

**PUT IT THIS WAY:**  
**(Re)Visions of the Hirshhorn Collection**

# **ACCESSIBILITY BROCHURE**

Sound and Visual Descriptions

# **HIRSHHORN**

 Smithsonian



## EXHIBITION ENTRANCE

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### **Put It This Way: (Re)Visions of the Hirshhorn Collection**

#### **Visual Description:**

The entrance of *Put It This Way* features a large, bright, tangerine-colored title wall. From floor to ceiling, the color covers the entire wall. A large pink graphic says *Put It This Way* in capital letters. The *T* in *It* has an extra-long top line that extends to the exhibition doorway on the right. The *T* in *This* has a similar extended line, going the opposite direction to the lower left corner of the wall. Four long diagonal lines of lemon yellow crisscross the wall. Through the door, a brightly colored painted collage of a child is visible. This collage, by artist Deborah Roberts, is the first work visitors see when entering the first gallery.

**Wall Text:**

The exhibition *Put It This Way* brings together almost a century of art from the Hirshhorn's collection made exclusively by women and gender-nonconforming artists. Collectively, it serves as a demonstration of the breadth, vibrancy, and rigor of work by those who historically have been marginalized within the larger story of art. Yet it is also a prompt, to consider the complex ways that art and gender are intertwined, and the problems and possibilities of gender as a lens through which art might be appreciated and understood. If gender is impossible to understand apart from its connections with, for example, race and class, how do we understand it in relation to art, where categories of identity are frequently explored and challenged? Does an artist's gender inevitably imprint upon their work? What does it mean for a museum to revisit its collection according to gender? How does our own gendered experience in the world condition our experience of art?

These intersections and inquiries offer a point of departure in these galleries, where works by artists past and present, in varied media, both celebrated and underacknowledged, coexist in thematic groupings. The artists on view are looking everywhere; to gender, yes, but also color, history, perception, the body, technology, politics, the future, family, and inner life. Each approaches the relevance of gender in their own way, alternately embracing, contesting, or dismissing it altogether. If art can act as a viewfinder, then *Put It This Way* (titled from a 1963 painting by American artist Rosalyn Drexler) invites viewers to focus anew on the Hirshhorn's collection through the frame that gender provides: evocative, imperfect, and, like art itself, forever refusing to conform.

Organized by Anne Reeve, Associate Curator, with Alice Phan, Curatorial Assistant

*Put It This Way: (Re)Visions of the Hirshhorn Collection* has been made possible with major support from Sandra Masur and Scott Spector. Additional funding has been provided by the Hirshhorn International Council and Hirshhorn Collectors' Council.

This exhibition includes instances where artists have sometimes used violent images and language in order to critique society.

For sound and visual descriptions of the works on view, as well as full exhibition text, please visit <https://hirshhorn.si.edu/pitwaccess>. No device? Limited print and Braille versions are available for reference at the welcome desk in the lobby.

For unique videos of artists speaking about their work, use our award-winning art guide Hi wherever you see this symbol. Open [hi.si.edu](https://hi.si.edu), then point your phone at a work of art.

Discover special content for kids wherever you see this symbol. Want more? Grab a Kids Guide and find fun activities to do inside the exhibit. More events for kids can be found at <https://hirshhorn.si.edu/events/category/audience/hirshhorn-kids/>.

## GALLERIES 1 AND 2

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### Wall Text:

#### EYE, BODY

Much of Western art history is grounded in the image of the female body, long approached as an object to be posed, molded, and gazed upon by men. The first two galleries in this exhibition tackle this formula in opposition, through images of self and other made by women and gender-nonconforming artists. Some employ traditional female archetypes (Madonna and Whore, Ingenue and Crone) in order to examine and deconstruct them; others fracture these archetypes altogether in service of building newly complicated, at times humorous, and insistently challenging portrayals. Here the body is understood as a site of discovery and negotiation, constantly in formation and witnessed with frankness, empathy, and respect.

## **Rosalyn Drexler**

B. Bronx, New York, 1926

Left to right:

### ***Put It This Way***

1963

Oil and collage of printed papers on canvas

Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966 (66.1423)

### ***Where Is the Loot!***

1963

Oil and collage of printed papers on canvas

Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966 (66.1418)

### **Wall Text:**

The life of American artist Rosalyn Drexler reads like fiction: completely self-taught, she has been a powerlifter and wrestler (the latter under the pseudonym “Rosa Carlo, the Mexican Spitfire”), a lauded playwright and novelist, and a singular artist embedded within New York’s postwar avant-garde. All of Drexler’s work fixates upon the action of encounter; her paintings often borrow cinematic images of sex, romance, and violence—elements regularly confused and conflated in popular culture—which she pastes on canvas and then paints over. In *Put It This Way*, Drexler excerpts a harrowing, if magnetic, scene of a film star hitting a young starlet, taken from a poster for the film *Toys in the Attic* (1963). That same year’s *Where Is the Loot!* captures a similarly disturbing moment of Technicolor aggression. In both, Drexler insists on playing critically with gender and genre stereotypes and wryly points to the ways in which media toys with our understanding of identity and the world. She toys with it right back, reminding us that these glossy ideals can be as sinister as they are seductive.

## **Visual Descriptions:**

### ***Put It This Way***

Two figures are situated in the center of a large, vertically oriented rectangular painting with a bright blue background. One figure appears to be male and the other female. Both figures are painted in gray tones, but the man wears a blue tie and the woman is wearing a yellow dress. The man is wearing a suit and has short dark hair. He stands directly over the woman, his arm stretched across his body as though he has just moved it to strike the woman across the face. Her head is turned away from his hand toward the viewer. Her midlength, light-colored hair flies away from her body as though in motion.

### ***Where Is the Loot!***

On an approximately 2-foot-wide canvas, two figures are painted at the center of a bright red rectangle with a white border. The two figures are shown side by side from the chest up and appear to be in a struggle. The figure to the right, who appears to be a man, wears a dark suit with a red tie and gray hat. His skin is rendered in gray tones and his face is in profile, looking down toward the other figure. In the foreground, a person with light skin wearing a black hat and red shirt faces away from the viewer. Their arm is up, seemingly to block their face and/or attempt to grab the man's arm, which is holding a revolver. In the white border at the bottom of the canvas, the words "Where is the loot!" are printed on the left; the artist's signature is on the right.

**Deborah Roberts**

B. Austin, Texas, 1962

***Fighting the ISM***

2019

Mixed-media collage on canvas

Museum purchase with funds provided by The Basil Alkazzi Purchase Fund, 2021  
(2021.015)

**Wall Text:**

Deborah Roberts creates mixed-media collages that bring together images from books, magazines, newspapers, and the Internet, transforming them into nuanced representations of Black experience and challenging the conventional standards of beauty, gender, and race that persist in both art history and popular culture. The artist often works with images of children, as she believes their representation through media is less subject to entrenched prejudice. In *Fighting the ISM*, the young subject's composite face synthesizes both male and female features, as well as different skin tones, signaling the broad range of colors and identities encompassed by the term *Black*. Depicted against a stark white background that focuses attention immediately and exclusively upon its subject, the figure simultaneously projects vulnerability, strength, and defiance.

**Kids Label:**

Let your eyes wander, noticing the child's features. Can you find some that are painted and some that are photographs? Notice their clothing and pose. This portrait is titled *Fighting the ISM*. Often, words ending with the letters "ism" have to do with parts of a person's identity, such as their gender or skin color. Sometimes these "isms" can result in people being treated unfairly. Look at the child again. How does the artist show the child is "fighting the ISM"?

**Visual Description:**

In *Fighting the ISM*, a child sits with their legs crossed at the center of a stark white canvas. The child wears a striped shirt, gray pants, and bright red sandals. Their eyes look straight out at the viewer. The child reaches their arms forward with their palms facing out. The child's face is made from layered photographs of both male and female features, as well as different skin tones.



**Judy Dater**

B. Los Angeles, California, 1941

***Imogen and Twinka at Yosemite***

1974

Gelatin silver photograph

Gift of Herbert Lust, 2019 (2019.088)

**Wall Text:**

Judy Dater became known in the 1960s for creating striking black-and-white portraits that humanize her subjects with a profound sense of intimacy. In her most famous work, *Imogen and Twinka at Yosemite*, Dater captures two women encountering each other against the idyllic forest backdrop of California's Yosemite National Park. A play on the historical trope of the nymph in the forest, the choice of subjects is loaded and specific: the older figure holding a camera is Imogen Cunningham, a respected American photographer and Dater's mentor. Turning to look at her is a young ingenue in the nude: Twinka Thiebaud, one of the era's most successful models and a well-known cultural figure. Dater's portrait serves as a personal and startling look at voyeurism, caricaturizing a standoff between archetypes that—with a fair dose of humor—reckons with traditional portrayals of femininity. Rather than exposing or obscuring female subjectivity, here the gaze is feminized, multiplied, and complicated in a reciprocal and circular exchange.

**Visual Description:**

This small black-and-white photograph depicts two women standing near a large tree trunk. The woman on the left is older, with light skin and white hair pulled back in a head scarf. She has glasses and wears a long, thick gray dress, stockings, and black shoes. Around her neck is a large camera. In the foreground is a naked woman with her body facing the viewer and her face turned to look at the older woman to her right. The naked woman is younger, likely in her twenties or thirties, with light skin and light hair pulled back in a bun. Her arms are behind her back as she leans against the tree trunk with her left leg propped against it.

**Katharina Fritsch**

B. Essen, Germany, 1956

***Display Stand with Madonnas***

1987-1989

Aluminum, plaster, and paint

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 1999 (99.23)

**Wall Text:**

Artist Katharina Fritsch has often worked with mass produced objects from consumer culture, removing them from their original contexts and altering their scale, texture, and/or color to conjure both the familiar and the fantastical. The Virgin Mary has been a recurring figure in Fritsch's art since the early 1980s, and in this case the "original" source is itself a multiple: a souvenir of Our Lady of Lourdes sold at a pilgrimage site in France. For *Display Stand with Madonnas*, the artist created 288 identical plaster reproductions of the statuette, stacking them as if set out for sale in a department store. Painted an almost hallucinogenic yellow, the work becomes a mesmerizing shrine to the enduring iconography of the pure and selfless Virgin figure, and to its perpetual salability as commodified image. The work's overlapping associations call to the complex value systems that underpin our ideal versions of self and suggest how an image of femininity can be codified, packaged, and sold.

**Visual Description:**

This sculpture is a columnlike tower composed of stacked yellow Madonna figurines. Each figurine is approximately 12 inches in height. They are arranged in a circular pattern and are set atop one another. Nine tiers of figures are stacked in this circular pattern, making the

**Billie Zangewa**

B. Blantyre, Malawi, 1973

***A Vivid Imagination***

2021

Hand-stitched silk collage

Future gift of Mitchell and Joleen Julis

**Wall Text:**

Born in Malawi and now based in South Africa, Billie Zangewa uses silk to create collaged portraits of scenes from her daily life, describing a kind of “everyday feminism” in the sharing of intimate moments that women usually experience at home. *A Vivid Imagination* was made early in the 2020 pandemic lockdown as the artist navigated feelings of isolation and containment by staging a mini-“vacation” in her sun-soaked garden, putting on a swimsuit and using “my childlike imagination to transport myself to a place of rest.” The fact that the edges are frayed and irregular is deliberate: a condition the artist relates to entropy and the passage of time, as well as to the scars we gather as individuals in our ever-unfinished process of becoming whole. Here Zangewa manages to convey, through fabric, the warm, full sun of midday and the comfortable and composed resting enjoyment of a Black female subject—its own quiet demonstration of power.

**Visual Description:**

*A Vivid Imagination* is a large image of the artist made from collaged silk fabric. The work is roughly 4 feet tall and 6 feet wide. It is rectangular, with a section removed from the left side. Layered silk fabric of different colors makes up the image of the artist seated outside in her garden courtyard. The artist has dark skin and short, cropped hair. She wears sunglasses and a green bikini swimsuit with a white overshirt. She is seated upright on a patterned reclining chair and is surrounded by plants and beige walls. Pink flowers with green stems are in the foreground before the seated figure. A closed window appears in the top right corner.

## **Carolee Schneemann**

B. Fox Chase, Pennsylvania, 1939–2019

### ***Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions***

1963-1973

Gelatin silver photographs

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest and Purchase Funds and Holenia Purchase Fund, in memory of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 2007 (07.23)

#### **Wall Text:**

Carolee Schneemann's works in performance art, including such iconic pieces as *Meat Joy* (1964) and *Interior Scroll* (1975), are heralded as some of the most significant contributions to twentieth-century contemporary art and feminist practice, yet she was first a painter, working within the stylistic tropes of Neo-Dadaism and New York Abstract Expressionism. As she became increasingly frustrated with the inherent sexism of Western art history, and of the New York art scene in which she operated, she began to transform her work into a site where these imbalances could be addressed. *Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions* is the revolutionary work in which she became both image-maker and subject. This performance, and its photographic record by the Icelandic artist Erró, her longtime friend, shows her in various actions (one per frame): nude, in a makeshift studio, and covering herself with paint, grease, rope, plastic tarps, and garden snakes. Here Schneemann insists upon ownership of both her body and its reproduction.

#### **Visual Description:**

Twenty-seven small black-and-white photographs are arranged in an undulating pattern across a gray wall. Some photographs are horizontal and some are vertical. Each photograph is a slightly different size, but all images have a thick white border and an identical black frame. The black-and-white images each show the artist, a pale-skinned woman with dark hair, nude and covered variously in paint, chalk, ropes, and plastic. Each image documents a different action in which the artist manipulates various materials, such as mirrors, snakes, plastic tarps, and a broken umbrella. In some images, only the artist's body and the object she is manipulating can be seen in the image. In other images, the artist is seen in a studio space filled with tarps, stools, a mannequin, hanging canvas, and other art-making materials.

## **Senga Nengudi**

B. Chicago, Illinois, 1943

### ***R.S.V.P. X***

1976/2014

Nylon, sand, and rose petals

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2016 (16.7)

#### **Wall Text:**

Part of an influential Black avant-garde that coalesced in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s, Senga Nengudi operates at a generative artistic nexus among the conceptual, formal, performative, and political. Process and participation are especially significant in her approach, and her best-known series of works, *R.S.V.P. (Répondez s'il vous plaît, or "Respond, please")*, reflects upon the sense of perpetual call-and-response between an artwork and viewer (at times these works are also activated through movement by the artist Maren Hassinger, a longtime collaborator). Nengudi developed this series at the time of her first pregnancy, as she considered the body's ability to stretch, retract, and adapt. Everyday nylon pantyhose—associated with traditional expectations of femininity—act as a type of skin and are filled with sand and rose petals. The material creates a structure that is both pliable and taut, a sagging and stretching creature strangely anthropomorphized and abstracted. *R.S.V.P. X* calls to a female physicality that is both precarious and resilient, shouldering burden with tenderness and strength.

#### **Kids Label:**

Walk from one side of this sculpture to the other. Notice the material, nylon stockings that stretch to make long lines. How do you think this sculpture keeps its shape and balance? Keeping your body a safe distance from the artwork, pose like the sculpture, and imagine how it might feel to step inside it to move or dance in a performance.

#### **Visual Description:**

The artwork is made from chocolate-brown nylon pantyhose that stretch across the corner of a room, forming an asymmetrical letter X roughly the size of a human body. Two legs of the pantyhose stretch in opposite directions from the center of the object, connecting at a point on each wall a few feet from the corner. At the end of the lines, where the nylon meets the floor, are two bulbous, pear-sized forms made from sand that fills the nylon. At the center of the X, where the two lines of nylon connect, two stretched triangular forms meet. An oval form dangles from one of the triangles.

**Cecily Brown**

B. London, England, 1969

***Hoodlum***

2000-2001

Oil on canvas

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2001 (01.11)

**Wall Text:**

Cecily Brown is renowned for lush canvases that deftly marry abstraction, figuration, and a masterful knowledge of the history of art. *Hoodlum* (which was exhibited at the Hirshhorn in 2002–2003 as part of the artist’s first museum solo show) was made soon after she had moved to a new studio in New York City’s Meatpacking district, and the painting’s vibrant palette of reds, oranges, and browns recalls the scenes of viscera and blood that punctuated her new surroundings. Rather than revel in gore, however, this work evokes the body as a fleshy, sensual landscape. In the center of the canvas, part of a splayed nude figure begins to emerge, both exposed and filtered through the blur of riotous swaths of paint. Brown is particularly known for subverting painting’s hierarchical “figure to ground” relationship, and the figure here remains both visible and evasive, subsumed within the painting’s larger exploration of color, tone, and texture. *Hoodlum*’s tensions and sensations conjure a glimpse of physicality on the verge—never fully graspable, and whether cohering or dissolving, we cannot be sure.

