
Art Basel Paris—Premise, Booth P9

Wally Hedrick

October 18—20, 2024



PARKER GALLERY

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Parker Gallery is proud to present a solo presentation of monumental black paintings by the iconoclastic California artist Wally Hedrick (1928–2003). A key figure in the postwar San Francisco Beat Generation, Hedrick began painting over his own paintings with black oil paint in 1957 as a protest against the United States' escalation of the conflict in Vietnam. Parker Gallery's presentation will include black paintings from throughout Hedrick's career, highlighting his commitment to activism and the evolving resonance of the works in relation to 20th century avant-garde art movements.

A veteran of the Korean War, Wally Hedrick was the first American artist to publicly protest the United States' involvement in South Vietnam. His anti-war activism remained a vital concern throughout his career, turning attention towards wars in the Persian Gulf, Iraq, and Afghanistan towards the end of his life.

Hedrick created his first black painting in 1957, by painting over one of his own paintings in thick, viscous layers of oil paint. The negation and destruction of

his previous work was an act of political protest, yielding a new urgent artwork in place of another. In the black paintings, Hedrick is at once withdrawing his contribution to culture while simultaneously creating a monument of mourning. As the artist noted: "Since there is no way for me to affect any political decision, what I'll do is I'll deny Western Culture my contribution."

Hedrick continued to paint over his works in black throughout his career, using this ongoing series as a vehicle to address timely, urgent and uncomfortable realities. On occasion, the artist would paint over a painting that had already been painted black, marking a subsequent alteration to the artwork, which would be recorded by a new date and an amendment to its title. These further demarcations speak to the never-ending cycle of armed conflict across the globe, and in particular, to the United States' perceived role as international mediator.

The black paintings can be seen as anti-war activism and political protest, as well as an act of performative, conceptual art. The success of Hedrick's black paintings as both an artwork and as an act of protest remain singular in the history of 20th century art. Furthermore, the series critiques the prevalent "action painting" of the 1950s and subsequent movements of monochromatic painting and minimalism. Throughout his career, Hedrick anticipated myriad practices of the avant-garde, with his own work often overlooked, as he had already moved on to something else. For an artist indifferent to performing a prescribed role within the proverbial art world, Hedrick's significant contributions remain obscure and vastly under-appreciated.

Wally Hedrick (b. 1928 Pasadena, CA—d. 2003 Bodega Bay, CA) played a pivotal role in the San Francisco Beat Generation. In 1954, he co-founded the legendary Six Gallery in San Francisco. Hedrick conceived an important poetry event at the gallery, held on October 7, 1955, in which Allen Ginsberg publicly read "Howl" for the very first time, heralding the San Francisco Renaissance and West Coast literary revolution. In 1959, Hedrick and his wife, Jay DeFeo, were included in *Sixteen Americans* at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City, alongside Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Rauschenberg and Frank Stella. Hedrick's work is included in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Oakland Museum, Oakland, CA; San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA; and the de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA among others.



Portrait of Wally Hedrick, c. 1957

“[The color] black might have something to do with our conscience or soul, but that is not what I had in mind. Black to me is the absence of light, and I’m very concerned with light. And so black paintings were not so much that they were black, but that they weren’t light.”

—Wally Hedrick





Wally Hedrick

Vietnam Series XXVI: You Have Nothing 2 Lose but Your Life!

1970

Oil on canvas

62 × 101 inches (158 × 257 cm)

\$150,000

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Vietnam Series XXVI: You Have Nothing 2 Lose but Your Life!,

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1970

“The tarlike oil surfaces of Hedrick’s paintings are heavy—in multiple senses of the word: They are visually weighty, dense, slow; they signify death. Hedrick’s willingness and stated desire to have the paintings signify in this way—explicitly indicated in his titles, which frequently refer to specific wars or political figures—suggest that these monochromes are not ‘pure’ in the teleological sense of the modernist project; rather, the accumulated black surfaces cover over and negate existing images... Despite their variety of formats, the paintings maintain their solemnity; unlike so much political art, the black monochromes seem to acknowledge the inability of art to change the world. But in their negation, the paintings register their protest.”

