



**June Leaf (1929–2024)
will be the subject of a traveling retrospective
opening at the Addison Gallery of American Art in March 2025**

**This first comprehensive exhibition of the artist's work in over
30 years will travel to the Grey Art Museum, New York City
and the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio**

The retrospective includes more than 150 works spanning seven decades in a wide range of media including paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, and collages.



June Leaf, *Zephyrs*, 1955. Oil on canvas. Collection Estate of June Leaf. Courtesy Hyphen, New York.



June Leaf, *Figure in Landscape*, 2020–21. Acrylic on metal, tin, and wire. Private Collection.

Andover, MA (January 16, 2025) – June Leaf: Shooting from the Heart, the most comprehensive exhibition of the artist's work in more than 30 years, will be presented at the Addison Gallery of American Art, located on the campus of Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, from March 15 to July 31, 2025.

Four years in the making, the exhibition, co-organized by the Addison Gallery and the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College with the collaboration of the artist, will feature more than 150 works drawn from the artist's vast archive along with numerous loans from select

ADDISON GALLERY OF AMERICAN ART

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private and institutional collections. The exhibition represents 75 years of June Leaf's work from the late 1940s through 2023.

Following its debut at the Addison, the exhibition will travel to the Grey Art Museum at New York University (September 9–December 13, 2025) and the Allen (January 27–May 24, 2026).

A catalogue published by the co-organizers and Rizzoli Electa will accompany the exhibition, featuring reflections by June Leaf's dear friends and fellow artists Joan Jonas and Kara Walker, as well as new scholarship by Allison Kemmerer, Gordon Wilkins, and Sam Adams.

June Leaf was born in Chicago and grew up in the city's West Side, where her parents owned and operated a tavern. She studied dance, then pursued visual art at the New Bauhaus (now the Institute of Design at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago). In 1948, she worked in Paris—a formative time where both the city's streets and museums deeply influenced her. She returned to Chicago and eventually earned both a bachelor's degree in art education from Roosevelt University and a master's degree in art education from the Institute of Design in 1954. Although never one to align herself with a particular artistic movement, Leaf came of age alongside a group of young artists from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago including Leon Golub, Seymour Rosofsky, Nancy Spero, and H. C. Westermann. Like these artists, who would become known as the Monster Roster, a group widely credited with establishing the first unique Chicago style, Leaf resisted the then ascendant abstract expressionism of the New York School in favor of an expressive, figurative, and often poetic aesthetic. In 1958, Leaf was awarded a Fulbright to study painting in Paris. She reflected on her second sojourn, "It had to do with growth. I felt I needed to leave Chicago. I needed to find a bridge in my work."

Leaf settled in New York City in the early 1960s and mounted her first solo exhibition there in 1968 at Allan Frumkin Gallery. Widely acclaimed by the public and press, this pioneering show drew the attention of *New York Times* critic Hilton Kramer, who described Leaf as "a rare thing in painting today, a poet with a taste and a talent for complex images." Remarking about Leaf at that time, art historian Dennis Adrian wrote, "She experienced with excitement the interaction, even the collision of the sensibility of European master painting with the agitated nature of



American life.” In New York, Leaf always maintained studios downtown: on Broome Street, the Bowery, and eventually on Bleecker Street where she also lived for over fifty years with her husband Robert Frank.

In 1970, Leaf began spending significant time in the remote town of Mabou, on Cape Breton in Nova Scotia. Initially working in her modest 1890s home, her daily routine was dedicated to making art and practical chores such as chopping wood every day to heat the house. By the mid-1970s she constructed a studio a few hundred yards from her house and later built a small forge nearby for her metal work. Overlooking the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the views from her home and studio were very impactful and she represented the setting in many of her paintings and drawings. In a conversation with writer Lucy Lippard, Leaf explained, “I learned from living in Mabou that nothing could make me remain in darkness ever again if I have the landscape. Human beings are very powerful, but they’re not as powerful as nature.”

Although the locations of Leaf’s studios were vastly different—one rural and the other urban—she pursued drawing, painting, and sculpture in both places. Throughout her lifetime, she consistently recognized that drawing was the key to everything she created. As she neared 90, she described it to a friend: “Drawing can do magical things, drawing can make something spring out of a paper so it’s a living thing... drawing is almost like breath coming out of you.”

June Leaf worked daily for 75 years, inventively blending media and materials in unconventional and intuitive ways, resulting in compositions that synthesized outside influences with distinctive motifs and symbols drawn from her own rich self-mythology to allow for new ways to see the world and ourselves.

Spanning all phases of her career, many of the works included in *Shooting from the Heart* have not been shown since 1991, when the Addison presented *June Leaf, a Survey of Paintings, Sculpture, and Works on Paper, 1948–1991*. During the run of that exhibition, organized by Philip Brookman and the Washington Project for the Arts, Leaf served as an Edward E. Elson Artist-in-Residence at the Addison, where her art’s fluid movement between the personal and universal, analysis and intuition, and art and life took firm hold of the students’ imaginations.



