

BENEFIT RECITAL

Tamara Wilson will raise funds before making her debut in "Aida." **Page G3**



FIRST YEAR

Nara Sushi + Korean Kitchen celebrates its anniversary with a new look. **Page G12**



STYLE

Houston native Yvette Charquois has a thing for classic style.

Page G8

ZEST

LIFE'S PASSAGES

Reflecting on the 100-year-life of philanthropist Carolyn Grant Fay.

Page G5

BOOKISH

Poet tries to save America

As a poet and essayist, Tony Hoagland is a playful — but thoughtful — provocateur. The titles he chose for his last two poetry collections? "Unincorporated Persons in the Late Honda Dynasty" and the deliciously droll "What Narcissism Means to Me."

Poets can be funny. It's true. But protecting Hoagland's funny bone requires intellectual muscle.



MAGGIE GALEHOUSE

Dexterity. Soul. And his new prose collection, "Twenty Poems That Could Save

America and Other Essays." brings these qualities to bear on the craft of contemporary poetry, on its shifting parts and changing wholes, and on its best and most imitated practitioners. For his grand finale, he makes an impassioned plea for a reboot of the American poetic canon with an updated stash of poems that would give citizens and students "a common vocabulary of stories, values, points of reference."

That is to say, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" — and just think how many millions of us stopped there in grade school! — needs a rest.

Hoagland's enterprise is neither snooty nor esoteric.

"We American poets are millionaires; we possess a vocabulary extracted, imported, and patched together from so many tongues and sources, we can write checks with our mouths all day," he writes in the just released book.

"We have *tinborn* and *yaboo* and *mesbuganab*; we have *ponder* and *relnack* and *bokeybokey*; we have *lily-livered* and *bumber-shoot* and *rockabilly*."

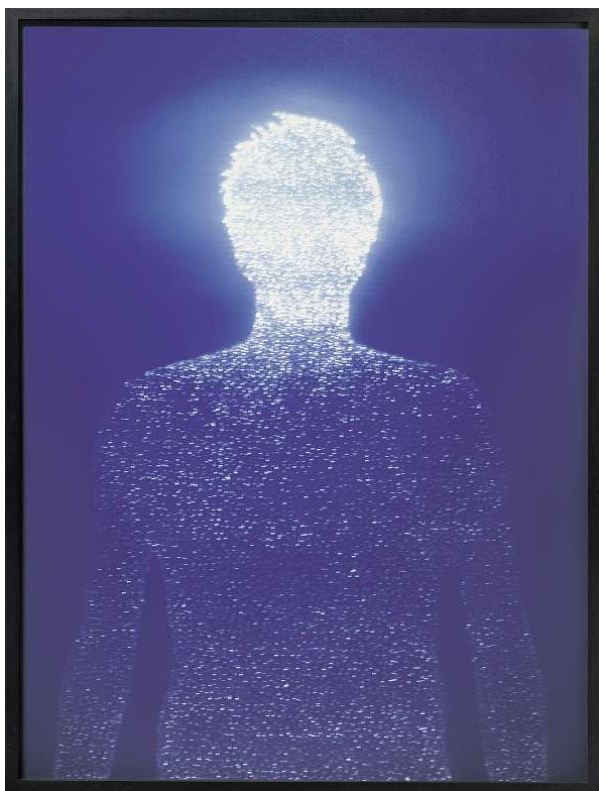
Yet the 61-year-old Hoagland worries that as the world has gotten faster and more dizzyingly complex, poetry has ridden that same

Bookish continues on G6

An ode to poetry

Want to know which 20 poems could save America? See the list at boustonchronicle.com/graymatters

Beyond the lens



Christopher Bucklow's photograms begin with silhouettes on aluminum foil.

Exhibitions illustrate two ways to see the art of photography

By Molly Glentzer

Photographers who were optional, yet they've never stopped looking for new ways to make art through their lenses.

The idea comes to light in two shows at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston featuring works made from the mid-19th century to the present. Both are drawn from the in-house collections.

"Shadows on the Wall" presents 50 cameraless photographs — works that rely primarily on paper, light, chemistry and their makers' imaginations. "A History

of Photography" illustrates with 29 images how artists in different eras have exploited changing technology to express themselves.

Aside from that variety, the exhibitions also hint at the museum's evolving curatorial vision.

Anne Wilkes Tucker built one of the nation's great photography collections during nearly 40 years with the museum, amassing about 30,000 prints. She is retiring in June, and her successor, Malcolm Daniel, has worked by her side for almost a year.

"It's sort of hard to find entry ways when you're dropped into a collection of 30,000 images. That's why we have this

Photos continues on G2



Museum of Fine Arts, Houston photos
Julia Margaret Cameron evoked pre-Raphaelite beauty with her 1867 photograph "Rosalba (Cyllena Wilson)."