—Michael Ned Holte,
“Reviews: Wally Hedrick.” *Artforum* (Summer 2008)



Still from *Wally's Pad: Visit One*, uncut tape, April 15, 1991, featuring *Between Iraq and a Hard-on 2002 > So Damn, Who's Sane? 4 A Kinder Gentler Nation* (in progress), before the artist covered it in black paint.

Wally Hedrick

Between Iraq and a Hard-on 2002 > So Damn, Who's Sane?

4 A Kinder Gentler Nation, 1991/2002

Oil on canvas

94 × 67 ½ inches (239 × 171 cm)

\$150,000



“People say, ‘Why were you getting upset about Vietnam in 1957?’ I was upset about Vietnam in 1954, when the French were in there. I painted out this painting, and this was when I said to myself that since there’s no way for me to affect any political decisions, what I’ll do is I’ll deny Western Culture my contribution... So I started taking [my] old paintings... and painting them out. At the beginning I used old paintings because I was obsessed with the idea that I was going to deny humanity these world-shaking images. It’s just like holding my breath ‘you’ll be sorry.’ And it was as simple as that. I believed it and I did it.”

—Wally Hedrick

Wally Hedrick

*WWI WWII/Vietnam War III/Iraq It's For Jobs/Iraq War
ad Naseum, 1954/1992/2002/2003*

Oil on canvas

73 × 66 inches (185 × 168 cm)

\$150,000



Wally Hedrick

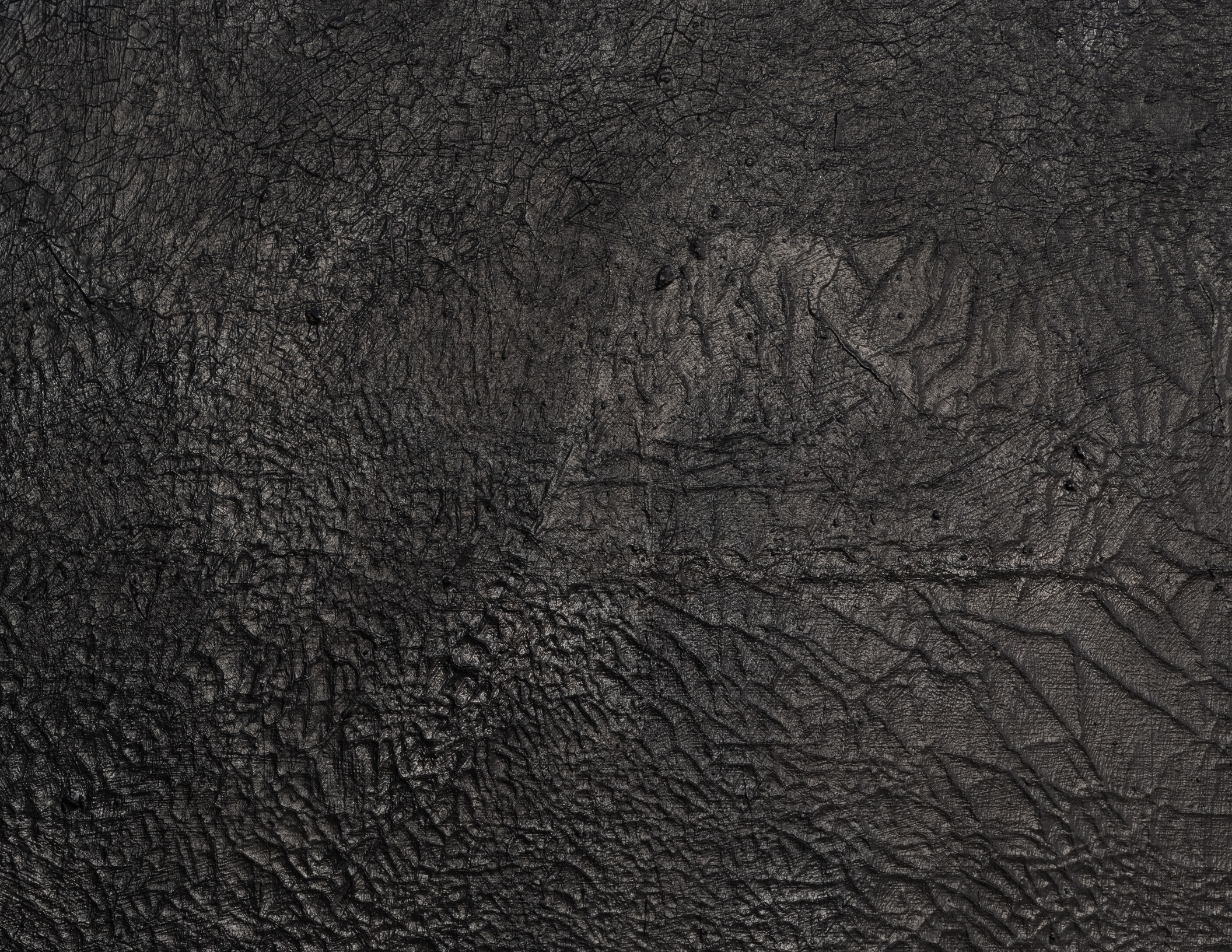
*WWI WWII/Vietnam War III/Iraq It's For Jobs/Iraq War
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Wally Hedrick

