

Art and Design from 1900 to Now

Drawing together works on paper, costume and textiles, painting, sculpture, photography, and decorative arts and design, the installation reflects the interconnectedness of the disciplines RISD teaches and the cross pollination among art forms and media that can influence how artists work.

This presentation was developed over the past two years through partnerships between staff, students, teachers, and several of the artists whose work is on view. We started from a place of asking questions, engaging in conversations, and listening, resulting in five groups of artworks across three galleries on this floor.

We thank the artists and others who took the time to engage in conversations around particular areas. We're grateful to the RISD Art Circle Teens, the RISD Museum Guild, and Rhode Island K–12 teachers for providing early and ongoing feedback. We look forward to continuing discussion as we introduce other works in these galleries and develop related public programs.

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CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

A Rightful Place

Elizabeth Williams, David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of Decorative Arts and Design, in conversation with artists Michelle Erickson, Jonathan James-Perry, and Preston Singletary; with special thanks to Emily Banas, Decorative Arts and Design Assistant Curator; and Shándaín Brown, Henry Luce Curatorial Fellow for Native American Art

Like many contemporary makers, Michelle Erickson, Jonathan James-Perry, and Preston Singletary hold identities that disrupt the historically narrow scope of what—and who—is represented in museums. The layering of their artistic practices with their experiences as activists, culture bearers, researchers, and historians yielded the insights accompanying these works. This section speaks to the natural environment, at once valued and exploited; the built environment, which both shelters community and enables exclusion; and the choices, outcomes, and fragility of life.

Dawn Spears
Narragansett and Choctaw, b. 1965 in Providence; works in Ashaway,
Rhode Island
Sneakers, 2017
Hand-drawn with ink markers on sneakers
Mary B. Jackson Fund **2023.42.1ab**



Lyonel Feininger
b. in New York; lived and worked in Germany, Paris and New York
Church at Gelmeroda XII, 1929
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth **38.059**



This painting's compositional harmony and absence of ornamentation reflect the artist's principles of design and his ongoing search for spiritual content in art. Over the course of several decades, Lyonel Feininger explored the motif of a church at Gelmeroda, a village near Weimar, Germany, which he had first visited in 1906. As he wrote to a friend about the region, "There are some church steeples in God-forsaken villages which belong among the most mystical achievements of so-called civilized man that I know." That sentiment is rendered in *Church at Gelmeroda XII*, which presents the austere medieval structure as an elegant construction of parallel and diagonal lines emerging from an atmosphere of prismatic colors.

—Maureen O'Brien, curator of painting and sculpture

Henri Rousseau

1844-1910; b. in Laval, France; lived and worked in Paris

A Corner of the Park at Bellevue, Autumn, Sunset (Un Coin du plateau de Bellevue. Automne, Soleil Couchant), 1902

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Henry D. Sharpe 77.114

Against a brilliantly colored sunset, a lone figure strolls in a park on the outskirts of Paris. Leafy patterns of gold and green fill the branches of trees whose limbs cast decorative shadows. As night descends, the sunlight softens to a rosy glow in the sky above.

Rousseau was a self-trained artist who worked as a clerk in a customs office. He drew inspiration from close observation of nature in Paris's parks and zoos. His paintings are characterized by a keen awareness of the natural world and its ability to reflect emotional states.

—Maureen O'Brien, curator of painting and sculpture



Lidya Buzio

1948 - 2014; b. Montevideo, Uruguay; lived and worked in New York
Cityscape Vessel, 1992

Earthenware with painting and burnished wax

Gift from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Barnett Fain 2001.80.38

Creating a place in which to thrive can be simultaneously thrilling and daunting, especially in a new environment. In 1972 artist Lidya Buzio moved from Uruguay, where she studied ceramics and painting, to New York. She marveled at the cityscape of her new home but struggled against the perception that ceramics did not merit recognition as contemporary art. Challenging the accepted media for painting, Buzio wrapped richly hued skyscrapers, water towers, and smoke-towered factories around geometric sculptures she built from earthenware slabs. By fusing a painted panorama with architectural construction, Buzio broke new ground in 20th-century sculpture.

—Elizabeth A. Williams, David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of
Decorative Arts and Design



Marsden Hartley
1877-1943; b. in Maine; lived and worked in Paris, New York, and Maine
Gorges du Loup, Provence, 1926
Oil on canvas
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund and Lippitt Acquisition Fund
2012.34



Marsden Hartley painted bold and often dramatic scenes of nature that adeptly illustrated his idea that “modernity is but a new attachment of things universal—a fresh relationship to the courses of the sun and to the living swing of the earth—a new fire of affection for the living essence present everywhere.”

In the early 1920s Hartley spent time in the French Alps, including Gorges du Loup, where granite cliffs carved by the river theatrically reveal ribbons of water snaking through contoured crevasses.

—Elizabeth A. Williams, David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of Decorative Arts and Design

Andrew Raftery
(RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)
b. 1962; lives and works in Providence, RI
January: Reading Seed Catalogs, from the series *The Autobiography of a Garden on Twelve Engraved Plates*, 2016
Transfer-printed engraving on glazed white earthenware
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD **2017.8.1**



Humans must live in harmony with the cycles and seasons of nature to succeed. RISD printmaking professor Andrew Raftery, a skilled gardener and avid English transferware collector, chronicled his monthly activities in his mother's garden in Providence, beginning with seed selection in January, fertilizing in July, and contemplating the dormant garden beneath the snow in December.

Raftery created images, engraved them onto copper plates, designed the 12 plate shapes, and developed the ink used to transfer the image from the copper to the ceramic. He then collaborated with the late Larry Bush, RISD Ceramic Department professor, to develop a new clay body, formulate the glaze, and fire the plates with a team of students.

–Elizabeth A. Williams, David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of Decorative Arts and Design

Andrew Raftery
(RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)
b. 1962; lives and works in Providence, RI
February: Planting Seeds, from the series *The Autobiography of a Garden on Twelve Engraved Plates*, 2016
Transfer-printed engraving on glazed white earthenware
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD **2017.8.2**



Andrew Raftery
(RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)
b. 1962; lives and works in Providence, RI
March: Watering the Cold Frame, from the series *The Autobiography of a Garden on Twelve Engraved Plates*, 2016
Transfer-printed engraving on glazed white earthenware
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2017.8.3



Andrew Raftery
(RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)
b. 1962; lives and works in Providence, RI
April: Edging the Beds, from the series *The Autobiography of a Garden on Twelve Engraved Plates*, 2016
Transfer-printed engraving on glazed white earthenware
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2017.8.4



Andrew Raftery
(RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)
b. 1962; lives and works in Providence, RI
May: Cultivating Lettuce, from the series *The Autobiography of a Garden on Twelve Engraved Plates*, 2016
Transfer-printed engraving on glazed white earthenware
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2017.8.5



Andrew Raftery
(RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)
b. 1962; lives and works in Providence, RI
June: Training a Passion Vine, from the series *The Autobiography of a Garden on Twelve Engraved Plates*, 2016
Transfer-printed engraving on glazed white earthenware
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2017.8.6



Andrew Raftery
(RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)
b. 1962; lives and works in Providence, RI
July: Fertilizing, from the series *The Autobiography of a Garden on Twelve Engraved Plates*, 2016
Transfer-printed engraving on glazed white earthenware
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD **2017.8.7**



Andrew Raftery
(RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)
b. 1962; lives and works in Providence, RI
August: Deadheading, from the series *The Autobiography of a Garden on Twelve Engraved Plates*, 2016
Transfer-printed engraving on glazed white earthenware
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD **2017.8.8**



Andrew Raftery
(RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)
b. 1962; lives and works in Providence, RI
September: Mowing, from the series *The Autobiography of a Garden on Twelve Engraved Plates*, 2016
Transfer-printed engraving on glazed white earthenware
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD **2017.8.9**



Andrew Raftery
(RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)
b. 1962; lives and works in Providence, RI
October: Bringing in Chrysanthemums, from the series *The Autobiography of a Garden on Twelve Engraved Plates*, 2016
Transfer-printed engraving on glazed white earthenware
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD **2017.8.10**



Andrew Raftery

(RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)

b. 1962; lives and works in Providence, RI

November: Digging Dahlia Tubers, from the series *The Autobiography of a Garden on Twelve Engraved Plates*, 2016

Transfer-printed engraving on glazed white earthenware

Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2017.8.11



Andrew Raftery

(RISD Faculty 1991-, Printmaking)

b. 1962; lives and works in Providence, RI

December: Contemplating in the Snow, from the series *The Autobiography of a Garden on Twelve Engraved Plates*, 2016

Transfer-printed engraving on glazed white earthenware

Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2017.8.12



Roberto Lugo

b. 1981 in Philadelphia, PA to Puerto Rican parents; lives and works in Philadelphia

A Century of Black Lives Mattering, 2016

Porcelain with enamel and glaze

Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2018.14



This vase depicts eight Black boys and men whose lives were taken or brutally altered through the systemic violence of white supremacy: Mike Brown, Philando Castile, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Rodney King, Trayvon Martin, Alton Sterling, and Emmett Till. Injustices like these spurred the global Black Lives Matter movement.

Lugo wrote about this work's intent in *Manual 11*:

Ceramics has the distinction of being a material that anthropologists use to tell us about what people were like thousands of years ago—it has the potential to keep the conversation going about these lost lives. It makes us account for the existence of people who are gone, and denies us the ability to forget about them. *A Century of Black Lives Mattering* presents the faces of some of the many people who have suffered from police brutality. I hope it will allow us to think about these lives for centuries to come.

—Elizabeth A. Williams, David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of Decorative Art and Design

Friedrich St. Florian

(former RISD faculty, Architecture)

b. 1932 in Graz, Austria; works in Providence

Pengeot Towers, Buenos Aires, Argentina (Perspective), 1961

Ink and graphite on paper

Gift of the artist 2023.101.1



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Katsuyo Aoki
b. 1972; b. in Tokyo; lives and works in Tokyo
Predictive Dream LVII, 2018
Porcelain
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund **2019.7**



Formed by hand, this porcelain skull recalls the swirling French Rococo designs used for furniture, decorative arts, and interiors in the 1700s. Rather than apply this aesthetic to the surface, Aoki used ornament to create the very structure of the skull. Intricately formed and densely elaborate, it exists as a *memento mori*, or a reminder of death and the fleeting nature of mortality, underscored here by the seeming fragility of the porcelain. Expressing, in the words of the artist, “the sacred and vulgar atmosphere of the present age,” this work balances between morbid connotations and painstaking elegance.

–Elizabeth A. Williams, David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of Decorative Arts and Design

Sonya Clark
b. 1967 in Washington, DC; lives and works in Amherst, MA
Hair Necklace 4 (Chain), 2012
Hair and copper
Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund **2020.8**



In this necklace made from copper and the Afro hair of family and friends, Sonya Clark signals the historically inseparable relationship of Black lives not just to the foundation of the United States, but to the explosive growth of the American economy. The materials Clark selected also negotiate a conversation with 19th-century hair jewelry, typically worn in memory of a deceased loved one. *Hair Necklace 4 (Chain)* references this historical practice while imploring the viewer to consider the value and exploitation of Black lives.

–Ahmari Benton, Nancy Elizabeth Prophet Fellow

Syd Carpenter

b. 1953 in Pittsburgh, PA; lives and works in Philadelphia
Percy Robinson, from the series *Places of Our Own*, 2009

Earthenware and graphite

Gift of Thomas Daley and Donna Weaverling Daley 2020.59



Syd Carpenter's explorations of natural shapes and landscapes recognize the people—especially the African Americans—who tend the land in their communities. The artist notes that “surprisingly, African Americans are not thought of as farmers, even though farm work was what we were brought here to do.” Carpenter's research brought her to landscape architect Richard Westmacott's 1992 study of 47 African American farms in the South, which served as a basis for her own three-dimensional versions. Her portraits of the land and its owners, for which the works are named, represent Carpenter's belief in the “importance of having a ‘home place,’ a tangible place that locates you, a place where your traditions and memories reside, a place that sustains your family and community.”

