

RISD MUSEUM

Listen!, July 6, 2024 - January 5, 2025

Listen! is curated by us, the current members of the RISD Art Circle, a group of teens from across Rhode Island and Massachusetts. United by our passion for art and creativity, we spend our Saturdays at the museum hanging out with each other, making art and creating opportunities that center our voices within the galleries. We, like many other teens, see the importance of fighting for what we believe in, and of pushing back against larger societal systems that don't share our beliefs or values.

After more than 80 hours discussing and exploring the RISD Museum's collection, we selected these 30 historical and contemporary works on paper because we found them urgent and powerful, directly addressing the issues we face while offering hope for the future. We have shared some of our personal reflections, poems, and memories on the labels throughout the galleries, signing them with pseudonyms. Our individual journeys shape the way we interpret these works and allow for a variety of meanings to emerge.

Listen! is a selection of works that resonated with us because of our lived experiences and interests. We believe creativity sprouts from places of struggle, and that imaginative possibility pushes all of us further in our search for equality and the freedom to be ourselves. We hope that as you explore this exhibition, you'll listen closely to the ideas that we present, as well as your own personal reflections and feelings.

–Curated by RISD Art Circle (RAC) 2023–2024 members Abigail, Alaina, Audrey, Brenna, Deliska, Hope, Jasmine, Joshua, Lena, Olivia, Rayna, Seoyon, Tamar, Toby, and Viva; in partnership with RAC staff Graciela Batista, Mindy Ji, Sherly Torres, Gina Vestuti; as well as Christina Alderman, director of family and teen programs; and Conor Moynihan, associate curator of prints, drawings, and photographs

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

Occupying Space

The works in this gallery were selected through conversations about the physical and mental occupation of space. Landscapes of imagination not only enrich our exploration of the world around us, but they also allow fresh insights to surface. When we become fully present and engage with our physical world, it can nurture a sense of community and harmony. Other times, that awareness may lead to a sense of loneliness and a feeling of being overwhelmed. The presence of people within these works reshapes our understanding of who can occupy space and how their experiences may differ from ours. As we voyage through spaces and places, embracing the breadth of the world around us and those who inhabit it, we construct new narratives about existence. These new approaches can become building blocks for a future rich with possibilities.

–RAC Hivemind

Gertrude Käsebier
1852–1934; b. in Des Moines, Iowa; worked in New York
Baron de Meyer with Cat, 1903
Platinum print
Florence Koehler Collection **49.017.1**



Ralph Gibson
b. 1939 in Los Angeles; works in New York
Man Under Water, from the portfolio *Deja-vu*, 1972
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Marshall N. Fulton **74.097.3**



As long as I can remember, I've been sick. I spent my childhood in and out of the hospital, so when my best friend took me to Scarborough Beach I was ecstatic. I had never really gone anywhere without my parents. We had boogie boards and were happily riding the waves when I was thrust face-first into the sand. No air, no light, no sound, no movement, no nothing. A second wave followed. I didn't know which way was up. It was so uncomfortable, the sand in my mouth and the weight of the wave on top of me.

–Sickly Swimmer, RAC member

Laura Gilpin

1891–1979; b. in Austin Bluffs, Colorado; worked in the US

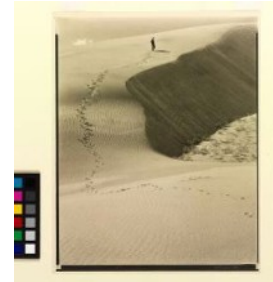
Footprints in the Sand, ca. 1930s

Platinum print on paper

Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts **79.053**

The lone footprints in sand remind me of when I felt most isolated. I was going into the transitioning years of middle school and I found myself in a global pandemic. One day I was surrounded by friends, family, teachers—anyone. The next day, I was alone in a room that was dark and empty. I was a world apart from others, like the person walking on the sand. I was in my room, trapped in a box on a screen, and felt as if each day was just a loop of the same horrible day, on repeat with no end in sight.

