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I Heart Dangerous Chunky

Seattle sculptor Carolyn Zick was among the first artists to have [her own blog](#) (Dangerous Chunky) and gave it up just as I began mine. We were ships passing, which was bad news for me, the ship coming in. I was counting on a back-and-forth with her, otherwise known as picking up on her themes.

She's back and better than ever. Zick makes thinking through links look easy, and her info accession skills are tiptop. Mine are less so, which is why I'm responding to her shout out about [Edward Kienholz](#): How many of his sculptures are in public Northwest collections?



Ed Kienholz, "The Western Motel," photo, Portland Art Museum

I can do that.

Zick lets her fingers do the walking online. Old media by training if not aspiration, I pick up the phone and ask. Here's what I got: The [Seattle Art Museum](#) has none. Ditto the [Henry Gallery](#). Because no one at the [Tacoma Art Museum](#) answered my ring (and I do mean no one), I couldn't confirm its Kienholz creditability gap, but I'll wager one exists.

One of the good things about TAM is, if it has an important piece of contemporary art, it doesn't banish it to the back bins for decades, unlike, say, the Henry. If your last name isn't [True](#), [Monsen](#) or (to a lesser degree) [Stewart](#), the Henry won't show what you donate, which raises the question, Why give it in the first place? Collectors have figured this out.

Notice how many from Seattle have taken up TAM's cause. If not SAM, then TAM. Henry shut itself out of the action.

Dangerous Chunky is (as always) too nice to say so (hints and ponderings are more her style), so I'll say it. Kienholz is to installation art what Philip Guston is to painting. He's essential. For Northwest museums to fail to acquire even a small example of his work, considering that he lived most of the year in Idaho, is dismal.

The shining light in all this darkness is the Portland Art Museum, which owns "Useful Art #5 - The Western Motel," installed in its permanent contemporary collection.



Ed Kienholz, "The Jesus Corner," photo via Dangerous Chunky

The other shining light is Spokane's [Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture](#), which Zick notes has a new exhibit up featuring a Kienholz piece from its permanent collection, "The Jesus Corner."

Seattle's Beth Sellars, curator of [Suyama Space](#), moved to Seattle in 1995 because of "The Jesus Corner." As art curator of the Cheney Cowles Museum, now folded into the Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture, she arranged to purchase it on terms favorable to the museum thanks to her friendship with Kienholz. When the museum decided to retire its (newly acquired) hulking jewel into storage without consulting her, she quit and headed here.

One more note about Kienholz, who loved women and was all about feminism as he so poorly understood it. That's why he declared in 1981 "that all works from 1972 onward would contain the signatures Edward Kienholz and Nancy Reddin Kienholz."

Ed. I'm talking to you beyond the grave. Bad move. Didn't work out for you or your audience and saddled curators ever after with a burdensome attribution problem. Christo, on the other hand, should have acknowledged the equal contributions of his wife, Jeanne-Claude, way before he did. [Mark Boyle](#) is yet another example of sharing credit. He now credits his whole family. I have no idea what that's about, but the work's still terrific.

UPDATE: Thanks to those who pointed out in the comments that Carolyn's last name lacks the w I gave it. It's Zick. Noted and changed.

Posted by [Regina Hackett](#) at September 27, 2007 5:29 p.m.