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## Bruce Museum exhibit offers a new take on tools

By Meredith Guinness Updated 11:30 am EDT, Tuesday, September 4, 2018



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"Man on a Limb," a papier-mâché work by Stephen Hansen, will be part of the fall exhibit at the Bruce Museum called "ReTooled: Highlights from the Hechinger Collection."

GREENWICH — Whimsy will be the order of the day when the Bruce Museum unveils "ReTooled: Highlights from the Hechinger Collection," its major fall exhibition.

Running from Sept. 22 through Dec. 30 in the Love Gallery, the exhibition features more than 40 paintings, sculptures, photographs and sketches that celebrate the prevalence of tools in our lives — both as utilitarian objects and as imaginative flights of fancy.

"I think it's going to be fun," said museum Executive Director Peter Sutton. "It's not only beautiful, but, in many ways, whimsical and satirical."

The exhibition highlights works by several major artists, including Fernand Léger, Claes Oldenburg, Berenice Abbott, Jacob Lawrence and Walker Evans.

"Léger to Jacob Lawrence," Sutton said. "That's quite a spectrum."

The works represent significant objects from of an intriguing collection brought together in the 1980s by John Hechinger, who owned a chain of hardware stores in the mid-Atlantic states. Often credited with morphing the neighborhood hardware store into the do-it-yourself home improvement business of today, Hechinger began collecting tool-inspired art to decorate his company headquarters.

"I felt that if I could show my associates how so many artists had celebrated the handsaw or the hammer or the paint brush, they would be aware of the intrinsic beauty of the simple objects that they handled by the tens of thousands," Hechinger once said of his collection. "They were not only the focus of their workdays, but our company's very lifeblood."

Curated by Jared Packard-Winkler, "ReTooled" is divided into four distinct sections: Objects of Beauty, Material Illusions, Instruments of Satire, and Tools: An Extension of Self. Some of the works emphasize a tool's form and design while others transform the implements or highlight their obsolescence in the modern world.

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In Objects of Beauty, artists celebrate the simplicity of distilled design, emphasizing soft curves, harsh cut lines and the dull shine of hardy iron. Evans' photograph "Wrench" (1965) encourages viewers to find beauty in the tool's slim lines and economy of form, while Jim Dine's series of nine works, "Toolbox" (1966), places screen print images of tools in ascetic, yet energetic compositions.

In Instruments of Satire, visitors can enjoy Oldenburg's comical "Three-way Plug" (1965) and James Rosenquist's "Trash Can in the Grass-Calix Krater" (1978), in which the artist elevates a trash can by adorning it with ancient Greek imagery.

Hechinger donated his collection to International Arts & Artists, a nonprofit arts service organization based in Washington, D.C., that organized the traveling exhibition. The exhibition is supported by Northern Trust, The Charles M. and Deborah G. Royce Exhibition Fund and the Connecticut Office of the Arts.

"ReTooled" comes at a key time for the museum, which is heading into a multiyear renovation and expansion project, Sutton said. Visitors and staff will be seeing more than a few tools around the museum in coming months.

"That's why we took it," Sutton said. "Because of its timeliness."

The Bruce will host an opening for museum members from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 21. Sarah Tanguy, who was Hechinger's personal curator, will offer a lecture on the works at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 4. Reservations are required.

For more information, visit [brucemuseum.org](http://brucemuseum.org).

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