and food in a modest storefront gallery in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. Machine Project also operates as an informal team of artists who collaborate to present work at locations ranging from beaches to museums to parking lots. Under his direction, Machine has produced shows with institutions such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver, the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, and the Walker Museum in Minneapolis. He has produced over 500 events in Los Angeles at the Machine Project storefront space, and recently concluded a yearlong artist residency addressing topics of public engagement at the Hammer Museum at UCLA.

Machine Project — The Platinum Collection (Live by Special Request) is organized by Assistant Director for Curatorial Affairs Rachel Seligman and supported by the Friends of the Tang.

Alma Thomas: A Retrospective

February 6 – June 5, 2016

The paintings of Alma Thomas (1891-1978) are characterized by bright primary colors and an independent vision that fuels her spirited work. Her art is inspired by elements in nature and unabashedly combines bright colors with her signature broken lines to create dense fields that recede and pulse with energy. This exhibition will explore the evolution of her highly personal style from the earth tones of the 1950s, to the abstract geometries of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

A woman who grew up under Jim Crow, and who experienced the Civil Rights Movement firsthand, Thomas began her artistic career after her retirement as a school teacher at age 60. In 1972, at the age of 80, Thomas was the first black woman to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art and her work was recently chosen to be prominently displayed in the White House. This exhibition will be Thomas's first museum survey since 2001.

Alma Thomas: A Retrospective is organized by The Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College and The Studio Museum in Harlem. The exhibition is curated by Ian Berry, Dayton Director of the Tang Museum, and Lauren Haynes, Associate Curator, Permanent Collection at the Studio Museum.

RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Faculty Engagement

The Tang offers one of the most in-depth faculty engagement programs in the country, the Mellon Seminar, which is designed to foster exchange and to encourage faculty from all disciplines to use the Museum and the visual arts in their teaching. Each year nearly 20 percent of Skidmore College's faculty—from choreographers and scientists, to poets and business experts—collaborate on exhibitions, develop museum-based assignments and projects for their students, and conduct classes at the Tang using objects from the collection. Examples of recent faculty collaborations include:

- *Classless Society*, co-curated by faculty from the Economics and English Departments, presented a range of contemporary art and material culture to document and explore the nature of class and tease out hidden assumptions and misconceptions. More than 20 faculty members at Skidmore taught classes with the exhibition.
- *Hope and Anger – The Civil Rights Movement and Beyond*, co-curated by faculty in American Studies, featured work from the Tang collection that allowed students to examine the dominant narratives of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements and the shifting construction and understanding of those narratives over time. Student research on the artwork led to the creation of a booklet of extended labels, which was made available to the viewing public.

Student Engagement

The Tang offers a range of ways for students to engage with the Museum, including the Eleanor Linder Winter '43 Endowed Internship. Recent student-curated exhibitions include:

- *Masked* presented a selection of unusual portraits from the Tang's collection that challenged the convention of portraiture as intended to render a person's physical likeness.
- *(Un)Known Lives of Objects* featured a selection of objects from the Tang's collection that were originally created in Nigeria. The exhibition explored the objects' complex journeys from West Africa to Saratoga Springs, and displayed them in four distinct settings: a home, a retail store, an art museum, and an anthropology and ethnography museum.

PUBLICATIONS

The Tang has a robust publishing program to disseminate the ideas that underpin its exhibitions. The Museum's catalogues have received awards from the AIGA (the professional association for design), American Alliance of Museums, and the International Association of Art Critics. Recent catalogues include *Everything is Connected* in celebration of the Tang's 15th anniversary, *Afflict the Comfortable* in collaboration with Salmagundi Literary Magazine, and *Classless Society*, based on the interdisciplinary exhibition of the same name. Upcoming catalogues include *Nicholas Krushenick: Electric Soup*; *Terry Adkins: Recital*; *Opener 26: Jeff Sonhouse: Slow Motion*; *Opener 27: Beverly Semmes: FRP*; and *Opener 28: Erika Verzutti: Mineral*.

