



*Art Has Many Facets: The Artistic Fascination with the Cube*, 1963, installation view, Fine Arts Gallery, University of St. Thomas, Houston. Courtesy of Menil Archives, The Menil Collection, Houston. Photo: Balthazar Korab

## *About Art Has Many Facets*

This installation takes its inspiration from *Art Has Many Facets*, an exhibition curated by John and Dominique de Menil's good friend Jermayne MacAgy at Houston's University of St. Thomas in 1963. That show explored artists' fascination with faceted geometric forms, from ancient dice and cut crystals to Cubist canvases and African masks. "We're not squares—we're cubes," ran the introductory catalogue essay. "We live in them, with ice boxes, in which there are milk cartons, egg crates, ice cubes.... We've even been called block-heads." This ensemble pays homage to that playful and eclectic spirit, staging a conversation between artworks from different times and places, all of which incorporate slanted planes or cube-like forms. The objects arrayed on pedestals and shelves were included in MacAgy's original display, while the paintings are related to works by the same artists that she selected.

A gifted educator, curator, and director of art institutions known for her broad interests and dramatic installations, Jermayne MacAgy (1914–1964) profoundly shaped Houston's art scene. After studying at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum and earning a PhD in art history from Case Western Reserve University, MacAgy began her career at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, where she was named acting director during World War II. On the recommendation of John and Dominique de Menil, she moved to Houston in 1955 to serve as director of the Contemporary Arts Association (now the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston), where she organized 29 exhibitions in under four years. Beginning in 1959, she led the Art Department at the University of St. Thomas, founded that year by the de Menils, and curated shows at both the university and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. At every institution, she gained renown for her pioneering thematic presentations. "Everything she touched became rare and fascinating," reflected Dominique de Menil after MacAgy's premature death. "The dullest abstract painting, the most musty object from a museum closet became extraordinary when seen through her magic lantern."