[A tool is a]n inanimate object that one uses or modifies in some way to cause a change in the environment, thereby facilitating one's achievement of a target goal.

— Marc D. Hauser

Among the low-priced, factory-produced goods, none is so appealing to the sense as the ordinary hand-tool. Hence the hardware store is a kind of offbeat museum show for the man who responds to clear "undesigned" forms.

— Walker Evans

Exhibition organized by International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC and featuring works from International Arts & Artists’ Hechinger Collection

FURTHER READING

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Graphic design by Kimberley Nichols & Patricia Pohlman, Dickinson College Office of Publications
Cover and above: Armand P. Arman, School of Fishes, 1982, vise grips, steel
Brochure text: Phillip Earenfight
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The primate order includes the only species on earth that makes tools to perform specific tasks. But of the primates, Homo sapiens are perhaps the only tool-makers who appreciate tools not only for their utility, but also for their aesthetic value. Indeed, Jim Dine’s inspired drawings of a pipe-wrench or a band of marching claw hammers cause one to fundamentally re-evaluate the tools themselves, to say nothing about the subject of contemporary art. To this end, Tools in Motion brings together a clever selection of art that incorporates everyday tools and hardware. The works in Tools in Motion demonstrate how tools take on a life—even a personality—when thoughtfully isolated from their original function, combined with other objects, or presented in conjunction with like works. Drawn from the Hechinger Collection, many of the works in this exhibition are directly associated with or descend from the forms and ideas pioneered in Pop Art, and toy with these elements in a lighthearted, playful way.

The works draw attention to everyday tools in ways that awaken our appreciation for them on an iconic, dare one say, sacred level. (If the behavior displayed in hardware stores is any measure, one can surely appreciate for them on an iconic, dare one say, sacred level. (If the behavior displayed in hardware stores is any measure, one can surely appreciate. With these photographs as well as an edition of Jim Dine’s Tool Box prints—which Hechinger already owned—he set off to build a corporate art collection that focused on the tools of the family business. The resulting collection of more than 400 works are much more than office art; they celebrate human ingenuity and creativity.

The works also remind one that artists, who were long regarded as craftsmen, use tools to create art. Brushes, hammers, nails, saws, and paint are as much the tools of an artist as a carpenter. Indeed, an artist’s studio is a workshop in the most literal sense, and no small number of artists, like the rest of us, stand in the aisles of hardware stores sorting through bins and shelves, looking for the right tool to complete the project at hand. Indeed, the first artists were no different than their primate relatives—both fashioned sticks to perform a specific task. But rather than fishing termites from a mound, primitive artists were painting on the walls of caves.

To return the company to the spirit of tools and tool-making, Hechinger contacted Ivan Chermayeff, a friend and designer, to create photographic prints of tools carried in the company’s hardware stores. With these photographs as well as an edition of Jim Dine’s Tool Box prints—which Hechinger already owned—he set off to build a corporate art collection that focused on the tools of the family business. The resulting collection of more than 400 works are much more than office art; they celebrate human ingenuity and creativity.

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The building seemed to rebuke the fantasies that a hardware store inspires. For anyone whose passion is to work with his or her hands, a good hardware store is a spur to the imagination. But of the primates, Homo sapiens are perhaps the only tool-makers who appreciate tools not only for their utility, but also for their aesthetic value. Indeed, Jim Dine’s inspired drawings of a pipe-wrench or a band of marching claw hammers cause one to fundamentally re-evaluate the tools themselves, to say nothing about the subject of contemporary art. To this end, Tools in Motion brings together a clever selection of art that incorporates everyday tools and hardware. The works in Tools in Motion demonstrate how tools take on a life—even a personality—when thoughtfully isolated from their original function, combined with other objects, or presented in conjunction with like works. Drawn from the Hechinger Collection, many of the works in this exhibition are directly associated with or descend from the forms and ideas pioneered in Pop Art, and toy with these elements in a lighthearted, playful way.

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