

California Lutheran University and  
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*The* William Rolland Gallery of Fine Art

# *Resonating Images*



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Cover image:  
David Hockney, *Margaret Hockney*, 2009  
Inkjet printed computer drawing on paper  
Courtesy of David Hockney Studios

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# *Resonating Images*

Curated by Jeff Phillips

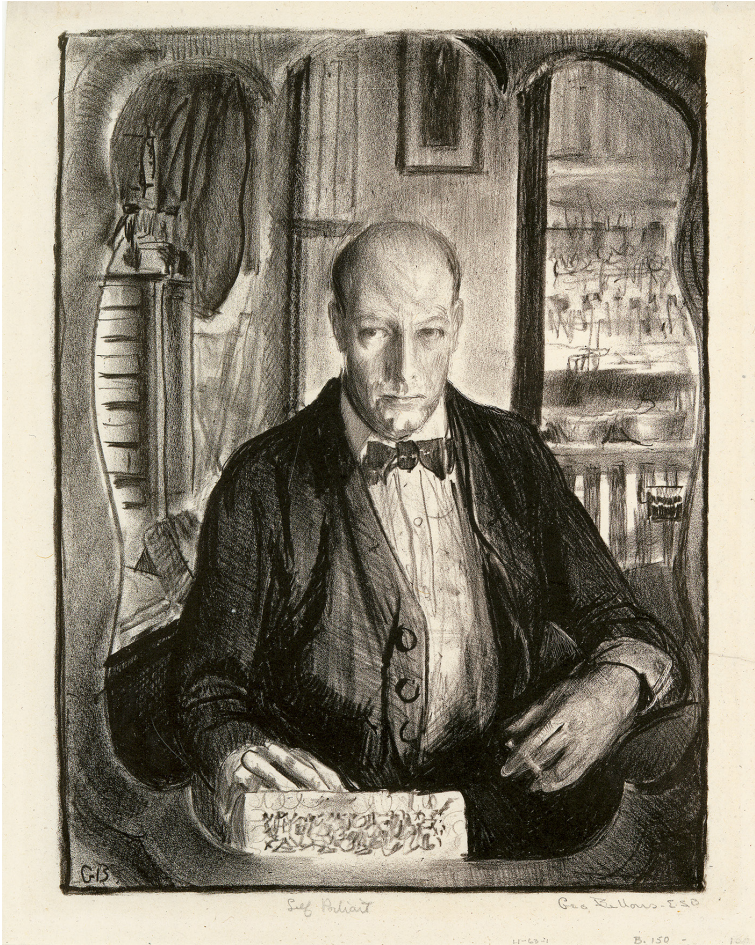
Assistant Curator Alex Lippman

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Peter Frank is Associate Editor of *Fabrik* magazine and art critic for the *Huffington Post*. He served previously as senior curator at the Riversdie Art Museum an as an art critic for *Angeleno* magazine and *LA Weekly*. Frank travels internationally writing, teaching, and curating art.



George Bellows, *Self-portrait*, 1921, lithograph  
Collection Palm Springs Art Museum, Gift of Sandra Smith

# *Resonating Images I* 1900-1950

**Essay by Peter Frank**

*Featuring works by*

Peggy Bacon	George Grosz
Edward Biberman	Kathe Kollwitz
George Bellows	Emil Kosa, Sr.
Thomas Hart Benton	Georges Rouault
Aaron Bohrod	Millard Sheets
Hans Burkhardt	John Sloan
John Steuart Curry	Manuel Tolegian
Lorser Feitelson	Max Weber
William Gropper	Francisco Zuniga

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Suzanne W. Zada, Gallery Z

The first half of the 20th century saw the emergence and eventual predominance of abstract art. But the tradition of pictorial representation, a tradition that had defined artistic practice in the West since ancient Greece, was hardly abandoned or forgotten. Liberated – both by abstraction and by photography – from its duty to visual “truth,” representational art became a vehicle for the artist’s personal expression, psychological insight, and sense of social responsibility. As practiced a hundred years ago, art dedicated to the depiction of people, places, and objects could depict such subjects as they had been depicted hundreds of years before that, as they had recently been depicted by the non-conformists of the 19th century, or as they had never before been depicted. What artists who still made humans look human and landscapes look like land now sought was not so much truth to optical veracity but truth to their own inner veracity. They had plenty of historical models in the likes of Rembrandt, Goya, Breughel, even El Greco and Uccello, artists who had given credence to expressive distortion, to the dream state and the waking hallucination, and to an “editorialized” realism, artists whose powerful visions endured well beyond their eras because they had unleashed the power of those visions. Those images lasted because they resonated, and the representational artists of the last century’s first half wanted theirs to resonate as well.

