

BRETTELL

An Experience

BRETTELL

An Artists' Homage
to the Dynamic Influence of Rick Brettell

Curated by Greg Metz
September 10, 2021–October 9, 2021
SPN Gallery at UT Dallas
Richardson, Texas

Contents

6 INTRODUCTION
Greg Metz

8 RICK'S COLLECTION
Caroline B. Brettell
Greg Metz

18 ESSAYS
Stephen Laphisophon
Gary Cunningham
Phillip E. Collins
Annegreth T. Hill
Victoria Corcoran
Bonnie Pitman
Pierrette Lacour

Karen Wiener
Gabriel Dawe
Roger F. Malina
Dennis Kratz
Amy Lewis Holland
David Wilcox
Vicki Meek

71 ARTIST REFLECTIONS

Chad Wesley Airhart
Frances Bagley
Phyllida Barlow
Peter Barrickman by Rick Brettell
Carolyn Brown
Ronald Cohen-Rozencohn
Nan Coulter by Benjamin Lima
Fred Churchack
Annabel Daou
Gabriel Dawe
Luca del Baldo
Martin Genwers
Ginger Henry Geyer
Ken Hale
John Hernandez
Tracy Hicks
Brandon Kennedy

Jean Lacy
Stephen Laphisophon
James Magee
Quin Mathews
Vicki Meek
Pamela Nelson
Ruben Nieto
Tom Orr
John Pomara
Susie Rosmarin
Ludwig Schwarz
Marjorie Norman Schwarz
Reynaldo Thompson
Tern Thornton
Michael Tracy
John Wilcox
Zeka Williams

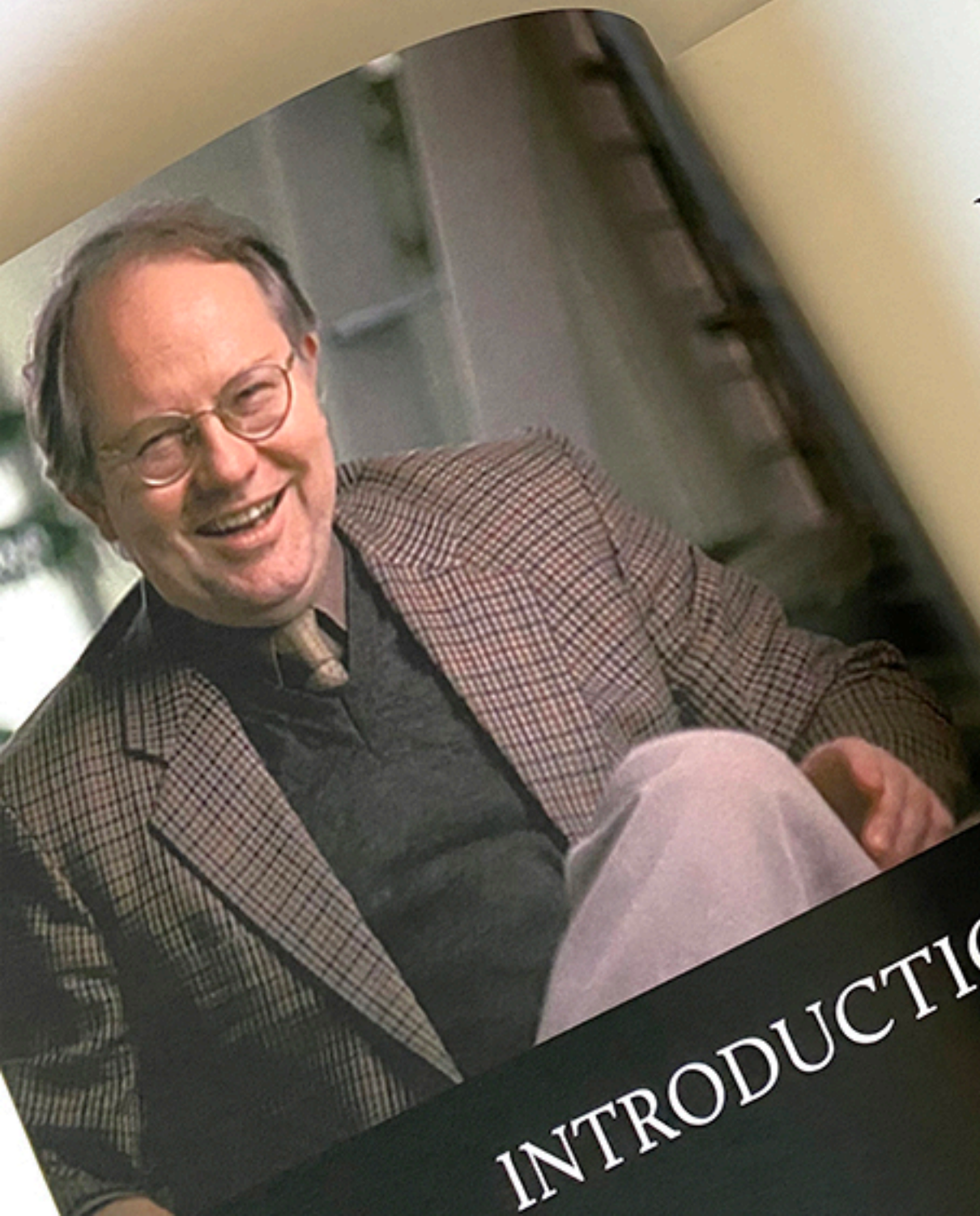
ight © 2021 by the
s, artists, and other rights
s reserved. No part of this
be reproduced in any form
ublisher's permission. Statements
inion expressed here are those
alone and do not represent The
Texas at Dallas.

ges
ction
6) Quin Mathews. *Still from The Rick
Experience* (film: 37 minutes)

k's Collections
age 8) Rick Brettell, art critic for *The Dallas
Morning News*, photographed at his Dallas
home on Dec. 5, 2018 by Tom Fox. Copyright
2018 *The Dallas Morning News*, Inc.

Essays
(page 18) Courtesy The Art Institute of
Chicago, Karen Engstrom for the *Chicago
Tribune*, 10/14/86, for Rick Brettell's 1986
exhibition "The Art of the Edge: European
Frames 1300-1900"

Artist Reflections
(page 71) Rick Brettell with Francisco Moreno,
Chapel at The Dallas Museum of Art, Courtesy
Pierrette Lacour



INTRODUCTION

Foreward

Greg Metz
Curator

This catalogue and exhibition, by some measure, is an autobiography by Rick Brettell translated through the eyes, minds, and experiences of just a few of the many he benefited and were privileged to have known, worked with, or merely be a collection of some of the artworks he had acquired over time, yet I soon realized that in no way did this reflect the depth and breadth of his influence and eclectic preferences. It became much more, as was Rick. His true sense of collecting might be best expressed by Melissa Berry, his longtime friend and former public programming director at the DMA: "Rick did not just collect art representing an artist's vision/thoughts/experiences at a particular moment in time, he collected artists and experiences with artists so that he would see through their eyes, their unique insights to the world around them. And he wanted others to experience what he learned from these encounters with them, not just from the objects they create, thus culminating with his final vision for the design of an 'Athenaeum'—not an object, but a shared experience." It is my hope that this small glimpse of those shared experiences are evidenced here in this catalogue and exhibition. Please enjoy as Rick would want and did.



