

cincinnati art museum

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***Images Available Upon Request**

Reconstruction of trailblazing American painting exhibition to debut at Cincinnati Art Museum March 12–July 11



CINCINNATI— An exhibition of 41 evocative paintings sparked an art world commotion in the late 1970s. Now, a reconstruction of the exhibition is coming to the Cincinnati Art Museum. [*American Painting: The Eighties Revisited*](#) will be on view from March 12–July 11.

Not often does the chance come along to revisit a cultural event from our past and interpret it anew.

With the generous gift of intrepid art collectors Ronnie Levinson Shore and John Shore, the Cincinnati Art Museum has acquired 40 of the 41 paintings from the original *American Painting: The Eighties* exhibition.

When the show debuted at New York University’s Grey Art Gallery in 1979, it touched off a critical and spirited debate about the nature and direction of painting in America.

In this new interpretation, visitors will have a chance to view work from some of the most iconic abstract painters of the late twentieth century, including Nancy Graves, Sam Gilliam, Elizabeth Murray and Robert Moskowitz—and along the way explore their own opinions of what defines the best of contemporary painting.

“These painters focused on formal concerns and on the material qualities of paint,” said Kate Bonansinga, director of the School of Art College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning at the University of Cincinnati, and guest curator of the exhibition. “Many painters today continue with these foci, though the field has expanded considerably.”

When curator Barbara Rose first presented the show, she boldly brought together the work of 41 virtually unknown young painters. Staunch in the face of critical reception, Rose stood by her conviction that these artists were worthy of attention, and her prediction that abstraction would remain central to contemporary painting—an opinion controversial to this day.

In 1984, after its highly publicized international tour, the Shores, natives of the Midwest, acquired the entire exhibition. This unorthodox yet prescient act speaks to the couple’s forward-thinking approach to collecting. Self-educated and knowledgeable in contemporary art, they identified with the vision of Rose’s selections and elected to keep the entire collection together.

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Now, with the perspective of nearly 40 years between their acquisition and their laudable donation of these powerful paintings, the Shores have made it possible for the public to share in the enjoyment of this collection, which has proven itself over time to document a pivotal point in the history of American painting.

American Painting: The Eighties Revisited will be on view in Galleries 301, 302, and 303 on the museum's third floor. Admission is free. Photography is permitted, without flash. On social media, share with #80srevisited and tag the Cincinnati Art Museum.

About the Cincinnati Art Museum

The Cincinnati Art Museum is supported by the generosity of individuals and businesses that give annually to ArtsWave. The Ohio Arts Council helps fund the Cincinnati Art Museum with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The Cincinnati Art Museum gratefully acknowledges operating support from the City of Cincinnati, as well as our members. Free general admission to the Cincinnati Art Museum is made possible by a gift from The Rosenthal Family Foundation. Special exhibition pricing may vary. Parking at the Cincinnati Art Museum is free. Visit cincinnatiartmuseum.org for more information.

Image credit: Sam Gilliam (b. 1933), United States, *Tequila*, 1979, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, Gift of Ronnie and John Shore, 2018.194, © 2019 Sam Gilliam/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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