This ongoing installation examines recent developments in international contemporary art. It features a selection from the KMA’s growing collection of recent works by emerging and established artists currently working in East Tennessee and beyond. *Currents* serves as a chronological extension and geographic expansion of the KMA’s historical art display in the adjacent gallery, *Higher Ground: A Century of the Visual Arts in East Tennessee*. It is also designed to enable museum audiences to track the changing character of the region’s art community within an international context.

The broad variety of works in the exhibition mirrors contemporary art’s seemingly countless threads of development. It reflects the desire of many artists to break from tradition and make objects inspired by their individual experience in the present day. Some use digital media or apply unorthodox combinations of techniques and materials. Others borrow images from the past or elements from earlier art traditions and reintroduce them in unexpected ways designed to spark new interpretive possibilities and cultural associations. In this way, *Currents* represents a vital educational resource through which local audiences can gain direct access to an increasingly global creative dialogue and follow its evolution.

**PREMIER PRESENTING SPONSOR**

**June and Rob Heller**

**PRESENTING SPONSOR**

**EMERSON Process Management**
Anne Wilson (Detroit 1949; lives and works in Chicago)

Local Industry Cloth, 2010

Donated mill fiber
24 inches wide x 75 feet 9 inches long
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2010 gift of the artist

Anne Wilson is a Chicago-based artist whose multimedia work addresses issues of labor and gender, and community engagement. Her studio practice was the subject of the KMA’s 2010 exhibition Anne Wilson: Wind/Rewind/Weave, which called attention to the global crisis of production and skill based textile labor. The exhibition included a participatory area entitled Local Industry, which allowed exhibition visitors to wind onto hand-crank bobbins colored thread donated by mills facing closure throughout the southeastern United States. The wound bobbins were then used by experienced weavers to compose a single bolt of striped cloth on one loom inside the gallery space. The resulting monumental textile, Local Industry Cloth, was created over the course of three-months with the expert assistance of 79 experienced weavers and more than 2,100 volunteers and exhibition visitors. When completed, the cloth was donated to the KMA by the artist alongside an “Archive of Production” identifying all contributors to Local Industry.
Leonardo Silaghi (Satu Mare, Romania 1987; lives and works in Cluj, Romania)

Untitled #1313203, 2013
Oil on canvas
90 1/2 x 120 inches
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2013 purchase

Leonardo Silaghi’s abstractions powerfully express the chaotic transition of his Romanian homeland from a decaying Communist nation to a contemporary urban society still taking shape. Often using black and white photographs of abandoned Cold War machinery as starting points, the artist launches into large, forcefully executed paintings populated by conveyor belts, vehicles, ductwork, and other industrial debris. Carefully painted shadows and highlights imply that these relics exist in pictorial space, while sweeping brushwork and rugged surface textures shift attention to his dynamic process.
In labor-intensive paintings, Antonio Santin uses rugs and their traditional patterns as avenues for exploring the territory between abstraction and representation. Resembling spontaneous accumulations of pigment at close range, each work also appears at arm’s length as a vivid overhead view of a rug adorning the floor of an unseen interior environment. His paintings begin as studies of actual rugs from which the artist makes adjustments designed to infuse the composition with new narrative possibilities, most notably in his inclusion of oblong masses that suggest enfolded human figures. This painting’s title, which literally translates as “disaster drawer,” also reflects the artist’s interest in word play in its literal proximity to a “tailor’s drawer” containing masses of tangled thread.
Charlotta Westergren (Stockholm, Sweden 1969; lives and works in Brooklyn)

**Siting**, 2003

Sequins, pins, rubber stoppers, foam core
120 x 378 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2003 purchase with funds provided by the Tennessee General Assembly, Tennessee Arts Commission, and the Arts & Culture Alliance

Charlotta Westergren is known for her interest in painting with non-traditional materials. Here, she uses thousands of large sequins to construct a shimmering, panoramic view of an icy landscape inspired by her interest in fairy tales and her Nordic heritage. This monumental installation was created by Westergren specifically for the KMA in conjunction with her 2004 solo exhibition.
Jim Dine (Cincinnati 1935; lives and works in New York)

*Green Picture in My Meadow*, 1971
Acrylic paint and straw on canvas
78 x 90 inches
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2014 gift of June and Rob Heller

Jim Dine is internationally known for his mixed-media works in which he enlarges a single image from his familiar environment—boots, tools, clothing—and, in this case, a stylized human heart.