“Resonating Images” finds and presents some striking pictures painted, drawn, and printed during the period 1900-1950. Some of these pictures themselves are rather well known, but in most cases it is the artist whose reputation precedes and whose work here may reflect a different side of him or her. It is necessarily an Americo-centric selection, dominated by artists from the United States but joined by foreign work (prints of Georges Rouault, Käthe Kollwitz, Francisco Zuñiga) that had a marked impact on the American art scene of the time. And the selection further tilts toward California, bringing the

work of Lorser Feitelson, Hans Burkhardt, Edward Biberman, and Millard Sheets together with that of William Gropper, George Bellows, Max Weber, and Thomas Hart Benton. The variety of themes, styles, and sensibilities (not to mention media) demonstrated here by artists on both coasts, as well as offshore, testifies to the richness of the representational impulse even – especially – when that impulse was faced with its most intense, existential challenges.



George Grosz, *Still Life with an Oil Lamp*, 1927, oil on canvas  
Courtesy of Jack Rutberg Fine Arts L.A.



Lorser Feitelson, *The Fountain*, 1923, oil on canvas  
Courtesy of George Stern Fine Arts





Edward Biberman, *Interlude/Fallen Comrade*, 1947, oil on  
canvas

Courtesy of Suzanne W. Zada, Gallery Z



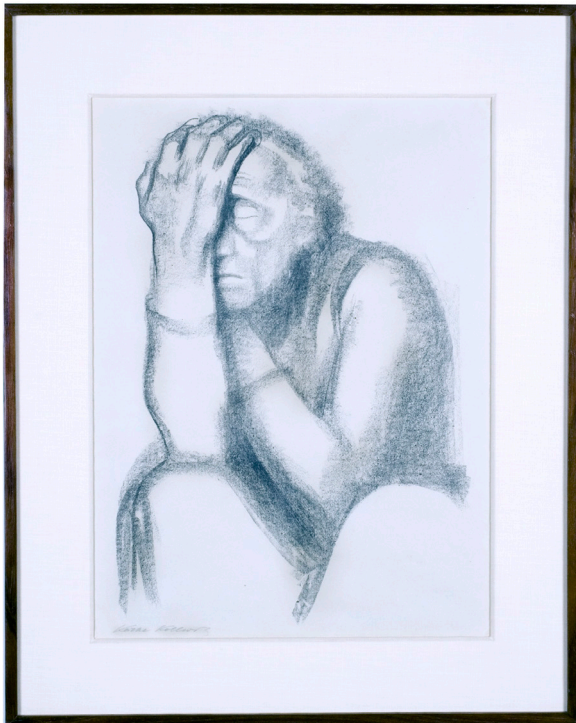
William Gropper, *Bankers*, 1932, oil on canvas  
Courtesy of the Abby & Alan D. Levy Collection



Hans Burkhardt, *Beyond Endurance*, 1945, oil on canvas  
Courtesy of Jack Rutberg Fine Arts L.A.



Francisco Zuniga, *Mujeres (Women)*, 1939, oil on canvas  
Courtesy of Jack Rutberg Fine Arts L.A.



Käthe Kollwitz, *Nachdenkende Frau II*, 1920, lithograph  
Courtesy of Jack Rutberg Fine Arts L.A.



Jerome Witkin, *A Boy and His Mother, The First Chair*, 1999, oil on canvas  
Courtesy of Jack Rutberg Fine Arts L.A.