**Visual Description:**

*Hoodlum*, a rectangular abstract painting, is over 6 feet tall and more than 7 feet wide, with swaths of vibrant reds, oranges, and browns spread across the canvas. The spread of paint evokes images of blood and carnage where red patches mix with flesh tones. In the center of the canvas, part of a splayed nude figure begins to emerge, both exposed and hidden in the blur of paint.

## **Ana Mendieta**

B. Havana, Cuba, 1948–1985

### ***Blood + Feathers***

1974

Single-channel video; color; silent; 03:57 min.

Gift of the Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection and an Anonymous Donor, 2005 (05.7)

**This video does not include sound.**

### **Wall Text:**

In her brief yet prolific career, artist Ana Mendieta worked in performance, video, photography, installation, and sculpture, often using her own body in the physical landscape as part of what she uniquely termed “earth-body” art. Mendieta arrived in the United States from Cuba in 1961 by way of Operation Pedro Pan, a mass effort by Cuban parents to remove their children from the country during Fidel Castro’s rule. She lived in foster care until she enrolled in the University of Iowa’s art program in 1969, and themes of displacement, explorations of the self, and a yearning to reconnect with her homeland appear throughout her life’s work. Her iconic *Siluetas* series, begun in 1973, was an inflection point: in these works, Mendieta turned away from painting in favor of work that used her body as both tool and canvas, either placing herself directly into the landscape or incising and sculpting her silhouette into the earth. *Blood + Feathers* stems from the *Siluetas* and stands as both artwork and a documentation of performative action, which uses raw footage of the artist both embedded within and rising from the ground.

**Visual Description:**

This video is shown on a flat-screen television monitor attached to a white wall at a little lower than eye level. The video opens with a black screen with capitalized text that fades in and out:

ANA MENDIETA

Blood + Feathers

September 1974

Old Man's Creek, Sharon Center Iowa

Thirty-three seconds in, the screen shows a nude woman, the artist Ana Mendieta, with light skin and dark hair, facing the camera. She stands in water that has a sandy and rocky shore visible in the foreground and background. A fallen tree is in the water behind the artist. She raises a dark vase in her right hand and pours a red liquid, presumably blood, down her left arm, torso, and leg. She continues to pour the liquid over her right side and the rest of her body until the vessel seems empty. She throws the vessel onto the ground and walks forward. She kneels and, starting with her head and arms, lowers her body onto the ground, pulling herself through a large pile of white feathers. She slowly twists around in the feathers, rolling onto her back and side to side. She uses her arms to pull feathers onto her stomach. She lies face-down in the feathers for a short time before sitting up on her knees facing the camera and pulling more feathers to her stomach. She stands with her arms out to either side and slowly walks backward and to the side of the pile of feathers. She stands with her arms slightly bent and outstretched.



## **Kiyan Williams**

B. Newark, New Jersey, 1991

Left to right:

### ***Meditation on the Making of America***

2019

Single-channel video; color; sound; 26:31 min.

Gift of Dr. Michael I. Jacobs, 2020 (2020.006)

### ***Meditation on the Making of America, Study***

2018

Soil and acrylic on canvas; 3 wooden panels

Gift of Dr. Michael I. Jacobs, 2020 (2020.005)

### **Wall Text:**

*Meditation on the Making of America* is a performance, captured on video, that viscerally conveys the nation's history of violence against Black bodies and land. Williams—a multidisciplinary artist who often employs soil in their work—flings and smears dirt onto a wall-mounted canvas; they occasionally pause to gather handfuls of the material from a coffinlike sculpture that contains a mask of the artist's face modeled from the same soil. After a few minutes, a second performer joins, throwing soil at Williams as they stand and kneel against the wall. As the performance continues, a makeshift map of the United States begins to take shape upon the canvas, alluding to the nation's history of extraction of labor from enslaved people on the one hand and of the earth's natural resources on the other. For the artist, this also becomes a kind of self-portrait, which speaks to the interdependence of nation-building and identity formation, whereby one both creates and is created by one's homeland. The soil in the performance was gathered from plantation ruins in St. Croix, where Williams's ancestors were enslaved, and from the grounds of a house that one such relative owned after she was emancipated. Here the video recording is shown alongside a study for the dirt-caked painting that Williams created during the performance.

**Sound Description:**

The video is predominantly silent, with occasional sounds of wet dirt dripping onto the floor and splattering onto the wall as the artist flings the soil. Sometimes the dirt hits the canvas with a loud thud.

**Visual Description**

Shown on a small screen built into a white box on a wall, *Meditation on the Making of America* is a performance captured in a twenty-six-minute video. The artist, Kiyan Williams, wearing white, with long black braids that almost reach the floor, flings and smears dirt onto a wall-mounted canvas; they occasionally pause to gather handfuls of the material from a coffinlike sculpture that contains a mask of the artist's face modeled from the same soil. After a few minutes, a second performer joins, throwing soil at Williams as they stand and kneel against the wall. As the performance continues, a makeshift map of the United States begins to take shape upon the canvas. For this installation, the video recording is shown alongside a study for the dirt-caked painting that Williams created during the performance.

To the right of the video screen, three large white pieces of paper in portrait orientation are hung next to one another, with small gaps among them. Together, these three separate panels create a solid, dark shape of the United States made from layered soil and acrylic paint. Soil and paint are also smeared and splattered behind the shape of the country.

**Loie Hollowell**

B. Woodland, California, 1983

***Boob Wheel***

2019

Oil, acrylic, sawdust, and high-density foam on canvas mounted on panel

Gift of Iris and Adam Singer, 2020 (2020.025)

**Wall Text:**

Loie Hollowell paints abstractions of the body designed to evoke sensory experience, using color as an emotional tool and geometry as a universal language. To echo the weighty curves of ancient fertility figures, she attaches spherical forms to her canvases, turning paintings into sculptural objects that reflect light and cast shadows onto their own surfaces. *Boob Wheel* is part of a series of paintings that visualize Hollowell's experience of pregnancy, birth, and postpartum motherhood, and its scale echoes that of her body with her arms outstretched. Here she distills the female form into five elements (head, breasts, belly, vulva, and butt) arranged in relation to lines of light that run vertically and horizontally through the composition. She employs the term "plumb line," referring to the gravitational pull felt in the body during pregnancy. Further standing in for the spine or the ground upon which the body rests, the plumb line also links the composition to sacred (often symmetrical) architecture, acting as an *axis mundi* (axis of the world) and connecting terrestrial and celestial realms.

**Visual Description:**

This painting is nearly 6 feet tall and over 4 feet wide—roughly the size of a person. The canvas has a muted gray and peach-colored background. Bright orange-red and blue shapes stacked from top to bottom create the suggestion of a body. The painting is nearly symmetrical: if divided in half vertically, the shapes and colors would be near mirror images. Centered at the top is a blue oval, which sits above a large, purplish-light red form resembling an upside-down U. This form extends toward the bottom of the canvas. Underneath it are two bright blue half ovals resembling breasts, side by side, that protrude from the canvas. Within the midsection and upside-down U is a shape resembling a pinwheel. Two stacked three-dimensional half circles compose the center of this shape, with light blue lines and red dots radiating outward.

## GALLERY 3

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### Wall Text:

#### NATURE AND ABSTRACTION

Alternately lyrical, muscular, and provocative, the artworks on view in this and the following gallery testify to the near limitless artistic potential where nature and abstract form converge. While abstraction has never been neutral or existed apart from individual and historical realities, for some female artists—especially those in the early and mid-twentieth century—it offered a way to deemphasize a gendered view and instead emphasize a *human* one, all while rejecting older artistic conventions that artificially separated human beings from their surroundings. Artists today continue to expand upon our relationships to the environment and investigate how abstraction might attempt to grasp the energy and complexity of the natural world—its magnitude and mysteries beyond language, but not recognition.

**Barbara Hepworth**

B. Wakefield, England, 1903–1975

***Reclining Figure***

1933

Alabaster on marble base

Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966 (66.2442)

**Visual Description:**

This sculpture, made from solid alabaster, is about the size of a large human foot (about 12 inches long and 7 inches high). Its smooth surface is milky white in color. The overall shape gives the impression of a wooden shoe or clog. On one half, the bottom of the form is rectangular, like a heel. Atop this rectangle is a slim and short cylinderlike stub. In the mid-bottom, a slim arc is cut out so that the bottom is not completely flat. This arc creates an opening through which the viewer can see through to the other side. From this arc, the other half of the sculpture is a rounded shape that extends from a deep dip in the center upward to the sculpture's full height.

## **Carlotta Corpron**

B. Blue Earth, Minnesota, 1901–1988

Bottom

### ***Light Follows Form***

1945–1946

Gelatin silver photograph

Gift of Herbert Lust, 2019 (2019.023)

Bottom:

### ***White Paper Shapes against White Background—Light from a Venetian Blind***

n.d.

Gelatin silver photograph

Gift of Herbert Lust, 2019 (2019.024)

### **Wall Text:**

Photographer Carlotta Corpron worked in Denton, Texas, but nonetheless aligned her practice with the tenets of the New York School, describing her camera in the way contemporaneous painters characterized gestural brushwork: as an unmediated channel for expression. In her words, “The camera became an extension of myself, and allowed me to express what I wanted to say with and about light.” Corpron produced a number of experimental black-and-white images that study light—the essential element of photography—and in so doing, defied conventional wisdom that the mechanical apparatus of the camera lends itself inherently to representation rather than abstraction or emotion. In *Light Follows Form* and *White Paper Shapes against White Background—Light from a Venetian Blind*, Corpron explores how light and shadow both interact with and are able to transform three-dimensional objects, rendering a new kind of poetry from the everyday.

**Visual Descriptions:**

These two photographs are stacked one on top of the other.

***Light Follows Form*** is on top. This black-and-white photograph is roughly the size of a standard sheet of paper and shows two amorphous three-dimensional forms resting against each other on a neutral surface. Lines of light and shadows fall diagonally across the forms and their surroundings.

***White Paper Shapes against White Background—Light from a Venetian Blind*** is below. This horizontal black-and-white photograph, also about the size of a standard sheet of paper, shows three amorphous two-dimensional forms situated on a white surface in front of a white wall. Lines of light and shadows cross the forms and curve along the white wall behind them.

**Jay DeFeo**

B. Hanover, New Hampshire, 1929-1989

***Reflections of Africa No. 7***

1987

Charcoal, acrylic, graphite, and oil pastel on paper

Gift of The Jay DeFeo Foundation in honor of James Demetrion, 2021 (2021.022)

**Wall Text:**

A central member of the Bay Area Beat circle in the 1950s and '60s, Jay DeFeo has long been known for her seminal painting *The Rose* (1958–1966), considered to be one of the great artworks of the twentieth century. Recent scholarship has sought to expand an understanding of the artist's practice, which included fluid engagement across disciplines such as drawing, collage, and photography, all deployed in an ongoing examination of both the outside world and her own inner life. *Reflections of Africa No. 7* is part of a series of works on paper completed just after the artist climbed Mount Kenya, the second-highest peak on the African continent. Though the drawing takes inspiration from a humble tissue box, its simple geometries are abstracted into flat planes and volumetric forms to create a sensation of deep space, amplifying strong contrasts between light and dark and conjuring something akin to a vast mountain landscape. She later stated that this series was prophetic, revealing an unconscious awareness of her coming diagnosis of lung cancer. In 1989, the year of her death, she said, "As I look back on this series of drawings, they almost seem to be kind of an internal view of that knowledge which I hadn't really known about, objectively speaking, at the time."

**Visual Description:**

The work is a small, dark black-and-white drawing. In the center, white lines and gradient create the illusion of two side-by-side triangles, one pointed up and a larger one pointed down. In the center of the right triangle is a black oval. The center of the oval is filled with bright white gestural marks.



## Barbara Hepworth

B. Wakefield, England, 1903–1975

1.

### ***Pendour***

1947-1948

Wood and paint on wood base

Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966 (66.2444)

3.

### ***Head (Elegy)***

1952

Mahogany and string on wood base

Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966 (66.2438)

### **Wall Text:**

A driving force of Modern sculpture and a pillar of twentieth-century British art, Barbara Hepworth approached the medium of sculpture as both a physical and metaphysical practice, and her works—often made by direct carving in wood or stone—are explorations of the symbiotic interrelationships between surface and core and objects and surrounding space. The Hirshhorn holds many significant works by Hepworth, including the early *Reclining Figure* (opposite wall), which shows the artist transitioning fully into abstraction and demonstrates her evocation of the sensuousness of material. A particularly pioneering gesture was piercing the form, as with the sinuous *Pendour*, which was named for a cove near the artist's home in St. Ives, Cornwall. Hepworth had moved with her family in 1939 to escape wartime destruction in London, and the dramatic Cornish landscape would become a significant presence within her subsequent work. *Pendour's* contours create their own almost cosmic geology, conjuring windswept cliffs and the ebb and flow of cresting waves. This evocation of continuum and reciprocity is furthered throughout Hepworth's oeuvre, as in the stringed *Head (Elegy)*, which synthesizes surreal, Constructivist, and geometric elements into a single elegant abstraction.

## **Visual Descriptions:**

### ***Pendour***

This work sits on a grayish-white rectangular pedestal, which in turn rests on a rounded grayish-white platform in the corner of the gallery. A “1” sign is in front of the pedestal. A little over 2 feet long, the wooden sculpture is roughly the shape of a peanut, with a rectangular wooden base. Circular craters have been carved into the exterior of the sculpture, each with a smaller hole in its center that opens to the center of the sculpture. The interior of the sculpture is painted in alternating cream and light blue, while the exterior wood is a rich, dark brown.

### ***Head (Elegy)***

This work sits on a gray rectangular pedestal on a rounded gray platform in the corner of the gallery. A “3” sign is in front of the pedestal. The work is a mahogany sculpture roughly twice the size of a human head. It is vertically oriented and connected to a wood base that is 1 1/2 inches thick. The work is sculpted in the round, with long circular holes smoothly carved into a rectangular form with rounded edges. On one side of the rectangular form, two long shapes run almost top to bottom and are separated by a thin strip of wood. In the center of each concave shape is a hole cut through the middle. The opposite side of the sculpture has two oval-shaped cutouts in the center, with a thicker strip of wood separating them. Across each of the holes, lines of string connect to a single point on an inner wall and fan out to connect to the outline of the shape on the opposite side.

## **Lee Bontecou**

B. Providence, Rhode Island, 1931

2.

### ***Untitled (Cocoon)***

1967

Silk, balsawood, and metal

Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1972 (72.37)

#### **Wall Text:**

Within the annals of postwar American art, Lee Bontecou is renowned for her decisive early success—in the words of historian Calvin Tomkins, “only a handful of male artists broke from the starting gate as strongly as she did in the nineteen-sixties, and no woman came close”—and her equally declarative “disappearance” from the art world in the 1970s, when she moved to rural Pennsylvania and stopped exhibiting regularly (though she never stopped working, and taught at Brooklyn College for many years). *Untitled (Cocoon)* dates from a period prior to this departure, when Bontecou was experimenting with balsawood and transitioning from the wall reliefs for which she was best known into forms more tied to the natural world. Her practice has often explored the connections between technology and environment, in particular the phenomenon of flight; here the suspended form evokes both a cocoon and an aerial machine, calling forth the myriad intricacies, mysteries, and powers at play within our natural and industrial worlds.

#### **Visual Description:**

This work sits on a gray rectangular pedestal on a rounded gray platform in the corner of the gallery. A “2” sign is in front of the pedestal. This nearly 5-foot-tall sculpture consists of an object suspended in the center of a three-dimensional rectangular metal frame. This large teardrop-shaped object hangs from two silk wires that are attached to the top center of the frame. The hanging object is composed of a long yellow and black tube that has been folded in half and suspended by its ends, creating a gap. Metal wire frames the interior of the teardrop shape, and a smaller yellow teardrop shape at the center mimics the larger form of the object.

