

UAM CSULB NEWS

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UAM TO EXHIBIT THE WORKS OF AL HELD

LONG BEACH — The University Art Museum (UAM) is pleased to present the second exhibition in the Hampton series, *Al Held: The Evolution of Style* on view from **June 26 through August 10, 2008**. Held, who demonstrates an intriguing transition from gestural painting typical of the Abstract Expressionist movement to intricate geometric imagery, bridges Modernism with contemporary painting. The 25 works in the exhibition span from the year 1958 to 2005, including one of Held's last two public commissions, a series of watercolor studies for the stained glass windows installed in the United States Courthouse in Orlando, Florida in 2006. In addition to the eight Held works in the UAM Hampton Collection of American Paintings, the exhibition includes works on loan from the Al Held Foundation, Inc., Collection of Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson, the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Crown Point Press, Manny Silverman Gallery, the law firm of Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP, and private collectors. A catalogue will accompany the exhibition with texts by **Robert Storr**, Dean of the Yale School of Art, Yale University, and the exhibition curators.

"Al Held's huge geometric landscapes (the largest is six meters across) are remarkably executed combinations of tripped-out video games and Hudson River School sunsets that allude to a manifest destiny of technological space..."

—Peter Eleey, *Frieze* magazine (Issue 71, Nov-Dec. 2002)

In a career spanning over 50 years, Al Held (1928-2005), often referred to as a second generation Abstract Expressionist, created a number of monumental works that expanded the language of abstraction. The term "Abstract Expressionist" therefore, seems too confining for an artist who ventured from a highly gestural mode into hard-edged abstraction, to structured, architectonic formalism, and perspectival illusionism within his stylistic evolution. Held developed distinct artistic idioms, examples of which are represented in the UAM's Gordon F. Hampton Collection. Organized by the UAM the exhibition represents Held's reinvention of style throughout his career. Held was consistent in his dedication to the act of painting, the geography of the two-dimensional picture plane, the ability to work on a monumental scale, and the value of abstraction. The exhibition is not only a means to understand Held's stylistic evolution; it also serves as a tribute to the vision of collector Gordon F. Hampton.

In 1999, the University Art Museum (UAM) received 85 mid-century American paintings and prints from the estate of Gordon F. Hampton, a Los Angeles attorney and prominent collector. Among this collection of second generation Abstract Expressionists were seven paintings by Al Held representing the span of his career. In 2006, Wesley G. Hampton (Gordon F. Hampton's son who has been active on the UAM Advisory

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Board since 2000) pledged \$100,000 to support five annual exhibitions from the Hampton Collection to be installed annually beginning in 2007. The first exhibition *Grand Gestures* showcased the collection through the installation of key works by Michael Goldberg, Adolph Gottlieb, Al Held, Lee Krasner, and Milton Resnick, among others. *Al Held: The Evolution of Style* is the topic of the second exhibition in the Hampton series.

ARTIST BIO

Al Held (1928–2005) is best known as a second-generation abstract expressionist. He was born on October 12, 1928 in Brooklyn to a working-class Jewish family. Held served in the United States Navy from 1945 to 1947, and returned to New York in 1948 where he enrolled at the Art Students League. Using his G.I. Bill, Held moved to Paris in 1949 and studied at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. In 1952, back in New York once again, Held's practice began to receive attention: in 1962 he was appointed Associate Professor of Art at Yale University, in 1964 he was awarded the Frank G. Logan Medal by the Art Institute of Chicago, and in 1966 he was awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship. During the late 1960s and 1970s, Held was the subject of solo exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Art, which traveled to The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (1968); the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia (1968), which traveled to the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston (1969); the Whitney Museum of American Art (1974), the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston (1978); and the P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in Brooklyn (2002). Several of Held's works were displayed at the National Gallery of Art as part of the *Seven American Masters* installation in 1986. In 1980, Held left his position at Yale, and, in 1981, began a six-month residency at the American Academy in Rome where he was elected to the Board of Trustees the following year. In 1983, he was awarded the Jack I. and Lillian L. Poses Creative Arts Award, and, in 1984, was elected to the American Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1988, Held established a second home in Italy where, for six months out of the year, he resided outside of his New York studio. On July 26, 2005 Al Held died in Todi, Italy, leaving behind a legacy of painting.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Image: Al Held, *West End*, 1985, Acrylic on canvas, 96 x 144 inches. Collection of the University Art Museum, California State University, Long Beach. Gift of the Gordon F. Hampton Foundation, through Wesley G. Hampton, Roger K. Hampton, and Katherine H. Shenk. Art © Al Held Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

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