RICK'S COLLECTION

The Eclectic Art Collection of Richard Brettell

Caroline B. Brettell

Rick was eclectic in his tastes, and in the works of art that he assembled into a collection that fills the walls and surfaces in our home. Much of his collecting had to do with personal relationships—with artists he came to know as colleagues or friends. And many of the items in the collection have powerful stories to accompany them. The first work of art we acquired was given as a wedding gift by the mother of one of his best friends in high school. During the Christmas break in 1972-73, we were in Denver and Rick spotted a work of art in an office supply store in downtown Denver—an Alma-Tadema hand-colored lithograph titled "A Reading from Homer." That afternoon we dropped by his friend's mother's house to say hello and Rick could not contain his excitement about the \$75 Alma-Tadema that he thought should hang in her apartment on the empty wall behind her sofa. Unbeknownst to us, she quietly went out to purchase it, and presented it to us right after we were married in June of 1973 and had returned to Denver so that Rick could finish working on his first book, *Historic Denver*—a book that became his Yale Master's essay. We have kept the Alma-Tadema with us ever since. The second work that came into "the collection" was a Philip Pearlstein print—Pearlstein was teaching at Yale one semester and so of course Rick met him and then splurged (he was a graduate student at the time) to acquire a work by him—a nude on a colorful blanket.

Rick spent four years on the faculty at UT Austin, and during those years made friends with many of the studio art faculty. Our Bill Wyman came into the collection as a housewarming gift. We had told everyone to bring a plant to the party celebrating the purchase of our first home, and Bill brought a painting of an avocado plant that still hangs in a place of honor above Rick's

piano. During those years we also added several works by Kenneth Hale to the collection. Ken was always experimenting with new methods of printmaking, and Rick was fascinated by his changing interests and changing styles. Another piece is an abstract work by Paula Townsend, the spouse of Rick's Pre-Columbian Art colleague, Dick Townsend. It uses water color and graphite and reproduces some Pre-Columbian iconography.

Once he took the job as Curator of Paintings at the Art Institute (in 1980), Rick was exposed in myriad ways to the world of galleries and dealers, particularly in London and Paris. He was mostly "shopping" for the Art Institute, but on the side, he started to assemble some French prints and drawings that we could afford. These are gems that only a trained "eye" could have spotted. In those years he also became close to Ivan Albright. Ivan and Josephine were on the list of participants for a trip that Rick was leading to English country houses. (This was Rick's first stint leading a trip; over the years, he became very good at it, and it allowed him to travel the world.) On the list it simply said "Mr. and Mrs. Albright." When Rick arrived in London and met the group of travelers for the first time, Mr. Albright came up to introduce himself. He used his first name and out of Rick's mouth without thinking came "Ivan Albright—I thought you were dead!" Ivan laughed uproariously, and they became friends until Ivan actually did pass away. Ivan dedicated one work of art, a lithograph titled "Appears the Man," to Rick, whom he described with the phrase "there is nothing he does not know." Right before he died, Ivan invited Rick to his home in Woodstock, Vermont, where he had lived

since 1965. Ivan begged Rick to save some of his etchings which he said that his wife did not like and would probably burn.

After moving to Dallas in 1988, Rick continued to collect Texas artists, among them Jim Magee and Peter Nickel. Some were works by students in the UTD graduate program—Chad Airhart, for example. Rick also collected works of art made by artists who came to Dallas as part of the residency program at UTD—among them two works by Peter Barrickman. One of the Barrickmans Rick considered to be a kind of portrait of himself—one sees stacks of books in an office space and feet propped up on a chair, implying the hidden presence of its subject. Works by Jean Lacy and Greg Metz also found their way into the collection. Jean and Greg had both worked with Rick on a fundraiser for the Dallas Opera, creating works of art inspired by particular operas, and we purchased the Metz at the auction of those works. Jean created a work of art titled "Night Migrations" that resonated with me because of my work on gender and migration. And recently Jean has created a posthumous "memory box" for Rick—a place where I can place personal items that meant so much to him, including his red and blue framed glasses.

Rick was always browsing sales catalogues, mostly so that he could make suggestions to collectors he knew about works that might be wonderful additions to their respective collections. But occasionally he saw something that he wanted for us. In one such catalogue he saw a work of art by my great uncle, Ernest Biéler, in a Swiss auction catalogue. It was a portrait of a seated bourgeois woman. He corralled our close



Bill Wyman, *Avocado for Rick*, 1977
Oil on canvas, 17" x 19"
Courtesy of the Richard and Caroline Brettell Collection



Ivan Albright, *Appears the Man to Rick: There is nothing he does not know*, 1960
Lithograph, 22" x 18"
Courtesy of the Richard and Caroline Brettell Collection



Peter Barrickman, *The Lodger*, 2009
Oil on canvas, 48" x 54"
Courtesy of the Richard and Caroline Brettell Collection



Jean Lacy, *Night Migration*, 1968
Mixed media collage on museum board, 17.5" x 19.5"
Courtesy of the Richard and Caroline Brettell Collection

Inviting the Arts Community Into the Arts Institutions

Greg Metz

In early 1980, I returned to Dallas with a fresh MFA from Indiana University, having made frequent trips to Chicago and New York throughout those years, only to find a vibrant but struggling art scene and a museum, the DMA, that was practically a mortuary: rather devoid of local artist voices or apparent interest in them, and certainly in need of some life blood. I and so many artists were part of the struggle to change that situation, which then brought me to my earliest encounter with Rick Brettell, the newly minted director of the DMA, in 1988.

Tracy Hicks, a fellow artist, and I had co-founded an artist advocacy organization called Dallas Artist Research and Exhibition (DARE), combined with an effort to also initiate an experimental alternative art and performance space. One of our initial actions of advocacy was to organize a boycott of the DMA's 1990 Beaux Arts Ball, an annual fundraising auction which depended on local artists donating their work for the Museum to then pawn off. When a good number of artists refused to give their works to this ubiquitous funding drive, Rick (as we were invited to call him) decided to invite us into a meeting with the ladies who ran this now-jeopardized event, to discuss our differences. We came prepared with a list of demands which included: participating artists being invited to the ball; percentages going

back to the artist; using the money raised to specifically collect Texas artists' works; and in addition, the creation of a diverse, six-member artist advisory committee to the museum director. Much to our surprise, Rick took up our cause and brokered a deal with these very reluctant ladies, to achieve much of what we were asking for. Thus began Rick's open-armed association with the local artist community, which had previously long been ignored.

From that point on, Rick bucked the elitist museum tradition by wanting to know how the museum could better serve the artist community, meeting with us about programing needs and involvement. This took several forms, which in some cases were quite risk-tolerant for such a young director of a major cosmopolitan museum. With his support, we organized a major symposium on advocacy needs and on establishing a critical alternative space for Dallas, which over 200 Dallas artists attended. At that time the culture wars were flaring, with calls to defund the NEA and its supporting institutions. Rick approved our request to organize and hold a protest rally at the DMA against this movement, which was being led by southern Republicans: North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms and Denton County Representative Dick Arme. Funds were appropriated for banners and to bring in speakers,

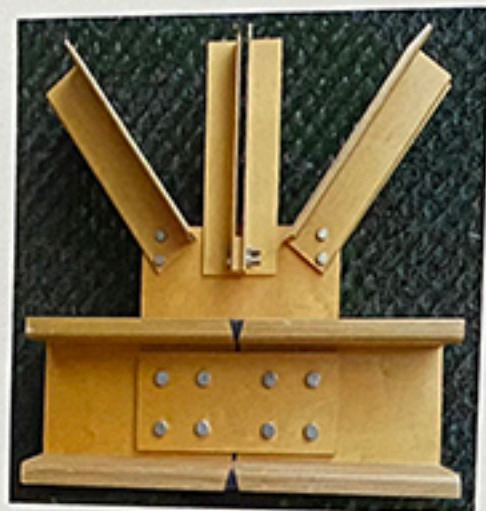


Courtesy of the Dallas Museum of Art Archives, photo by Tom Jenkins

including City Council member Craig Holcomb, infamously outspoken pundit Molly Ivins, Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) representative Rita Starpattern. Even Dallas Mayor Annette Strauss was invited and spoke, with 'MC' Rick delivering his own rousing speech of support for the NEA. As news outlets reported, there were over 500 sign-carrying artists and arts supporters that day in the museum courtyard, in a very conservative city and museum that previously had little to no history of protest. Rick was

fearlessly supportive. I think many were in total disbelief that this could ever have happened in Dallas.