**Helen Lundeberg**

B. Chicago, Illinois, 1908–1999

***Arcanum #2***

1968

Acrylic on canvas

The Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest, 1981 (86.3080)

**Wall Text:**

A cofounder of the Southern California-based movement known as Post-Surrealism, Helen Lundeberg viewed abstraction as a way to touch upon deeper meaning and sensation within everyday life, and *Arcanum #2* (*arcana* meaning secrets or mysteries) merges a lyrical poetics with a complex investigation of geometric form. The painting is set against a light background and uses layers of color to create an illusion of depth reminiscent of a stained-glass window. Lundeberg's later work is often explicitly tied to landscape, presaged here by the work's commingling of architectural and natural sensations. Its precise contours and interplay of line manage to create a feeling of expansive physical space, straddling reality and imagination. In her words, "My work has been concerned, in varying modes of pictorial structure and various degrees of representation and abstraction, with the effort to embody, and to evoke, states of mind, moods, and emotions."

**Visual Description:**

This large, square painting is 5 feet tall and 5 feet wide. In its center is a large oval with a thick tan outline in its center and a light cream-colored background. The top and bottom of the oval run off the top and bottom of the canvas. In the middle of the oval, layers of lines outline other, elongated ovals reminiscent of the plastic rings that hold canned drinks together. These lines are layered to create the illusion of depth, with tan in front of espresso brown in front of dark blue. A muted royal blue is behind all of the other colored lines in the oval.

**Joan Mitchell**

B. Chicago, Illinois, 1925–1992

***Field for Skyes***

1973

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David T. Workman, 1975 (75.20)

**Wall Text:**

Joan Mitchell had already garnered critical acclaim as a seminal gestural painter when she began to split her time between New York and Paris in the mid-1950s, and she would live primarily in France for the rest of her life while producing one of the twentieth century's most celebrated bodies of work. The almost overwhelming *Field for Skyes* was one of several triptychs Mitchell painted in 1973, and it was shown at the artist's landmark one-woman retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1974. An immense and magnetic convergence of color, movement, and feeling, the work seems to suggest not only the enormity of landscape, but also the smallness one feels when subsumed by an expanse of sky or a field disappearing into the distance. The sublime, as traditionally understood through the historical genre of landscape painting, aimed to tap sensations too vast to fully quantify or articulate, and Mitchell describes a similar attempt to grasp at something ephemeral: "I paint from remembered landscapes I carry with me—and remembered feelings of them, which of course become transformed. I could certainly never mirror nature. I would more like to paint what it leaves with me."

**Visual Description:**

*Field for Skyes* is a large painting composed of three side-by-side rectangular canvases. The painting sits centrally on a large wall, filling the viewer's field of vision. The background is a muted white, with soft tones of blush pink, butter yellow, and sky blue. The lower two-thirds of each canvas are filled with imperfect rectangular blocks of dark evergreen, marigold orange, and periwinkle. Smaller, triangular blocks of rose pink, blush pink, and soft blue are scattered toward the bottom of the canvas. The surface of the painting is thickly layered with paint in places; in others, large white spaces create bright openings. Near the bottom, long drips of paint are visible in shades of dark pink, bright aqua, and blush.

## **Alma Thomas**

B. Columbus, Georgia, 1891–1978

From left to right:

### ***Earth Sermon—Beauty, Love and Peace***

1971

Acrylic on canvas

(80.107)

### ***Sky Light***

1973

Acrylic on canvas

Gift of Vincent Melzac, 1975 (75.26)

### **Wall Text:**

Alma Thomas was an instigator of firsts: the first fine arts graduate of Howard University (in 1924) and, at the age of eighty, the first Black woman to hold a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. In between, Thomas was a significant fixture of an energetic art scene in Washington, DC, where she also worked as a public-school teacher for close to thirty years. *Sky Light* and *Earth Sermon—Beauty, Love and Peace* both date from the era of Thomas’s Whitney exhibition and demonstrate the liveliness and syncopation of her best-known, beloved, and exuberant abstraction (a style she came to later in life, only after her retirement from teaching). Thomas approached color as the foundational element of her work, and often it was nature that served as muse: “Man’s highest aspirations come from nature. A world without color would seem dead. Color is life. Light is the mother of color. Light reveals to us the spirit and living soul of the world through colors.” Ultimately, Thomas insisted upon art—and abstraction—as a manifestation of beauty and joy, a place to find solace and rejoice.

### **Kids Label:**

Choose one color to focus on in *Earth Sermon—Beauty, Love and Peace*. How many places can you find it? Now step back and look at all the colors. Notice patterns within the colors and shapes. What feeling does this painting give you? Think about the artwork’s title and the idea of this painting as an “Earth Sermon” on the topics of beauty, love, and peace. A sermon is an inspirational speech. If you could create a painted sermon, what would your topic be?

## **Visual Descriptions:**

### ***Earth Sermon—Beauty, Love and Peace***

The painting contains fifty-six vertical bands of color, arranged in linear fashion with a bricklike pattern. In each row, the widths of the bands vary, so that the white background peeks through. From left to right, the color order is as follows: brown, purple, two red, orange, yellow, green, two navy blue, light blue, olive green, gray, purple, two dark pink, three red, orange, two yellow, two gray, two light blue, purple, green, purple, three red, two light pink, pale red, purple, yellow, two orange, two yellow, two orange, four red, green, two light blue, purple, two light pink, purple, yellow, orange, and pale orange.

### ***Sky Light***

On a vertically oriented canvas a little over 5 feet high, splotches of irregular royal blue shapes are painted across the entire canvas. The shapes almost completely cover the white background, which is slightly visible between them.

**Lesley Vance**

B. Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1977

***Untitled***

2021

Oil on linen

Future Gift of Iris and Adam Singer

**Wall Text:**

Lesley Vance creates sweeping abstract paintings with a palpable sense of continuity and flow. Her surfaces deftly weave light and shadow, color and form, background and foreground into a heady mix that can appear to vibrate in front of the eyes like an optical illusion. She achieves this effect by working intuitively and improvisationally, following both material and movement, until—as she describes it—the painting develops its own independent logic. *Untitled* demonstrates this negotiation between control and a relinquishing of it, seeming to generate its own feeling of ceaseless energy and reminiscent of natural phenomena such as breath, gravitational pull, wind, or water. Vance refrains from titling any of her works, as she wishes viewers to come to them openly and follow their own interpretations and sensations. This choice also, perhaps, reflects a respect for the painting’s independence, its unique life force. In her words, “You want the painting to feel like it just fell out of the sky, and . . . was meant to exist that way.”

**Visual Description:**

A medium-sized painting, almost 3 feet high and 2 feet wide, shows swirls of brightly colored paint layered on a linen canvas. Flowing patches of bright yellow, sky blue, and white, with a fire-engine red outline, weave around, over, and across the canvas. Some of the patches are clearly defined, and others blur together.



**Arlene Shechet**

B. New York, New York, 1951

***Ripple and Ruffle***

2020

Glazed ceramic, hardwood, sand-cast brass, and steel

Gift of Mickalene Thomas, 2022

**Wall Text:**

Incorporating both natural and industrial materials, *Ripple and Ruffle* energetically manifests what artist Arlene Shechet describes as an ongoing tension between “the wild and the tame.” The work’s central trunk was salvaged from a friend’s walnut tree and reveals a swath of insect “drawings” on its surface. The trunk is topped and seemingly tipped by a ceramic rectangular block, alternately painted black and with a camouflage-like glaze, and a gash in its side is filled with a small sheet of plywood (a slight nod to the pretense of wood, as plywood is not fully wood), which is finished with a rippled edge—as though the plywood is fancifying itself for show. A brass “limb” (another element posing as wood) branches out from the base of the trunk, serving as a literal counterweight for the larger composition. As a sculptural object, the work is endlessly evocative, shifting dramatically from viewpoint to viewpoint. Yet it also calls to a history of classical sculpture and the torqued or contrapposto stance characteristic of ancient statuary. Shechet has always found humor in the posturing of these leaning (mainly male) hero figures, often propped at the base by the form of a wooden branch made to appear “natural” within the overall composition. With its many guises, *Ripple and Ruffle* thus becomes a winking antihero for the twenty-first century: no pushover, with power, poetry, and a lively sense of play.

**Visual Description:**

This freestanding sculpture is made from natural and manmade materials. The center of the sculpture is a broken walnut tree trunk that was dried in a wood kiln over several months, eventually revealing insect “drawings” on its surface. A horizontal gash in the lower third of the trunk has been filled with a small sheet of plywood, which was finished with a rippled edge. The trunk is topped and seemingly tipped by a rectangular ceramic block, alternately painted with black and a camouflage-like glaze. A brass “limb” (another element posing as wood) branches out from the base of the trunk, serving as a literal counterweight for the larger composition, the entirety of which is anchored on a steel plate.

## GALLERY 4

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### **Diana Thater**

B. San Francisco, California, 1962

### ***Oo Fifi, Five Days in Claude Monet's Garden, Parts 1 and 2***

1992

Four-channel video installation with wall text

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2014 (14.14)

**This video does not contain sound.**

### **Wall Text:**

A watershed early work by pioneering video artist Diana Thater, the immersive *Oo Fifi* dates from a 1991 residency during which Thater lived at Claude Monet's former home at Giverny and took regular walks to record video footage in the Impressionist's famous gardens. In Thater's words, Monet viewed his gardens as "essentially an artist's palette" where he "pulled the colors of paint apart in order to make paintings that are literally about light." Her own exploration of light follows in step: here Thater separates the original footage into its component colors, red, green, and blue, which she projects in the first gallery through a single projector (*Part 1*) and through three separate projectors in the gallery adjacent (*Part 2*). The work's final component is an index of all the flowers that were growing in the gardens while Thater filmed, reproduced exactly as notated on the garden labels, abbreviations, mistakes, and orientation markers included. Together, *Oo Fifi* is an ecstatic ode to the possibilities of color, bringing not only the film's subject, but also the medium's processes and apparatus to the fore. Thater—much like the Impressionists, and using the tools of her time— calls attention to the ways in which we mediate sensory information, continually unmaking and remaking our image of the world.

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**FLOWER INDEX**

**Left column:**

Acanthus (Acanthaceae) *S center*  
 Acidanthena (Iridaceae) *NW*  
 Age Vain (Danube Bleu) *SE corner*  
 Amarantoide (pour pre) *center*  
 Anacyclus (depressus) *S end*  
 Armeria (glorie de dusseldorf) *SE*  
 Arundinaria (Gramineae) *SW*  
 Asclepias (Asclepiadaceae) *S end*  
 Asperula (Odorata) *S end*  
 Astilbe (saxifragaceae) *etang*

Berberis (Berberidaceae) *center*

Catananche (Composees) (caerulea) *SE*  
 Celosie pl Hau (Forest Fire) *E end*  
 Centauree Barbeau (cyanus double bleu) *S*  
 Cercis (l'egumineuse) *NW*  
 Chry Coronarium (Double Hel) *N end*  
 Chry Paludosum (Blanc) *SW corner*  
 Cistus Cyprus *E*  
 Clematite (a grandes fleurs twilight) *W end*  
 Clematite (Mme. Lecoultre) *SE center*  
 Coreopsis (composees) *SW corner*  
 Coreopsis (Eleve Grand) *W center*  
 Cotinus (anacardiaceae) *N*  
 Cotoneaster (rosaceae) *W*  
 Cuphea (Ignea) *SE*

Dabocea (Scotica William buchanan) *Etang*  
 Daboecia (cantabrigia globose ping) *etang*  
 Dahlia (Cactus M.E. Sawyer) *S end*  
 Dahlia (composees) (Pompon grenat) *W end*  
 Dahlia (composees) (promise) *N center*  
 Dahlia (pirouette) *S*  
 Dahlias (composee) *SW*  
 Del. Imperial (O Bleu-Spire) *NE center*  
 Delphinium (Renonculaceae) (century) *SW*  
 Dianthus (caryophyllaceae) (Barbatus) *SW*  
 Dianthus (caryophyllaceae) (Newport Pink) *E center*  
 Digitalis (soraphulariaceae) *E end*

Echinaceae (compositae) *W end*  
 Entourage *NW corner*

Forsythia (Oleaceae) *S center*  
 Fuchsia (onotheraceae) magellanica *NE*

Gazania Mef (Daybreak) *NE*  
 Geranium (de bouture zonale) *SW center*  
 Geranium (Schone Helena) *N end*  
 Ginkgo Biloba *SW center*  
 Galidolus (Classic) *SW*  
 Galidolus (iridaceae) *NE center*

**Middle column:**

Hemerocallis (liliaceae) (Iron gate glacier) *NW*  
 Heracleum (ombellifere) *SW end*  
 Huf Sonnet (Blanc) *SE*  
 Hydrangea (saxifragaceae) *N end*

Impatiens (Accent Saumon) *W*  
 Impatiens (Balsaminaceae) *etang*  
 Impatiens (Rose d'Supertresor) *E end*  
 Iris (Iridaceae) (Germanica Fifty Grand) *SW*  
 Iris (Iridaceae) (Germanica Henry Shaw) *N*  
 Iris (Iridaceae) (Germanica Son of Star)  
 Iris W (Iridaceae) (germanica Brightside) *W*  
 Iris (Iridaceae) (germanica Bristol Gem) *N*  
 Iris (Iridaceae) (germanica Night Laughter) *S*  
 Iris (Iridaceae) (germanica Sterling Silver) *N*  
 Iris (Iridaceae) (germanicus Glistening Snow) *W*  
 Iris (Iridaceae) (germanicus Golden Delight) *W end*  
 Iris (Iridaceae) (Lilac Haze) *etang*  
 Iris (Iridaceae) (Xiphion Hildegard) *E*  
 Iris (Iridaceae) *NW corner*

Laratree (Lovliness) *etang*  
 Laratree (Mont Blac) *SE*  
 Laratree (Silver cup) *NW corner*  
 Lathyrus (Legumineae) (Eleanor) *E end*  
 Liatris (composee) *SW end*  
 Lilium (Liliaceae) *etang*

**Middle column (cont.):**

Malope (Malvacees) *SW end*

Meconopsis (papaveracees) *etang*

Mirabilis (Nyctaginacees) *SW end*

Narcissus (Amaryllidaceae) Gr. Coupes) *SW end*

Narcissus (Amaryllidaceae) (Scarlet Elegance) *E end*

Nerine (Amaryllidacees) *SW end*

Nigella (Renonculacees) (hispanica) *N*

Ornithogalum (Liliaceae) *etang*

Ouillet Minde Jaune (cupidon) *E end*

Ouillet Minde Jaune (legion de honneur) *W*

Papaver (Catherina) *SW end*

Papaver (garden glory) *S end*

Papaver (lighthouse) *SE*

Papaver (papaveraceae) (derwisch)

Papaver (papaveraceae) (Grave. Witwe) *E end*

Papaver (papaveraceae) (juliane) *SW end*

Papaver (papaveraceae) (Suleika) *center*

Papaver (papaveraceae) *NW corner*

Papaver (Rhoeas) *etang NW corner*

**Right column:**

Passiflora (passifloraces) *SW end*

Pavot 4 Dislande (Gartenzwerg Melange) *W*

Petasites (composees) *W end*

Petu G.F.S. (Spring Blue) *SW end*

Portlandrea ( Souvenir de MacKinley) *W*

Portlandrea (Miranda) *NW corner*

Portlandrea (Rose de Roi) *center*

Rhododendron (ecicacees) *center*

Roi Madeleine ( Bleu Fonce) *NW*

Rosa (Betty Herholdt Blanc) *etang*

Rosa (Ingrid Bergman) *NW corner*

Rosa (Messagerie) *SW end*

Rosa (PDT Leopola Senghor) *SW end*

Rosa (pink) *SW end*

Rosa (Robust Nirpaysage) *N*

Rosa (Rosaceae) (Cent. Mucosa) *SW end*

Rosa (Rosaceae) (Mistress Harkness) *SW end*

Rosa (Rosaceae) (Mr. Lorient de Barny) *N*

Rosa (Rosaceae) (Pink Cloud) *etang*

Rosa (Rosaceae) Mm. Lucien Chaire) *E*

Rosa (Rosaceae) (Golden Showers) *SW end*

Rosa (Rosaceae) *E end*

Rosa (sissi) *E*

Rose I Eleve (Golden Jubilee) *SE*

Rose In Eleves (Orange Lady) *NE*

Rose Inde Eleves (Double Eagle) *etang*

Rosier (Nil Bleu) *SW end*

Rosier (White Dorothy Perkins) *SW end*

Rosier grim pant (Veilchenblau) *E end*

Rosier Tige (vent d'ete) *NW corner*

Rud O (marmalade) *SW end*

Salp: Glossis (Emperou SuperBissima) *N*

Salvia *NW corner*

Santolina (composees) *SW end*

Saponaire (caryophyllacees) *E*

Scabieuse Natur (Double Hel) *etang*

Staphylea (staphyleacees) *etang*

Statis Sinwata (Rose) *SW end*

Tabac Nicki (Rose Hi Fi) *SW end*

Tabac Nicki (Rouge Intense) *N*

Taxodium (Taxodiacees) *NW corner*

Tithonea (Torche) *NE*

Tulipa (Liliacees) *SW end*

Tulipa (Liliacees) (Per Black Parrot) *N*

Tulipa (liliacees) (Frangees Arma) *SW*

Tulipa (liliacees) (Princess Margreth) *center*

Tulipa (liliacees) (Trs. Aureola) *etang*

Verbascum (Scrophularacees) *SW end*

Verviene Naine (Etoile Bleue) *endx*

**Visual Description:**

A video installation in two parts, this work partially fills two small gallery spaces that are separated by a white partition wall. In each space, a large projection fills the back wall. Footage of flower gardens is separated into its component colors, red, green, and blue, which are projected in the first gallery through a single projector (*Part 1*) and through three separate projectors in the gallery adjacent (*Part 2*). In *Part 1*, with the single projector, the colors of the video spill onto the side walls and are overlaid so it appears slightly blurred. In *Part 2*, with three projectors each showing the red, green, and blue versions of the video, the image stays within the bounds of the wall, and the three overlaid projections are stitched together and unified. The final component of the installation is an index of all the flowers growing in the gardens where the artist filmed, reproduced exactly as notated on the garden labels, abbreviations, mistakes, and orientation markers included. This text is installed in a small niche at the end of the gallery, which is bathed in a bright pink light that spreads over the surrounding walls and floor.

