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## President's Letter

*Camilla Van Vooren*

By the time you receive this September WAAC *Newsletter*, I hope I will have seen you at the annual meeting in Denver. I extend my sincere appreciation to colleagues who presented papers at the meeting. I encourage all of you to consider sharing an interesting, challenging, or unique project with the WAAC membership at the next annual meeting. The comfortable, friendly, and supportive atmosphere of this gathering of professionals makes it a perfect setting to share our experiences: the good, the bad, and the ugly (and I might add the odd...).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of individuals: Carl Patterson, the entire staff of the Conservation Department of the Denver Art Museum and all of my Denver colleagues for their assistance in planning the meeting, Yosi Poseilov for agreeing to give the workshop on digital photography, Ann Daley and Steve Good for making the tours of the Red House and the Anschutz Collection possible, and Carmen Brian and the Western Center for the Conservation of Fine Arts for hosting the opening reception at the Kirkland Museum.

A special thanks, as well, to my fellow WAAC board members, especially my Vice President, Susanne Friend, Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Member-at-Large, Chris Stavroudis, *Newsletter* Editor, Carolyn Tallent, Webmaster, Walter Henry, and Presidents Emeritus, Laura Downey Staneff, Beverly Perkins, and Molly Lambert for their continued helpfulness, patience, and support during my term. Planning the annual meeting can be, at times, an arduous task. The suggestions, advice, and encouragement of these individuals were invaluable to me. I would also like to recognize vendor donations from Dry Creek Gold Leaf, Inc. of Denver and Terry Dowd, Inc. whose generous contributions helped to defray meeting costs.

Continuing the theme of my previous letters focusing on the art scene in Denver, I will indulge in a discussion of the future of Denver's dynamic cultural growth. I recently attended a lecture at the Denver Art Museum given by Dean Sobell, the director of the future Clyfford Still Museum to be built by 2010 on Bannock Street, next to the Hamilton Wing of the Denver Art Museum. Sobell's lecture entitled "Who Is Clyfford Still... And Why Does He Matter" was a prelude to the exhibit at the Denver Art Museum, *Clyfford Still, Unveiled: Selections from the Estate* which opened July 14.

Attendees to the annual meeting will have had the opportunity to see this sampling of the Clyfford Still Museum's

holdings: the thirteen paintings and works of art on paper are a respectable survey of the artist's oeuvre, which includes a striking self-portrait and the black and red-streaked *1944-N No.1* of which Sobell claimed, "I could argue that this is the first work of Abstract Expressionism."

Despite his early enthusiasm, Still retreated from the movement due to his disenchantment with galleries, the market, and the art world, in general. He went into virtual seclusion from commercial galleries in the 50s, while his contemporaries De Kooning, Pollock, Rothko, Newman, and others went on to further define the movement in a wide variety of styles. Meanwhile, Still left New York to live out his life in Maryland. Despite his reticence, the Met's exhibit of Still's work in 1979, the year prior to his death, was the largest body of work by a living artist ever exhibited there.

The artist's will placed rigid restrictions on the estate (encompassing nearly 95% of the artist's body of work and his entire archives) including the stipulation that the works could only be exhibited in a gallery built to his specifications. These specifications made various American cities reluctant to take on the responsibility of the estate and resulted in keeping his work from public view since 1980. In 2004, the city of Denver committed to carrying out the artist's wishes with its proposal to build the Clyfford Still Museum and was awarded with the estate. In 2006, architect Brad Cloepfil, who recently completed the expansion of the Seattle Art Museum, won the commission to build the museum.

The Clyfford Still Museum will be preceded by the opening of another new cultural institution in Denver, the Museum of Contemporary Art, now under construction and scheduled to open in October. The MCA was formed in 1996 and was first housed in an old fish market in Sakura Square, an Asian market downtown. It moved to the "Temporary Contemporary" across the street from the new building site last year.

The selection process for the new museum took the form of a six-week educational interview during which six architectural designs were presented in lectures attended by graduate students, museum patrons, high school students, and others numbering to 900 per session. Director Cydney Payton describes the goal of the interview process "...to design a place where architecture supports rather than defines the museum's mission." Ghana-born British architect, David Adjaye, was the unanimous choice resulting from the "public interview."

## President's letter, continued

Adjaye, known for his innovative use of light and symmetry, creates a dynamic between the glass-cloaked exterior and an interior described by the architect as a three volumes wrapped in a translucent skin (polypropylene). The light permeability and insulating properties of the polypropylene as well as the rooftop garden contribute to the structure's designation as a LEED structure (the first museum in the country with this certification). LEED, Leadership in Energy Environmental Design, is a nationally accepted building rating system which is the standard for the construction and operation of "green" building. LEED certification is based on compliance in five areas: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality. The structure will use approximately 40% less energy than a non-LEED building.

Adjaye's design will house five distinct galleries that will feature works of art on paper, photography, oversized works, new media, and projects. It will be what Payton calls "a flexible space" where a minimalist entryway rises up to a threshold which dissolves into public and gallery spaces within.

I am happy to have been WAAC president at a time that gave me the opportunity to host the annual meeting in Denver when the city is experiencing what could be called a cultural renaissance. I hope that meeting attendees enjoyed both the public and private collections that were available to them as well as other Denver attractions during their visit here, and I hope that they will be encouraged to return to Denver to experience these new institutions in the Mile High City.