



Blaffer Art Museum entrance,
Gala, September 21, 2012.

Photo by Fulton Davenport, courtesy of
Blaffer Art Museum.

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT: THE UH PUBLIC ART COLLECTION AND BLAFFER MUSEUM

By *Debbie Z. Harwell*

As the University of Houston has made its push for Tier One status, what many people do not realize is that since the 1960s UH has been building a Tier One art collection that is one of the city's best kept secrets. With the campus in the midst of a building boom in 1966, the Board of Regents and President Phillip Hoffman pledged to dedicate one percent of future construction costs to acquiring works of art. The first state institution to make such a promise, UH recognized that works of art both beautified the campus and enhanced the University's prestige.

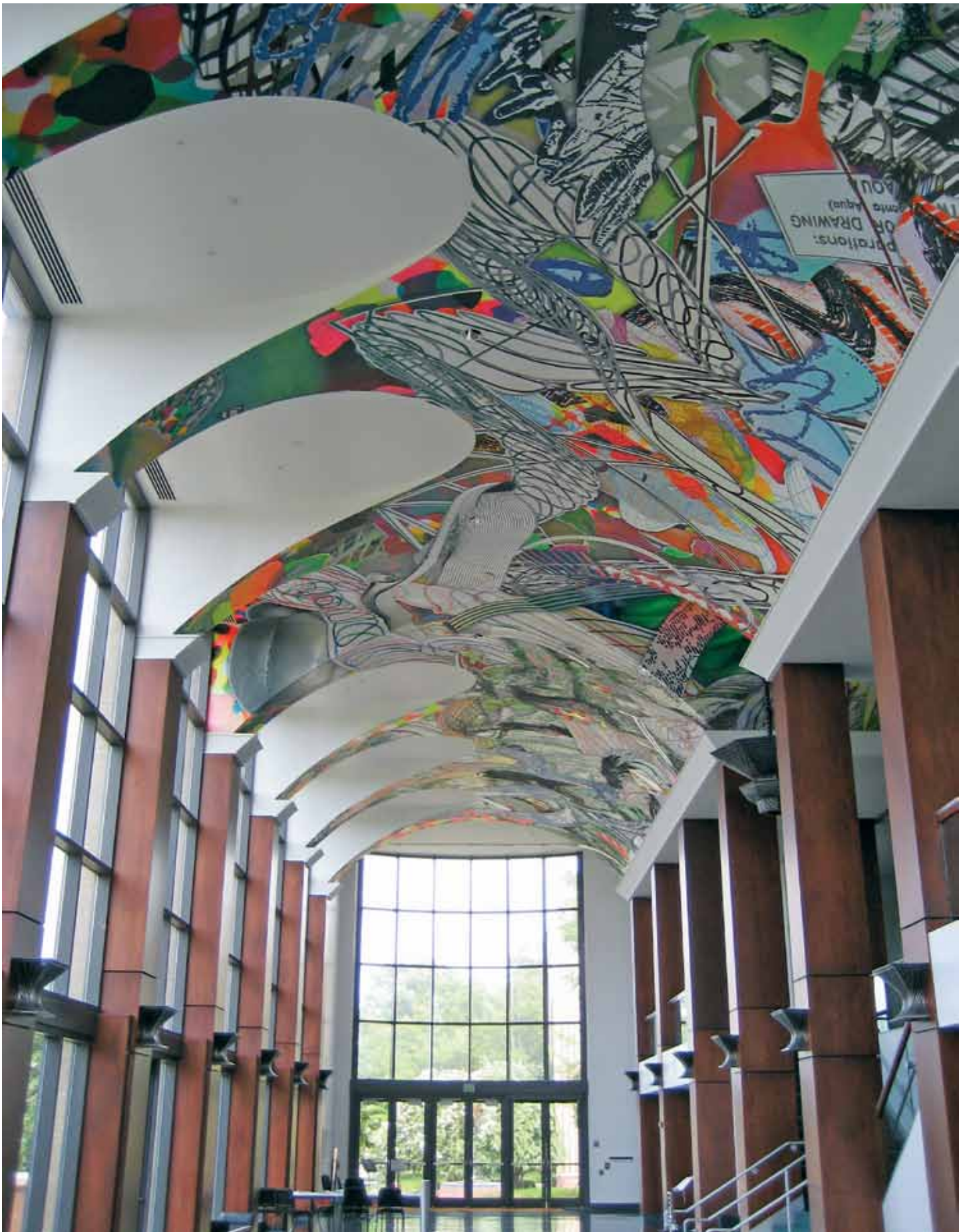
Found boldly marking the outdoor landscape as well as tucked away inside campus buildings, the public art collection traces artistic trends over the last half century and features the work of artists in a variety of mediums. The acquisitions began with the *Orbit I* and *Orbit II* by Masaru Takiguchi and include Frank Stella's mural *Euphonia* commissioned for the Moores Opera House, and the recently installed *Statue of Four Lies* by UH alums, The Art Guys. Almost 300 pieces of public art can be found on the main campus with another 150 at locations throughout the UH System.