Rick understood that as with nature, social structures are organized from the bottom up, and he courted the art community knowing that if he could engage the city's artists then the museum would be effectively carrying out its 'contemporary charge', thus assuring that their programing was responsibly relevant. In doing so, he created a Public Programming arm to the DMA and



Top Right: From left, Architects Dan Shipley, Max Levy, Gary Cunningham, Joe McCall and Lionel Morrison and curator Rick Brettell at the opening reception of the exhibit 'Five Dallas Modernist Architects' at the Visual Arts Building at the University of Texas at Dallas campus in 2002. (Photo Nan Coulter)



Gary Cunningham, *Truss (two views)*, 2002
Wood, steel bolts, 48" w, 45" h, 16" d
Five Dallas Modernist Architects Exhibition
Fabricated by Paul Field of Cunningham Architects

the front of their seats, while Rick would increasingly lean toward the podium and audience. By the end of the lecture, Rick's body would be climbing over top of the podium, with his gestures more and more exaggerated. The audience would be on the literal edge of their seats. Rick and the audience had worked themselves into a mutual frenzy.

An intense period of time with Rick occurred around the turn of the millennium; this included the *Sacred Space* exhibition, the *Young Architects* exhibition at UT Dallas, the Sixth Floor Museum expansion, and the *Warhol and Jackie* exhibition. *Sacred Space* was my great awakening to Mexico. Although I was born in Texas, I had yet to visit our neighboring country to the south. My initiation was amazing—a three-week road trip with the



From left: Rick Brettell, Gary Cunningham, Peter Walker at the Nasher Sculpture Garden, Apr 26 2017. A public forum on bringing a new Arts District to UTDallas
Copyright Bret Redman

great photographer Carolyn Brown and PhD candidate Elizabeth Bort, who masterfully organized and managed the intense trip. We drove down in Carolyn's aged Subaru—all the way down to the southern edge of Chiapas, machine guns and all. It was life-changing, and I came away with a respect and love of

Mexico that has only grown through the years. With the scholarly research and documentation complete, we began to conceive the exhibit. It was to be a multi-venue show, and we had to devise an approach that could not only break down and travel, but also had to deal with the delicate and hands-off surfaces of the Great

Hall of State, the first venue that Rick had secured. He believed The Hall of State was one of the most sacred buildings in Texas. Ideas like the use of scaffolding to formulate space and flow in the Hall of State evolved during our multiple trips to Mexico. Since we could not touch the walls or ceilings, we had to find a way build structures in the space as high as thirty feet, to support the massive photographs. Our first visit to the great Cathedral in Mexico City laid out the solution. Rick was determined to use the exact same galvanized scaffolding used inside the Cathedral for the structures in our show. He used his friendships and connections in Mexico to facilitate the transaction. Watching him navigate such efforts was akin to performance. Like the attendees of his lectures, the participants in the *Sacred Space* endeavor became mesmerized by Rick's energy and vision. He knew when it was time to work the deal, and he did it effortlessly. He believed in the project. *Sacred Space* was the first of many projects spawned from our mutual love of Mexico, and today Mexico remains my favorite place on the planet. Rick loved the passion and energy of Mexico, and often used bits of Mexico to inform projects up here. The Athenaeum was born out of a small mental hospital-turned-museum in Puebla. Rick saw the Athenaeum as a garden occupied by buildings, not a building with gardens.

In the UTD exhibit on young Dallas architects, Rick asked the participating architects to present a single project that they felt exhibited their philosophy and process. However, he had different plans for me. Instead of a project of my choosing, he assigned my office to design a building that engaged our office compound on Dragon Street. It was to be an

arts club and art storage facility for Dallas art collectors. Creating an arts club for Dallas was a reoccurring urge of Rick's. He loved the Chicago model, and wanted a place for visiting artists, scholars, and lecturers to stay. He imagined it being open to artists and contributors of all social and economic positions. The art storage part of the program was to pay for the arts club overhead. Rick also introduced an outsider into our office team: he wanted us to work with artist Ludwig Schwarz. Our office had not collaborated with an artist before, and there was a bit of that anxiousness that often accompanied a Brettell endeavor. Of course, we had a ball with Ludwig, and this project marked the beginning of a lifelong friendship with Ludwig and Marge Schwarz. This sort of mash-up occurred many times over the years with Rick, perhaps culminating with my insertion into the world of James Magee and *The Hill* outside of El Paso. It is almost impossible to see and understand all the linkages in my life that were orchestrated by Rick, but it is fair to say that Rick was responsible for many of the most important relationships in my life. It is impossible to isolate Rick's influence in my life, as his hand is everywhere.

He once sent me to Giverny, France, with one week's notice, with absolutely no guidance or direction. I was to go and study five houses owned by the Terra Foundation. It was a few weeks before Christmas, and Giverny was experiencing the coldest winter in decades. All I could figure to do was to measure and survey the houses and grounds. I would go out for twenty or thirty minutes at a time with a laser measuring tool, and take several measurements before retreating back to the house I was staying in, to warm up and plan my next set of measurements. After four or five



Rick photographing "books as architecture" at the Boston Athenaeum, July 24, 2017. Photo Ginger Geyer



Rick in the main reading room of the Boston Athenaeum, July 24, 2017. Photo Ginger Geyer



At the Clark Institute, Rick holding a tote bag with Picasso quote: "Give me a museum and I'll fill it", July 25, 2017. Photo Ginger Geyer



Perrette Lacour and Rick Brettell at The Wilcox Space in June 2018 for the final showing of the Sixth Exhibition curated by Laura Hartman and Arthur Peña, *Elements and Process: Selected Works of John Wilcox*. David Wilcox.

messages would soon appear, listing people whom he would need to call or meet "IMMEDIATELY." The meetings would soon take place, as Rick would ask: "Where is he/she? It is 2 past 10!" as the projects were launched, ready to be realized in a few months, while everyone around remained on alert. Rick used this method repeatedly, with art historians and his other colleagues, to create amazing exhibitions around the world. Who could open a huge exhibition on Pissarro at the Grand Palais in Paris in less than a year? Rick, of course. Who could send his beloved students to Mauritius, Venice, and all over the world to enhance their research and allow them to meet important people? Rick, again!

