

***Any distance between us***, July 17, 2021-March 13, 2022

This exhibition explores the power and significance of intimate relationships in a selection of artworks made between 1954 and 2021. From quiet, unassuming expressions of affection to the openly erotic, these works foreground the relationships between artists and their subjects. By presenting their lives, loves, and chosen families, these artists reveal and articulate private worlds of vulnerability, tenderness, and desire.

***Any distance between us*** recognizes the extraordinary importance of all expressions of intimacy as fundamental and equal. Charged with memories of relationships current and past, many of these objects and texts are significant statements of resistance and affirmation for LGBTQ+ artists and artists of color, reflecting 75 years of cultural shifts in representations of sexual orientation, gender identity, class, and race. Shaped by numerous historical events and political movements of the time, these works reflect or transform our understanding of how we become close to and care for one another.

***—Stephen Truax, RISD BFA Painting, 2007 and Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art***

***Any distance between us*** was made possible by support from Alexander Gray Associates, New York; Bortolami Gallery, New York; CANADA, New York; David Zwirner Gallery, New York; and P•P•O•W, New York. RISD Museum is supported by a grant from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, through an appropriation by the Rhode Island General Assembly and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and with the generous partnership of the Rhode Island School of Design, its Board of Trustees, and Museum Governors.

## CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

TM Davy, American, b. 1980

***Here and There***, 2020-2021

Oil on panel

81.3 x 66 cm (32 x 26 inches)

Courtesy of the artist and Van Doren Waxter TL41.2021

“We exist in an age of complete transition. The time is now to communicate the beauty of queer love around the world. A paradigm shift in people’s conception of love is happening. If I can, I want to play a small part in that—in revealing how true and how eternal it is. Transcendence is a movement to the broadest spectrum.”

—TM Davy, 2019

# RISD MUSEUM

In this tender image, Davy presents a couple from behind, gazing out at the dusky sky, while one points out the moon and the first star of the night. These two people are friends of the artist and his recurring subjects. Davy might have observed the scene while spending summers in the Pines on Fire Island, a popular Long Island enclave for queer people—particularly gay men—since the 1930s.

Aaron Gilbert, American, b. 1979, (RISD BFA 2005, Painting)

***Greyhound Lines***, 2021

Oil on canvas

45.7 x 61 cm (18 x 24 inches)

Museum purchase: gift of the RISD Museum Board of Governors, Fine Arts Committee members, friends, and colleagues in honor of John W. Smith, Museum Director, 2011–2020 2021.35



***Greyhound Lines*** presents an older woman and a young girl—possibly a mother or grandmother and daughter or granddaughter—seated on a bus trip from New York to Oakland, as indicated by the ticket stuck in the window. Gilbert's painting depicts a moment of familial care and tenderness yet leaves the circumstances surrounding the figures ambiguous. This may be a pleasant, if distant, family visit, or a voyage necessitated by unfortunate events. The work also evokes experiences specific to traveling across America by intercity bus, underscoring the dynamics of social class particular to that form of transportation.

Patrick Angus, American, 1953-1992

***Untitled***, 1980s

Pencil on paper

Framed: 30.2 x 37.8 x 3 cm (11 7/8 x 14 7/8 x 1 3/16 inches)

Private Collection, New York TL75.2021

Patrick Angus, American, 1953-1992

***Untitled***, 1980s

Crayon on paper

Framed: 33 x 40.6 x 3.2 cm (13 x 16 x 1 1/4 inches)

Courtesy of Charles Renfro TL76.2021

Patrick Angus, American, 1953-1992

***Untitled***, 1980s

# RISD MUSEUM

Graphite on paper  
Framed: 30.2 x 37.8 x 3 cm (11 7/8 x 14 7/8 x 1 3/16 inches)  
Courtesy of Fabio Cherstich and Bortolami Gallery, New York  
TL77.2021

These drawings are characteristic of the tender, intimate portraits Patrick Angus created of other gay men from the late 1970s until he succumbed to AIDS in 1992. Rendering his subjects in a manner suggesting his affection for and identification with them, Angus depicts these figures in isolated domestic settings during moments of repose. These drawings contrast sharply with the work for which Angus is better known—paintings of Times Square gay porn theatres, bathhouses, male strip clubs, and other sites of anonymous gay sexual intimacy in New York.

The drawings and paintings of David Hockney (presented elsewhere in this gallery)—and eventually Hockney's patronage—were profoundly significant for Angus during his brief career.

