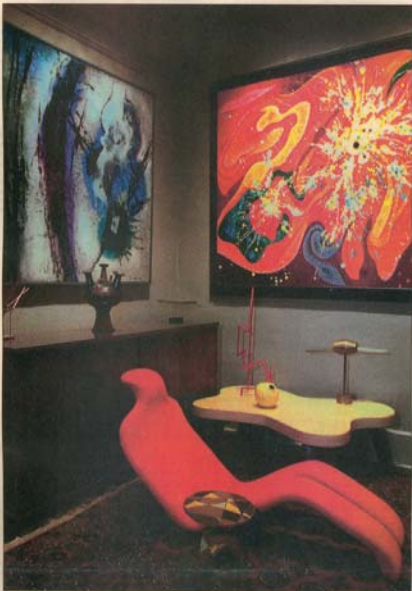


## VANCE KIRKLAND MUSEUM & FOUNDATION



Above, Kirkland museum director Hugh Grant, with a Kirkland painting behind him. At left, Kirkland's paintings and decorative art meet in this exhibit room.

### Early 1900s in state called a significant era of expression

By Kyle MacMillan  
Denver Post Staff Writer

SEEKING Colorado art in Colorado has not been easy, at least when it comes to work from the state's lively scene in the early decades of the 20th century.

The Denver Art Museum has paid little attention to this area. And other institutions with larger budgets, such as the Denver Public Library and Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, don't show significant quantities of such work with any consistency.

But with the arrival of a new player on the scene, the situation is changing quickly.

# A home for Colorado art

### TOP TEN WORKS BY LOCAL ARTISTS

Here is a look at 10 of the most significant Colorado artworks at the Vance Kirkland Museum & Foundation and the artists who produced them.

**David Bourdieu (1851-)**  
"Clever Vase" (1892), porcelain, 8 1/2 inches tall. One of the youngest artists represented at the Kirkland museum, this widely respected clay artist built on many of the technical and stylistic traditions represented in the collection.

**Edgar Britton (1901-1982)**  
"Chief" (ca. early 1920s), fabricated bronze, 11 1/2 inches tall. A student of Grant Wood at the University of Iowa, Britton taught at the Colorado Fine Arts Center from 1942 to 1950. Originally a painter, he later turned to sculpture.

**Charles Bunnell (1887-1968)**  
"Abstraction of Planes" (1945), oil on panel, 25 1/2 by 20 1/2 inches. One of the best-known students at the Breuckhoff Art Academy in the 1930s, he settled in Colorado Springs, assisting Frank Meadon on the Post Office mural there.

SEE TOP TEN ON 18P

Edgar Britton, "Chief"



Charles Bunnell, "Abstraction of Planes"



David Bourdieu, "Clever Vase"

Two years ago, the Vance Kirkland Museum & Foundation began aggressively buying up its Colorado holdings. It now has 450 paintings, sculptures, decorative objects and works on paper by more than 100 artists who lived all or part of their lives in the state.

"Some may be great," said director Hugh Grant. "Some may be very good artists. But they show a rather wonderful span of how complex and sophisticated and active the 20th century was in Colorado."

Besides boasting the drawing power of the Kirkland Museum at 1311 Pearl St., the new collecting direction focuses increased attention on a group of artists whom many area experts believe have not received the attention they deserve.

Colorado cannot claim a group of artists as influential as the Bay Area figurative painters in California or Texas modernists in New Mexico, but those associated with the many movements centered in New York City. But the state did have a vibrant art scene for much of the 20th century.

"Obviously New York is exceptional and certain states are exceptional," Grant said. "But I think Colorado might rank very high on the list out of the 50 states as one of the most active art communities in the 20th century and one of the imaginative."

Among the most significant artists are those associated with the Breuckhoff Art Academy, which opened in Colorado Springs in 1919 with John Carlson as its director and operated through 1945. Other notable artists associated with it include Charles Bunnell, Ernest Lawson, Archie Musick, Robert Reid and Birger Sandzen.

SEE KIRKLAND ON 20P

### MOST SIGNIFICANT COLORADO ARTWORKS AT THE VANCE KIRKLAND MUSEUM & FOUNDATION

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Martha Daniels, "Green Tower"

**Martha Daniels (1943-)**  
"Green Tower" (1959), multi-temperature-fired ceramic, 52 inches tall. The Denver Art Museum showcased Daniels' often large-scale ceramic pieces in its Chase Ranga Gallery in 2000. Still an active as well, her work will be part of a day show opening Jan. 9 at the Wilson Hsu Gallery.

**Charles Denton (1921-1994)**  
"Chief from the Sculptured House" (early 1950s), molded fiberglass, 42 inches tall. Most widely known for his 1950s "Sculptured House" made from materials he, the Dallas architect was also a notable designer whose creations included this chair.

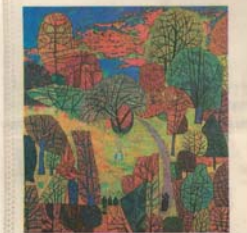
**William Joseph (1926-)**  
"Quarrel" (1954), cast bronze, 10 1/2 inches tall. He was a member of a loose-knit, post-World War II group known as the Fifteen Colorado Artists. "The only thing we had in common was that we didn't have anything in common," he said in a 1958 interview.

**Edward Marschak (1913-1983)**  
"Farewell to Summer" (1962), oil on canvas, 4 feet by 4 feet. Marschak and his husband, both longtime ceramicists, were featured in a retrospective exhibition at the Anschutz Center for the Arts and Humanities in 2000 as part of a conference of the National Council for Education in the Ceramic Arts.

