

Martin Museum show offers Fontaine retrospective

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Baylor University's Martin Museum of Art draws from its permanent collection for its summer exhibition and, like a magician pulling rabbits from a hat, always seems to find a few surprises for viewers.

This year, a museum endowment provided funding to frame pieces in the collection and, as a result, this summer's show includes a newly framed Cezanne etching, "Head of a Young Girl"; an Italian landscape by 19th century American painter George Inness; and a series of etchings by German printmaker Koethe Kollwitz.

The varied exhibit from the permanent collection complements the Martin's other summer show, a centennial retrospective of paintings by Paul Fontaine, an American artist who spent much of his life in Germany and Mexico.

There's two degrees of separation between Fontaine and Baylor. German artist Edmund Kinzinger served as chairman of Baylor's art department from 1935 to 1948 after leaving Nazi Germany. Kinzinger had founded the artists' society Gruppe Uechte with artists Oscar Schlemmer and Willi Baumeister. Baumeister became a friend to Fontaine, a U.S. serviceman, when the latter remained in Germany after World War II.

The Martin Museum retrospective follows Fontaine's work beginning with his studies at Yale University's School of Fine Arts in the late 1930s and his wartime stint as a U.S. Army illustrator in Italy and Germany. After the war, he remained in West Germany until 1970, working as art director for the military publication "Stars and Stripes" and as a cartoonist.

He then moved to Guadalajara, Mexico, where he lived and worked until 1992 when he returned to the United States. He died in Austin four years later from heart failure.

Abstract style

Most of the oil and acrylic paintings in the Martin Museum show illustrate Fontaine's distinctive abstract style: large canvases that combine patches of bold color interacting with dark lines and backgrounds. His Mexico paintings use a brighter palette with fewer sooty grays and blacks than his German works. His final paintings show him working in blues and greens.

Adair McGregor, the Martin's collections manager, said the retrospective shows Fontaine's style largely stayed consistent throughout his four-decade career, something not often seen in an artist over such a long period of time.

Four art scholars will speak on Fontaine's career in an opening reception at 3 p.m. June 22 at the gallery: Baylor's Katie Edwards; Mary Brantl of St. Edwards University; Margaret Stenz, collections manager of Austin's Art In Public Places; and Juan Carlos Romero, director of No Name Gallery in Guadalajara, Mexico.

New acquisitions and newly framed pieces from the Martin's permanent collection highlight the exhibit in the adjoining gallery. The 1873 Paul Cezanne etching "Head of a Young Girl" hangs next to the collection's 1511 "Joachia and the Angel" by Albrecht Durer and Rembrandt's 1636 "Return of the Prodigal Son."

On a wall flanking a trio of Rauschenberg prints hangs "Ariccia," an Italian landscape by 19th century American painting George Inness. Martin Museum executive director Karin Gilliam considers the piece to be one of the collection's most valuable paintings.

The summer exhibition also features four of the collection's 11 prints by German artist Kathe Kollwitz, who worked in the first half of the 20th century. The granddaughter of a Protestant pastor, Kollwitz's art often focused on the poor and peasant farmers and the prints in the Martin show come from her series "The Weavers" and "Peasant War."

Several pieces from the museum's H. E. Maston Collection, acquired several years ago, are featured in the summer show, including works by Naomi Lorne, Mary Gehr, Sonja Lamut and Naoko Matsubara.

Paul Fontaine Centennial Celebration and Selections from the Permanent Collection

When, where: Through June 28 and July 9-Aug. 25, Martin Museum of Art, Baylor University's Hooper-Schaefer Fine Arts Center. Hours: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 10 a.m.-7:30 p.m. Thursdays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays, 1-4 p.m. Sundays. Opening reception, 3 p.m. June 22.

Admission: Free.