



Henry Geldzahler was for three decades a prescient champion of young artists, of Andy Warhol, David Hockney, Keith Haring, and many more. Meet fourteen of the unheralded artists Geldzahler was enthusing about when he died last August at 59

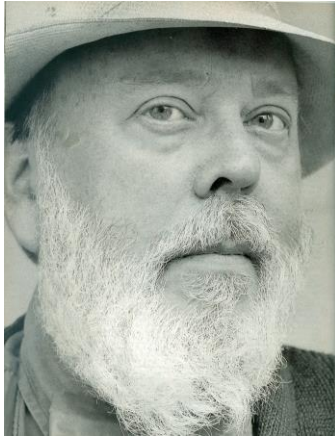


Opposite, portrait by the artist, a young man: Geldzahler in 1986, by Ray Charles White. Above, left to right: Andy Warhol (rear), Henry, David Hockney, and writer Jeff Goodman, shot in New York by Dennis Hopper in 1963.

Regarding Henry

By Julia Szabo

THE FIRST DIRECTOR OF THE VISUAL-ARTS PROGRAM of the National Endowment for the Arts; the first curator for the department of twentieth-century art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; commissioner of cultural affairs in the Koch administration; guest curator at P.S. 1 and curator of the Dia Art Foundation's Bridgehampton gallery—Henry Geldzahler, who died last August, was no mere arts apparatchik. He was a pioneer, a true lover and collector of art and artists, an intrepid visitor of ateliers no matter how remote, a Maecenas with the Midas touch. A



list of Geldzahler's friends is a pantheon of contemporary art: Andy Warhol (whose best "serious" work Geldzahler personally provoked), David Hockney, Frank Stella, Francesco Clemente, Sandro Chia, Keith Haring. (At the coffeehouse Geldzahler ran in Harvard Square in the early sixties, he also booked gigs by a then-unheard-of young folk singer named Joan Baez.)

"When he was commissioner, Henry went to Jean-Michel [Basquiat]'s studio and bought a painting," says Raymond Foye, Henry's companion of many years and publisher of Hanuman Books. "He brought it back to his office, called in his staff, and said, 'Look at this picture. I just paid \$500 for it. It's a masterpiece.' He explained to them why, and then he said, 'I will give you this guy's address. If you know what you're doing, you'll go there and buy paintings, because you can all put your kids through college twenty years from now.' They thought he was nuts."

Who knows where the next mark-making young talent is? Henry knew. And because he was constantly scoping out new talent, no consideration of his legacy is complete without a reading of the signals he registered with his unfailing radar of the cutting edge. The following are the emerging artists (Henry would have called them "younger underknowns") he befriended and championed in the last years of his life. Coming soon to a gallery near you: twelve men and two women who benefited from Henry's considerable support. (The first six are the protégés who benefited the most.) Go and check out their new work. (Upcoming U.S. shows are listed.) That's what Henry would have done.

Hunt Slonem, 43, paints abstract portraits of exotic birds. Introduced to Henry by Slonem's brother, Jeffrey.

What Henry wrote: "Slonem's canvases emphasize an esthetic of ocular activity; the viewer's eye is set in almost constant motion, flicking about to take in the entire rectangle. . . . [He] creates beautiful work that continually gives joy and surprise."

Where to see the work: Robert McClain Gallery, Houston, Texas, through January; also Hall-Barnett gallery, New Orleans, through February 15. ■