Aurora Mattia, American, b. 1993  
Excerpt from *The Fifth Wound*, 2020  
Forthcoming from Nightboat Books (nightboat.org), Fall 2022  
Courtesy of the artist TL90.2021

This text—a personal meditation on gender, sexuality, the body, and identity by writer Aurora Mattia—complements Elle Pérez's 2020 portrait of Mattia, *Mae at Riis*, also in this exhibition.

Patrick Carroll, American, b. 1990  
*O THE HEARTACHE YOU'LL FIND*, 2020  
Wool, mohair, nylon  
Dress: 45.7 x 124.5 cm (18 x 49 inches)  
Courtesy of Patrick Carroll TL53.2021.1

Patrick Carroll, American, b. 1990  
*LOSS*, 2020  
Silk, wool, nylon  
Tank: 69.9 x 38.1 cm (27 1/2 x 15 inches)  
Courtesy of Patrick Carroll TL53.2021.2

# RISD MUSEUM

Patrick Carroll, American, b. 1990

***EROS***, 2020

Wool, mohair, nylon, camel

Thong: 137.2 x 20.3 cm (54 x 8 inches)

Courtesy of Patrick Carroll TL53.2021.3

"I made the **LOSS** tank a few weeks before my father took end-of-life medication against the terminal illness he began suffering from in 2015. 2014 I brought him to see Joan Armatrading, an eternal inspiration whose music he played often during my childhood; "Oh, the heartache you'll find" is a lyric from "Down to Zero," off her 1976 eponymous album. Shortly after my father died the pandemic made a hermit of me, and I spent much of the year making clothing—all of which I conceive of as mourning costume—to gain intimacy with the dead and the living. I dyed **EROS**, which ties up into a thong, with Baja fairy-duster flowers from the yard. From this year of loss I offer these in joyous remembrance."

—Patrick Carroll

David Wojnarowicz, American, 1954-1992

***Memory Drawing***, ca. 1981

Ink on paper

27.9 x 22.9 cm (11 x 9 inches)

Courtesy of Will Palley, the Estate of David Wojnarowicz and P•P•O•W, New York TL79.2021

***Memory Drawing*** is one of a series of works on paper that chronicle men having sex in public. Made from memory and informed by the several years the artist lived on the street, these quickly executed drawings with written descriptions have the feel of intimate disclosures. Wojnarowicz is known for his searing political indictments of America and its history of racial and sexual discrimination—particularly in relationship to the AIDS crisis.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, American; b. Cuba, 1957 - 1996

***Untitled (Couple)***, 1993

Light bulbs, porcelain light sockets, and extension cords

Private Collection, Exhibition copy courtesy

of the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation TL81.2021.ab

# RISD MUSEUM

“The thing that I want to do sometimes with some of these pieces about homosexual desire is to be more inclusive. Every time they see a clock or a stack of paper or a curtain, I want them to think twice. I want them to be like the protagonist in *\*Repulsion\** by Polanski, where everything becomes a threat to her virginity. Everything has a sexual mission—the walls, the pavement, everything.”

–Felix Gonzalez-Torres, 1995

Before he passed away from AIDS in 1995, Gonzalez-Torres came to prominence for work that poetically made political use of everyday objects and situations. *Untitled (Couple)*, like many of his works, simultaneously celebrates the life and mourns the loss of his lifetime partner, Ross Laycock, who succumbed to AIDS-related complications in 1991.

Sholem Krishtalka, Canadian, b. 1979

*The Golden Hour*, 2020

Oil on vinyl-coated Masonite

Each: 40 x 30 cm (15 3/4 x 11 13/16 inches)

Courtesy of the artist TL44.2021.ab

“I feel my way through this world. My work is a document and a map of relations, and therefore emotion. Here I was, at this place, with that person, the glimpse of the light, witnessed by my memory, processed through my body and rebuilt gesture by gesture, stroke by stroke. Time passes, people come and go, a love flows and ebbs and turns and sometimes sours. And no matter what may happen to this love, or to that friend, or to that place, the memory is safeguarded; the fleeting feeling, the brief glow, is mine. No one can take that from me.”

–Sholem Krishtalka, 2021

Peter Hujar, American, 1934-1987

*Untitled (Self Portrait)*, 1975

Gelatin silver print

50.8 x 40.6 cm (20 x 16 inches)

Collection of Vince Aletti TL43.2021

“I want to be discussed in hushed tones. When people talk about me, I want them to be whispering.”

