



Seattle: SAM's Masterpieces, Bugs on Display

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Elizabeth Jameson, "Keeping Up Appearances" (2006). On view at Ballard Fetherston Gallery Photo by Ryan Schierling

By Jen Graves

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SEATTLE—With the reopening this month of the **Seattle Art Museum** after an extended hibernation for its expansion, art assumed center stage in the city, and galleries joined the festivities, many of which spotlighted local talent.

Howard House devoted its space to a first-time show by the organic sculptor **Jim Rittimann**, and **Ballard Fetherston** called in **Elizabeth Jameson**, a known quantity locally who's deserving of a larger audience.

James Harris Gallery took another approach, presenting landscape photographs by L.A.'s **Amir Zaki**, along with a few landscapes of a far more naturalistic order by Seattle photographer **Glenn Rudolph**, seen in the gallery's back room. And then there was **SAM's grand reopening**, which debuted star selections from its rapidly expanding collection.

Museum Exhibitions

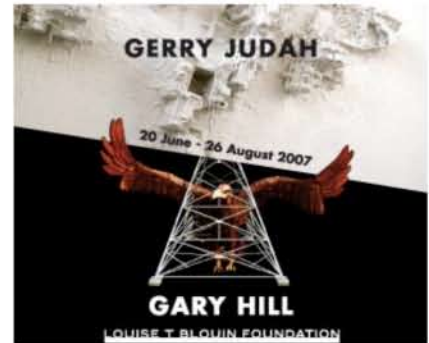
[Seattle Art Museum](#)
"SAM at 75: Building a Collection for Seattle"
Through Sept. 9

Seattle Art Museum this spring announced it has received promises and gifts of more than 1,000 works of art from more than 40 collectors, including multiple pieces by artists such as **Francis Bacon** and **Gerhard Richter**, and standout objects, too—among them *Bird in Space* (1926) by **Constantin Brancusi**, one of **Marsden Hartley's** German soldier paintings (1914-15), and **Edward Hopper's** *Chop Suey* (1929). They were gifted in honor of the museum's expanded downtown headquarters, which opened in May and was designed by Allied Works of Portland, Ore., and in honor of SAM's 75th birthday in 2008.

The first show of what's coming into the museum, "SAM at 75: Building a Collection for Seattle," opens with Brancusi, Hartley, **Mark Rothko**, **Donald Judd**, and **Barnett Newman** in the first gallery, and covers in a series of other rooms the museum's diverse and decades-long history, from **Alberto Giacometti** to **Lee Krasner** and **Jackson Pollock** to **Sterling Ruby** and **Maurizio Cattelan**.

A highlight is the Richter room, devoted to seven of his paintings, which of course looks like a show of paintings by seven different artists. There's also

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Photo courtesy Howard House

Jim Rittimann, "Paradise Insect / Symbiotic Relationship #103, #103a, #103b" (2007). On view at the Howard House

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Photo courtesy James Harris Gallery

Amir Zaki, "Untitled" (2007). On view at the James Harris Gallery

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painting by **Eva Hesse**, and curators have paired two new arrivals—a photograph of **Cindy Sherman** as a Renaissance artist, and Cattelan's taxidermed dog in a plastic chair—with two 17th-century Dutch still lifes.

Along with fresh and interconnected new installations of all the collections, from Asian and African to Minimalism and Tokyo pop, this survey is a glimpse at promising things to come for the museum.

Gallery Exhibitions

[Howard House](#)
"Jim Rittmann: Paradise Insects/Symbiotic Relationships"
Through June 16

Jim Rittmann makes new insects from old ones. He collects and takes apart bugs. He puts the wings of one on the abdomen of another. He adds unsightly teeth and jaws. And then he sets the insects so they piggyback on one another, some seeming to work in tandem, others seeming to irritate each other, or they appear to be in hot pursuit of each other, or to consider their twin selves in an invisible mirror. These hybrid organisms pinned inside wood-framed display boxes like entomological specimens, frozen in action, are what Rittmann calls "Paradise Insects/Symbiotic Relationships."

They aren't easy to look at, but it may not be for the reasons you'd think. At first, yes, they're gross. They are shiny, pointy, robotic, and cold. But after looking over the 42 boxes in the show, containing 113 individual "Paradise Insects," one adjusts to their strangeness and notes their affinities with all kinds of contemporary media, from action movies to journalistic photography. And then the problem is not that they're dead but that they seem to be too much alive. It's a good problem, one that is, as in animal works by **Jean Dubuffet**, **Damien Hirst**, and Maurizio Cattelan, rife with implications about art and death.

Then again, if you prefer not to go that far, you can simply enjoy the scenes playing out in front of you and look for the references to, say, the photography of **Eadweard Muybridge** or kung fu. And if you know anything about the adaptive uses of bug parts, you can have a field day.

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