

# Rehanging the Ranch

Last year Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson gave Stanford University 121 works from their post-war American art holdings, many of which were dispatched from the family home. They talk to *Apollo* about the evolution of their collection

WRITER LOUISE NICHOLSON  
PHOTOGRAPHS WINNI WINTERMEYER

When Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson dispatched 121 pieces from their outstanding modern and contemporary American art holdings to Stanford University last summer, they were not left with bare walls at their California home (see *Apollo*, September 2014). Quite the reverse. They had already precisely planned a full rehang, choosing from the 700 remaining works. 'It will be just as good,' Harry Anderson had told me, standing before a dazzling soon-to-depart Rothko, a twinkle in his eye. 'If not, you'll find me in a nearby saloon drinking Martinis.' So I went back to have a look – and Anderson was not downing Martinis.

The driveway was reassuringly similar. Last summer, the couple came out to greet me. 'We're Hunk and Moo,' said Harry, introducing

himself and his wife with the nicknames by which they are known to all, and shaking my hand vigorously. 'This is our Nadelman,' he continued, as if introducing a family friend rather than Elie Nadelman's bronze *Man in the Open Air* (c. 1915) standing on the pathway. I couldn't get along without him. I dust off his hat as I pass by each day.' Such is the easy relationship the Andersons have with their collection. Moving past bronzes by Henry Moore, Jacques Lipchitz, Seymour Lipton, Arnaldo Pomodoro and Roy Lichtenstein, we went inside. On my return, Nadelman and his coterie are still here to greet me.

But inside, all is changed. Last summer, I asked Hunk in the lobby what was going to Stanford. 'Look straight ahead, look left, look right,' he replied with glee. 'That's all going. These are in the category of irreplaceable.



These are the saints. Now we'll promote the new saints.' Gone – albeit just down the road and on public view – are De Kooning's *Untitled V* (1986) and Philip Guston's *The Coat II* of 1977 (Fig. 3), replaced by a Julian Lethbridge and a David Hockney (Fig. 2). 'Lethbridge shows at Paula Cooper,' says Hunk. 'When he was younger we bought quite a few, then nothing much, then he started doing what we think is very beautiful. We like to collect an artist in depth.'

Yet even if they know an artist they do not commission, buying mostly through dealers. 'We make relationships,' says Hunk. 'Dealers have been very generous with their time and knowledge. They took a personal interest to help us build our collection.' Today, they find this rare. 'You go into a gallery,' says Hunk, 'and the owner is invisible, either in the back office or out to lunch.' Moo elaborates on the point. 'The Hockney [which dates from 1978] is called *Paper Pools*. We knew him. This is made of handmade pulped paper. We were there – we saw him do the green with a turkey baster!' As she explains: 'Ken Tyler [considered to be the most accomplished printmaker in recent times] invented a quick way to make the paper. His studio used to be at Gemini in LA, then he went to upstate New York. Ellsworth Kelly and Kenneth Noland went there. We have some Noland. We bought this from Ken Tyler in 1979.'

'It has taken nine months to make the change,' continues Moo in a practical fashion. 'There was the planning. Then, the gift went out and we redecorated the house. Then the new hang went in.' Their daughter, named Mary but known to all as Putter (photographed with her parents for *Apollo*; Fig. 1), returned home for the upheaval. 'She knows the works so well that the rehang was not difficult.' However, this is not the first change. When the Andersons came to the Bay Area in California in the early 1960s, Cliff May designed Hunk's office for his growing food services business, which he simply calls 'an important part of all this'; the balance of their collection fills every hall, stairwell and room there. A few years later, they had their informal, ranch-style



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family home designed by Cliff May's pupil, William Daseking. 'This is a house designed for art,' continues Hunk, 'but not the art that is in it now. We had French and American Impressionists, Homer and so forth. Then in 1969 we changed gear as a result of self-education, to American Abstract Expressionists. We looked at our collection and it was good, but we wanted to buy better – the best.'

Since then, they have bought exclusively post-war American art, with the focus on Colour Field Painting, Post-Minimalism, California funk art, Bay Area Figurative Art and contemporary abstract art. What they have created is a distinctly family collection determined by the taste, likes and dislikes of Hunk, Moo and Putter. In their 50 years of buying some 2,000 works, the Andersons have not used art advisors or consultants. Rather, they have forged strong relationships, learned to look, and read a lot. Early on, they got to know Nathan Oliveira, an artist who taught at Stanford. Introductions led to the New York dealer Eugene Thaw (*Apollo*'s Personality of the Year in 2008 and interviewed in the December 2008 issue). 'He was very important,' says Hunk. 'He got us *Lucifer*.'