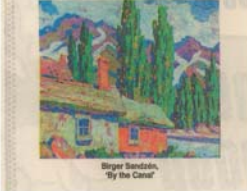
**Han McClelland (1913-)**  
"Pine Needle Vase" (1940-60) porcelain, 8 1/2 inches tall. McClelland and her husband, both longtime ceramicists, were featured in a retrospective exhibition at the Anschutz Center for the Arts and Humanities in 2000 as part of a conference of the National Council for Education in the Ceramic Arts.

**James Mills (1924-2001)**  
"We Are Ready for the Procession" (1962), collage and acrylic on canvas, 48 inches by 36 inches. In addition to painting, Mills was a popular character actor, appearing frequently in Denver theatrical productions. He also served for several years as The Denver Post's art and drama critic, stepping down in 1983.

**Birger Sandzen (1871-1954)**  
"By the Canal" (1929), oil on canvas, 20 inches by 14 inches. The head of the art department at Bethany College in Lindsay, Kan., Sandzen first came to Colorado in 1908 and remained in the state for the next 35 years. Some of his most prized works are Colorado scenes.



Edward Marschak, "Farewell to Summer"



Birger Sandzen, "By the Canal"



William Joseph, "Quarrel"



Han McClelland, "Pine Needle Vase"



James Mills, "We Are Ready for the Procession"



Charles Denton, "Chief from the Sculptured House"

## Kirkland spotlights Colorado works

### KIRKLAND FROM PAGE 1F

Although the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center organized a traveling exhibition titled "Pine Peak Views: The Breuckhoff Art Academy, 1919-1947" in 1981, the accompanying catalog in a retrospective exhibition at the Anschutz Center for the Arts and Humanities in 2000 as part of a conference of the National Council for Education in the Ceramic Arts.

"What effect the Kirkland Museum will have on the visibility of the Breuckhoff artists and others who followed it is uncertain, but their work will at least receive more ongoing visibility in Colorado than ever before, especially with the institution's recent decision to open five days a week.

"I have been frustrated that there hasn't been a museum in Denver that has focused on this area of interest," said Denver art collector Jim Houghton. "I think it's culturally important. It's encouraged by the Kirkland Museum trying to represent this area."

Besides attempting to display a cross-section of the Breuckhoff artists, the Kirkland Museum has collected an array of other artists, from abstract painter James Mills (1924-2001) to designer Charles Denton (1921-1994). The focus is on what Grant terms "modernistic" art.

"I figure 'modernistic' art is anywhere from abstract realism — it has to have some kind of clarity, it can't just be straight realism in pure abstraction," he said. "So obviously it's a big span."

Two curators at the Denver Art Museum, said Grant's efforts, saying that what he is doing complements the museum's other collections. Visitors can easily make a side trip to the Kirkland Museum, which is just seven blocks north in the Capitol Hill neighborhood.

The label with the about doing this, and he said. "Do you think it makes sense?" I said. "Absolutely, as far as it goes," said Grant. "Because it's an important group of modern and contemporary art from all over the world, we can't focus on this area specifically," she said. "So it's really important that someone with the resources to do it is able to do so and has chosen to do it."

In fact, because the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, which grew out of the Breuckhoff Art



Artist Vance Kirkland in 1959 when he was director of the School of Art at Denver University.

### Home for art

What Vance Kirkland Museum & Foundation Means: 10 to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays  
Where: 1311 Pearl St.  
Admission: \$5 general public, \$5 seniors, students and teachers and \$4 per person for groups (303-852-6576 or www.vancekirkland.org)

Academy, emphasizes art of this region. Vandybilt has made modern and contemporary art from elsewhere the primary emphasis of her department.

The museum consisted this approach in 1981, when it went nearly 50 Colorado artworks, from the 1930s, '40s and '50s to the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. That institution now has more than 700 pieces, with the bulk by artists connected with the Breuckhoff academy.

"Because the fine arts center's holdings are so comprehensive, Cathy Vandybilt, director and chief curator of the facility's subsidiary Taylor Museum, said she supports Grant's efforts and so no way feels threatened by them.

"I don't really see it as competition," she said. "We still acquire pieces by gifts or by purchase for that collection, but we're not just about it, because we have such a good core collection. And there are a lot of things in Colorado Springs, which I hope will come to us someday as a gift."

"If the Denver Art Museum has ignored Colorado artists from much of the 20th century, it has made a point of collecting contemporary work. Because of its activi-

ties in this area and those of other institutions, including the Museum of Contemporary Art (Denver), the Kirkland Museum has largely stored clear of such work.

The few exceptions are selections by longtime Colorado artists such as Martha Daniels and Clark Hubert, who have rich histories of contributions to the state and are still producing work and participating in exhibitions.

"We aren't conflict with anybody, which is really good. We have this niche," Grant said.

He established the Vance Kirkland Foundation in 1994 to promote the legacy of the painter, who arrived in Denver in 1939 to head the Chappell School of Art at the University of Denver. Kirkland became one of the state's best-known artists, evolving through a series of surreal and abstract styles.

The foundation enlarged Kirkland's studio at 1311 Pearl St. and converted it into a museum. It houses not only a large group of the artist's works but also his extensive decorative arts collection, which Grant has expanded with a series of significant acquisitions.

In what he saw as a logical outgrowth of the foundation's vision, Grant decided two years ago to spotlight Colorado art as a way to broaden the scope of the museum's holdings and make them more attractive to visitors, even the institution open to the public full time.

"It works so well, with everything else he is doing every year at the Kirkland museum," Vandybilt said. "They really identified a slice he can get great pleasure from and at the same time give back to the community and fill an important role."