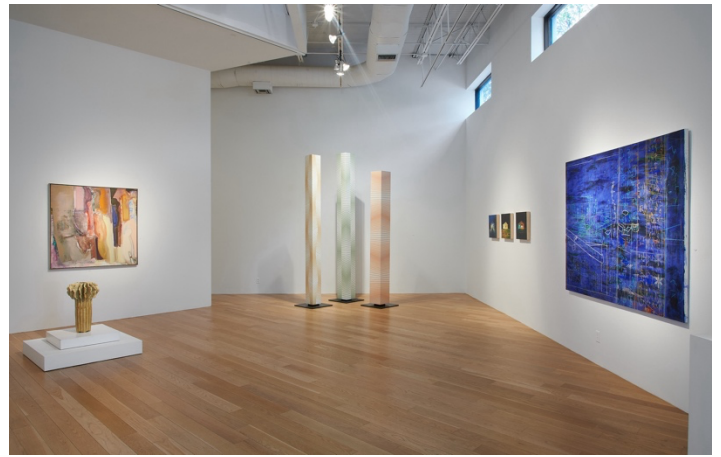


Review: *50th Anniversary Exhibition Part II* by Elliot Penn

Moody Gallery is currently celebrating five decades of continuous business with a two-part exhibition. *Part I*, which closed on October 25, showcased thirty-eight artworks by gallery-affiliated artists, including Melissa Miller, Michael Kennaugh, Pat Colville, Terry Allen, Lucas Johnson, and more. *Part II*, which opened on November 8, presents over forty artworks spread across the gallery's four viewing spaces: front gallery, middle gallery, garden gallery, and garden. *Like Part I*, *Part II* is rich in diversity. The artworks selected for this second installment range in subject, style, age, and material, from optically illusionistic sculptures to prints and paintings depicting scenes from mythology and folklore.



Installation view: Ellen Tanner, *Snake Doctors* (2025) [left], Claire Ankenman, *Dream Space 1-3* (2024) [right]
Installation view: Jay Shinn, *Wheatley* (2023), *Meadow Land* (2023), *Mid-Day* (2023) [center]

Upon entering the gallery, three gleaming, colorful sculptures attract the viewer's gaze with great authority. These three wall sculptures, crafted by Claire Ankenman and entitled *Dream Space 1-3* (2024), are made from steel and plexiglass. These sculptures explore the relative and perceptual experiences of light and color. Ankenman's careful, efficient, and mathematical sculptures reflect, absorb, and transmit light to create optical shifts and induce changes in the viewer's perception. Opposite *Dream Space 1-3*, three monumental sculptures by Jay Shinn fill the backend of the front gallery. Like Ankenman's sculptures, Shinn's *Mid-Day* (2023), *Meadow Land* (2023), and *Wheatley* (2023) betray a preoccupation with optical illusionism. At a distance, looking from the front entryway, the tall, rectangular columns appear to feature splotches of desaturated color, seemingly airbrushed onto the surface. However, as one approaches the sculptures, as their surfaces come into focus, colorful, reticulated patterns emerge. In the case of *Meadow Land*, when viewing two sides simultaneously, the sculpture's painterly stripes and carefully

placed gradients of green pigment create the illusion of a vertically aligned rectangular prism that extends from the base to the top of the column. At varying heights, this illusory rectangular prism appears to recede into and protrude out from the surrounding space.



Jay Shinn, *Meadow Land* (2023), Acrylic on wood



Ellen Tanner, *Snake Doctors* (2025), Oil on panel

Ellen Tanner's *Snake Doctors* (2025) hangs near the entrance in the front gallery, neighboring *Dream Space 1-3*. A small-scale oil on panel painting, *Snake Doctors* shows two dead copperheads, both cut in multiple places, set in an Edenic, coastal landscape. Twelve shimmering dragonflies have descended upon the snakes and are stitching their bodies back together. Executed with a perspective and touch reminiscent of Florentine artists of the early Renaissance, the imagery of *Snake Doctors* references traditional southern American folklore in which dragonflies and snakes have an alliance, with dragonflies mending or reviving injured or dead snakes. Rendered with microscopic detail, *Snake Doctors* lures the viewer to look closely. According to Tanner, "...I enjoy the idea that, if someone does take the time to come close and look through magnification, they will see something quite a bit more

nuanced than is visible at a distance or to the naked eye. I love that intimacy of inviting someone close to these small worlds I have spent hundreds of hours on...”



