

## *Everyday Things: Contemporary Works from the Collection*, April 13, 2012-February 24, 2013

Before the 20th century, the use of everyday objects in Western art was most often associated with the genre of still-life painting, where natural and manmade items were depicted for their symbolic meanings and as evidence of an artist's virtuosity. In the early 20th century Marcel Duchamp challenged traditional meanings and methods of making of art by boldly selecting commonplace objects--a bicycle wheel, a bottle rack, and a urinal, for example--and designating them as art. These "readymade" objects became subject matter and substance for three-dimensional assemblages and sculpture that redefined both aesthetic experience and evidence of an artist's craft.

*Everyday Things* brings together works from the collection made from the 1960s to the present, including a number that are being exhibited here for the first time. Some realistically depict ordinary domestic objects (a paper bag, a garden hose, supermarket produce), while others accumulate quantities of found materials (plastic Coke bottles, rubber flip-flop sandals, audiotape) or serve as functional forms in their own right (light fixtures and furniture). Several artists transform existing materials to become components of other everyday things--such as wall sconces made with portable coolers and colorful benches composed of handrails.

Many of these artworks reflect current societal themes, addressing issues from waste and recycling to domesticity in relation to industrial production to the impact of functional objects' design on daily life. Whether featuring traditional or non-traditional materials, they heighten our awareness of how everyday things--from the banal to the transformative--characterize our world.

### CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Pepón Osorio  
Puerto Rican, b. 1955  
*T.K.O.*, 1989  
Mixed media  
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2001.30

Pepón Osorio is known for elaborate, room-size installations that often use humor and kitsch to confront difficult political and social issues. *T.K.O.* is a kind of miniature installation or three-dimensional collage. Within its bright-red velvet-lined box, Osorio has placed various objects and tokens that he associates with his native Puerto Rico. These items mingle with images of political figures whom he holds responsible for decades of corruption and violence there. "T.K.O." stands for "technical knockout," a boxing term used to declare a match's end when a still-conscious boxer cannot continue to fight. The cover features boxing gloves with plastic toy soldiers and a metallic dollar sign. Together with the work's title, this arrangement hints at a larger political story contained inside the box.



# RISD MUSEUM

Robert Watts

American, b.1923

*Ham & Egg Sandwich*, 1965

Lucite

Gift from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Barnet Fain 2001.80.29



Carrie Mae Weems

American, b. 1953

Lenox, Inc., manufacturer

American, fl. 1889-present

*Commemoration Plate*, 1992

Bone china

Gift from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Barnet Fain 2001.80.30



Decorative plates such as Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Plate, the Official Royal Wedding Commemorative Plate for Prince William and Catherine Middleton, and inauguration plates for U.S. Presidents traditionally commemorate the rites and rituals of rich and powerful people. Carrie Mae Weems's twenty-plate series *Commemorating* was produced by the artist with the American china manufacturer Lenox, which is known for its White House commissions and customized tableware for U.S. Embassies and governors' mansions. The series uses the classic design of a round, gold-ringed, bone-white dinner plate, but celebrates rather than royalty the achievements of famous, average, familiar, and forgotten people and moments in African-American history. This one reads: "Commemorating Blues, Jazz, Collard Greens & Thelonius Monk," while subjects of other plates in the series range from Harriet Tubman to the ghettos of Harlem, Watts, and Detroit to "Every Black Man Who Lives to See Twenty-One."

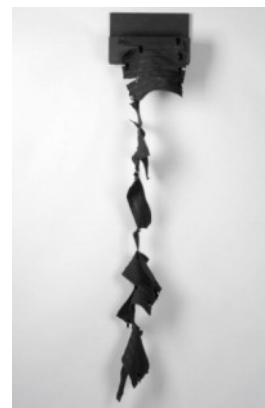
Kenn Speiser

American, b.1946

*Zipper Box*, 1997

Zippers, thread, gimp nails, micaceous iron oxide (acrylic paint), wood, piano hinge

