



National traveling tools exhibit making stop at Everhart Museum

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"Hammers Inside," an oil on canvas by Patrick Kerwin, is part of a temporary exhibit at the Everhart Museum titled "Tools in Motion: Work from the Hechinger Collection."

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Sometimes a hammer isn't just a hammer.

Such is the concept behind "Tools in Motion: Work from the Hechinger Collection," a national traveling exhibit devoted to art made with or inspired by tools that will begin a three-month stay at the Everhart Museum this weekend.

Opening Friday, the exhibit, which is on loan from International Arts & Artists (IA&A), features more than 50 pieces from the collection of the late John Hechinger, founder of the now-defunct Washington, D.C.-based Hechinger hardware stores franchise. Included are an eclectic array of sculptures, photographs and paintings by renowned artists like Arman, Ivan Chermayeff, Jim Dine and Ron English.

To complement "Tools in Motion," the Everhart also will feature two kid-themed exhibitions:

“Student Art at the Everhart: Fantasy Tools,” featuring artworks made by area students depicting invented tools that would help get them through their day; and “Isaiah’s Corner: Tool Time!” which will provide youngsters with a way to look at tools in a new way through themes like the use of tools past and present, animals that use tools and magical tools in myths.

For all ages

Everhart curator Nezka Pfeifer said the museum picked the exhibit with the belief that it would have great cross-generational appeal. After all, she said, “It’s such a human concept, such a human act, to use tools.”

“If you like working with tools at all, you’ll like this,” Ms. Pfeifer said.

“In all my years of being a curator, I’ve never come across anything like this,” said Sarah Tanguy, an independent curator who oversees the Hechinger collection. “It really does appeal across generations. It just makes people rethink the whole concept of tools.”

Mr. Hechinger, who passed away in 2004, began collecting tool-related art in 1978, not only to decorate the company’s headquarters, but also as an expression of his lifelong passion for tools. By the 1990s, the Hechinger Co. had collected more than 375 unique artworks, which in 1998 became part of a popular ongoing series at Washington’s National Building Museum.

Tool time

Among some of the eye-catching attractions in the exhibit are: a diorama of the first Hechinger shop; the digital installation “The Tools We Carry,” which features three video screens in the heads of three shovels that flash images depicting the shovels’ “dreams”; “Man on a Limb,” a humorous sculpture of a man sitting up on a board that he’s in the process of sawing (“He’s got this goofy grin. He has no idea what he’s doing,” Ms. Tanguy said); and “School of Fishes,” a 300-pound sculpture made of Vice Grips meant to replicate exactly what the title says.

“You really have to see it to believe it. These Vice Grips, they not only look like fish, they look like they’re moving,” Ms. Tanguy said.

“There’s a lot of different textures about the show. Some of the artworks are just really inventive,” Ms. Pfeifer added. “They’re just really very whimsical and fun.”

“There’s something for everybody. Something’s going to grab your fancy,” Ms. Tanguy said. “It’s so enchanting. It sort of casts a spell.”

If you go

What: “Tools in Motion: Work from the Hechinger Collection”

Where: Everhart Museum, Nay Aug Park

When: Friday through Dec. 22

Details: For more information on the exhibit, call the museum at 346-7186 or e-mail: general.information@everhart-museum.org.