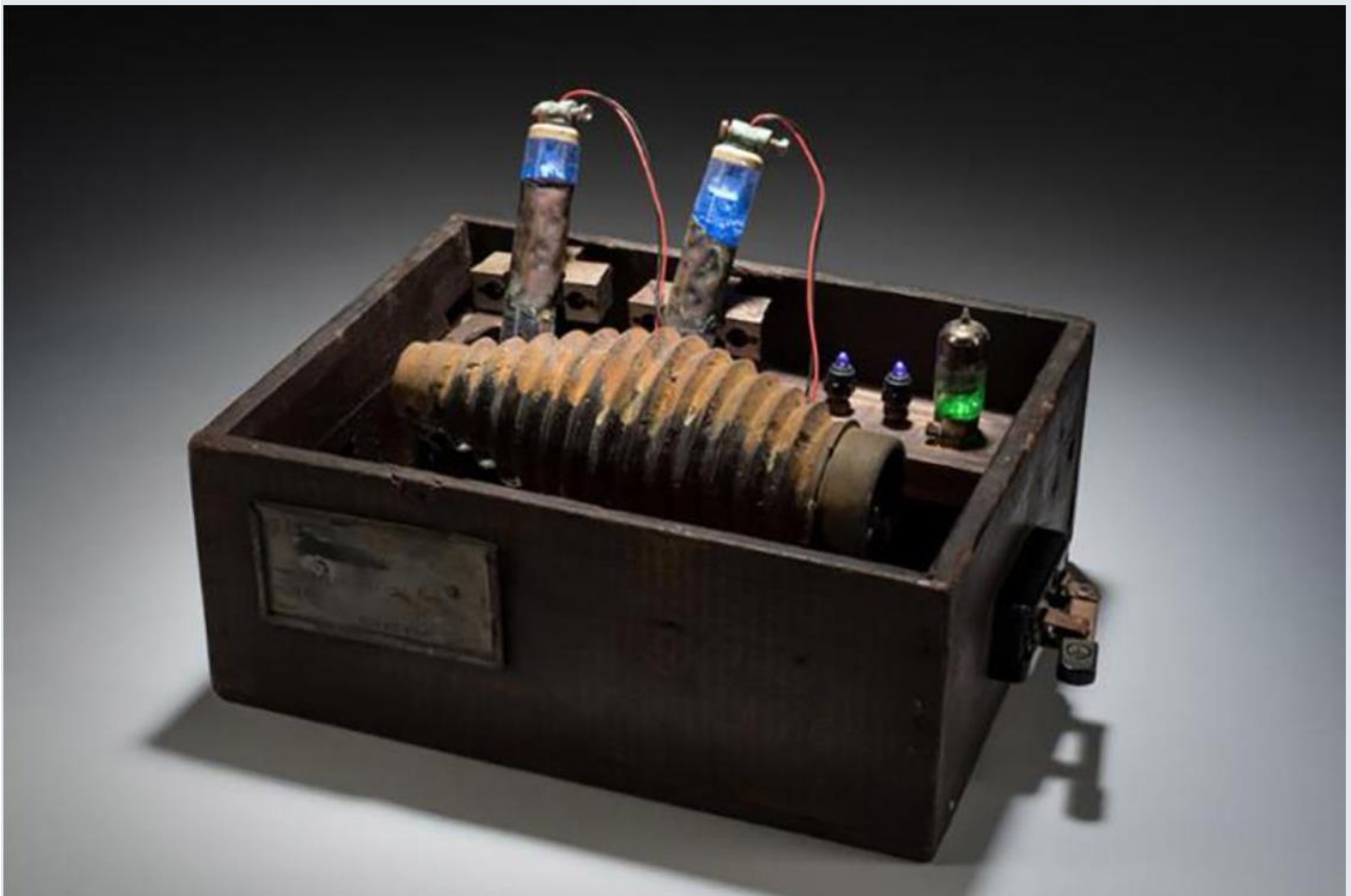


ARTS

Union College exhibit a fusion of science, history

30 historic scientific instruments on display, along with 6 works by contemporary artists

Bill Buell [@buell_bill](#) | January 11, 2018



Audrey Wilson, "Electroconvulsive Therapy," 2016, kiln cast glass, LEDs, found objects, wood.

PHOTOGRAPHER: PROVIDED

But William Gillespie, a civil engineering and math professor at the school back in the middle of the 19th century, would certainly be near the top of Lohnes' list.

"Probability and Uncertainty," a new exhibit in the Mandeville Gallery at Union, brings together 30 historic scientific instruments on display along with six works by contemporary artists, all focusing on

scientific themes. Many of the historic instruments in the show are in Union's collection thanks to Gillespie.

"This exhibition seeks to emphasize shared impulses found in the humanities and sciences then and now," said Lohnes. "Our fields are intertwined metaphorically, and tangibly, within these beautiful objects."

Many of the scientific instruments in the Union College collection are Olivier Models, made for French mathematician Theodore Olivier in Paris back in the 1830s. The items belong to Union thanks to the efforts of Gillespie.

"He purchased a lot of different things that were given to the college by his widow after his death in 1868," said Lohnes. "A lot of the string instruments in this collection were his."

While there are three paintings and a video in the exhibit, most of the pieces are three-dimensional items. The six contemporary artists who provided work for the exhibit are Aimee Burg, Neatrice Gaskins, Jessie Henson, Carter Hodgkin, Kirsten Kay Thoen and Audrey Wilson.

"These are artists that I've come to know over the years," said Lohnes, whose research took her to the National Museum of History, where she worked with curators from the division of medicine and science, and the Smithsonian's collections of physical sciences, mathematics and electricity. "Many of the artists were doing things that had scientific elements to them, so they were perfect for this exhibit."

The actual historical instruments in the exhibit were used by Union professors from 1855 to the turn of the century. They were then put in storage and discovered by William C. Stone, a math professor at Union between 1942 and 1991. Stone, a 1942 Union graduate, restored the items in the college's machine lab along with students Norman Thompson, David Strom and Gregory Mateja.