

The Story of the Nasher Collection: A Tribute to Raymond and Patsy Nasher

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Number 85, Fall 2008

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/9079ac>

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Publisher(s)

Le Centre de diffusion 3D

ISSN

0821-9222 (print)

1923-2551 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Gibbins, K. (2008). Review of [*The Story of the Nasher Collection: A Tribute to Raymond and Patsy Nasher*]. *Espace Sculpture*, (85), 45–46.



The Story of the Nasher Collection: A Tribute to **Raymond and Patsy NASHER**

Kristen GIBBINS

NASHER SCULPTURE
CENTER, Gallery II.
Photo: Tim Hursley.

To mark its 5th anniversary, the Nasher Sculpture Center will mount an exhibition in celebration of its founders. *The Story of the Nasher Collection: A Tribute to Raymond and Patsy Nasher* will highlight the personal stories behind the works of art, including Patsy and Raymond Nasher's partnership in pursuit of the finest examples of modern and contemporary sculpture; their close friendships with artists, art dealers, and museums; and the insights that came from living with and sharing the works of art that they loved.

Featuring the great masterworks of the collection, as well as significant and personally meaningful works from its humble beginnings, the exhibition will present a personalized and intimate view of art by some of the most important artists of the past 125 years.

The exhibition will also unveil to the public many of the most important works in the collection that, because of their personal significance, had remained in the Nasher residence, such as Jean Arp's *Torso with Buds*, the first major modern sculpture in the collection.

ABOUT THE CENTER AND GARDEN

The Nasher Sculpture Center, which opened in October 2003, is the first institution in the world dedicated exclusively to modern and contemporary sculpture with a collection of global significance as its foundation. The Center occupies a full city block in downtown Dallas, in the heart of the

city's growing Arts District. The 55,000 square foot building and one-and-a-half acre sculpture garden was designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Renzo Piano in collaboration with landscape architect Peter Walker.

The building is defined by parallel stone walls that form five equal-sized pavilions which house the Galleries, Nasher Café by Wolfgang Puck, and Nasher Sculpture Center Store. Walls of Italian travertine provide a quiet setting for the presentation of sculpture. The facades at each end are fabricated with clear glass, allowing the pavilions to visually extend into the garden creating a seamless continuity between the Center's indoor and outdoor spaces.

The 1.42 acre Sculpture Garden features more than 90 trees, including cedar elms, live oaks, and crepe myrtles, together with stone pathways, pools, and fountains that define intimate landscapes for quiet reflection and contemplation of works of

art, and create a verdant oasis in downtown Dallas. Approximately 25 large-scale sculptures from the Nasher Collection are on view in the Garden at any one time. *Tending, (Blue)*, by James Turrell, is the only site-specific work commissioned as part of the Sculpture Garden.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

The Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection is considered one of the foremost collections of modern and contemporary sculpture in public or private hands and is comprised of more than 300 sculptures dating from the late 19th century to the present. The Nashers also amassed a sizeable collection of pre-Columbian artifacts and tribal works, and important American modernist paintings.

The birth and growth of the Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection started more than fifty years ago. In 1954 on a business trip to New York, Raymond and Patsy purchased their



Boleslaw Biegas, *Untitled* by Cy Twombly, *Song of Songs III and IV* by Jaume Plensa, *Untitled XXXII* by Richard Stankeiwicz, and *Il Birichino* by Medardo Rosso.

Nasher Sculpture Center. Mark di SUVERO's *Eviva Amore* with Building in Background. Photo: Tim Hursley.

The late Raymond D. Nasher is considered one of Dallas' most influential civic leaders and patrons of the arts. His passion for modern and contemporary sculpture and his tireless commitment to establish Dallas/Fort Worth as one of the finest cultural destinations in the world will carry his legacy for generations to come. The Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection continuously rotates throughout the Nasher Sculpture Center, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, and museums across the world. It continues to be recognized as one of the most extensive and important collections of modern and contemporary sculpture in the world. ←

*The Story of the Nasher Collection:
A Tribute to Raymond and Patsy Nasher*
Dallas, TX, USA

September 20, 2008 – January 4, 2009

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first major artwork titled *Tennis Players* by Ben Shahn, and acquired another work by the artist, titled *Penultimate Paterson*, a few years later. Starting in the 1960s, Raymond and Patsy traveled to Mexico, where they became interested in pre-Columbian art and bought their first three-dimensional works, a sculpture from the Canary Islands and a pair of Nayarit figures from ancient America. By the mid-1960s, the Nashers had made their first significant purchases of modern sculpture. These included Jean Arp's *Torso with Buds* (1961); two major bronzes by Henry Moore, *Three Piece No. 3: Vertebrae* (1968) and *Two Piece Reclining Figure No. 9* (1968, no longer in the Collection); and Barbara Hepworth's large and powerful *Squares with Two Circles (Monolith)* (1963, cast 1964).

During the 1980s, the Nasher Collection grew at an accelerating pace. Outstanding works by virtually all the great masters of modern sculpture were added. Simultaneously, the Nashers became more deeply involved with work by living artists, exhibiting an eclectic and adventuresome taste that embraced diverse and sometimes very challenging objects. Some of the first major acquisitions in this area include Claes Oldenburg's *Pile of Type-writer Erasers* (1970-74), Richard Serra's *Inverted House of Cards* (1969-1970), Donald Judd's *Untitled* (1976), and Roy Lichtenstein's *Double Glass*

(1979). Works by younger artists such as Anish Kapoor, Richard Deacon, Jeff Koons, Scott Burton, and Martin Puryear soon followed.

By 1987, the Nasher Collection had gained international recognition and was one of the first exhibitions in the Dallas Museum of Art's new downtown building. The collection was subsequently presented in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; the Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain; the Forte di Belvedere, Florence, Italy; and the Tel Aviv Museum, Israel. In October 1996, more than 70 sculptures from the collection were shown at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco. In February 1997, 105 works of sculpture and painting from the Collection were exhibited in *A Century of Sculpture: The Nasher Collection* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

Surveyed as a whole, the Nasher's Collection of modern and contemporary sculpture demonstrates considerable balance between early modern works and art of the postwar period, abstraction and figuration, monumental outdoor and more intimately scaled indoor works, and the many different materials used in the production of modern art. Recent additions to the Collection include *Walking to the Sky* by Jonathan Borofsky, *The Tragedy of Life* by



Jean ARP, *Torso with Buds*, 1961. Bronze. 73 7/8 x 15 x 15 in. Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, Dallas. Photo: David Heald.