–Peter Hujar, date unknown

# RISD MUSEUM

Hujar was a critical figure in the downtown New York underground scene from the late 1960s until his death in 1987 from pneumonia brought on by AIDS. This self-portrait, which positions the viewer lying next to the artist, is similar to photographs Hujar later took of many others who were part of the same scene and dying tragically young from AIDS-related illnesses.

Jonathan Lyndon Chase, American, African-American, b. 1989  
*Young Man Wearing Dickies*, 2020

Acrylic paint, watercolor, marker, and pen on paper

Sheet: 70.8 x 55.8 cm (27 7/8 x 21 15/16 inches) (sight)

Promised gift from Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez  
TL104.2020

“Often I see images of dead brown and black bodies on the web and never any white bodies; it’s strange and unsettling. We always see violence inflicted upon black or queer bodies and there is this weird line between awareness and consumption or enjoyment of seeing our pain. It is important to create these spaces for people like myself to be themselves and to see a safe, confident, and strong visibility and being able to relate to an image that isn’t on the surface white or straight. We should be able to access ideas about love, power, tenderness, and space through other perspectives despite them being universal ideas to their own experiences and bodies.”  
–Jonathan Lyndon Chase, 2016



Angela Dufresne, American, b. 1969, (RISD visiting faculty 2004-2011; RISD Faculty 2012-present, Painting)

*Hanna in the Mirror II*, 2005

Oil on panel

40.6 x 45.7 cm (16 x 18 inches)

Anonymous gift 2018.117.30

“My works attempt to engage in the stuff of the world, in dialog with media, cultural production, and history, as performance, and then project it back onto the canvas, completing the cycle, as it were.”  
–Angela Dufresne, 2013



This quietly intimate painting depicts the German actor Hanna Schygulla, best known for her roles in the 1970s films of Rainer

# RISD MUSEUM

Werner Fassbinder, contemplating herself in a mirror. Schygulla is frequently a subject of Dufresne's paintings, and here the scene suggests our often intense emotional identifications with, and erotic feelings for, celebrities and other iconic figures.

Louis Fratino, American, b. 1993

***View of Monte Cristo***, 2020

Oil on canvas

91.4 x 50.8 cm (36 x 20 inches)

Promised Gift of Greene/Christoffel Collection TL96.2021

"I think about a queer gaze being an unknown gaze. It's a way of seeing something that hasn't been seen before. When I first came to New York, I started making a lot of tiny paintings. The history of painting can feel so masculine and so monumental, so it felt like a queer thing to do—to make something small and ask you to give it legitimacy, even though they didn't occupy very much space in the world. And I think that's a queer mentality, in a way. You don't have to beat people over the head or step over anybody to be in the world. I think my gaze has a lot more to do with how I see people than how gay people see things. That's sort of the job of art historians or art writers—to coalesce something."

—Louis Fratino, 2020



Christopher K. Ho, American; b. Hong Kong, b. 1974

***Art & Family***, 2014

Letterpress print on matte board and stand

Courtesy of the artist and Sunpride Foundation, Hong Kong

TL42.2021

"***Should I have a baby?*** This question loomed as I worked on this project. As my partner drifted farther away, my expressions of affection commensurately ramped up, from thoughtful (topping up the soap dispenser) to desperate (buying a house). The result was an inane duet that too many couples find themselves playing. The lesson? That when small gestures suffice to affirm a relationship, that relationship is solid. And that having a baby is no salve for love lost, even as it may be fodder for making art."

—Christopher K. Ho, 2021

# RISD MUSEUM

Wolfgang Tillmans, German, b. 1968

***Sportflecken***, 1996

Ink jet print on paper

144.8 x 210.8 cm (57 x 83 inches)

Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner, New York TL87.2021

“It’s not all personal, although that is one level. The viewer should be encouraged to feel close to their own experiences of situations similar to those that I’ve presented to them in my work. They should enter my work through their own eyes, and their own lives—not through trying to piece together mine.”

–Wolfgang Tillmans, 2017

This image of a T-shirt—possibly stained with bodily fluids from a sexual encounter—reminds us of its relationship to the human body. Tillmans’s work emphasizes and elevates mundane experiences and objects to prompt greater appreciation of the overlooked moments of everyday life.