Rick believed in making Dallas a city for arts and artists, whom he encouraged and promoted from the moment he arrived here. He would spend many hours ensuring that artists would be recognized for their amazing and important work. He created the Wilcox Space, so that John Wilcox's work of art could be discovered at last by many in the city, and the Cornudas Mountain Foundation, so the world could finally know James Magee, "the best artist in Texas." Rick admired and loved Ludwig and Marjorie Schwarz, Stephen Laphisophon, Vicki Meek

and many more. He was thrilled to receive artists from around the world in the two residencies he opened at Southside and then CentralTrak, so that young local artists, unable to travel, could meet and draw from their peers from different cultures and sensibilities. I remember him asking me to lunch so we could discuss Southside... asking me? Didn't he have other friends to discuss this new idea with? Yes of course, but I found out that Rick trusted my instinct more than I even realized. He was very disappointed when these projects had to close, but the few years of their existence were crucial for the city.

Dallas and its striking landscape would not be the same without Rick. He believed in bringing Dallas to the world's attention, as he was there with Mrs. McDermott and others, meeting great architects and their projects which soon would define the city. Rick was the champion of Texas art, which he never saw as regional, but rather national and worthy of the world's attention. At the end, he gave all he had to create MoTA, the Museum of Texas Art, and the Athenaeum at the University of Texas at Dallas. For Rick, the Athenaeum was his vision of what the university could become, the ultimate art destination in Texas for scholars from all around the world as well as novice art lovers, in a complex mixing all art disciplines, and above all a unique library with his dream, a beautiful "Reading Room!" He worked on those projects until his last breath. My hope is that Dallas and UTD remember him and his visions, and will carry on with the same spirit in the future.

The UTD South Side Artist Residency, 2003-2006

Karen Weiner

Rick Brettell believed in making things better, and he believed in the vital but often under-appreciated contributions of artists to their communities. His distinguished teaching career was not limited to the classroom; the projects that he jump-started throughout the community comprise a legacy of how to think outside the box.

He thought that establishing an artist residency in Dallas sponsored by UT Dallas was the solution to cross-pollinating the primarily regional art scene at the time with visiting artists, critics, and dealers, and that through the resulting creative capital and new relationships, an international profile would develop. Although Houston's CORE Program, San Antonio's Artpace and the Chinati Foundation's residency in Marfa already existed, none of these included a partnership with a university. Also, a residency located downtown would provide an urban extension to the suburban UT Dallas campus, and connect it to the local working art community. So, despite his very busy schedule, Rick introduced the Canadian developer Jack Matthews to UTD's School of Arts and Humanities. We were lucky.

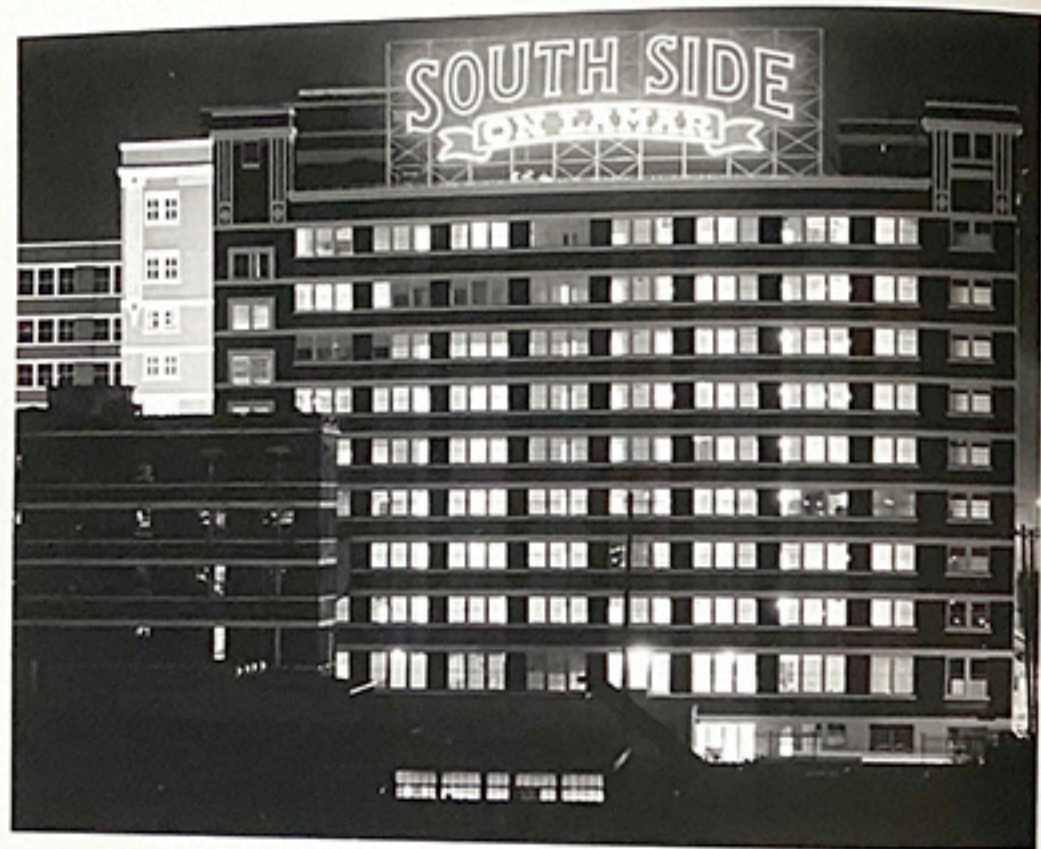
Matthews owned South Side on Lamar, a renovated 1913 building south of downtown Dallas, which housed 1,000 people in residential



Annie Murdock, *Box Entwined*, 5 hour performance, retail display window of Republic Center, Dallas, December 2005

lofts. The UT Dallas Artist Residency began in 2003 in 5 rent-free lofts, which had gallery/storefront type entrances. The program grew rapidly to include a total of 29 artists and presented countless events (both on site and throughout the metroplex): exhibitions, screenings, readings, artist talks, performances, open studios, as well as visits by curators. Collaborators included the McKinney Avenue Contemporary, the Dallas Museum of Art, Brookhaven Community College, and Southern Methodist University.

The program benefited from Rick's extensive



Exterior of Southside on Lamar. Site of UTD's first artist residency
1409 Botham Jean Blvd. (S Lamar)

network of colleagues, and from his skill at putting together successful collaborations (think, for example, of FRAME, CISM, EODIAH, ISAAC, and his final tour de force, the UTD Athoneum). Studio visits and public art talks by the likes of Philippe Vergne from the Walker Art Museum, Nato Thompson from Mass MoCA, and Trevor Smith of the New Museum in New York were all tapped from Rick's rolodex. Exchanges occurred between UTD and South Side through the involvement of UTD faculty (including Greg Metz, John Pomara, Marilyn

Waligore, Thomas Riccio, and Pierrette Lacour), UTD students as interns and the 06 Collective which presented programs at South Side, and some of the visiting artists who taught classes at UTD during their time in residence.

Examples of events included Annie Murdock's performance in a downtown Republic Bank window as the lunch crowd streamed by, Paul Slocum's Treewave band performance in the unrenovated Casket Factory at South Side, Chad Sager's wrapping of the support columns with string a la Marcel Duchamp in the South



Phyllida Barlow, who Rick introduced to Dallas as one of the first Artist in Residence at UTDallas' Southside on Lamar Residency, is shown here working on her 2,000 sq. ft. installation at UT Dallas's Main Gallery, Oct-Nov. 2003.

Phyllida Barlow site specific 'Untitled' sculpture for her installation, 2003
Wood, fabric, styrofoam, paint, cardboard tubing

strategic vision for our beginnings in the Dallas Arts District. As with all things, he challenged the Crows to do it well. He urged us to select works only fitting for a collection of the caliber of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and this high bar became our threshold. From about 8,000 works of Asian art sprinkled in hotels and office towers across the country, Rick, leading our curatorial team, selected just 611. These works formed the Crow Collection of Asian Art—the first Asian Art Museum in the southern United States. We opened to the public in December of 1998.

