



TOOLS AS ART

WORK AND PLAY

TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE



INTERNATIONAL
ARTS AND ARTISTS

“IT’S NOT JUST AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMOR AND ARTISTRY OF A PARTICULAR PIECE BUT AN APPRECIATION OF HOW THE COLLECTION FITS THE GENERAL THEME OF TOOLS IN THE WORKPLACE, TOOLS IN LIFE, AND TOOLS AS ART.”

-JOHN HECHINGER



1. Christopher Plowman, *Still Life with Tenon Saw*, 1985, Varnished steel, 20 x 28 x 14”

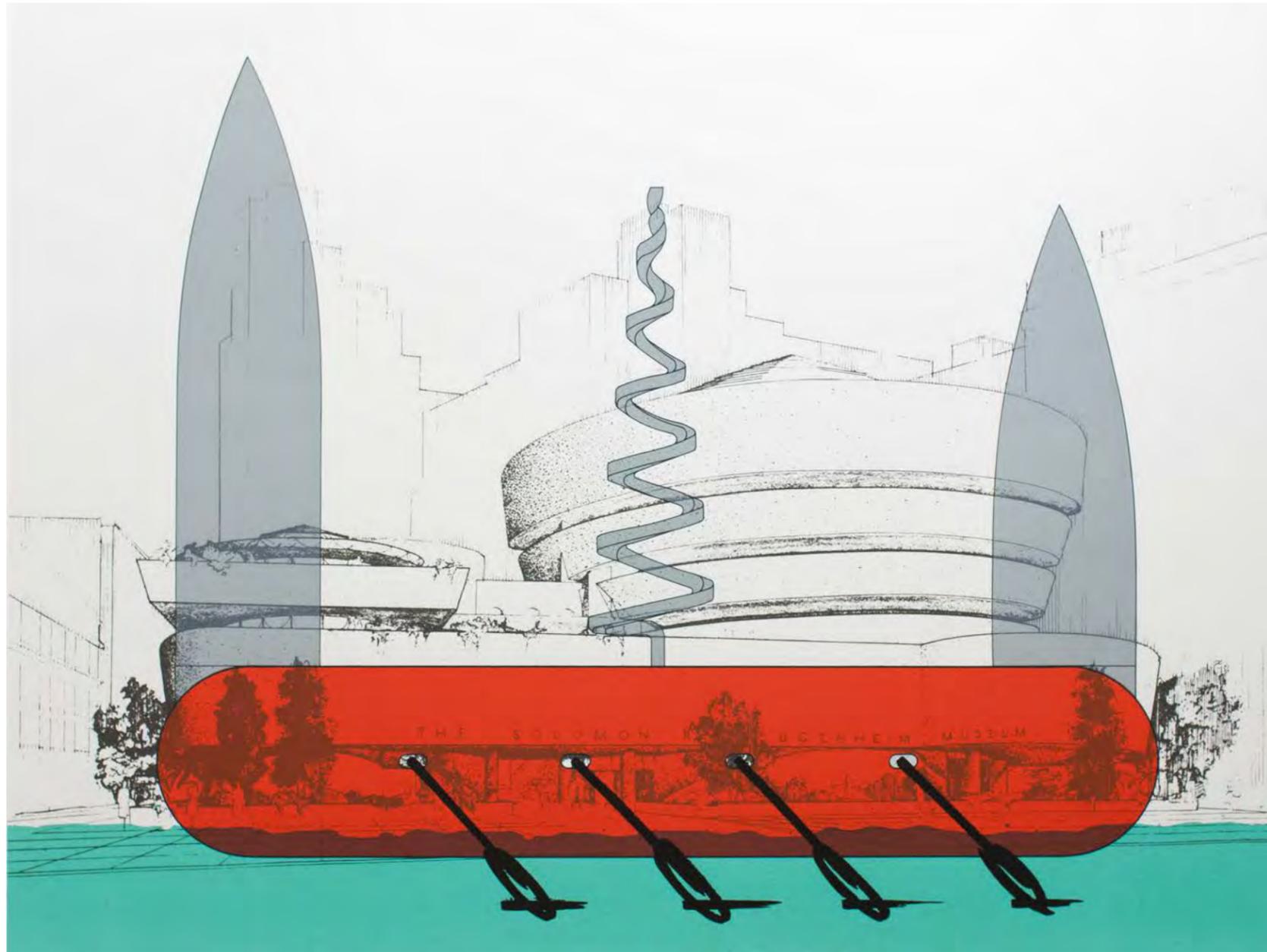
TOOLS AS ART: WORK AND PLAY

The 75 artists in *Work and Play* have taken the most familiar of tools — those common implements of human industry — and transformed them into extraordinary works of art. Encompassing photographs, paintings, works on paper, and sculptures, this bold, dynamic, and often whimsical exhibition stirs the imagination while celebrating the value of labor and honoring the creativity of builders, artists, hobbyists, and self-reliant DIYers.