Hugh Steers, American, 1962 - 1995

***Futon Couch***, 1991

Oil on canvas

142.2 x 152.4 cm (56 x 60 inches)

Courtesy the Estate of Hugh Steers and Alexander Gray Associates, New York TL80.2021

***Futon Couch*** is representative of the images Hugh Steers created of the everyday lives lived in the shadow of the AIDS crisis in New York in the late 1980s and early 1990s. His tender, haunting paintings present quiet moments of intimacy, sex, and love, frequently showing one lover caring for another dying of AIDS. Steers died from AIDS-related complications in 1995.

Jack Pierson, American, b. 1960

***Do you ever even for a second***, 1991

Graphite on paper

35.6 x 27.9 cm (14 x 11 inches)



# RISD MUSEUM

Courtesy of the artist and Cheim & Read, New York TL46.2021

“And, late at night—I had a sketchbook, and I wasn’t a person that sketched on a daily basis, but I just started writing, like, writing things down. And I started method acting, like, ***What would it be like, you know—this looks like some brokenhearted loser writing in his journal about something.*** I had to do this whole as-if—***I’ll pretend I’m this brokenhearted loser saying the most intimate things to somebody that I’m in love with.*** I made about 20 or 25 of them, because all I had left was a pencil and paper at that point, in terms of making things.”  
—Jack Pierson, 2017

Elle Pérez, American, b. 1989

***Mae at Riis***, 2020

Archival pigment print

Frame: 86.2 x 60.7 x 4.4 cm (33 15/16 x 23 7/8 x 1 3/4 inches)

Museum purchase: gift of the RISD Museum Board of Governors, Fine Arts Committee members, friends, and colleagues in honor of John W. Smith, Museum Director, 2011-2020 2021.27

“In a way, my work has always been made collaboratively, and because of that, that’s why I don’t think of it as documentary. Because my work has such a raw, visceral relationship to emotional authenticity, people often would recommend that I would go into documentary, but I could never figure out the ethics of it.”  
—Elle Pérez, 2019

This image presents the writer Aurora Mattia at New York’s Riis Park beach—a popular site for the LGBTQ+ community. Pérez is celebrated for creating honest and affectingly intimate portraits of friends and gender-non-conforming individuals. Text by Mattia, excerpted from ***The Fifth Wound***, is presented in this exhibition.



# RISD MUSEUM

Catherine Opie, American, active; b. 1961

***Norma & Eyenga, Minneapolis, Minnesota***, 1998

Chromogenic print

Image: 99.8 x 125.2 cm (39 5/16 x 49 5/16 inches) (sight)

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2021.26

“For [the ***Domestic***] series, I traveled in an RV across the United States on a two-month road trip photographing lesbian couples and families in their homes or environments. There are images of lesbians relaxing in their backyards, hanging out in kitchens, floating in their pools, playing with their children, lounging on beds, staring out windows, and so on. I exhibited them as large-scale color portraits, accompanied by a group of small still-lives from these various settings. I wanted to focus on the idea of community, the individuals within that community, and how communities are formed.”

–Catherine Opie



Nan Goldin, American, b. 1953

***Vivienne in the Green Dress, NYC***, 1980

Color chromogenic print

Image: 49.7 x 33.4 cm (19 9/16 x 13 1/8 inches)

Walter H. Kimball Fund 2003.8

“It was important to me, the way I developed, that I didn’t stay in my nuclear family. It’s also why my friends have always been my family. I mean it’s become a trite kind of statement—‘the chosen family’—but when I first wrote about it in 1985 in the ***Ballad [of Sexual Dependency]*** book, it wasn’t trite then. It was still a kind of new notion to people.... They’re the most important to me in the world, my friends. More important than family, lovers, my career.”

–Nan Goldin, 2017



This photograph presents the artist’s longtime friend Vivienne Dick, an Irish filmmaker whom she met in New York in 1978. It is emblematic of Goldin’s candid and unposed views of the lives of her circle of friends, often in the most private settings in their homes.

# RISD MUSEUM

Sage Sohler, American, b. 1954

***Bill and Ric, with Ric's daughter Kate, San Francisco, February 1987,***  
1987

Gelatin silver print

Image: 27.3 x 40.3 cm (10 3/4 x 15 7/8 inches)

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2015.87.2



Sage Sohler, American, b. 1954

***Jean and Elaine, Santa Fe, New Mexico, June 1988,*** 1988

Gelatin silver print

Image: 27.3 x 40.3 cm (10 3/4 x 15 7/8 inches)

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2015.87.3



"I began this project in 1986 because the advent of AIDS had led me to think about the prevalence, variety, and longevity of gay and lesbian relationships—the opposite of the promiscuity that was getting so much play in the press. My ambition was to make pictures that challenged and moved people and that were interesting both visually and psychologically. In the 1980s, many same-sex relationships were still discreet, or a bit hidden. It was a time when many gay men were dying of AIDS, which made a particularly poignant backdrop for the project. This was before successful drug cocktails were developed. I was interested in how, as a culture, we weren't used to looking at two men touching, and was struck by the visual novelty yet total ordinariness of these same-sex relationships."