*Green Picture in My Meadow* captures the artist’s response to a rural landscape setting after several years of living in London, England. In 1971, the year he produced this painting, he had just settled in Putney, Vermont, whose natural beauty would help fuel his studio practice over the course of nearly two decades. In the making of this painting, he pitched an army tent in a field and mixed straw with his paint in order to echo the area’s distinctive natural terrain.
Jered Sprecher (Lincoln Nebraska 1976; lives and works in Knoxville)

**A Plane is a Pocket in the Corners of the Mind**, 2014

Oil on canvas
8 x 20 feet
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2021 purchase with funds provided by the KMA Collectors Circle

Knoxville-based artist Jered Sprecher is among a generation of contemporary painters exploring anew the creative territory between figuration and abstraction, and between the handmade and the digital. He describes himself as a “hunter and gatherer” who draws inspiration from an eclectic array of image sources including graffiti, architecture, cut gemstones, family photographs, and ancient frescoes. Computers, copiers, and printers enable him to acquire and prepare selected images beforehand, in some cases cropping and filtering them to the point at which they become ghostly remnants of the original. Intermingled with a broad range of abstract passages, this imagery is transferred onto canvas by hand through a meticulous, intuitive, and labor-intensive process. Inch by inch and layer by layer, he applies pigment in translucent veils, stenciled grids, feathered stripes, irregular dabs, and serpentine drips. The resulting compositions possess a transitional character—at close range, rich surface details are optically dominant while from a distance opalescent hues command greater attention, conveying a degree of luminosity reminiscent of digital monitors.
Ridley Howard (Atlanta 1973; lives and works in Brooklyn)

Starry Carpet, 2005
Oil on canvas
60 x 72 inches
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2009 gift of Craig Jacobson

Ridley Howard specializes in technically refined paintings in which he explores the allure and superficiality of contemporary life. Within stage-like settings, elegant figures interact with mannered gestures that suggest unfolding dramas of a cinematic variety rather than moments from real life.
Daniel Canogar (Madrid, Spain 1964; lives and works in Madrid and New York)

ECHO, 2016
Flexible LED tiles, power supply unit, media player, LED screen hardware, Edition of 3 + 1 artist proof
51 x 38 x 10 inches
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2017 purchase with funds provided by KMA Collectors Circle

Canogar is a multidisciplinary artist who produces vibrant electronic sculptures often made of discarded consumer parts. As the artist explains, “such detritus becomes a mirror of ourselves—circuits, cables, and hard drives mimic our tissues, nervous systems, brains, etc.—but above all, these technologies die, just as we do. In its obsolescence, technology becomes utterly human.” His interest in screens, in particular, stems from their growing public presence in locations ranging from monumental billboards to tiny wrist devices that monitor our every move. The artist leaves visible their dangling cables and electronic components in order to underscore symbolic connections between machine components and those of the human body.

Made of flexible LED tiles that appear to peel off the wall, ECHO features an abstract generative animation that occasionally is disrupted by moiré patterns. The artist designed the work so that its patterns shift according to real-time seismic data across the globe fed to the work through links to online sites. The result is an ever-changing abstract composition that captures the echoing murmurs of the planet’s shifting tectonic plates. References to abstract painting and Meso-American textiles also inform the work’s design.
Zsolt Bodoni (Alesd, Romania 1975; lives and works in Budapest)

Replaced, 2009
Acrylic on canvas
71 x 78 3/4 inches
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2014 gift of David Hoberman

