

RISD MUSEUM

The Phantom of Liberty: Contemporary Works in the RISD Museum Collection, May 4, 2018-
December 30, 2018

I see liberty as a ghost that we try to grasp . . . a misty shape that leaves us with only a wisp of vapor in our hands.

–Luis Buñuel, filmmaker

Artists, designers, and design collectives are uniquely positioned to consider the ways in which “freedom” is an elusive or even imaginary ideal in contemporary life. The museum’s broadest presentation of postwar art to date, *The Phantom of Liberty* presents overlapping concentrations of objects that address themes ranging from spirituality and religion to family and domestic space to the ways power and authority shape and define geography and personal experience.

These works ask numerous questions, including

What is liberty, and is it possible in a world defined by constant technological interconnectedness?

Can artistic expressions ever be considered “independent,” when they are so informed by and reliant upon historical precedents?

In what ways are different individuals allowed varying degrees of “freedom,” and why, and by whom?

Wherever possible, the artist’s own commentary has been used for the label text, providing a direct perspective on their intentions and methods. In other instances, alternative perspectives on the theme are presented.

Some viewers may find the deliberately provocative language, imagery, and concepts of some of these works difficult or upsetting.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

James Casebere, American, b. 1953

Empty Room, 1994

Cibachrome print

Gift of Judy and Robert Mann 2016.25

I was thinking a lot about the Enlightenment era and the way that different cultural institutions were created in the late 18th and early 19th century. One of the developments was the prison. I wanted to investigate innovations of the whole system. . . . I was trying to critically look at the whole process of incarceration as cultural-historical phenomena. –James Casebere

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Deana Lawson, American, b. 1979, (RISD MFA 2004, Photography)
Binky and Tony Forever, 2009
Pigmented inkjet print
Museum purchase: Gift of Judy and Robert Mann and Walter H. Kimball Fund 2017.52

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

—Deana Lawson



On Kawara, Japanese, 1933 - 2014
"Dimanche" 20 Oct. 1974, "Today" Series, No. 461974
Liquitex, newspaper, and cardboard
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2002.75

Significant events of Sunday, October 20, 1974

Hurricane-strength winds devastated parts of Cape Breton Island, damaging over a thousand homes in Sydney, Australia

The death of Élie Lescot, 29th President of Haiti

Number 1 Pop Song: "Jazzman," Carole King

The Buffalo Bills defeated the New England Patriots 30–28



Walead Beshty, American, b. 1976
24-inch Copper (FedEx® Large Kraft Box ©2008 FEDEX 330510 REV 6/08 GP), Standard Overnight, Los Angeles–New York trk#798442758011, March 3–4, 2010. . ., 2010
Polished copper, accrued FedEx shipping and tracking labels
Gift of David Hoberman 2015.125



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FedEx owns the rights to the logo and the design of the box but they also own the right to that volume of space. Other express-mail

companies such as DHL or UPS can't produce a box of the same dimension because there's something called an SSCC code, which is independent of the design of the box, and which is a kind of proprietary code for that volume of space. So FedEx not only owns the design of the box, but also owns this volume of space and that to me seemed a very perverse form of serial, modular unit –the idea that a unit of space could be owned and could be intellectual property. –Walead Beshty

Lubaina Himid, British, b. Tanzania, b. 1954

Undo the Knots of Poverty, 2011

Acrylic and pencil on paper and collage of magazine pages on paper
Richard Brown Baker Fund for Contemporary British Art 2016.54



If you walk through the markets of Accra, or south London, you'll be walking among hundreds of exuberant people of the world, yet many are descendants of slaves. You go to a Jewish wedding and the people survive, understand, carry their history. They are stronger than history, that is the point. My figures say: "You tell me your story, I'll tell you mine."