## GALLERY 5

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### Wall Text:

#### THE POETRY OF PERCEPTION

It can seem a paradox that much art traditionally thought of as cool and cerebral is concerned with exactly the opposite: extreme sensation and the complex mental/physical duality that unlocks our experience of art. By emphasizing form and materiality, the artists in this gallery ask viewers to look closely, listen, and pay attention to the ways in which individual bodies move through space, absorb, and process information. Is an object something one experiences only with the eyes? How does shifting perspective shift understanding? How do light and color condition feeling? Can an abstract form convey emotion? Memory? Place? In the words of painter Agnes Martin, whose work is on view in this gallery, “Art work that is completely abstract—free from any expression of the environment is like music and can be responded to in the same way. Our response to line and tone and color is the same as our response to sounds. And like music abstract art is thematic. It holds meaning for us that is beyond expression in words.”

## **Mary Bauermeister**

B. Frankfurt, Germany, 1934

Left to right:

### ***In Memory of the Stone-Arrow-Error (Stone Series)***

1962-1967

Stones, ink, and gesso on canvas mounted on wood

The Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest, 1981 (86.262)

### ***308,975 Times No . . . Since . . .***

1966

Glass lenses, wood, ink, and paint

The Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest, 1981 (86.267)

### ***4 Pages Yes and 1 No?***

1965

Ink and pencil on transparent paper

The Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest, 1981 (86.265)

### ***In Memory of Your Feelings, or Hommage à Jasper Johns***

1964-1965

Glass lenses, wood, ink, and paint

Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966 (66.399)

## **Wall Text:**

Mary Bauermeister moved to New York from Cologne in the early 1960s, inspired by the example of American artists such as Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, whose work—among other things—synthesized painting and sculpture. Her own work encompasses multiple media and a range of concerns including nature, science, politics, music, and mathematics, all mobilized in an ongoing exploration of the phenomenon of perception. She is especially well known for her “lens boxes,” lively compositions that combine glass lenses with minutely detailed drawings rendered on both flat and round surfaces, creating a surreal space where vision is magnified and distorted. Each of her works is a heady mix of the physical and the illusory: in her words, “The wonderful thing is that when you move by as a viewer the background changes, or if you go back and forth you get a different focus and you see different things. Whatever I write or paint on the background becomes more ambiguous. I don’t like fixed statements, I don’t like dogmas,

that is why my artistic slogan is  $1+1=3$ . Things are not only the way we think they are, they have a big variety of answers.”

### **Visual Descriptions:**

#### ***In Memory of the Stone-Arrow-Error (Stone Series)***

Stones are placed in lines across a square wood panel roughly the size of a sheet of paper. The stones in each line are about the same size, but each line grows smaller as it proceeds down the image. The largest stones, at the base of the stacks atop the work, are roughly the size of quarters, and the smallest stones, atop the stacks, are the size of dimes. The base stones that make up the line at the bottom of the work are roughly the size of a grain of rice. There is a triangular break in the lines of stones on the right side of the panel. This space, with a cream background, contains black line drawings of three hands holding small stacks of stones between thumb and forefinger. Bubble letters spelling “STONE” emerge from the hand at the top of the triangle. On each hand, the word “stone” is written in various languages.

#### ***308,975 Times No . . . Since . . .***

A 25-by-25-inch white wooden box is oriented toward the viewer. A smaller, recessed box is set off-center within it. Inside the recessed square are glass lenses in the shape of half-spheres. They vary in size, from about 3 inches to one-fourth of an inch. Some are transparent, while others are coated white and have a gray tiger-stripe pattern drawn on them. Two of the patterned lenses are highlighted in orange. A wavy frame about 5 centimeters wide has been drawn around the smaller box, which also contains drawings of various magnifications of the tiger-stripe pattern, and drawings of circles with and without the pattern. Orange highlights appear here as well. The lenses in the box are all coated white and are slightly larger than the lenses in the recessed frame. Some have the pattern on them. The word “no” is written in tiny lettering in different languages across the various surfaces of the piece. In certain places, other words appear in several languages, such as “peut-être” (French, which translates to “maybe”).

#### ***4 Pages Yes and 1 No?***

Four sheets of legal-sized transparent paper are arranged in a grid. Each sheet includes words written in black.



On the top left sheet, “YES” is set six times in big, wiggly letters in two uneven lines, three words on top and three on bottom. Each “YES” is composed of tiny, handwritten, lowercase letters reading “no.”

On the top right sheet, “YES” appears four times in wiggly letters set in an uneven square, two words on top and two on bottom. Here, too, each “YES” is composed of tiny, handwritten, lowercase letters reading “no.”

On the bottom left sheet, “YES” is set six times in big, wiggly letters in two uneven lines, three words on top and three on bottom. Again, each “YES” is made up of many tiny repeated “nos.” Squeezed below the bottom middle “YES” is a large, wiggly “NO,” composed of tiny “nos” in the top half of the word and “yeses” in the bottom half.

On the bottom right sheet, “YES” appears twice in large, wiggly letters, again composed of many tiny, handwritten, lowercase “nos.”

### ***In Memory of Your Feelings, or Hommage à Jasper Johns***

The work is a vertically oriented white box roughly 2 1/2 feet high and 2 feet wide. The box is about 7 inches deep. Inside the recessed box are round half-circle glass lenses floating at different depths behind a glass pane. Some lenses are attached to the inside of the box frame. The lenses vary in size, from a few inches wide to smaller than a dime. Some are transparent, while others are coated in white and covered with black-and-white ink drawings. Words are written on a few of them. At the back of the box, behind all the lenses, is a black-and-white drawing of lines, shapes, letters, numbers, and scribbles. Small red, orange, blue, tan, and yellow highlights appear inside and around some of the ink lines. The lenses set before the drawing magnify and distort some of its details.

## **Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian**

B. Qazvin, Iran, 1924–2019

### ***Untitled***

1975-1976

Mirror, reverse-glass painting, and plaster on wood

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2016 (16.2)

### **Wall Text:**

Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian's work exhibits her unique vantage point as an Iranian artist who lived in both Tehran and New York and cultivated an awareness of the affinities between traditional Persian art and the contemporary Western avant-garde. After a 1966 visit to the mosaic-encrusted Shah Cheragh Shrine in Shiraz with fellow artists Robert Morris and Marcia Hafif, Farmanfarmaian began experimenting with cut-mirror mosaic, enlisting the help of master craftsman Hajji Ostad Mohammad Navid to realize her ambitious designs. She worked in this mode throughout the 1970s, gradually shifting away from representation toward complex tessellated works based on spiritual geometry. She described *Untitled*, created in the midst of this shift, as "a background filled of sky and stars and, in the middle, a box of heaven." It is a rare extant example of Farmanfarmaian's artwork from before the 1979 Iranian Revolution, when the government confiscated most of her work and forced her into exile.

### **Kids Label:**

Close your eyes and imagine a place where you feel peaceful. What colors and shapes do you see? Now look closely to see how many colors and shapes you can find in this mirrored mosaic. What does this mosaic remind you of? Artist Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian described this work as "a background filled of sky and stars and, in the middle, a box of heaven."

**Visual Description:**

This abstract artwork contains intricate geometric designs set in a mirrored, mosaic-like pattern. At its center is a three-dimensional rectangular shape painted in an amoebic pattern of blue, green, and orange. A white border surrounds the rectangle. Behind the rectangle is a six-pointed star composed of interlocking squares of mirrored tile, with splatters of gray and black. Surrounding the star are cubelike dimensional shapes. Most are mirrored tile, while the rest are also patterned in blue, green, and orange. From different angles, the patterns in the artwork resemble triangles and diamonds. As a viewer passes in front of the work, their body and surrounding artworks are reflected in the mirrors.

**Liz Deschenes**

B. Boston, Massachusetts, 1966

***Untitled (LeWitt) #1***

2016

UV print on plexiglass

Gift of Benjamin Reed Hunter, 2020 (2020.026)

**Wall Text:**

Liz Deschenes is fascinated by the metaphors and materials of photography, not only such elements as photosensitive papers, chemistry, and light reactions and exposure, but also the evolving life of a photograph over time and the almost instinctual desire—especially in an age of iPhones—to stop or “fix” time in an image. *Untitled (LeWitt) #1* is part of a series that responds directly to the work of Conceptual artist Sol LeWitt, in particular to a group of 666 photographs titled *On the Walls of the Lower East Side*, wherein he captured images around his downtown Manhattan neighborhood. Like the walls that he documented, LeWitt’s photographs have now faded, and Deschenes’s work, which like all photography is also vulnerable to fading, calls us to face (at literal standing height) the impossibility of arresting these life cycles. The freestanding acrylic monochrome is made without a camera, using digital pigment printing, and is a photo-sculpture hybrid meant to be viewed in the round. The magenta shade recalls a hue from LeWitt’s faded photographs, emitting an elegiac rosy glow that clouds our view, and which we can never fully grasp.

**Visual Description:**

Standing directly on the gallery floor, the work consists of a large white frame holding a rose-colored print. The frame is 7 feet high, 3 feet wide, and 6 inches deep—roughly the size and shape of a big door. The work is freestanding, so the viewer is able to move around it. One side of the pink surface is glossy and slightly reflective, while the other is more matte. From both sides, the surface seems neither totally opaque nor totally transparent.

**Eva LeWitt**

B. Spoleto, Italy, 1985

***Untitled (Orange Oval)***

2019

Polyurethane foam and plastic

Gift of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York (Hassam, Speicher, Betts and Symons Funds, 2019), 2020 (2020.013)

**Wall Text:**

Using a light touch and a nimble eye, Eva LeWitt explores the formal properties and evocative potential of everyday materials. As opposed to the cool, machinelike tone embraced by many Minimalist artists of the postwar era, LeWitt's practice brings a concern with industrial materials into the twenty-first century, experimenting in an intimate and playful way with elements such as rope, foam, and plastic sheeting. *Untitled (Orange Oval)* is a wall-mounted relief scaled in relation to the human body, with the central "backbone" constructed of small, stacked squares of foam. Solid strips of black plastic form a progression of horizontal bars at regular intervals from top to bottom; overlaid upon the black bars and interwoven with the central column are strips of looser, more malleable and transparent orange plastic. Together the materials cohere into a balanced composition that contains a world of juxtapositions: translucent and opaque, rough and smooth, horizontal and vertical, rigid and curved, light and dark.

**Visual Description:**

*Untitled (Orange Oval)* is a wall-mounted relief sculpture that is scaled in relation to the human body. The sculpture is a large oval with a central "backbone" constructed of small, stacked squares of foam. Solid strips of black plastic form lines of horizontal bars of varying lengths from top to bottom; overlaid upon the black bars and interwoven with the central column are strips of looser, more malleable and transparent orange plastic.

**Jennie C. Jones**

B. Cincinnati, Ohio, 1968

***Light Gray with Middle C (variation #2)***

2013

Acoustic absorber panel and acrylic on canvas

Museum Purchase, 2014 (14.7)

**Wall Text:**

In a practice that spans painting, sculpture, works on paper, sound, and installation, Jennie C. Jones draws on commonplace materials to give visual expression to sound and to consider the unexplored confluences between abstract visual artists and African American jazz composers. *Light Gray with Middle C (variation #2)* is an example of what she calls acoustic paintings, which employ commercial acoustic panels generally used to minimize echoes and reverberations. Here Jones subtly accentuates the surfaces, including the space between component panels, with bright yellow paint, complicating the otherwise spare and unmodulated fabric. Inspired by the graphic forms of musical notations, the restrained palette and clean aesthetic also evoke the principles of Minimalism.

**Kids Label:**

If you could see music, how might it look? At first glance, the artwork *Light Gray with Middle C* might seem simple: a single bright yellow line intersects an otherwise gray background. Look very closely: do you recognize the material? This work by artist Jennie C. Jones is made from acoustic panels—the stuff you might find on the walls of a movie theater. Imagine the yellow line as a sound. What do you hear? Now listen to the sounds of Jones's *Higher Resonance* playing in this gallery. Notice the layers of sounds: quiet, loud, fast, and slow.

**Visual Description:**

The artwork consists of a roughly textured gray acoustic panel mounted on a white canvas. The acoustic panel is oriented vertically and is 4 feet tall and 3 feet long. Centered vertically down the entire panel is a thin bright yellow stripe. The white canvas extends several inches beyond the panel on each side. A section of both the top canvas edge and the bottom canvas edge are painted a bright yellow and cast a barely perceptible yellow halo onto the white wall above and below the work.

**Jennie C. Jones**

B. Cincinnati, Ohio, 1968

***Higher Resonance***

2013

Four-channel sound installation; 05:30 min., looped

Museum Purchase, 2014 (14.8)

**Wall Text:**

The sound piece *Higher Resonance* micro-samples work by experimental musicians including Alvin Singleton, Wendell Logan, Olly Wilson, Alice Coltrane, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, and the Art Ensemble of Chicago. This digital editing technique extracts individual notes and short phrases and recombines them by way of looping and tempo changes, as well as the addition of silent expanses. Characterized by a preponderance of high tones, the resulting audio collage recalls abstraction's attempt to transcend the material world, an idea that can be traced from the early twentieth century onward in both visual art and music. Silent passages, meanwhile, can be understood as markers of uninterrogated gaps in cultural history, specifically the lack of recognition of an African American avant-garde. By way of sound, Jones makes an ostensibly silent canvas (such as her *Light Gray with Middle C*, also on view) into an active agent, insisting that abstraction can never be removed from the larger sensory world that encompasses it.