*WWI WWII/Vietnam War III/Iraq It's For Jobs/Iraq War
ad Naseum, 1954/1992/2002/2003*







PARKER GALLERY

Wally Hedrick
"The Absence of Light: Black Paintings (1957–2003)"
at The Box, Los Angeles, 2016





Bruce Conner, Wally Hedrick, Deborah Remington,
Franklin Williams
"Karma Presents Works by Four Bay Area Artists"
at Karma, New York, 2017



Bruce Conner, Wally Hedrick, Deborah Remington,
Franklin Williams
"Karma Presents Works by Four Bay Area Artists"
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Wally Hedrick

b. 1928 Pasadena, CA, d. 2003 Bodega Bay, CA

Education:

- 1958 San Francisco State University, MA
- 1955 California School of Fine Arts (now San Francisco Art Institute), BFA
- 1954 California College of Arts & Crafts (now California College of the Arts), Oakland
- 1947 Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles

Selected solo exhibitions:

- 2026 Parker Gallery, in collaboration with The Box, Los Angeles, CA (forthcoming), *catalogue
- 2017 *Wally Hedrick*, Air de Paris, Paris, France
- 2016 *The Absence of Light: Black Paintings (1957–2003)*, The Box, Los Angeles, CA
- 2010 The Box, Los Angeles, CA
- 2008 *War Room*, The Box, Los Angeles, CA
- 2007 *Estate Sale*, Michael Kohn Galley, Los Angeles, CA
- 2003 Linc Art, San Francisco, CA
Pre-emptive Peace, Sonoma State University Art Gallery, Rohnert Park, CA
- 2000 *Paintings*, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA
- 1999 *Provisions*, Sonoma Museum of Visual Art, Santa Rosa, CA
- 1996 *Madonnas, Gods & Goddesses*, King-Heller Gallery, Bodega Bay, CA
- 1994 *Classic Hedrick*, Mills College Art Gallery, Oakland, CA
Paintings, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA
- 1990 *Paintings*, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA
- 1985 *Selected Works*, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA
- 1984 Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA
- 1982 Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA
- 1967 San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA
- 1963 New Mission Gallery, San Francisco, CA

Selected group exhibitions:

- 2019 *Dilexi Gallery: The Early Years*, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA
Dilexi Gallery: Seeking the Unknown, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

