



JAN TICHY

MATRIX 164

APRIL 5 - AUGUST 5, 2012

WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART

NIGHT VISIONS¹

Diverse pursuits converge in the mesmerizing installations of Jan Tichy. Typically presented in darkened spaces, sculptural and architectural elements are illuminated by moving projected light. Tichy constructs beautiful formal spaces that subtly reveal social and political themes. The Czech-born artist grew up in Prague in the years leading up to the non-violent, anti-communist Velvet Revolution (1989). Learning of his Jewish heritage in his late teens, he later moved to Jerusalem and studied political science—soon changing to photography and sculpture—amid the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Politics are ingrained in his being, but rarely overtly expressed in his work. For Tichy, now based in Chicago, the urban setting is often the most highly-charged site of political differences. Therefore, he often uses iconic and symbolic architecture to explore issues of power in his work.

Tichy's MATRIX exhibition is in three parts. He has selected two installations that relate to the city of Hartford and to the landscapes of the Hudson River School, one of the signature painting collections of the museum. In addition, the artist has created a new work that specifically addresses the history of the Wadsworth Atheneum. As with every upcoming MATRIX artist, Tichy visited the museum many months in advance of his exhibition in order to meet the staff, see the MATRIX gallery, explore the museum, experience the city, and, ultimately, formulate a concept for his exhibition project. The works presented in MATRIX 164 are *Installation No. 6 (Tubes)*, 2008; *Installation No. 11*, 2010; and *Installation No. 14 (Austin)*, 2012.

The centerpiece of Tichy's exhibition is *Installation No. 14 (Austin)*. The artist explains, "The subject of the installation is the institution itself—the museum—its buildings, collections, staff, audience and history, which is questioned through the story of Chick Austin."² A. Everett "Chick" Austin, Jr., the director of the Wadsworth Atheneum from 1927 to 1944, left an extraordinary legacy that has become legend. From the outset of his directorship at the age of twenty-six, Austin aimed to turn America's *oldest* public art museum into its *most advanced*.³ By all accounts, Austin succeeded with an impressive list of "firsts." A champion of the Baroque and a leader in bringing Modernism to the United States, he presented America's first comprehensive exhibition of Italian Baroque painting (1930), first introduction to Surrealism (1931), and first Pablo Picasso retrospective (1934). Austin acquired hundreds of works for the collections, including the first Salvador Dalí, Piet Mondrian and Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio to enter an American institution. In the area of performance at the Wadsworth Atheneum, he broke new ground with the premiere of Virgil Thomson

COVER IMAGE:

JAN TICHY, *INSTALLATION NO. 6 (TUBES)*, 2008 (DETAIL)

JAN TICHY, *INSTALLATION NO.14 (AUSTIN)*, 2012
(DETAIL, AVERY SKYLIGHT)





and Gertrude Stein's opera *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934), and the first public performance of George Balanchine's original ballet company (1934), which later became the New York City Ballet. Austin redecorated his office at the museum with ultra-modern Bauhaus design—again, the first in the country—and opened it to the public as an exhibition (1930).

Austin's private residence—now a national historic landmark in the collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum—was inspired by the Palladian-style Villa Ferretti in Dolo, Italy.⁴ With a simplified flat façade and a depth of only eighteen feet, the Austin House (1930) earned the nickname of “the stage-set house,”⁵ furthered by its period-themed rooms that range from Rococo and Baroque to Art Deco and Bauhaus. Austin was also responsible for the design of the Avery Memorial building (1933), featuring an International Style interior with a



THE AUSTIN HOUSE, 1930. WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART. PHOTO: EUGENE R. GADDIS, 2001



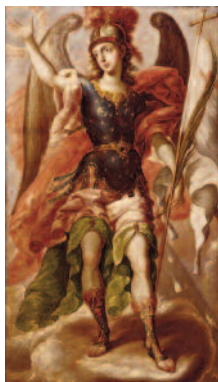
AVERY COURT OF THE WADSWORTH ATHENEUM FEATURING PIETRO FRANCAVILLA'S *VENUS WITH NYMPH AND SATYR* (1600), 1934. WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART ARCHIVES

three-story court, a dramatic skylight, and cantilevered balconies. In a bold statement, Austin placed the Italian Mannerist marble sculpture *Venus with Nymph and Satyr* (1600) by Pietro Francavilla as the centerpiece of this Bauhaus-inspired space, where it remains to this day. The magnificent architectural setting in Avery Court motivated Jan Tichy to delve into Austin's history,⁶ which continues to inform and define current practice at the museum, as the subject of his new installation.