Gael Stack, *Untitled* (1998), Oil on canvas

Gael Stack’s *Untitled* (1998), which hangs unframed near *Snake Doctors*, belongs to a series of paintings that the artist began in earnest in the mid-1990s. Paintings from this series have velvety, cobalt blue grounds, indefinite and vacuous. In the case of *Untitled*, notational motifs, figures, expressive lines, scrawled marks, and calligraphic strokes appear against, in front of, amidst, within, and behind a blue void. The heavily worked and layered surface of *Untitled* is equally conceptually rigorous and aesthetically stunning. Stack’s unique pictorial language or iconography, that which animates *Untitled*, suggests intelligibility and decipherability without delivering explicit meaning.



Installation view: Dornith Doherty, *Primavera* (2025), *Garden Party* (2025), *Interlace* (2025) [left to right]
Tracye Wear, *Cactus III* (2024) [center]
Stephen Greene, *Double Image* (1994) [right]



Stephen Greene, *Double Image* (1994), Oil on canvas

Double Image (1994), an oil on canvas painting by Stephen Greene, hangs in the main gallery close to three pigment prints by Dornith Doherty and Tracye Wear's *Cactus III* (2024). Though it features large swaths of orange, red, and purple paint, and though its creator is sometimes called an Abstract Expressionist, *Double Image* does not fit comfortably within the formal parameters of Abstract Expressionism. While *Double Image*, with its diaphanous layers and streaks of color, is assuredly abstract, the composition is only minimally gestural. Furthermore, the surface of *Double Image* is not treated uniformly and does not achieve an all-over style. Rather than focusing on the expressive capabilities of oil paint à la Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock, Greene orders color to a harmonious end in *Double Image*, treating the surface with a range of opaque and transparent effects.





Joseph Glasco, *Untitled* (1981), Collage and acrylic on paper
 Luis Jiménez, *Air, Earth, Fire, and Water* (1994), Lithograph
 Michael Bise, *Mother and Son* (2024), Graphite on paper

The middle gallery boasts collages by Sherry Tseng Hill and Jerry Jeanmard, as well as sculptures by Bethany Johnson and Tracye Wear. The frosted surface of Wear's *Seed V* (2025) perfectly complements Joseph Glasco's *Untitled* (1981), a rhythmically patterned collage and acrylic composition on paper. Luis Jiménez's exuberant *Air, Earth, Fire, and Water* (1994), a lithograph in colors, hangs on the back wall of the middle gallery. A variation on Jiménez's indigenous or southwest pieta theme, this print straightforwardly depicts the Aztec-era legend of Iztaccíhuatl and Popocatepetl. According to legend, the warrior Popocatepetl was sent to battle by the king, who wanted to discourage the romance between his daughter, Iztaccíhuatl, and Popocatepetl. The king lied to his daughter, telling her that Popocatepetl was dead. Upon hearing this lie, Iztaccíhuatl died of grief. When Popocatepetl returned to find his beloved dead, he knelt and held Iztaccíhuatl's lifeless body. The gods then covered the two with snow and transformed them into twin volcanoes. With energetic linework and vibrant colors, Jiménez shows the two lovers during their transformation into mountains. According to Jiménez, "Nothing in the codices refers to this myth of the creation of the two volcanoes outside of Mexico (City). But there's something in it that's very important for the Mexican psyche and therefore for the Mexican American psyche as well." The middle gallery also houses Michael Bise's *Mother and Son* (2024), a delicately rendered, overtly religious graphite on paper drawing showing a mother bathing her infant son. A crown of thorns frames the composition, perfectly encircling the infant.