Over the years I would visit Rick often for advice. When the museum celebrated ten years, Rick connected me with the important collectors of Asian art in the state, forming the best, most serious elements of *Texas Collects Asia* in a series of five exhibitions and a major publication. As delegations from other museums visited Dallas, Rick was generous to always suggest that they visit the Crow Museum. He was a good friend to our museum, offering support and space to the Crow family, as we found our way from being the small private collection born of Trammell and Margaret's passion for Asia, to becoming a major Asian cultural center for the City of Dallas and for all of North Texas.

Rick, like the best kind of friend, was our toughest critic and our most loyal supporter. His enthusiasm for our 2016 exhibition of *Talavera from Puebla, Mexico*, examining the global influences of Chinese taste on Mexican Ceramics, was invaluable. Simply put, the exhibition would have never happened, had Rick not included the Crow Museum in the seminal meeting of the International Museum of the Baroque with museum directors at a 2013 luncheon in Dallas. Rick didn't invite visionaries



Carol and Rick Brettell at the Crow Museum of Asian Art *Clay Between Two Seas* Gala, 2016. Copyright Turk Studio

to have lunch for the purpose of having lunch. Lunch, while always delicious, was secondary. Rick drew humans together to challenge us to be better and to change the future. This is what he called us together to do in 2013, and again in 2017.

Museum Builder

After several meetings and conversations, a decision was made to explore the possibility of a union between the Crow Museum and The



At the Crow Museum of Asian Art *Clay Between Two Seas* Gala, 2016. Copyright Turk Studio

University of Texas at Dallas. The leaders of the Crow Museum spent two months writing a position paper illuminating the assets of the near twenty-year-old museum: a collection of works numbering almost 1,200, a long-term lease in the Dallas Arts District, a library of more than 12,000 volumes, a healthy and sizable endowment, and two decades of equity and engagement with the arts and Asian communities in Dallas and beyond.

The museum had long looked north: UT Dallas is in the heart of the geographic region where the Asian American communities continue to expansively grow. The student population is 43 percent Asian American and the University, with the Edith O'Donnell Institute

of Art History, was primed to form partnerships for research and publication on the collection. Rick saw all of this before anyone. A second location on campus would answer all of these wishes and more: library space, auditorium space and expanded gallery space to accommodate the 85 percent of the Crow Collection hidden away in storage. In the 1970s, Trammell's father, the real estate titan Trammell Crow had presciently stated, "Asia is the future." Rick heard the call.

By late spring of 2018, Rick and I were meeting often with the team he had formed two years prior, to develop a strategic vision for the Athenaeum. In June, I was paired up with Dr. Hobson Wildenthal to "make it happen." I took

CHAD AIRHART

In Memory of Rick

I remember the first time I met Rick. It was in 1999, and he was the professor for my first graduate course at UTD, entitled Painting as Performance. At the time, my paintings meshed together my fascinations with ants and with photographic surrealism. But I wanted to loosen up. With Rick Brettell, that happened. We could plan a series of ant-swarm gestural abstractions, talk about art criticism and history, deconstruct each other's life stories, and follow with the best way to make a chicken broth—all in one hour. Rick inspired, encouraged, and demanded. He pushed me to explore and read about everything. As the best college advisor of all time, Rick helped plan my first trips to Germany, England, and France. He taught art within the big picture. He helped me go beyond myself—to keep my own compass as the ultimate guide for direction. I will forever be grateful for the support of his passionate voice.

Energetic. Competent. Rick was the greatest lecturer in the world! In constant motion, Rick saw the artist as an unlimited force that opened up universes. A writer, thinker, historian, museum shaman, musician, and maker—Rick expanded minds, and seen in his light, the world will always have the potential to be made afresh.



Chad Airhart, *Ant Cutters*, 1999
Oil on canvas, 12" x 24"
Courtesy of the Artist

FRANCES BAGLEY

Rick Brettell was a force in the Dallas art community since he first took the position of Director of the DMA in 1988. During that time, he not only engaged the museum's patrons and board members, he also engaged the artists of the community, while lending his influence toward helping us get projects realized.

In 1990, Cindy Hurt and I began a campaign to mount an artist-organized exhibition in a raw warehouse in Deep Ellum. When we presented our idea to Rick, he immediately picked up the phone, calling prominent collectors for financial support of our exhibition, *The Vessel*.

With his help, we raised enough funds to refurbish a gallery space in the raw warehouse, insure all the work in the show, design and print a catalogue, and open with a large party to honor the donors and artists.

This one story is just an example of the next three decades of Rick's involvement with artists in Dallas. His enthusiasm, and his focus on our community, never waned.



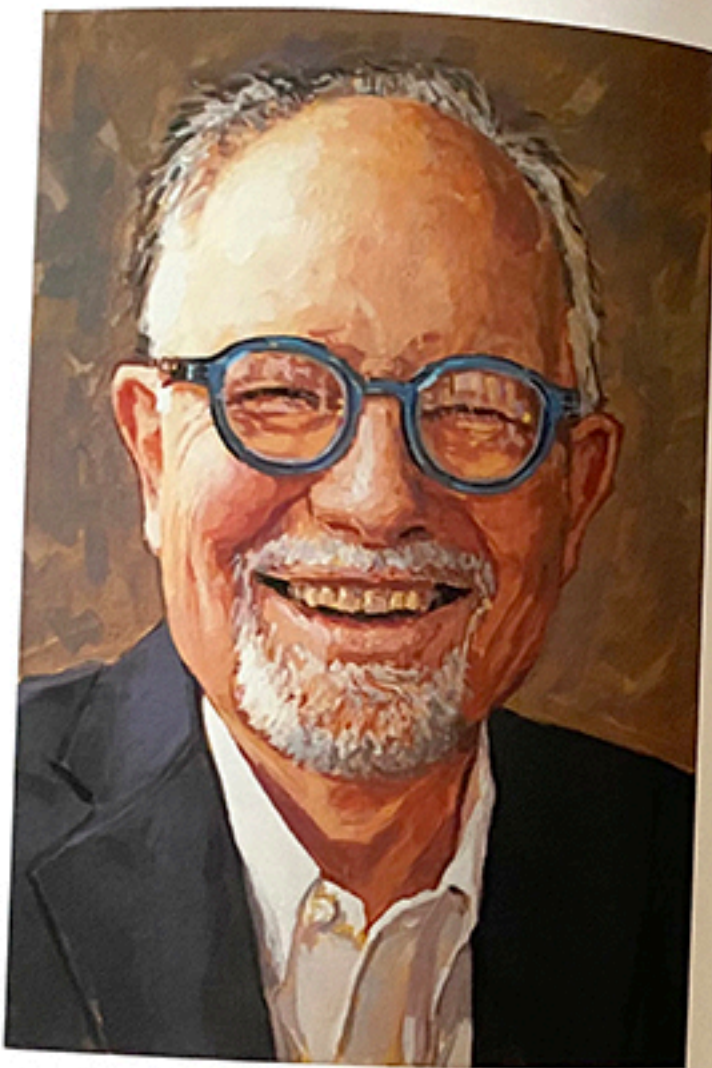
Frances Bagley, *Perched*
natural fibers and steel, 74" x 17" x 13", 2015
Courtesy of the Artist

LUCA DEL BALDO

For Rick

Two years ago I contacted Richard Brettell (on David Carrier's advice—there is a wonderful conversation between them in the *Brooklyn Rail*) to propose that his portrait be included in my great project, *The Visionary Academy of Ocular Mentality*. This consists of about ninety portraits of the most important living art historians, philosophers and scholars, along with their written contributions (it was later published by the German publisher De Gruyter, in 2020). Rick's answer was: "I am very happy to participate in this project—largely because I very much like your portraits from photographs (in both senses ... like them from the evidence of photographs AND marvel that they are made from photographs) ... there is a low-rez one taken by a good friend in a restaurant while we dined together, and the other a higher-resolution 'selfie' that gives you more visual information. Hope you can, using the two of them, make something that amuses."