–Repeating Rage, RAC member



Chris Van Allsburg (RISD MFA 1975, Sculpture)

b. 1949 in Grand Rapids, Michigan; works in Providence

Disappearing Houses, 1985

Conté crayon and graphite on paper

Gift from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Barnet Fain **2001.80.84**



Willie Birch

b. 1942 in New Orleans; works in New Orleans

Morning: The Way Things Are Born, 2010

Lithograph on paper

Mary B. Jackson Fund **2011.89.1**



Julie Mehretu (RISD MFA 1997, Painting/Printmaking)

b. 1970 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Empire (present-day Ethiopia);

works in New York

Local Calm, 2005

Sugar-lift aquatint with color aquatint, spit-bite aquatint, soft- and hard-ground etching, and engraving on Gampi chine collé on paper

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund **2006.17**



Diana Al-Hadid

b. 1981 in Aleppo, Syria; works in Brooklyn

We Will Control the Vertical, 2009

Screenprint on paper

Gift of Exit Art **2012.133.3.1**



RISD MUSEUM

Cai Guo-Qiang 蔡国强, artist

b. 1957 in Quanzhou, China; works in New York and China

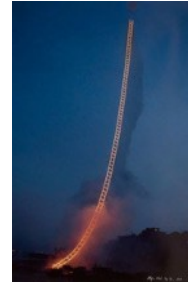
Wen-You Cai, photographer (RISD BFA 2012, Sculpture)

b. in Tokyo, Japan; works in New York

Sky Ladder, 2015

Chromogenic print

Gift of Wen-You Cai 2018.65



Endless ladder falling from the sky,
renders the sky red and bright.

Is that the way to heaven?

I asked.

I don't know,

you answered.

How can I get there?

You told me to wait.

For years I waited,
not knowing when you'll come back.

I looked up,
the ladder is gone.

But I believed

you are waiting for me on the
other end of the ladder.

–Toto, RAC member

Wenda von Weise
1941–1984; b. in Princeton, New Jersey; worked in Cleveland Heights,
Ohio
Untitled, from the portfolio *Artifacts at the End of a Decade*, ca. 1981
Screenprint on two sheets of transparent polyester
Esther Mauran Acquisitions Fund **2020.64.20**



This artwork reminds me of my childhood experience of exploring abandoned and blocked-off paths near the broken bridge on the Seekonk River, which I wrote a poem about:

Have I ever told the story
of the four kids by the broken bridge?
They would dance and play
Through each day
Down by the broken bridge
Now and then you'd see them sneaking
Down to the old corner shop
Through time laughs would echo
Never to mellow
Down at the broken bridge
Yet one was taken
Far away
Another ran home,
With tales to tell
One haunts the space
From distance untold
With the final kid
At the mended bridge

–Hydrangea, RAC member

Nelson Stevens
1938–2022; b. in Brooklyn; worked in Springfield, Massachusetts
Imani Impulse, 1980
Screenprint on paper
Museum purchase: gift from the Estate of Pearl and Ernest Nathan
2023.23



Imani Impulse is an anchor for this exhibition. It was not part of the initial dive into the collection, but Conor presented it to the teens as a possibility a few months into our work. They fell in love at first sight, but at the time I was unsure how it would sit among the other artworks. Time and time again, this print came to the forefront of the discussion, with different members advocating for why it was critical. I began to see its profound impact on the group's thinking. Complex, lively, and bold, demanding to be seen from multiple viewpoints, *Imani Impulse* soon became the North Star for their vision of teen experiences.

–Christina Alderman, director of family and teen programs

Widline Cadet
b. 1992 in Pétion-Ville, Ayiti (Haiti); works in the US
Fusion Kò-a-Mirwar nan Ekspozisyon (Body-to-Mirror Fusion in Exposure), 2019
Inkjet print on paper
Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez **2023.66.4**



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When I was a child I only saw the blonde woman in the fields, alone, with snow-pale skin. She is the angel I was shown, yet here I have discovered two more, two who relish in their dark skin. Our world looks down upon darker-skinned women for something so simple as existence. Yet here, I repeat, I see two women, in each other's comfort, in each other's Blackness, in each other's amity, so beautiful, so pure, so radiant, so true. Please let them relish, let them love, let me see more angels.

