CONTINGENT
drawing and sculpture by Joan Tanner
Guest curated by Julien Robson

Exhibition Dates: May 23 – Sept 16, 2017
Artist & Curator Talk: Wed, Sept 6, 2017
Reception with Artist & Curator: Fri, Sept 8, 6:00-8:00 PM

The Hilliard University Art Museum is pleased to announce CONTINGENT: drawing and sculpture by Joan Tanner. This solo exhibition marks the artist’s first in Louisiana and is guest curated by Julien Robson.

Born in 1935 in Indianapolis, Joan Tanner has lived in Southern California since the mid-1960s. She has consistently exhibited her work since 1968 and has held major exhibitions at Santa Barbara Museum of Art; MCA Santa Barbara (formerly CAF); the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Kentucky; the Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College, Los Angeles; and Suyama Space in Seattle. Her work is held in many museum collections across the United States.

Based in Kentucky and Austria, Robson is an independent curator with more than thirty years of international experience. From 2000 to 2008, he served as Curator of Contemporary Art at the Speed Art Museum, as well as the Curator of Contemporary Art at the Philadelphia Academy of the Fine Arts from 2008 to 2012. Presently Robson is director of the Great Meadows Foundation and the INhouse Foundation in Louisville.

Statement by Guest Curator Julien Robson:

Over a prolific career, compelled by a “curiosity to engage contradiction” and an impulse to disrupt “assumptions about spatial relations,” Joan Tanner’s art has developed across disciplines to encompass many media, including painting, photography, video, sculpture, and assemblage. Consistently she has been preoccupied with ideas of history, impermanence, and inconsistency in her exploration of materials and form—and over five decades has created a body of provocative and engaging work that challenges the viewer’s imagination, defying simple categorization. CONTINGENT is an exhibition that surveys a selection of Tanner’s drawings and three dimensional works from the past twenty years.

While she began her career in the 1960s as a painter, over time Tanner’s interests have shifted, moving through collage and assemblage toward the sculptures and installations that now preoccupy her. It is a trajectory that has seen her use organic materials—allowed to decompose over time—and found objects that she has assembled together using a thick colored plastic paint. Her main practice now, though, is focused on sculpture and installation, and that is fed by a fascination with industrial and found materials, as well as a desire to address complexity and the contingency of meaning.

For Tanner, meaning is variable, dependent upon both place and time, and the interpretive role of the viewer, a contingency that is made all the more complex by the way she continually recycles and reshapes the elements that make up her installations. For instance, a work like Spindles (2008/2017) has, over the years, been reconfigured three times for different displays, embodying a history that is neither finite nor complete. The other
sculptures in the exhibition adhere to an aesthetic of “unfinishedness” that suggests impermanence and change—principles at the heart of Tanner’s thinking—as a potential part of their life.

Throughout her career Tanner has grounded her practice in the activity of drawing, at times as a testing ground to design ideas that will be realized elsewhere in her work, but mainly as a self-directing medium to explore “Thought Forms”—to help grasp and clarify creative ideas and emotional experiences. Returning continually to drawing, as with her other activities, Tanner allows its tools, methods, and restrictions to direct her initial concepts and impulses, as if liberating her predeterminations through the very process of making.

By her own admission, Tanner’s ideas evolve through chance as she becomes absorbed in their invention, so that the outcome is not necessarily the ending she had in mind—an axiom that is as true in her sculptures and installations as it is of her drawings. Hers, however, is not a vague or unintentional activity, but one that shifts restlessly between seemingly contradictory forms and methods to reveal the unexpected.

**Upon request, press and media kits are available including high resolution images and selected literature on the artist.**

**Museum Hours, Admission & General Information**
The Hilliard University Art Museum is located at 710 East Saint Mary Boulevard, on the campus of University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Museum Hours are: Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm; Wednesday, 9:00 am to 8:00 pm; Saturday, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm; closed Sunday and Monday. General Admission: $5 Adults, $4 Seniors (62+), $3 Students (5-17). FREE for Members, UL Students/Staff/Faculty with identification, and visitors under 5. Guided tours of the galleries are available Friday & Saturday at 2 PM, complimentary with admission. For general information, please visit hillliardmuseum.org or call (337) 482-2278.

**About the Hilliard Museum**
The Hilliard University Art Museum operates on the campus of University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and was originally founded in 1964 as the Art Center for Southwest Louisiana. Featuring a state-of-the-art modern facility that was erected in 2004, the museum houses more than 2,200 objects in its permanent collection, and is the largest art exhibition space between New Orleans and Houston. The Hilliard serves a wide range of educational and cultural needs by fostering cross-disciplinary intellectual discourse on campus and throughout the region. At the core of the Hilliard's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit the art of our time while celebrating the great diversity of Louisiana’s heritage.

**Concurrent and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Hilliard University Art Museum**

February 3 – August 12, 2017. *Spiritual Journeys: Homemade Art from the Becky and Wyatt Collins Collection*, guest curated by Gus Kopriva

May 27 – Aug 12, 2017. *Pierre Bonnard: Landscapes from Le Cannet*, guest curated by Véronique Serrano, director of the Musée Bonnard