The exhibition draws entirely from the remarkable collection gifted to International Arts & Artists in 2003 from John Hechinger, a hardware store magnate who embarked on his singular pursuit nearly 50 years ago. When his family's company moved to new headquarters, it sparked in him an irrepressible urge to fill the empty corridors with art that would not only humanize the building but also inspire his staff. Now these works enchant and inspire audiences across America and the globe with their inventiveness and inexhaustible range of expression.

2. Ed McGowin, *Workers Waving Goodbye*, 1991. Oil on canvas, hand-carved frame, 52 x 52"





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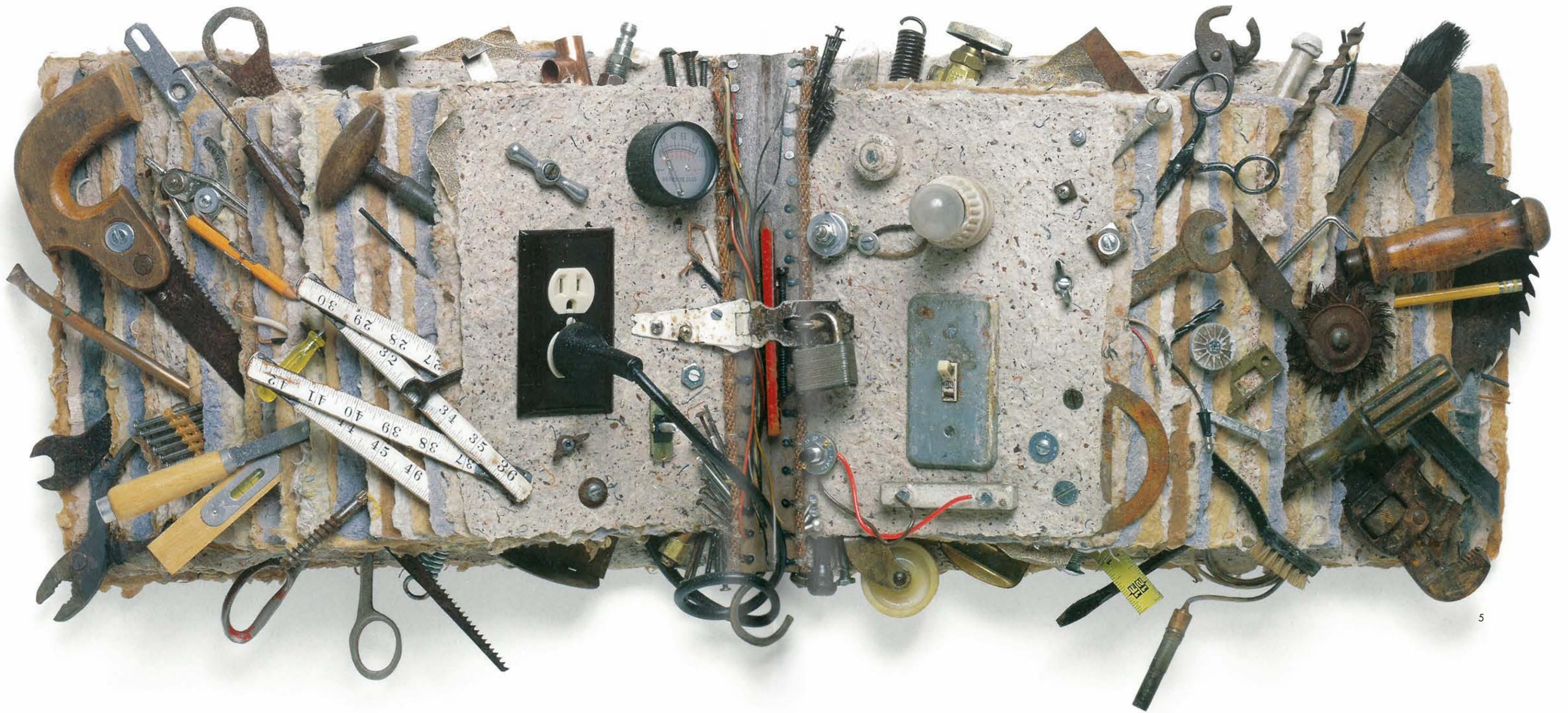
In *Knife Ship*, one of Claes Oldenburg's proposed colossal monuments, an uncanny hybrid of a boat and pocketknife, its blades and corkscrew raised like sails, paddles in front of the Guggenheim Museum in New York. By contrast, *Zen Saw II*, John Mansfield's holistic amalgam of Eastern and Western cultures, imagines a saw made of rice paper and balsa wood cutting through granite as effortlessly as slicing a loaf of bread. Meanwhile, trained musician