The exhibition is curated by the Addison's Allison Kemmerer, the Mary Stripp and R. Crosby Kemper Director and Gordon Wilkins, Robert M. Walker Curator of American along with Sam Adams, Ellen Johnson '33 Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Allen Memorial Art Museum. The curators have arranged the exhibition thematically rather than chronologically so that Leaf's captivating and provocative sculptures (both kinetic and stationary), paintings, and works on paper are intermingled and placed in dynamic conversations across media and time, revealing the artist's sustained engagement with such motifs and themes as the human drama, theater, dance, performance, motion, gender, and interpersonal relationships.

"This is a long-overdue opportunity to examine the career of one of the boldest and most adventurous artists of her generation," said Kemmerer. "June Leaf produced an extraordinary body of work that revels in fearless experimentation and delights in the full spectrum of human life. A mediator capable of traversing the planes of the real and the imagined, of holding up a mirror to essential, unassailable human truths, Leaf's work provides her audience with a pathway through the noise and distraction, leading us, as she described, 'from the real world to the world beneath.' It is our hope that with this project Leaf's important place within and unique contributions to the art of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries will be rightfully secured."

Andria Derstine, formerly the John G. W. Cowles Director, Allen Memorial Art Museum, added, "Across a career that spanned some eight decades, the artist, storyteller, dancer, and engineer June Leaf produced an extraordinary body of work that revels in the human experience in all its familiarity and sublimity. Nimble navigating the planes of the real and the imagined, Leaf's piercing eye and art—often playfully, but always powerfully—reflects fundamental and undeniable aspects of human existence, reminding us of our common humanity. The Addison Gallery of American Art and the Allen Memorial Art Museum are honored to have collaborated on this project that celebrates this singular artist's profound contribution to contemporary art."

The Addison Gallery's presentation of *June Leaf: Shooting from the Heart* continues the institution's tradition of supporting the work of women artists throughout its nearly 100-year



history, with many acquisitions, artist's residencies, and solo exhibitions (often the artist's first) featuring collaborations with individuals ranging from Berenice Abbott, Anni Albers, Ruth Asawa, Margaret Bourke-White, Maud Morgan, and Irene Rice Pereira to, more recently, Sheila Hicks, Rosamond Purcell, and Alison Elizabeth Taylor.

Sponsors

June Leaf: Shooting from the Heart was supported by a planning grant from the Andrea Frank Foundation. Major support for the exhibition and publication was provided by the Estate of June Leaf with additional funding provided by John and Sally Van Doren (PA 1980), and the Allen Memorial Art Museum's John H. '29 and Marjorie Fox '29 Wieland Current-Use AMAM Support Fund.

About the Artist

June Leaf (b. 1929, Chicago; d. 2024, New York) lived and worked between New York City and Mabou, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Leaf's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including solo presentations at the Inverness County Centre for the Arts, Nova Scotia, Canada (2022); Ortuzar Projects, New York (2022); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2016); Museum Tinguely, Basel, Switzerland (2004); Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada (2001); Freedman Gallery at Albright College, Reading, Pennsylvania (1997); Chicago Cultural Center (1995); Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts (1991); College of Cape Breton, Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada (1985); North Dakota Museum of Art, North Forks (1983); and a retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1978), among others. The artist's work, which is represented by Hyphen, New York, is held in private collections and permanent public collections including, in addition to the Addison: Art Institute of Chicago; DePaul Art Museum, Chicago; Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Wisconsin; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minnesota; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel; University of Southern Illinois at Carbondale; Whitney Museum of American Art; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut. Leaf is the recipient of prestigious awards including a National Endowment for the Arts Grant (1989), a Fulbright Grant



(1958), as well as an honorary degree from DePaul University and an Honorary Degree from Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. In 2024, Leaf was elected as a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Also on view at the Addison

During the spring season three exhibitions highlighting the museum's permanent collection will also be on view: *Playing to Our Strengths: Highlights from the Permanent Collection*, *On and Off Stage: Performance and Persona*, and *Dynamic Duos*. An opening reception for the spring exhibitions will be held at the Addison Gallery on Saturday, March 29, 4:00–6:00 pm, free and open to the public.

About the Addison Gallery of American Art

Devoted exclusively to American art, the Addison opened in 1931 and holds one of the most important American art collections in the country. Its collection includes more than 28,000 works by artists such as John Singleton Copley, Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer, George Bellows, Georgia O'Keeffe, Jackson Pollock, Lorna Simpson, Kara Walker, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Kerry James Marshall, Mark Bradford, and Spencer Finch as well as photographers Eadweard Muybridge, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons, Sally Mann, Dawoud Bey, and Carrie Mae Weems, and many others. The Addison Gallery, located in a stand-alone building on the campus of Phillips Academy—a residential school of grades 9 through 12 in Andover, Massachusetts—offers a continually rotating series of exhibitions and programs, all of which are free and open to the public.

The Addison is open to the public 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and 1 – 5 p.m. on Sunday. The museum is closed on Mondays, national holidays, December 24, and the month of August. Admission is free.

For more information, visit the website at www.addisongallery.org or call 978-749-4015.

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