I'm not in the business of making work where I repeat the trauma. My work is about attempting to belong, about understanding who we are as black people in the diaspora, how much we have contributed across Europe in terms of culture, building, the wealth of the European machine. Never mind the American machine, that's a whole other story. –Lubaina Himid

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Lothar Hempel, German, b. 1966

Werewolf, 2001

Acrylic on paper

Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez 2017.19.12

and if the end comes in only three days or in 30 years, it is not important anymore. a group of young fascists stands on the corner and beats up everyone, who in their eyes have to bear the blame. such an unexplained hysteria and meaninglessness prevails. the catastrophe is total and equals true to nature its own parody in every detail. -Lothar Hempel



Paul Graham, British, b. 1956

Broadway, 3rd June 2010, 2.10.12 pm, From the series *The Present2010*

Two color inkjet prints each mounted to Dibond

Museum purchase in honor of Dr. William G. Tsiaras, Museum Board of Governors Chair, 2011-2015; Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2016.41ab

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I don't really think that where my passport is from plays such an important role. I have a live-work space in New York, I barely go out, and if I do I barely leave the neighborhood. I don't take part in normal city life—I don't go to work or the subway, I don't go uptown much. So when I do go out, it's a shock—when I'm suddenly in midtown watching office workers, or I'm in suburban America in a car, I feel like I've dropped onto Mars. And that is something that I seek to maintain; to keep the surprise of looking at the world with fresh eyes. But then, aren't most artists, in any medium, supposed to have this innocent wonderment at the world? —Paul Graham

Raul Gonzalez III, American, b. 1976
Watchalo, Papa, Watchalo, 2016
Mixed media on paper
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2017.12

I was convinced that we weren't going to have this situation that we are going to be having for the next four years. And then suddenly Trump was elected president and the work felt so much more needed.

Yet, this stuff has been happening forever. We need to continue to make work that shines a light on things that have, for too long, been brushed under the rug. And I'm only making this work because I'm deeply connected to it because of who I am and where I'm from. . . . I was just so taken aback by how much was missing in terms of the stories that were being told in museums and in the American wings. And I kind of wanted to write in missing chapters with my pictures.
—Raul Gonzalez III



Robert Gober, American, b. 1954
Untitled, 2000
Color lithograph with screen printing on paper
Jesse Metcalf Fund 2003.10

I have no talent for poetic titles. I tried. I envy artists who do, like de Kooning's *Door to the River* (1960); could there be a more beautiful and evocative title? I tend to say *Untitled* or use a simple descriptive title. I know it's annoying to people and that it creates a vacuum when you "untitle" things, but if I have no interesting information to add with a title then why do it?
—Robert Gober



[Gober's 1992–1993 show at New York's Dia Center for the Arts] was

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one of the best I've seen in my entire life. It had prison bars on the windows and his hand-painted wallpaper forest. This surreal jumble of images was poignant and deep, representing to me a great sense of loss. Half the people we knew died [of AIDS]. Half. Can you imagine? It was like a war.

—Marilyn Minter, artist

Helen Frankenthaler, American, 1928 - 2011

Holocaust, 1955

Enamel, oil, and turpentine on canvas

The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th-Century American Art
72.108

In 2002, I wrote to [Frankenthaler's] home on Contentment Island in Darien, Connecticut, and to her gallery in New York City, requesting an interview. She denied my request, explaining in a three-sentence letter that the painting's title may only have suggested to her a feeling of "turbulence." —George M. Goodwin, "Wrestling with Frankenthaler: Her Painting in the RISD Museum"

The meanings of an abstract work will depend on its materiality, its situation, the processes of its making, its composition, its title, its symbolic suggestions and counter-suggestions, its context in a discussion of abstraction, and in the artist's work. In other words, the way in which a work of abstract art generates meaning can be extremely complicated. Considered in this way, it might seem entirely possible that an abstract work can represent the Holocaust in complex ways. —Mark Godfrey, *Abstraction and the Holocaust*



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

Mono Rail Over No Man's Land, 1994

Oil on canvas

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2016.6

There is no set way to deal with a question as broad and deep as identity, and I don't want to limit myself to any one way of painting. Sometimes figures are clearly defined, sometimes it's ambiguous or the question simply evaporates. I'd like to tap into a universal human experience but know there's no such thing; we all experience the world differently. When gender and race are eliminated, something else is left to see; other connections are made between the figures and their worlds. —Nicole Eisenman