He is referring to one of their greatest joys, Jackson Pollock's painting of 1947, which they bought in 1970 and was hanging in the dining room before it went to Stanford. It came from film producer Joseph H. Hazen. Thaw made the introduction, telling Hazen about the Andersons' collecting and good credentials. Hunk remembers it clearly: 'Thaw told us, "You will have to woo him." Joe Hazen interviewed us and we passed.' It has hung in



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**'It's a new installation with a new idea. We all did it, me, Moo and Putter'**

- 1 Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson with their daughter, Mary – known as Hunk, Moo and Putter – photographed in the Studio at their California home, January 2015
- 2 LA-based British artists David Hockney (b. 1937) and Julian Lethbridge (b. 1947) are displayed in the lobby, replacing the works gifted to Stanford University
- 3 The lobby as it was – Philip Guston's (1913–80) *The Coat II* of 1977 hangs on the far wall, flanked by a late work by Willem de Kooning (1904–97)
- 4 In the dining room, *Two Heads* (1959), a late painting by David Park (1911–60)
- 5 *1947-Y-No. 1*, a large painting of 1947 by Clyfford Still (1904–80), has been retained in the dining room, and is flanked by a 1944 'pre-dip' Pollock

two rooms in the house. 'First, it was over Putter's bed all through her high school and college. Then we had it in here. Now we've moved our 'pre-dip' Pollock here; it was in the living room but you couldn't really see it. We gave the more important Pollock to Stanford, the one with better standing, we think. But we might feel a higher esteem for this one as we live with it more closely.'

A Clyfford Still, *1947-Y-No. 1*, has remained in this room (Fig. 5), while two De Kooning canvases have gone – though his almost blindingly bright, blood-red *Gansevoort Street* (c. 1949) is in place. Among the Andersons' particular interests are Californian regional artists, so in this room for gathering with friends they have placed a work by David Park (Fig. 4). 'He was part of the Bay Area Figurative Movement with Richard Diebenkorn and Sam Francis.' Just outside the room, there is a new acquisition by Terry Winters – the Andersons don't stop art shopping; often Putter goes ahead to check galleries out before they visit. Nearby, six drawings by Duchamp, Rodin and others remain in place from before.

Part of the original plan for the house was the Gallery. This is a womb-like room with a floor-to-ceiling glass door to the garden. Before the rehang, one wall was filled with Mark Rothko's big *Pink and White over Red* (1957), another with his later *Untitled (Black on Gray)* of 1969. An important person whom the Andersons learnt from was Bill Rubin at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. 'We got to know Bill and went to his apartment to see his collection,' recalls Moo. 'We bought the pink Rothko through his brother, Larry. When Bill came out and saw the Rothkos I apologised because they only just fitted into this room. He said: "No, it's fine. Rothko wanted his paintings to be walls.'" Lawrence Rubin was then the discerning director of Knoedler, and five works in the Andersons' Stanford gift were bought through him.

Before the Rothkos and their adjacent Clyfford Still (Fig. 7) and Louise Nevelson pieces went to Stanford, Moo would come here for a meditative moment 'almost every