Although I had never met Rick, I already knew him as a great scholar and art historian of French Impressionism, and as the highest authority on Paul Gauguin and Pissarro. A long and intense dialogue began between us via email, as old and close friends, on art, on portraiture, on Caillebotte or Vuillard, on life,



Luca Del Baldo, *Rick Brettell/The Visionary Academy of Ocular Mentality*, 2019
Oil on linen, 14" x 20"
Courtesy of the Artist

on dogs (we were both lovers of our pets), on architecture, on some famous directors of museums and presumptuous scholars, on Fred Licht or Ivan Albright or Philip Johnson, on American art collecting, etc. When I showed him his portrait, Rick was delighted and, as always, commented on it with brilliant insights:

"I love it ... the idea of an art historian squinting into the light, therefore shown without eyes, and with glints of light on the blue glasses is WONDERFUL to me ... with teeth (mine are like walrus tusk enamel because I drink so much coffee!) a rare occurrence in formal portraits, with glasses and "seeing aids," with mirrors and windows (the two principal metaphors for "the picture") and an issue raised with reflected light in my glasses of the world beyond picture, with the differences—manifold as they are—between painting and photography, with painting as an act of friendship and with memories—both of the encounter that produced the photograph that inspired the painting, and with my own role in the creation of artist's self-portraits dealing with identity and aging ... you and Hals and Henri are all characters in my little pictorial dance. I am defining myself through your portrait as the "comic spirit of art history." You are Mr. Monochrome—and the prince of aging flesh."

He then wrote a wonderful essay on the portrait for my book, and he found the money for the publication. Rick was a person who

truly loved art and artists, and also helped them find important commissions (I painted the portrait of one of the greatest arts and educational patrons of Dallas, Margaret McDermott, commissioned by Mr. Harlan Crow). I am infinitely grateful to Rick for this.

When Rick informed me of his cancer and his very serious illness which was getting worse and worse, I was shocked. Furthermore, the beginning of the global pandemic made everything even more sad and difficult. He continued to discuss art with me, always with the same great passion and strength. I painted for him, as my personal tribute, a small painting about Paul Gauguin that he liked very much: "The man in the portrait is a little confused and in shock. If he was ever like that, he would NEVER have wanted us to know ... the paint is beautiful, complex, and subtle ... Brotherhood in morphine."

In our last emails, Rick, after seeing my painting on George Floyd's death, proposed to me: "I am thinking of a series—some unintentional martyrdoms and the others principled martyrdom, where one is tortured because of beliefs, me think. Not all contemporary ... One of the very greatest martyr paintings, Francisco de Zurbaran, *The Martyrdom of Saint Serapion*, 1628."

I miss Rick very much—a great loss, and an irreplaceable, sincere friend and mentor.

JAMES MAGEE



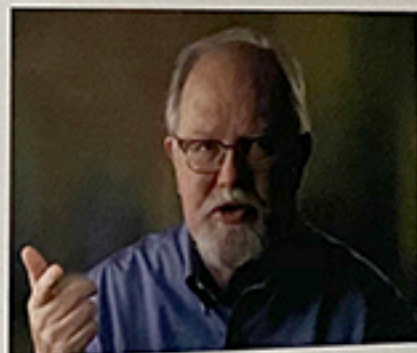
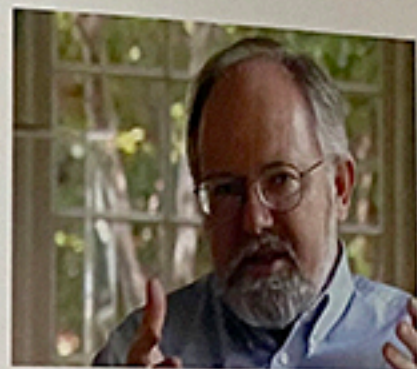
James Magee, *Mixed Media* Circa 2011
Mixed Media, 12" x 12" x 3"
Courtesy of the Caroline and Rick Brettell Collection

Words cannot convey my debt to Rick Brettell. For nearly thirty years he was the unwavering champion of my work. Together with Rudy Weingartner, who was introduced to me by Rick in the late 1990s, they reinvigorated the Cornudas Mountain Foundation in an effort to support construction at my West Texas job site, The Hill. Now that Rick is gone, my life has entered a different and, I would say, a more

quiet period, though the activity in my various workshops continues. Rick was luminous in so many ways—that goes without saying—but beyond sheer brilliance of perception and intellectual agility, Rick Brettell was even more exceptional as the most generous man I have ever known; that is, generous of spirit, generous of heart and generous of soul, and for this I ache in his passing.

QUIN MATHEWS

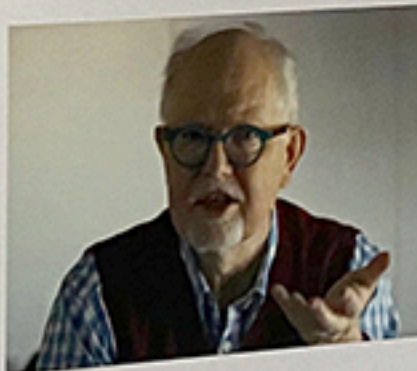
To know Rick Brettell was to get on a wild ride of unexpected pleasures. Rick asked me to work on projects over 25 years that took us to destinations like a corporate boardroom in Chicago, a modernist landmark in the Netherlands, an insane-asylum-turned ruin in Burgundy, and a three-decade art installation in the desert. He opened my ears and mind and shoveled in a personal art history education. When I said I hadn't known that modern art began in 1851, he responded "Why would you not think that?" The many others who also won the gift of Rick's friendship and mentoring also know the experience. This film (*The Rick Brettell Experience*, 37 minutes) brings together clips from over the years of conversations—and adventures—with the amazing, brilliant, one-and-only Rick Brettell.



