

Subject to Change: Art and Design in the 20th Century, June 4, 2008 – December 2008

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Egon Schiele, Austrian, 1890-1918
Portrait of Marga Boerner, 1917
Gouache and crayon on paper
Anonymous gift 1991.079

Among the nearly three thousand drawings Schiele created using his distinctive expressionistic line, portraits and provocative figure studies were his most frequent and compelling subjects. Schiele was a contemporary of the Austrian, Sigmund Freud, the famed father of psychoanalysis who exposed the significance of the unconscious mind and sexual drive. Schiele created RISD's work while serving in the Austrian army during World War I, having been called up in 1915. In 1917, he was able to arrange a transfer to the Royal Military Supply Depot in Vienna, where congenial duties and a sympathetic commanding officer, Hans Rosé, provided opportunities to pursue his art. Rosé was enamored of actress Marga Boerner and asked Schiele to do a portrait drawing of her. This is one of three known drawings of Boerner. The actress's down-turned eyes, bare shoulders and thighs seem to reveal more about her admirers' fantasies, than the subject.



Francis Picabia, French, 1879-1953
Aviation, 1922
Ink, crayon, watercolor on paper
Gift of Bayard Ewing 1991.102

Picabia was already associated with the Dada movement in Paris and New York in 1915, when he first developed his "machinist" imagery. He based many of his drawings and paintings directly upon mechanical drawings found in magazines such as *La Science et la Vie* (*Science and Life*). His celebratory embrace of the machine was also an anti-art gesture in keeping with the Dada movement's response to World War I. Picabia pushed the boundaries of what could be considered art and challenged the idea of originality, two issues of continuing importance for artists today. *Aviation* is from a body of



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work created for an exhibition at the Galerie Dalmau, Barcelona.
André Breton (1896-1966), writer and founder of the Surrealist movement, was the sheet's first owner.

Jasper Johns, American, b. 1930

Donn Horatio Steward, American, 1921-1986

Universal Limited Art Editions

Numbers, From the Portfolio, 1st Etchings, 2nd State, 1967-1981

Etching and open-bite with pen and ink and brush and wash on cream paper

Gift of Malcolm G. Chace, Jane Chace Carroll, and Eliot Chace Nolen, in memory of their parents Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Chace, Jr. 1997.14

Moving away from the personal and emotional content of the Abstract Expressionists, Johns subjects are "things the mind already knows" as he famously stated. He reworks his familiar subjects over decades in a variety of sensuous materials and techniques, suggesting that meaning can be found in his process. Johns first used numbers as a subject in a series of paintings in 1955. In 1960, he layered the numbers on top of each other using the two-dimensional representations of intellectual constructs to create illusions of three-dimensional space. In this piece, Johns began with a black and white etching from 1967-69 and in 1981 drew over it with lush tonal ink washes and a complex network of loose parallel and cross-hatched lines.



Nancy Spero, American, 1926-2009

Les Anges - La Bombe, from the series "The War Series", 1966

Gouache and ink on paper

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2004.6

A pioneer of feminist art, Spero has created intensely emotional works on paper and temporary installations that draw on current and historical events. In 1964, having returned to the United States after several years in Paris, she was profoundly disturbed by the escalating war in Vietnam. Newspapers, magazines, and television inundated the public with images of the conflict. For Spero, it was the constant sight of helicopters and bombs that distinguished this war. The mother of three boys, although all too young to be drafted, she responded with a powerful series of drawings from 1966-1970. Here the bomb becomes an anthropomorphic form spewing sperm-like



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heads. As in much of her work, she calls attention to the abuse within our society's male power-base.

El Lissitzky, Russian, 1890-1941

Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky, Russian, 1893-1930

R.S.F.S.R. State Publishing House, Russian

For the Voice (Dlia golosa), 1923

Construction-paper cover, letterpress text, illustrations, and typographic designs

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2006.92.1

El Lissitzky trained as an architect and worked in many media. He met Kazimir Malevich in 1919 while they were teaching at the State Art School in Vitebesk and was a convert to Malevich's revolutionary use of total abstraction to express the spirit of the new Soviet society. In the early 1920s, Lissitzky worked intensively on a body of paintings, drawings, collages, and prints that he called Proun, a Russian acronym for the "Project of the Affirmation of the New." Lissitzky built on Malevich's flat, geometric shapes, placing them in illusionistic space in an attempt to bridge painting and architecture.

For the Voice is a book of thirteen poems by Mayakovsky which Lissitzky set into a dynamic design that he hoped would provoke readers to recite aloud and spread the provocative content of the poems. Lissitzky liked to call himself an architect of the page and he created this design solely using the elements in the compositor's type-case: letters, rules, bars, bullets, etc. It is a tour-de-force of hand typesetting, done by a Berlin typesetter who did know Russian.