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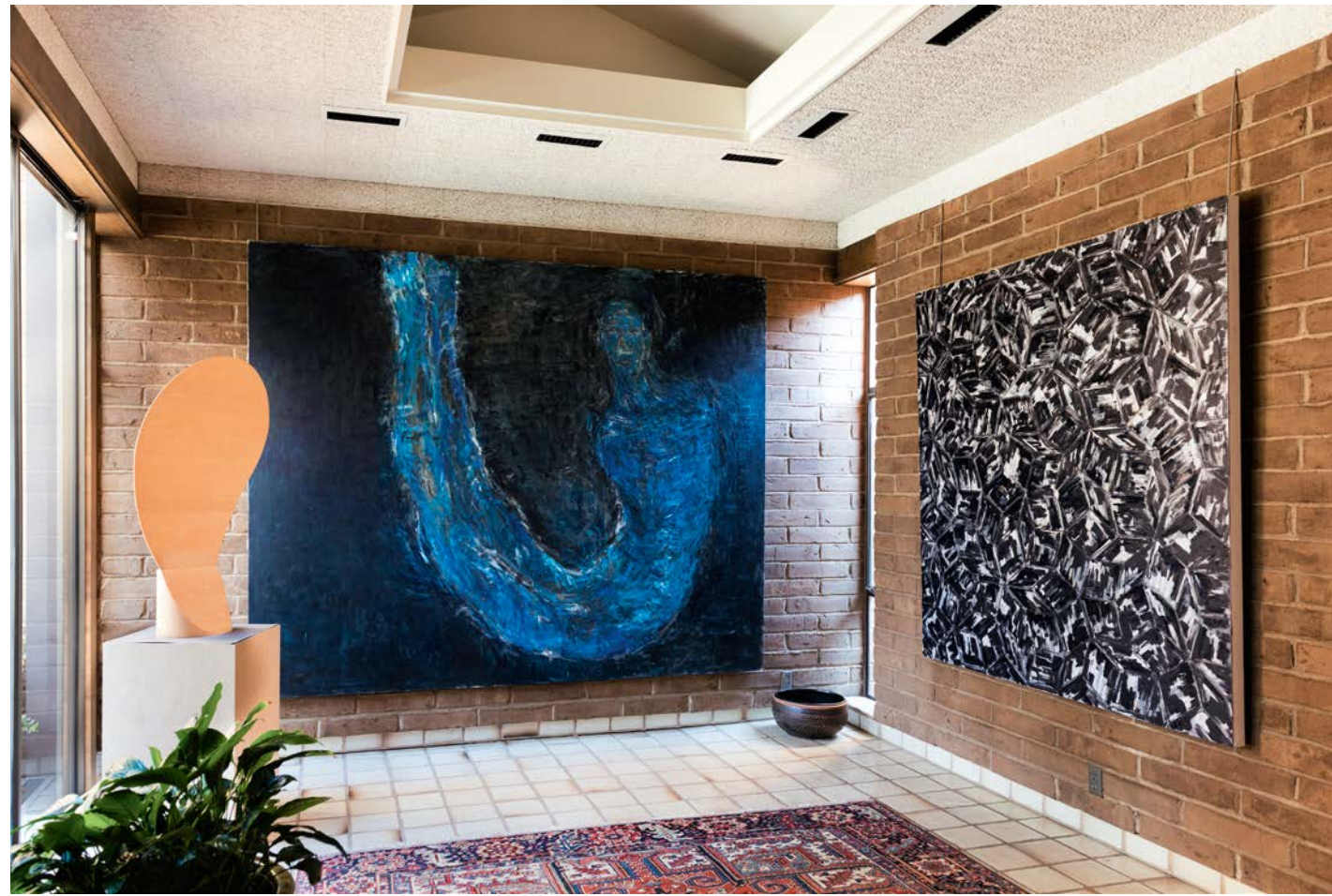
day – it was especially good in the morning light'. Now, a big dramatic Susan Rothenberg (Fig. 6) replaces the Clyfford Still and gives Moo intense pleasure: 'I love it – see the thickness of the paint.' Bay Area artist Frank Lobdell replaces Louise Nevelson's *Sky Garden* (1959–64); and a Terry Winters, an artist the Andersons especially like, 'replaces the irreplaceable' pink Rothko.

Not all the Rothkos have gone; *Green, Blue, Green* (1969) hangs in the Andersons' bedroom. 'We kept two out of four,' says Moo. 'The two big ones went to Stanford. They look even bigger there. Putter's friends, who were in here the whole time as children, can't believe that they fitted into our little house.' The art in this most personal room is what Moo calls 'a mixture of earlier times'. Kenneth Noland's very wide *Mexican Camino* (1970) hangs above the bed. 'We gave two Noland and a couple of Sam Francis to Stanford, but kept one of each here,' she says.

Yet it is the colour-drenched Emil Nolde (Fig. 9) watercolours that hold the visual



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experience together. After a brief but landmark trip to Paris' museums in 1964, the Andersons set out to become knowledgeable collectors, first of Impressionists, then early modern painters such as Picasso (a 1972 graphite work is in this room), German Expressionists such as Nolde, and early American modernists such as Arthur Dove. 'We went to London when Putter was 10 years old. We used to go to an exhibition and go off round it on our own. Then, at dinner, we'd say what we had liked. This time [at a Nolde show], we each liked a different painting. I was a bit flush then, so I said "Let's get all three."' Moo takes up the story. 'Hunk chose the sunflowers. I chose this portrait we keep on the easel [Fig. 9]. Putter chose a sailboat drawing, one of his "unpainted pictures".'