In 1973, the University dedicated a new Fine Arts Center and, with gifts from Sarah Campbell Blaffer, expanded the University's support for art appreciation and art education. The next year, Blaffer Museum director, Richard Stout, reinstated the Houston Area Exhibition, a juried

competition previously held by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. This event continues to be held every four years, representing the pulse of Houston's art community. In 1976, the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation initiated a traveling exhibition program that has featured exhibits of internationally renowned artists such as Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, and Willem de Kooning. In addition, the museum showcases the works of local artists, faculty, and students.

In October 2012, the University completed a \$2 million renovation of the Fine Arts building and Blaffer Art Museum, creating a premier exhibition space. The opening exhibition features the first comprehensive presentation of sixty works by unorthodox American sculptor Tony Feher spanning twenty years of his career. A fully-illustrated monograph on Feher's work with essays by Russell Ferguson, chair of the Art Department at UCLA, and Blaffer's director and chief curator, Claudia Schmuckli, will accompany the exhibition.

The best kept secret in Houston's art world awaits you. The new Blaffer Art Museum space will soon include a courtyard lounge, a stage, a screen for outdoor film screenings, and a café offering locally-produced food and indoor-outdoor seating. All exhibitions are free and open to the public Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information on the public art collection and a map of selected works, visit www.uh.edu/uh-collection/.



Frank Stella, *Euphonia*, 1997, collage on ceiling
Location: Moores Opera House Lobby

All photos by Michael Guidry, courtesy of University Public
Art Collection unless otherwise noted.

