



TUCK, CHARCOAL AND CONTE ON BLUE PAPER, 22 x 30", 2006

## Dancing with Allen Bentley >>>

Step into a dynamic world of movement. *By Kendra Toscano*

**W**ith swooping, gestural strokes and bold use of color, Allen Bentley uses dancing as a metaphor, a tool for telling his narratives. However, what is truly intriguing about his work lies under the surface. His work is all about human contact; not the dance itself, but what the dance represents. Bentley uses the dance as a symbol of the constant struggle in relationships—the push and pull that exists as part of the human condition we can all identify with. “I’ve been dealing with the idea of relationships, and so that’s a very important term in my painting,” says Bentley. “The relationship between people... there’s a give and a take. Good times, bad times, compromises—and it’s all this crazy balancing act, swirling thing. That naturally led to dancing. It became a perfect metaphor.”

One of the most striking qualities of Bentley’s work is his unique perspective. We, the viewers, peer down on the couple, invading their intimate space. This shift from classical perspective is extremely important. Most often, in paintings and in life, we see things from a fixed frontal perspective. The shift from this vantage point adds a definite freshness to the work. In his energetic painting *Bang*, the dancers practically leap off the canvas. His use of unusual perspective, keen ability to capture movement and theatrical use of color are all on display in this engaging and volatile work.

Another somewhat unusual aspect of Bentley’s work is the fact that the faces of his figures are virtually nonexistent. The facial expressions are of no importance to the narrative and are most often not rendered at all, thereby forcing the viewer to read the body language for content and meaning. This is completely intentional on the part of the artist. Bentley’s masterful ability to depict the human body in motion is enough to tell his story.

His dancers have a distinctly animated, rhythmic, yet authentic quality which is achieved by Bentley’s constant use and study of live models. Bentley understands how the human body moves and how bodies react to one another, which is evident in his paintings and drawings. His mark may appear to be free and uncalculated, but is, in fact, very deliberate. This is clear in his drawing *Tuck*, in which his loose lines perfectly delineate the figures, creating a sense of swirling movement at the same time.

### Philadelphia Art Museum

26th Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, Pa.  
(215) 763-8100 | [www.philamuseum.org](http://www.philamuseum.org)  
Exhibiting: *Crouching Spider*: a sculpture by Louise Bourgeois (05/24/06-04/30/07) and *Modern People*: A Tribute to Arnold Newman (09/23/06-03/04/07)

### The Print Center

1614 Latimer St., Philadelphia, Pa.  
(215) 735-6090 | [www.printcenter.org](http://www.printcenter.org)  
Exhibiting: *New Jersey Artists*: New Jersey Print and Paper Fellows at Rutgers Center for Innovative Print and Paper and Prints by Barbara Duval (11/30/06-02/10/07)

### Woodmere Art Museum

9201 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, Pa.  
(215) 247-0476 | [www.woodmereartmuseum.org](http://www.woodmereartmuseum.org)  
Exhibiting: *Emerging Artists Series*: Christopher Hartshorne & Hiro Sakaguchi (01/28-03/04)

### COLLEGE EXHIBITIONS >>>

#### Arcadia University Art Gallery

450 S. Easton Rd., Glenside, Pa.  
(215) 572-2131 | [www.arcadia.edu/gallery](http://www.arcadia.edu/gallery)  
Exhibiting: *Always Thinking of You*: Paintings and Recent Constructions by Gerald Nichols (01/23-03/11)

#### The Berman Museum of Art at Ursinus College

P.O. Box 1000, Collegeville, Pa.  
(610) 409-3500 | [www.ursinus.edu](http://www.ursinus.edu)  
Exhibiting: *Jazz Paintings on Paper*: Improvisations on the Venezuelan Suite by Ellen Priest (01/20-04/05)

#### Boland Hall Gallery at Saint Joseph’s University

5600 City Ave., Philadelphia, Pa.  
(610) 660-1840 | [www.sju.edu/gallery/](http://www.sju.edu/gallery/)  
Exhibiting: Paintings by Chad Cortez Everett (01/16-02/15)

#### Galleries at Moore

20th Street and The Parkway, Philadelphia, Pa.  
(215) 965-4027 | [www.thegalleriesatmoore.org](http://www.thegalleriesatmoore.org)  
Exhibiting: *A Retrospective of work of Andrea Baldeck’s photography* (01/19-03/18)

#### Hicks Art Center at Bucks County Community College

275 Swamp Rd., Newtown, Pa.  
(215) 968-8000 | [www.bucks.edu/gallery/](http://www.bucks.edu/gallery/)  
Exhibiting: 42nd Annual Student Exhibition: Featuring the work of students (04/28-05/07)

#### Institute of Contemporary Art

118 S. 36th St. Philadelphia, Pa.  
(215) 898-7108 | [www.icaphila.org](http://www.icaphila.org)  
Exhibiting: *Installations by Carlos Garaicoa*: Sculptural and photographic works by Nicole Cherubini and Ramp Project: a site-specific installation by Irene Fortuyn (01/20-03/25)

#### Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts

118 N. Broad St., Philadelphia, Pa.  
(215) 972-7600 | [www.pafa.org](http://www.pafa.org)  
Exhibiting: *Romantic Realist*: Drawings and prints by Daniel Garber (01/27-04/08)