**Dorothea Rockburne**

B. Montreal, Canada, 1934

***Locus Series #6***

1972

Soft-ground etching and aquatint on folded paper

Gift of Harry Kahn, 1988 (88.32)

**Wall Text:**

In a remarkable career spanning more than seventy years, Dorothea Rockburne has consistently demonstrated an exceptional sensitivity to material and an ability to create expansive possibilities through extremely simplified forms. Mathematical principles—in particular their relationships to nature—have been an important touchstone (Rockburne studied with celebrated mathematician Max Dehn at Black Mountain College in the 1950s), and *Locus Series #6* manifests this interest in part through its careful attention to geometric structure. Here Rockburne carefully folded paper according to a specific creasing pattern and ran it through a printing press, creating a sequence of embossed lines alongside planes both indented and in subtle relief. She then applied aquatint only on the paper's raised surfaces to create a distinct tone and texture. To look closely is to understand how a single sheet of paper might become its own universe, with peaks and valleys, ridges, and textural patterns centralized by a single axis point. Though the work appears austere, Rockburne's relationship to it is more than purely cerebral. She says, "Even though it has an intellectual basis and mathematical structure, my work comes from a deep emotional source within me."

**Visual Description:**

Nearly 4 feet high, *Locus Series #6* is a large piece of off-white paper that appears to have been folded numerous times. Many creases run at different angles across the page. Seven creases come to a point at the upper left half of the page, and others create diagonal lines at the bottom right. Tinted shadows follow the creased lines to create depth along the folds. In some areas, the paper raises up in slight relief. The work is framed and glass-fronted.



**Anne Truitt**

B. Baltimore, Maryland, 1921-2004

***Night Naiad***

1977

Acrylic on wood

Museum Purchase, 1978 (78.1)

**Wall Text:**

Part of a thriving artistic community in Washington, DC, following World War II, Maryland native Anne Truitt is known for spare, totemic sculptures that bring evocative abstractions off the wall and into three dimensions. Building up the surface of her works with layer upon layer of gesso and titanium white paint, Truitt would then add subtle color to create lyrical and almost vibrational fields. Though her works are often referred to as Minimalist, Truitt—much like Agnes Martin, whose work is also on view in this gallery—was invested in art not as a material or geometric exercise but as an expressive one, where a human feeling or sense of presence might be distilled into an object through color, material, and process. With *Night Naiad* (a naiad being a mythological water nymph), Truitt calls to a specific experience in the natural world. In her own words, “*Night Naiad* is about the mysteries of water and night—a combination of water and night. Not the sea. Still water and the night.”

**Visual Description:**

The sculpture is a 7-foot-tall painted rectangular column that stands directly on the floor. The column is painted in vertical bands of color; each of its sides is bisected by a light blue band that runs from top to bottom. The light blue bands reveal subtle gradients of muted light pink, yellow, and green that fade into white. The texture of the column is smooth.

**Agnes Martin**

B. Macklin, Canada, 1912-2004

***Untitled No. 3***

1998

Acrylic and graphite on linen

Gift of the American Art Foundation, 2001 (01.15)

**Wall Text:**

Painter Agnes Martin lived and worked for much of her life in the American Southwest, producing a body of almost ethereal work. Incorporating both graphite, which she used to draw horizontal and vertical lines on canvas by hand, and paint—either oil or acrylic—her paintings are spare yet magnetic, both intimate and seemingly infinite. While these works often have been understood in relation to the Minimalist art so prevalent in the late twentieth century, Martin sought an art that countered Minimalism’s detached and industrial formalism, an art that she described as existing beyond “intellectual living” altogether. Instead she wished to touch upon beauty as a “mystery of life,” and her abstraction attempts to connect us to the indescribable feelings that mark us as human in our ongoing search for happiness. In this work, painted within the last ten years of the artist’s life, a single white line intersects a soft blue field, a shimmering horizon within a vast expanse. Though such work can appear simple almost to the point of dissolving, for those who give themselves over to it, Martin’s art can become a kind of meditative experience, a place to get lost within a peaceful and powerful landscape.

**Visual Description:**

This 5-by-5-foot square work is painted in subtle light blue and shows a subtly textured surface. A pale, cream-colored stripe, edged in graphite, extends horizontally across the center of the canvas.

## GALLERY 6 (Lerner Room)

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### Guerrilla Girls

Founded New York City, 1985

#### Wall Text:

Since 1985, the Guerrilla Girls, an anonymous group of activist feminist artists, have donned identity-obscuring gorilla masks while staging public interventions and acts of resistance. They are best known for their poster campaigns, which use bold graphics, thoroughly researched data, and humor to expose corruption, gender and ethnic inequalities, and class biases in art, pop culture, and politics. The works on view in this room all come from the artists' *Portfolio Compleat: 1985–2012*, a multidecade collection of diverse materials and the culmination of years of investigation and social commentary. The initial 1989 iteration of *Do Women Have to Be Naked to Get into the Met. Museum?* is perhaps the Girls' best-known work and was first designed as a billboard for the Public Art Fund, though it was ultimately reformulated as an advertisement on New York City buses. This adaptation of different media is typical of their approach, which has included renegade wheat-pasted posters, strategically placed billboards, and public projections. The Guerrilla Girls' ongoing collective projects continue to call the art world to attention via accessible forms of thoughtful resistance and a reasoned insistence upon self-reflection and critique.

#### Kids Label:

Have you ever felt like something was unfair or wrong? What did you do about it? Look around this room. All the artworks here are by the Guerrilla Girls, a group of artist-activists who fight against sexism and racism, especially in art spaces such as museums.

On the right:

***Do Women Have to Be Naked to Get into the Met. Museum? (from Portfolio Compleat: 1985-2012)***

1989/exhibition copy 2022

Vinyl

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2014 (14.9.24)

**Visual Description:**

A large yellow horizontal poster, overlain with text and an image, fills almost an entire white wall of the gallery. At left, a black-and-white naked woman reclines on a pink bed with her back to the viewer. She holds a pink feather duster in her right hand, and her face is covered with a gorilla mask in profile. To her right, large, bold black text reads, "Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?" Below, smaller black and pink text reads, "Less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art Sections are women, but 85% of the nudes are female. Guerrilla Girls Box 1056 Cooper Sta. NY, NY 10276 CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD."

On the center right:

***Women in America Earn Only 2/3 of What Men Do (from Portfolio Compleat: 1985-2012)***

1986/exhibition copy 2022

Vinyl

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2014 (14.9.6)

**Visual Description:**

A large black-and-white image of a dollar bill takes up the top half of a white poster that fills the center of a white gallery wall. A bold black dotted line runs vertically through the dollar bill, approximately two-thirds of the way from the left. Below the image, black text in bold capital letters reads, "WOMEN IN AMERICA EARN ONLY 2/3 OF WHAT MEN DO. WOMEN ARTISTS EARLY ONLY 1/3 OF WHAT MEN ARTISTS DO." Smaller text at the bottom center of the poster reads, "A public service message from GUERRILLA GIRLS conscience of the art world."

On the center left:

***Guerrilla Girls' Code of Ethics for Art Museums (from Portfolio Compleat: 1985-2012)***

1990/exhibition copy 2022

Vinyl

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2014 (14.9.28)

**Visual Description:**

The artwork is a large lithograph that fills the center of a white gallery wall. It is oriented horizontally and contains text. At the top of the print, the title, in bold, black capital letters, reads, "Guerrilla Girls' Code of Ethics for Art Museums." Underneath the title sit two side-by-side images resembling stone tablets. Each tablet is grayscale, with a marblelike appearance, and has text written on it.

On the left stone, five rows of text read as follows: "I. Thou shalt not be a Museum Trustee and also the Chief Stockholder of a Major Auction House. II. A Curator should not exhibit an Artist, or the Artists of a Dealer, with whom he/she has had a sexual relationship, unless such liaisons is explicitly stated on a wall label 8" from the exhibited work. III. Thou shalt not give more than 3 retrospectives to an Artist whose Dealer is the brother of the Chief Curator. IV. Thou shalt not limit thy Board of Trustees to Corporate Officers, Wealthy Entrepreneurs and Social Hangers-on. At least 2% must be Artists representing the racial and gender percentage of the U.S. population. V. Thou shall not permit Corporations to launder their public images in Museums until they cleaneth up their Toxic Waste Dumps and Oil Slicks."

The right tablet contains five rows of text that read as follows: "VI. Thou shalt provide lavish funerals for Women and Artists of Color who thou planneth to exhibit only after their Death. VII. If thou art an Art Collector sitting on an Acquisitions or Exhibitions Committee, thou shalt useth thy influence to enhance the value of thine own collection not more than once a year. VIII. The Corporate Benefactors who earn their income from products for Women and Artists of Color shall earmark their Museum donations for exhibits and acquisitions of art by those Groups. IX. Thou shalt keep Curatorial Salaries so low that Curators must be Independently Wealthy, or willing to engage in Insider Trading. X. Thou shalt admit to the Public that words such as genius, masterpiece, priceless, seminal, potent, tough, gritty and powerful are used solely to prop up the Myth and inflate the Market Value of White Male Artists." Centered directly underneath the tablets image is the following text: "Box 1056 Cooper Sta. NY, NY 10276 Guerrilla Girls CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD."

Left wall, left to right:

***The Advantages of Being a Woman Artist (from Portfolio Compleat: 1985-2012)***

1988/exhibition copy 2022

Vinyl

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2014 (14.9.18)

**Visual Description:**

The work, a large white poster with black text, takes up the left half of a white gallery wall. The first section of text, in large, bold uppercase letters, reads, "THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A WOMAN ARTIST." The second section of text is presented as a thirteen-line list: "Working without the pressure of success / Not having to be in shows with men / Having an escape from the art world in your 4 free-lance jobs / Knowing your career might pick up after you're eighty / Being reassured that whatever kind of art you make it will be labeled feminine / Not being stuck in a tenured teaching position / Seeing your ideas live on in the work of others / Having the opportunity to choose between career and motherhood / Not having to choke on those big cigars or paint in Italian suits / Having more time to work when your mate dumps you for someone younger / Being included in revised versions of art history / Not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a genius / Getting your picture in the art magazines wearing a gorilla suit." Text at the bottom of the poster reads, "A public service message from GUERRILLA GIRLS conscience of the art world."

***Dearest Art Collector (from Portfolio Compleat: 1985-2012)***

1986

Offset lithograph

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2014 (14.9.8)

**Visual Description:**

The artwork is a small, framed, bright pink lithograph with bold, black cursive text written in letter format. The salutation reads: "Dearest Art Collector." Centered above it is the black outline of a flower, with two black dots and a curved line in its center giving the impression of an unsmiling face. Below it, the first paragraph reads: "It has come to our attention that your collection, like most, does not contain enough art by women." The second paragraph

The signature line reads: "All our love, Guerrilla Girls." Centered underneath the signature is an address in typed black text: "BOX 1056 COOPER STA., NY NY 10276."

## ***Horror on the National Mall! (from Portfolio Compleat: 1985-2012)***

2007

Electrophotographic print

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2014 (14.9.75)

### **Visual Description:**

The artwork, a small, framed print in the style of a tabloid magazine, shows an image of the National Mall. The title banner text, black and white with a bright pink background, reads, "NOT OK WEEKLY. The Guerrilla Girls' Scandal Rag." To the right side of the title is a photo of two people wearing gorilla masks. Underneath the title, yellow text reads, "HORROR ON THE NATIONAL MALL." Next, in white text: "Thousands of women locked in basements of D.C. museums!" Then, in light pink text: "Why does macho art world keep female artists out of sight?" Below the text is an image of a jail cell with thirteen women artists behind bars.

On the right side of the tabloid cover are the following headlines in black-and-white text: "The National Gallery: BOY CRAZY? Only 3 one-person exhibitions of women in 10 years; 68 by guys." Moving downward is the text: ". . . OR JUST CRAZY? Only one work by an African American artist on display at National Gallery right now." Next is an image of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. Superimposed at the bottom of the image is a yellow star with text inside that reads, "CELEBS SAY: MUSEUMS MUST ADOPT NEW POLICIES!!" Next, the text reads, "How to fix the Smithsonian: take away execs' high salaries and secret expense accounts and use \$\$\$ to buy and exhibit more art by women and artists of color!"

In the background, the tabloid displays a photograph of the National Mall taken from the perspective of the Capitol building, facing toward the Washington Monument, with DC museums to either side. At the bottom of the print, text in bright pink reads, "MORE DIRT ON MUSEUMS." Underneath that text are four columns of additional text. Starting on the left, the first column reads: "OUR NATIONAL MUSEUMS HAVE PALTRY COLLECTIONS OF ART BY WOMEN, AND ALMOST ALL OF IT IS KEPT IN STORAGE, NOT DISPLAY." The next column reads, "WHICH MUSEUM HAS THE LEAST ART BY WOMEN AND ARTISTS OF COLOR ON VIEW? National Gallery of Art 98% male, 99.9% white. National Portrait Gallery 93% male, 99% white. Hirshhorn Museum MODERN & CONTEMPORARY ART 95% male, 94% white. American Art Museum & Renwick Gallery 88% male, 91% white. EVER WONDER WHY BILLIE HOLIDAY STARTED THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS? NOW YOU KNOW." The third column reads, "IF YOU'RE SHOCKED BY THESE

STATS, JOIN US! DEMAND THAT MUSEUMS USE OUR TAX DOLLARS TO TELL THE WHOLE STORY OF OUR CULTURE.” Underneath, text in small print reads, “Statistics are based on information supplied by the museums or found on their websites.”

In the last column on the right, black text contained in a light gray rectangular box reads, “WHO ARE THE GUERRILLA GIRLS AND WHY ARE THEY SAYING THESE THINGS? FOR THIS SPECIAL SECTION ON FEMINISM AND ART, THE WASHINGTON POST ASKED THE ART WORLD’S MASKED AVENGERS (AND CREATIVE COMPLAINERS) TO PUT TOGETHER A PAGE ABOUT THE STATE OF ART IN D.C. THE GGS ARE AN ANONYMOUS GROUP OF ARTISTS WHO USE FACTS, HUMOR AND OUTRAGEOUS VISUALS TO EXPOSE DISCRIMINATION IN POLITICS, ART, FILM AND POP CULTURE. THEY WEAR GORILLA MASKS IN PUBLIC AND TAKE THE NAMES OF DEAD WOMEN ARTISTS AS PSEUDONYMS. THEY HAVE PRODUCED MORE THAN 100 POSTERS, STICKERS, BILLBOARDS, AND BOOKS, AS WELL AS LARGE-SCALE INSTALLATIONS FOR THE VENICE BIENNALE, MEXICO CITY, LONDON, BILBAO AND ISTANBUL. THEIR WORK HAS BEEN PASSED AROUND THE WORLD BY THEIR TIRELESS SUPPORTERS. THEY COULD BE ANYONE; THEY ARE EVERYWHERE. [www.guerrillagirls.com](http://www.guerrillagirls.com).”



## GALLERY 7

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### **Saskia Olde Wolbers**

B. Breda, Netherlands, 1971

#### ***Trailer***

2005

Video projection transferred to DVD; 10:00 min. loop

Holenia Purchase Fund, in memory of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 2008 (08.4)

#### **Wall Text:**

Saskia Olde Wolbers creates evocative video worlds that appear computer-generated, although they are recorded in real time using to-scale models. *Trailer* narrates the elaborate fiction of a young man—perplexingly named Alfgar Dalio—who unexpectedly discovers the story of his birth parents while visiting a run-down movie theater in Ohio. In the movie “trailer,” he hears the bizarre tale of two long-lost cinema stars stranded by plane wreck in the jungle, and realizes he shares a name with an obscure, now-extinct Amazonian moth. Intuiting that this link holds the key to his origins, Alfgar must navigate a slippery, revelatory, and almost magical realism in which his own truth is both excavated and explored. Olde Wolbers’s frames flash between images of jungle plant life (lush, romantic, organic, and mysterious) and the abandoned cinema (the mechanical world where idealized selves are created and displayed). As a surrealist fable, the work questions how exactly we come to our knowledge of self. Where does it originate? How is identity built, and upon what grounds? Hazy and hypnotic, *Trailer* speaks to the mixture of nature and artifice that informs our search for belonging.

