1 **NICK AGID SCULPTURE**
Table top, hand-engraved aluminum sculpture of three house forms and three pencil forms by Nick Agid, various sizes, stamped signature
$1,200 - 1,400

2 **NICK AGID SCULPTURE**
Table top, hand-engraved aluminum sculpture of two house forms and two pencil forms by Nick Agid, various sizes, stamped signature
$1,000 - 1,200

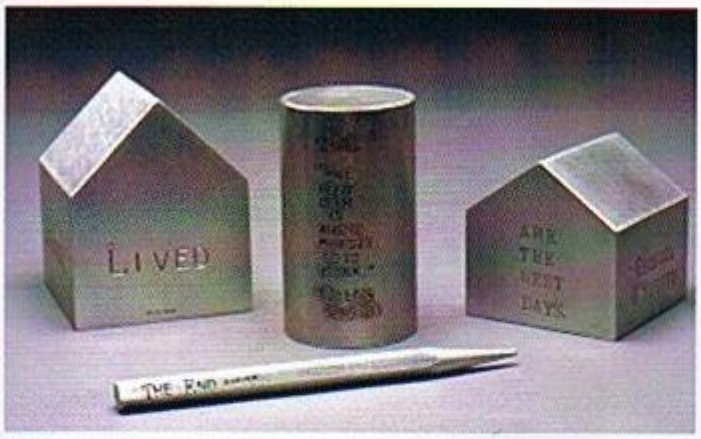
DRAWING AND THE ART SCHOOL

By Gerald Nordland

The Chouinard Art Institute was composed of a cluster of related and overlapping disciplines that included fine arts, design, film, illustration, advertising, fashion, and ceramics. It was the conviction of the faculty that a strong general education was required for every student. That education would include history, government, literature, science, psychology, semantics, and two years of art history. Drawing and painting from the Fine Arts division were the foundation of the curriculum of every division. Since the artist would live in a competitive environment, producing work for current use, one had to be keenly aware of contemporary taste, new technologies, and shifting styles. One needed to be able to understand the user of art and the pressures motivating decisions. An artist was trained to be a thinking person, with sensitivity to his/her audience, means, past, and his/her interpreters.

Drawing is unquestionably the oldest of the arts. Humans depicted their quarry long before fashioning the first mother-goddess figure or creating the first clay cup. We know from cave paintings, Egyptian hieroglyphs, and Greek vase decoration that substantial skills were developed in describing the observed world, setting out brilliant likenesses, recording both interior and exterior life.

At the beginning of the 15th century - in his Libro delleArts - Cennino Cennini was the first to formally advocate the serious study of drawing as the basis of all artistic training. Drawing was conceived at that time as an intellectual discipline. By the end of the 15th century Leonardo da Vinci demonstrated the importance of drawing as a means of scientific discovery in both his writings and his drawings. Under Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael developed drawing into more elaborate and significant functions for the artist. It became a tool for exploring and developing ideas and an expression of ability and virtuosity. First thoughts were jotted down and developed into specific studies of compositional elements - figures, heads, draperies - and then synthesized into total compositions, worked-up for presentation to a client, Pope, or King. The academic work-up can be compared to the architects approach, with tentative sketches of functions, structures, and facades, then integrated into a model of a future building.



3 **NICK AGID SCULPTURE**
Table top, hand-engraved aluminum sculpture of two house forms, one beer can and one pencil form by Nick Agid, various sizes, stamped signature
$1,000 - 1,200

4 **JAMES AITCHISON DRAWING**
"Bukowski and Bach", 2000 by James Aitchison, multimedia drawing on rag board: acrylic, oilstick and collage on prepared paper, signed; 40" x 30"
$1,500 - 2,000

The Chouinard Art Institute curriculum recognized, as did J. A. D. Ingres, that ". . . drawing is the probity of art." The twentieth century has seen a progressive dilution of classical art techniques and drawing skills, with the evolution of new technologies - photography, copying machines, and computer design. Classical contour drawing, calligraphic skills, and tonal composition are often substituted, manipulated and avoided through mechanical devices and computer software. For many in the late twentieth century and today, drawing is avoided by contemporary devices. If, however, drawing is an intellectual discipline, the basis of all artistic training, a means of scientific discovery and a tool for developing and exploring ideas, that avoidance carries a heavy cost. The price can be a loss of independence, the freedom to express the uniqueness of personal vision.

The Chouinard Art Institute was a faculty-governed art laboratory. Decisions were arrived at through the consensus of the teaching staff. Those decisions were tempered by daily experience in the making of art in the contemporary world. Every faculty member was first a practicing artist and only secondarily an art instructor. Daily experience in the real world studio, with its pressures and changing technologies, guided each staff member in helping develop curriculum, in considering the adding of new classes or dropping old ones, and in counseling and guiding students, evaluating the timing for their advancement into a major upper division field.

Because the faculty recognized that the pace of 20th century life and modern art had brought about a relaxation of standards which affected the work and sensibilities of entering students, it decided to adopt new teaching and scheduling strategies. First, a saturation/teaching process in eight-week packages was developed where the student would immerse him/herself in a specific art laboratory, unlike anything one experienced in previous schooling. Second, drawing was mandated as an unavoidable discipline, and every full-time student was required to devote one studio day each week in drawing, relating to his/her primary career goals.

Artists such as Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Richards Ruben, John Altoon, and

5 **LITA ALBUQUERQUE MINIATURE PAINTING**
Oil, pigment and gold paint on paper, 'Polar Alignment', 2002, by Lita Albuquerque, unsigned, framed; 3' x 3'
$1,100 - 1,400

6 **TERRY ALLEN GOUACHE**
'And I Shook Hands with Mickey', 1999, by Terry Allen, gouache and ink on BFK Rives paper, signed on front; 30 1/2' x 22 1/2'
$7,000 - 8,000

Emerson Woelffer, spent years drawing and painting, making prints and sculpture, studying the works of earlier masters and the "new masters" of contemporary art - Cezanne, Matisse, Picasso, Kandinsky, and Miro. It was only after years of discipline and skill-development that they were able to sort through their learning and discard the unnecessary, that which no longer worked, the meretricious and set out their personal discoveries. Those statements were unique, autobiographically theirs, and yet inimitable. No Chouinard artist ever led his/her students to believe that the profession of art offered an easy path. For some it is the only path. It begins with a contradictory arrogance and humility: a conviction that whatever the cost, it is what I want and need to do, and the corresponding belief that I have the mysterious and unknowable ability to carry it through to success.

The roster of fine and distinguished Chouinard veterans who have succeeded in making lasting contributions to contemporary art is more than remarkable. They can be found in painting & sculpture, etching & lithography, sculpture & photography, illustration & advertising, film, fashion, ceramics and fields of design that range widely from interiors to furniture to product design to architecture. Beyond this one has to mention such light and space concept artists as Robert Irwin, Doug Wheeler, and Larry Bell, who founded their own specialties. The art field is an endless maze of opportunity, possibility, blind alleys, discovery, and tempting dreams. It requires an open-ended, positive, and skill-based training, the accumulated wisdom of the past, the fundamental tools of the field, and the breadth of experience provided by veteran instructors in the model of Chouinard.

The works to be seen in this exhibition/auction, and the artists who have so generously contributed to it - whether Chouinard alumni, veteran instructors, or congenial colleagues - are links in the grand tradition of Chouinard and its emphasis on professional art training.

The Chouinard Foundation's efforts to strengthen the underpinnings of art training in Southern California will continue to grow in meaning and consequences for the growth and development of art in the region for years to come. - **Gerald Nordland** - Chicago 2003