# *Resonating Images II*

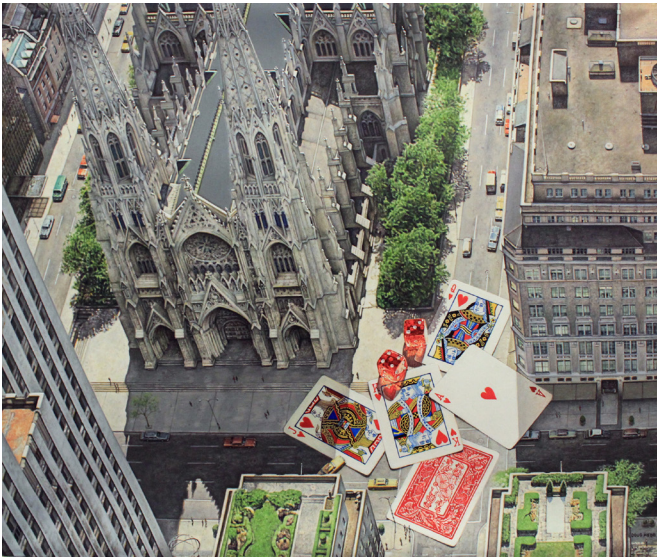
## **Essay by Peter Frank**

*Featuring works by*

Ernie Barnes	Constance Mallinson
Sandow Birk	Peter Milton
Fernando Botero	Pablo Picasso
Rebecca Campbell	Larry Rivers
Chuck Close	Andy Warhol
Rafael Coronel	Doug Webb
James Doolin	Ruth Weisberg
Dj Hall	Jerome Witkin
David Hockney	Robert Williams

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Leslie Sacks Fine Art  
The Museum of Latin American Art  
Mixografia



Doug Webb, *Virtue and Vice*, 2011, acrylic on linen  
Courtesy of Sandy Wood



If the first “Resonating Images” exhibition considered the impact of representational imagery on the tumultuous first half of the 20th century, this second exhibition considers the impact of the 20th century, and beyond, on representational imagery. In the wake of events and technologies far larger than they, artists after 1950 largely abandoned the straightforward humanistic project that had motivated their predecessors. To be sure, they still regard artmaking as among the most human things a human can do, and regard art as a reflection on modern life. But modern life itself has become a hall of mirrors, and not only in the developed world. Means of communication have developed and multiplied at a dizzying pace and have enmeshed the entire globe in a web of information – and control of information. More and more, ignorance is a choice, but at the same time misinformation, much of it deliberate, is rife. Thus we know far more than we ever did, and so much of what we know is in fact not (quite) true. The fealty to truth that motivated artists, representational and otherwise, a hundred years ago seems quaint and misguided now. Rather, in the face of a globalized viewpoint, abetted by media saturation, all artists feel they can do is resist. They can seek the truth, but they despair of finding it, and an edge of desperation and exhaustion permeates even the most ecstatic or furious of contemporary images. Some artists succumb to this edge, some mask it, some struggle with it, some even celebrate it, however sardonically. But in the age of the Internet and the image – the infinitely perfect, reproducible, and corruptible image – artists who depict the seen world in any way have their work, and their attitudes, cut out for them.

Most of, if not all, the artists in this survey admit to the primacy of the photograph – that is, the mechanically (and now digitally) recorded image – in visual culture worldwide. This primacy, while evident before the Second World War, was secured only after. With the refinement of color film and the increasing reliance of popular

publications and programs on the camera's eye, the skills of the painter and draughtsman were deflected entirely from the task of recording the world. Instead, many artists turned to commenting on the conditioning of modern vision by the camera, commentary we see in the snapshot-related photo-realism of D. J. Hall, the exacting hyper-realism of Chuck Close, and the strategy-driven Pop appropriations of Andy Warhol. All these approaches do not simply admit to the existence of photography, but reflect on photography's displacement of hand-rendered imagery in our lives and its dominance over our common vision. They do not challenge the photograph, but rather co-opt it.

The camera eye also plays a central, if less conceptual, part in the light-filled, even deliriously luminous depictions of Rebecca Campbell and James Doolin, not to mention the surrealist conceits of Doug Webb. These painters do not so much erase idiosyncratic rendition (as Hall, Close, and Warhol have) as suppress it, allowing personal sensibility instead to creep out around the edges or even to drive subject matter rather than style. They subject their deliberately banal subject matter to the merest distortion (formal or, in Webb's case, meta-formal), to help it transcend, however slightly, the conditions of the photograph. The kind of optical precision found here, with its reliance on peculiarly affecting light and/or unlikely relations between objects, reveals the gullibility of the eye and impels us to question the veracity of what we see, both in photographs and in real life.