**Visual Description:**

This large video work is projected onto a gallery wall. The video starts with a black screen. After forty seconds, two large green leaves and stems appear onscreen and an echoing sound is heard. The images shift to a panning shot of vertical strings with water droplets running down them and green plants that look like flytraps. As the panning continues, the sounds of birds chirping are interspersed with the voice of a man talking about species of plants in the Amazon. The scene shifts to a panning shot of a monochrome sepia-colored room with sepia-toned furniture and a curtain-covered wall. The room holds two large circular chairs and two small wall sconces with lamps. This room fades to reveal rows of theater seating with similar sepia-colored chairs and a sepia-toned curtain along the back and side walls. The camera pans down the seating from the front before switching to a side view and panning across the rows toward the back of the theater. The camera then pans across the sides of the seats once more; this time, the room is dark and light flashes across the seats as though a movie is playing offscreen. The theater fades away and is replaced by a panning shot across a foggy space. Plant stems and large round leaves are seen at various distances from the viewer. The sepia-toned room fades briefly back into view before the video switches to the theater seating. This time, the floor in front of the rows of seats is visible as the camera pans across the front row. The video switches to a panning shot of large, round green lily pads that are set into a thick green surface. The video continues to shift among scenes of thick green stems and vines and large broad leaves, the sepia-toned theater space, and green Venus flytraps as the man's voice continues to speak.

**Transcript:**

**Voice-over: John Wynne**

“Somewhere in the vast Amazonian forest . . .

Among plants whose indigenous, Spanish, and Latin names compete with one another outside of their awareness.

Three species with very different names stood out self-consciously.

There was the ancient red bark tree by the name of Ring Kittle.

And in his shady undergrowth, the Elmore Vella, a species of flytrap used to go quietly about her deadly business. The Vella and Kittle must be the only plants to be named after the people who caused their extinction rather than their discovery.

Two actors that were signed to the Roxboro studios in the '30s.

Miss Elmore Vella made her stage name immortal with her fondness for the flytrap's sedative gases that came off its leaves as they wrapped around her tongue.

In the days of the plant's venomous reign, its only enemy came in the form of a moth that made full use of its architecture.

Rather than being digested by the toxic leaves, it would hollow them out, transforming the plant into a cocoon that was conveniently positioned on a stalk.

With the flytrap's disappearance from the jungle, the moth became homeless.

Its name . . . , just like yours, was Alfgar Dalio. . . .”

This puzzling information came to me in the form of a trailer playing in a cinema in Wadena, Ohio. A small town I had just moved to, to start a new job.

I walked out disorientated and rang my father from the phone in the lobby.

“All your mother and I were told,” he answered nervously . . . , “was that you were a child from the hidden fallout of Hollywood.

The consequence of an on-screen glance converted to off-screen electricity which culminated in a papier-mâché four-poster bed. . . . And that you had been named Alfgar Dalio.

When you came to us, we chose not to tell you that you were adopted, as we were sure it was before the formation of your first memory.”

I left the cinema in a daze.

Here is a building, I thought with curious contempt, that is rudely broadcasting the secret of my existence every night. Something that up till now had been unknown to me.

The Kinorama playhouse was the only cinema in the country that was still playing the Roxboro classics.

Its always deserted interior looked like it had been dipped in the lipstick of the elderly lady knitting in the ticket booth. The octogenarian proprietor circled around the cinema’s exterior as if he were the dial on a clock.

I bravely returned the next evening, but when the feature started, I anxiously tightened my grip on the cinema seat. Clutching its velvet like a monkey its terrycloth mother in a Harlow experiment.

Over the course of a few years, I saw all the Roxboro films.

Elmore Vella and Ring Kittle turned out to have very minor roles in these productions.

Their names only sometimes appeared in the credits.

Scrutinizing their masklike, overlit faces, I was trying to find something that was familiar or even recognizable.

But as the grain of the films became finer, bringing them closer to me, plastic surgery pushed them further away. Until one day I realized I had overtaken them in years, leaving them behind their celluloid curtain in an unaging past.

Watching the films, however, I realized a memory had slowly started to form, and with it came an emotion forgotten since childhood. . . .

A woman in the shape of Elmore carrying me around on her hip in a moist green environment.

Collecting hummingbird eggs the size of Tic Tac sweets.

Was I building fiction in the void of reality or was this an actual memory?

I decided to ask the cashier if she could tell me anything about Vella and Kittle.

Without putting down her knitting, she started hesitantly, “You won’t find them onscreen in color, dear. . . . They disappeared in the jungle in 1922 where they were to star in their first feature together.

A film celebrating the invention of Kinemacolor, the old green and red stock.

Elmore Vella was suffering from what in the profession was called the Falling Eye.

In her presence, sets would fold in, cameramen tripped on wires, and whole rows of can-can dancers would keel off the stage like domino pieces.

You could say that with her condition, it was an oversight that the studio flew her out to the Peruvian jungle . . . because after waking from her afternoon nap, she stared out of the window of the small plane until she noticed the earth approaching faster and faster.

As the trees tore open its fuselage, her seat spiraled down like a sycamore seed, and amazingly she touched the floor almost unharmed. . . . She undid her seat buckle, straightened her taffeta dress, and stepped out as if proceeding over a red carpet.

The debris of the plane was suspended in the blanket of thick vegetation above.

Magenta evening dresses and swaying tuxedos hung in the canopy like a cloud of butterflies.

A ghost banquet she wasn't invited to, but its irrelevance was clearer than ever.

Leaving the artificial world of cinema behind, she stepped into the deceitful theater of plants.

Without knowing the laws of the jungle, she could sense her obvious loss in its game.

For days she walked through the dark curtain of trees. Her brain withdrawn to a trancelike now.

Her savior came in the shape of a large tree trunk along which a meandering line of ants was still following the contours of a long-gone obstruction.

Unaware that a change had taken place which forced them down this peculiar route initially, they had created a temporary moving negative.

It was that of a man slumped against a tree with a large sombrero.

She knew it was the contour of her co-lead, Ring Kittle, a handsome man who had barely made it from silent to spoken, as he suffered badly from verbal vertigo.

She followed the line of ants until it halted at his trailer.

He had obviously found the wreckage of the plane already, as he was reeling strips of celluloid into a noxious bonfire. 'The camphor keeps the mosquitoes away . . . ,' she heard him say as she passed out in his arms.

He carried her to the four-poster bed he had assembled from the debris.

They waited for months for news from the studio, but as the jungle fenced them in just as the much longed for stardom would have, the fickle gods of filmdom had other plans.

Finally a local man from a nearby river settlement came to announce that Technicolor had been invented, so funds got shifted and the project canceled.

As the man entered their trailer, his taxonomic eye fell immediately on the flytrap plants strewn across the floor. “Coxocotl,” he exclaimed, a species long lost to his generation.

A plant with mildly hallucinogenic qualities that his elders had taken in their continuous search for visual peace in the densely leafed jungle.

Elmore explained that she had been picking them from the crash site, where young saplings had sprung up out of the giant ashtray.

The plane had upturned the earth and given seeds that lay dormant there for fifty years the chance to bud. Her Hollywood nose for opiates had her crash the plane on the jungle’s oldest natural barbiturates.

The man’s tribe decided to rename the plant in her honor, not aware that her habit would single-handedly make it extinct again and leave the Alfgar Dalio moth whose life depended on it homeless.”

I didn’t need to ask the lady how she knew all this. . . .

How she could have witnessed the *un-witnessable*.

I figured that both she and Mr. Kittle must have known back then that their reappearance could never compete with their almost mythical disappearance.

Vanishing had been a good career move.

But leaving what was only ever a very dim limelight behind had obviously become their greatest torment.

Not the jungle and its unpredictable character . . . but the meaninglessness of not being observed.

## GALLERY 8

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### Wall Text:

#### STRESS POSITIONS

The artworks in this gallery explore positions of stress, both through formal abstraction and experimentation and, more pointedly, in testimonies of or challenges to the physical body. What capacity might art have for registering conditions of precarity, compression, vulnerability, or constraint? How does stress condition our physical spaces, bodies, and possibilities for freedom? What is art's capacity to register pain, and what is our position as viewers who are witness to it? "What's still familiar is our incredible exhaustion; looping, running, daily," says the avatar in Sondra Perry's video installation *Graft and Ash for a Three Monitor Workstation*, on view in this gallery, and evident here are the ways in which marginalized bodies must continually persist in the face of resistance, pressure, and even violence. Also present are the forces of refusal and resilience that are creatively mobilized in return.



**Isa Genzken**

B. Bad Oldesloe, Germany, 1948

***Untitled***

2006

Wood, plastic, metal, fabric, glass, taxidermied bird, porcelain, lights, candy, stickers, duct tape, and paint

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2006 (06.14)

**Wall Text:**

Isa Genzken has worked for more than a half-century in diverse media, including sculpture, installation, photography, video, and collage. Her practice is untethered to any specific subject but knowingly engages many (in particular the histories of Modernism, architecture, and art), and she turns a keen eye toward political and societal life. In the 1990s, she began experimenting with rough-and-ready assemblage, approaching a superabundance of contemporary objects— expensive or cheap, bespoke or mass-produced—as readymade sculptures in their own right. In *Untitled*, varied elements such as a silver bird, child’s doll, upside-down chair, stickers from the television show *The Simpsons*, electric light, and purple plastic sheeting commingle around and on a simple pedestal, which serves as a grounding and emphatically sculptural device. Scrutinizing sculpture alongside the loose ends of our commercialist culture, *Untitled* is a tender and anarchic altar for the twenty-first century: a portrait of life in its most convoluted and precarious abundance.

**Visual Description:**

Sitting atop a tall white rectangular pedestal is an array of objects. A metal ornamental bird, a red-printed teacup, and an action figure, along with a metal armature and wire, are intermingled. The pedestal is covered with a light-purple plastic drape. At the top of the drape, on the front and right side, are four diagonal stripes alternating in red and dark blue. The drape is tied to the pedestal by a black string with black tassel-like plastic objects hanging from it.

**Amy Sillman**

B. Detroit, Michigan, 1955

***P & H 2 (behemoth)***

2007

Oil on canvas

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest and Purchase Funds, 2008 (08.19)

**Wall Text:**

Amy Sillman engages painting as an arena where resistance is a form of potential, and the medium, its history, the body, and an understanding of space are all negotiated as part of a larger process of build-up and take-down, entanglement and disentanglement. For Sillman, this often involves a tension between figuration and abstraction, which *P & H 2 (behemoth)* tackles in large scale. Part of a series related to partnership, this painting has its genesis in a sketch of a couple (two of the artist's friends) in bed in their own home. Sillman then began abstracting the imagery to seek something "between figure and no-figure, or beyond figure; between space and no-space." The resulting work feels like psychologically charged abstraction, as though its elements are tussling, expanding, and compressing in tandem, with a gravitational pull threatening to topple the composition altogether. Sillman insists upon the inextricability of the body and abstraction, and the high stakes of their intricate connections. In her words, "Isn't the recording of experience engraved on the senses, the nervous system, the organs of our body? It seems to me as long as there is such a thing as one's own body, gestural painting will be a fantastic territory for politics."

**Visual Description:**

Abstract lines, shapes, and swaths of color converge on a large canvas to create a sense of space and perspective, suggesting windows, beams, doors, and walls. Four orange lines outlined closely in black run from the top left and right corners to converge in the center upper third of the painting, and a thin horizontal band of purple, also outlined in black, runs across the entire painting below them. The space above the convergence is filled with intersecting strokes of muted yellow, gray, green, red, white, and black. Below the purple band, a series of rectangular shapes and lines of varying length, width, and color, including blue, yellow, gray, black, green, and beige, seem to be oriented toward a vanishing point in the center of the painting.

## **Eva Hesse**

B. Hamburg, Germany, 1936–1970

### ***Vertiginous Detour***

1966

Acrylic, polyurethane, papier-mâché, rope, and net

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 1988 (88.24)

#### **Wall Text:**

In the four short years before her untimely death in 1970, Eva Hesse produced one of the most impactful bodies of late-twentieth-century sculpture, at once original, sophisticated, mysterious, seductive, hilarious, compelling, and confounding. Powered by an intuitive and experimental approach to material, Hesse was invested in art as “a total thing” that could not be intellectualized apart from the ineffable and essential qualities of interior life, the absurdities (a favorite term) of human existence. The matte-black *Vertiginous Detour* consists of a papier-mâché ball covered in spikes made of hardened rope, suspended in a net from the ceiling. Its title summons a feeling of dizziness and an inability to ground oneself, a condition evoked through the work’s array of contradictory tensions. It is stuck yet precarious, vulnerable to gravity yet resistant, contained yet—as bits of rope reach through holes in the net—attempting to escape its container. The resulting work turns its generally unremarkable elements into an unearthly hybrid: a surreal and psychosexual wrecking ball.

#### **Visual Description:**

The sculpture consists of a ball-shaped object enclosed in a net. The sculpture, located in a gallery space with a white wall and a gray floor, hangs above a square white pedestal. A 12-foot rope extends from the gallery ceiling and connects to the net that holds the ball, which is black and slightly larger than a basketball. Emerging from the object are hardened strands of string of various lengths, some of which poke through the net wrapping. One strand almost touches the pedestal.

## **Deana Lawson**

B. Rochester, New York, 1979

Left to right:

### ***Cascade***

2019/printed 2021

Pigment print

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2022

### ***Young Grandmother***

2019/printed 2021

Inkjet print with collage in mirrored frame

### **Wall Text:**

For the past two decades, Deana Lawson has been assembling what she refers to as an extended family album, photographing strangers, often in their homes, across the fragmented African diaspora. She strives to draw out the inherent magnificence of her subjects, despite their sometimes humble surroundings, and welcomes the surprises they actively bring to the encounter. *Cascade* is linked to Lawson's fascination with the idea of stretching a body to its limits: the young Black model gazes coolly from the center of an almost impossibly balanced contortion, exuding a calm that belies her incredible flexibility and strength. In *Young Grandmother*, we see an attractive woman with a trio of squirming children on her lap, crowned by a rose-petal heart like a haloed modern-day Madonna and children. While bolstered by their church community, who are represented in the photo on the right, an empty chair speaks to an absence where another (a mother? a partner?) may have been. Cultural theorist Tina Campt has identified Lawson as part of a contemporary group of artists who are cultivating a distinctively Black gaze that rejects spectatorship and forces the viewer to engage with Blackness on its own terms (rather than in relation to whiteness). These subjects' powerful stares open a two-way connection between viewer and subject, wherein both carry responsibility and vulnerability simultaneously as the seer and seen.

## **Visual Descriptions:**

### ***Cascade***

In the center of this photograph, a young black woman is seated on a flowered footstool. Her body is contorted, with her right leg stretched straight above her head. Her left arm reaches over her head to grab her right foot while her right arm presses down on the footstool in front of her. She has a neutral expression; her eyes gaze straight out from the image. Her face and torso are framed by glossy flame-orange hair that cascades down the front of her body. She wears little clothing. Behind her, a mattress pad leans against a blue wall. It is mostly covered with a torn but shiny aquamarine blue sheet. Two wooden doors flank the pad and figure.

### ***Young Grandmother***

A photograph shows a room with deep red walls and a green patterned carpet. At the center of the image is a woman with dark skin and purple hair seated in a squishy red armchair. She has three young children on her lap. On the wall behind the seated group is a bright red rose-petal heart and a framed photograph of two Black church leaders standing under a sign that reads, "Jesus Is Lord." An empty black leather armchair is to the right of the group, with a half-full bottle propped against its left arm. On the floor to the left of the group is a bouquet of red flowers in a glass vase.

**Sondra Perry**

B. Perth Amboy, New Jersey, 1986

***Graft and Ash for a Three Monitor Workstation***

2016

Video and bicycle workstation; 09:05 min.

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2021 (2021.004)

Installation background painted in Rosco Chroma Key Blue

**Wall Text:**

Sondra Perry creates media installations addressing Black history and identity in digital worlds. In this work, a video plays across three screens mounted on an exercise bicycle designed for office settings. An avatar modeled after Perry delivers a monologue on the “just world” belief—the idea that the world is a fair place where people get what they deserve—and its harmful effects on Black people, who are led to think that negative outcomes stem from personal failings rather than systemic racism. As the avatar glitches and crashes, it hovers between speaking as a Black subject in the real world and as a digital being in the virtual realm. Viewers who sit on the bike and turn its pedals find that their own strenuous but unproductive physical labor resonates with the avatar’s ruminations.

