In this world, it somehow seems that the grass is always greener on the other side. The unknown and exotic simply entices more than what is next door and local. In the art world, if you are from New York, Paris, or Beijing you automatically have more cachet than if you hail from Minneapolis or Wichita. The phenomenon is real, yet unfair and misguided. It happens too often that regional artists find stronger recognition outside the states where they live. Many American artists have greater following in Europe than on their own turf. The “grass is greener” syndrome is an unfortunate predilection of human behavior that finds its way into such unfortunate prejudices in the art world. In fact, Kansas has a strong artist community, and this state has launched or sustained the careers of many world-class artists. The exhibition of Wichita’s Fisch Haus artist Patrick Duegaw this past spring at the Wichita Art Museum is a superb example of an exceptionally talented painter in our very midst.

The Ulrich is exploring Kansas artists of exceptional stature in several ways in 2009/2010. The Ulrich Salon Circle, our patron group with a series of Salons or evening gatherings across the year, is spotlighting our patron group with a series of Salons or evening gatherings across the year, focuses on From the Center: Artists with Kansas Connections. Kansas museum director Saralyn Pecca Hardy joins artists Wendell Castle, Terry Evans, Keith Jacobshagen, and Tom Ottenees in conversations about art, careers, Kansas, and overcoming the odds.

Roger Shimomura is arguably the most prominent artist living in Kansas. Last year, the Ulrich hosted his print retrospective. As this newsletter goes to print, the Ulrich is finalizing the acquisition of eight major works by Shimomura. Collectively, the paintings and prints span his career and create a rich representative sampling of this profound artist in the Ulrich permanent collection. We are honored to bring this work by an esteemed Kansas artist to the Ulrich and WSU.

In winter 2010, we will present a retrospective of Kansas native Gordon Parks (1912-2006). A LIFE photographer for more than two decades and pioneering filmmaker, Parks was an extraordinary talent who came from humble beginnings in Fort Scott. His photography will be paired with riches from the artist’s archives recently acquired and now housed in Special Collections at WSU’s Alsah Library.

Art museums bring the world of art to their communities. We also should acknowledge and honor artists of merit from our region. As we launch into another dynamic year at the Ulrich, we will be thinking about Kansas. Please come, look, and enjoy.

— Dr. Patricia McDonnell, Director
Since the early 20th century, images and ideas about robots have evolved from.awkward, mechanical creatures to more sophisticated androids with artificial intelligence. In popular culture, we know and love robots from the Jetsons TV program, C-3PO from the Star Wars films, and recently in Pixar films of the same name, not to mention the Terminator and Iron Man movies. As robotic technology catches up with the wild imagination of science-fiction novels, movies, and animation, the dreams and fears anticipated in these stories may become reality.

Organized by the San Jose Museum of Art and the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Art, the Ulrich Contemporary Art examines this imaginative world of robots in American myth. It presents 27 artworks by 15 contemporary artists who respond to the romance and fascination with myths of robots with optimism, pessimism, and humor. In various mediums—sculptures, paintings, photographs, digital media, and installations—and with diverse styles they probe wide-ranging attitudes towards these mechanical creatures in the American psyche. Seminal video artist Nam June Paik designs television robots that he names after figures from the French Revolution. Contemporary sculptor Michael Salter reclads the packing materials used to ship electronics and creates a towering Skystrobot. Music video director Chris Cunningham depicts two enamored mechanical creatures to more sophisticated androids to more sophisticated human-factory robots in a piece for singer Björk's song All is Full of Love.

While some artists meticulously create specific portraits or representational sculptures of robots, others address a range of social and cultural issues through common robot imagery. Light-hearted and serious, nostalgic and futuristic, the artworks in this exhibition provide visual reflection on both the place of robots in popular culture and the collective imagination as well as on the technological advancements that are fast becoming an essential part of our contemporary lifestyle.