–Angel Admirer, RAC member

Confronting Inequalities

The works on this wall ask and even demand us to reimagine our world. Unfairness is embedded in our educational, political, and economic institutions, which hold onto power. The prejudice and greed of people who are part of those institutions create barriers to the basic needs, self-expression, and dignity of others. Art can be about personal expression. It can also show people how to stand up for themselves and how to question systems that control the visibility of particular identities. Beauty isn't just beauty; it's a way to push back. Being ourselves and showing who we are can shake up structures of power. New ideas come naturally in a world that's rapidly changing.

–RAC Hivemind

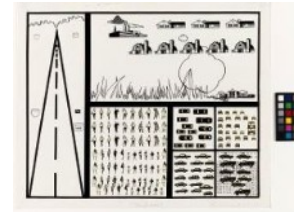
Allan D'Arcangelo

1930–1998; b. in Buffalo, New York; worked in New York

Landscape, 1967

Mixed-media collage with Letraset, ink, and tape on paper

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roger Sonnabend **80.270**



In *Landscape*, dapper mid-century-esque people, buildings, and cars are sectioned off by bands of black tape. I was a bit perplexed when the RAC members included this work on their list for *Listen!*—it's so old-school analogue.

What were they seeing in it? It became clear this was a scene of containment, but one where an alternative reality could be imagined. A wall and a springboard. D'Arcangelo took prefabricated Letraset decals and playfully constructed a new landscape out of them, and perhaps even despite them. This helped me to see new possibilities within the limitations.

–Conor Moynihan, associate curator of prints, drawings, and photographs

Jungil Hong

b. 1976 in Seoul, South Korea; works in Providence

Lightning Bolt, Redrum, 2005

Screenprint on paper

Museum Purchase: Gift of the Artists' Development Fund of the Rhode Island Foundation **2007.42**



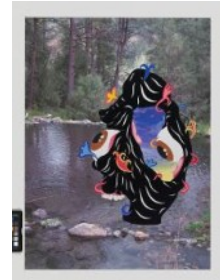
William Villalongo

b. 1975 in Hollywood, Florida; works in Brooklyn

Funky Space Reincarnation, from the portfolio *Trance/Borders*, 2006

Inkjet, collage, and hand-coloring on paper

Gift of Exit Art 2012.133.5.6



John Fekner

b. 1950 in New York; works in New York

Slowdown Children Growing, from the portfolio *Your House Is Mine*,
1988–1992

Spray paint and stencil on paper

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2013.91.3.4



When I was little and I went on walks with my mom, we would pass a sign that said SLOW CHILDREN AT PLAY. I never paid much attention to it. Recently I ran past the sign and wondered, is the sign for me or about me?

I'm 18 now, meaning I'm an adult, yet I don't feel like an adult.

Pondering my life, I'm thinking about how the world won't slow down for me as I'm thrust into a position I'm not ready for. I feel childhood slip through my fingers. Too inexperienced to have a voice, I waited for the wisdom to hit me. The world never slowed down for me to grow, so I had to catch up.

–Too Inexperienced, RAC member

Eric Drooker

b. 1958 in New York; works in New York

Wake Up Man, from the portfolio *Your House Is Mine*, 1988–1992

Screenprint on paper

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund **2013.91.3.5**

This piece reminds me of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020. At the time, I went to my very first protest and it was super empowering. Not long before that I was scared of the whole racial-discrimination topic, due to me being Black. I was afraid I could be next, and that fear played a big part in how I acted in public. I'm not afraid anymore, but that stuck with me for a long time, until I went to that protest.

–If Not Us, Then Who?, RAC member



Stash Two

b. 1967 in New York; works in Brooklyn

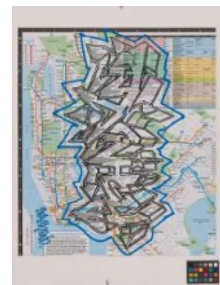
Subway Map, from the portfolio *Your House Is Mine*, 1988–1992

Screenprint on paper

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund **2013.91.3.6**

As a child, I wasn't really aware of how much cities change when they want to appeal to certain demographics. I can recall my friends and family being pushed out of their homes for simply existing and not fitting into that demographic. Many didn't protest out of fear of getting into legal trouble.