–Elizabeth A. Williams, David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of Decorative Arts and Design

Preston Singletary

Tlingit, b. 1963 in San Francisco, CA; lives and works in Seattle
Tlingit Hat, 2020

Blown and sand carved glass

Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD in honor of John W. Smith 2021.11



Preston Singletary creates glass sculptures that reference designs from his Tlingit heritage, but explains that traditional materials are becoming increasingly rare, resulting in “the need for new materials, new mediums to tell the stories of the people.” Singletary's blown-glass, sand-carved hats are based on Native Northwest Coast painted crest hats made from cedar bark or spruce root. Commissioned by the RISD Museum, this work combines designs from a Tlingit Chilkat robe in the museum's collection with references to Singletary's own Killer Whale clan.

–Emily Banas, assistant curator of decorative arts and design

Luci Jockel

(RISD MFA 2016, Jewelry and Metalsmithing)

b. 1991; works in Baltimore, MD

Bee Wing Lace Neckpiece, 2021

Honey bee wings, PVA glue

Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD in honor of John W. Smith 2021.20.1



This neckpiece was made from the wings of honeybees that died of natural causes in RISD's campus hives. The RISD Museum commissioned this work from Jockel, who uses sustainably sourced animal remains in her jewelry as a way to honor and grieve the loss of our fellow creatures. Her use of bee wings acknowledges the vital importance of bees and somberly reflects on the many threats to bee populations today, including pesticide use and climate change. The design was inspired by lace in the museum's collection and the lace collars worn in Dutch portraits in the 1600s.

–Emily Banas, assistant curator of decorative arts and design

Therman Statom
(RISD BFA 1974, Sculpture)
b. 1953 in Winter Haven, FL; lives and works in Omaha, NE
Untitled (Glass House), 1986
Glass, mirrored glass, silicone, pencil, paint
Gift of Nancy Berman and Alan Bloch **2021.22**

A pioneer in the use of sheet glass as a material for sculpture, Therman Statom often references houses, ladders, tables, and chairs in his work. This house holds a ladder, table, and smaller house inside. Its lack of an entry point underscores the built structure's ability to allow or prevent access.

Asked about the meaning of his imagery, the artist responds: "Images form in my mind and I'll go with them. I think the language of objects is intuitive, there may be some intellectual references, but I think people spend too much time looking for those, I think they need to learn to trust that they can understand art and what things mean in reference to who they are."

–Elizabeth A. Williams, David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of Decorative Arts and Design



Arthur Hash
(RISD Faculty 2015-2020, Jewelry + Metalsmithing)
b. 1976 in Panama; lives and works in Providence, RI
Happiness is Regulated by Your Success Bracelet, 2019
ABS Plastic
Gift of the artist **2021.57.2**

In this bracelet, Arthur Hash explores his identity as a jeweler and silversmith. This work was designed using computer modeling software and 3D printed in plastic, yet Hash includes a traditional metalsmithing hammer as a symbol of his craft. Here the hammer and a human heart are connected to a regulator that controls the flow of happiness, which cascades over the bracelet. The design is a self-reflection on his process, Hash says. "The more attention given to craft the more 'successful' the piece is."

–Emily Banas, assistant curator of decorative arts and design



Michelle Erickson

b. 1960 in Hampton, VA; lives and works in Hampton, VA

Jonathan James-Perry

Aquinnah Wampanoag, b. 1976 in New Bedford, MA; lives and works in Providence, RI

Pilgrim Flask PlyMYTH, 2019

Stoneware with glaze and copper

Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2021.95



This vessel by Jonathan James-Perry (Aquinnah Wampanoag) and Michelle Erickson reckons with the 1620 North American landing of the English ship *Mayflower* and its aftermath. Unlike 400 years ago, when European arrival launched the destructive colonization and displacement of Wampanoag peoples, this contemporary collaboration was one of mutual humanity and respect.

For Erickson, the ceramic quahog, cowrie, and scallop shells “hold significant meaning to respective cultures, but all represent the natural world, whose imperilment threatens us all.” The vessel’s shell body and gas-nozzle neck also reference Shell, one of the world’s largest oil companies.

Mined and worked by Indigenous people long before European arrival, copper explodes from the nozzle, creating what James-Perry calls “a portal . . . between air and water, different dimensions or different worlds.” Here, materials and cultures unite in witness of transgressions against the earth and Native peoples, calling for change.

–Elizabeth A. Williams, David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of Decorative Arts and Design

Resistance

Making art is often an act of resistance, whether it's working against the properties of a material or confronting a political power. Directly responding to specific circumstances and events, some of these posters, paintings, vessels, and garments were made to inspire direct political action. Other more abstract works signify the resistance of individuals and communities against histories, actions, and policies that disenfranchise them.

William Congdon
American, 1912 - 1998
Paris, Train on Bridge, 1953
Oil on Masonite
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth **54.130**



William Congdon performed an act of painterly resistance in this nighttime view of Paris. He used mat knives to scrape pigment across a rigid surface, then incised the paint with pointed tools. Deep scores reveal the cathedral of Notre Dame, while a fine web of lines projects a mirror image of the bridge and train onto the river Seine.

Congdon served as an ambulance driver during World War II, witnessing its destruction firsthand. He returned to Europe afterward, resisting commercial success in New York and consciously rejecting the material aspirations of the American dream.

—Maureen C. O'Brien, curator of painting and sculpture

Gerhard Richter
b. 1932 in Dresden, Germany; works in Cologne, Germany
Elisabeth II, 1966
Color offset lithograph on cardboard
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2012.110

This print was made from a cropped and enlarged mass-media image of the British monarch Elizabeth II. Blurry and enigmatic, it resists immediate comprehension, prompting viewers to engage in deeper contemplation. The work is based on a newspaper photo, a common technique for the artist. Richter's exploration of photography as both subject matter and a creative technique adds another dimension to the artistic narrative, challenging the idea of photojournalism.



–Mohadeseh Salari Sardari | محدثه سالاری سردری
Brown student (PhD 2027, History of Art and Architecture) and RISD
proctor 2023

Y. Z. Kami | کامران یوسف زاد
b. 1956 in Tehran, Iran; works in Garrison, New York
Untitled, from the portfolio *Tantra*, 2005
Inkjet print on paper
Gift of Exit Art **2012.133.6.2**



“I strive to achieve otherness, that transcendental element. However, I find that element can be the most difficult part of my work to describe in words.”

–Y. Z. Kami

This portrait of an unknown person presents an aura of ambiguity. The subject’s expression is introspective, and the face appears to shimmer and fade. Y. Z. Kami uses the human face as a way of reflecting the spiritual. His work is infused with a deep appreciation for Persian poetry and Iranian Sufi traditions.

–Mohadeseh Salari Sardari | محدثه سالاری سردری
Brown student (PhD 2027, History of Art and Architecture) and RISD proctor 2023

Andy Warhol
American, 1928-1987
Race Riot, 1964
Oil and silkscreen on canvas
The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th-Century American Art
68.047



Race Riot presents a photograph of a police dog attacking a peaceful civil-rights protestor in Birmingham, Alabama. The photo was taken for *Life* magazine in 1963 by photojournalist and activist Charles Moore, who explained in a 2005 interview, “I don’t want to fight with my fists. I want to fight with my camera.” Andy Warhol cropped Moore’s image, removed it from its original news-oriented context, and transferred it onto canvas. This process introduces an emotional distance that suggests how mass media desensitizes us to troubling events. The work’s title also prompts us to consider how resistance to racial inequality is often met with conflict and abuses of power.

–Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art

Paul Signac
French, 1863-1935
The Demolishers (Les Démolisseurs), 1896
Transfer lithograph on paper
Museum Works of Art Fund **67.118**

These prints were part of a fundraising effort for the French anarchist newspaper *The New Times* (Les Temps Nouveaux), published between 1895 and 1914. Editor Jean Grave asked several avant-garde artists to produce lithographs for sale to subscribers of the newspaper. The resulting works express many of the social and political values of the anarchist movement in 1890s France, including support for labor unions and the working classes, as well as dreams of a future without class divisions or economic inequality. The hazy quality of the lithographic medium lends itself especially well to imagining a utopian future that has still yet to materialize.

–Sarah Mirseyedi, Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow



Constantin Émile Meunier
Belgian, 1831-1905
Borinage Miners (Mineurs, Borinage), 1898
Lithograph on paper
Museum Works of Art Fund **67.119**



Georges Willaume
French, 1876 - ca. 1918
Dawn (L'Aurore), 1896
Lithograph on paper
Museum Works of Art Fund **67.137**



Henri Edmond Cross
French, 1856-1910
The Wanderer (L'Errant), 1896
Lithograph on paper
Museum Works of Art Fund **67.120**



Ai Weiwei 艾未未
b. 1957 in Beijing; works in Berlin
Kui Hua Zi (Sun Flower Seeds), 2009
1000 porcelain sunflower seeds, sculpted and painted by hand; lidded glass jar
Elizabeth T. and Dorothy N. Casey Fund **2010.20**



Seemingly identical but actually individually sculpted and handpainted, these porcelain sunflower seeds are symbols of the common people. Ai Weiwei, an artist known for his acts of rebellion and resistance, paid hundreds of small-workshop artisans in the city of Jingdezhen, China, to produce thousands of ceramic seeds. For centuries, factories in Jingdezhen have been an important industrial center for porcelain production, serving the imperial family and supplying foreign markets. Opposing notions of mass production and industrialization, the sunflower seeds represent the individual creativity and collective strength of the people.

–Wai Yee Chiong, curator of Asian art

Grayson Perry

b. 1960 in Chelmsford, England; works in London

May My Ashes Blow Away on the Winds of Change, 1986

Earthenware with glaze

Richard Brown Baker Fund for Contemporary British Art 2011.37

This ceramic vase features an inscription, Britain's Union Jack flag, and a scenic landscape, all rendered in blue and white. Grayson Perry often intertwines contemporary social themes with historical approaches to object- and image-making. This work resembles a funerary urn. Its styling as a classical amphora includes an open neck from which cremated ashes could blow away. This design underscores the defiance in the inscription: "May my ashes blow away on the winds of change, I love life / I love England."

—Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art



Alejandro Diaz

b. 1963 in San Antonio, TX; works in New York

Make Tacos Not War, from the series *Povera Lite*, 2012

Cast polyurethane resin, acrylic paint, wood

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2013.28.2

This work simulates the handmade signs commonly seen at political demonstrations— specifically those speaking out against a government's decision to go to war. Diaz's version alludes to "Make Love Not War," a statement that frequently appeared on Vietnam war protest posters in the 1960s. The artist's replacement of *Love* with *Tacos* not only shifts the sign's message to reflect his Mexican American identity, but also whimsically satirizes the waste and futile destruction of armed conflict.

—Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art



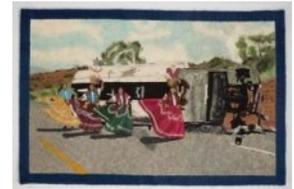
Adela Goldbard
(RISD faculty, Experimental and Foundations Studies)
b. 1979 in Mexico City; works in Providence, RI
Marcela Ortega
b. in Oaxaca, Mexico; works in Los Etlas, Oaxaca
Nochixtlán II, 2018-2019
Wool; needle-felted
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund **2022.6.1**



Adela Goldbard
(RISD faculty, Experimental and Foundations Studies)
b. 1979 in Mexico City; works in Providence, RI
Marcela Ortega
b. in Oaxaca, Mexico; works in Los Etlas, Oaxaca
Nochixtlán III, 2018-2019
Wool; needle-felted
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund **2022.6.2**



Adela Goldbard
(RISD faculty, Experimental and Foundations Studies)
b. 1979 in Mexico City; works in Providence, RI
Marcela Ortega
b. in Oaxaca, Mexico; works in Los Etlas, Oaxaca
Nochixtlán VI, 2018-2019
Wool; needle-felted
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition



A collaboration by RISD faculty Adela Goldbard and artisan Marcela Ortega, this needle-felted wool triptych commemorates a bloody conflict in a community in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. On June 19, 2016, federal police attacked teachers and allies protesting educational reforms that denied teachers better working conditions and threatened to suppress Indigenous narratives. Burned buses remained untouched almost a year after the deadly clash. The last image shows members of the Teachers Union at the site of the massacre performing a traditional dance in the indigenous dress of Oaxaca's eight regions.