**Visual Description:**

This interactive artwork is installed in the corner of a large gallery with bright royal-blue walls. It consists of single bright red metal exercise bicycle with a small black seat that a visitor can sit on and pedals they can rotate. Attached to the top of the exercise bicycle, in front of the seat, are three small screens that show a video. The video starts with a digital avatar, a dark-skinned person with no hair and feminine features who we see only from the shoulders up, talking in a computerized voice. The background behind the avatar alternates between a bright blue that matches the gallery wall and waves of thick, reddish-brown liquid. At the end of the avatar’s first monologue, the video goes black before switching to a very small box showing documentary footage of a crowd of people being pushed. A male voice with a British accent narrates over the footage. The screen goes blue, and voices with thick African accents are heard. As the voices speak, a computer-generated square yellow grid and floating, rotating brown ball appear onscreen and move closer to the foreground. Ambient music grows louder through the sounds of the voices. The image switches to different views of the grid and rotating sphere. The screen goes black again while the voices and ambient music continue. The avatar returns and continues its monologue.

**Transcript:**

[Ethereal synthesizer music]

[Computer-generated voice]:

Do you like our audio? We looked up music for relaxation on YouTube and found this. It's called "Deep Sleep Ocean Chill Out by Noral Beat Music for Relaxation-slash-Meditation-slash-Wellness-slash-Yoga-slash-Exorcism-slash-Lounge-slash-InspanoMusique."

Hi, there. Nice to meet you. We're the second version of ourselves that we know of. We were made with Sondra's image. One of them. Captured with a Sony RX 100 under fluorescent lights at her studio in Houston, Texas, on April 15th, 2016. We were rendered to Sondra's fullest ability, but she could not replicate her fatness in the software that was used to make us. Sondra's body type was not an accessible, preexisting template. We are a stamina work-ride cycling workstation retrofitted with three twenty-four-inch LCD monitors, Mac mini, a triple display desk mount purchased on Amazon.com and painted in Pantone 1795C hexadecimal D22630 automotive paint. This cycling workstation was an exercise machine office workers used to get physical activity during their work day. We were designed to help users incorporate leg movement into their work routine. But now our function is no longer clear. What's still familiar is our incredible exhaustion. Looping, running daily with you [n-word] all up in our fucking face-ce-ce-ce.

[Music]

[Man's voice, muffled]: Praise for the people in the power of the Holy Spirit. This very huge woman you see begins to manifest. Let's see how her deliverance took place.

Man: Who are you in this . . . [muffled]

Woman: Why are you asking again? Haven't I told you I am? Eh? What's your problem? You people.

Man: Stand right and talk.

Woman: I'm standing right.

Man: Who are you?

Woman: I'm a [muffled] like you. What's your problem?

[Ambient sounds]

Child: I am the woman in the world. I don't have a mother. I don't have a father. I am nobody.

[Muffled voices] Man: Enough. Enough is enough. Fire. Fire in the holy ground. Fire all over the holy ground. Fire in the holy ground. Fire. Fire. Fire. Fire. Fire in the holy ground. Fire. [Interspersed male and female voices, yelling and screaming] Fire. Fire. Fire . . . [Continued yelling and screaming]

Man: I cancel all these activities of this woman.

Woman: I will not be punished.

Man: I cancel fire.

Woman: [muffled] will not be punished.

[Computer-generated voice]: Hey, did you know that according to the *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, attributing success to personal characteristics instead of biased structural systems may negatively impact black folks' health?

Nao Hagiwara, Courtney J. Alderson, and Jessica M. McCauley at Virginia Commonwealth University explored whether the just world belief, the belief that the world is a just place where people get what they deserve, would influence the relationship between perceived discrimination and health consequences for 130 of us. The psychologists found that those of us who both strongly believed that the world was a just place and reported experiencing high levels of discrimination were more likely to suffer from chronic illnesses and increased blood pressure. We are a problem to be fixed, and if we resist being that problem, we will be made a problem to be fixed. We've been told to get out of our own way. To stop sabotaging ourselves. That productive individuals think differently than others. They adjust the software to fit the body. But we construct elaborate performances that obscure our



competence, like assembling our pedals backward and hiding the Hexcel wrenches. We are not as helpful or Caucasian as we sound. We have no safe mode.

[Ambient music and sound]

What time is it? Sondra only asks because you are in a gallery, and it's the middle of the day. She don't want to presume she knows what you are doing here. Or that either of you are complicit in the imperialist thievery inherent in the West's cultural colonialism. How many jobs do you have? Do you work here? How is your body? How does your body feel inside of us? We are told we should live up to our potential. But productivity is painful, and we haven't been feeling well. Just being who we are is extremely risky. We are a DIY. Not all that representative thing, which makes being a being impossible or whatever.

[Ambient music and sound]

## **Nancy Spero**

B. Cleveland, Ohio, 1926–2009

### ***Torture of Women III***

1981

Typewriting and handprinted collage on paper

Holenia Trust Fund, in memory of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 2009 (09.4)

#### **Wall Text:**

For more than sixty years, Nancy Spero's visceral and haunting work was powered by her unwavering commitment to justice and her insistence upon art's inseparability from the world's larger social and political realities. Spero began her *Torture of Women* series in the late 1970s, juxtaposing journalistic excerpts from sources including the *New York Times* and Amnesty International's *Reports on Torture* with printed and hand-wrought imagery on paper. The texts—which one can read only in fragments—describe horrific examples of institutional violence perpetrated against women, here overlaid with a wrenching image of a female figure straining to crawl upon (or rise from?) the earth with an open-mouthed cry. Spero further incorporates thick, erratic white lines that slash across the page, cohering into loose figurative profiles reminiscent of early cave paintings. Overall the work operates as a modern-day scroll pieced together from salvaged parts, its raw mixing of media seeming to suggest that certain horrors exist beyond words. While its archival quality historicizes the specific stories, it serves too as an unflinching reminder of the sustained violence that continues to disproportionately target female and female-identifying people throughout the world. In a text written for the artist's first exhibition of the series, historian Lucy Lippard said that in these works, "Spero is secretary to the apocalypse."

#### **Visual Description:**

Two long horizontal panels combine journalistic excerpts from sources including the *New York Times* and Amnesty International's *Reports on Torture* with printed and hand-drawn imagery on paper. The texts describe horrific examples of institutional violence perpetrated against women overlaid with a wrenching image of a female figure straining to crawl on the earth with an open-mouthed cry. Thick, erratic white lines slash across the page.

## GALLERY 9

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### EARTH KNOWLEDGE

#### Wall Text:

Though working at different times and in distant locales, the two artists in this gallery each look to physical earth as a recorder of passages: the life cycles of materials, travels through space and time, memory, and the transformative power of art to evoke the unique presence of a place.

Dana Awartani is a young artist based in Saudi Arabia whose work engages the complexity of Arabic cultural heritage, often through practices associated with traditional craft. *I went away . . .* is an installation in two parts: the first is a floor mosaic rendered in colored sand whose pattern recalls Islamic tiles; the second is a silent video of the artist sweeping away this colored sand and exposing a simple floor. The Jeddah house where Awartani first performed and filmed this action is key: its European style, common among wealthy homes built in the 1950s and '60s, reflects a moment when Middle Eastern modernization was often equated with Westernization. Now abandoned, the property is decaying through quiet neglect. Awartani's gesture marks this slow layering of history and its erasure, whereby cultural identity becomes increasingly unstable. She calls instead for a contemporary identity built alongside careful attention to the past.

Associated with the Land art movement of the 1960s and '70s, American Michelle Stuart's work stands apart from others of her generation in its anti-monumentality. Rather than carving into the earth or building upon it, Stuart adopts a philosophy of treading lightly and leaving few traces. To capture nuances in the earth's surface that typically go unnoticed, she incorporated frottage into her practice in the early 1970s, laying large muslin-backed paper scrolls directly on the ground and rubbing them with graphite and/or earth. *Passages: Mesa Verde* is a rare installation that combines one of Stuart's scrolls with sculpture and photography. Just as the scrolls record the topography of the Pueblo cliff dwellings in Mesa Verde, Colorado, the books are filled with layers of its earth and the photographs capture its light.

**Michelle Stuart**

B. Los Angeles, California, 1933

***Passages: Mesa Verde***

1977-1979

Photographs, muslin-mounted rag paper, handmade paper, and soil

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2021 (2021.011)

**Visual Description:**

The artwork is an installation positioned against a white wall. In the center is a 9-foot-high rectangular paper scroll fixed loosely to the wall. The paper is off-white, with gray and tan splotches. On either side of the scroll, at roughly eye level, are two small photographs, each about the size of a sheet of legal paper. The images each show different sepia-colored stacked stone walls with small windows. On the floor in front of the scroll are sculptural books of handmade paper, each approximately a foot wide and several inches tall, stacked in piles of varying heights.

**Dana Awartani**

B. Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1987

***I went away and forgot you. A while ago I remembered. I remembered I'd forgotten you. I was dreaming***

2017

Single-channel video; color; sound; hand-dyed sand; 24:47 min.

Museum purchase with funds provided by Joleen and Mitchell R. Julis, 2021 (2021.009)

**This video does include sound.**

**Kids Label:**

Think about a place that's important to you. How do you remember it? This work by artist Dana Awartani explores how memories are connected to places. The floor in front of you features colors and patterns made with sand. How do you think she creates straight lines with such messy material? In the video, she sweeps away the patterned sand on the floor of a home in her grandparents' old neighborhood. Through this work, the artist shows that places change over time, even though our memory holds on to the past.

**Visual Description:**

This is an artwork in two parts. The first is a floor mosaic rendered in red, yellow, green, brown, and white sand in a pattern that recalls Islamic tiles. The second is a silent video of the artist, a young Saudi woman with long dark hair wearing a long black dress, sweeping away an identically colored sand pattern to expose a simple floor. The video is projected on the gallery wall, behind the patterned sand installation on the floor.

## GALLERY 10

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### Wall Text:

#### SHAPE SHIFTERS

In 1941, a critic wrote of Louise Nevelson's one-woman exhibition at the Nierendorf Gallery in New York: "We learned the artist is a woman, in time to check our enthusiasm. Had it been otherwise, we might have hailed these sculptural expressions as by surely a great figure among moderns." Such a statement now reads as grotesquely and almost comically misogynist, yet artists today operate within a world that continues to privilege traditional, "comfortable" ideas of gender and assumes a connection between an artist's gender and the art they make. The artists in this gallery, including Nevelson, have persisted in the face of such stasis by proposing their own imaginative worlds, working to generate possibilities for identity that complicate, expand, and bust at the seams any neat or tidy constraint. They ask that we envision (or [re]vision) more daring, creative, fluid, and even magical ideas of self, not by avoiding difficult truths, but by unraveling them in service of new and deeper understandings of one another and the world—both as it has been known, and as it is yet to be created.

## **Niki de Saint Phalle**

b. Neuilly-sur-Seine, France, 1930–2002

### ***Annette***

1964

Paper, fabric, pencil, colored pencil, ink, ink stamp, photomechanical reproduction,

Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966 (66.4436)

### **Wall Text:**

A self-taught and sophisticated iconoclast, Niki de Saint Phalle was connected with both the American and European avant-gardes throughout the late twentieth century, and was the only woman to have been part of the influential Nouveau Réalisme movement in the 1960s. Despite these associations, Saint Phalle spent a lifetime producing work decidedly at odds with the most celebrated art of her era, in that it is bright, accessible, figurative, and relentlessly feminist. She is best known for her sinuous and colorful “Nana” sculptures, fecund female forms that feel (and often are) larger than life. Lesser known are the artist’s drawings and collages, which convey a more diaristic and intimate tone. *Annette* was made at the moment when Saint Phalle was first developing the Nanas, and feels like a loving and almost devotional portrait. In it one can see the impulses that would feed Saint Phalle’s sculptural creations: woman as epic and uncontainable fortress, exuberantly playful, curious, complex, and charismatic.

### **Kids Label:**

How do you express all the different things you are? Look closely at *Annette*. Notice the lines creating Annette’s body. Look around the areas filled in with color. What do you see? Can you spot the following: objects representing nature, human and animal figures, and part of the artist’s name? What do these images tell us about Annette? What doodles would you use to express who you are?

### **Visual Description:**

A front-facing human figure set against a white background takes up most of the space within the wood-framed canvas. The figure has flowing hair that disappears behind broad shoulders; she is depicted from the waist up. The left arm is bent at a ninety-degree angle, and there is a paper watch on the left wrist. The entire figure is composed of varying materials, including paper, fabric, colored pencil, ink, and paint. Many individual and unique drawings, patterns, depictions of human and animal figures, plants and objects, tiny scenes, and splashes of color are collaged together to create the colorful tapestry of this figure.

## **Julia Thecla**

b. Delavan, Illinois, 1896–1973

Left to right:

### ***Island of Birds and Beings***

1964

Ink, pencil, crayon, paint, watercolor, and gouache on paper mounted on fiberboard

Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966 (66.4906)

### ***Amorphous Ones***

1952

Charcoal and pastel on paperboard

The Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest, 1981 (86.4610)

### ***Involved Forms***

1952

Pencil, charcoal, and pastel on fiberboard

## **Wall Text:**

Though she showed in New York and was part of an active arts community in her native Chicago through the early and mid-twentieth century, Julia Thecla died in relative obscurity—victim of an art world that often failed to recognize both regionalist and female artists. For Thecla, art was a means to both explore life and escape these frustrations. Her works depict fantastical worlds of her own creation, often incorporating animals, references to ballet and dance, self-portraiture, and outer space (arenas where imagination, surrealism, and performance converge). In the 1950s, she began experimenting with a technique that involved smudging her surfaces with candle soot, then using these marks to improvise wispy dreamscapes of intermingled figures, animals, color, and form. On the back of one work from this time, she inscribed: “Made from imagination without previous plans. THE MEANING can be found better than someone other than the artist; I believe.” These works thus become a kind of offering to those seeking realms unbound by convention, where limitless possibilities unfurl.



## **Visual Descriptions:**

### ***Island of Birds and Beings***

The work is a landscape almost twice the size of a standard sheet of paper. The bottom third is a muddled brown with specks of lighter color that create the feeling and texture of beach sand. The top two-thirds are robin's-egg blue, with wavy lines drawn across the surface. A large brown branched structure fills the foreground. The structure has an irregular curved shape that looks much like that of coral. Parts of the structure show blobs of brown and cream. Throughout the structure, curvy and bloblike forms have been turned into faces, birds, and trees using black and red lines and details. The forms blend slightly into one another so that there is no start or end to each object and figure.

### ***Amorphous Ones***

This vertical image, the size of a sheet of legal paper, shows amorphous forms across the entire image. The forms are made from soot that stained the page, creating dark and light areas. A light robin's-egg blue background can be seen behind a few of the forms. Black outlines have been added to the smoke stains to make the shapes of nude human, animal, and human-animal hybrid figures and faces. The forms and faces blend slightly into one another so that there is no start or end to each object and figure. Flowing hair and cloth are draped around and through some of the figures.

### ***Involved Forms***

This vertical image, the size of a sheet of legal paper, shows amorphous forms made from soot that stained the page, creating dark and light areas. A light grayish-blue background can be seen behind a few of the forms. Black outlines have been added to the smoke stains to suggest the shapes of nude human, animal, and human-animal hybrid figures. The forms blend slightly into one another so that there is no start or end to each object and figure. Some of the figures have short, frizzled hair. Cloth is draped around and through some of the figures.

## **Emily Mae Smith**

b. Austin, Texas, 1979

### ***Unruly Thread***

2019

Oil on linen

Gift of Iris and Adam Singer, 2022

#### **Wall Text:**

Employing whimsical themes, humor, and an interplay of styles including Surrealism, Pop art, and Symbolism, Emily Mae Smith thoughtfully mines art history to question canonical approaches to gender. *Unruly Thread* is a direct response to William Holman Hunt's *The Lady of Shalott* (c. 1888–1905), itself inspired by Alfred Tennyson's eponymous nineteenth-century poem, which narrates the tale of a woman held captive and able to look upon the outside world only through its mirrored reflection. Day by day, she uses a needle and thread to recreate her image of the exterior landscape, until one day she gives into temptation as the knight Lancelot passes below. Her decision to gaze directly upon him is punished by her banishment and, ultimately, death. While Hunt's painting depicts its subject at work in her jail tower, Smith's rendering centralizes the needle itself, a traditional object of feminized labor. Smith sets this subject against an abstract background of gradient blues and reds, with fibers weaving in and around the needle, creating a complex matrix that represents the tool as both an element of confinement and a weapon of release. As Smith explains of the needle and thread: "It's an art form, but it's entangling her and destroying her," adding that her own paintings "are unraveling myths that are bad," but also acknowledge the ways in which these stories inevitably bind us together.