–Rogue Star, RAC member



Iké Udé

b. 1964 in Makurdi, Nigeria; works in Nigeria and the US
Sartorial Anarchy #6, from the series *Sartorial Anarchy*, 2013
Inkjet print on satin paper
Gift of the artist **2013.93.2**

The person in this artwork wears clothes and has items from different places. It makes me think about travel. Going to new places and learning new things has been a dream I have had ever since I was little. When I was 12 I went to North Carolina. Traveling there was inspiring because of all the beautiful things they have compared to Pawtucket—vast gardens and clean, large houses! Seeing new places with their own traditions can be eye-opening, like how Thanksgiving just seemed to be richer there.

Still to this day I think about what traveling the world would be like.

–Bee Barbles, RAC member

Meredith Stern

b. 1976 in Pennsylvania; works in Rhode Island
We Are Power, from the portfolio *Green Patriot Posters: Images for a New Activism*, ca. 2009
Color inkjet print on paper
Gift of Edward Morris **2015.61.28**



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Raul Gonzalez III
b. 1976 in El Paso, Texas; works in Massachusetts
Watchalo, Papa, Watchalo, 2016
Mixed-media and colored ink on paper
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund **2017.12**

I've only come to truly appreciate parenthood and the inevitable sacrifices that come with it since I've left high school and my childhood home. From this farther viewpoint, every moment of love and selflessness comes more clearly into picture. It was a rewarding and exciting feeling to share what I saw in this artwork with the teens; it opened up a discussion on relationships with parents, gender roles, and immigration laws in the US. They were able to view *Watchalo, Papa, Watchalo* in a different light and realize new meanings, and I am overjoyed that it made it to this wall!

–Graciela Batista, RISD BFA 2024, Illustration



Ian Cooper
b. 1978 in New York; works in Brooklyn
Do/You (Flat), 2008
Four-sided screenprint on paper with incisions and folds
Museum purchase with funds from an anonymous donor **2018.93.50**



Jazzmen Lee-Johnson (RISD BFA 2008, Film/Animation/Video)
b. 1984; works in Providence
Phendula, from the portfolio *Grandma's Lament / Sello sa Nkoko*, 2019
Screenprint on paper
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2020.27.5



This artwork from Jazzmen Lee-Johnson definitely is a callback to childhood experiences of being shut out of spaces because of my racial identity or economic status.

My parents wanted to buy their first house on the East Side of Providence, the wealthier part of the city. The schools were better, the neighborhoods were better, and so was the overall quality of life. My parents had the money to buy a house, but when they asked about one, the price listed online was apparently “not the right price,” according to the realtor. When a white family became interested in the same house, the price dropped to the amount that was listed online. My parents were shut out from this opportunity to create a better life for themselves and me.

– Cooky Clementine, RAC member

Embracing the Supernatural

Teenagers exist in the changing, liminal space of not being an adult but also not quite a kid. The depictions in this half of the gallery can challenge our perceptions and help us explore and engage with new ways of understanding the unfamiliar. Unsettling, grotesque, and exaggerated, the supernatural can represent our fears and anxieties. It can also serve as a profound medium we can use to explore and express our identities. These monstrous narratives caution us against superficial judgments, reminding us not to judge a book by its cover.