The needle-felting technique used here, which binds wool fibers through contact and agitation, materially expresses the trauma of this event. It also provides a metaphor for the forces of Indigenous solidarity and collective resistance to government oppression.

–Kate Irvin, curator of costume and textiles

Paul Briggs

b. 1963 in Beacon, New York; works in Boston

Bridges (Poetry Series, after The Hill We Climb--Amanda Gorman), 2021

Stoneware with glaze

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2022.83.1



Paul Briggs

b. 1963 in Beacon, New York; works in Boston

Crystal Stair (Poetry Series, after Mother to Son--Langston Hughes),

2021

Stoneware with glaze

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2022.83.2



Paul Briggs summons his experiences in art, education, and theology to create work that speaks to oppression, pain, and healing. Named after two generations of Black American poets, these ceramic works speak to systemic social injustice and the strength to persevere. Briggs cut through these vessels with knotted coils both to reveal injury and emphasize resistance. He explains, “These vessels are pierced by pain. But they are still strong structures—the knots are holding them together. We all have knots.”

—Elizabeth Williams, David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of Decorative Arts and Design

Studio One Eighty Nine, design label
Accra, Ghana; 2013–present
Rosario Dawson, co-founder
b. 1979 in New York; lives and works in New York
Abrima Erwiah, co-founder
b. 1978 in New York; lives and works in Accra and New York
Maxi Dress, Spring/Summer 2020
Cotton (grown in Ghana) plain weave; hand-batik (wax-resist) printed
and indigo-dyed
Mary Ann Lippitt Acquisition Fund 2021.4

The whole idea . . . was essentially to use fashion as an agent of social change. . . . We think that working together to build a local fashion industry can be more economically beneficial than aid . . . in developing economies.

–Abrima Erwiah

Made of cotton grown in Ghana and wax-resist dyed by artisans in Ghana's Cape Coast area, this gown was featured in a Studio One Eighty Nine New York fashion week runway show. Co-founders Abrima Erwiah and Rosario Dawson have made it their mission to support women's empowerment, preserve traditional crafts, and champion sustainability, both as an ethical stance regarding labor practices and a commitment to the environment. A portion of proceeds from this collection supported COVID-19 care and HIV/AIDS programs in sub-Saharan Africa.

–Kate Irvin, curator of costume and textiles



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Poetry of Daily Life

Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, in conversation with artists Avish Khebrehzadeh and Billie Zangewa

Chores, rituals, life cycles, and relationships with family and friends are explored in these quiet, intimate works. In our discussions planning this section, we also returned to themes of fragility, safety, and resilience—influenced, in part, by the COVID pandemic. The works here suggest the dreamlike wonder of everyday life, as well as its fleeting nature. Employing a wide range of media, these artists used the nuanced physicality of their materials to heighten how we might read these works.

Elsa Gramcko
1925-1994; b. in Puerto Cabello, Venezuela; worked in Caracas, Venezuela
Arriba No. 27, 1959
Acrylic print on canvas
The Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 69.207



Comprised of only four colors—red, yellow, white, and black—this painting represents Elsa Gramcko’s work during the late 1950s and early 1960s: abstract, with fields of rounded irregular shapes. With its central black form, which dominates the other colors, Gramcko appears to respond to Venezuela’s dependence on crude-oil extraction, an industry that shaped the country’s modernization but also destabilized it. Situated within the history of Venezuelan modern art, the painting is connected to the abstract, non-referential modernist Constructionist and Kinetic movements preferred by her contemporaries, whereas Gramcko often used abstraction and color to represent political ideas.

—Conor Moynihan, assistant curator of prints, drawings, and photographs

Rose B. Simpson
(RISD MFA 2011, Ceramics)
Kha'p'o Owingeh (Santa Clara Pueblo), b. 1983; lives and works in
Santa Clara Pueblo
Maria, 2021
Dptych with lithograph on two sheets of Okawara paper
Museum purchase: gift from the Estate of Pearl and Ernest Nathan and
Mary B. Jackson Fund **2023.16ab**



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Aaron Douglas
1899-1979; b. in Topeka, Kansas; lived and worked in New York and
Nashville
Building More Stately Mansions, 1944
Oil on canvas board
Purchased with the Frederick Lippitt Bequest **2008.30**



This is a study for a larger painting in the collection of Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, where Aaron Douglas taught from 1939 to 1966. Rendered in Douglas's flat, prismatic style, this study honors the labor of people of African descent. In the foreground, figures holding tools seem to reflect on the monuments behind them, built by their ancestors. The children next to a globe at the lower right seem to suggest the possibilities for the next generation.

Douglas's work often acknowledges the past while looking toward the future. He explained, "Each new generation can and must look back on, face up to, and learn from the greatness, the weakness, and failures of our past with the firm assurance that . . . such an honest and dutiful approach . . . will continue to carry us on to new and higher levels of achievement."

—Jan Howard, curator emerita, RISD Museum

Esther Pressoir
(RISD graduate 1923, Painting)
1902-1986; b. in Philadelphia, PA; raised in Woonsocket, RI; worked in
New York
Florita, ca. 1924–1944
Linocut on paper
Mary Ann Lippitt Acquisition Fund 2019.96.3

In this linocut print of Florita, her model and lover, Esther Pressoir fuses the graphic boldness of her print of Sally with the fleshiness and fluidity we see in her oil self-portrait. Florita is seated on a boudoir chair, which is turned at a slight angle. She gazes directly at the viewer and opens her mouth to speak. The rounded contours of Florita's body are mirrored in the chair, while inky patches denote her sharp collarbones, thick eyebrows, and prominent chin. Florita's breasts, belly, and arms are rippled, showing signs of aging, particularly when set against the smooth form of the chair.

–Suzanne Scanlan, assistant professor, Theory and History of Art and Design (THAD), RISD



Leonora Carrington
1917-2011; b. in England; lived and worked in Mexico City
Stella Snead and Her Cat, 1941
Oil on canvas
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2019.54

In this unfinished painting, Leonora Carrington portrays her friend and fellow artist Stella Snead. The manor house in the background, often seen in historical portraits of European nobility, is perhaps Carrington's way of imbuing Snead with power. Snead projects strength in her leotard-like outfit as she actively twists toward a mysterious spiraling sphere. The cat, sketched below, was the subject of a painting Snead created while she and Carrington were art students in London.

This enigmatic representation reflects both artists' association with the unconscious imagery of Surrealism. Carrington and Snead were among the many Surrealist artists who came to New York, where this painting was made, to escape the war in Europe.

—Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs



Esther Pressoir
(RISD graduate 1923, Painting)
1902-1986; b. in Philadelphia, PA; raised in Woonsocket, RI; worked in
New York
Through Andorra, ca. 1924
Linocut on paper
Gift of Jean Lewis Keith 2019.134.2



From August 1927 to January 1928, Esther Pressoir bicycled through nine European countries. In this linocut, she depicts her crossing into Andorra, a mountainous country tucked between France and Spain. Her tiny, moonlit silhouette is set against jagged peaks in a landscape dotted with rooftops and a single white cross. She wears a leather jacket, skirt, and booties that seem impractical, even ludicrous for this kind of terrain. She pushes a bicycle with flattened tires but is hardly deflated herself. She presses on toward resplendent rays that illuminate the horizon, promising a comfortable bed to the weary traveler.

—Suzanne Scanlan, assistant professor, Theory and History of Art and Design (THAD), RISD

Esther Pressoir
(RISD graduate 1923, Painting)
1902-1986; b. in Philadelphia, PA; raised in Woonsocket, RI; worked in
New York
Self Portrait (Smoking), ca. 1930
Oil on canvas
Gift of Jean Lewis Keith 2020.10



In this self-portrait, Esther Pressoir gazes unapologetically out of the picture, a cigarette smoldering in her hand. In the 1920s and '30s, many women asserted their independence by smoking in public. Here Pressoir floats in a swirl of thick paint strokes and draws her knees toward her chest. Her pink flesh is outlined in warm red tones, bringing the figure to life and separating the subject from the somber background. Her crimson lipstick and fingernails, bobbed hair, and high-heeled black shoe characterize Pressoir as a fashionable modern woman and an artist to be reckoned with.

–Suzanne Scanlan, assistant professor, Theory and History of Art and Design (THAD), RISD

Esther Pressoir
(RISD graduate 1923, Painting)
1902-1986; b. in Philadelphia, PA; raised in Woonsocket, RI; worked in
New York
Sally, ca. 1929
Black crayon on yellow paper
Gift of Jean Lewis Keith 2019.134.1



Esther Pressoir
(RISD graduate 1923, Painting)
1902-1986; b. in Philadelphia, PA; raised in Woonsocket, RI; worked in
New York
Sally, ca. 1929
Linocut on paper
Mary Ann Lippitt Acquisition Fund 2019.96.2



Esther Pressoir
(RISD graduate 1923, Painting)
1902-1986; b. in Philadelphia, PA; raised in Woonsocket, RI; worked in
New York
Linocut block for Sally, ca. 1929
Linocut block
Gift of Jean Lewis Keith 2020.31.10



Esther Pressoir used the crayon drawing below as the basis for this graphic linocut print of a woman named Sally. In the drawing, Sally's smoldering cigarette, fashionably bobbed hair, and loose-fitting lingerie cast her as a 1920s *garçonne*, a figure both androgynous and feminine. Pressoir depicts a moment of repose—perhaps a break from a modeling session.

In the print, the artist collapses pictorial space, focusing on shape, pattern, and light in carving the linoleum block. The checkerboard pattern on the back of the chair has exploded onto the wall. The shaded contours of Sally's body are exaggerated and her features are sharply elongated, rendering her a bold and more authoritative subject.

—Suzanne Scanlan, assistant professor, Theory and History of Art and Design (THAD), RISD

Esther Pressoir
(RISD graduate 1923, Painting)
1902-1986; b. in Philadelphia, PA; raised in Woonsocket, RI; worked in
New York
Dancer from the series *Kykunkor, The Witch Woman, African Dance
Drama*, 1934
Brush and ink on paper
Mary Ann Lippitt Acquisition Fund 2019.96.1



With a few quick strokes of her brush, Esther Pressoir captures a shimmying dancer. The dancer is performing in *Kykunkor*, a 1934 dance drama written and choreographed by the Sierra Leonean musician Asadata Dafora. When *Kykunkor* was staged in New York, Pressoir made numerous live sketches in the theater, chronicling dancers, drummers, and actors. This dynamic character sketch records a performer's posture and costume. Though the facial features, hands, and feet are not rendered, Pressoir suggests rhythm and movement.

–Suzanne Scanlan, assistant professor, Theory and History of Art and Design (THAD), RISD

Magdalene A. N. Odundo
b. 1950 in Nairobi, Kenya; works in UK
Asymmetrical Series II, 2015
Terracotta
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2020.37

This lustrous vessel has a seductive, bodylike presence. Note the tiny bump at the front of the shape, suggestive of a belly button, and the two bumps at the back, suggestive of a spine. Magdalene Odundo constructs her forms using hand-building techniques inspired by women potters in Abuja, Nigeria. There is no glaze on this piece—she attained the color and surface luster through firing and laborious burnishing techniques she encountered in Egyptian and African ceramics, as well as Native American ceramics during her visit to San Ildefonso Pueblo in New Mexico. Odundo said, “I’ve always equated clay with the humanity that’s within us, fragile like our bodies. . . . if you push just slightly on the wrong pivot, it will break your heart.”

—Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs



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Imogen Cunningham

1883-1976; b. in Portland, Oregon; worked in Seattle and California

Triangles, 1928

Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 73.172

In the 1920s, photographer Imogen Cunningham explored patterns of light and shadow through sharp-focused, close-up views of plants, industrial subjects, and the human form. The female nude recurred throughout her practice. Cunningham's formal exploration of her sitter's body complements how Esther Pressoir stylistically rendered her sitters Sally and Florita, which are both to the left on this wall. Cunningham and Pressoir worked around the same time, but in different media. They both embraced a modernist approach to their art-making, focusing on highly stylized representations of the female nude that centered form and experimentation over naturalism and convention.

—Conor Moynihan, assistant curator of prints, drawings, and photographs



Charles Demuth
1883-1935; b. and worked in Lancaster, Pennsylvania
Bicyclists, ca. 1916-1917
Watercolor and graphite on paper
Gift of the Fazzano Brothers **84.198.1178**

Here Charles Demuth captures two performers on a single bicycle, one balancing nimbly on his elbows on the handlebars as the other peddles. This depiction of public entertainment shares similarities with scenes of dance performances by Esther Pressoir and Abraham Walkowitz. Like Pressoir, Demuth spent time in Europe, which influenced his practice. In this work, Demuth combined American popular culture what he had seen in European modern art, flattening a circus act into simplified colored forms. In so doing, he created a thoroughly modernist image flavored by everyday American culture.

—Conor Moynihan, assistant curator of prints, drawings, and photographs



Abraham Walkowitz
1878-1965; b. in Tyumen, Russia; worked in New York
Isadora Duncan, ca. 1910
Pen and ink and watercolor over graphite on paper
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur B. Kern **2002.44**

Dance and dancers are common motifs in American art in the early 1900s. Modern dance—sometimes called improvisational or free dance—began to take form in the US and Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century. An early leader in the genre was Isadora Duncan, rendered here balancing on one foot, with her other knee raised. Like in modernism more generally, modern dance rejected previous traditions, in this case forms such as ballet, and was inspired by expressions from non-Western cultures, including Africa. Between this watercolor by Abraham Walkowitz and Esther Pressoir's *Dancer* nearby, we can see how modernist dance and African diasporic culture were in dialogue with and an influence on modernist painting and drawing.

—Conor Moynihan, assistant curator of prints, drawings, and photographs



Jerry Mischak

(RISD BFA 1973, Painting; former RISD senior critic)

b. 1951 in Newark, New Jersey; lives and works in Providence

Two Chairs, 2015

Paper, acrylic paint, oil stick, and vinyl tape on paper

Gift of the artist **2023.106**

To make *Two Chairs*, Jerry Mischak painted rows of brushstrokes on paper, which he then cut out and collaged to create the background of this composition. With equal precision, he cut and collaged brightly colored duct tape to make the rolled rug and broom at the center. In this work, we observe two features the artist has honed in his practice over the decades: vibrant, playful color and inventive uses of duct tape. Combining ordinary materials and subject matter, Mischak both transcends the everyday and relishes in it.

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



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Clifford Prince King
b. 1993 in Tucson, Arizona; works in Los Angeles
Paris, 2022
Pigmented inkjet print on paper
Gift of Burton Aaron **2023.58.2**

Between its soft focus and red glare, this image is hard to discern at first glance. It appears to be two images that connect an outdoor moment to an interior scene.

Clifford Prince King is known for his intimate domestic scenes of Queer Black men. This photograph, too, suggests the heartbeat of everyday life. King has discussed his focus:

I think representation can save a lot of people years of confusion and heartache, by seeing themselves (in media and art) being portrayed within everyday life. I think that can provide courage, understanding and ease for someone's personal journey. I find that I've created most images because I hadn't seen this form of intimacy and closeness amongst people like myself.

—Conor Moynihan, assistant curator of prints, drawings, and photographs



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Hugh Steers

1962–1995; b. in Washington, DC; worked in New York

White Gown, 1995

Color lithograph on paper

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 **2023.22.2**



In this tenderly rendered lithograph, a solitary figure in drag admires themselves in the mirror. This heel-clad figure recurs in Hugh Steers's compositions, often appearing as a superhero-type persona. Steers created scenes of Queer domestic life and intimacy, later bringing in themes of illness and HIV. This focus was especially important during the 1980s and '90s, when abstraction—not figurative work—dominated art-making, and scenes of openly gay domestic life were at odds with the political rhetoric of the day. Known as a painter, Steers only made three prints—this and two others. He died from AIDS-related complications within months of completing them.

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

wei Wang 王未

(RISD MFA 2022, Printmaking)

b. 1995 in Qingyang, Henan, China; works in New York

Tape, 2021

Tape, 2021

Tape, 2021

Tape, 2021

Screenprints on handmade kozo (mulberry) paper, laid down on wove white paper

Walter H. Kimball Fund 2022.64.2.1 - .4



These screenprints on handmade mulberry paper feature images of blue tape playfully expressing itself through different lengths, shapes, and severity of tear. wei Wang's composition centers and isolates each piece, granting us a new way of viewing material typically used in a supporting role. In Wang's work, ephemeral materials such as the blue tape become metaphorical time capsules of memory and identity. The artist explains:

My approach to creating is through the lens of being an alien and queer in unfamiliar environments and given spaces. . . . Highlighting

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the integrity of my chosen materials and sources of information are a big part of my creative process, especially when most of the materials are commonly considered secondary and ephemeral.

–Lana Wang, THAD Fellow, Prints, Drawings, and Photographs
Department, 2023;
RISD BFA 2024, Illustration



Stand in a Different Place

Kate Irvin, curator of costume and textiles, in conversation with artists Diedrick Brackens, Pia Camil (RISD BFA 2003, Painting), and Jagdeep Raina (RISD MFA 2016, Painting)

Narratives don't have to come from one place. There are other ways of understanding histories through different points of view.

-Pia Camil

More than the intellectual, mental response, it's the touch part I want people to feel, the intimacy.

-Diedrick Brackens

I'm thinking a lot about how to resuscitate histories and bring them into the present moment to push boundaries and teach about something larger than ourselves.

-Jagdeep Raina

The works in this section draw us in with their tactile qualities, engaging us in intimate stories. Specific references to tradition and place merge with broad notions of home, roots, and natural landscapes, while the artists' various approaches to materiality and craft beckon us to envision alternative ways of seeing and being in our relationships to art and to one another.

Opening up the narrative requires shifting perspectives. Infused with history, memory, and tenderness, these works invite us to step away from our usual vantage points and stand in a different place.

Grace Hartigan

1922-2008; b. in Newark, New Jersey; lived and worked in Baltimore

Homage to Matisse, 1955

Oil on canvas

Anonymous gift 56.120

In painting I try to make some logic out of the world that has been given to me in chaos. I have a very pretentious idea that I want to make life, I want to make sense out of it. The fact that I am doomed to failure-that doesn't deter me in the least.

-Grace Hartigan

History and time collapse into one frenzied plane in this exuberant composition that addresses Hartigan's desire to create "a surface that resists, like a wall, not opens, like a gate." Here Hartigan employed thick and sensuous brushstrokes to pay homage to a 1915 painting by Henri Matisse. That work by Matisse is itself a tribute to Dutch painter Jan



Davidsz. de Heem's 1640 still-life of a table laden with platters of fruit and other spoils.

-Kate Irvin, curator of costume and textiles

Louise Bourgeois
1911-2010; b. in Paris; worked in New York, NY
Still Life, 1963
Wood, plaster, and paint
Museum Works of Art Fund **66.163**



The relation of one person to his surroundings is a continuing pre-occupation. ...This is the soil from which all my work grows.

-Louise Bourgeois

This composition of rounded forms nestled in a basin and resting atop slablike shapes suggests the bowl of fruit and loaves of bread one might find in a traditional still-life painting. The otherworldly color palette and pared-down shapes here, however, exude the “fantastic reality” that Louise Bourgeois sought to inject into her sculptural experiments. Personal narratives of motherhood, earthiness, sustenance, and nurture coalesce in these simplified contours, suggesting a range of sensory and emotional responses.

-Kate Irvin, curator of costume and textiles

Alice Trumbull Mason
1904-1971; b. in Connecticut; lived and worked in New York
L'Hasard (Chance), 1948-1949
Oil on Masonite
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund **78.028**

About that silver sliver of sea, it is full of symbols, but I just felt like painting a story.
-Alice Trumbull Mason, 1957

A founding member of the American Abstract Artists, a group formed in New York in 1936, Alice Trumbull Mason was a passionate advocate for the enchanting energy of nonrepresentational art. Though Mason referred to her style as “architectural abstraction,” this painting reveals her approach as more organic than rigid. A poet as well as a painter, hers was a practice of creating relationships and eliciting feelings by juxtaposing forms and colors in rhythmic and unexpected ways.

-Kate Irvin, curator of costume and textiles



Joan Mitchell
1926-1992; b. in Chicago; lived and worked in New York and Paris
Mooring, 1971
Oil on canvas
Gift of the Bayard and Harriet K. Ewing Collection **1992.124**

Mooring calls up a nautical reference—the stayed vessel on turbulent water. This painting is a jumble of shimmering rectangular volumes. In the upper right a large orange box is partially wrapped in translucent white paint, like a clouded sunset. The middle ground is dominated by blue, as if to let in water, and quick orange brushstrokes dance as a light reflected on waves. Across the surface of the canvas Mitchell employs a variety of colors, shapes, and washes to suggest the possibility of day’s end, boats, net, cloud, sail. These abstractions don’t capture landscapes as they are seen, but as they are felt and remembered. The mind of the viewer expands and contracts in tandem with the pulse of her creation.

-Diedrick Brackens, artist and exhibition collaborator



Probably Meher maker(s), (Sukkur District, Upper Sindh Province, Pakistan)

Ralli (Patchwork Quilt), 1900-1950

Cotton plain weave; reverse appliquéd, pieced, and quilted

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund **2010.62.4**



Elaborately patterned with geometric and floral designs, this ralli (patchwork quilt) was made by reverse appliquéd and piecing together new and used fabric scraps. As in other quilt-making communities, recycling old fabrics is integral to craft traditions in the Sindh and Kutch regions along the India-Pakistan border. Home to diverse Hindu and Muslim nomadic groups, this area has long been a space for the cross-cultural exchange of styles, motifs, and techniques. Derived from the local word *rulanna*, meaning to mix or connect, ralli designs show inspirations from many sources, including ancient Indus Valley Civilization pottery and quilting techniques introduced by American female missionaries in the late 1800s.

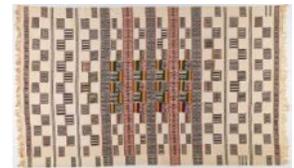
–Yukti Agarwal, Brown | RISD dual-degree student, BA/BFA 2024

West African

Blanket, 1960-1975

Cotton strip weave with supplementary weft patterning

Gift of Alice Marcoux **2015.75**



An accomplished Zarma artisan hand-wove 15 narrow strips on a wooden loom and then sewed them together to create this dynamic checkerboard composition. Cotton textiles in this style draw from traditions in adjacent Fulani communities, where fine wool weavings are gifted for weddings, enfolding newlyweds in the warm embrace of their family's love and protection, then used as blankets and sometimes as wrapped garments. Green and orange stripes, seen here, started appearing in these blankets in the 1960s in celebration of Niger's independence from French West Africa in 1959.

