

Unveiling of 50th Anniversary Sculptures

I'd like to begin with a warm welcome to the families, friends and colleagues of the four artists we are honoring tonight, as well as to all the members of the extended AUP community. We are celebrating two things tonight—first, the unveiling of two sculptures, and second, the opening of a four-artist show inside the Combes Fine Arts Gallery. Ralph Petty, Jonathan Shimony, and Clara Delamater, daughter of our founder Lloyd Delamater, are all three professors of fine arts at AUP and contributors to the show we inaugurate this evening; Rafael Mahdavi, Jonathan's partner in the collaboration that is "Gateway" has become a special friend of the University this year as a result of our symphonic collaboration, is also a contributor to the exhibition, and was honored warmly on Tuesday evening when we held a special Arts Arena event on his life's work. Clara Delamater who teaches sculpture at AUP, has contributed two of her own to the exhibition this evening and will introduce them in a moment; the bronze bust she did of her father will be on prominent display during Global Alumni Weekend and Graduation next month. I am very proud to say that the arts are at the center of our 50th Anniversary celebrations, because, as universal languages, the arts bridge cultures, cross borders, and across the world and within this university translate our differences into shared experience.

But now I would like to turn to the drama at hand—the unveiling itself of "Listening" and "Gateway," the two works created for the 50th Anniversary that will frame the doors of the Combes entryway and remind us ever after of our mission as a University.

First I want to acknowledge Ralph Petty, current Chair of the Art History Department, curator of our Fine Arts Gallery, and longtime builder of our fine arts curriculum as well as creator of an arts community at AUP. Three of his paintings hang in my office and have been my constant companions for five years. To know Ralph for the intensely creative, deeply honest and human and generous man that he is is to be his friend and devoted colleague. "Listening," his birthday gift to AUP, captures for me the intimacy of listening, learning, sharing, and seeking alignment, even as it also portrays difference. The two figures lean in toward one another in recognition of their commonalities, yet they look outward in different directions. To me "Listening" conveys all the difficulties and satisfactions of our attempts to hear each other and also to acknowledge each other's very different experience.

Last, but not least, I want to acknowledge Jonathan Shimony, who brought into the University this year not only the monumental "Gateway," but also the remarkable partnership with Rafael Mahdavi that begot it, and the concentric circles of collaboration that this work required to get from Rafael's studio in Southern Burgundy to 6, rue du Colonel Combes. President, faculty, students, staff members, neighbors on the street here, our maintenance crew, and the wonderful art critic David Galloway who wrote the catalog notes were all deeply implicated contributors. To return to Jonathan for a moment, I want to say what all of us know, that Jonathan is one of the great forces for good in this university—his kindness, generosity, and, I want to use the term ebullience, his love for life, his positive outlook, his devotion to teaching, his sheer kinetic energy emanates from each word he

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speaks and act he undertakes. Impossible to be angry, out of sorts, or even sad in Jonathan's inspiring presence. His students are the best witnesses of his many gifts to our University—just ask any one of them who has gone to his studio in Gentilly to work on his 150 year old lithography press and then to break bread together. Tonight we thank him and Rafael Mahdavi for the gift of "Gateway," a work revelatory of both our mission and their spectacular duet. Both massive and delicate, like the Eiffel Tower, both symmetrical and not so, this open book that beckons students of 100 nationalities to reading, to reason, and to relationship, captures their differences and ours, their diversity and ours, their collaboration and our community. As in the case of "Listening," we see ourselves and find ourselves in "Gateway."