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A fast-forward of post-'50s Phila.

Rarely has Philadelphia art in private collections been more vividly shown than at the exhibition "Main Line Collects Philadelphia" at the Main Line Art Center in Haverford.

Examples of post-1950 Philadelphia painting and sculpture by 42 artists, their work drawn from 19 private collections on the Main Line, combine in a display of significant quality organized by guest curator Mary Anne Dutt Justice of Bryn Mawr.

A walk through this exhibit offers a remarkable fast-forward through the period the show covers. Of course there are some significant omissions, works that were not available. But the strongest part of the exhibit is its very representative inclusion of artists across several generations - some of the early examples requiring fairly deep digging to uncover.

A large portion of the show is devoted to artists concerned with such time-honored themes as still-life, landscapes and figure painting. Yet the range of expression here reveals a full awareness of abstraction as well.

The old master contingent is present in a low-key fashion in work by painters Edna Andrade, Tom Chimes, Larry Day, Martha Mayer Erlebacher, Sidney Goodman, John Moore, Peter Paone, Jane Piper, Warren Rohrer and Bill Scott and by sculptors Harry Bertoia, Chuck Fahlen and Leo Sewell.

But there's much, much more. Some of the work by younger artists shows more ease of expression and less self-conscious use of new materials.

Why are exhibits of this kind so rare at galleries and museums? Labor-intensive, they require careful research, also special fund-raising to cover insurance, transport of objects and security. But the public service that such well-planned exhibits as this one render can be enormous, getting the news out about top talent in our area, and justifying the extra effort involved. Hats off to Main Line.

Main Line Art Center, 746 Panmure Rd, Haverford. To June 10. Mon-Thu 10-8, Fri-Sun 10-4; June 6, 6-9. Free. 610-525-0272.