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2002.115.2



# RISD MUSEUM

Mike Kelley

American, 1954-2012

*Untitled (Bowling Ball, Bag and Shirt)*, 1991

Bowling ball; fabric; vinyl; polyester; rayon

Gift of Art Resources Transfer, Inc. 2002.76

The bright-red customized elements of Mike Kelley's three-part still-life sculpture conjure an alter-ego of the artist as a member of a bowling league. Fabricated for the piece, these seemingly common commercial items feature mysterious personalized details. The bowling ball has no holes. The XXL shirt is monogrammed above the chest pocket, with the artist's signature stitched in black thread and its mirror image stitched in white. On the back of the shirt and on the bowling bag is a hand-designed emblem of a genie's lamp with a small puff emerging from its spout. Flanked by two crossed paintbrushes dripping with paint, its handles read "Death, Knowledge, Life, and Guilt," while the lamp itself is inscribed with the letters "X-C," connoting a Christogram, or Christian monogram. This darkly humorous assemblage perhaps alludes to Kelley's Roman Catholic upbringing in a working class suburb of Detroit, while also suggesting the cultural distance between bowling leagues and art museums.



Dave Cole

American, b. 1975

*American Flag (Toy Soldiers #12)*, August 2002

Acrylic on wood panel, plastic soldiers

Gift of Dr. Armand Versaci 2003.119



Dan Flavin

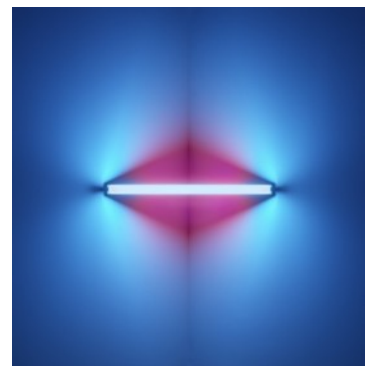
American, 1933-1996

*Untitled*, ca. 1970

Fluorescent light (blue and red)

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.14

A key figure in the Minimalist art movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Dan Flavin worked exclusively with off-the-shelf fluorescent light tubes to create sculptures that use light, color, and simple geometric configurations to explore the visual and physical experiences of perception. Installed horizontally across the corner of the room, the fluorescent tubes cast a haloed diamond of red and blue light that activates the surrounding gallery space.



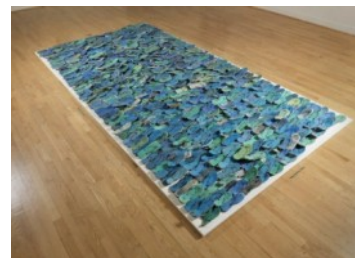
# RISD MUSEUM

Jonathan Bonner, artist  
American, b. 1947  
*Front Pockets*, 1999-2001  
video, color, silent  
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2004.116.12



Tony Capellán  
Dominican, b. 1955  
*Mar Caribe [Caribbean Sea]*, 1996  
Plastic and rubber sandals with barbed wire  
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2005.10

Tony Capellán collected these commonly worn sandals along the bank of the Ozama River in Santo Domingo where they had washed up. The toe strap from each flip-flop has been replaced with barbed wire, transforming this footwear into a symbol of political and economic hardship and undercutting the stereotypical view of the Caribbean Islands as a tropical paradise.



Ree Morton  
American, 1936-1977  
*Untitled (Signs of Love)*, 1976  
Oil on plywood with celastic curtain  
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2005.3

In the late 1960s Ree Morton abandoned her middle-class life as a wife, mother, and nurse to become an artist. An early proponent of installation art, she experimented with nontraditional materials and integrated elements of painting and sculpture with the work's site. *Untitled (Signs of Love)* is composed of a pastel-toned landscape painting and a patterned curtain made of Celastic, a material used for set designs. The painting presents a romantic, nostalgic fantasy in the literally "rosy" view out the window while the three-dimensional curtain suggests the tangible reality of daily life. With its swags, floral motifs, and pastel palette, the painting further embodies ideas about decoration, domesticity, sentimentality, and theatricality—characteristics traditionally associated with the feminine and not typically considered appropriate for serious art.