In a minimal configuration, Tichy's *Installation No. 14 (Austin)* considers Austin's many contributions to the museum in terms of exhibitions, acquisitions, theater, and architecture, through the artist's video projections combined with objects from the Wadsworth's collections. Beginning with light—his usual *modus operandi*—Tichy captured Austin's Avery Memorial by videotaping the changing light and shadows on the gridded skylight over the court. The time, folded into the sped up recording, reveals a theater of shadows modulating the space below. Inside the Austin House, he captured the waxing light of the sunrise penetrating a window into the Baroque-style parlor, slowly revealing the design elements of the living room out of the darkness—as the projection functions with the collection objects in the gallery space. These projections appear in opposite corners of the gallery and their changing light effects re-compose the installation over the course of time. Tichy worked with the curators from different departments to discuss his concept and select the most appropriate works from their respective collections to support his ideas in the installation. This collaboration included Robin Frank for American painting and sculpture, Eric Zafran for European painting and sculpture, Linda Roth for European decorative arts, Alyce Englund for American decorative arts, and Gene Gaddis and Ann Brandwein for archival materials and the Austin House. Altogether, Tichy chose eight collection objects.



CHAUNCEY BRADLEY IVES,
BUST OF HORACE BUSHNELL (1802–1876),
1846 (REAR)



CRISTÓBAL VILLALPANDO,
THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL, c. 1700

In a nod to the innovative performing arts program and the Avery building's theater, five pedestals hold a selection of European and American busts in a line along the far wall. Because they face away from the viewer, the experience suggests entering a theater from the rear, from which one sees rows of shoulders and the backs of heads. In addition, Tichy's unusual positioning of the busts proposes viewing an artwork in a completely new way—a recognition of Austin's approach to art, his work, and his life, exemplified by a Mannerist Venus sculpture presented in a Bauhaus architectural interior.

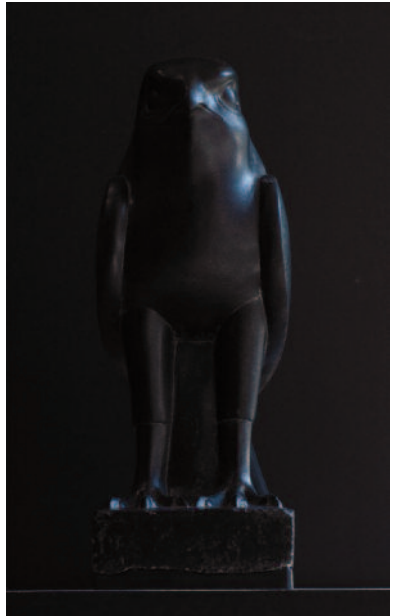
In this spirit of combining works from different periods and cultures in dialogue, Tichy has installed two acquisitions from 1939 to represent Austin's rediscovery of the Baroque in America and his active and varied collection strategies. With Europe embedded in World War II in 1939, Austin avoided Europe that year and ventured to Mexico instead in search of art for the collection. Cristóbal Villalpando's (Mexican, 1649–1714) *The Archangel Michael* (c. 1700) was one of twelve paintings purchased from that trip. The *Feast of Santa Maria della Salute* (c. 1720), a large painting of Venice by Johan Richter (Swedish, 1665–1745), originally attributed to Luca Carlevarijs (Italian, 1663–1730),⁷ signifies the director's numerous trips to Europe in search of Old Master works for the Wadsworth Atheneum. The painting's Venetian subject also echoes the large canvas panels (c. 1730) painted in Turin that decorate the Austin House living room, where Tichy videotaped the window projection. For the modern side of Austin's legacy, Tichy selected one-time Bauhaus director Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's (American, born Germany, 1886–1969) *Brno Chair* (1930) shown on a low platform. It is one of the numerous icons of twentieth-century design that furnished Austin's home and museum office as beautiful, but functional, objects before being



JOHAN RICHTER, *FEAST OF SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE*, C. 1720