Ethnic Hungarian artist Bodoni creates atmospheric, painterly canvases that evoke the violent struggles of Hungary’s past. The artist witnessed the fall of the communism in his country and the subsequent struggle to reclaim its history. His paintings depict shadowy streets, plazas, and warehouses littered with telltale remains of former regimes and signs marking the dawn of new ones. Depicting the dark interior of a massive foundry, Replaced explores the practice of casting or melting down bronze sculptures by successive political regimes in order to rewrite history.
Tomory Dodge (Denver 1974; lives and works in Los Angeles)

*Mirage*, 2006
Oil on canvas
84 x 78 x 2 1/2 inches

Tomory Dodge creates large paintings in which broad sweeps of bright pigment define primal landscapes and call attention to the physical reality of the artist’s process. For this painting, Dodge was interested in the way that prismatic colors could be used to represent in a convincing manner what he describes as the “overheated delirium” of a mirage.
Whitney Leland (Washington, D.C. 1945; lives and works in Knoxville)

1995 I, 1995
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

Leland has achieved national recognition for his vibrant organic abstractions. For more than four decades, he has explored the seemingly infinite possibilities offered by a limited set of variables—tangled, symmetrically arranged tentacles of color. These elements are created through a labor-intensive method of applying precise shapes of wet acrylic paint onto a flat canvas in multiple layers. Leland is one of the earliest graduates of the University of Tennessee’s art program, and studied with Walter Hollis Stevens, whose work is on view in the Higher Ground gallery across the hall on this floor.
Giles Lyon (New York 1967; lives and works in Portland, Oregon)

**Empire**, 1997-2009

Acrylic and mixed media on canvas

113 x 144 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2010 gift of the artist

Giles Lyon specializes in vibrant canvases that record his energetic approach to painting and his reflections on the evolving relationship between nature and civilization in the Information Age. His densely layered compositions appear entirely abstract at first glance. However, upon close examination, each reveals the presence of landscape-derived imagery referencing bioterrorism, overpopulation, environmental collapse, and runaway urban development. The Brooklyn-based artist is a former Artist in Residence at the University of Tennessee, and is the nephew of renowned photographer Danny Lyon, whose work is on view in the Higher Ground gallery across the hall on this floor.
Julie (Warren Martin) Conn (Knoxville 1943; lives and works in Lexington, Kentucky)

Warlord, 1993
Tennessee coral marble on black marble base
38 1/2 x 23 x 29 inches
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2004 gift of Glady and Ross Faires in honor of Frank Vallone

Now living in Kentucky, Conn is a long-time resident of Knoxville known for her flowing forms sculpted from various types of marble. While most appear abstract at first, her descriptive titles often enable viewers to discern hints of narrative imagery as in Warlord, whose projecting forms include a distinctive shield and helmeted head. Conn is deeply inspired by the work of British sculptor Henry Moore as well as classical art and culture.
Karen LaMonte (New York 1967; lives and works in Prague, Czech Republic)  

*Chado*, 2011  
Kiln-cast glass, artist’s proof (edition of 3)  
39 x 33 x 37 inches  
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2014 purchase with funds provided by Mary Hale Corkran in memory of her husband Blair

Although LaMonte’s first works were blown glass figures, she soon developed an interest in the theme of absence, and began producing ghostly cast glass sculptures in which only women’s clothing is represented. She investigates the role of clothing as an expression of identity, and as a mediator between the human body and society. *Chado* stems from LaMonte’s residency in Kyoto, and reflects her new understanding of the importance of the kimono in Japanese culture. As she explains, “How the kimono is worn parallels the relationship between Japanese individuals and their society. We conceal our bodies, but also to obscure and protect our individual personalities.”
Crystal Wagner (Baltimore, Maryland 1982; lives and works in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania)

**Aphotic IX**, 2016
Hand-cut screen printed paper in custom made wooden box, UV-protective Plexiglas
10 x 48 x 7 inches
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2017 gift of Lane Hays in memory of Charles A. Hays, who was part of the team responsible for the construction of the Knoxville Museum of Art

