

WoodmereArtMuseum

TELLING THE STORY OF PHILADELPHIA'S ART AND ARTISTS

UNIVERSITY OF THE **Arts**  **ARCADIA**
EXHIBITIONS

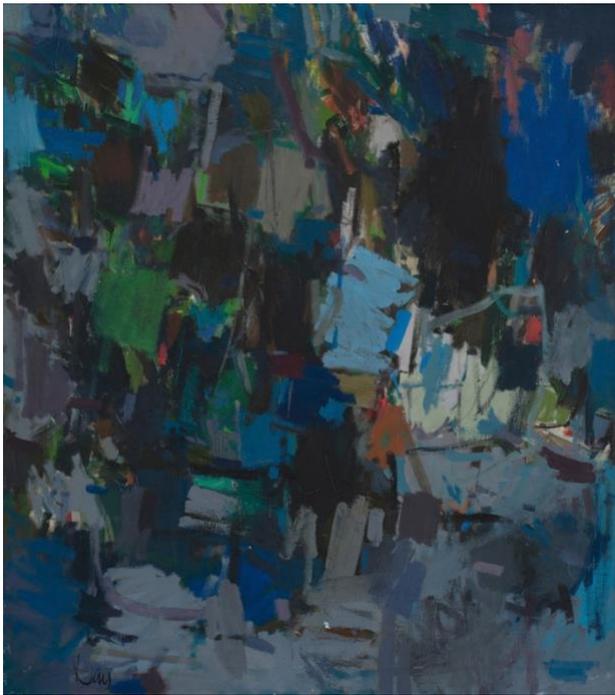
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Across three art institutions, retrospective explores the career and influence of Larry Day



Presented during his centennial year, *Body Language: The Art of Larry Day* explores the Philadelphia-based artist's shift from abstraction into figuration and his impact on the city's cultural fabric.

PHILADELPHIA (August 18, 2021) — This fall, three venerable Philadelphia-area institutions will mount what will be the most expansive exhibition to date of the art of Larry Day (1921-1998). *Body Language: The Art of Larry Day* will be presented across Arcadia University, University of the Arts and Woodmere Art Museum, exploring Day's significant contributions to American art from the 1950s through the 1990s including nearly 150 paintings, drawings and prints. The exhibition is curated by Day's longtime friend David Bindman, emeritus professor of history of art at University College London and visiting fellow at the Hutchins Center for African and African American Studies at Harvard University.



The exhibition's three-part structure highlights the distinct elements in Day's career, organized around his most prominent thematic categories: abstraction, figuration and the cityscape. Together, they work in concert to reinforce the artist's significance and lasting relevance while exploring Day's shift from abstraction to representation.

Larry Day: Absent Presence will be on view at the Spruance, Rosedale, and Harrison Galleries at Arcadia University from August 30 to November 21, 2021; *Larry Day: Silent Conversations* will be on view at Woodmere Art Museum September 25, 2021, to January 23, 2022; and *Larry Day: Nature Abstracted* will be on view at Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery of University of the Arts October 8 to December 3, 2021. Admission is free at Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery and Arcadia University. Admission at Woodmere Art Museum is \$10 and free on Sundays and to students.

Day's work was featured in many of the ground-breaking exhibitions that charted a new path for figuration in American art in the 1960s. In his hometown, he was known as "the Dean of Philadelphia Painters," so powerful was his inspiration and impact as an instructor at Philadelphia College of Art (now University of the Arts) and across the city's many other art schools.

William Valerio, the Patricia Van Burgh Allison Director and CEO of Woodmere Art Museums, says: “Day’s importance in re-imagining the figurative arts is equaled by his impact as a teacher and mentor. That this show takes place at a museum and two schools is a fitting honor on the centennial anniversary of his birth. Woodmere has made a significant commitment to stewarding Day’s legacy into the future, and *Body Language* has opened our eyes to the relevance of his work and to his constant visual curiosity and questioning, which is so important to artists today.”

Guest Curator David Bindman describes Day as a significant voice in American art in his shift away from abstraction in the early 1960s: “... Day’s figurative paintings are ‘realist’ in the sense that they often represent real people and the everyday subjects and places of modern life, but such ‘reality’ is always undercut by fictional elements and open-ended ironies. Day transcends the real.”