'Shadows on the Wall: Cameraless Photography From 1851 to Today' and 'A History of Photography: Selections From the Museum's Collection'

When: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Wednesdays, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Thursdays, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 12:15-7 p.m. Sundays, "Shadows" through Nov. 30; current rotation of "A History" through Feb. 22

Where: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 5601 Main
Tickets: \$7.50-\$15; 713-639-7300, mfa.org

When Internet security code gets a little personal, speak up

KEN HOFFMAN
Commentary



Accurate. Some would say offensive. I say lucky guess.

Have you ever bought something off the Internet, or subscribed to a newsletter, or purchased concert tickets online... and the form asks you to repeat letters of a security code — to make sure you're a human being kind of person and not some evil spam machine?

Half the time, I can't make out the squiggly letters in the security code. They look like a kindergartner's art project on a family's refrigerator door.

True story: Last week, I tried to sign up for a local restaurant's email newsletter. These are pretty good deals, especially if you like the joint. You get a lot of 2-for-1 offers and discount coupons, occasionally a free appetizer or dessert. Try it. Go to some of your favorite restaurants' websites and see if they have email newsletters.

Free food is good food. I was halfway through registering for the newsletter at one

of my go-to burger palaces ... when I saw the security code it asked me to repeat.

It was a three-letter common English word. Plain as day. Capital letters. No modern art or hieroglyphics.

I was stunned. I'm not going to say what the word was. It described a member of a certain religion.

Nobody needs to be categorized in order to get 2-for-1 breakfast tacos.

It just happened to be accurate, which made me laugh and shake my head. I was not offended. I am one of those!

I thought it was just an amazing coincidence, given the astronomical number of three-letter combinations and the likelihood that I would actually be one. The percentage of us in the world is very small.

This just shows how modern technologically can bite you on

Hoffman continues on G4

Photos can be art or science — or both

Photos from page G1

18-month overlap. It's working well," Tucker said.

She's been pulling objects out in "coherent groupings" to share her vast institutional knowledge. Recently, they've devoted weeks to exploring works by Italians and Czechoslovakians; next week they'll focus on Africa.

Tucker has long wanted to do a cameraless photography show, but she was surprised to discover recently how much of it the museum owns.

She's acquired photograms — pictures produced with photographic materials, such as light-sensitive paper, but without a camera — since 1963, when the museum got a large collection of works by László Moholy-Nagy. But she'd never had time to look at them all together. She and co-curator Allison Pappas could have compiled a show twice the size of "Shadows," and they learned a lot about the medium, she said.

"Everybody is starting with a blank piece of paper, like a painter starts with a canvas," Tucker explained. "It is a form photographers have continuously been interested in, maybe because it is so personal. It really is their invention, totally about what they can imagine and the ways they choose to do it."

Tucker and Pappas organized the works in two categories: some record physical objects, often with a scientific purpose; others are purely abstract art. About a third of the images are by women, a percentage Tucker said is unusually high.

"They didn't need a lot of technical stuff," she said. "Often, photograms are very simple."

That might describe Anna Atkins' 1851 "Pteris aquilina," a botanical illustration of ferns. But it doesn't imply a lack of effort.

Susan Derges made the monumental triptych "Shoreline, May 18, 1998" by mounting huge sheets of photographic paper to hard surfaces, hauling them to England's Taw River at night, immersing them and using the moon and a flashlight as light sources. The water's chemicals affected the colors that developed.

"God love her," Tucker said. "I saw this at FotoFest a few years ago and thought, 'OK, we have to have that.' It's just so beautiful. It's a record but it's more than a record; so lyrical."

"Shadows" illuminates a surprising variety of techniques involving not just different kinds of light but also paper that can be opaque, translucent or transparent. The Surrealist Man Ray, the Dadaist Christian Schad and another early 20th-century artist, El Lissitzky, called their photograms Rayographs, Schadographs and heliographs, respectively.

One wall contains works that weren't all created with artistic intent, but sometimes with scientific tools like



Dorothea Lange's "Freedom of Religion: Three Denominations" is on view in "A History of Photography," a new display of prints from the museum's vast collection that will rotate every four months.



Anna Atkins's photogram "Pteris aquilina"

electron microscopes. It's hard not to stare at a live-size cross-section of a male torso made in an era when physicians froze cadavers and sliced them for study. Much smaller but equally intriguing is an image that made the invisible visible: In 1901, the scientist Henri Becquerel proved the existence of radium by exposing uranium salts on gelatin silver paper, work that earned him the 1903 Nobel Prize in Physics.

Early in the 20th century, painters and sculptors made drawings by etching into the emulsion on glass negatives. In the early 1960s, Carl-Heinz Hargeseimer "drew" by dropping liquid chemicals onto photographic paper. The little-known Hungarian Dóra Maurer folded paper and repeatedly exposed it to create "Hidden Structures" in 1979. Robert Heineken used magazine pages as negatives. Contemporary artist Joyce Ne-

manas composes complex collage-like photograms using mixed media.

