

NEWS

For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

October 17, 2003

For Information Contact:

Rebekah Lamb, 617/353-4672

lambo@bu.edu

www.bu.edu/ART

Expanding Universe **The Recent Paintings of Al Held**

*****Recently featured in the June 2003 issue of Art in America*****

November 7, 2003 – January 11, 2004

Opening Reception & Artist Lecture: Thursday November 6, 2003 6 - 8:30 pm

BOSTON-- The Boston University Art Gallery (BUAG) is thrilled to present *Expanding Universe: The Recent Paintings of Al Held*, a traveling exhibition that showcases recent paintings and watercolors by the American master painter and pioneer of geometric abstraction, Al Held. Held's new paintings, colossal in scale and vibrant in color, reveal sections of an immense universe in which geometric elements of varying shapes and sizes float freely about in multidirectional, non-gravitational spaces. At age 75, the artists' work continues to evolve as he moves forward without regard for trends.

Held creates each sizeable painting (the largest at 9 feet square) using a labor-intensive process that can take anywhere from a few months to a few years to complete. He begins each work with an intuitively inspired visual idea and then, with the aid of studio assistants, develops and hones it—constantly making changes and employing a series of procedures that includes painting, taping, repainting, scraping away, sanding, and refining each surface to reduce any history of the process or visible traces of the artist's hand. This final stage is important because Held is more interested in a viewer's perception of what is painted than in the matters of who painted it or how it was painted.

Much like the physicist, Held is curious about how everything from DNA to outer space is structured. Inspired by scientific theories about chaos, black holes, cosmic strings, and the like, he uses his intuitive faculties, as an artist, to create analogous metaphorical structures that he considers to be "images that we believe in but that are beyond our senses and that we can never experience directly."

Born in 1928 in Brooklyn, New York, Al Held studied painting at the Art Student's League in New York City in the late 1940s and at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris in the early 1950s. After returning to New York in 1953, he mingled with many of the pioneering artists of the New York School and soon began painting in an Abstract Expressionist style, which was the most heralded format of the day. In the early 1960s, Held was appointed Associate Professor at Yale University, where he continued to teach through 1980. As many of his peers began exploring geometric vocabularies in the early 1960s, Held, too, turned to geometry. By the mid-1960s, he was painting large, flat abstractions, each composed of geometric configurations that overlap a painting's edges, while dividing a composition into areas that

may be read interchangeably as figure or field. Not wanting to become a colorfield painter, however, and recognizing that he had in effect reached the limits of reductivism, he decided to swing the pendulum in the opposite direction—by accepting the validity of illusionistic space.

Today, Held divides his time between studios in Boiceville, New York and Perugia, Italy. His paintings are included in more than thirty-five museum collections around the world.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

OPENING RECEPTION

Thursday, November 6, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

ARTIST TALK

Al Held will discuss his work.

Thursday, November 6, 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Concert Hall, College of Fine Arts

855 Commonwealth Avenue

GALLERY TALK

Join Graham Campbell, Visiting Associate Professor of Art and Acting Head of the MFA Graduate Painting Program, College of Fine Arts, Boston University, for a discussion about Al Held and his work.

Thursday, December 4, 1 p.m.

At the Gallery

Curated and organized by David Rubin, Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans.

Touring under the auspices of Pamela Auchincloss/*Arts Management*, New York.

IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Please call the gallery or visit the BU Art Gallery website at www.bu.edu/ART for events and programming information during the season. All exhibitions and events are free to the public.

Information

Boston University Art Gallery

855 Commonwealth Avenue

Boston, MA 02215

TEL (617) 353-3329

FAX (617) 353-4509

Gallery Hours

Tuesday-Friday 10am –5pm

Saturday & Sunday 1 – 5 pm

www.bu.edu/ART

The **Boston University Art Gallery** (BUAG) is a non-profit art gallery geared toward an interdisciplinary interpretation of art, and committed to a culturally inclusive viewpoint that expands the boundaries of the museum. Exhibitions focus on international, national and regional art developments chiefly in the 20th century; seek to present the cultural and historical context of art, and to acknowledge the artistic contributions of under-recognized sectors of the population. BUAG is located at 855 Commonwealth Avenue, inside the College of Fine Arts at Boston University (BU West T stop on the B Green Line).

#