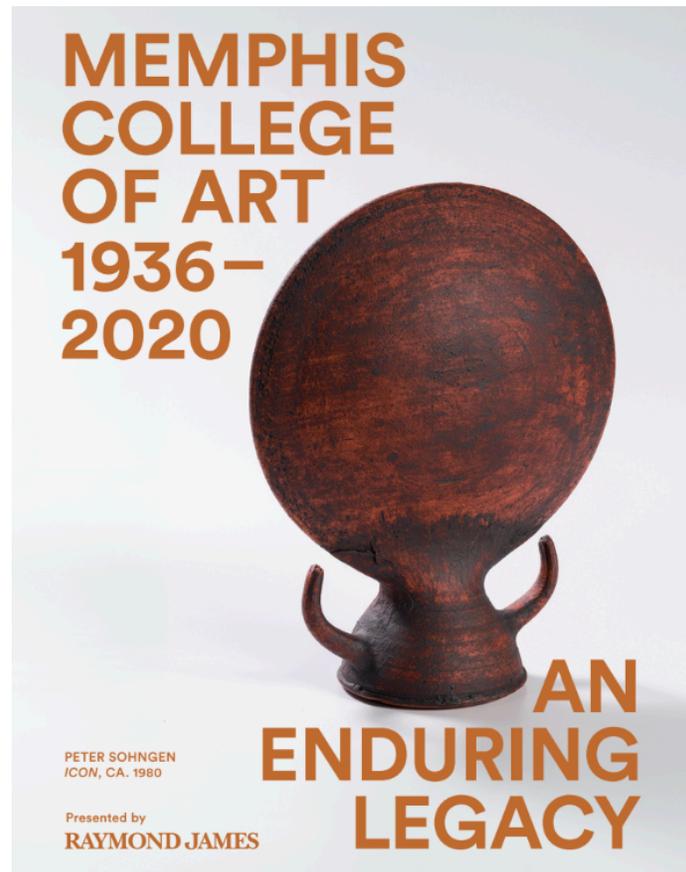




Ninety Artists Honor the Creative Lineage of Memphis College of Art in Major Museum Exhibition at Memphis Brooks Museum of Art



MEMPHIS, Tenn. (February 25, 2026) – The [Memphis Brooks Museum of Art](#) announced today the opening of *Memphis College of Art, 1936–2020: An Enduring Legacy*, a major exhibition honoring one of the South’s most influential independent art schools. On view through Sept. 27, the exhibition brings together 90 works by 90 artists whose work now appears in prominent museums, galleries, and collections nationwide.

Drawn from the museum’s permanent collection and loans from artists and private collectors, the exhibition spans more than eight decades and features work across painting, photography, ceramics, textiles, sculpture, artist books, video, installation and printmaking. Together, these works trace generations of Memphis-trained artists and reflect the museum’s longstanding commitment to collecting, preserving, and presenting the creative legacy of the city.

The Memphis College of Art graduated its final class in May 2020, closing after 84 years of educating artists who shaped the creative life of Memphis and far beyond. This exhibition aims to look forward as much as it looks back, highlighting the school's lasting impact and the artists who continue to carry its spirit into new work and new places.

“The work in this exhibition reflects a level of imagination, rigor, and confidence that comes from being trained in a deeply creative place,” said Zoe Kahr, Executive Director for Memphis Brooks Museum of Art. “These artists learned their craft in Memphis, and it shows—and their influence continues to shape what comes next.”

The Memphis Brooks Museum of Art and the Memphis College of Art share deep roots. For more than sixty years, the two institutions stood side by side in Overton Park, serving many of the same artists, students, and audiences. Both trace their origins to the Memphis Art Association, founded in 1914 by Florence McIntyre and members of the Nineteenth Century Club to advance arts and culture in the city. The association established the Brooks Memorial Art Gallery in 1916 and helped launch what would become the Memphis College of Art, laying the groundwork for more than a century of shared history.

Memphis College of Art, 1936–2020: An Enduring Legacy is guest-curated by Marina Pacini, who served as Chief Curator at the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art from 2002 to 2019.