“A CONSUMMATELY REFLECTIVE ARTIST”

Background and biography: Living much of his life in Philadelphia, Larry Day was the son of an Italian father and Scottish mother. He attended Temple University’s Tyler School of Art following his service in World War II’s Pacific theater. He graduated in 1950 with Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Science in Education degrees and a gold medal for his scholarship and achievement in art.



Following Tyler, Day embarked on his instructional career in Philadelphia’s public school system. His service there was brief, and he soon became an influential figure in the painting department of the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art (now University of the Arts), where he was a faculty member for 35 years. Day was also a critic at the University of Pennsylvania’s graduate school and at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. He was revered by his students and colleagues alike for his dedication to both studio work and teaching.

Body Language: The Art of Larry Day carefully examines the evolution of Day’s artistic voice, from his fascination with the work of old masters and his expert skills as a draftsman, to his deep and abiding interest in music, literature, popular culture, and esoteric philosophical texts.

Subversive and running counter to then mainstream ideas in American art, Day moved away from abstraction in the early 1960s, opting instead to explore parallel fascinations with figurative and architectural subjects, probing the emotions of everyday life. In his own unique way, he participated in a component of American art that, like the emerging Pop and Hyperrealism movements of his times, sought to direct the arts to the subjects and textures of lived experience.

On view at Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery of University of the Arts

October 8 - December 3, 2021

330 S. Broad Street, Philadelphia

Day achieved significant success as an abstract painter in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and his nature-based, expressionist paintings are highlighted in *Nature Abstracted* at Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery of University of the Arts. These paintings formed the solid foundation of his artistic presence in Philadelphia and New York; some, such as *To Pergamon* (1958-1959) make reference to figurative form, while other compositions of gesture, line, and color, such as *Untitled* (c. 1960) evoke moods of the sky and earth.

On view in the Spruance, Rosedale, and Harrison Galleries at Arcadia University

August 30 - November 21, 2021

450 S. Easton Road, Glenside

Day's cityscapes and suburban views, which are the focus of Arcadia University's *Absent Presence*, are measured and uninhabited, paradoxically suggesting the presence of human activity behind walls, doors, and windows. These works demonstrate the artist's exploration of the visible and unseen geometries of the built environment, as in *Three Worlds* (1989) and his unique perspective on iconic Philadelphia locations, such as the Waterworks, which are portrayed in his *Aquarium* (1977). Day's early work as a printmaker, foundational to his artistic practice, will be highlighted here as well, including works in which surreal and mythological subjects foreshadow the allegorical and whimsical series of drawings he produced later in his career.

On view at Woodmere Art Museum

September 25, 2021 - January 23, 2022

9201 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia

At Woodmere Art Museum, *Silent Conversations* contains the multi-figure paintings and drawings that Day is best known for, including many portraits and self-portraits. They document his exploration of the old masters as a route toward an art of contemporary subjects and demonstrate a deep interrogation of the realms of activity most familiar to his life: the

studio, the classroom and the gatherings of friends. In a number of the works, games that Day enjoyed, such as poker, charades and Twister, stand as metaphors for the eccentricities of human relationships. Large-scale paintings such as *Narrative: To the Memory of Matteo Giovannetti* (1967) make reference to history and art history, grappling with cultural heritage as determinant of contemporary life. Day was a master draftsman, and his drawings, whether the gender-queering *Hercules Dressed as a Woman* (1990) or the fancifully surrealist *Masquerade* (1995), demonstrate his combination of technical virtuosity and visual imagination.

The installation at Woodmere also includes a gallery that showcases the interplay between Day's abstraction and the later figurative works and concurrent cityscapes, serving as an introduction to the three-part exhibition.

Day's work is included in the collections of many museums, including the British Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Eleanor D. Wilson Museum at Hollins University, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art, the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Woodmere Art Museum.

EXHIBITION CATALOG

A full-color catalog produced by Lucia/Marquand and distributed by the University of Pennsylvania Press accompanies *Body Language: The Art of Larry Day*. It includes essays by David Bindman, Sid Sachs, chief curator and director of exhibitions at UArts, Jonathan Bober, curator and head of the Department of Old Master Prints at the National Gallery of Art, and artist Eileen Neff, who studied with and subsequently taught alongside Day. Also included is a "Memory Portrait" written by retired National Gallery of Art curator Ruth Fine, who married Day in 1983.