Robert Williams takes Webb's urban surrealism a step further, coming out of an alternative-comic-strip background and applying the extravagant caricature of that idiom to over-the-top – but precisely described – fantasy. The mass-entertainment fantasy that motivates Larry Rivers not simply to paint, but to build, a cameratic image – perhaps an old movie still or stage shot – refers to a different cultural memory, one which mixes in many minds with their own personal histories. (Is that Fred and Rita dancing by moonlight, or Uncle Fred

and Cousin Rita dancing at her wedding?) On yet a whole other level of comment, Sandow Birk makes sly and pointed fun of social presumption by emulating the veristic yet optically effulgent manner of 19th century romantic landscape, only to “brand” his picture with a nautical coat of arms. Meanwhile, in her dioramic landscape view, Constance Mallinson conflates the painterly ambitions we associate with the 19th century and the exactitude we expect of latter-day mechanical or digital “eyes.”

Even as it looms over current and recent representational practice, however, the camera does not inform all such practice. David Hockney’s doggedly personal, even personalized, approach to portraiture admits to the frame of the camera but not to its wan imitation of natural light, much less its textureless surfaces. Hockney insists that humans still radiate personality and that, in contrast to photography, painting is designed to coax out such personality through the free interpretation of the painter. Similarly, Ruth Weisberg represents figures in a way that amplifies her and our subjective vision – as we see these figures and at the same time as we can’t possibly see them, drawn as credible presences within incredible collapsing or expanding space. The subtle caricature of Ernie Barnes adds to the animated drama of his very human scenes, while the wit and rich brush of Rafael Coronel gives more than just comic depth to his sitter. Fernando Botero’s wit is at once more caustic – certainly when aimed at those who fare best in society – and more lucid, famously turning every actor in the human comedy into puffed-up, pillowy versions of their real selves.

The dream state, too, can only be approximated by the camera, even when subjected to the most elaborate manipulations of Photoshop. Dreams, after all, do not exist in our retention of images or even scenarios so much as in our recollections of conditions and spatial and temporal relationships between presences. Peter Milton captures the fleeting, circumstantial quality of dreams in his burred, misty etchings

through which pass ghostly personages from past and present. Likewise, Jerome Witkin conjures the nightmare with his vigorously described jumps in scale between “ordinary” figures and their grotesque doppelgängers, jumps that take place in impossibly warped spaces, interior and exterior alike.

In its feverish imagery and emphatic but brittle execution, Witkin’s art comments on the passion and tragedy that maintained throughout the last century and into our own. It is an art of witness. A late print by Pablo Picasso would not seem to reflect similarly on the human anguish of past and present. But this celebration of sexuality – and, through historical reference, of social upheaval – by the author of *Guernica* testifies to the indomitability of the human spirit, driven enough by desire both to change life and bring more life forth. This etching from Picasso’s “347” series does not simply record the facts of living, as photographs do, but applies them.

Picasso, of course, never once thought that his *métier* would or could be replaced by what cameras do. By contrast, the artists, here and elsewhere, who have followed Picasso in the production of images of recognizable subjects have lived with the camera, as tool and as touchstone, as friend and as threat. But, by relying as much on the practices of art history and their own impulses as they have on the reproductive apparatuses available to and otherwise surrounding them, these artists have determined a secure niche in contemporary art practice for hand-produced figures and landscapes, interiors and still lifes, idle fantasies and wild dreams. It is still possible, and indeed necessary, they demonstrate, to handmake representational art in the age of mechanical – not to mention digital – reproduction.



Jerome Witkin, *Vincent Van Gogh and Death*, 1987, mixed media drawing  
Courtesy of Jack Rutberg Fine Arts L.A.





Constance Mallinson, *Arcadian Ego*, 2003, oil on canvas  
Courtesy of the artist



Ernie Barnes, *Pool Hall*, circa 1970, oil on canvas  
Copyright Ernie Barnes Family Trust,  
courtesy of the California African American Museum





Larry Rivers, *Make Believe Ballroom*, 1989, acrylic,  
oil, litho on canvas, cast resin fiber, wood  
Courtesy of Mixografia