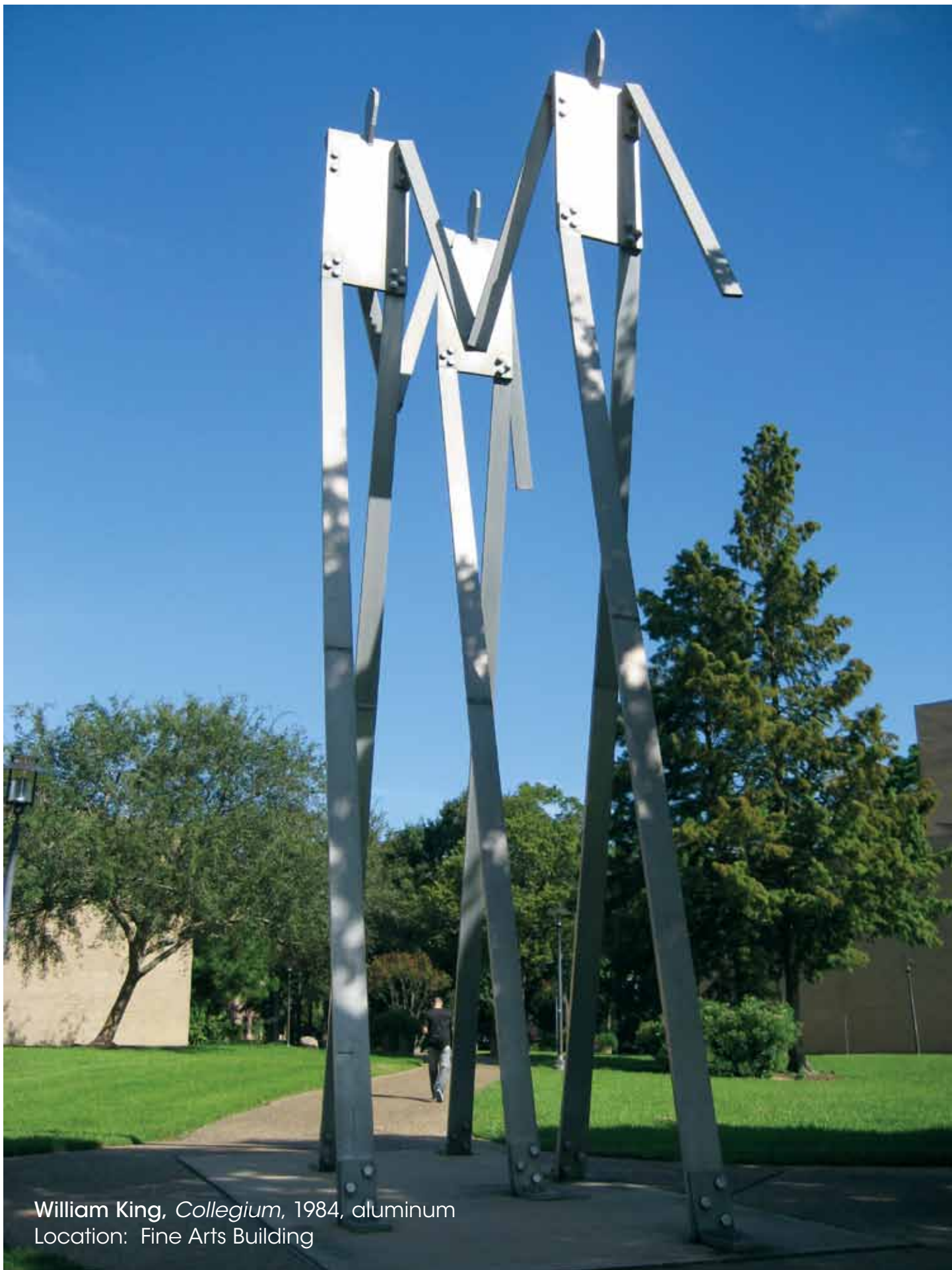


Les Cubistes, The Russian Invasion, 2010, Archival pigment print
Location: Roy Cullen second floor hallway, group of ten photographs

Photo by MANUAL, courtesy of University Public Art Collection.



Lawrence Argent, Your Move, 2010, bronze and granite
Location: Calhoun Lofts courtyard



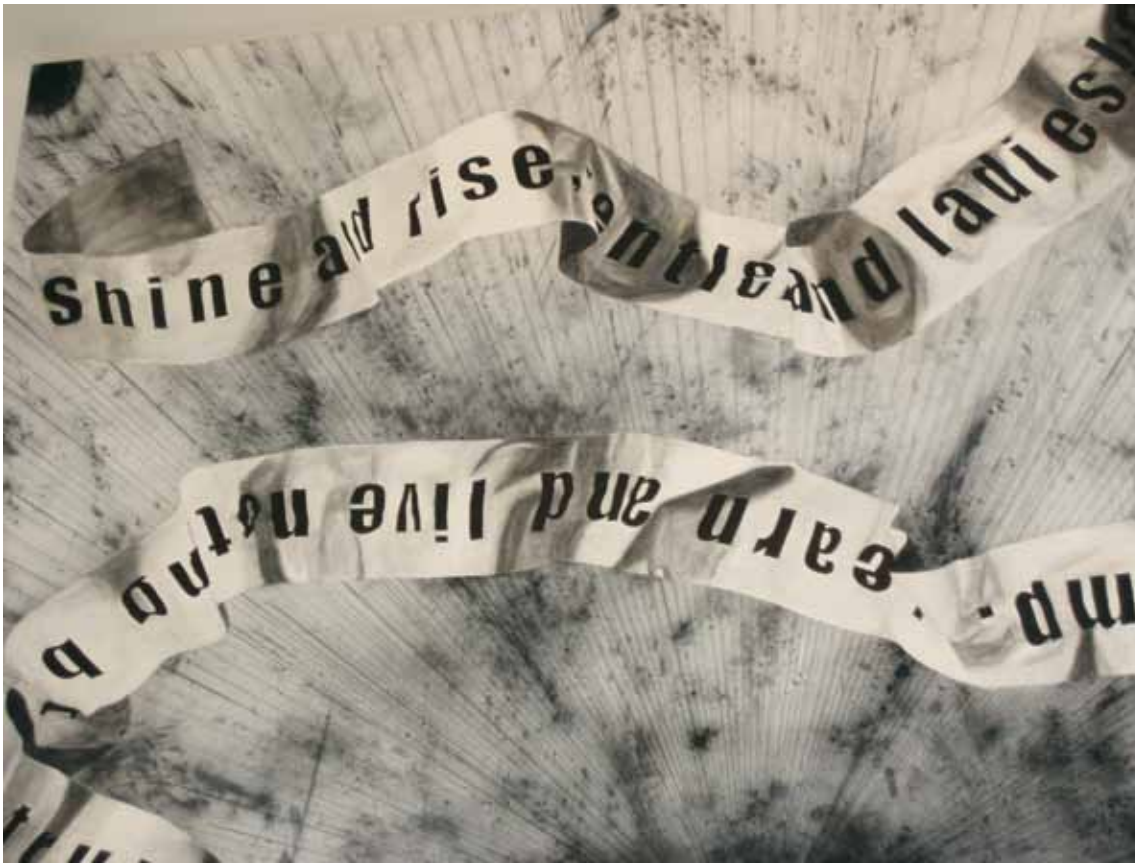
William King, *Collegium*, 1984, aluminum
Location: Fine Arts Building



The Art Guys, *The Statue of Four Lies*, 2010, bronze, stone, concrete, accompanying Codex house in Special Collections
Location: Cougar Village North lawn

Alyson Shotz, *A Moment in Time*, 2005, glass beads and monofilament
Location: Wortham Theatre Box Office Lobby





Randy Twaddle, *Shine and Rise*, 2007 (detail), charcoal on canvas
Location: Honors College Commons

Masaru Takiguchi, *Orbit 1*, 1968, camphor wood
Location: Science and Research Building



Andy Warhol, *Caroline, Princess of Monaco*, 1983, Polaroid; group of 150 Polaroids and black & white photographs, gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation