



Posted on Thu, Jul. 05, 2012

Nelson adds works to Bloch Building corridor

Two new vibrant op art pieces join a third already on display.

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The Kansas City Star

The Bloch Building gallery walk is turning into a gallery all its own.

Since the building's 2007 opening, visitors have ambled down a blank corridor when they left the Bloch lobby to head south to the galleries. That began to change last October, when the museum installed a vibrant op art piece by Luis Tomasello on the east wall between the modern and contemporary galleries and the African gallery.

And over the past couple of weeks, two more works have been installed nearby.

One is a sculpture by Fred Eversley, an artist associated with the 1960s L.A. Light & Space movement. His untitled 9-foot-high piece looks like a narrow curving blade or feather and comprises a series of overlapping triangles cut from laminated blue acrylic mirror.

Next to it is "Ecriture," a large wall piece by Venezuelan artist Jesús Rafael Soto (1923-2005), in which linear metal elements suggesting cursive writing dangle and seem to vibrate in front of a grid of black-and-white striped squares.

It's a masterpiece, and it captivated the Nelson's director/CEO Julian Zugazagoitia when he saw it at the Sicardi Gallery's booth at the Art Basel Miami Beach art fair last December. The work was sold to the Schwartz family from Brazil, who agreed to let the Nelson have it on long-term loan.

"Whether it's Tomasello, Soto or (Carlos) Cruz-Diez, this is a whole generation that is coming into focus now," Zugazagoitia said. "All of this group was around the gallery of Denise Rene in Paris in the '50s and '60s. It's one of those things, art history is now looking at them."

Eversley too is coming back, Zugazagoitia said, thanks to his appearance in several major exhibits that were part of the Getty Foundation's recent "Pacific Standard Time" project tracing the rise of the Los Angeles art scene.

"He had a beautiful showing at the Hammer," Zugazagoitia said of one of the participating L.A. museums. "This piece was in that show, and I just loved it. I took a picture with a cellphone and shot it to him and said, 'Would you lend this?' and he said, 'yes.'"

Born in 1941, Eversley began his career as an engineer for NASA's Apollo missions, but at 25 he decided to channel his interest in science and technology into art. Known for using geometric forms and reflective materials to express his interest in energy, Eversley has fulfilled numerous public art commissions, and his work is in the collections of dozens of museums.

In 1970, he had a one-person show at the Whitney Museum in New York. In 1977, he was an artist-in-residence at the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum.

The three works in the gallery walk make for a lively ensemble, expressing Zugazagoitia's idea that "the corridor could be really curated into an op art experience."

Although Eversley is not connected with the op group that included Soto and Tomasello, "the correlation made sense," Zugazagoitia said, noting that all three of the artists play with light and use the movement of the viewer to activate their works.

"The idea is that those corridors start to be programmed," he added. "I want to be very fluid. The corridors should be inviting and offer a renewed experience every time you come."

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