



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
MAYOR JERRY SANDERS

San Diego Public Library

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NOTE TO EDITORS: A varied selection of high resolution, color digital images is available from the library curator on request.

Works by Noted San Diego Artist Robin Bright Featured in Library Exhibition *Sculptures and Drawings from the "Hector Vex" Series on Display*

SAN DIEGO – An exhibition showcasing nearly forty sculptures and drawings by one of San Diego’s most respected artists, Robin Bright, runs February 10 to March 23, 2008 in the gallery of the Taylor/Pacific Beach Branch Library. Exhibition-related events include a reception for the artist on Sunday, February 10, from 1 to 4 p.m. A half-hour, in-depth television interview with Bright, hosted by Library Curator Mark-Elliott Lugo as part of the ongoing “Profiles” artist interview series, will air numerous times on CityTV24 (Channel 24 on Cox Communications and Time Warner Cable) during the run of the exhibition. The exhibition and reception are free and open to the public.

All of the works on display are from Bright’s “Hector Vex” series, the body of work that, over the years, has become most closely identified with the artist. With a few exceptions, the pieces in this exhibition were recently created and have never been shown. Bright began his minimalist-oriented “Hector Vex” series in New York in the late 1960s, a few years before he moved to San Diego. Since then, he has produced nearly 500 related works. Most often they have incorporated delicate, rod-like steel and bronze elements cast or welded into elegant, technically impeccable, geometric configurations. On occasion, free-flowing passages of metal add more spontaneous elements. Some of Bright’s “Hector Vex” sculptures are primarily explorations of form, whereas others deal with semantics and language, in addition to form.

Perhaps Bright’s sensitivity to materials is most brilliantly demonstrated in the subtle painterliness of the richly oxidized, complex patinas that enhance many of his sculptures. Although chance plays a role in their final appearance and they appear to be naturally occurring, the patinas are painstakingly applied and enhanced by the artist. A similar effect can be found in

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a variation of the “Hector Vex” sculptures in which Bright embeds steel elements into Hydrocal®, a technique he has been working with since the late 1970s. During the fabrication process, the rust of the steel leaches into and tints the plaster, emulating richly colored, earth-toned washes. The patinas and oxidation offer a poetic counterbalance to the overall austerity of the works.

Bright’s art can be found in a number of important public and private collections, including the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Santa Fe Museum of Art, Santa Fe, NM; the Johnson & Johnson Corporate Collection, New Brunswick, NJ; the Mason Phelps Collection, San Diego; and others.

Despite critical acclaim over the years, support of discriminating collectors, and a sterling reputation, Bright exhibits infrequently. His last major exhibitions – a stunning retrospective at the Boehm Galley (Palomar College, San Marcos) in 2005 that encompassed works dating from 1973 to 2004, and an exhibition at the Taylor Library, also in 2005 – offered inspiring looks at the significance and consistency of his artistry.

Bright, who was born in New York City in 1934 and received his education in New Mexico, Munich, and Paris (the Sorbonne), is a thinking man with a world-class background. “If I went blind, I’d write,” he says. However, the artist describes himself as “utterly visual,” a reference to what he characterizes as the humorless, theory-driven art espoused by university academics.

Bright’s artistic influences are eclectic. They include Paul Klee, Wols, early works by Mark Tobey, Indian miniatures, Chinese cave paintings in deteriorated condition and other ancient artifacts, primitive paintings and, from his travels in the desert Southwest, scraps of steel machinery and implements rusted to the point of being unrecognizable. In terms of the nobility, poetry, and spirit of their work, he admires artistic and intellectual greats such as Barnett Newman, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, and Philip Guston. Like many artists who are best known for their purely abstract, reductivist work (Ellsworth Kelly, in particular, comes to mind), Bright has an idiosyncratic, hidden side. He is an accomplished draftsman and, for a period of years, created a body of figurative work under the pseudonym Clayton Rising.

In his 2005 Taylor Library exhibition (which was designated by *Union-Tribune* art critic Robert Pincus as one of ten best art exhibitions of the year in San Diego), Bright shocked long-time aficionados of his art with a new body of work, the “Small Towns” series.

Named after small towns in New Mexico and fabricated from natural and tinted Hydrocal®, these resembled fragments of frescoes or arcane, illustrated manuscripts. Their subtly muted colors, crumbling edges, and exotic, curvilinear patterns that appeared to have been inspired by Persian rugs or elaborately configured wrought iron, were, to many of his fans, distinctly un-Bright-like in their decorativeness.

The current library exhibition is classic Bright, unquestionably contemporary but also convincingly evoking the ravages of time and the elements on man-made objects. True to his vision, Bright offers a rich experience to viewers from all backgrounds.

The Pacific Beach/Taylor Library is open seven days a week and is located at 4275 Cass Street. Library hours are: Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Fridays, 12:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; and Sundays, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The San Diego Public Library's Visual Arts Program is a nationally recognized series of exhibitions, lectures, a television program, and other art-related activities. The mission of the Program is to demonstrate the Library's role as a cultural institution embracing a broad range of disciplines, while assisting San Diego's mid-career and older professional artists in achieving wider local, regional, and national attention. Visual Arts Program exhibitions are made possible, in part, by contributions from individuals, volunteer efforts, and the Friends of Central Library. For more information about the Bright exhibition or the Visual Arts Program, the public can contact the library curator at (619) 238-6627 or visit the Library's website at www.sandiegolibrary.org

Learn about other events at the San Diego Public Library's Central Library and 35 branches, find links to numerous additional resources, or search for materials in the Library's catalog online at www.sandiegolibrary.org

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