

Cranbrook

from page B1

the post-World War II era.

Edson-Pell, one from a series of star athlete portraits by Andy Warhol from the late '70s, leans inconspicuously against a wall in one of the museum's back wings.

A few steps to the left is Robert Rauschenberg's *Moon Burn* (Scale Series), an intriguing piece comprised of vertical wood panels overlaid with horizontal bands of colored fabric, found objects, four dangling light bulbs and a reflective plane that juts out from the work's base.

On the other side of the gallery, a grand-scale abstraction of fluorescent color has been revealed. Frank Stella's *Takht-i-Sulayman Variation I*, an enormous canvas attached to several stretchers, comes from a series by artist that presents variations on the protractor-drawn shape.

"It's the color that grabs you first," says Wittkopp of the works, which were assembled by Shuey and her late husband, Dr. John Shuey.

Appropriately, the exhibit, which runs through April 7, is entitled *Three Decades of Contemporary Art: The Dr. John & Mrs. Rose M. Shuey Collection*.

"They were really attracted to lush color," says Wittkopp of the couple's eye and sensibility as major art collectors.

It's been approximately a month since Wittkopp received official word that Shuey wished to donate the entire collection to Cranbrook. Although Wittkopp has been working with the collector for more than a year, he only knew that some pieces would be made available to Cranbrook for exhibition.

"I knew that it was right for us," he says of working with Shuey. "But when you're working with a collector of this magnitude, you don't make any assumptions," he says, adding, "It's been the most thrilling

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moment of my career."

Since most pieces in the Shuey collection existed in a private realm, having never been seen or loaned out, the Cranbrook exhibit provides a unique opportunity. "Visitors will get a very fresh view of contemporary art. This work is all very fresh," says Wittkopp.

By-and-large, the collection is quite accessible partly because of its strength in the Op Art and Pop Art movements.

The collection's accessibility has broader implications for the museum and, hopefully, visitors. "I would hope that visitors will get excited about these artists and these works and be ready to take the next step and approach other contemporary work," says Wittkopp.

Although the exhibit's catalog explores the 38 artists represented in the show through articles written by art historians, educational programs on the Shuey collection won't run until February in hopes of encouraging visitors to return. The collection was organized organically, rather than chronologically or in the sequence in which the Shueys purchased the pieces. "Ultimately, I decided to mix up the pieces so each has the space it needs, which also provided opportunities for some interesting juxtaposition," says Wittkopp.

Following the exhibit, pieces from the Shuey group will be presented in the art museum's permanent collections space, according to Wittkopp.

Cranbrook has recently sought to beef up its exhibition of con-

temporary art, and the Shuey donation will advance that goal. "It allows our collecting and exhibition programs to be more complementary," said Wittkopp. "It will allow us to contextualize our contemporary exhibition program."

The donation brought a change in the art museum's collections policy. Prior to the donation, the museum exclusively collected art associated with artists who worked or studied at Cranbrook, says Wittkopp. The new policy includes 20th and 21st century works with a special interest in

work by artists associated with Cranbrook, which, as it turns out, matches founder George Booth's goals for the museum. "What this gift does is actually reaffirm the mission given by George Booth."

But only the future can tell what's in store for the art museum. With a new collections policy and a multi-million dollar collection of contemporary art from which to build, new visions are starting to form, including a picture of an expanded gallery.

"It's what we're starting to dream about," says Wittkopp. "Nothing concrete at this point, but that's the dream we're starting to test the feasibility of, and the acquisition of the Shuey collection makes a more compelling case for that dream."

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