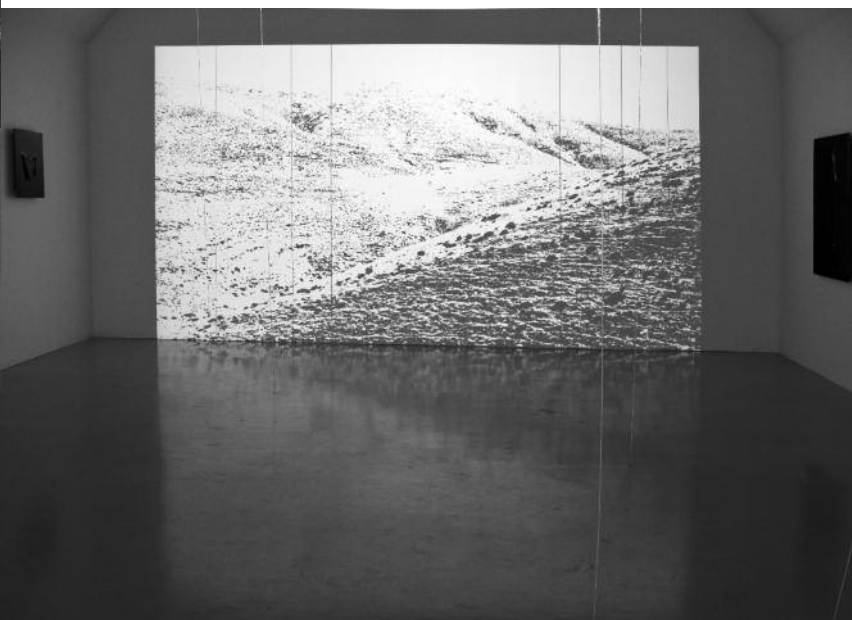


BRNO CHAIR, 1930. BERLIN, GERMANY.
LUDWIG MIES VAN DER ROHE



acknowledged as art and made a part of the collection. The *Brno Chair* was purchased for Austin's office in 1934, and accessioned in 1981.⁸

In *Installation No. 11*, Tichy draws connections with the Wadsworth's distinguished collection of Hudson River School paintings—the dramatic light effects associated with Luminism as well as the photographic qualities of the painted countryside. It is also a meditation on dualities laced with politics. In the installation, two wall-sized projections face each other—one depicts a sea and the other a desert. Between the two projections, along one wall, hang five large photographs of a sculpture of Horus.⁹ The ancient Egyptian sky god, depicted as a falcon, is said to have the sun for his right eye and the moon for the left, a reference the artist uses to talk about light and vision. On the opposite wall is a single enlarged photograph of a moth reflected in a mirror. A night creature, the moth is drawn to the light that ends its life. Over the course of



JAN TICHY, *INSTALLATION NO. 11*, 2010 (DETAIL)

ten minutes, the projected landscape appears out of darkness and cycles through a process of exposure until it burns out in white light. The projection of the seascape does the opposite; it emerges from whiteness only to be overcome by blackness. In addition, floor-to-ceiling strings crisscross the space at various angles. Illuminated by the projections, while casting shadows on both land- and seascape, the string field forces the viewer to navigate the space. Originally presented in Tel Aviv, *Installation No. 11* suggests the borders of Israel itself, with the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Judea Desert to the east. Beyond that, however, Tichy's work embodies more universal connections of contested territories and the devastation of the natural landscape.

In another work with more abstract associations, Tichy relates *Installation No. 6 (Tubes)* to the omnipresence of urban issues, including Hartford—a financially struggling city surrounded by affluent suburbs, among many other polarities. The work suggests a cross-section of a dense city skyline at night, made alive by the buzzing sounds of electricity and the headlights of traffic moving through a busy metropolis—"a kind of organism that lurks below the city's surface."¹⁰ Created quite simply from paper tubes of differing heights and widths adhered to the flat surface of an upturned TV monitor, the energy of the city at night is communicated by the ever-changing abstract screen images and their accompanying sound. The audio is generated by the moving image on the screen, recorded, and amplified by the artist.¹¹ A small object with a large ominous presence, *Installation No. 6 (Tubes)* captivates the viewer and dominates the gallery space.

Tichy's nocturnal installations, animated with projected light, transform white-cube spaces into fantastical nightscapes that continually shift the viewer's perception. Open for personal interpretation, while loaded with intricate layers of specific meaning, Tichy's work also holds subtle allusions to social and political issues that can be both pointed and wide-ranging. In the Wadsworth-specific *Installation No. 14 (Austin)*, Tichy beautifully captures the essence of the Wadsworth Atheneum's identity through references to the tenure of former director Chick Austin. Through a few projections and well-selected collection objects, Tichy brilliantly demonstrates the nature of this advanced and storied institution through its legendary leader who set the stage. Offer Jan Tichy a darkened space and he'll evoke a personal experience of enlightenment.