and urban bricoleur Ken Butler creates a showstopper of an assisted readymade by repurposing found saws into a fully functioning percussion instrument.

3. Claes Oldenburg, *Knife Ship Superimposed on the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum*, 1986, Screenprint, 30 1/2 x 36 1/4"
4. Ron English, *The Reconstruction*, 1992, Oil on canvas, 38 x 44", © Ron English



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5. Colleen Barry, Tool Dictionary, 1987, Handmade paper and hardware, 17 x 32 x 3"



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Some of the featured artists, such as Walker Evans, Hans Namuth, and Wayne Thiebaud, honor the simple efficiency and sheer elegance of their subjects. Others take a more fanciful approach, juxtaposing tools into unusual contexts; for instance, Jim Dine, whose passion for tools grew out of his family's hardware store, depicts a giant wrench floating serenely in a verdant landscape. In Donald Lipski's sensuous juxtaposition, the artist bandages a saw, mummy-style, with fuchsia raffia. And in homage to the writings of Franz Kafka, HELMA inserts ladders into her landscape as a means to escape a nightmarish forest. Still others approach tools as a stand-in for the self, endowing them with human attributes. In *The Slob*, H.C. Westermann lodges nails akimbo into a hapless hammer, while Anthony Caro transmutes a wrench into the shape of a reclining woman, her head nonchalantly tossed back; and "outsider artist" Mr. Imagination coaxes African deities from paintbrushes by adding faces and ornaments.



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- 6. Paul Paiement, *Hybrids E-Isoptera Lightbulbae*, 1982, Egg tempera on panel, 24 x 24"
- 7. James Surls, *Rebuilding*, 1991, Carved and burned magnolia wood, 36 x 29 x 29"
- 8. Silas West, *Climbing Man*, 1895, Painted tin, 76 x 44"



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Tools can also become agents for humor and social commentary. In Maria Porges's visual and verbal pun *Table Saw*, a ceramic plate morphs a jagged saw into a quaint setting for a cozy meal at home. The image darkens in an untitled portrait of the ideal Soviet citizen by Andrey Chezhin, who replaces the blurred features of a photo-booth reject with a nail. Phyllis Yes subtly embeds a feminist message into a saw by stippling it with a brightly-hued paisley pattern, while Mel Edwards's *Kotoko*, a sculpture from his Lynch Fragment series, fashions an African mask from railroad ties to evoke the bitter legacy of slavery. Construction assumes new

urgency in James Surls's enigmatic *Rebuilding*, and attains a stark power in *Builders Three* by Jacob Lawrence, a tool collector and master storyteller who drew inspiration from Renaissance images of tools, which he considered hallmarks of civilization.