James Drake, *Forgiveness (Five Heads)* (2021), Charcoal, pencil, and tape on paper
 James Drake, *Can We Know the Sound of Forgiveness* (2021), Charcoal on paper mounted on canvas

Andrea Rosenberg's *Untitled 94.19* (2019), William Christenberry's *Untitled* (2005), Randy Twaddle's *Arrangement #9* (2023), and James Drake's *Forgiveness (Five Heads)* (2021) fill the walls of the garden gallery. As the title suggests, *Forgiveness (Five Heads)* features five classicized visages drawn in graphite and collaged onto a paper support with tape. Before assembling them into a collage, Drake utilized these five heads as preparatory drawings. At least two heads from *Forgiveness (Five Heads)*, the face shown in profile looking upward on the far right and the face at the bottom center, appear affixed to bodies in Drake's colossal charcoal drawing entitled *Can We Know the Sound of Forgiveness* (2021).



James Drake, *Glass Tongues* (2012), Glass

In addition to being a master draughtsman, the Lubbock-born Drake is a sculptor. His *Glass Tongues* (2012), a cluster of nine clear, upright tongues, rests on a table in the furnished garden gallery. *Glass Tongues* belongs to Drake's *Tongue-Cut Sparrows*, a series he began in 1995 that explores the daily experiences of men and women inside and outside of the El Paso County Detention Facility. For this series, Drake worked with the female partners of imprisoned men who had invented their own sign language to communicate. Drake asked the signers to translate the works of William Shakespeare, Cormac McCarthy, William Blake, and others into their new, silent language. According to Drake, who artistically documented the results in a variety of mediums, "Not only were they very receptive to the idea, they were instrumental in choosing certain passages and works that exemplified their love and loss and desperate need to communicate." The project takes its title from a Japanese folktale about a wife who cuts out the tongue of her husband's beloved pet bird. Despite this, the bird was miraculously still able to sing.



Jim Love, *Alas, Poor Yorick* (1989), Welded steel and cast iron
 Jim Love, *Portable Untitled No. 1* (1994), Welded steel
 Jim Love, *Fire Plug* (1971), Painted and welded steel

Last but certainly not least, Jim Love is represented in *Part II* by three sculptures spread across the garden gallery and garden: *Alas, Poor Yorick* (1989), *Portable Untitled No. 1* (1994), and *Fire Plug* (1971). The Amarillo-born Love, who has been represented by Moody Gallery since 1992, was a master of assemblage and sculpture. Throughout his life, Love collected discarded objects, sourcing them from antique stores, junkyards, and the like, and transformed them into artworks, which he called "put-togethers." Love's *Alas, Poor Yorick*, which features a single, metal bloom standing upright on a long, thick, winding stem, takes its title from dialogue in Shakespeare's

Hamlet. Hamlet, reflecting on the ephemeral nature of life, power, and all human endeavors, utters this famous line as he holds the skull of a former court jester. By titling his flower sculpture after this line of dialogue, Love imbues the work with a sense of fragility and fleetingness. As Lynn M. Hebert put it, Love's flowers "are glorious messengers of life and reminders of our tenuous connection with Mother Nature." In addition to his "put-togethers," Love fashioned large-scale, outdoor sculptures, welding steel into irreverent, playful, and iconic forms. One such work, *Fire Plug* (1971), sprouts from the ground in the garden.

Part II serves as an entry point into the rich history of Moody Gallery, a subject that could easily fill tomes. This exhibition provides the opportunity to see artworks by gallery stalwarts like Luis Jiménez and James Drake, while also privileging those artists who help to keep Moody Gallery fresh and relevant. The diversity of *Part II* is, in part, derived from the eclectic taste of Elizabeth "Betty" Moody, founder, owner, and director of Moody Gallery. Since 1975, Moody has led her gallery through good and bad times, through downturns in the economy, natural disasters, a global pandemic, and more. With no intention of calling it quits anytime soon, she continues to run her gallery with passion and enthusiasm. Moody, who is exceptionally gifted at connecting clients with art, not only manages to make each visitor to her gallery feel like the most important person in the room, but she also cares deeply about the artists she represents. On this subject, Donna Tennant remarks, "Betty is known for taking care of her artists... Few artists leave Moody Gallery once they join." *Part II* closes on December 23, after which an exhibition of Michael Kennaugh's art will open. After fifty years in business, Moody Gallery remains open-minded, original, and eclectic, as well as firmly committed to its original mission of promoting artists living and working in Texas.