# RISD MUSEUM

Tania Bruguera  
Cuban, b. 1968  
*Study for Poetic Justice*, 2003  
Used teabags, deer bone and glue on paper  
Walter H. Kimball Fund 2005.69

Tania Bruguera's gridded collage composed of used tea bags is a study for *Poetic Justice*, a large-scale installation she created for the 2003 Istanbul Biennial. In that work, tea bags lined the walls of a long, corridor-like room, interspersed with tiny video monitors displaying archival news footage. Bruguera became interested in tea as a metaphor for the repackaging of culture while at an artist residency in India. British tea culture, adopted from China and cultivated throughout the British Empire, was dependent on the importation of tea plants from South and Southeast Asia, which were then packaged and distributed back into India as part of British colonial customs connoting foreignness and sophistication. "As happened in India with tea," observes Bruguera, "our realities are more and more co-opted, re-packed, and sent back to us with pre-digested meaning; they are defined by the media. Like the British Empire before, now corporations control the news and therefore History."



B. Wurtz  
American, b. 1948  
*Untitled*, 1989  
Wood, fabric, and tin can  
Gift of Hudson 2005.87.4

In this small sculpture B. Wurtz has carefully arranged several familiar objects to evoke a domestic scene that looks slightly askew as a food tin manages not to fall off a slanted board suggesting a lopsided kitchen table. Using found materials specifically related to food, clothing, and shelter, Wurtz's precarious assemblages simultaneously emphasize and obscure the mundane origins of his sources, recycling elements into carefully balanced, whimsical compositions. "While I do make objects," the artist has noted, "in a way it would be more accurate to say that I rearrange objects that already exist....Found objects give me the content right from the start. They represent my feeling that looking at the Universe begins with really seeing the everyday things right in front of one's nose."



# RISD MUSEUM

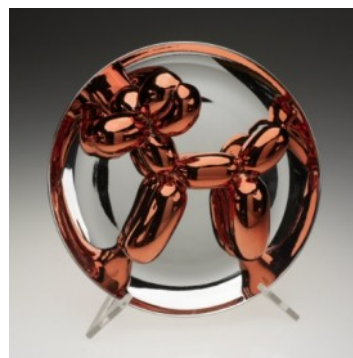
Christian Marclay  
American; Swiss, b. 1955  
*Cascade*, 1989  
Magnetic tape  
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2006.2

Encompassing sculpture, performance, print editions, and video, Christian Marclay's work is distinguished by its focus on music and sound. In making *Cascade*, Marclay unspooled yards and yards of reel-to-reel audiotape and gathered it into a tumbling mass to be suspended from the ceiling. The tape was manufactured to record and play back sound, but in destroying its functionality to make this sculpture Marclay calls attention to the physical characteristics of the electromagnetic material itself: the thin, delicate strands shifting slightly with any air current, and the warm brown surfaces shimmering and glistening, spilling like a waterfall to the floor.



Jeff Koons  
American, b. 1954  
*Balloon Dog (Red)*, 1995  
Porcelain  
Gift of Susan Morris 2008.101.1

*Balloon Dog (Red)* is a miniature version of Jeff Koons's iconic ten-foot-tall cast stainless steel balloon dogs, made from 1994 to 2000. For these sculptures the artist appropriates "balloon modeling"—an activity usually practiced by clowns at children's birthday parties—into the realm of high art, thus parodying the traditions of sculptural fabrication and reproduction. Koons worked as a Wall Street commodities broker before becoming an artist in the 1980s. He has since taken "appropriation art," which borrows subject matter and techniques from visual culture, to extreme degrees to distort and reflect an American appetite for consumerism.



Jeff Koons  
American, b. 1954  
*Bread With Egg*, 1995  
Plaster and tempera  
Gift of Susan Morris 2008.101.2



# RISD MUSEUM

John Baeder  
American, b. 1938  
*Charlie's Diner*, 1975  
Oil on canvas

Bequest of Richard Brown Baker 2009.92.7

John Baeder's paintings of roadside American eateries and everyday locales are based on photographs he took during road trips across the country. Charlie's Diner was located in Worcester, Massachusetts, where the first lunch cart was invented. Always devoid of people, Baeder's diners quietly preserve and celebrate the built environment of a rapidly disappearing era. Personalized, hand-painted signage adds to the sense of nostalgia. "Charlie's is a small painting, but there's a strange bigness to it," Baeder has noted. "The shadow grew and moved in on Charlie's as [it] sat comfortably at rest preparing for dusk."