9. Hollis Sigler, *The Perfect Heart is Only a Dream*, 1990, Oil pastel on paper, carved and painted frame, 33 x 39"
10. Detail of Christopher Pelley, *Pandora's Box*, 1996, Oil on linen and found objects, 56 x 48"

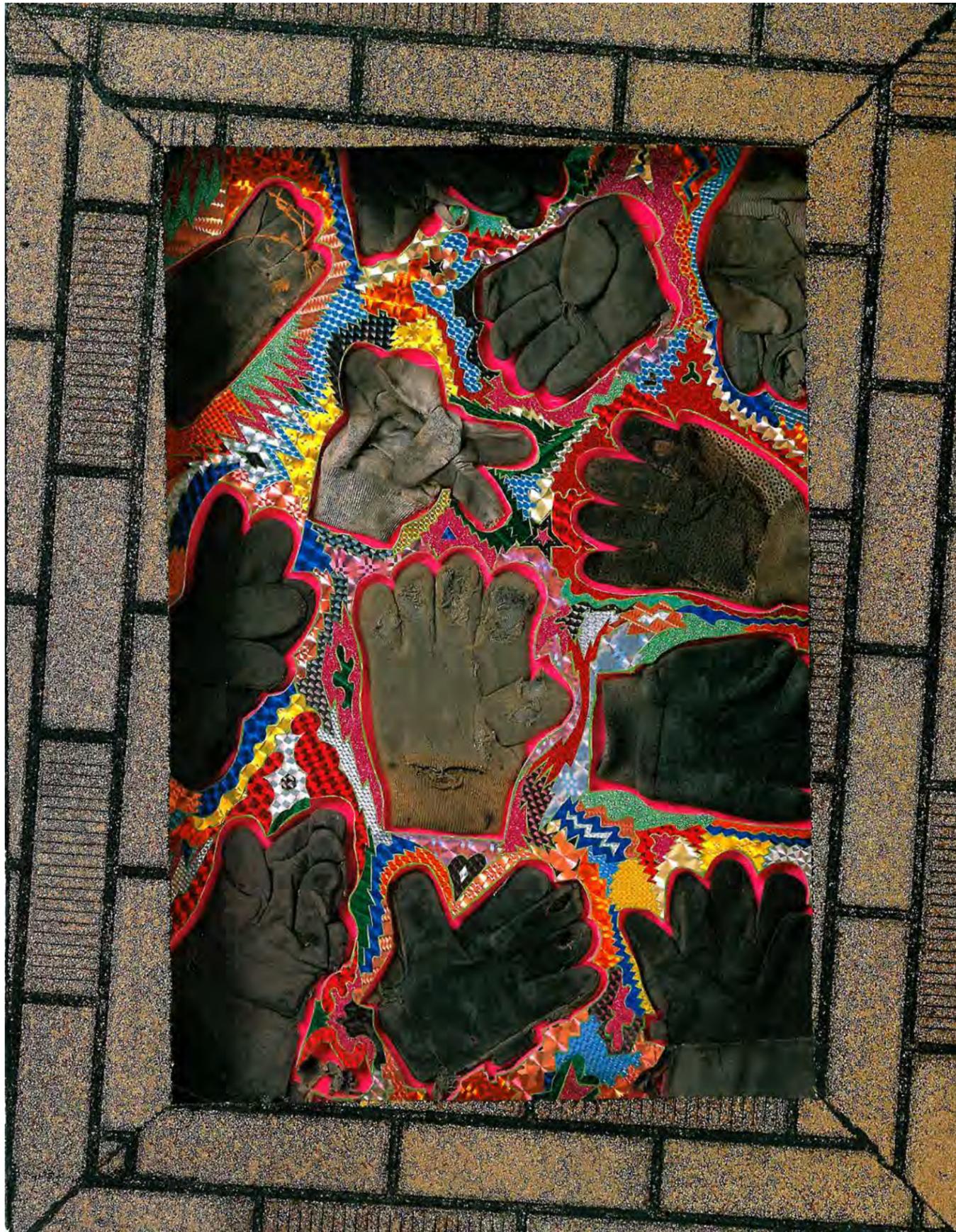


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Since prehistoric times, tools have captured the imaginations of artists as well as artisans, and the varied, innovative depictions in *Work and Play* coalesce into an evocative history of human ingenuity itself, overturning traditional associations along the way. Tinged with nostalgia for a pre-computer age as well as with the promise of growth, the exhibition traces technological progress and the evolution of labor with fanciful narratives that bring together personal and shared experience. This arc takes us from antiques, such as a nineteenth-century painted sign (*Climbing Man*), to Colin Ives's dreaming shovels in the mixed-media video installation *The Tools We Carry*. In sum, the exhibition blurs the lines between labor and creativity, melding craft and blue-collar toil with the innovative work of well-known and emerging artists from diverse backgrounds. The result is a pluralistic vision of creative labor that is sure to enchant cross-generational audiences, as well as anyone fascinated by tools and the works of hands — art cognoscenti, craftspeople, and the general public alike.

11. Henryk Fantazos, *Women in Labor*, 1986, Oil on canvas, 40 x 51"



ABOUT THE CURATOR

Washington, DC-based Sarah Tanguy is an independent curator and arts writer, who believes in hands-on, face-to-face collaboration with artists and the power of art to connect with the general public and our lived experience. Beyond generally themed exhibitions and collections, many of her projects have explored the intersection of art with such topics as science, food, tools, and books, inspiring new ways to engage the world around us.