—Sage Sohler, 2014

# RISD MUSEUM

Katherine Bradford, American, b. 1942

***Long Time Lovers***, 2021

Acrylic on canvas

182.9 x 172.7 cm (72 x 68 inches)

Courtesy of Canada, New York TL82.2021

"I'm exploring who we are, how we fit in, how we fit in together visually, how we all stand next to each other, and there are quite a lot of options for how to look and be with one another. I'm interested in the community, and I love the community that you and I are in, which is full of really odd, different kinds of people. I really like that and I want to celebrate it."

–Katherine Bradford, 2019

The figures in Bradford's paintings often resist gendered associations, yet the pair depicted in ***Long Time Lovers*** quietly appears to suggest an affectionate and enduring lesbian relationship. The artist lives between Brooklyn and Maine with her longtime partner, Jane, whom she met in December 1990.



Alvin Baltrop, American, 1948 - 2004

***The Piers (couple having sex)***, n.d. (1975-1986)

Color chromogenic print

Image: 35.6 x 22.9 cm (14 x 9 inches)

The Alvin Baltrop Trust, © 2010, NY, and Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne/New York TL40.2021

"I began to take these photos as a voyeur [and] soon grew determined to preserve the frightening, mad, unbelievable, violent, and beautiful things that were going on at the time. To get certain shots, I hung from the ceilings of several warehouses utilizing a makeshift harness, watching and waiting for hours to record the lives that these people (friends, acquaintances, and strangers) led and the unfortunate ends they sometimes met. The casual sex and nonchalant narcotizing, the creation of art and music, sunbathing, dancing, merrymaking, and the like habitually gave way to muggings, callous yet detached violence, rape, suicide, and, in some instances, murder. The rapid emergence and expansion of AIDS further reduced the number of people going to and living at the piers, and the sporadic joys that could be found there."

–Alvin Baltrop, date unknown

# RISD MUSEUM

Tom Burr, American, b. 1963

***Black leather lovers***, 2013

Stools, plywood, and acrylic

67 x 108 x 80 cm (26 3/8 x 42 1/2 x 31 1/2 inches)

Courtesy of the artist and Bortolami, New York TL23.2021



“Coming out of feminism and the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, there was always a need to picture something, to picture the body, and I was interested in doing something very different than that. I was interested in implicating the viewer.... I was interested in the projection into the work by the bodies that might be viewing it.”

–Tom Burr, 2016

Burr’s sculpture presents two low barstools as human surrogates. The play on words in the title alludes both to the chairs’ black leather-like upholstery material and to gay male fetish and BDSM subcultures.

Robert Mapplethorpe, American, 1946-1989

***Untitled (Self-Portrait)***, ca. 1973

Polaroid photograph

10.8 x 8.6 cm (4 1/4 x 3 3/8 inches)

Collection of John Cheim, New York TL45.2021

This early self-portrait possesses a startling intimacy and eroticism. Mapplethorpe’s work frequently combined explicit sexual content with allusions to artworks from ancient Greece and Rome and the Renaissance. There seems to be a striking similarity between this photograph and the Barberini Faun, a Greek sculpture from around 220 BCE.

# RISD MUSEUM

Tom of Finland, Finnish, 1920-1991

**Untitled**, 1988

Graphite on paper

Image: 21 x 29.5 cm (8 1/4 x 11 5/8 inches)

Gift of Hudson 2009.52.3

“In those days, a gay man was made to feel nothing but shame about his feelings and his sexuality. I wanted my drawings to counteract that, to show gay men being happy and positive about who they were. Oh, I didn’t sit down to think this all out carefully. But I knew—right from the start—that my men were going to be proud and happy men!”

–Tom of Finland, date unknown

This drawing is emblematic of Tom of Finland’s comic-book-like representations of explicit sex between gay men. Significantly, this particular image includes figures wearing condoms—a profound political statement in the 1980s, when countless numbers of men, including artists in this exhibition, were dying of AIDS-related diseases transmitted through unprotected sex. Given the broad distribution of Tom of Finland’s images in various publications at the time, this work functioned as a kind of public-service announcement recommending safe-sex practices.