- 2018 *Artists Respond: American Art and the Vietnam War, 1965–1975*, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC
House of the Sleeping Beauties, Sotheby's S|2, London
- 2018 *Collecting on the Edge*, Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Utah State University, Logan, UT
Walking Point, Greene Naftali, New York, NY
Way Bay, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkeley, CA
- 2017 *JEAN CONNER—WALLY HEDRICK—DEBORAH REMINGTON—FRANKLIN WILLIAMS*, Karma Gallery, New York, NY
Animal Farm, The Brant Foundation, Greenwich, CT
Rat Bastard Protective Association, Susan Inglett Gallery, New York, NY
- 2016 *Rat Bastard Protective Association*, curated by Anastasia Aukeman, the Landing Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2014 *Fertile Ground: Art and Community in California*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
- 2013 *SIGHT/VISION: The Urban Milieu*, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA
- 2012 *Painting*, The Box, Los Angeles
Renaissance on Fillmore, 1955–1965, curated by Michael Schwager, di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa, CA
The Historical Box, curated by Mara McCarthy, Hauser & Wirth, London, UK
The Historical Box, curated by Mara McCarthy, Hauser & Wirth, Zurich, Switzerland
Wally Hedrick and William T. Wiley, The Mayor Gallery, London, UK
- 2011 *Beyond Tradition: Art Legacies at the Richmond Art Center*, Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA
Bella Pacifica, Bay Area Abstraction, 1946–1963, A Symphony in Three Parts, David Nolan Gallery, New York, NY; Nyehaus, New York, NY; Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York, NY
- 2010 *Sunless*, curated by Walead Beshty, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, UK
I.G.Y., curated by Todd Levin, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY
- 2009 Oakland Museum of California Grand Reopening May 2010. Collection Show
Looking For Mushrooms—Beat Poets, Funk and Minimal Art: Art and Counterculture in San Francisco around 1968, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany
Sight Vision Revisited, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA
- 2008 *Mysteries*, curated by Melissa E. Feldman, Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Paul McCarthy's Low Life Slow Life: Part 1, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco
Freedom of Expression: Political Art in an Age of Uncertainty, University Art Gallery, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA
American Pop, Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA
- 2007 *The creamery: FUNK ART etc from Bodega*, the 8 gallery, San Francisco, CA
Artists of Invention: A Century of CAA, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
- 2005 *The True Artist is an Amazing Luminous Fountain: Selected Works from the di Rosa Preserve, Napa*, Traveled to Washington, D.C., Palm Springs, CA, Santa Cruz, CA
- 1999 *What Is Art For? William T. Wiley, Mary Hull Webster and 100 Artists*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
- 1995 *Beat Culture and the New America 1950–65*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
- 1994 *Here and Now: Bay Area Masterworks from the di Rosa Collections*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
- 1993 *Bay Area Masters*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
- 1992 *Sight/Vision: The Urban Milieu III*, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA
- 1990 *The Six Gallery*, Natsoulas-Noveloze Gallery, Davis, CA
- 1986 *Sight/Vision: The Urban Milieu II*, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA
The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1986, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
2nd Annual Newport Biennial: The Bay Area, Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, CA
- 1985 *Art in the San Francisco Bay Area: 1945–1980*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA

1983 *Sight/Vision: The Urban Milieu*, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA
1979 *Bay Area Artist Exhibition*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
1976 *The Modern Era: Painting and Sculpture in California*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
1975 *Bay Area Artist Exhibition*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
1974 *Poets of the Cities: New York & San Francisco 1950–1965*, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX
1962 *New Paintings of Common Objects*, Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena, CA
1960 *Gangbang*, Batman Art Gallery, San Francisco, CA
1959 *Sixteen Americans*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona
San Francisco Art Commission Civic Art Collection, California
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
San Jose Museum of Art, California
Sonoma State University, Santa Rosa, California

Honors and awards:

1999 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant
1997 Adolph & Esther Gottlieb Foundation Individual Support Grant
1994 Award of Excellence, California State Fair
1993 Golden Bear Award, California State Fair
1991 Golden Bear Award, California State Fair
1986 Individual Artist Grant, funded by the San Francisco Foundation
1985 Adaline Kent Award, San Francisco Art Institute
1982 The National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship
1968 The National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship

Public collections:

Berkeley Art Museum, University of California
di Rosa Preserve, Napa, California
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, de Young Museum, California
Mills College, Oakland, California
Museum of Modern Art, New York
Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Utah State University, Logan, Utah
Oakland Museum of California, California