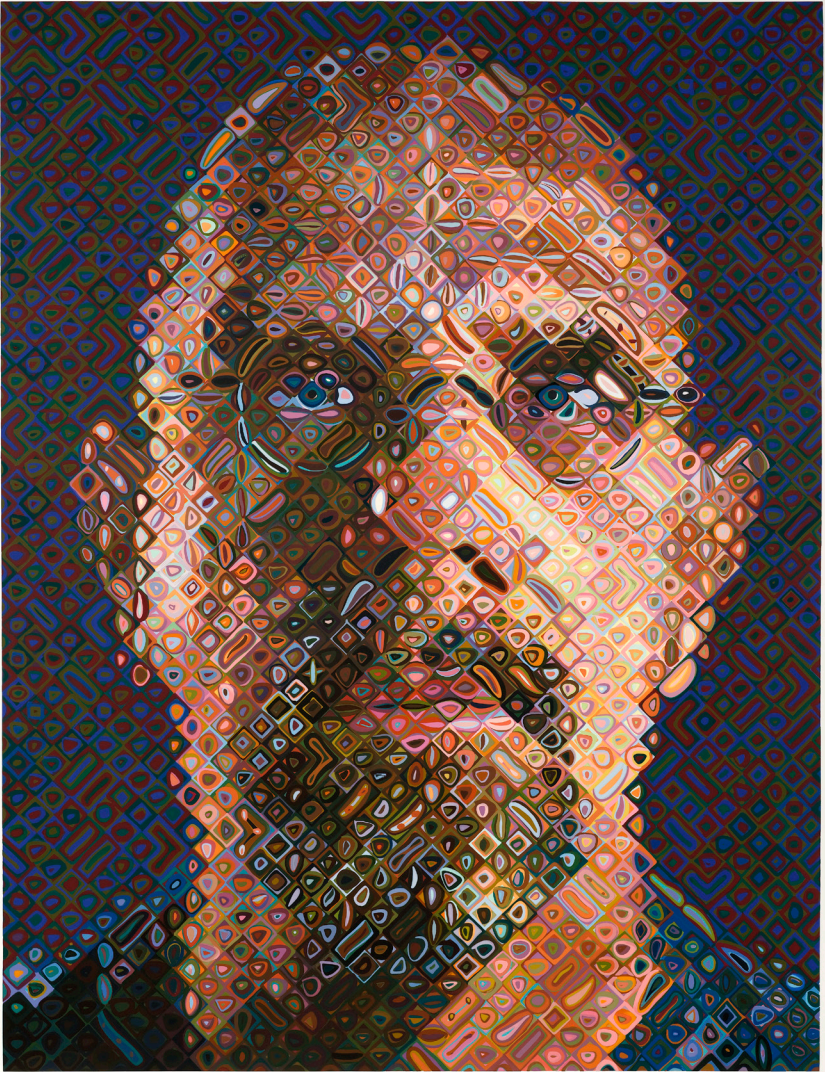
Rebecca Campbell, *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, oil on canvas  
Copyright Rebecca Cambell, courtesy of LA Louver Gallery, Venice, CA



D.J. Hall, *Nocturne*, 2004, oil on canvas  
Courtesy of the Artist



Pablo Picasso, *Demenagement, ou Charrette Revolutionnaire*  
from the 347 Series, 1968, etching and aquatint  
Courtesy of Leslie Sacks Fine Art