Jack Beal  
American, 1931 - 2013  
*Shopping Bag*, 1969  
Acrylic on canvas

Bequest of Richard Brown Baker 2009.92.9

Jack Beal's realist approach makes an ordinary household object the center of attention while exploring formalist flat planes of color, clean lines, and strong contrasts of light. In 1965, when Photorealist painting was first being exhibited, New York Times art critic Hilton Kramer wrote of Beal's paintings: "He paints these works with painstaking representational fidelity. Yet the results convey a feeling of fantasy and romance emphatically at odds with their mundane details.... There is something a little absurd in painting a blue denim work-shirt as if it were the precious stuff of a Renaissance robe, or in treating an aluminum snow shovel to the luminosity of fine pewter in an old Dutch still life."



# RISD MUSEUM

Ai Weiwei

Chinese, b. 1957

*Kui Hua Zi (Sun Flower Seeds)*, 2009

1000 porcelain sun flower seeds, sculpted and painted by hand,  
inside a lidded glass jar.

Elizabeth T. and Dorothy N. Casey Fund 2010.20

Ai Weiwei paid skilled craftspeople in the Chinese city of Jingdezhen, where porcelain was invented 1,200 years ago, to sculpt and paint each of these life-size sunflower seeds by hand. The seeds relate to Ai's memories of growing up in communist China under Mao Zedong, when Chairman Mao was represented as the sun and the Chinese people as his loyal sunflower followers. Although widespread consumption of sunflower seeds in China was associated with limited personal choice, people ate them with pleasure (and continue to today). Contained in a modern household jar, the porcelain seeds become a symbol of both the common and the extraordinary. Larger artworks by Ai feature enormous quantities of porcelain seeds, including 100,000,000 created for an installation last year at the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall. Outspokenly critical of the current Chinese government's policies, Ai was arrested in April 2011 and his studio was raided by Chinese authorities. He was released after three months following an international outcry.



Pruitt-Early

American

*Paintings for Teenage Boys, Miller Six Pack, (What's on a Man's Mind)*, 1989

Stretched printed fabric with iron-on decals, wrapped in plastic  
Gift of Allen Schuh 2010.23.1

Paintings for Teenage Boys and Sculpture for Teenage Boys are collaborations by the artist duo Rob Pruitt and Jack Early. In their twenties when they created this work, Pruitt and Early affixed pop culture decals to stretched fabric printed with the Miller beer logo. Marijuana and profanity to sex and motorcycles, the '80s-era illicit images suggest the boredom and apathy of a generation, filtered through the artists' perspectives of being both gay and working class. While Pruitt and Early ended their collaboration shortly after creating this work, due in part to a critical backlash for their use of posters of prominent African-Americans in other work of the time, they have also been lauded for engaging with risky subject matter.





# RISD MUSEUM

Pruitt-Early

American

Robert Pruitt

American, b. 1964

Walter "Jack" Early

American, b. 1962

*Sculpture for Teenage Boys (Miller Six Pack)*, ca. 1989

Four six packs of beer with decals in plastic yokes

Gift of Allen Schuh 2010.23.2

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Michael Owen

American, b. 1967

*Don't Tread on Me*, 2011

Oil on PVC panel

Gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2011.103

Coiled like a snake ready to strike, an ordinary green garden hose floats in a bright white empty field. The title of the painting, *Don't Tread on Me*, refers to Revolutionary-era American patriotism, borrowing the motto of the colonists against British rule. That phrase appeared on the Gadsden flag — which depicts a coiled rattlesnake — the first American flag carried by the Continental Marines during the Revolutionary War, symbolic of the U.S. colonies, and adopted by the Tea Party in 2009. This painting belongs to the artist's "survivalist series," in which he paints commonplace household items — including batteries, life vests, and water storage systems — that have been stockpiled by post-9/11 American survivalists. By associating the mundane hose with a potent symbol, Owen alludes to current political issues with a sense of humor and irony.