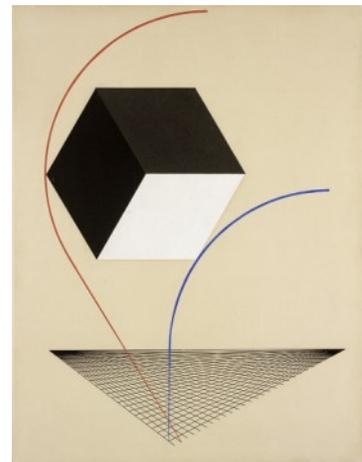
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Anselm Kiefer, German, b. 1945
Unternehmen "Seelowe" VI (Operation "Sea Lion," VI), 1979
Bound book of gelatin silver prints and metal stand
Gift of David and Gerry Pincus 2008.36

Kiefer is among the most highly acclaimed international artists, yet his work was not initially embraced in his own country. Much of Kiefer's work reflects on how German myths and culture have been tainted by its Nazi history--a subject still taboo at the time this piece was created. *Operation "Sea Lion", VI, 1979*, is one of a series of unique books based on Germany's aborted marine attack on England in 1940. Kiefer staged the assault for his camera in the basement of his studio, placing model ships in a zinc bathtub from the Third Reich. He assembled soft-focused, painterly photographs in ambiguous narratives echoing the speculation and inconclusiveness of the original planning for the Operation. The photographs are hauntingly beautiful and poetic. In concurrent paintings, the subject was treated more ominously. (This piece was on view through 5/13/2008, page turned at each rotation.)



El Lissitzky, Russian, 1890-1941
Proun, 1923
Collage, gouache, and pen and ink on board
Museum Appropriation Fund 40.006



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Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, French, 1864-1901

Edward Ancourt & Cie, French

Divan Japonais, 1892-1893

Color lithograph

Museum Appropriation Fund 40.016

Toulouse-Lautrec's posters for 1890s Parisian nightlife brought fame to the artist as well as his subjects. This poster was commissioned for the opening of the Divan Japonais, a cabaret in Montmartre decorated with trendy Japanese motifs and lanterns. Toulouse-Lautrec portrayed two of his friends seated in the audience: Édouard Dujardin, an art critic and founder of the literary journal *Revue wagnérienne*, and Jane Avril, the famous cancan dancer. On stage in the background is Yvette Guilbert, a celebrated singer in her signature black gloves. Japanese prints had a strong impact on his work as is seen here in the abrupt cropping and flat patterning of color.



Jacob Lawrence, American, 1917-2000

There is an Average of Four Bars to Every Block, from the Harlem Series, 1943

Gouache, ink, and pencil on paper

Mary B. Jackson Fund 43.565

The historical struggles of black Americans were chronicled through four series of narrative paintings by Jacob Lawrence between 1938 and 1941. In the Harlem series of 1942, Lawrence turned from history to his own neighborhood, creating 30 works of gritty contemporary life. The RISD sheet shows one of the four bars to every block crowded with men and women of different races and attitudes. The title may suggest that Lawrence did not entirely approve of Harlem's barroom culture. Then, as now, public drinking was more than a benign social activity. It undermined the weak, some still reeling from the Great Depression. Lawrence's social commentary is enlivened by bold colors arranged in flat, repeating asymmetrical patterns that recall not only Cubist collage but also the rhythms and breaks of jazz music of the Harlem Renaissance.



Willem de Kooning, American, 1904-1998

Black and White Abstraction, ca. 1950

Sapolin enamel on chart paper

Museum Works of Art Fund 56.186

De Kooning made a series of works in enamel on chart paper around 1950 that followed the black-and-white paintings for which he gained international acclaim as a leading Abstract Expressionist painter. Like



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the black-and-white canvases, the works on paper were set free from representing realistic imagery, allowing the support to be an arena for painting directed by the process. He worked with a liner brush, commonly used by sign painters. The long flexible hairs held large amounts of paint, which he spread in loose, geometric shapes and calligraphic marks over the sheet. While the flat planes of cubism and the autographic mark of surrealism are evident, de Kooning created a language of abstraction uniquely his own.