“Hearing graduates talk about the importance of their professors made mentorship the central focus of the exhibition,” said Pacini. “Further, the ninety works demonstrate that students did not necessarily follow their mentors in either media or styles. Faculty inspired them in many different ways, but the artists still made the work uniquely their own.”

Over decades, graduates of the college carried their training across the country and internationally, shaping creative communities wherever they landed. Spanning generations, the work on view reflects the discipline, experimentation, and ambition that defined the college's approach to art-making—and shows how a regional school became a launching point for national influence.

As the museum prepares to leave Overton Park after 110 years and reopen downtown as Memphis Art Museum in a new Herzog & de Meuron–designed building, this exhibition marks a closing chapter in one home and a bridge to the next. Memphis College of Art's former home, Rust Hall, will soon return to its roots as a place for art and learning, with the Metal Museum at Overton Park opening there this September. The site that trained generations of artists will continue to shape creative life in Memphis, even as the institutions themselves evolve.

A series of public programs will accompany the exhibition, including three upscale, seated dinners inspired by the history and legacy of the Memphis College of Art. Each dinner will reflect a different chapter of the school's evolution, creating an experience grounded in art, history, and culinary design. More information is available at brooksmuseum.org.

The exhibition is presented as part of the [2026 Tennessee Triennial for Contemporary Art](#), a statewide initiative highlighting the strength of Tennessee's visual arts community. The Memphis Brooks Museum of Art is proud to join a consortium of museums leading this celebration, including the Frist Art Museum in Nashville, the Knoxville Museum of Art, and the Hunter Museum of American Art in Chattanooga.

An accompanying publication documents the history and continued impact of the college and features a major research essay by Pacini, developed through community surveys and archival research. Additional contributions come from artists and scholars whose work reflects the college's influence.

The exhibition is presented by Raymond James with major support from the Formanek Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation and Grinder Taber Grinder. Additional support comes from the National Endowment for the Arts, Wyeth Foundation for American Art, an anonymous donor, The James Lee House, Ellen and Brig Klyce, KC and Jeff Warren, Doug Carpenter + Associates, Kaywin Feldman and Jim Lutz, the Art Now Collective, Kay Clark, Maggie and Milton Lovell, Gloria and Kenneth Boyland, Deborah and Bob Craddock, Debi and Galen Havner, Sally Hergenrader, James R. Humphreys, Kristen and Jay Keegan, the Doris S. and Hubert Kiersky Charitable Remainder Trust, Valerie and Carl Person, Bill Townsend, Anise and Ron Belz, Kim Caldwell, Kristi and James Carmichael, Dabney Coors, Metcalf and Madeleine Crump, Pinkney and Janice Herbert, Martha and Michael Hess, Simone and Logan Meeks, Suzanne and Jon Scharff, Henry Turley and Wanda Shea, Tate and Webb Wilson, Carissa Hussong and David Lusk, Fatima and James Little, Angie and Will Deupree, Brooke and Alan Balducci, Sherri and Kevin Kimery, Kerry Jackson and Kathy Fish, Barbara and Pitt Hyde, Lisa A. Brumleve-Pratt and Harry Pratt, Irene and Ron Ayotte, Betty and George Johnson, and Susan and James Edelman.

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About Memphis Art Museum

Opening in December 2026 along the Mississippi River, Memphis Art Museum is the reimaged home of the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art. As a 123,500-square-foot cultural campus, it offers expanded galleries, abundant public spaces, and new studios for learning and creativity. Designed as an open invitation to the city, the museum serves as a home for creativity and community, where Memphians and visitors gather, connect, and experience the power of art. With world-class architecture, a rooftop sculpture garden, and year-round cultural programming.

About Art Now

The Art Now collective exists to champion emerging artists from Memphis and the broader Mid-South. Through collective giving and shared passions, Art Now grows the museum's permanent collection, activates public spaces, and builds bridges between artists and audiences. Learn more at thebrooks.org/collectives.

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