Throughout, the catalog explores the working process and relationships between Day's paintings and drawings. It also features a previously unpublished essay penned by poet and critic John Hollander, a selection of Day's extensive writings, which include an early work of fiction and essays on Nicolas Poussin, Henri Matisse and Robert Rauschenberg, and an extensive chronology and bibliography that together place Day in the broad artistic context of his period.

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About Arcadia Exhibitions

Arcadia Exhibitions organizes programming for four distinct gallery spaces on the Glenside campus throughout the calendar year. Its goal is to provide a broad-based community constituency with a stimulating roster of individual and thematic exhibitions of contemporary art ranging in scope and stature from the regional to the international. Public lectures, panel discussions, gallery tours, and receptions generate vital contexts for each exhibition while also serving as a forum to encourage dialogue among artists, educators, students, and the general public about contemporary art and its socio-cultural relevance. Learn more at:

arcadia.edu/arcadia-exhibitions/about. Arcadia Exhibitions is located at 450 S. Easton Rd, Glenside, PA 19038

About University of the Arts

University of the Arts' mission is simple: to advance human creativity. Established in 1876, UArts believes creativity is the most essential skill for success in today's society and has educated generations of groundbreaking artists, performers, designers and creative leaders for 145 years.

After being granted university status in 1987, University of the Arts became the largest institution of its kind in the nation, offering programs in design, fine arts, media arts, crafts, music, dance, theater and writing. It now features 22 undergraduate arts majors, 13 graduate programs and the nation's first PhD program in Creativity. UArts is also home to innovative centers across disciplines, including the Center for Immersive Media, Lightbox Film Center, Philadelphia Art Alliance and Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery. [Learn more about UArts](#).

About Woodmere Art Museum

Housed in a 19th-century stone mansion on six acres in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood of Philadelphia, Woodmere offers a unique museum experience that centers on the art and artists of Philadelphia. Vibrant exhibitions explore the achievements and social ideas of Philadelphia's artists in the broader context of American art; Woodmere prioritizes diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in its collecting, programming, and admission policies. Throughout the year, Woodmere offers family events, tours, gallery talks, lectures, panel discussions, studio art classes, film, and music performances. Woodmere brings the experience of art and nature together with a growing collection of sculpture installations across our six green acres.

The core of Woodmere's collection is the gift of Charles Knox Smith (1845 – 1916). Born of modest means, Smith built his fortune in the mining industry, and he became a city leader and passionate art collector. In 1898, he purchased the Woodmere estate with the grand ambition of creating a museum of the fine arts immersed in the green beauty of Chestnut Hill. He

expanded and transformed his home into a showcase for his art collection as a gift to the people of Philadelphia. Smith focused much of his collecting on Philadelphia's artists, but his Hudson River paintings remain on view as the best in Philadelphia to this day. For almost forty years up to 1978, the artist Edith Emerson was Woodmere's director, and she established a focus on women artists, especially collecting those in the circle of her life partner, Violet Oakley.

Woodmere is located at 9201 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia PA, 19118. Open to the public Wednesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Admission is \$10; FREE on Sunday. For more information: woodmereartmuseum.org.

Note to Editors & Writers:

- ***The three exhibitions will be on view simultaneously from October 8, 2021, through November 21, 2021.***
- ***On Friday, October 15, the three institutions will host a media preview. Details to come. Interested media please contact Abby Addams, abby@bluemedium.com***
- ***On Saturday, October 16, 2021, the Woodmere Art Museum will host a lecture on the art of Larry Day by exhibition curator David Bindman.***

Media Contact:

For additional information, images, or to request an interview please contact:

Abby Addams, Blue Medium

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Images (from top): *Narrative: To the Memory of Matteo Giovannetti*, 1967, by Larry Day (Woodmere Art Museum: Gift of Ruth Fine in honor of Irving and Miriam Brown Fine, 2020). *Abstraction*, c. 1958, by Larry Day (Woodmere Art Museum: Gift of Anita and Armand Mednick, 2020). *Three Worlds*, 1989, by Larry Day (Woodmere Art Museum: Museum purchase, 2017).