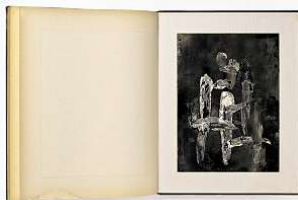
The prolific Bauhaus master Moholy-Nagy, whom Tucker calls "the papa of photograms," influenced students from Berlin to Chicago. He also wrote a seminal book, "New Vision," about experimenting with elemental forms like circles, squares and triangles. The show hints at the range of his ideas through several works.

"For Moholy, there were no holds barred. Whatever came into his mind, he tried," Tucker said. "He was so fascinating — a painter, a sculptor,

"Everybody is starting with a blank piece of paper, like a painter starts with a canvas. It is a form photographers have continuously been interested in, maybe because it is so personal. It really is their invention, totally about what they can imagine and the ways they choose to do it."

Anne Wilkes Tucker, curator

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston photos



Carl-Heinz Hargeseimer poured chemicals onto paper to create images in 1961.

a printmaker, a photographer. He's one of those people, when they do those imaginary dinner parties, I would like to put at my table just to see what he would be like."

A few of the "Shadows" artists work with paper so old its light sensitivity is diminished. Every Monday, museum staff have recorded changes in the collective f&d cartier's "Wait and See," a grouping of unfixd blank papers that have turned deep pastel colors. (Fresh unfixd paper turns black immediately when it's exposed to light.)

Then there's the ephemeral magic of contemporary German artist Floris Neusüss' "Back in a Moment," which captured his shadow on the floor as he sat on a chair.

Tucker loves the humor in that work as well as a life-size silhouette by Christopher Bucklow, who casts shadows on aluminum foil, then punches thousands of holes in the foil and shines light

through it.

The Hungarian artist Brassai (Gyula Halász) appears in both shows. He made "The Temptation of Saint Anthony," on view in "Shadows," by etching and painting a glass negative of a nude photograph. In the "History" show, his traditional black and white photograph "Wardrobe Mirror in a Prostitute's Hotel on the rue Quincampoix" finds the surreal in the everyday.

In photography, the process is just the tool, whether you're using a lens or not using a lens. What it is you want to see or say has to come first," Tucker said.

Daniel's show also contains images that weren't necessarily made to be shown in museums or galleries but have beautiful or moving aesthetic sensibilities.

Timothy H. O'Sullivan shot "Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle, N.M." on a geological expedition in 1873. Three years later, John Thomsen created some of the earliest social documentary photography, depicting London street people. About a decade after that, brothers Paul and Prosper Henry made "A Portion of the Constellation Lyra" as

astronomers at the Paris

Observatory.

"We tend to think things are art or science, art or documentary. I don't think we have to look at it that way," Daniel said.

He also chose photographs that are "indisputably about art-making," including Gustave Le Gray's 1857 "Mediterranean Sea at Sete." That print combines two negatives — one of the sea, one of the sky, since no one had yet figured out how to expose for both.

"There's no reason to make a picture like this except to make art," Daniel said.

He also offered windows into the evolution of processes, "so people can get a sense of what a daguerreotype was like or the incredibly beautiful tonal gradations and velvety matte surface of a platinum print," he said.

The detail in Vincent Chevalier's 1840-41 daguerreotype "View of Paris" has to be viewed with a magnifying glass. "It's more than you'd see with a naked eye," Daniel said.

Photography's sometimes uneasy relationship with fine art existed almost from the get-go, after paper processing was introduced. Its fibers yielded grainer imagery than daguerreotypes but also seemed more soulful.

Daniel loves the handmade quality of historical photographs.

"It was a time when photographers were trying to figure out what to do with their art, figuring out how to take a picture," he said. "By the 1890s, everybody was a snap shooter."

The "History" show progresses through the 20th century, including Edward Steichen's 1904 atmospheric and painterly "Trees, Long Island," Alvin Langdon Coburn's 1917 abstract "Vortograph," not previously shown works by Sydney Grossman and Diane Arbus, and early color work by William Eggleston. "History" ends with an enormous 1989 portrait by Thomas Ruff, one of the first photographers to work at a scale that's now common.

"History" is the first installment of what will be an ongoing program in the Beck Building's lower-level corridor that will rotate about every four months. It's not quite finished, but the next rotation in March it will fill two walls.

Considering Tucker's role in making Houston a nexus of global photography, Daniel couldn't believe the museum didn't have a gallery dedicated to the medium. He wants to get works out of storage and onto walls. A third of the prints in the first "History" display haven't been exhibited at the museum.

A historical specialist who worked more than 20 years at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, he's also using the project to familiarize himself with the Houston collection, decade by decade.

"I was conscious not to use up all our goodies on the first one," he said.

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