

Mary Livingstone Beebe, begins work as the director of the Sculpture Garden Collection

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Mary Livingstone Beebe, executive director of the highly successful Portland Center for the Visual Arts since 1973, has begun work as director of the Sculpture Collection at the University of California, San Diego. Approved by the UC Board of Regents in September 1980, the project is a joint effort between the university and the Stuart Foundation. The foundation is the creation of La Jolla art patron, James DeSilva.

According to Assistant Chancellor Patrick J. Ledden, the collection will focus on contemporary, post-1960 sculpture and in the next decades will become a "museum without walls." Beebe's responsibilities include working with an advisory committee on the purchase and commissioning of the sculpture, traveling the United States and Europe to view artists' work, and working with the sculptors themselves on installation. She expects to acquire or commission three to five major pieces for the collection each year. The first commissioned work, a 23-foot-high bird form entitled "Sun God" by artist Niki de St. Phalle, should be installed in the spring of 1982.

Born in the Paris suburb of Neuilly in 1930, de Saint Phalle lived in New York City from 1933 to 1951 and again in the 1960s. During the 1950s and 1960s she participated in a number of avant-garde projects with Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Breer, Jean Tinguely and Henry Geldzahler. She is known for an exuberant and colorful, highly personal combination of the beautiful and grotesque in monumental creations of monsters, Nanas, and children's playgrounds.

An outstanding advisory committee of internationally recognized art professionals will guide the UC San Diego project and oversee the choice of artists and works. The committee currently includes James Demetron, director of the Des Moines Art Center; DeSilva; Anne d'Harnoncourt, curator of 20th century art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art; Pontus Hulten, director of the new Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles; Allan Kaprow, UC San Diego professor of visual arts; Ledden; Pierre Restany, Paris art critic, and George Segal, sculptor.

Beebe sees this as an extraordinary opportunity to build a collection of the highest quality and interest. "The 1200-acre campus offers many superb settings which I am sure will inspire artists to do their best work. We will provide the support for them to do so. People from all over the world will come to experience and study the collection. I think such an opportunity to learn is wonderfully appropriate for a major campus. Of course, not everyone will like every work, but one person doesn't like every book in the library either. The only disappointment would be no response and that doesn't seem likely. There is real vision with fresh and solid thinking behind it in this project. We fully expect it to grow into a source of great pride for the whole region."

As director of the Portland Center for the Visual Arts, Beebe was responsible for all activities including fund raising, program development, budget management and public relations.

"When we opened in 1972 we were told Portland couldn't provide enough support for contemporary art to sustain us," recalls Beebe. "I am deeply proud of the Center and what it accomplished in nine years. We have become an important place to artists while receiving national and international recognition for the quality of programs."

Before accepting the position at PCVA in 1973, Beebe worked at the Portland Art Museum, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Fogg Museum at Harvard University. She graduated from Bryn Mawr College in 1962 with a B.A. in political science and attended the Sorbonne, University of Paris.

She has served on the Board of Directors of the Henry Gallery at the University of Washington in Seattle and currently serves on the Board of the Association of Art Museums in San Francisco. She has been guest curator of exhibitions in Colorado, Hawaii and Idaho. In 1979 she was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship for independent travel and study enabling her to travel around the United States for six months furthering her firsthand knowledge of contemporary art.

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