Robert Rauschenberg, American, 1925-2008

Untitled, 1968

Graphite, gouache, crayon and photographic transfers on Arches paper

Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th-Century American Art: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Irving J. Fain 69.204

Rauschenberg is famously known for combining objects from life into his paintings and sculpture. In his transfer drawings, such as this one, he merges photographic images of everyday life with the expressiveness of his hand. His method consisted of soaking magazine reproductions in solvent, placing them face down and rubbing them (the action of which is visible in the transferred image) onto the sheet with a blunt instrument. The seemingly random assortment of pictures--a hand, a playing card, a vehicle, numbers, a dripping faucet, poured liquid--emulates the bombardment of images that one might face walking down an urban street or flashing across a television screen. Yet, they are not random. He seems to be commenting on the variety of approaches to mark-making from traditional handwork to chance operations (the playing card) to mechanical techniques (the photographs themselves, the Letraset numbers or the vehicle--Rauschenberg made *Automobile Tire Print* tracing the marks of a tire in 1953) to Pollock's use of dripped and poured paint.



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Franz Kline, American, 1910-1962

Studio Shapes, 1951

Oil paint on newsprint

Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th-Century American Art: Gift of Roy Neuberger 70.008

This is one of Kline's earliest works after developing his signature abstract paintings in black and white. Before 1950, he was making small, eight by six inch drawings. Around 1949, Willem de Kooning (whose c. 1950 drawing is across the room) suggested that he project his drawings on the wall. The enlargement magnified the abstraction and energy of the marks and prompted him to move to large scale painting. One of his smaller painted works, it includes shapes that appear calligraphic, yet they may well be based on objects in his studio. Calligraphic, roughness and the intensity of his marks are typical and seem spontaneous, although they are the result of long study. Many are started, as this one appears to be, working on telephone directory pages, tearing them up and recombining them in collage.



Berenice Abbott, American, 1898-1991

New York at Night, 1932

Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 73.167

In 1929, Abbot visited New York after eight years in Paris and was awestruck by changes that had occurred during the city's second skyscraper building boom. With a "passion" for the new vitality of the city, she returned permanently to New York to capture it through the precision of her camera's lens. The mechanical nature of photography, long considered a liability in its acceptance as an art form, became a strength in celebrating the new machine age. This image, taken from the newly completed Empire State Building, took incredible planning. She needed a fifteen minute exposure to capture the radiance of the city at night and there was one day with maximum illumination inside and darkness outside--December 20, the shortest day of the year. Luckily the weather cooperated.



Having failed during early years of the Depression to find financing to comprehensively document the rapid changes in the city, she was given the opportunity in 1935 with Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal relief program, the Federal Arts Project. Between 1935 and 1939 she made more than 1000 exposures of which 305 were included in her 1939 book *Changing New York*. Intended as a guidebook to visitors to

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the 1939 New York World's Fair, it included a text by the respected critic Elizabeth McCausland, her life partner.

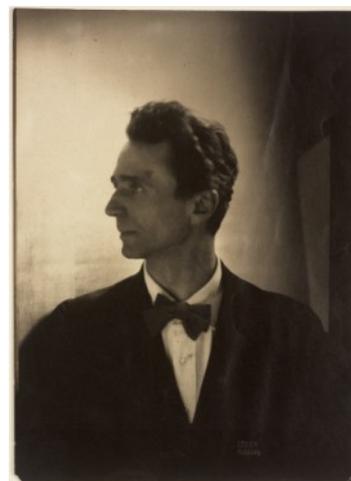
Edward Ruscha, American, b. 1937
Serious Injury, 1972
Gunpowder on paper
Museum purchase, Gift of the Museum Associates 75.063

Inspired by Jasper Johns (whose work is nearby), Ruscha began to use words as subject matter in the early 1960s. He has said "I love the language. Words have temperatures to me. When they reach a certain point and become hot words then they appeal to me." *Serious Injury* is a hotter phrase than most Ruscha has used, yet it is visually more subdued than many. The small ribbon-like letters in receding perspective seem to be vanishing. When you consider the words in conjunction with the gunpowder used to create them, they become even more provocative. Ruscha is known for using unusual materials and he has done many word drawings in gunpowder, but it is rare for the medium to be so directly relevant to the meaning of the word.



Edward Steichen, American, 1879-1973
Self-Portrait, 1917
Coated platinum print
Anonymous gift 83.168.1

Steichen was influential not just as a photographer, but also as one who brought European modernism to this country beginning around 1905 and as an early photography curator (1947-1962) at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. His early photographs, such as this, promoted a pictorialist approach to the medium. Pictorialists were eager to distinguish themselves from amateurs working with small, easy-to-use cameras that began appearing on the market in the 1880s. They modeled their aesthetic after fine-art "pictures" and gave their images a soft-focus quality that suppressed detail in favor of an expressive reading. Pictorialist photographs are closely aligned with the Arts and Crafts movement. Even though the image was captured with a machine (camera), the prints themselves are often unique handcrafted objects, as in this coated platinum print. A famed portraitist, Steichen periodically turned the camera on himself. This self-portrait, made around the time he enlisted in the Army as the



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United States entered World War I, shares similarities with Toulouse-Lautrec's portrayal of Jane Avril.