

ENTERTAINMENT/LONG ISLAND/MUSEUMS

Heckscher's 'Locally Sourced' exhibit spotlights LI artists



Hans Namuth's "Artists on the Beach" (1962). Credit: Gift of Mr. Marcel Bally/The Heckscher Museum of Art

By Deidre S. Greben

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Hans Namuth's iconic shots of Jackson Pollock at work in his Springs studio gave the world a critical behind-the-scenes glimpse of the Abstract Expressionist's seminal drip painting technique. Now another image the photographer took out on Long Island's East End is having a similar effect.

"This one photo really captures the essence of the show," notes Karli Wurzelbacher, curator of "Locally Sourced: Collecting Long Island Artists," an exhibition that runs through March 15 and kicks off the Heckscher Museum of Art's yearlong centennial celebration. The 1962 black-and-white print features nearly two-dozen world-renowned

artists congregating on a grassy dune. “It underscores the exhibition’s themes — the Long Island landscape and the exchange of ideas between the artists who have worked here.”

It numbers among some 100 paintings, sculptures and works on paper culled from the 2,500 objects in the Huntington museum’s permanent collection. Selections range from longtime holdings such as Edward Moran’s 19th century depiction of sailing vessels on a fog-cloaked bay to mixed-media images from Bastienne Schmidt’s blue-on-blue “Underwater Topography” series, obtained just this year.

“All the artists worked on Long Island, whether for a week or their entire career,” says Wurzelbacher. “They came here because of the proximity to the New York City art scene — to take a break from it. They could just hop on a train to clear their mind or to experience nature in a different way.”



Betty Parsons' "Vertical Waves" (1974), an acrylic and wood construction. Credit: Gift of Ellsworth Kelly/Heckscher Museum of Art

How the artists connected to the area landscape varies. “Vertical Waves,” by influential gallerist and painter Betty Parsons, for instance, is a literal interpretation of the exhibition’s title, with its sourcing of driftwood from a beach near the painter’s home and studio on the North Fork. The abstract assemblage was donated to the Heckscher

by Ellsworth Kelly, one of many big-name artists in Parson's stable who also spent time on the far reaches of the Island.

Thomas Moran was among the first to imagine the region as an artists' haven. He is represented by one of his own canvasses along with a charming depiction of his East Hampton home and property by plein-air painter Theodore Wores. "By choosing this subject matter," says Wurzelbacher, "Wores was announcing that he was part of Moran's circle."



Miriam Schapiro's "Berthe Morisot & Me," 1970s, is a collage. Credit: Gift of Drs. Constance and Lee Koppleman/Heckscher Museum of Art

To be sure, being drawn to the same vicinity promoted social and intellectual exchange among artists, often resulting in seminal developments in their practice. Sharing a cottage with painter Joan Mitchell in the early 1950s, Miriam Schapiro encountered many of the Abstract Expressionists and the rebellious, macho spirit they propagated. Schapiro, whose collages are displayed at the Heckscher in a gallery devoted to women artists, went on to dismantle art-world hierarchies by incorporating domestic craft elements into her paintings. "Long Island is an important part of her story," notes Wurzelbacher.

Closer to home are works from the Heckscher's immediate environs, such as a gouache created by Helen Torr in nearby Centerport (where she lived with her husband,

American modernist Arthur Dove) and an oil by German-born painter George Grosz, who had a home within walking distance of the museum and played a pivotal role in its success.

While “Locally Sourced” presents an unprecedented chance to enjoy some of the stars of the Heckscher’s wide-ranging collection, it reconfirms the museum’s critical role in preserving and relating Long Island’s history.