Film stills of Rick discussing art

(middle) *The Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History*, filmed 2015 by Quin Mathews Films

(bottom) *The Museum of Texas Art*, filmed 2020 by Quin Mathews Films



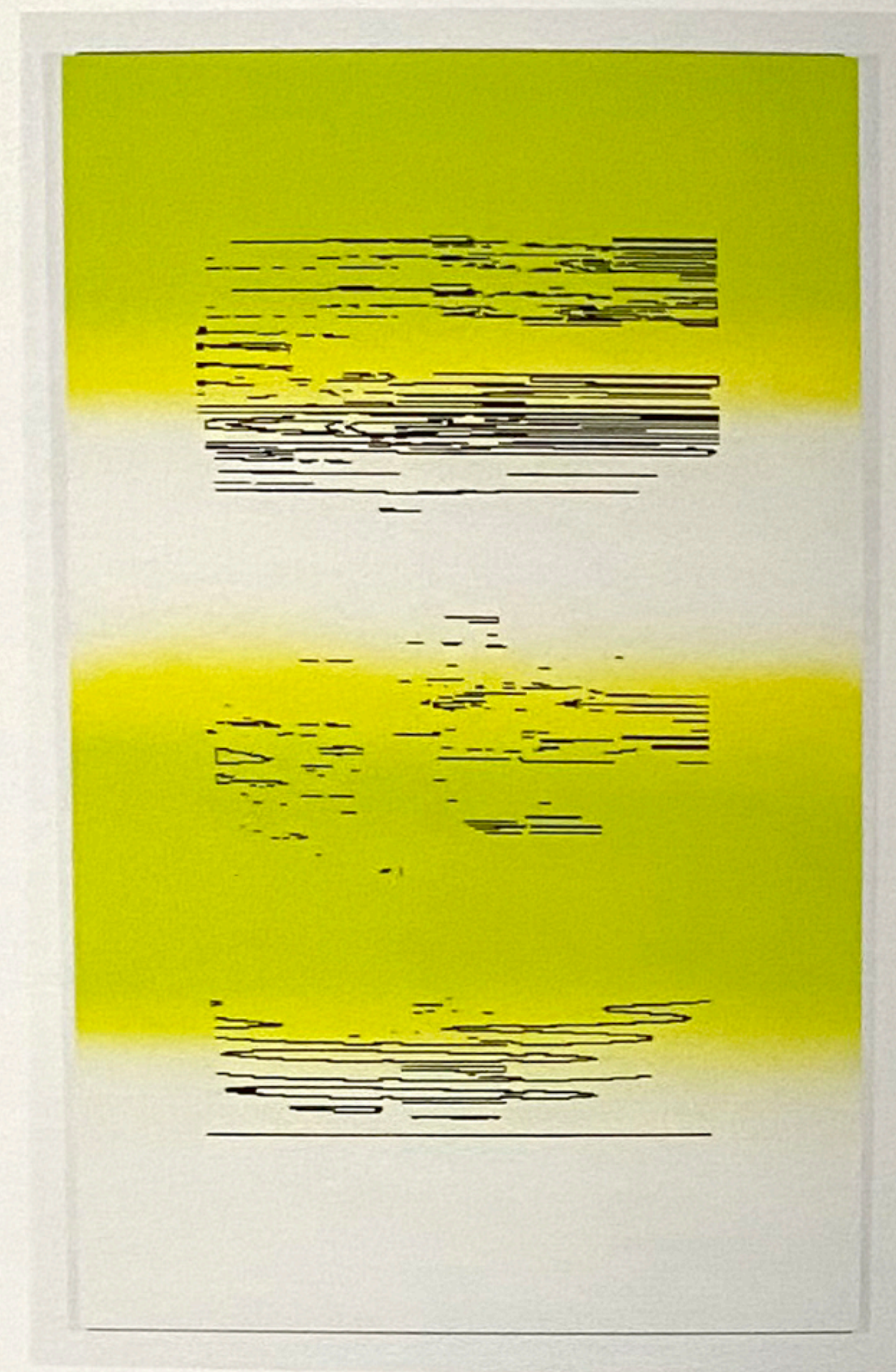
JOHN POMARA

The Energizing Force of Rick Brettell

When Rick Brettell arrived in Dallas in 1988 as the newly appointed director of the Dallas Museum of Art, he brought with him an infectious energy that affected everyone in his orbit. As he reached out to collectors and board members, he equally embraced the artists in Texas—the first director to do so at such a vast scale. He created the Texas Fund as a way to collect important artists in the region, and to place them alongside national and international artists in the collection. He believed, and often stated, that some artists working in Texas are “artists of international stature.”

It was under his direction that Annegreth Nill, the new contemporary curator, established a exhibition series entitled *Encounters*. Each *Encounter* exhibition coupled simultaneous shows of two artists' work alongside each other: one national or international-level artist, and one artist from Texas. This brought a new excitement to the museum programing, as well as to artists across the state. Rick's energy again affected the art culture of Texas, expanding the audience at the DMA and championing artists that lived here.

In 2001, I had my first museum solo exhibition at the DMA under the leadership of a new director, Jack Lane, and his deputy director Bonnie Pitman. Jack continued Rick's mission with regard to Texas art, and instructed the newly established curator, Suzanne Weaver, to reinstate the *Concentration* series of exhibitions in the museum's programing, which now showcased



John Pomara, *Sky Pilot*, 2020
Oil enamel on aluminum, 71" x 46"
Courtesy of Barry Whistler Gallery and the Artist

young emerging artists with solo exhibitions at a national level. Included among them were Texas artists, continuing the tradition that Rick had instigated several years earlier.

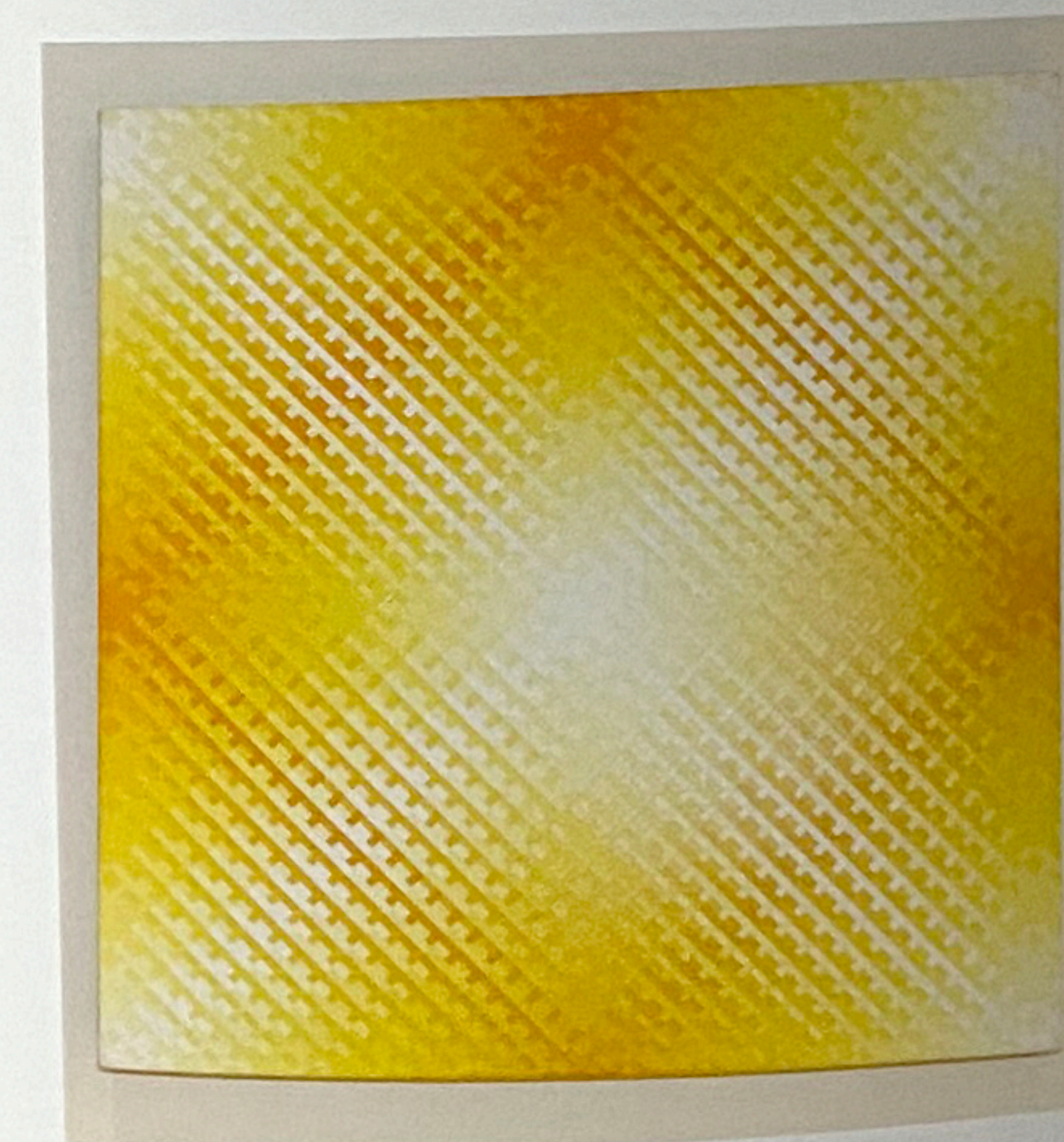
By 1996, Rick began teaching at The University of Texas at Dallas. From this position his energy expanded in the years that followed to