PATRICIA HICKSON

Emily Hall Tremain Curator of Contemporary Art

JAN TICHY

EDUCATION

2007–2009

MFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

2005–2007

Advanced Studies in Fine Art, Bezalel
Academy of Art and Design, Tel Aviv

1999–2002

Photography Department, Jerusalem School
of Photography & New Media

1995–1999

Political Science and General Studies,
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

SELECTED ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2012 *Jan Tichy: MATRIX 164*, Wadsworth
Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford

2011 *Installation No. 13*, Nathan Gottesdiener
Prize, Tel Aviv Museum of Art

2010 *01:37:24:05*, Center for Contemporary Art,
Tel Aviv
Installation No. 10, Spertus Museum,
Chicago

2009 *Installations*, Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago
Recent Works, Museum of Contemporary
Art, Bat Yam, Israel

2008 *12 x 12: Jan Tichy*, Museum of
Contemporary Art, Chicago

2007 *1391*, Herzliya Museum of Contemporary
Art, Israel

2004 *Beton*, Morel Derfler Gallery, Jerusalem

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2011 *Experimental Station*, CA2M, Madrid

2010 *Disquieted*, Portland Art Museum, Oregon

2009 *After Architecture: Typologies of the
Afterwards*, Centre d'Art Santa Mònica,
Barcelona
Paperworks, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

2008 *Additions*, La Biennale di Venezia, 11th
Annual Architecture Exhibition, Israel
Pavilion, Venice

2007 *Fleeing Away From What Bothers You Most*,
Magasin 3 Stockholm Konsthall

SELECTED PROJECTS

2012 *Lighten Up*, public art project on Albany
Avenue, North Hartford, in collaboration
with TAG (Teen Advisory Group) of the
Amistad Center for Art & Culture and the
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art,
Hartford

2011 *Project Cabrini Green*, public art project in
Cabrini Green, Chicago, and at the MCA
Chicago in collaboration with Efrat Appel

and students and faculty from the School
of the Art Institute of Chicago

2009 *Lighting The Crown Hall*, Illinois Institute of
Technology, Chicago, with MFA
International students

2004 *Blow Up*, photo dance performance, HaZira,
Jerusalem, with Oren Tischler and Vertigo
Dance Company

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

American University Museum, Washington, DC
Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art
Indianapolis Museum of Art
Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Magasin 3 Stockholm Konsthall
Museum of Modern Art, New York
Spertus Museum, Chicago
Tel Aviv Museum of Art

Born 1974, Prague, Czechoslovakia
Lives and works in Chicago, Illinois

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

All works courtesy the artist and
Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago/New York.

Installation No. 6 (Tubes), 2008

Digital video with sound on freestanding analog
television monitor with 250g white paper objects

Running time: 10 min.

Dimensions variable

Installation No. 11, 2010

Two-channel digital video projection, six color inkjet
prints, seven masonry strings

Running time: 10 min.

Dimensions variable

Installation No. 14 (Austin), 2012

Two HD video projections, LED element, objects
from the collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum
(as listed below)

Running time: 10 min.

Dimensions variable

Edward Sheffield Bartholomew

American, 1822-1858

Bust of Diana, 19th century

Marble

28 x 16 ½ x 10 ¼ in.

Purchased by Subscription, 1858.11

Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux

French, 1827-1875

Study for Neopolitan Fisher Boy, 1871

Marble

20 x 14 ¼ x 11 in.

Purchased through the gift of James Junius

Goodwin, 1960.33

Richard S. Greenough

American, 1819-1904

William Hickling Prescott (1796-1859), 1844

Marble

26 x 14 x 10 ¼ in.

Purchased through the gift of Henry and Walter

Keney, 1969.43

Chauncey Bradley Ives

American, 1810-1894

Bust of Horace Bushnell (1802-1876), 1846

Marble

25 ½ x 13 x 9 ½ in.

Source unknown, 1858.14

Chauncey Bradley Ives

American, 1810-1894

Meekness, 19th century

Marble

21 ¼ x 11 x 8 ½ in.

Purchased by Subscription, 1855.58A-B

Johan Richter

Swedish, 1665-1745

Feast of Santa Maria della Salute, c. 1720

Oil on canvas

47 ½ x 59 ¾ in.

The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner

Collection Fund, 1939.268

Cristóbal Villalpando

Mexican, 1649-1714

The Archangel Michael, c. 1700

Oil on canvas

73 ½ x 42 ¾ in.

The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner

Collection Fund, 1939.583

Brno Chair, 1930

Berlin, Germany

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

American, born Germany, 1886-1969

Steel and leather

39 ¾ x 22 ¾ x 20 in.

Wadsworth Atheneum Purchase, 1981.104

¹ Former Wadsworth Atheneum Director A. Everett "Chick" Austin, the vehicle of Jan Tichy's new installation piece, organized an exhibition titled *Night Scenes* at the Wadsworth Atheneum. *Night Visions* relates to *Night Scenes*, which also aptly describes Tichy's installations of nocturnal settings. Many thanks to my colleagues Gene Gaddis and Ann Brandwein for bringing this Austin exhibition title to my attention. I would also like to extend an additional thank you for their considerable assistance on this project.