Andy Warhol, American, 1928-1987

**Keith Haring and Juan Dubose**, 1983

Polacolor ER print

Gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.  
2008.110.83

“Juan came with me to Christmas to a family reunion thing for the entire family. My Father has ten brothers and sisters. It’s a Marine Corps family. All my Father’s relatives are Marines; I know that I could have been a Marine. On one side there is this really macho thing, but there is also this thing of pride in yourself and in family and in real simple things. I could have done all that, but it was even more incredible to have their respect even though I was not a Marine and even though the whole family knew, by now figuring it out, that I’m gay. Haring is their name, too, and what I’ve done makes them incredibly proud. And though we never talked about it, after coming to New York and visiting me when I was living with Juan, my parents finally accepted him as part of the family, buying him a present at Christmastime.”





# RISD MUSEUM

–Keith Haring, 1989

This portrait—one of many Polaroids Andy Warhol took from the late 1950s until his death in 1987—depicts Keith Haring, an artist known for bringing graffiti into a fine-art context, and his lover, Juan Dubose, a New York-based deejay. Both men died of AIDS-related complications, Haring in 1990 and Dubose in 1989.

Keith Vaughan, English, 1912-1977

***Study for Figure with Towel***, 1957

Oil on board

39.4 x 31.7 cm (15 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches)

Gift of Richard Brown Baker 1996.11.52

“I ask myself which of my pictures would I be willing to stand beside in public, say Piccadilly Circus, for all to see. The least personal ones, I suppose, abstract landscapes. The continual use of the male figure... retains always the stain of a homosexual conception... ‘K.V. paints nude young men.’ Perfectly true, but I feel I must hide my head in shame. Inescapable, I suppose—social guilt of the invert.”

–Keith Vaughan, 1953

Keith Vaughan painted the male nude—one of his favorite subjects—in a uniquely abstracted style. His figure studies reflect a sense of intimacy and desire in relationship to his subjects.

Vaughan is also noted for his diaries, written from 1939 to the time of his death. Over 61 notebooks, he chronicled his struggles as a gay man living in a postwar Britain characterized by acute hostility toward and criminalization of homosexuality.



# RISD MUSEUM

Paul Cadmus, American, 1904-1999

***Male Nude, TS5***, 1954

Graphite and casein on tan paper

Plate: 20 x 30.2 cm (7 7/8 x 11 7/8 inches)

Museum purchase: Mary B. Jackson Fund and gift in memory of Courtland Roach by his friends 1999.6.2



Paul Cadmus made frank depictions of homoerotic content that were controversial during his lifetime. This intensely sexualized view of a male nude—the model Ted Starkowski, alluded to as TS in the title—reflects artistic skill Cadmus developed through classical training.

Kennedi Carter, American, b.1998

***Untitled***, 2020

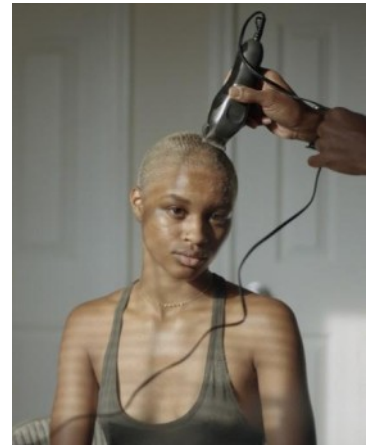
Inkjet print on paper

Sheet: 50.6 x 40.6 cm (19 15/16 x 16 inches)

Museum purchase: gift of Maria and Witt Barlow 2020.42

“Seeing yourself can make a huge difference, because when you are trying to imagine the things you want to be, seeing someone else doing it can be very empowering. I just think when I make my work I want to show different possibilities. I like telling Black stories and finding the ones that are often either underrepresented or ignored or that were left out. I think that’s what I aim to do with my work.”

–Kennedi Carter, 2021



In Carter’s self-portrait, her father shaves her head with electric clippers. The work not only underscores the central role that hair plays in African American culture but also highlights this important relationship in the artist’s life.



# RISD MUSEUM

Jack Pierson, American, b. 1960

*Cry*, 2009

Metal, wood and paint

50.8 x 154.9 x 2.5 cm (20 x 61 x 1 inches)

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2018.37

Pierson's word works developed from his experience as a graphic designer and the period his studio was located in New York's Times Square district in the late 1980s and early 1990s. His nostalgic evocation of a bygone era—when signs were handmade—combines with words or phrases that possess an emotional affect, such as *cry*.



