

# Major Work by Contemporary Artist Focuses on Stanford Family

**Splendid Grief: Darren Waterston and the Afterlife of Leland Stanford Jr.  
April 15– July 5, 2009**

Stanford, California — The Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University presents “Splendid Grief: Darren Waterston and the Afterlife of Leland Stanford Jr.,” on view from April 15 through July 5, 2009. The death of Leland and Jane Stanford’s son inspired the founding of Stanford University and serves as an example for San Francisco artist Darren Waterston, whose installation transforms the gallery into a mourning parlor, using works from the museum's collection and his own paintings.



“Despite their reputation for emotional restraint, Victorians indulged in complex and elaborate rituals surrounding death and mourning,” said Hilarie Faberman, the Center’s curator of modern and contemporary art. “No better example is the case of Leland Stanford Jr., the only child of Leland and Jane Stanford, who died at the tender age of 15 from typhoid fever. The Stanfords’ immense loss became the impetus for several commissioned monuments and works of art that perpetuated their son’s memory. One of these splendid memorials was the Leland Stanford Jr. Museum that was founded at the same time as the university that bears young Stanford’s name. ‘Splendid Grief’ examines the Stanford Family’s elaborate displays of sorrow seen through the eyes of contemporary painter and installation artist Darren Waterston.”

Waterston transforms the Ruth Levison Halperin Gallery into a mourning parlor that serves as a *memento mori* to the late Leland Jr. This installation includes objects from the museum’s collection dealing with Leland’s short life, such as Eadweard Muybridge’s photograph “Leland Jr. on His Pony.” In addition, the installation features artifacts from the Stanford Family lent by the university library’s special collections that concern the life and death of little Leland. The art works and artifacts were chosen based on Waterston’s research and the guidance of the Cantor Art Center curators, staff, and university historians and archivists.

Waterston created eight large paintings dealing with spirituality and the afterlife that are integrated into the mourning parlor. The installation creates a dialogue between those 19th-century objects, which reflect the cult of grief, and the new paintings that are inspired by them. A film dealing with the Stanford Family and little Leland’s legacy by Stanford University MFA documentary film graduate students Mike Attie and Melanie Vi Levy accompanies the exhibition.

***Our Darling Boy***

Written, directed, and edited by Mike Attie and Melanie Levy. Faculty advisor Kristine Samuelson. ©2009 by the Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University, all rights reserved.

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**VISITOR INFORMATION:** Cantor Arts Center is open Wednesday – Sunday, 11 am – 5 pm, Thursday until 8 pm. Admission is free. The Center is located on the Stanford campus, off Palm Drive at Museum Way. Parking is free after 4 p.m. and all day on weekends. Information: 650-723-4177, [museum.stanford.edu](http://museum.stanford.edu).

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