establish UTD's Artist Residency, Centraltrak, to be followed by The Wilcox Space, as well as becoming director of the newly established Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History. If this wasn't enough to do, Rick added to his resume: art critic for the *Dallas Morning News*. The man never stopped!

One of the highlights of my career was in the spring of 2017, when Rick wrote an in-depth review of my latest exhibition at Barry Whistler Gallery as well as the newly acquired commissioned works for UT Southwestern's

newest hospital. In the article he stated, "We realize this artist we have known for years is a major artist—not a 'Dallas' or a 'Texas' artist, but an artist of international stature." He went on to say that the new works at UT Southwestern, "are simply breathtaking." Seeing these words in print still resonates with me. Rick's tremendous support and ability to articulate his sense of the paintings continues to energize me as an artist. His creative talent, keen eye, and energy affected countless artists throughout his time in Texas.

SUSIE ROSEMARIN



Susie Rosemarin, *Yellow Study No. 1*, 2002
Acrylic on canvas, 20" x 20"
Courtesy EODIAH Collection

The Bat

By day the bat is cousin to the mouse.
He likes the attic of an aging house.
His fingers make a hat about his head.
His pulse beat is so slow we think him dead.
He loops in crazy figures half the night
Among the trees that face the corner light.
But when he brushes up against a screen,
We are afraid of what our eyes have seen:
For something is amiss or out of place
When mice with wings can wear a human face.

- Theodore Roethke

'The Bat', a poem by one of Rick's favorite poets, Theodore Roethke, which he loved to recite to friends with that classic twinkle in his eye.



BRETTELL

An Artists' Homage to the
Dynamic Influence of Rick Brettell

Index

Airhart, Chad Wesley
Artist, Teacher, Studio & Gallery Owner
Oneonta, AL
www.themakersdowntown.com
www.chadwesleyairhart.com
72

Albright, Ivan (1897-1983)
Artist, Chicago, IL
www.artic.edu/artists/33376/ivan-albright
11

Bagley, Frances
Artist, Dallas, TX
francesbagley.com
73

Barlow, Phyllida
Artist, London, UK
www.hausenwirth.com/artists/2826-phyllida-barlow
47, 74

Barrickman, Peter
Artist, Milwaukee, WI
www.peterbarrickman.com
11, 75

Bieler, Ernest (1863-1948)
Artist, Lausanne, Switzerland
www.kunstmuseumbern.ch/en/see/today/4-ernest-
bieler-120
12

Brettell, Caroline B.
University Distinguished Professor of Anthropology
Chair, Department of Anthropology
Southern Methodist University
Dallas, TX
people.smu.edu/cbrettell
9

Brown, Carolyn
Photographer, Dallas, TX
www.craigheadgreen.com/carolyn-brown
www.carolynbrownphotographer.com
cebphoto@icloud.com
25, 77

Cohen-Rozencohn, Ronald
Artist, Educator, Iowa City, IA
www.ronald-cohen-rozencohn.casa
79

Collins, Phillip E.
Vice Chair, Art and Culture Advisory Commissions,
City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs
Past Chief Curator, African American Museum of Dallas
Dallas, TX
34

Corcoran, Victoria
Founding Program Director, McKinney Avenue
Contemporary
Founder and President, Corcoran & Co
Dallas, TX
corcoranco.com
35

Coulter, Nan
Photographer, Contributing Arts Editor at *The Dallas
Morning News*
Dallas, TX
nancoulter@gmail.com
80

Cunningham, Gary (Corky)
Architect, Cunningham Architects
Dallas, TX
www.cunninghamarchitects.com
22

Curchack, Fred
Theatre Artist, Professor of Theatre, The University of
Texas at Dallas
Video excerpts from the ensemble version, *Gauguin's
Paradise*, vimeo.com/581630705 Password: Gauguin
Video excerpts from the solo version, *Gauguin's Shadow*,
vimeo.com/150731369 Password: Gauguin
Dallas, TX
82

Daou, Annabel
Artist, Dallas, TX
conduitgallery.com/artists/annabel-daou
annabeldaou.com
@annabeldaou
84

Dawe, Gabriel
Artist, Dallas, TX
www.gabrieldawe.com
@gabrieldawe
49, 85

Del Baldo, Luca
Artist, Cantù, Como, Italy
www.lucadelbaldo.com
www.degruyter.com/document/
doi/10.1515/9783110706109
86

Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History, The
The University of Texas at Dallas
56

Gerwers, Martin
Artist, Dusseldorf, Germany
www.gerwers.de
www.philippvonrosen.com/artists/martin-gerwers
slewe.nl/artists/martingerwers
88

Geyer, Ginger Henry
Artist, Writer, Museum Consultant
Dallas Museum of Art, Deputy Director for Planning
under Rick Brettell
Austin, TX
www.valleyhouse.com
gingergeyer.com
@gingergeyer
89

Hale, Ken
Marguerite Fairchild Centennial Professor Emeritus,
Department of Art and Art History, College of Fine Arts,
The University of Texas at Austin
Artist, Carmel Valley, CA
www.kenhaleart.com
91

Hernandez, John
Artist, San Antonio, TX
33, 92
Hicks, Tracy (1946-2014)
Artist, Dallas, TX
www.tracyhicks.com
33, 93

Holland, Amy Lewis
Senior Director, The Crow Museum of Asian Art,
The University of Texas at Dallas
Dallas, TX
59

Kennedy, Brandon
Artist, Curator, Writer
Dallas, TX
94

Kratz, Dennis
Senior Associate Provost, Founding Director of the
Center for Asian Studies
Ignacy and Celina Rockover Professor of Humanities at
The University of Texas at Dallas
Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities, 1997-2019
Dallas, TX
54

Lacour, Pierrette
Rick Brettell's Assistant
Program Coordinator
The Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History,
The University of Texas at Dallas
Dallas, TX
43

Lacy, Jean
Artist, Curator, Arts Educator
Former Curator of Education and Exhibitions at the
Museum of African-American Life and Culture in Dallas,
TX
www.flyingjean.com
96

Lapthisophon, Stephen
Artist, Writer, and Educator, The University of Texas at
Arlington
Arlington, TX
stephenlapthisophon.com
conduitgallery.com/artists/stephen-lapthisophon
19, 97

Lima, Benjamin
Editor, *Athenaeum Review*, The University of Texas at
Dallas
Dallas, TX
athenaumreview.org
80