–Kate Irvin, curator of costume and textiles

Pia Camil
b. 1980 in Mexico City; lives and works in Mexico City
The little dog laughed, 2014
Hand-dyed and hand-stitched canvas
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund **2016.3.a-z**



Mexican artist Pia Camil looks for spaces. Or, as she describes it, “the blind spots of this mass culture where the eye could actually rest.” *The little dog laughed* features hand-dyed canvas panels that reference the vertical billboards found in Mexican urban landscapes. Here the panels suggest what could be interpreted as “spaces” of a whole—the hand-stitched pieces as part of a larger image. Each colorful segment allows the viewer a moment of pause, though collectively the segments form a collage of commodity culture, a commentary on mass consumerism and capitalistic overuse.

-Zoë Pulley, RISD MFA 2023, Graphic Design

Jackie Saccoccio
(BFA 1985, Painting)
1963 - 2020; b. in Providence; worked in New York
Profile (Heartbeat), 2015
Oil and mica on linen
Anonymous gift **2018.117.110**



I went to art school in the '80s. I thought I was going to be an architect, but I realized that it wasn't buildings that I wanted to make but rather some kind of connection with space-delving into this vertiginous space, and trying to make something out of that. It was always an illusionistic space, though, not a real space.

-Jackie Saccoccio, 2015

Titled *Profile (Heartbeat)*, this monumental painting has little to do with a figurative silhouette and so much more to do with the layered and messy topographies of our interior worlds. Saccoccio invited drips and spread in this spontaneous application of oil paint glistening with mica. She engulfs us in the pulsating energy of a throbbing heart, an expansive space that allows for losing ourselves in the complexities of memory.

-Kate Irvin, curator of costume and textiles

Joyce J. Scott
b. 1948 in Baltimore; lives and works in Baltimore
Family, 2009
Glass beads
Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2019.37

The title of this work conjures up many meanings, from the families we're born into to those we choose. Joyce J. Scott uses swirling blue glass beads to represent water, linking together a family with different skin tones as both sides meet in the center. To make this necklace, Scott employed the peyote stitch- also known as gourd stitch-a method of weaving beads that has had a pervasive global presence, especially among Native North Americans. Scott's process explores jewelry beyond its function as adornment, examining topics such as racism, sexism, and stories from her African American heritage in each piece of wearable art.

- Emily Banas, Assistant Curator of Decorative Arts and Design



Jeffrey Gibson

American: Mississippi Band of Choctaw/Cherokee, b. 1972 in Colorado; lives and works in Brooklyn

The Anthropophagic Effect, Garment no. 1, 2019

Canvas, cotton, vinyl, brass grommets, nylon thread, artificial sinew, dried pear gourds, glass beads, plastic beads, birch, porcupine quills, and nylon ribbon

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2019.56



Jeffrey Gibson tackles issues of North American colonialism and postcolonial mindsets by focusing on materiality, human agency, and Indigenous and Queer activism in his artwork. In this piece, dried gourds, glass beads, and sinew reference powwow regalia, but in a contemporized form and scale. Gibson uses porcupine quills on the sleeves and also incorporates fabric printed with a quill pattern on the ground. The electric palette of neon oranges, yellows, pinks, and greens draws from Gibson's Mississippi Choctaw and Cherokee heritage, as well as from 1980s and 1990s Queer culture. The repeated text on the front body of the garment, "Stand Your Ground," references American state policies that give residents the right to use guns when feeling threatened.

-Yukti Agarwal, Brown/RISD Dual Degree 2024, Contemplative Studies/Textiles/THAD

Sheila Hicks

b. 1934 in Hastings, Nebraska; lives and works in Paris

The Principal Wife, 1968

Bundled and wrapped linen, rayon and acrylic yarns; Lucite bar

Length: 254 cm (100 inches)

Gift of in memory of Mary Josephine Cutting Blair 2005.42

Textile is a universal language. In all of the cultures of the world, textile is a crucial and essential component. Therefore, if you're beginning with thread, you're halfway home. There's a level of familiarity that immediately breaks down any prejudice.

—Sheila Hicks, 2014

In *The Principal Wife*, Sheila Hicks created a malleable sculpture comprising multiple segments of undyed linen hanks bound at intervals with brightly colored yarn. Languidly draped over a Lucite bar and plunging heavily to the ground, these individual components are intended to be rearranged and adjusted. The work's title refers to the varied roles of women that Hicks observed while traveling in North Africa, inspiring her to explore the ways in which many parts become one, and yet can split and recombine into new—and still whole—units.

—Kate Irvin, curator of costume and textiles



Diedrick Brackens
b. 1989 in Mexia, Texas; lives and works in Los Angeles
natal lake, 2019
Handwoven cotton double-weave
Mary Ann Lippitt Acquisition Fund 2020.35

A boy lounges above a blue lake harboring five catfish. The negative space surrounding the figure mimics the color palette of the fish, and vice-versa, as if the boy is ascending from the water. Brackens's work is heavily related to his hometown of Mexia, Texas. There crowds of thousands gathered every year to celebrate Juneteenth, but during festivities in 1981 a tragedy took place when three Black boys lost their lives on Lake Mexia while in police custody. The officers involved walked away with zero penalties. Bracken often refers back to this event in his work, frequently accompanied by the motif of catfish as homage to his Southern roots.



-Natiana Fonseca, RISD BFA 2023, Textiles

Alexandre da Cunha
b. 1969 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; works in London and São Paulo, Brazil
Untitled (coffee), 2011
Burlap with cotton
Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez 2020.72.3

I like the idea of viewers encountering something beautiful with a reference to textiles and crafts and then, after recognizing the object . . . considering notions of cleaning, labor, and global trade—how these things come from other countries and how we use them.

—Alexandre da Cunha

Referring to his practice as “pointing” rather than “making,” Brazilian-born artist Alexandre da Cunha often employs pre-fabricated, mass-produced items in his work to examine issues of commodity culture and manual labor. In *Untitled (coffee)*, coarse burlap from bags used to hold coffee beans for export has been stretched like a painting. This work was first exhibited in Brazil’s São Paulo state, which flourished in the 1800s as a center of the coffee industry first through the forced labor of enslaved Africans and later from that of European immigrants.

—Kate Irvin, curator of costume and textiles



Misha Kahn

(RISD BFA 2011, Furniture Design)

b. 1989 in Duluth, Minnesota; works in Brooklyn, New York

All Tied Up Chair, 2023

Polyethylene terephthalate glycol (PETG), epoxy, and paint

86.4 x 61 x 70.5 cm (34 x 24 x 27 3/4 inches)

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund **2023.110**



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In *All Tied Up Chair*, RISD alumnus and Queer designer Misha Kahn combines formal principles with “the reality of our lives that smashes incoherent materials and forms together constantly.” Kahn first sculpted the work using virtual-reality software, then explored three dimensional possibilities with his own hands. He describes the freeform result as “very traditional craft meeting this hyper-digital object, . . . like a customized t-shirt running down a boardwalk with a hot dog as fast as it possibly can from a formal dining chair.”

–Elizabeth A. Williams, David and Peggy Rockefeller Curator of Decorative Arts and Design

Jagdeep Raina

(RISD MFA 2016, Painting)

b. 1991 in Guelph, Ontario, Canada; lives and works in Toronto

What was left behind, 2021

Cotton and silk embroidery on cotton muslin; phulkari embroidered border

Mary B. Jackson Fund **2021.86**



This tapestry depicts a collaboration I worked on with Satinder Chohan, a playwright based in London, exploring the Green Revolution in Punjab. The Green Revolution—a US-sponsored agricultural program based on high-yield seed varieties, intensive irrigation, drainage, and chemical fertilizers and pesticides—has damaged the landscape in Punjab by causing declining water tables, widespread soil erosion, low forest cover, and an epidemic of farmer suicides. I drew from Satinder’s photographs to create this work. Satinder will also create a new body of writing informed by my resurrection of her photographs.

–Jagdeep Raina (RISD MFA 2016, Painting), artist and exhibition collaborator

Sally Bennett Jones

1944-1988; worked in Gee's Bend, Alabama

Patchwork Quilt (Center medallion of triangles), 1966

Cotton plain weave; patchwork

Museum purchase: Mary B. Jackson Fund and gifts of Alice Marcoux,

Mrs. Leon A. Mnuchin, Anne D. Utescher and Pixie D. Arnold, Lila and

Martha Wetherbee, and museum property, by exchange, and gift of the

Souls Grown Deep Foundation **2021.87.2**



Sally Bennett Jones was a Black woman quilter from an Alabama community known as Gee's Bend. Gee's Bend is known for the dynamic quilts that women there have fashioned for generations. This example adapts patterns that Jones learned from family members who taught her how to quilt. Gee's Bend quilters are praised for their pattern-making skills, their use of found fabrics, and their celebration of the irregularities within shapes and lines that come from hand stitching.

-Natiana Alexandra Fonseca, RISD BFA 2023, Textiles

Anina Major

b. 1981 in Nassau, Bahamas; lives and works in Provincetown,

Massachusetts; (RISD MFA 2017, Ceramics)

Hybrid No. 00105042021, 2021

Stoneware and sea glass

Mary Ann Lippitt Acquisition Fund **2022.9**



The aesthetic intricacies of *Hybrid No. 00105042021* echo Anina Major's complex interrogations of how objects embody ideas "beyond materiality, existence, or placement." Bearing a blue glaze infused with Bahamian sea glass, the vessel incorporates Major's frequent positioning of water as an entry point for thinking about space and time. The plaited stoneware reflects traditional Bahamian and Black Seminole basket-weaving styles. Plaiting, adjacent to braiding, is an African diasporic commonality observed in hairstyles and basketry. Anina learned plaiting from her grandmother and applied it to ceramics as a means of challenging its commercialization while preserving its artistic language and legacy.

-Ahmari Benton, Nancy Prophet Fellow

Dawn Spears
Narragansett and Choctaw, b. 1965 in Providence; works in Ashaway,
Rhode Island
Purse, 2019
Hand drawn with ink markers on fabric
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2023.42.2



This purse is embellished with colorful hand-drawn designs by Narragansett artist, farmer, and community member Dawn Spears. The RISD Museum is built on what is now called College Hill, part of the ancestral homelands of the Narragansett Indian Tribe. Spears says that her work within her family, community, and in the arts is driven by her “belief in the preservation and education of culture and traditions.” Spears also created the skirt designs for the *Her Empowerment—Our Legacy* gown. The unique adornment of garments and fashion accessories is a common theme in her practice.

Dawn Spears
Narragansett and Choctaw, b. 1965 in Providence; works in Ashaway,
Rhode Island
J. Nicole Hatfield
Comanche and Kiowa, works in Norman, Oklahoma
Loren Aragon
Acoma Pueblo, b. 1979 in Albuquerque, New Mexico; works in
Bernalillo, New Mexico
Her Empowerment — Our Legacy, 2017
Hand drawn ink and painted pigment on drop cloth
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2023.42.3



Her Empowerment—Our Legacy was collaboratively designed by three Native American artists. The garment was made at the 2017 SEEDS Marketplace, a Native American art market established and led by women in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Loren Aragon (Acoma Pueblo) constructed the gown and then gave creative control to J. Nicole Hatfield (Comanche and Kiowa), who painted the bodice, and Dawn Spears (Narragansett and Choctaw), who designed the skirt. The dress pays homage to Native American women and matriarchs in the arts. Aragon hails from New Mexico, Hatfield from Oklahoma, and Spears from Rhode Island.

—Sháńdíín Brown, Henry Luce Curatorial Fellow for Native American Art

Dreaming Between Utopia and Dystopia

Wai Yee Chiong, associate curator of Asian art, in conversation with artists Enrique Chagoya and Chitra Ganesh

Something about being in between utopia and dystopia is powerful. Especially in this moment, when we are basically in an apocalypse.

-Chitra Ganesh

By harnessing the power of storytelling, artists can reverse, question, and diversify traditional and historical interpretations. Using unique visual languages, the artists in this section have created imaginary realms to critique the sociopolitical ills of contemporary society. Metaphor, satire, science fiction, comics, and cartoons offered them novel ways to destroy stereotypical notions and engage with real histories that have been overlooked.