–RAC Hivemind

Santos Chavez
Mapuche, 1934–2001; b. in Canihual, Chile; worked in Chile, Cuba, the
US, Sweden, and Germany
Suena de Pastor (Dream of the Shepherd), from the portfolio *Siete
Xilografias Originales (Seven Original Woodcuts)*, 1965
Woodcut print on paper
Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 71.028.7



Toyohara Kunichika 豊原国周

1835–1900; b. in Edo (present-day Tokyo), Japan; worked in Japan

Fukuda Kumajirō 福田熊次郎, publisher

d. 1885 in Edo, Japan; worked in Japan

Umezawa Minokichi 梅沢巳之吉, block carver

worked 1880–1922 in Edo, Japan

The Mansion of Plates and the Cursed Makeup Mirror (皿屋敷化粧姿鏡 Sarayashiki keshō no sugatami), 1892

Polychrome woodblock prints (nishiki-e)

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.39.5



Trenton Doyle Hancock

b. 1974 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; works in Houston, Texas

Harmony, from the portfolio *The Ossified Theosophied*, 2005

Color etching and aquatint on paper

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2006.50.4



Steve Mendelson (RISD BFA 1981, Illustration)
1958–1995; b. in Highland Park, Illinois; worked in the US
#11, from the series *The Song of Amergin*
Pen and ink on paper
Gift of Kenneth and Carol Mendelson 2010.97.12

Steve Mendelson (RISD BFA 1981, Illustration)
1958–1995; b. in Highland Park, Illinois; worked in the US
#33, from the series *The Song of Amergin*
Pen and ink on paper
Gift of Kenneth and Carol Mendelson 2010.97.34

We often fear the unknown, the strange, and the unfamiliar, and there is nothing more unknown, strange, and unfamiliar than death. I have always feared death, and yet I am curious, drawn to the mystery of it. Flowers may sprout from my grave, but I will never see them. I'll never hear my own eulogy, never know what people thought of me. Does it matter what they thought of me? If they thought I was strange for collecting animal bones, for my cabinet of curiosities, for picking worms out of puddles and laying their twitching pink bodies back in the earth? We all will lie in the earth among the worms eventually, so I might as well do them a favor in the meantime.

–Worm Girl, RAC member



Alex Dodge (RISD BFA 2001, Painting)

b. 1977 in Denver, Colorado; works in the US

The Legendary Coelacanth, 2007

Computer-numerical-controlled drypoint engraving on hand-antiqued paper with Coelacanth-computer-virus executable file on EPROM memory chip

Museum purchase with funds from an anonymous donor **2018.93.43**



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This print reminds me of going to New Hampshire and swimming in this lake with a giant rock pile in the middle. I would make my parents go with me, too scared to be out that far by myself. We would swim aimlessly until finally one of us would find the smooth rock and I would breathe a sigh of relief. I would open my eyes underwater, regardless of the fact that they would burn, and fighting through the pain I would see something truly beautiful.

–Crystal Lake, RAC member

Jan Švankmajer

b. 1934 in Prague, Czechoslovakia (present-day Czech Republic); works in the Czech Republic

Natural History Tab. 7, 1973

Color etching on paper

Gift of Lasse Antonsen **2020.43.1.6**



My dad is squeamish as he shows me a YouTube video of a 12-year-old expertly dissecting a blackbird. He wishes that I was more like this budding scientist, without the dragging-roadkill-home part—that I would assume this child's curiosity for the arcane workings of the body, and medicine, and more importantly, perhaps, greater concern for my future job prospects. Today his efforts are in vain. The boy skillfully cuts into flesh while my thoughts wander.

–Maybe a Little Concerned, RAC member

Cindy Ji Hye Kim (RISD BFA 2013, Illustration)
b. 1990 in Incheon, South Korea; works in New York
Mott Haven, March 2020, 2021
Screenprint on paper
Gift of the artist **2022.32**

Mott Haven, March 2020 depicts a lively tree extending its snake-like branches into an interior space through a window frame. At first it gave me an ominous feeling of a dark being creeping in our direction. The RAC teens, however, inspired me to look at the tree as a being in search of space and hope—one that documents the passing of time. I believe Ji Hye Kim is emphasizing that trees are living organisms with minds of their own. They're not unlike humans, with their "branches spreading out like hair," as a RAC member stated.

–Sherly Torres, museum educator



Jim Drain
(RISD BFA 1998, Sculpture; RISD CE instructor)
b. 1975 in Cleveland; works in Providence
Untitled (bench), 2010
Powder-coated stainless steel and aluminum
Edgar J. Lownes Fund **2011.42.2**