# RISD MUSEUM

Kevin Osmond

English, b. 1968

*Constellation #4*, 2009

2mm wood rods, wood spheres, nail lacquer, nylon thread

Richard Brown Baker Fund for Contemporary British Art 2011.14.1



Leidy Churchman

American, b. 1979

*Cart in Theory*, 2008

Oil on wood, rocks and bell; found metal cart

Lippitt Acquisition Fund 2011.18



Leidy Churchman uses oil paint to transform a variety of found materials into strikingly realistic objects of a similar size and shape: squashed cigarette butts are made from twigs, juicy-looking strawberries are actually rocks, and what looks like a convincing hunk of blue cheese is in fact a rough, angular piece of stone. A worn-looking replica of a prominent art book, *Art in Theory, 1900–2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, painted on a thick wedge of wood, appears on the bottom shelf. Using artifice to question the nature of objects, *Cart in Theory* (a pun on the book's title), asks us to consider whether the cart becomes theoretical instead of functional when it is lifted out of "real life" and placed in an artwork. The artist frequently added and removed various objects to and from this work prior to the museum's acquisition. It was only then that it became a true "still life"—finite in quantity and fixed forever in its arrangement and presentation.

Jim Drain

American, b. 1975

*Untitled (bench)*, 2010

Powder coated stainless steel and aluminum

Edgar J. Lownes Fund 2011.41.2



With their thick, cartoonish contours and psychedelic colors, Jim Drain's benches are hard to miss. Upon closer inspection it is clear they are composed largely of manufactured handrails, that one everyday element has become an integral part of another functional form. From 1995 to 2001 Drain was a member of the now-disbanded Providence art collective known as Fort Thunder. The group of young artists and musicians lived and worked in a former textile factory in the Olneyville section of the city. There Drain became known for knitted costumes worn in performances and featuring vibrant colors similar to the benches.

# RISD MUSEUM

Stella Waitzkin  
American, 1920 - 2003  
*Untitled*, n. d.  
Polyester resin  
Gift of the Waitzkin Memorial Library Trust 2011.43



Jessica Stockholder  
Canadian, b. 1959  
*With Your Salad*, 2005  
Plastic cooler, brushed aluminum wall sconce, electrical cord,  
polyester resin, fabric  
Gift of Merrill Sherman 2011.44.1

Jessica Stockholder is known for creating very large environments that merge the color and gesture of abstract painting with the physicality and volume of sculpture. In *With Your Salad*, blue and green resin shapes droop over the top of a common picnic cooler and light fixture, creating an entirely new wall sconce that resembles miniature architecture. The title of the work suggests a salad bar or smorgasbord — an “everything but the kitchen sink” approach to making art.

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# RISD MUSEUM

Franz West  
Austrian, b. 1947  
*Privatlampe des Künstlers II*, 1989  
Iron chain, electrical cord, and light bulb  
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2011.77



Tony Feher  
American, b. 1956  
*A Few Blue Spots*, 2001  
Plastic bottles, caps, galvanized steel D-chain, stainless steel wire,  
water and cotton sash cord  
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2011.78

Grouped and hung from a central chain with thin wisps of wire radiating outward, Tony Feher's assemblage of discarded plastic Coke bottles, each containing a slight amount of water, evokes a dysfunctional circulatory system, a translucent exoskeleton, or an elegantly suspended spine. The bottles' distinctive but typically overlooked formal characteristics take on new meaning while a few blue caps among the red ones call to mind metaphors of disease or contamination. Remnants of the bottles' labels are also visible, marking their transformation from consumer waste to elevated work of art.



Ann P. Smith  
American, b. 1980  
*Whale*, 2010  
Recycled electronic and mechanical parts  
Gift of the artist 2011.80

Working with myriad discarded elements, Ann P. Smith underscores the rapid technological changes and planned obsolescence of consumer goods characteristic of our society. *Whale* is made of broken electronic and mechanical devices, including lamp, printer, speaker, electric razor, and typewriter parts. As the future disposal of "e-waste" becomes an increasing concern, it is significant that Smith recycles these manmade items into the depiction of an animal form.



# RISD MUSEUM

Richard Wentworth

British, b. 1947

*Third Hand*, 1986

Galvanized steel buckets with handles

Richard Brown Baker Fund for Contemporary British Art 2012.14



Don Eddy

American, b. 1944

*Peaches, Tomatoes, Watermelons (Supermarket Window I)*, 1972

Acrylic and graphite on canvas

The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th Century American Art  
73.070