GROWTH OF COLLECTION

The Tang is committed to growing its collection, with a particular focus on strengthening its contemporary holdings. The Tang received a gift of contemporary works on paper from Anne and Arthur Goldstein in August 2015, including works by a diverse group of notable and emerging artists including Stephen Balkenol, Huma Bhabha, Nicole Eisenman, Josephine Halvorson, Mary Reid Kelley, David Korty, Atta Kwami, Jack Pierson, Sterling Ruby, Amy Sillman and Gary Simmons. In June 2015, the Tang also received a \$100,000 challenge grant from the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation to support the creation of an endowment for conservation of the Tang's collection. In late 2014, in the lead-up to its 15th anniversary year, the Tang received a gift of 75 works of contemporary art from the collection of computer programmer and philanthropist Peter Norton. The Norton gift supports the integration of the visual arts in higher education, fosters creative museum practice, and engages diverse audiences with contemporary art. The gift to the Tang included works by some of today's leading contemporary artists, including Polly Apfelbaum, Matthew Barney, Willie Cole, Renée Cox, David Hammons, Glenn Ligon, Gabriel Orozco, Lari Pittman, Lorna Simpson, Carrie Mae Weems, and Fred Wilson. The gift included significant contemporary photography, and works by a number of artists who had early solo exhibitions at the Tang, among them Dario Robleto, Fred Tomaselli, and Kara Walker.

EXPANSION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMING

In February 2015 the Tang received a \$1 million challenge grant from the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund to help build the institution's endowment and support expansion of its programming. The grant is helping to fund such initiatives as artist-led workshops and seminars, object-based learning for community groups and public school students, student-curated exhibitions, and open houses for those in the Skidmore community and visitors to the region. The matching grant will also help the Tang expand programming to reach new audiences, including school-age students and adults in traditionally underserved areas.

PAST EXHIBITIONS IN ANNIVERSARY YEAR

Nicholas Krushenick: Electric Soup

February 7 - August 16, 2015

Electric Soup featured Krushenick's dynamic paintings that juxtapose bold forms with hard-edged abstraction in a body of work that is both independent of and connected to Op art, Pop, Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and Color Field painting. The exhibition included well-known works created in New York in the 1960s and 1970s as Krushenick rose to prominence, as well as works created in Baltimore during the 1980s and 1990s, when market tastes shifted away from Krushenick's unclassifiable style. The survey also included Krushenick's rarely seen drawings and prints influenced by Abstract Expressionist Hans Hofmann's theory of "push-pull," in which bright contrasting colors activate space—a practice Krushenick used throughout his career. Krushenick is called "the father of Pop Abstraction" and has been influential to many contemporary artists including Kathy Butterly, Peter Halley, Mary Heilmann, and Thomas Nozkowski.

Nicholas Krushenick was organized by Dayton Director Ian Berry and supported by Friends of the Tang.

Opener 29: Arturo Herrera

June 6 – August 23, 2015

The 29th project in the Tang's long-running *Opener* series featured 100 new paintings from Arturo Herrera's recent body of abstract paintings, for which he selected small books from flea markets and then manipulated and altered these found objects. By drawing lines, patterns, or his signature cartoon images across the covers and sealing the book shut, the artist transforms the books into objects infused with new meaning.

Based in Berlin, Herrera has created an impressive body of work that includes cut-paper collages, sculptures, drawings, paintings, and wall installations. Much of Herrera's work uses bold colors and fantastical, abstracted forms that shift childhood imagery—such as animated Disney characters—to invite reinterpretation of familiar modes of representation and seeing.

Opener 29: Arturo Herrera was organized by Dayton Director Ian Berry in collaboration with the artist. The *Opener* series is supported by New York State Council on the Arts, Overbrook Foundation, Ann Schapps Schaffer '62 and Mel Schaffer, Beverly Beatson Grossman '58, and Friends of the Tang.

ABOUT THE TANG TEACHING MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

The Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College is a pioneer of interdisciplinary exploration and learning. A cultural anchor of New York's Capital Region, the institution's approach has become a model for university art museums across the country—with exhibition programs and series that bring together the visual and performing arts with fields of study as disparate as history, astronomy, and physics; one of the most rigorous faculty-engagement initiatives in the nation, the Mellon Seminar; and robust publication and touring exhibition initiatives that extend the institution's reach far beyond its walls. The Tang Teaching Museum's building, designed by architect Antoine Predock, serves as a visual metaphor for the convergence of ideas and exchange the institution catalyzes. The Museum celebrates its 15th anniversary in 2015. More information at <http://tang.skidmore.edu>.

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