A graduate of the University of Tennessee’s printmaking program, Wagner specializes in sprawling organic forms that combine elements of printing, drawing, and sculptural installation. Recently she has focused on producing series of unique sculptural prints contained within elongated boxes that make reference to the natural world—especially undersea life. *Aphotic IX* refers to the portion of a lake or ocean where there is little or no sunlight and in which bioluminescence is the only light present.
Patricia Piccinini (Freetown, Sierra Leone 1965; lives and works in Melbourne, Australia)

Woods (Panelwork), 2004
ABS plastic and automotive paint
R. Dale McCrary

Piccinini uses art as an arena for exploring contemporary ideas about nature. She is especially interested in modern society’s obsession with the automobile, the ways in which technology is changing society, and blurring the boundary between natural and artificial. Her works include a wide range of media, such as sculpture, video, drawing, installation, and digital prints. In addition to creating wall-mounted works like Woods using auto body materials, she is known for her hyper-real animal sculptures that suggest a genetic experiment gone awry.
David Bates (Dallas 1952; lives and works in Dallas)
*Black Tip Shark*, 1989
Oil on canvas
96 x 78 inches
Knoxville Museum of Art, 1990 gift of Laila and Thurston Twigg-Smith, the Persis Corporation, and the Knoxville Journal

Texas-based artist David Bates has achieved an international reputation for his paintings examining the intimate relationship between humanity and nature along America’s Gulf Coast. His expressive compositions present grass-roots subjects in a heroic, larger-than-life format rendered in bold brushwork and thick paint.
Zsolt Bodoni (Aleșd, Romania 1975; lives and works in Budapest)

**Hall with Horses**, 2009

Acrylic and oil on canvas

80 x 114 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2010 purchase with funds provided by Cathy and Mark Hill, Livia and Marc Straus, David Butler, Susan and Kent Farris, Rosemary Gilliam, Kitsy and Lou Hartley, Penny Lynch and Kimbro Maguire, Carole and Robert Martin, Hei Park, Jenny Banner, Lane Hays, Margo Clark, Melinda Meador and Milton McNally, Laura and Shelton Davis, and the KMA Guild

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Jered Sprecher (Lincoln, Nebraska 1976; lives and works in Knoxville)

**A Type of Magic**, 2008

Oil paint, spray paint, and graphite on linen
60 x 60 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2009 purchase with support provided by Ann and Steve Bailey, Connie and Ralph Gonzalez, Barbara Apking, Hei and Stanley Park, Stuart Worden, Jayne and Myron Ely, Cathy and Mark Hill, Allison and Reid Lederer, Kay Clayton, Penny Lynch and Kimbro Maguire, Dan McGehee, Lane Hays, Carole and Bob Martin, Pam and Jeff Peters, Ted Smith, Dorothy and Caesar Stair, Marie and Bob Alcorn, Jennifer Banner, Barbara and Bernie Bernstein, David Butler, Lynda Evans, Susan and Kent Farris, Arlene Goldstine, Donna Kerr, Sheena McCall, Melinda Meador and Milton McNally, Mary Helen and Fran Olmstead, Betsy and John Quinn, Mary M. Rinearson, Ebbie Sandberg, Andrea Cartwright and Alan Solomon, Sarah Stowers, Rosalind Tillman, Loida Velazquez

Sprecher, a Knoxville-based artist and member of the University of Tennessee’s art faculty, uses an assortment of methods to construct complex, layered paintings. Each is made up of image fragments culled from sources ranging from art history books to random imagery from the immediate environment. Their original meaning and associations are often subdued, altered or lost in favor of their new role as formal devices. These elements are combined in compositions that appear to shift between abstraction and representation, and between two-dimensional form and three-dimensional space.

The richly textured surfaces of Sprecher’s paintings are the result of his method of applying multiple layers of paint with brushes, squeegees as well as spray cans. The artist also applies tape and stencils to the surface of his canvases to create precise edges that contrast sharply with loosely brushed or sprayed pigment. The resulting angular planes of color draw the eye into a fragmented, ambiguous pictorial space that appears shallow in certain areas while infinitely deep in others.