² Jan Tichy, email correspondence with the author, 15 March 2012.

³ Eugene R. Gaddis, "The Stage-Set House," in *Magic Façade: The Austin House*. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2007), p. 21.

⁴ Austin and his new wife Helen Goodwin Austin encountered and documented Villa Ferretti (dated 1596, designed by Vincenzo Scamozzi, a student of architect Andrea Palladio) during their honeymoon travels in Italy. New York architect Leigh H. French, Jr., designed the Austin House with Austin. See Gaddis, p. 28.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶ In one weekend, Tichy devoured *Magician of the Modern*, the biography of A. Everett "Chick" Austin, Jr., written by Eugene R. Gaddis, the William G. DeLana Archivist and Curator of the Austin House at the Wadsworth Atheneum. See Gaddis, *Magician of the Modern: Chick Austin and the Transformation of the Arts in America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000. The publication is also available as an ebook.

⁷ Until 2010, *Feast of Santa Maria della Salute* (c.1720), acquired in 1939 (accession number 1939.268) was attributed to Luca Carlevarij (Italian,

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

Lighten Up: A Public Art Project by the Teen Advisory Group

Opening Reception Sunday, May 20, 2012
8:00-10:00 pm

Jan Tichy is an artist-in-residence at the Wadsworth Atheneum in collaboration with The Amistad Center for Art & Culture's Teen Advisory Group (TAG), high school students from the Greater Hartford area. Tichy and TAG are creating a public art project, a series of site-specific light installations along Albany Avenue and adjacent neighborhoods in the North End of Hartford.

TAG Members: Aislyn Brown, Armani D. Pimental, Alexis Edwards, Afi Geffrard, Samantha Gorski, Vaneisha Harrison, Estada Laureore, Bruno Spak Perošino, Hannah Phillips, Shanique Reid, Chanel Ross, Shannon Ross, Roy Scott, and Kimberly Vasquez.

Staff: Lauren Cross, Community Programs Coordinator; Johanna Plummer, Georgette Auerbach Koopman Director of Education; and Olivia White, Executive Director of The Amistad Center.

Volunteer Advisors: Cyndi Dryfe and Tamara Williams.

ARTIST TALK

MATRIX Gallery Talk
Jan Tichy
Thursday, April 5, 2012
6:00 pm

Jan Tichy will discuss his installations in the galleries.



Wadsworth
Atheneum
Museum of Art

600 Main Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06103
(860) 278-2670

www.wadsworthatheneum.org

MATRIX 164 is supported with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

The MATRIX program is also supported by the current and founding members of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art's Contemporary Coalition.

Support for the museum's Community Engagement Initiative is provided by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

The Amistad Center's Teen Advisory Group is supported by generous gifts from MassMutual, Janet Flagg Rawlins and other individual contributors.

Support for the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is provided in part by donors to the Greater Hartford Arts Council's United Arts Campaign with support from the Connecticut Office of the Arts, which also receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

1663-1730) rather than Johan Richter (Swedish, 1665-1745). The painting was purchased from Wildenstein & Co. in New York.

⁸ The *Brno Chair* likely resonates more deeply with Tichy. It was originally designed for the Mies-designed Villa Tugendhat (1928-1930) in Brno, Czechoslovakia (the medieval city for which the chair is named). The historical building was the home of Fritz and Grete Tugendhat, Czech Jews (like Tichy) who fled the country with their three children in 1938, just before the Nazi invasion of World War II. Settling in Switzerland, they never returned. The Gestapo took over the villa in 1939. After the war, the building was used for various purposes, modified, and fell into disrepair. In 1992, Czechoslovakian government leaders met at Villa Tugendhat to sign the documents that formally divided the country into two separate states: the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In 2007, heirs of the Tugendhat family applied for restitution. Three years later, the renovation commenced and the villa opened to the public on March 6, 2012. Thus, Tugendhat Villa is a politically charged site on numerous levels.

⁹ Tichy, who teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, is very familiar with this object in the museum collection that he passed on a regular basis. Egyptian, *Statue of Horus as a Falcon*, Ptolemaic period (late 4th century-3rd century BC). Stone; 16 5/8 x 7 1/4 x 17 1/2 in. Gift of the Alsdorf Foundation, 2002.632.

¹⁰ Jan Tichy quoted in Marisa Mazria Katz, "Welcome to Tel Aviv's First Art Biennial," www.guardian.co.uk, 17 September 2009.

¹¹ See Kathryn Hixson, "An Interview with Jan Tichy," *Artis (Arts Israel)*, 2009.