Deana Lawson, American, b. 1979, (RISD MFA 2004, Photography)

*Binky and Tony Forever*, 2009

Pigmented inkjet print

Frame: 96.5 x 112.1 cm (38 x 44 1/8 inches)

Museum purchase: Gift of Judy and Robert Mann and Walter H. Kimball Fund 2017.52

"A lot of my work is about what I don't see in popular media culture, and to me I felt like I needed to make an image that was about embracing and intimacy and support, physically, between young people, particularly young Black people. I usually find strangers, and I photograph in their environment. When I asked Binky where she wanted to photograph, I don't think she was comfortable at her place, so we decided to do it at my apartment in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. So the picture's actually in my apartment, it's my bedroom. Often, I rearrange things in the environment, but in *Binky and Tony Forever*, my bedroom pretty much looked like that."

—Deana Lawson, 2016



# RISD MUSEUM

Doron Langberg, American, b. Israel, b. 1985

**Mike**, 2019

Oil on linen

61 x 45.7 cm (24 x 18 inches)

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2019.80

"In my early twenties, my work was much more explicit. There was a conflation of intimacy and sex. As I grew as a person, these aspects of my life started diverging, and I found that my language could also describe friendship or familial closeness. It doesn't have to be tied to sex or sexuality to be about queerness. Queerness can be a lens through which to view the world and experience relationships, beyond the sexual."

–Doron Langberg, 2019



David Hockney, British, b. 1937

**Peter Resting with Clothes on, St. Tropez**, 1969

Pen and ink on paper

36.8 x 44.4 cm (14 x 17 inches) (sheet)

Gift of Richard Brown Baker 1996.11.20

"What an artist is trying to do for people is bring them closer to something. I am constantly preoccupied with how to remove distance so that we can all come closer together, so that we can all begin to sense we are the same, we are one."

–David Hockney, 2020



This drawing depicts David Hockney's lifelong subject and lover, fellow artist Peter Schlesinger, whom he met in Los Angeles in 1966. It represents his style and sensibility as a draftsman with its sparing use of line and shading against a neutral background.

Louis Fratino, American, b. 1993

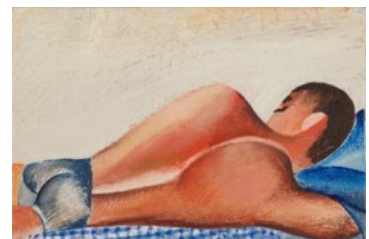
**Sleeping Tom, morning light**, 2019

Oil on linen

30.5 x 22.9 cm (12 x 9 inches)

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2019.81

"I make paintings of the people I love, from memory. I want to make work that is tender and generous and optimistic."



# RISD MUSEUM

–Louis Fratino, 2019

*Sleeping Tom, morning light*, like many of Fratino's works, presents a highly stylized and sexualized image of a man. His shading, contour, and application of paint creates a tactile quality that exaggerates this eroticization.

Nicole Eisenman, American, b. France, b. 1965, (RISD BFA 1987, Painting)

*Drinks at Julius*, 2012

Etching and aquatint with chine collé

Image: 16.4 x 20.3 cm (6 7/16 x 8 inches)

Edgar J. Lownes Fund 2014.36.1

"Work comes out of life.... Being a queer woman is the air that I breathe, and it's inescapable, and it's going to be part of the work."

–Nicole Eisenman, 2016

This etching presents a scene of friends and lovers at Julius, the oldest gay bar in New York City, evoking details particular to the place, such as the sticky, square-shaped tables and bright incandescent lights. Eisenman's depictions of social gatherings from her everyday life suggest how intimacy is experienced in public, as well as private, spaces.

By presenting life and sexuality through a queer perspective, Eisenman's paintings and works on paper have profoundly influenced a number of other artists, including numerous figures in this exhibition.

Jess T. Dugan, American, b. 1986

*Hank, 76, and Samm, 67, North Little Rock, AR, 2015, 2018*

Color inkjet print

Image: 34.3 x 45.7 cm (13 1/2 x 18 inches)

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2018.95.5

This photograph is part of the project *To Survive on This Shore: Photographs and Interviews with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Older Adults*. Over five years Dugan and social worker Vanessa Fabbre traveled the US, photographing and interviewing



# RISD MUSEUM

transgender seniors, a community that has frequently been misrepresented.