Lucy Qinnuayuak ᓇᓴ ᑭᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ

Inuit, 1915 - 1982; b. in Salluit, Northern Quebec, Canada; worked in Kinngait, Nunavut

Timothy Ottochie

1904 - 1982; worked in Kinngait, Nunavut, Canada, printer

Bird, 1964

Stencil technique on paper

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James A. Houston 77.148.7



Lucy Qinnuayuak's favorite subjects were birds, as seen in this work. The posture of this gull and its bright orange color suggest a humorous sensibility. Humor is valued in Inuit culture.

Qinnuayuak was a prolific Inuit drawer and printmaker, a part of the first generation of artists working at Kinngait Studios. Kinngait (ᑭᓄᓄᓄᓄ) is located on the southern tip of Baffin Island in the Qikiqtaaluk region of Nunavut, Canada. Originally known as the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative, Kinngait Studios is the longest running print studio in Canada, and has released a cataloged collection of works each year since it was founded in 1959. The printer of this work, Timothy Ottochie, was also an Inuit artist and member of the Kinngait Studio.

-Sháńdíń Brown, Henry Luce Curatorial Fellow for Native American Art

Alice Neel
1900-1984; b. in Pennsylvania; lived and worked in the US
Nancy Selvage, 1967
Oil on canvas
Gift of Richard and Hartley Neel **1994.086**



Shinjiro Okamoto 岡本信治郎
1933-2020, b. in Tokyo; worked in Japan
Portrait of Van Gogh, from the series *Van Gogh Time Machine*, 1969
Silkscreen on paper
Bequest of Richard Brown Baker **2009.92.179**



Alice Neel and Shinjiro Okamoto employ very different approaches to portraiture. Using bold brushstrokes and deliberately leaving sections of the canvas unpainted, Neel creates a directness and sense of emotional connection with her portrayal of the artist Nancy Selvage. Okamoto in contrast, depicts Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh in an abstract manner, using bold colors and expressive lines—characteristics of Van Gogh's works.

–Wai Yee Chiong, curator of Asian art

Jay Milder

b. 1934 in Nebraska; works in the US

In the Beginning XII, 1966

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William A. Small, Jr. **1994.095.2**



Jay Milder

b. 1934 in Nebraska; works in the US

In the Beginning VI, 1966

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William A. Small, Jr. **1994.095.3**



Abstract figures of animals and humans emerge in these expressive interpretations of biblical stories. Jay Milder made many biblical vignettes on canvas in the 1960s, creating a sense of mysticism by using thick layers of paint. The artist saw negative space as spiritual and symbolic, so his figures often merge into swirls, half-hidden or only partially revealed. Many of the animals have human-like expressions, adding another layer of emotion to Milder's paintings.

–Wai Yee Chiong, associate curator of Asian art

Pepón Osorio

b. 1955 in Puerto Rico; lives and works in the US

T.K.O., 1989

Mixed media

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund **2001.30**



Colorful tokens and dolls fill this bright-red velvet-lined box representing the artist's personal associations with his native Puerto Rico. Boxing gloves, toy soldiers, a knife, a dollar sign, and photographs of political figures critique sociopolitical issues in the island state, lacing the kitschy paraphernalia with darker references to corruption and violence.

- Wai Yee Chiong, associate curator of Asian art

Toshiko Takaezu
1922 - 2011, b. in Hawaii, worked in the U.S.
Ocean's Edge, 1992
Porcelain with glaze
Gift of the artist **2009.81**

Towering and imposing, Toshiko Takaezu's ceramic sculpture is adorned with splashes of earth-toned glaze that suggest abstract brushstrokes. This vessel has no openings, a characteristic of most of Takaezu's pieces. The unseen empty space inside the work becomes mysterious and powerful, which the artist likened to a metaphor for the human spirit.

–Wai Yee Chiong, curator of Asian art



Jun Kaneko 金子潤
b. 1942 in Nagoya, Japan; works in the U.S.
Untitled, 08-03-01, 2008
Ceramic with glaze
Elizabeth T. and Dorothy N. Casey Fund **2009.95**

Known for his large hand-built ceramics, Jun Kaneko emphasizes form rather than function. This is represented in this cylindrical, rounded sculpture from the series *Dango*, which means dumpling in Japanese. A completely closed form, like the Toshiko Takaezu piece across the room, this sculpture is playfully adorned with bright patterns and lines. For Kaneko, each work is both painting and sculpture, and its combined form and decoration is designed to "give off a visual energy" that enlivens the space around it.

–Wai Yee Chiong, curator of Asian art



Otto Dix
1891-1969; b. in Untermhaus, Germany; lived and worked in Germany
Christ at Gethsemane (Christus am Ölberge), 1948
Oil on canvas mounted on plywood
Gift of Dr. Cynthia O. Harris and Leo O. Harris **2015.48**

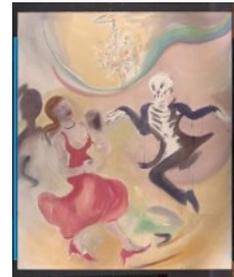


This scene from the New Testament depicts Jesus Christ as he kneels in a garden on the night before his death. The landscape is illuminated by a terrifying winged figure representing God the Father, who offers Jesus a golden chalice filled with blood. Acknowledging but fearing his destiny, Jesus prays.

Dix employed a dark palette and broad, gestural brushstrokes in his raw depictions of European society during two world wars. Here he represents Jesus as a common man whose physical and emotional suffering reflect the inhumanity and horror of war.

-Maureen O'Brien, curator of painting and sculpture

Sophie Von Hellermann
b. 1975 in Munich, Germany; lives and works in the UK
Her Death Was Hysterical, 2005
Acrylic on canvas
Gift of Craig and Lynn Jacobson **2017.91.2**



Death is depicted here as a whimsical skeleton dancing in a romantic, dreamlike setting. Von Hellermann typically applies pure pigment to unprimed canvas using broad-brushed washes, imbuing her work with a sense of weightlessness. Drawing inspiration from fables, legends, and classical mythology, she blurs the lines between the real and the imaginary.

-Wai Yee Chiong, associate curator of Asian art

Jordan Seaberry
(RISD BFA 2014, Painting)
b. 1989 in Chicago; lives and works in the US
Hallmarks, 2018
Oil, acrylic and mixed media on canvas
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2020.3



Old photographs, comic-book panels, and other ephemera emerge from and become submerged in thick clouds of paint in this work, which addresses systemic injustice, family wounds, and personal memories. *Hallmarks* is the last in a series of Seaberry's paintings that stems from his own family history. He portrays himself and his father here as ghosts, hidden yet present in multiple layers of paraphernalia. Seaberry's use of socially conscious content also reflects his work as a grassroots community organizer.

-Wai Yee Chiong, associate curator of Asian art

Alex Dodge
(RISD BFA 2001, Painting)
b. 1977 in Denver; works in the US
Study for INTERNET no. 2, 2020
Oil and acrylic on polyester
Museum purchase: Anonymous gift 2021.2



Here two sock puppets appear as performers on a dimmed stage. For Dodge, these figures reflect human behavior and emotion while questioning what is real versus fabricated. Although this painting was drawn using animation programs and executed in paint with stencils, it was also inspired by Japanese woodblock prints. Dodge learned traditional woodblock printing methods in Japan, and the fading colors in this work's background suggest a gradated printing technique known as bokashi.

-Wai Yee Chiong, associate curator of Asian art

Ahrong Kim

(RISD MFA 2013, Ceramics)

b. 1985 in South Korea; lives and works in US

Hang In There II, 2021

Porcelain, luster, and metal

Museum purchase: A grant from Trustee Emeritus Dr. Se-Ung Lee P 91
via the Korea Foundation **2021.74**



The mosaic-like aesthetic of this vibrant sculpture was inspired by Korean jogakbo patchwork textile traditions. Despite its whimsical appearance, this piece was meticulously constructed using molding, hand-building, hand-painting, and slip-casting techniques. Kim's complicated process mirrors the complex nature of the human psyche, a key message that she hopes to convey. *Hang in There II* expresses the fragility of the inner self and the range of emotions and psychological states we all experience.

-Wai Yee Chiong, associate curator of Asian art

Chitra Ganesh

b. 1975 in New York; lives and works in the US

Solar Hands, from *Sultana's Dream*, 2018

Linocut on BFK Rives Tan, 280gsm paper

Esther Mauran Acquisitions Fund **2021.75.16**



These expressive linocut prints vividly capture the journey of the fictional character Sultana into an imaginary utopia. They are part of a set of 27 images contemporary artist Chitra Ganesh made to illustrate Bengali feminist writer Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's 1905 novel. In *Ladyland*, the dream world Hossain describes, women dominate and rule, a reversal of Indian societal practices. Harnessing the progressive structures and futuristic framework found in the novel, Ganesh reminds us of the power of imaginary worlds as a platform for criticizing the systems and histories that surround us.

-Wai Yee Chiong, associate curator of Asian art

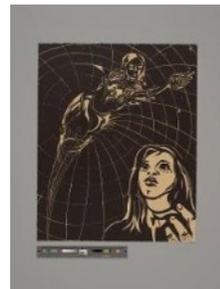
Chitra Ganesh

b. 1975 in New York; lives and works in the US
Oracle in the Baoli, from *Sultana's Dream*, 2018
Linocut on BFK Rives Tan, 280gsm paper
Esther Mauran Acquisitions Fund 2021.75.17



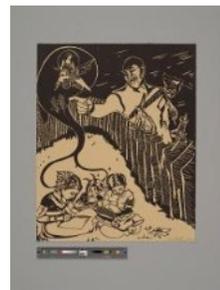
Chitra Ganesh

b. 1975 in New York; lives and works in the US
Event Horizon, from *Sultana's Dream*, 2018
Linocut on BFK Rives Tan, 280gsm paper
Esther Mauran Acquisitions Fund 2021.75.18



Chitra Ganesh

b. 1975 in New York; lives and works in the US
Sentimental Nightmare, from *Sultana's Dream*, 2018
Linocut on BFK Rives Tan, 280gsm paper
Esther Mauran Acquisitions Fund 2021.75.19



Chitra Ganesh

b. 1975 in New York; lives and works in the US
Refugees and Queen, from *Sultana's Dream*, 2018
Linocut on BFK Rives Tan, 280gsm paper
Esther Mauran Acquisitions Fund 2021.75.20



Woomin Kim

b. 1986 in Busan, South Korea; works in the U.S.; Queens, New York
Shijang: Aisle, 2021

Pieced and embellished textiles

Museum purchase: A grant from Trustee Emeritus Dr. Se-Ung Lee P 91
via the Korea Foundation and Elizabeth T. and Dorothy N. Casey Fund
2022.78



On this quilt, colorful aprons hang above baskets of anchovies and leeks, evoking sights, smells, and textures. Kim created this piece as part of a project paying homage to Korean street markets, where it is not uncommon to see fresh produce next to garments and hardware supplies. Following the outbreak of COVID, Kim hoped to dispel negative impressions of crowded spaces, and to celebrate the positive energy she associates with marketplaces and the communities they serve.

–Wai Yee Chiong, curator of Asian art

Pang Liming 庞黎明

b. 1947 in Tianjin, China; works in China

Xiong Zhaozhi 熊照志

b. 1948 in Hunan, China; works in China

People's Fine Art Publisher 人民美术出版社, publisher

Beijing No.2 offset printing factory 北京胶印二厂, printer

Everyone Strives to be a Role Model in the Technological Revolution

(*人人争当技术革命的标兵 Rén rén zhēng dāng jìshù gé*

mìng de biāobīng), 1979

Off-set lithograph

Gift of Judith Tannenbaum 2023.107.4



A smiling woman poses in front of machinery in this poster promoting the age of technology in China. Holding a rolled-up blueprint and a book about new innovations, she is meant to be seen as the epitome of progress. Propaganda images like this one played an important role in spreading the teachings of the state and ideas about how life ought to be. Their bright colors and cheerful subjects allude to a utopic future.