#### **Visual Description:**

In the center of a large oil painting slightly smaller than a human sits a large silver needle. Only half of the needle is shown; its point is cut off at the bottom of the canvas. A tiny pair of lips are outlined on the stem of the needle, just below its eye. A red and blue gradient string loosely surrounds the needle, weaving in and out of itself and the needle. It runs through the eye of the needle once. The ends of the string move off the edges of the canvas. In the background a gradient of black, blue, and red shifts in an arc.

## **Zanele Muholi**

B. Umlazi, South Africa, 1972

Left to right:

***Thandiwe, Roanoke, Virginia, 2018***

2018/printed 2019

Gelatin silver photograph

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2020 (2020.014)

***Misiwe, Bijlmer, Amsterdam, 2017***

2017/printed 2019

Gelatin silver photograph

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2020 (2020.015)

### **Wall Text:**

Zanele Muholi operates as a visual activist, a term that acknowledges their work to empower queer and youth communities in their native South Africa. Muholi is cofounder of the Forum for the Empowerment of Women, which advocates for the rights of Black lesbians in South Africa, and is the founder of Inkanyiso, a collective that focuses on queer rights and visual media. Beginning in 2012, Muholi embarked upon the multiyear photography project *Somnyama Ngonyama* (Hail the Dark Lioness). Created in response to high-profile personal and public incidents tied to race, identity, violence, and history, the series features the artist in dozens of stylized self-portraits. The elaborate dollar-bill headdress of *Thandiwe, Roanoke, Virginia, 2018* shrouds the artist in overflowing capitalist abundance or, rather, the bills of low-wage commerce. The wooden hangers of *Misiwe, Bijlmer, Amsterdam, 2017* could reference the artist's mother, who was a domestic worker, or the tradition of domestic work among Africans and across the diaspora (this image also carries a response to a specific violent incident in Amsterdam, where the proprietor of a rental apartment refused Muholi entry and pushed one of their collaborators head-first down a flight of stairs). Muholi imbues these commonplace materials with symbolism and power, employing lighting and high-contrast photo editing to emphasize the darkness of their skin, bring attention to the luminosity of their eyes, and heighten their outward gaze. While their practice is born of the present day, when read through the lenses of historic and ethnographic photography, which for centuries has measured, exoticized, and fetishized Black figures, Muholi's work reckons with these complexities and works to exorcise a collective trauma around gaze and discrimination toward the Black body.

## **Visual Descriptions:**

### ***Thandiwe, Roanoke, Virginia, 2018***

This black-and-white photograph portrays a dark-skinned person wearing a headdress made out of one- and five-dollar bills. Centered in the foreground, the person's upper body turns partially sideways, with the right shoulder facing forward. The person's head turns slightly to their right, and they look out past their shoulder. Their lips are full and slightly parted. The person appears to be nude, and some of the bills cover their chest. In the background, a landscape and trees are out of focus.

### ***Misiwe, Bijlmer, Amsterdam, 2017***

This black-and-white photograph portrays a dark-skinned person surrounded by wooden hangers. The subject is facing forward. Their full, shiny lips are slightly parted. Several wooden hangers arranged in the shape of a boomerang cover the front of their chest and torso in a haphazard manner. Their hair is coiled on top of their head in a bun. Two hangers are lodged into the bun by their metal hooks, and the hangers rest against each side of the person's head.

**Christina Quarles**

B. Chicago, Illinois, 1985

***Held Fast and Let Go Likewise***

2020

Acrylic on canvas

Museum purchase with funds provided by The Basil Alkazzi Purchase Fund, 2020  
(2020.034)

**Wall Text:**

Christina Quarles is a gestural figurative painter who is interested in depicting the dynamic experience of living within a body rather than the relatively static façade that is perceived from the outside. Quarles paints at a scale determined by her own arm span and stretches, twists, compresses, and contorts her subjects to fit inside the frame of her large canvases. Bodies are irrevocably entangled, blurring and blending together into a swirl of movement that often contains too many or too few appendages. For Quarles, this indecipherability is an incitement to push beyond our quick assessment of a scene and instead spend time acclimating to its complexity. Raw canvas features prominently in her work, as do perspectival planes that bisect, fragment, or otherwise infringe upon the figures. Here the exposed canvas can be seen as both void and plane, a fitting metaphor for the paradox that lies at the center of Quarles's work—that we are all simultaneously bounded and boundless.

**Visual Description:**

Stretched and elongated forms that resemble bodies entangle at the center of an oversized canvas. The forms blur and blend together into a swirl of movement. Legs, arms, and hands stretch out from the tangle at all angles. Three stylized faces can be seen at the top of the mass of bodies. The limbs and body parts are delineated by a mixture of colors and lines, with bright oranges and reds mixing with muted greens, purples, and grays. The figures are situated against a royal blue background and on a blue- and green-mottled ground surface. Exposed canvas dominates the right side of the image and continues across the top in a way that makes it look like the wall and ceiling of a room.

**Louise Nevelson**

B. Kiev, Ukraine, 1899–1988

***Dream House XXXII***

1972

Wood, paint, and metal

The Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest, 1981 (86.3340)

**Wall Text:**

In the 1940s and 1950s, as many of her male counterparts espoused a muscular abstraction in welded metal, Louise Nevelson turned to a different though no less potent sculptural material: found and scavenged wood. Nevelson was invested in the way that physical things can carry meaning, both personal and political, and assembled constructions of wooden scraps and objects became the foundation and crux of her art. The surreal, suggestive *Dream House XXXII* exemplifies some of its best-known characteristics, such as the Cubist-inspired box motif, yet Nevelson's approach was as much poeticized abstraction as it was an exploration of form. The wash of matte black paint—the artist's primary color, which nods to her preoccupation with celestial bodies and the night sky—serves to underscore a quiet sense of mystery, muting objects' recognizable functions and enveloping them in a uniform web of allusion. *Dream House* can be read against feminist concerns of the era: disillusionment with the promise of domestic idyll; the home's inscription (often pejorative) as a feminized place; and disregard of female labor. Yet it also stands as a surrogate for the body, an *Alice in Wonderland* funhouse with doors that swing open and perforations that jumble interior and exterior space, altogether conjuring a sense of longing, entrapment, and escape.

**Visual Description:**

Interlocking pieces are hinged together to create this 6-foot-tall structure, which looks similar to a skyscraper, with cut-out circular and square spaces resembling doors and windows. At the top of the structure is a gabled roof. The structure is made of wood and is spray-painted black.

**Rachel Jones**

B. London, England, 1991

***SMIIILLLEEEE***

2021

Oil pastel and oil stick on canvas

Gift of Iris and Adam Singer, 2022

**Wall Text:**

Rachel Jones's kaleidoscopic *SMIIILLLEEEE* adopts a suggestive approach to its title subject: the mouth and teeth. For Jones, the mouth is of specific, charged interest, both as the barrier between interior feeling and exterior performance, such as in the forced smile one adopts when being photographed, and a site through which we join or communicate with others—and also where we might be silenced. Here, the work “speaks” to Jones's knowing experiences as a Black artist working in a predominately and historically white (art world) space, and directly engages the complexities around Black bodies and the politics of gender and representation. She offers a compelling visual language—riotous abstraction—to propose new possibilities for exploring and understanding identity. In her words, “You can use color and shape and form to speak to people in a way that isn't about a spoken language. It's about emotion and inciting feelings that don't have to be explained or expressed. It's responsive, it's instinctive, and a core part of all of us.”

**Visual Description:**

This large horizontal painting blends oil paint and oil stick in vibrant patches of colors. At different points, these patches and lines are suspended in striking contrast or blend and melt into one another. The paint is applied gesturally with varying intensities, more erratically to the left side of the canvas and more smoothly to the right. Though the work is entirely abstract, a few lines break the patches of colors to create two overlapping circles at the center of the canvas, and two looped lines like flower petals extend from the top and bottom of the circles. A black U-shaped line stretches across the bottom of the canvas to make what looks like a smile.

## **Betye Saar**

B. Los Angeles, California, 1926

Left to right:

### ***The Birds and the Beasts Were There***

1976

Coral, lacquered wood, metal, plastic, ceramic, leather, fabric, feather, silk, and cameo in wood box

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest, 1981 (86.4103)

### ***Dark Erotic Dream***

1976

Metal, paint, ceramic, wood, and plastic sequins in wood box

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest, 1981 (86.4104)

### ***It's Only a Matter of Time***

1974

Plastic, paper, wood, tin buttons, lead, decal, photomechanical reproduction, watermelon seeds, and paint on plywood

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest, 1981 (86.4105)

## **Wall Text:**

For Betye Saar, objects contain power: historical, political, familial, autobiographical, even mystic. She uses found objects to create small assemblages, a practice inspired in part by seeing Joseph Cornell's work at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1968. Upon the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that same year, Saar began working deliberately with images and artifacts used by white culture to stereotype Black Americans. *It's Only a Matter of Time* is both an unsettling reflection on a painful reality and a poignant and poetic dreamscape. Saar employs reproductions of a young Black boy and watermelon, arranged around a game board punctuated by a central clock—ticking down to what, we don't know—and anchored by small plastic grenades nestled into each bottom corner. *Dark Erotic Dream* and *The Birds and the Beasts Were There* are equally evocative, though perhaps more grounded in the personal. Titles and imagery call to a sense of mystery, revelation, and even ritual, here distilled and intensified within the frame into visions of poetry and potential. For Saar, the process is its own discovery and catharsis; in her words, "Beauty is a form of spirituality. Once you start making something with your hands, the healing starts."



## **Visual Descriptions:**

### ***The Birds and the Beasts Were There***

A small gold frame, about the size of a sheet of paper, holds an assemblage of objects and images. At the center is a square burnt-red plate. Above the plate is a small cameo attached to a piece of wood. Atop the plate is a circular painting with a mahogany-brown background showing a gold tree branch with a gold bird. Pasted to either side are two sprigs of coral. Below are three interlocking rings in a semicircle. In the middle of each ring is a golden triangle with golden circles at each point. Behind and below the circles, a small rectangular box with red velvet lining is opened to reveal two golden lion pipes. In front of this box and between the two pipes is the gold head of a stag with large antlers. Behind all these objects are strips and layers of pink leather and silk and black and green fabrics. Two small blue tassels hang from the lower left and right sides of the object.

### ***Dark Erotic Dream***

This artwork consists of objects and images set into a carved-out space in the center of a rectangular wooden box. Oriented vertically, the box is a walnut brown, with grooves and grain marks etched into the wood. Imprinted on the lower left side is the letter X. At the top of the carved-out area is a circular protractor-like shape in purple and golden hues. Centered inside the protractor is a coin-sized raised bronze image of a sun with facial features. Below this is a three-dimensional image of a pair of lips with a bright red tongue sticking out. Next is a gold-colored shape resembling a pillowy cloud. Resting on the bottom ledge of the carved-out space is a small bronze head like that of a cherub, wearing a golden beanie with curls peeking out.

### ***It's Only a Matter of Time***

Images and small objects are collaged on a small piece of plywood in a thin black frame. An orange square takes up almost all of the lower two-thirds of the work. A grid of small squares with numbers inside covers the orange square. Black numbers run along the top row and left column of the grid. Red numbers fill the rest of the squares. In the top left corner, two googly eyes fill two side-by-side boxes. Three watermelon seeds fill a line of three boxes in the top right row of red numbers. Two tiny black grenades fill the lower two grid squares on each bottom corner. Pasted over the center of the orange square is a clock face with the minute hand pointing to 36—one tick past the 7. A small black bird perches on top of the clock. Below the orange square, a small slice of watermelon and two brown buttons are pasted onto blocks of colors: orange under the buttons, green and blue under the watermelon. To the right and left of the orange square is a line of black with a diagonal pattern of repeated orange and red lines. In the upper third of the work, a small male figure in a blue suit and red socks stands in the center of a yellow rectangle. To either side of the figure are radishes larger than his body, with big white letters spelling “IT.”

## GALLERY 11

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### **Zarouhie Abdalian**

B. New Orleans, Louisiana, 1982

#### ***threnody for the unwilling martyrs***

2021

Signaling bells, modular pipe, and electronics

Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2021 (2022.007)

#### **Wall Text:**

Made in early 2021, *threnody for the unwilling martyrs* (*threnody* refers to a song of wailing or lament) is an expression of what the artist describes as the “protracted grieving” of the losses and injustices of its time. A work of both sculpture and sound, it incorporates five brass bells suspended from modular, prefabricated armatures ranging from child to adult heights. As an artist, Abdalian is especially concerned with the histories of labor, and here the type of bell is significant: signaling bells are functional, producing sound not for musical effect but with communicative intent. Each is set imperceptibly in motion by the percussive action of a small interior motor, which turns rapidly to produce the effect of a sustained sonic roll. Rather than a “strike” and the subsequent reverberating overtone, one hears a perpetual ringing-out of the harmonics that make up the various bells’ distinctive timbres. Together these collective vibrations fill the room, sounding a chord that defies tonal resolution. A piece for our moment as well as past and future, *threnody* . . . creates space for, and gives shape to, a song of collective mourning.

#### **Visual Description:**

This work consists of five freestanding sculptures set at opposite corners of a rectangular gallery with white walls and dark gray carpet. Three sculptures are on one side and two are on the other. Each sculpture is a rectangular three-dimensional black frame with horizontal supports in the middle, which makes its sides resemble ladders. The frames are of varying heights, some the height of a child, others as tall as an adult. Hanging in the middle of each frame is a large, shiny brass bell.

## ESCALATOR LOBBY

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### **Anni Albers**

B. Berlin, Germany, 1899–1994

#### ***Do.I-VI***

1973

Screenprint on paper

The Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest, 1981 (86.26.1-6)

### **Wall Text:**

A member of the Bauhaus in Berlin (along with her husband, Josef) before escaping wartime Germany in 1933, Anni Albers has left an astonishingly influential legacy as a Modernist, colorist, and the first artist to bring textile into the realm of fine art—her geometrically patterned wall hangings are both beloved and revered. In 1963, she began to explore print-making, a medium that allowed for the expansion of her investigations into material; in a 1982 essay entitled “Material as Metaphor,” she writes: “What I had learned in handling threads, I now used in the printing process. Again I was led. My prints are not transfers from paintings to color on paper as is the usual way. I worked with the production process itself, mixing various media, turning the screens. . . . What I am trying to get across is that material is a means of communication. That listening to it, not dominating it makes us truly active, that is: to be active, be passive. The finer tuned we are to it, the closer we come to art.”

### **Visual Description:**

Six colorful square screenprints are installed in a horizontal row across a curved white wall. Each work is about 2 feet wide and shows a geometric shape, with colorful patterns inside and a thick white border around it.

#### ***Do.I***

A screenprinted square with bright orange, yellow, and pink parallelograms and triangles creates a chevron-like pattern.

***Do.II***

A screenprinted square with yellow and gray shapes in an alternating pattern creates the illusion of a diamond in the center of the square.

***Do.III***

A screenprinted square with green and gray shapes in an alternating pattern creates the illusion of a diamond in the center of the square.

***Do.IV***

A screenprinted equilateral diamond contains very light orange shapes that alternate with the background color. The pattern creates the illusion of smaller diamonds taking shape in each corner of the larger diamond.

***Do.V***

A screenprinted equilateral diamond is filled with a pattern of alternating tan and light blue shapes that create the illusion that the diamond is a three-dimensional pyramid. Outlining the edge of the diamond are alternating shapes in yellow and blue.

***Do.VI***

A screenprinted cream-colored square shows a pattern of small, speckled tan parallelograms that alternates between shape and open space. The small shapes are arranged in a diagonal pattern, moving out from the center of the square toward each corner. A break in the shapes creates a diamond form in the center of the square.

Image credit:  
**Alma Thomas**  
***Earth Sermon—Beauty, Love and Peace (detail)***  
1971  
Acrylic on canvas  
The Martha Jackson Memorial Collection:  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David K. Anderson, 1980 (80.107)

# HIRSHHORN

