

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE

“A sustainable society is one that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

- John Portman, “A Constant Vision in a World of Change”

**Agnes Scott’s Dalton Gallery Presents: *Building on Dana / Patterns in Space***

**Co-curated by Anna Carnes, Nell Ruby, and Katherine Smith**

**An exhibition on John Portman’s Dana Fine Arts Building (1965)**

**Decatur, GEORGIA** — Agnes Scott College is pleased to announce the opening of *Building on Dana / Patterns in Space*, the spring exhibition in the Dalton Gallery, on display from February 7 through May 19, 2025. *Building on Dana / Patterns in Space* explores the building’s past, present, and future through the voices of artists, activists, students, and scholars examining its built environment. It establishes the significance of the Dana Fine Arts Building in architect John Portman’s early career and in shifts in the college’s curriculum in the 1960s; it also highlights the challenge of access and inclusion in historical design and an evolving cultural context. The exhibition features works from contemporary artists and designers who have reinterpreted visual and programmatic aspects of Dana Fine Arts to create a visual conversation between past and present.

“What started as a vision of showcasing our building as an early example of Portman’s contributions to Atlanta architecture has led to bold pedagogical experiments and environmental activism that are facilitating communication and transformation with a growing community of collaborators on campus and beyond in ways, I think, the architect would have appreciated” said Katherine Smith, co-curator of *Building on Dana* and Professor of Visual Practices. “It has already been inspiring and expansive beyond our wildest dreams.”

This exhibition represents the work of the Building on Dana project (2024-25 academic year), an interdisciplinary study of Edwards & Portman’s Charles A. Dana Fine Arts Building (1965) as an object of inquiry. Originally designed for art and speech & drama, the building is now the hub of the Department of Creative Arts. The project has likewise created a more communal and sustainable space: restoring reading rooms and recultivating gardens, incorporating and proposing accessible design – past and future.

“Working with students, colleagues, and community leaders on the Building on Dana project has shown me that I live in a community that reflects my most cherished values of respect for and service to the flourishing of living things,” said Nell Ruby, Professor of Visual Practices. “Our project benefits from our work in the interrelated disciplines of studio art and art/architectural history. Part of our new enthusiasm is an explicit, outward expansion from curriculum to community. The Building on Dana project was created with a commitment to this idea.”

Alongside archival materials, contemporary art from local, regional, and national artists redefines elements of the architecture and offers opportunities for new perspectives. Finnegan Shannon and Caitlin La Dolce explore our bodies’ relationship to space and advance equitable access for all. Roxie Friction, following a legacy of site-specific textiles in Portman’s buildings, re-interprets our building through woven installation.

“The work in the show responds to how a multitude of experiences of space can exist at once, and the intersection of those experiences. Once you begin seeing these patterns you begin to see them everywhere. I’m excited for the community to come into our building, see these patterns in our space, and take those out into the world,” said Anna Carnes, Permanent Collection & Dalton Gallery Manager.

Curated with a focus on creating dialogue between historical architectural elements and contemporary artistic practices, *Building on Dana / Patterns in Space* invites visitors to reflect on the transformation of space through the lens of design.

Public programs include artist talks, lectures on art/architectural history, and a community series on sustainable habitats with partners to include Bee City USA - Decatur, GA, Bee Campus USA - Agnes Scott College, and City of Decatur. All programs are free and open to the public.

The publication that accompanies the exhibition is a facsimile of the brochure published at the building’s dedication, updated with color versions of archival images. 16 pp.

#### Exhibition Highlights:

- model of the building and short texts about spaces on all floors

- archival images and materials from Portman Archives, Agnes Scott Special Collections & Archives, and Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center
- timelines for Dana in Agnes Scott College/Decatur and in John Portman's architecture/Atlanta urbanism
- new projects by contemporary artists Roxie Friction, Caitlin La Dolce, Finnegan Shannon
- reproductions of original garden designs by Atlanta-based landscape architect Edward L. Daugherty
- transformations of multiple green spaces into native, pollinator gardens (plans and planting in progress during exhibition)

Please join us for the opening reception on Friday, February 7 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Enjoy nibbles and drinks by The Reading Room; music by DJ Saasha Foo.

For more information about *Building on Dana / Patterns in Space*, including exhibition details and upcoming programs, please visit [www.buildingondana.design/](http://www.buildingondana.design/) or contact Anna Carnes, Gallery Manager/Co-curator, [acarnes@agnesscott.edu](mailto:acarnes@agnesscott.edu) or 404.471.6073.

The exhibition is made possible by the generous support of Forward Arts Foundation, Portman Archives, James T. and Ella Rather Kirk Fund, Anne Beidler and Jonathan Neiditz Fund for Art, Sarah Hamilton Leathers '53 and Leone Bowers Hamilton '26 Art Lecture Series Fund, Student Green Fee Fund, and our dedicated Friends of Art.

### **About Agnes Scott College**

Located in Decatur, Georgia, Agnes Scott College was founded in 1889 and is a highly selective women's liberal arts college with approximately 1,100 students in its undergraduate and graduate programs. Named "Most Innovative" seven years in a row by *U.S. News & World Report*, Agnes Scott is known for SUMMIT, its dynamic experiential learning curriculum, and graduate programs that prepare forward-thinkers to lead inclusively in advocacy and public engagement, strategic communications, medicine and health. To learn more about Agnes Scott College, please visit [agnesscott.edu](http://agnesscott.edu).

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image credit: exterior view of Dana Fine Arts Building at night, ca. 1965. © 1965 Unknown photographer courtesy of the Portman Archives