–Wai Yee Chiong, curator of Asian art

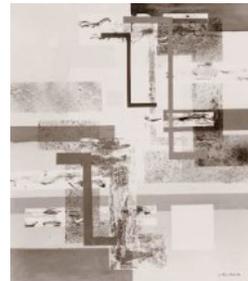
Facts and Figures

Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art, in conversation with artists Nathaniel Oliver (RISD BFA 2018, Painting) and Rose B. Simpson (RISD MFA 2011, Ceramics)

The paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, and sculptures in this section share largely representational and abstract depictions of figures. They were also selected to demonstrate the various ways that works are purchased for or given to the museum's collection. The wall labels for these objects are split in two: one text describes and explains the work, and the other presents the circumstances by which it was acquired.

This interpretative approach was developed in conversation with exhibiting artists Nathaniel Oliver and Rose B. Simpson, both of whom challenged the museum to clarify the individuals, sources of wealth and financial support, and institutional priorities that have played a role in the acquisition of each of these works for the RISD Museum collection.

Irene Rice Pereira
1907-1971; b. in Chelsea, Massachusetts; worked in New York
Toward the Infinite, 1964
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mr. Ben Weiss **66.031**



Jean Xceron
1890-1967; b. in Greece; lived and worked in New York and
Washington, DC
Fragments No. 252, 1941
Oil on canvas
Gift of the artist **66.068**

Interpretation

Fragments No. 252 is emblematic of Xceron's signature use of geometric forms against subtly shaded neutral backgrounds to explore shape, color, light, and contour. His work demonstrates the profound influence of the Cubist paintings of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque from the early 20th century.

Acquisition details

In 1965 art historian Daniel Robbins became the director of the RISD Museum. Robbins was a scholar of Cubist art, and that same year he also opened a survey of Jean Xceron's work at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. *Fragments No. 252* was featured in that exhibition. Xceron donated the painting to the RISD Museum in 1966, suggesting the strong relationship between the artist and curator. Interpersonal dynamics play a critical role in the donation of works to a museum, with artists' gifts of their works variously reflecting a sense of gratitude to or identification with an institution or support for the individuals who work there.

-Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art



Hans Arp
1886-1966; b. in France; lived and worked in France, Germany, and
Switzerland
Configuration, 1926
Wood with paint
Gift of Mrs. George H. Warren, Jr. 66.356

Interpretation

These amorphous wooden shapes painted in shades of green, blue, red, off-white, and yellow alternate between total abstraction and the suggestion of objects, figures, or landscapes. Hans Arp allowed arbitrary and unexpected relationships to develop within his works—a reflection of his involvement in the French Dadaist and Surrealist movements of the 1920s and 1930s.

Acquisition details

Art collector Katherine Urquhart Warren (1897-1976) donated *Configuration* to the RISD Museum in 1967. It joined other works she gave the museum between 1956 and 1977 by artists such as Ilya Bolotowsky, Joan Miro, and Pablo Picasso. Warren's collecting and philanthropic activity was made possible by her birth into a wealthy and powerful Louisiana family and her marriage into an equally prestigious New York family. She served on the RISD Museum Committee (now the Board of Governors) from 1953 to 1974 and as a term trustee for the school from 1967 to 1970. She began collecting early 20th-century European and American art in 1926. She was also notable for serving on the Museum of Modern Art's board in New York and for her support of architectural preservation projects in Newport, Rhode Island.

-Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art



Wifredo Lam

Cuban, 1902-1982; b. in Sagua la Grande, Cuba; lived and worked in Cuba, Spain, and France

Near the Virgin Islands (Près des Îles Vierges), 1959

Oil, charcoal, and pastel on canvas

Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 69.054



Interpretation

In this painting, highly stylized silhouettes of humans and animals become shadowy presences against a complex layering of black, gray, and green washes. The dark tone of the composition is interrupted by clusters of brightly colored geometric forms that suggest clothing, hats, or other accessories. The allusions to African sculpture and Afro-Cuban deities and rituals in the Virgin Islands reflect Lam's leading role in the Negritude movement, which flourished in the Caribbean in the 1940s.

Acquisition details

Since 1966, more than 200 works of art-including this painting-have been acquired through funding for the Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art. Nancy Sayles Day's philanthropy was sustained by wealth her family amassed in the textile industry during the second half of the 1800s. Upon her passing in 1964, her family decided to celebrate her legacy through an art collection at the RISD Museum, and agreed to a focus on Latin American Art. The acquisition of this work built on a previous purchase-also for the Nancy Sayles Day Collection-of Lam's celebrated 1944 painting *The Eternal Presence (An Homage to Alejandro García Caturla)*.

-Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art

Louise Nevelson

1899-1988; b. in Ukraine; lived and worked in New York

Untitled, ca. 1955-1958

Wood with paint

The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th Century American Art

73.124



Interpretation

This wall sculpture explores relationships between the color, shape, and depth of physical form. The daughter of a lumber dealer, Nevelson first began using of scrap wood in her work in the 1930s as an impoverished artist scavenging for firewood. This approach intensified the year before this work was made, when building demolitions littered her New York neighborhood with debris. *Untitled* suggests on a small scale the style and sensibility that characterize the much larger wall-sized sculptures for which she became internationally recognized.

Acquisition details

Untitled is part of a collection of works RISD Museum director Daniel Robbins began assembling in 1967 with support from Selma Fain Pilavin in memory of her husband. Albert Pilavin (1902-1964) founded the Rhode Island-based Apex Tire and Rubber Company and also made art. Other gifts from the Pilavin Collection include major paintings by Robert Mangold, Cy Twombly, and Andy Warhol.

-Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art

Lorna Simpson
b. 1960 in Brooklyn; works in New York
Counting, 1991
Photogravure and screenprint
Walter H. Kimball Fund 1993.001

Interpretation

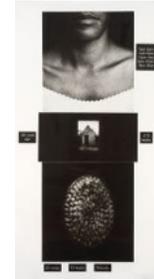
These three photographs are each accompanied by numerically themed captions. The image on top focuses on a woman's upper torso, neck, chin, and mouth. The middle section depicts a South Carolina smokehouse associated with the housing of enslaved people. The bottom panel shows an oval coil of braided hair. Simpson's pairings suggest how even the simplest presentations of written and visual information require further questioning and consideration—especially in regard to the complexities of African American histories and life experiences.

Acquisition details

This work is one of many the RISD Museum has acquired since 1927 through the Walter H. Kimball Fund. In a document dated November 6, 1918, Kimball stated his intention to bequeath to the museum funds "to be applied to the purchase of pictures from time to time for exhibition." Kimball also left bequests to the Brown University Library (2,500 books) and provided property for what is now a wildlife refuge in Charlestown, Rhode Island.

The 1993 purchase of *Counting* was coordinated by the museum's current curator of painting and sculpture, Maureen C. O'Brien, when she was the curator of prints, drawings, and photographs.

—Dominic Molon, Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art



Arnaldo Roche-Rabell

1955 - 2018; b. in San Juan, Puerto Rico; lived and worked in Chicago
Spirit of the Colony (El Espiritu de la Colonia), 1993

Oil on canvas

Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 1994.026



Interpretation

This painting depicts a dark-skinned man whose eyes are distinctly rendered in blue and yellow on the left and red and orange on the right. The flock of birds obscuring his face symbolizes the spirit of the colony referenced in the title, or the communities in Puerto Rico, the artist's native land. The birds also represent the artist's Afro-Caribbean ancestors, whose identities are often left in the margins. By scraping and layering paint, Roche-Rabell reveals the depths of color that are characteristic of his practice. These textures express pride in his heritage and embody revelations of belonging and homecoming.

—Gabrielle Walker, Nancy Elizabeth Prophet Curatorial Assistant

Acquisition details

This is one of 269 works—including the Wifredo Lam painting at the far left—that the RISD Museum has acquired since 1966 as part of its Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art. Nancy Sayles Day (1905–1964) was a Rhode Island artist and supporter of the arts.

Funds that focus on acquiring works made in a particular region or by artists of a specific cultural identity have become less prevalent in recent years, as artists often move elsewhere and/or resist nationalistic associations.

—Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art

David Hammons
b. 1943 in Illinois; lives and works in New York
Rock Head, 2000
Stone and hair, metal stand
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2001.31.1

Interpretation

In *Rock Head*, David Hammons affixed afro-textured hair to a stone to create an unconventional portrait. This sculpture and others like it developed out of his performances in Harlem in the 1970s, when he gave haircuts to similar objects made using human hair sourced from African American barbershops. Hammons often uses recovered materials and references to the body to evoke visual tropes of Black identity.

Acquisition details

This work was acquired for the RISD Museum in 2001 by the previous Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art, Judith Tannenbaum. It was purchased alongside a 1974 work by Hammons-Untitled (Body Print)-that was selected by curator Jan Howard. The acquisition, one of Tannenbaum's first in her curatorial role at the museum, reflected her interest in Hammons's career since the mid-1970s. It is especially significant in the context of the limited number of-and extremely high demand for-available works by Hammons, who has become an iconic figure in contemporary art.

-Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art



Sue Williams

b. 1954 in Chicago Heights; works in New York

Busy with Face in Middle, 1997

Oil on canvas

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.15



Interpretation

In this painting, male and female figures are rendered in black on white in a cartoonish manner. Artist Sue Williams frequently distorts the human form, exaggerating and isolating body parts. This stylistic approach is intensified by her dynamic, mostly abstract compositions, which suggest the intersection of violence and sexuality.

Acquisition details

This work was acquired through the Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund. According to a memorial text published by RISD after her passing in 1984, Danforth established the fund “to provide a perpetual source of funding” for RISD Museum acquisitions. This fund supports the purchase of works that the museum’s curators or director identify as priorities for the collection.

–Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art

Richard Hunt
1935 - 2023; lived and worked in Chicago
Double Disk Construction, 1958
Steel
Bequest of Richard Brown Baker 2009.92.40

Interpretation

This work's title describes its composition in welded steel. The combination of shapes explores the material qualities of the medium while also suggesting various organic forms. Richard Hunt emerged as an important African American artist in the mid-20th century, and his sculptures remain profoundly influential today for their fusion of abstract and representational sensibilities.

Acquisition details

This is one of about 300 works of art given to the RISD Museum by collector Richard Brown Baker upon his death in 2002. While Baker's funding contributions to the museum are described in the label for the John Stezaker work near the entrance to this gallery, the artworks he donated to the museums at RISD (he was born in Rhode Island in 1912) and Yale University (where he graduated in 1935) helped both institutions greatly strengthen their holdings of 20th-century art.

-Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art



Simone Leigh
(former RISD faculty, Ceramics)
b. 1967 in Chicago; lives and works in New York
Opuwo, 2018
Terra cotta, porcelain, cobalt, India ink, resin and raffia
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2018.1



Interpretation

Opuwo, named after a town in Namibia, presents the ceramic head of a woman whose absent eyes prompt considerations of the power of seeing-and of being seen and recognized. Her hair is styled in a puff made up of small porcelain roses, and her conical raffia skirt references the huts and skirts of the Herero, an ethnic group in Namibia and Angola. Between 1904 and 1907, German colonizers killed tens of thousands of Herero and Nama people in what is now considered the first genocide campaign of the 20th century. Leigh describes her sculptures as representing women “who, for whatever reasons, have been left out of the archive or left out of history.”

