

# SLOW ART



## SURPIK ANGELINI'S SERENE PRIVATE KUNSTHALLE IN MONTROSE OFFERS A TEMPLE TO CONTEMPLATION AND ACTIVISM.

Catherine D. Anson investigates.  
Photography Thomas R. DuBrock, Naho Kubota.

Officially, it's known as The Transart Foundation for Art and Anthropology — and despite being in the heart of Montrose, mere blocks from Menil world, it may be Texas' most under-known art space. The by-appointment art foundation designed by Houston/New York firm Schaum/Shieh Architects is not shiny, vanitas, and market driven. This is a place where serious dialogue, a global outlook, and looking deep are encouraged. It's quite a discovery within the Inner Loop — a noncommercial, nonresidential structure erected in the land of no developer limits that received the international 2018 Best of Design Award for a Cultural building from *The Architect's Newspaper*.

Transart's raison d'être is spun around its founder, Surpik Angelini, who is as close as we'll get to Dominique de Menil in our lifetime. She was, in fact, an acolyte of a Menil scholar: the iconoclastic late Thomas McEvilly — the Rice professor, cultural critic, and Jungian art historian who took on MoMA and forever changed the categorization of African art as primitive. Angelini is intensely private, and in fact, demurred being photographed for this article. Despite her curatorial involvement



and work as an artist, lecturer, patron, and thinker for more than two decades, we only met recently; even so, her name has often been invoked. A champion of artists not already elevated by art fairs

and auctions, Angelini is powerful and unwavering in her mission to restore humanism and intelligence to an art world that can feel like spectacle and a money pit for billionaires.

The three exhibitions I visited this year at Transart were each revelations, and unexpected in the artists chosen to be showcased on the ground floor of a 3,000-square-foot space whose sensibility leans to a chapel: light-filled, hushed, reverent. Art is freed from hype, and the slow gaze is possible. My first pilgrimage to Transart was when artist Maria Cristina Jadick reached out with an invite to her show. Jadick's environmentally charged post-Harvey installation represented a new body of work — one that was impactful but more concise, stripped down, and direct. A breakthrough. Months later, Venezuelan-born Gerardo Rosales presented a nuanced installation that paired mops and private school uniforms with epic paintings. So under-the-radar that no curators had heard of him (yet), Rosales addressed issues of gay rights, divisions of social class and wealth in one of the top shows of 2019 in the Texas art world. Finally, John Calaway, a former energy executive/pioneer in the wind-power industry, returned to exhibiting this fall after a long hiatus with a solo at Transart. Calaway experimented with new materials fabricated by 3-D printing that mimicked Corten steel, forging sculptures of reductive beauty that harkened back to some of the 20th-century greats in the neighboring Menil Collection — Picasso, Miró, Klee, and Tinguely.

Angelini says of her ongoing quest with Transart, which now has a permanent home: "I have my family, and they're all the artists I've worked with — for 20 years, 50 or 60 artists. And I really get involved. I'm more than a curator. My participation is different. I'm not suggesting things that are outside [the artist's] language. I just make the links between their own dots. So I never get out of their universe. In Transart, the artist has to get into the research. And has to [create] a critical sort of artwork, a cultural critique." "*Vicki Meek: Vulnerable*," through *January 5; by appointment only; thetransartfoundation.org*.

From top:

The Transart Foundation for Art and Anthropology by Schaum/Shieh Architects, 2018.

A view of Transart's serene interiors.

Artist John Calaway with his *Bird of Pray*, 2019, at Transart Foundation.