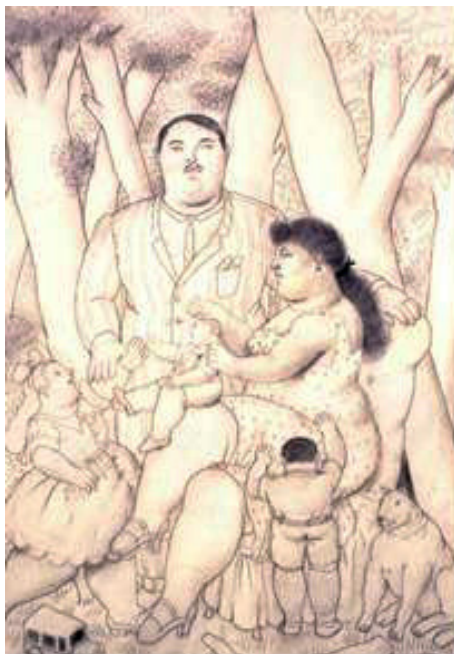


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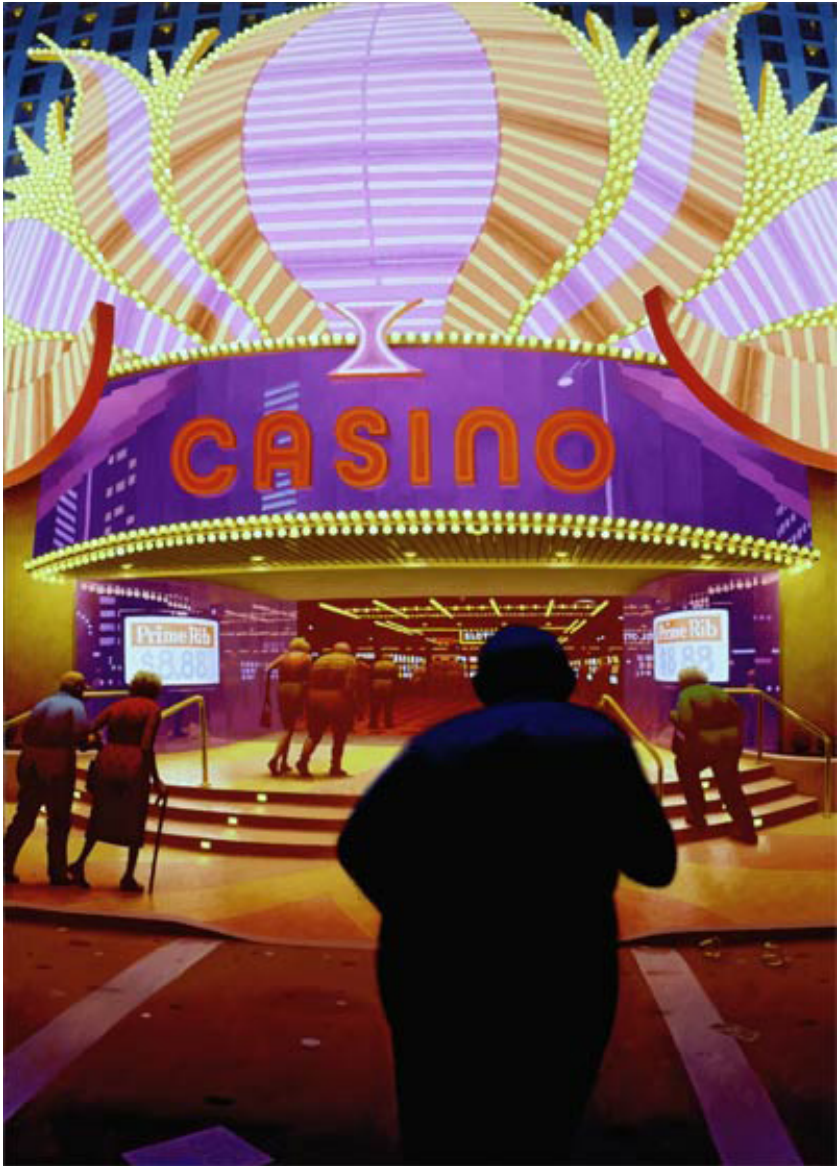
chuck close

2007

Chuck Close, *Self-Portrait Screenprint*, 2007, screenprint in 203 colors  
Image copyright Chuck Close. Photograph courtesy Pace prints.  
Loan courtesy of Leslie Sacks Fine Art



Fernando Botero, *La Familia/The Family*, 1992, charcoal on canvas  
Courtesy of The Museum of Latin American Art



James Doolin, *Casino Zombies*, 1991, oil on canvas  
Courtesy of the Estate of James Doolin and Koplin Del Rio Gallery



Sandow Birk, *Night Surfing*, Rio de Janeiro, 1997, oil on canvas  
Courtesy of Koplín Del Rio Gallery





Robert Williams, *Creation Trumps Creator*, 2009, oil on linen  
Courtesy of the Artist



Ruth Weisberg, *Times Three*, 1990, oil and mixed media on canvas  
Courtesy of Jack Rutberg Fine Arts L.A.



Peter Milton, *Interiors I: Family Reunion*, 1984,  
resist-ground etching and engraving  
Courtesy of Jack Rutberg Fine Arts LA



The William Rolland Gallery of Fine Art is located on the campus of California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks. Since opening in 2011, the gallery has curated several world-class exhibitions.

William Rolland is a collector of fine art and sculpture, and philanthropist whose dedication to the arts has enabled students and the community at large to engage with and learn about some of the world's finest historical and contemporary art.

