

A lesson in abstraction
F&M hosts an exhibit of Cleve Gray's work

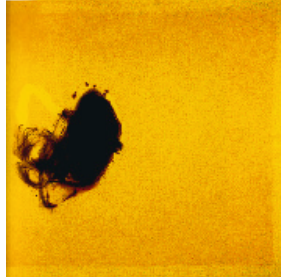
Sunday News
 Published: Oct 05, 2008
 00:12 EST
 Lancaster

Article Photos Map Related Share It

Link Tags

By KRISTY BULLER, Correspondent

Images of war-torn Europe remained etched in the mind of a 20-something Cleve Gray after his service in World War II. Having studied art since childhood, Gray had an aptitude for landscape painting and transferred those images to the canvas.



Cleve Gray's "Jonquil" is now part of F&M's permanent collection.

1 of 1

His exposure to the post-war European art scene would soon inspire a clear shift toward more conceptual work, and today Gray is fondly remembered for his colorful, wall-size abstract paintings, which he produced until his death in 2004.

A collection of some of his legacy works is now on display at Franklin & Marshall College's Phillips Museum of Art. The exhibition, "A Considered Life," runs through Dec. 19 and features paintings from the "Man and Nature" series, created between 1975 and 2004.

"This exhibition is unique to the college because it is the first time these masterworks are being shown outside of New York since the artist's death," said Claire Giblin, curator of collections at the museum. "There is no question concerning the importance of this work and the significance of Cleve Gray in the history of mid- and latter 20th-century art."

The show opened Friday with a reception and gallery talks by R. Scott Wright, visiting assistant professor of art and art history at F&M, and Deborah Barkun, a former assistant professor of art history at Millersville University.

Wright said he was initially struck by Gray's work upon viewing "Threnody," a monumental, 100-foot-long anti-war abstraction created between 1972 and 1973. By the time Wright saw the work in the 1980s, he was in art school and facing the tough realization that painting was losing its popularity.

That decade, he said, was combative for art students studying painting. Critics and historians of the day were declaring the act of painting dead, claiming nothing new could be achieved in the medium. Gray, he said, changed that belief, reinvigorating the art form by combining interests in antiquity and world cultures with a twist on American modernist painting.

"This idea of Gray championing painting at a time when it was considered old-fashioned is at the core of this exhibition," Wright said. "He is a master painter and a major American artist."

Although the exhibition will travel following its stint at F&M, one painting will return to the college as part of its permanent collection of mid-20th century fine art. "Jonquil," an 8½-foot-square, color-based abstraction created in 1976, was donated to the college by Gray's widow, biographer and novelist Francine du Plessix Gray.

Related Topics

- artist ▾ (489)
- art ▾ (317)
- painting ▾ (162)
- art exhibit ▾ (108)
- artwork ▾ (73)
- painter ▾ (44)
- Phillips Museum o... ▾ (4)

A noted American figure in her own right, du Plessix Gray will visit the college Wednesday, Oct. 29, to discuss the life and works of her husband, as well as her most recent book.

Wright said the donation of "Jonquil" will help the museum expand its collection to include modern and contemporary art. The piece exemplifies Gray's interest in world cultures.

"The motif that sort of floats to the side-center of that piece is reminiscent of Japanese brush painting, and although there are no direct references to actual characters, the marks feel like ideograms," he said. "The goal was to emulate the ancient practice of sumi brush on rice paper, but in a much larger and more muscular way."

Wright considers Gray a bridge between early modernists, such as Jackson Pollack and Willem de Kooning, and postmodern art.

Throughout his life, Gray studied and held exhibitions worldwide, demonstrating his passion for varying zeitgeists. In addition to studying archeology at Princeton University, he made artful references to Zen Buddhism and Greco-Roman influences.

Wright said Gray looked forward and backward at the same time.

"Gray is gaining in stature as his work is being recognized," Wright said. "He only passed away four years ago at the height of his powers. I think people are just getting over the shock that there will be no more great works to come."

The exhibition also features "Untitled Red," the last painting Gray worked on before his death.

"A Considered Life" will be on display in the Dana Gallery of F&M's Phillips Museum of Art through Dec. 19. Admission is free. For more information about the show, visit www.fandm.edu/phillipsmuseum.xml. For more

Shopping.com art oil painting model

Search

	Get It For: \$94.00		Get It For: \$94.00
	Get It For: \$94.00		Get It For: \$94.00

Featured Jobs

Lancaster Rehabilitation Hospital - Lancaster, PA

RN Charge Nurse PT
 Moravian Manor - Lititz, PA

State Director
 Communities In Schools of PA - Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

DENTAL HYGIENIST/PT
 Confidential - Leola, Pennsylvania

More Jobs

Local Video

Nick Martin, Maya de...
 0:02:19

How Steelers can win
 0:03:24

How Cardinals can win
 0:04:10

Super Bowl prediction
 0:01:16

Test the waters
 0:00:45

Mounted patrol
 0:01:12

Find your dream home
 in Lancaster County.

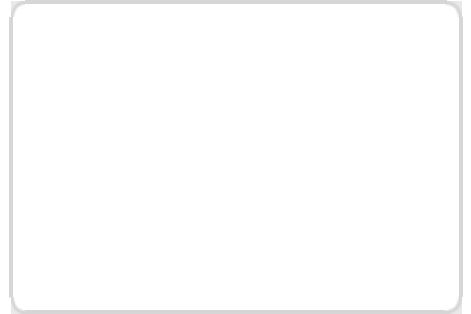
information about Cleve Gray, visit www.clevegray.com.

Photo Gallery



Penn Manor Girl Scouts Water Rescue
1. 1/24/2009 -- Red Cross basic water rescue training for Penn Manor Neighborhood of Girl Scouts at Millersville University Brooks Hall. Scarlett Morris, 10, throws a life jacket out in the water to her 'buddy' Ashley Pfister, 11, during a game called "Help, Help I'm drowning" Photo/Graybill Photo By: Justin Graybill

Top Ads



Local Restaurants

Find The Best Local Restaurants In The Online Local Yellow Pages™
www.LiveDeal.com/YellowPages

Contemporary Fine Art

Contemporary Painting Savannah Fine Art Gallery
www.2cargallery.com

[Ads by Google](#) [Chinese Art Painting](#) [Paintings](#) [Paint Art](#) [Art Gallery Work](#) [Artists Work](#)

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Business](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Lifestyle](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Homes](#) | [Autos](#)

[Terms of Service](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Ephrata Review](#) | [Lititz Record](#) | [Lancaster Farming](#)



Copyright 2004-2008