Acquisition details

This work was acquired in recognition of Leigh’s brief but significant teaching experience in RISD’s Ceramics Department and her increasing stature as one of the most celebrated artists working today. The purchase was made using the Mary B. Jackson Fund, the origins and intent of which were first articulated in the Bulletin of the Rhode Island School of Design from October 1926:

THE JACKSON BEQUEST. The Museum has been advised that, under the will of the late Benjamin M. Jackson, it was to receive certain of his choice pieces of furniture, and shared with Brown University and the Rhode Island Hospital the considerable estate which he left. There were some minor bequests, but the income of the funds which later will be available is to be used “for the purchase of such works of art as the properly authorized representatives or committee may find desirable for the use of said Rhode Island School of Design.” This fund is to be known as “The Mary Bixby Jackson Fund.” As the choice works of art are added year by year, it will be increasingly evident that Mr. Jackson made [the] extremely wise provision that his interest should be continued after his death. By such broad-minded consideration have museums in America reached their present state of development, and only by others following his example may the larger and more useful collections of the future be acquired.

-Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art

Nathaniel Oliver
(RISD BFA 2018, Painting)
b. 1996 in Washington, DC; lives and works in New York
There I Lie, Fever, 2020
Oil on wood panel
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2021.1

Interpretation

This painting is a self-portrait of the artist lying in bed and recovering from a fever. The physical and psychological sensibilities of illness are conveyed here through color, texture, and other formal means and techniques.

Acquisition details

I was first introduced to Nathaniel Oliver's work through KJ Freeman, whose New York gallery, HOUSING, presented Oliver's 2020 solo exhibition *Limbo*, in which this painting appeared. I was struck by the general approach Oliver took in representing the figure and his explorations of painterly technique, and I selected this work from the exhibition for its unconventional use of color and pattern. The acquisition was also motivated by the museum's commitment to supporting RISD alumni throughout their careers but especially in their more emergent stages. This was not only Oliver's first work acquired by a museum, but the gallery's first sale to an institutional collection.

-Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art



Rose B. Simpson

Kha'p'o Owingeh (Santa Clara Pueblo), b. 1983; lives and works in Santa Clara Pueblo; (RISD MFA 2011, Ceramics)

Reincarnation, 2021

Ceramic, glaze, grout, lava beads, coral beads, sea urchin, turquoise beads, glass beads, and epoxy

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2021.40.1



Interpretation

This ungendered figure is adorned with striped markings on the face and chest and embellishments at the neck and ears. Two circular openings in the base suggest the space between the arms and torso or voids where breasts or lungs would be. Simpson describes *Reincarnation's* "confident and naturally beautiful" subject as "demonstrating a knowing that is based on experience behind and beyond this lifetime" underscores the allusion to rebirth and regeneration in the title.

Acquisition details

This work was acquired through the Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund. According to a memorial text published by RISD after her passing in 1984, Danforth established the fund "to provide a perpetual source of funding" for RISD Museum acquisitions. This fund supports the purchase of works that the museum's curators or director identify as priorities for the collection. The acquisition of Simpson's work recognizes her contributions to contemporary sculpture, her inventive engagement of the ceramic medium, and as her status as a RISD alumna.

-Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art

Rose B. Simpson

Kha'p'o Owingeh (Santa Clara Pueblo), b. 1983; lives and works in Santa Clara Pueblo; (RISD MFA 2011, Ceramics)

Shard, 2021

Ceramic, glaze, grout, linoleum, steel, copper wire, and epoxy

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2021.40.2



Interpretation

A geometric pattern plays across the face of this figure, repeating on the body and the thin cylindrical forms jutting from the sides of its head. This pattern developed when Simpson recognized that the linoleum flooring in many modern Indigenous homes appears similar to shards of ceramics made by ancient ancestors from the homelands surrounding Santa Clara Pueblo, where she lives. Her substitution of linoleum for protected ancestral artifacts reflects the relationship in her sculptures between the historical past and living present of Native American people and culture.

Acquisition details

In addition to the ongoing project of reassessing the moral and ethical considerations of maintaining and displaying historical examples of Native American cultural objects as part of its collection, the RISD Museum is committed to acquiring the work of contemporary Native American artists. Recent works by Simpson, Jeffrey Gibson, and Courtney M. Leonard are on view in this gallery.

-Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art

Emma Amos

1937 - 2020; b. in Atlanta; lived and worked in New York, Boston, and New Jersey

Pie in the Sky, 1991

Acrylic on canvas with fabric collage and African fabric borders

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2021.80



Interpretation

Pie in the Sky presents three falling figures and a slice of a map of the southern tip of Africa against a dark, gesturally painted background. Amos frames this scene with Dutch wax-print fabric, a legacy of European colonialism that has been reclaimed by Afrocentric culture. The falling figure, a prevalent motif in Amos's work, here alludes to the turbulent process of dismantling the racially discriminatory governmental policies in South Africa and Namibia known as Apartheid.

Acquisition details

I chose this work for acquisition to honor the legacies of Emma Amos and Nancy Elizabeth Prophet, the first known woman of color to graduate from RISD. Both artists were prominent educators--Amos at Rutgers from 1980 to 2008, and Prophet at Spelman College from 1934 to 1944. Both also contributed to prominent historical moments and events. Amos developed a craft-centered TV show in 1977 and served as the only female member of the Black artist-activist collective Spiral in the 1960s, while Prophet was one of the foremost American artists working in Paris in the 1920s and '30s.

-Ahmari Benton, Nancy Elizabeth Prophet Fellow, RISD Museum

Leilah Babirye

b. 1985 in Uganda; lives and works in New York

Senga Bisilikirwa, (Special Auntie), 2019

Glazed ceramic and found object

Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez 2022.103.6

Interpretation

Here artist Leilah Babirye worked debris into ceramic, developing a new form. Its distorted appearance suggests the pain Babirye and others in the LGBTQ community in Uganda experienced after the government passed anti-gay legislation in 2014. Babirye fled to the US, receiving asylum with support from the African Services Committee and the NYC Anti-Violence Project.

Acquisition details

This is a promised gift from New York-based collectors Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez. A promised gift does not belong to the museum, but Samuelian and Gonzalez have signed an agreement pledging to give this sculpture at a later mutually agreed-upon date.

Promised gifts like this one can allow donors to live with works they have collected while also offering the museum access to those objects for display. This arrangement lets the museum recognize the current significance of Babirye's practice by showing her work now. In this particular instance, exhibiting the work also reinforces the museum's antiracist collecting initiatives, which are gradually strengthening our holdings of contemporary African art.

-Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art



Nick Mauss

b. 1980 in New York, NY; works in New York

Untitled, 2011

Ceramic with glaze

Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez 2022.103.17

Interpretation

This ceramic wall-based sculpture features gestures in black and white and linear washes of green and blue. Mauss employed a blind firing process, embracing unpredictability and chance with regard to the final composition and colors of the work. The durability of the ceramic material contrasts with the improvisational quality of how the work was made.

Acquisition details

This object is a gift of Avo Samuelian and his husband, Hector Manuel Gonzalez. Active collectors for 20 years, Samuelian and Gonzalez made the first of more than 100 gifts and promised gifts to the RISD Museum in 2017. The donation of Mauss's work develops the museum's support of emerging contemporary Queer artists.

—Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art



NO IMAGE
AVAILABLE

Jonathan Bonner
(RISD MFA 1973, Sculpture; RISD faculty, Foundation Studies)
b. 1947 in Princeton, New Jersey; works in Rhode Island
Double Spiral #2, 1993
Stainless-steel wire mounted on board
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 1996.65.2

Interpretation

In this wall sculpture, a spiral forms a larger circular structure. The use of steel wire draws out its tactile sensibilities while creating a dynamic optical effect. Double Spiral #2 is characteristic of Jonathan Bonner's work, which often employs simple forms to encourage unique personal responses from viewers.

Acquisition Details

This is one of 28 works by Jonathan Bonner that have been donated to the RISD Museum by Board of Governors and Fine Arts Committee member Dr. Joseph A. Chazan. (Another is Bonner's large sculpture Mirth [2007], on view outside the museum's Benefit Street entrance.) Chazan's gift of Bonner's work reflects the special relationships that can develop between artists, patrons, and institutions in general, and the decades of close friendship and support between Bonner and Chazan in particular. Dr. Chazan has assisted in acquiring more than 600 works by Rhode Island-based artists for the museum, demonstrating a shared commitment to local artists.

This presentation of Bonner's work recognizes his profound impact on RISD as a long-serving faculty member and as a leading figure in the Providence art community.

—Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art



Additional Works in the Chace Center:

Chen Zhen 陈箴

1955-2000; b. in Shanghai; lived and worked in China and France

Le silence sonore, 2000

Wood, metal pots, and chair, with sound

Gift from the Estate of Anita and Burton Reiner 2021.42

Interpretation

This installation of wooden chamber pots and a chair evokes the image of Buddhist temple bells. The monotonous sound—a recording of the washing of chamber pots—suggests the meditations of Buddhist chants, lending the ensemble a spiritual quality. Chen's work often explores the notion of duality, and in this case the humblest and most mundane of objects are transformed into something of great value.

-Wai Yee Chiong, associate curator of Asian art

Acquisition details

This is one of two works donated to the collection from the estate of Anita and Burton Reiner. While contemporary art from Asia was not a sole focus of the Reiner collection, these gifts to the collection reflect Anita Reiner's extensive travels to China and other Asian nations. The donation of this work allows the museum to build its representation of contemporary Asian art and to complement its much stronger holdings of historical works from the continent. It also reflects the benefits to estates in placing works at institutions where they can reach a public audience, and to museums in receiving works that might otherwise be beyond their reach as purchases.

-Dominic Molon, Richard Brown Baker Curator of Contemporary Art



Courtney M. Leonard
(RISD MFA 2008, Ceramics)
Shinnecock, b. 1980
Breach: Logbook 21/Nebulous/Artifice CSW2, 2021
Earthenware with glaze
Mary Ann Lippitt Acquisition Fund **2021.96.1ab**



Courtney M. Leonard
(RISD MFA 2008, Ceramics)
Shinnecock, b. 1980
Breach: Logbook 21/Nebulous/Flow Trap Study G1, 2021
Earthenware with glaze
Mary Ann Lippitt Acquisition Fund **2021.96.2**

Courtney M. Leonard
(RISD MFA 2008, Ceramics)
Shinnecock, b. 1980
Breach: Logbook 21/Nebulous/Ghost Trap Study MTS O1, 2021
Earthenware with glaze
Mary Ann Lippitt Acquisition Fund **2021.96.3**

Courtney M. Leonard
(RISD MFA 2008, Ceramics)
Shinnecock, b. 1980
Pallet, 2021
Wood
Mary Ann Lippitt Acquisition Fund **2021.96.4**

This work is made of four ceramic pieces that reference traps for catching fish and other marine animals. Courtney M. Leonard is an installation and multimedia artist of the Shinnecock Indian Nation. Shinnecock means “people of the shore,” and the tribe’s traditional homelands are located on the eastern edge of Long Island. Leonard began the *BREACH* series in 2014 as an exploration of environmentalism, water, whales, and the Shinnecock homelands. She was inspired to examine these themes after a 60-foot-long finback whale washed ashore on Southampton beach in 2005 and US government officials did not allow the Shinnecock tribe to access the whale for traditional ceremonies.

-Shándiín Brown, Henry Luce Curatorial Fellow for Native American Art

Penelope Umbrico
(RISD faculty 2001-2003, Photography)
b. 1957 in Philadelphia; works in New York
*Sunset Portraits (from 9,539,955 Flickr Sunset Pictures 8/8/11)**, 2011
Machine-printed chromogenic prints from digital files
Anonymous gift and Museum purchase, Helen M. Danforth Acquisition
Fund **2022.27**



In 2006, artist Penelope Umbrico wondered what was the most photographed subject. Searching Flickr, an early online platform for sharing images, she found more than half a million photos of the sun at sunset. Umbrico began to exhibit walls of these pictures, printed at then ubiquitous commercial photo labs, as she questioned what it means to share images with an anonymous public. She was curious about what social-media images “tell us about our relationship to photography, technology, and each other.” After she installed walls of suns in different locations, Umbrico noticed that viewers began to photograph themselves in front of them, leading to the second part of the project, seen here.