**Samm:** Hank didn't know she was a girl until she was around 11 or 12. She was always the boy in the family. If it was Thanksgiving, Mom and the girls cooked dinner while she and Dad went hunting. Her mother even customized her clothes. Every Easter, everybody got new bluejeans and yellow T-shirts. The girls got those bluejeans that zipped up the side, but Hank always got the fly front. The girls got a regular plain yellow T-shirt but Hank's mother would create a pocket on hers so that it would be just like her dad's.

**Hank:** But they didn't call me "he" or "him." They just called me Hank.

**Samm:** They knew that Hank was different from her sisters and Hank's dad was excited, I guess, about having this "boy," and Hank's mom didn't object. Her father would put her in boxing matches with older boys and he was really proud. Once in a while some relatives would show up and say to her dad, "Hey, you are going to make that girl funny." And Dick would tell them to mind their own business and leave Hank alone. And that was simply it.

**Hank:** It was a lot like in the olden days, you know, there were a lot of people around like me and people just expected us to become "unmarried aunts" or "fancy boys" and nobody ever confronted you with it. My father would say things like, "Oh, this one will never get married." If I heard him say that today I would say, "Oh, he's telling them I am gay." Only I didn't have those words for it back then.

But when I was 12, my parents decided that it was time for me to be a girl. This was a very strenuous thing for me because, of course, I didn't want to be a girl. They started trying to work me into being a girl but by then my identity was already set. I was totally me. I always say, "I'm just Hank. I'm not he, I'm not she, I'm just Hank. I'm who I've always been." But my father and mother decided that for my birthday they should give me some girl perfume. Perfume wasn't something that I was familiar with. Of course, my sisters had perfume but that was for girls! And so, I was brokenhearted. I mean, they could have cut me with a knife and hurt me less than saying, "Okay, now you are going to be like a girl." Later on, when I was 21, I went into the military, which took me away from them and everybody.

**Samm:** But there were points in the military that were very difficult. She ended up being investigated for homosexuality and examined psychiatrically, and the army ended up putting it in writing that "while she had a pretty face, she was very masculine."

# RISD MUSEUM

**Hank:** I loved the military, but I thought there was no future there for me because of all the stress of the investigation. I finally went to my superior and said, "Either you are going to stop the investigation on me or you are going to charge me with something, because I can't go on like this." It was a very traumatic experience for me.

**Samm:** Eventually they brought it to a conclusion and they added up all the evidence to find that they didn't have a thing on her.

Hank and I have been together 44 years. We met after her time in the military, through some Chicago lesbians I had met. They threw a party every Friday night and one of those nights someone said, "There are some really fine dykes up in Western Michigan." And then somebody said, "Road trip!" And 30 hours later, there we were in Kalamazoo. And so I found this one in Western Michigan. She was different from anybody I had ever met in my whole life, and I knew that she would be in my life for the rest of my life. There was this immediate connection that would always be there. The way we are today, we started out that way.

Elliott Jerome Brown, Jr., American, b. 1993

***Syllables of joy and devastation (2)***, 2018

Archival inkjet print

114.3 x 76.2 cm (45 x 30 inches)

Courtesy of the artist and Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York

TL78.2021

"I arrive at things thinking, How can I visualize power? How can I visualize intimacy? How can I visualize warmth? How can I do those things without exploiting this relationship or the environment that I have access to? How can I present these things in a way that is respectful and that is still engaging? Those are questions that I bring to each thing I do."

—Elliott Jerome Brown Jr., 2020

Brown's photograph depicts a figure close up and in a moment of reflection. His artistic practice as a queer African American man explores intimacy, communion, mourning, and joy.



# RISD MUSEUM

Salman Toor, American; b. Pakistan, b. 1983

***Two Boys with a Dog***, 2020

Oil on panel

35.6 x 45.7 cm (14 x 18 inches)

Museum purchase: gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel

Gonzalez 2020.48

"I like these seemingly undernourished and hairy bodies of color inhabiting familiar, bourgeois, urban interior spaces. I see these boys or men as well-educated creative types discovering what it means to live an artist's life in New York City, and in the thick of changing ideas about race, immigration, and foreignness, and also what it means to be American. Sometimes they can look like lifestyle images. They are also fantasies about myself and my community. It's incredibly empowering to share the comedy and disquiet of these narratives with Americans, and the world."

–Salman Toor, 2021