The guest suite across the corridor has their Doves at the entrance. 'Those five little Arthur Doves,' as Hunk calls them, 'we got at Edith Halpert' – the pioneering New York dealer in avant-garde American art whose Downtown Gallery was one of the first in Greenwich Village. Moo remembers the occasion: 'We went down steps to her gallery. We saw all these little paintings so we picked out five, all connected to the Finger Lakes area of New York state where



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6 Susan Rothenberg's (b. 1945) *Blue U-Turn* of 1989 has been moved into the Gallery from the Studio, the Andersons' experimental space

7 Clyfford Still's 1957-*J No. 1 (PH-142)* on display in the Gallery, before leaving for Stanford

Hunk went to college.' The suite's sitting room is in dramatic contrast: a sinuous line of copper and brass, made in 1983 by Robert Therrien, hangs from the wall, replacing two Diebenkorns that have gone to Stanford. 'I think this is better,' says Moo.

The suite's bedroom keeps its Rothko watercolour and two Robert Motherwell oils (*Joy of Living* [1948] and an untitled work from the *Spanish Elegy* series of around 1959), but introduces a Jasper Johns print over the bed. 'It was up at the office before,' says Hunk, pausing to look at it closely. 'It's the first time this and some others are in the house. We are learning to live with them.' His eyes brighten as he adds, emphatically: 'Johns is the greatest living printmaker, as far as I'm concerned. We gave away 655 multiples.' He is referring to the Andersons' gift of prints, multiples and monotypes to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco in 1996. Spanning the period 1953–2007, the Anderson Graphic Arts Collection – which they continue to augment through gifts – documents an especially creative period in American printmaking. It includes woodcuts, intaglios, lithographs, screenprints and monotypes from the major US fine art presses, with works by Johns, Josef Albers, Roy Lichtenstein, Ad Reinhardt and



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Frank Stella. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art has also benefited from Anderson sharing: first individual works, then a group of Pop Art paintings in 1992, followed by seven Stella paintings of 1959–88 – which inspired Stella himself to give the museum a painting in the Andersons' honour.

One of the most successful areas of the rehang is the long windowless bedroom corridor with smaller and more intimate pictures. 'Finally, we are able to take advantage of it as it was supposed to be,' says Hunk. 'Originally it had Impressionist drawings. Then we put huge Abstract Expressionists – Kelly, Guston, Martin, Motherwell. We called it storage on the walls. This, I really enjoy now.' There are a couple of Barnett Newmans, a Matisse drawing from the early days of their collecting, and lots of portraits. 'One thing we've tried to do,' says Moo, 'is collect drawings of artists – that's a great Gorky self-portrait.' She points to a trio: 'Hoffmann, Sam Francis and a Kelly from 1949 – the year after he left for Paris.' One wall has six Gustons dating 1950–80, 'a little retrospective of his work. These are really teaching walls.' She believes that 'overall, it's a better installation. Here are four Diebenkorns, all Ocean Park period. We see these first in the morning when we come from our bedroom.'



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8 The Studio showcases contemporary artists including Kate Shepherd (b. 1961) and Tauba Auerbach (b. 1981). The room's centrepiece is *Color and Information*, a large abstract painting of 1998 by Terry Winters (b. 1949)

9 *Head of a Woman (Blue Ground)*, painted by Emil Nolde (1867–1956) in the 1920s–30s, has stayed in the family collection and is displayed on an easel in the bedroom

Out across the small garden – but, this being California, big enough for a pool – the Studio is their experimental space added in the 1980s (Fig. 8). (Its basement space added in the 1980s is hung with Californian artists' paintings and has open storage for Moo's poster collection.) With a few pieces now moved into the house, such as the big Susan Rothenberg into the Gallery, the room is full, almost crowded, with what Hunk smilingly calls 'some of the young people we are fooling with'. They include Ethiopian-born Julie Mehretu, British artist Matthew Ritchie, Kate Shepherd, Tauba Auerbach, and Stanford alumnus Mark Fox – all live and work in New York. 'Putter has a passion for these. She's brought us to this generation. She identified them.' It's a fresh, dynamic ensemble. Will these be, as Hunk predicts, 'the new saints'?

Last summer, Hunk Anderson assured me that 'when you come back it will be different but just as good'. They are surely the best judges of that. 'We're happy,' says Hunk. 'We made the right decisions. The gift helps Stanford make the art district it wants. Here, it's a new installation with a new idea. We all did it, Moo, me and Putter.' **A**

*Louise Nicholson is an art historian and journalist.*