

# The Cutting Edge

## Tools as Art from the Hechinger Collection



Christopher Pelley, *Pandora's Box*, Oil on linen and found objects, 1996



Jean Tinguely, *Tool's '85*, Motor driven construction of hardware and tools, 1985

**T**he *Cutting Edge: Tools as Art from the Hechinger Collection* celebrates those tools of trade bearing a blade. Exemplifying great creativity and imagination, this family-friendly exhibition explores the range in cutting tools from saws and scissors to knives. Well-recognized artists like **Berenice Abbott**, **Howard Finster**, **Jim Dine** and **Jean Tinguely** demonstrate that even sharp and piercing tools can be magically transformed into fanciful works of beauty, surprise and wit. With the potential to build and destroy, the ubiquitous blade has been a means to gauge the progress of civilizations since the beginning of history. *The Cutting Edge* explores an array of blade forms that have tantalized the artistic imagination. The 50 paintings, photographs, prints, sculptures, and folk art featured in this exhibition dates from the late 19th century to the present.

As head of the Hechinger Company, a hardware and building materials chain founded in 1911, industrialist John Hechinger (1920-2004) began to collect artwork in 1978 to enliven his new headquarters. Starting with Jim Dine's *Tool Box*, a suite of silkscreen prints, Hechinger collected paintings, sculptures, works on paper, photographs, and crafts that underscored not only the family business but also the do-it-yourself spirit of the American experience. In displaying them throughout the building, they became the subject of endless discussion and a source of pride. At his death, Hechinger's collection exceeded 375 works by more than 250 leading modern and contemporary masters as well as emerging artists.

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One of the underlying currents of the exhibition and the collection is the seeming paradox between the autonomous, mass-produced tool and its conversion into a unique expression of an artist's vision. In Christopher Pelley's *Pandora Box*, a toolbox assumes the role in Greek mythology of the painting's namesake, underscoring the unpredictable power of tools. Tinguely's *Tools 85*, by contrast, is a clanking, irreverent comment on technology and consumption. At set intervals, the machine comes to life, with each tool performing its customary action to no purpose. Yet, as John Hechinger notes, the act of working is itself quite beautiful, and the lowly items, often thought beneath the consideration of an artist, celebrate themselves and are heard.

*"Among the low-priced, factory-produced goods, none is so appealing to the senses as the ordinary hand tool. Hence the hardware store is a kind of offbeat museum show for the man who responds to clear 'undesigned' forms."* [Walker Evans]

### About the Curator

Sarah Tanguy holds degrees from Georgetown University and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Before becoming a full-time independent curator and critic in 1995, Ms. Tanguy worked at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the National Gallery of Art, the International Exhibitions Foundation, The Tremaine Collection, the International Sculpture Center, and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. In 2004, she became a curator for the U.S. State Department's ART in Embassies program, while continuing to pursue freelance projects. Ms. Tanguy has produced more than 150 exhibitions and written for *Sculpture*, *American Craft*, *Metalsmith*, *Glass*, and *Readers Digest*, among other publications.



Howard Finster, *Mountains of People Use Tools*, Enamel and marker on saw, 1959



Greg Drasler, *Jack*, 1987, Oil on canvas

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Berenice Abbott, *Hardware Store*, Gelatin silver print, 1938



William Eggleston, *Near the River at Greenville, Mississippi*, Type C print, 1986

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### EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

**Number of Works:**

50 paintings, photographs, prints, sculptures and folk art

**Curator:**

Sarah Tanguy, curator of the Hechinger Collection

**Requirements:**

Moderate security; approx. 220 running feet

**Participation Fee:**

\$10,500

**Booking Period:**

8 weeks

**Shipping:**

IA&A makes all arrangements; exhibitors pay outgoing costs within the contiguous U.S.

**Publication:**

Companion book

**Availability:**

October 2010-December 2013

**Contact:**

Nicole Forrest  
Senior Exhibitions Manager  
nicolef@artsandartists.org

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Graham Crowley, *The Clampdown*, 1983, Oil on canvas



Manuel Hughes, *Work Dance 1*, 1988, oil on canvas



Lou Horner, *Dreamtime*, 1991, Acrylic on wood



Ken Butler, *Saw Blades/Saythe/Guitar*, 1994, Mixed media