Recent exhibitions include *Reveal: The Art of Reimagining Scientific Discovery* at the American University Art Museum and *Traces* at The Kreeger Museum, both Washington, DC; and *Synergy Unbound*, part of an ongoing series at the American Center for Physics, College Park, MD. From 2004-2019, Sarah was a curator for Art in Embassies, U.S. Department of State, where she curated over 100 exhibitions and 12 permanent collections featuring U.S. and host country artists for U.S. diplomatic facilities overseas. She has also worked as curator with three private collections, including *Tools as Art: The Hechinger Collection*. In addition to exhibition-related essays, she contributes to *Sculpture and Metalsmith*, among other publications, and enjoys conducting interviews in all formats. Over the years, Tanguy has been a juror for exhibitions and public art projects, and has participated in numerous panels, lectures, and critiques.

The daughter of a U.S. diplomat, Tanguy holds a B.A. in Fine Arts from Georgetown University, and a M.A. in Art History from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She interned at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and worked at the National Gallery, the International Exhibitions Foundation, The Tremaine Collection, the International Sculpture Center, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, The Hechinger Collection, and Art in Embassies.

12. Fred Gutzeit, *Glove Box*, 1982, Asphalt siding, spectral mylar and work gloves, 41 x 32 x 4"



FRONT Jim Dine, *Big Red Wrench in a Landscape*, 1973, Color lithograph, 30 x 22", © Jim Dine / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
BACK Debbie Fleming Caffery, *Homer*, 1987, Silver Gelatin Print, 24 x 20", Courtesy Gitterman Gallery, © 2021 Debbie Fleming Caffery, All Rights Reserved

EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

Number of Works

87 paintings, sculptures, works on paper and photographs

Requirements

Moderate Security;
3,500 - 4,500 square feet

Participation Fee

Please inquire

Tour

2024 - 2027

Shipping

IA&A makes all arrangements;
exhibitors pay outgoing shipping
costs within the contiguous US

Booking Period

12 weeks. Shorter and longer
booking periods are available
upon request, pricing may vary

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