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Gardar Eide Einarsson, Norwegian, b. 1976
There Is No Justice, 2006
Silkscreen on aluminum
Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez 2017.39

This is one from a series of works appropriating speech bubbles from science-fiction comics. *There's No Justice* transports the words uttered by a comic-book character in a dystopian future to our own time, putting the viewer in the place of the speaker and letting the phrase "There's no justice there anymore! Let it burn!" establish its own relationship to current events. –Gardar Eide Einarsson



Alejandro Diaz, American, b. 1963
No Shoes, No Shirt, You're Probably Rich, 2016
Lightbox with duratrans film
Gift of Art + Culture Projects 2016.50.2

When I finally was exposed to high art in high school and I would see books at the bookstore on pop art or abstract expressionism, I responded immediately in that same way as my grandfather would if he saw a fancy Greek or Roman sculpture somewhere. He would just buy or create the ersatz version of it. When I was exposed to pop art, I wanted to internalize it because I thought maybe that would be the best way to learn about it. But I also almost wanted it as a possession, as an object to have. Because if you grow up in a working-class culture, I think you grow up with this feeling that if you acquire things, you acquire self-worth. –Alejandro Diaz



David Allyn, American, b. 1972, (RISD MFA 2003, Ceramics)
Nicholson File Building Platter, 2015
Porcelain with screen print
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2016.33.1

Using materials that may last thousands of years, I have taken my own steps toward preserving some of the forsaken spaces that occupy the city I call home. My hope is to create dialogue about the path of underutilized urban areas, as our culture learns to navigate the concept of adaptive reuse and the growing tendency towards renewed urbanism. With the trend in capitalism being to simply erase our history and build something new, I believe that developing a conversation in which we reimagine the habitat we create and



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honestly investigate why we do so is both worth our time and vital to our survival. –David Allyn

Tony Cokes, American, b. 1956

Evil, 16: Torture.Musik, 2011

Video: color, sound

Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2015.63.1

In *Evil, 16: Torture.Musik* I animated excerpts from “Disco Inferno,” a 2005 article in *The Nation* by Moustafa Bayoumi. I found this article to be a key and cogent text in a then-developing body of reportage and scholarship devoted to the military use of music and sound as a weapon, a form of psychological manipulation, or torture. [This work’s] soundtrack features a playlist of songs or artists documented as being used in U.S. psy-ops and torture programs. –Tony Cokes

Robert Mangold, American, b. 1937

Distorted Circle within a Polygon II, 1972

Acrylic and graphite on shaped canvas

The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th-Century American Art 73.018

I’m never sure how I got into doing the circle paintings. One story I tell, . . . Sylvia [Plimack Mangold] and I spent a summer at Al Held’s farm in Boiceville, New York. . . . I was sitting there looking at curved hills and I started doing some funny kind of landscape works that had a slightly atmospheric rectangular top and then a curved bottom. I think it may have come from that summer where I was just looking at that space in nature, but when I got back to the city I started working with a compass curve, in a sense, and did a series of paintings that were parts of circles, a half-circle broken in different ways. –Robert Mangold



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

The idea for this piece came about during a four-week residency in India. . . . As happened in India with tea, our own realities are, more and more, co-opted, repacked, and sent back to us with predigested meaning; they are defined by the media. Like the British Empire before, now corporations control the news, and therefore history. The sensual materials, like the smell of tea, were meant to address the subtlety of corporate co-option. –Tania Bruguera



Fia Backström, Swedish, b. 1970
Socially Organized Appearance, 2009
Photograph mounted to aluminum, 30 adhesive decals
Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez 2017.19.5

This work includes a stock image of these incredibly white people, in skin tone, clothes, and setting. The title is from Guy Debord's 1967 book *The Society of the Spectacle*. Michael Taussig's *What Color is the Sacred?* (2009) is also related, how everything colorful has been deemed exotic and "other."

This work considers the difference between the U.S. [the United States] and "US," whether as US the consumers or U.S. the nation. With this current regime, we are back to an understanding that seems to eerily correlate to this image in its total fetishism of the exclusivity of whiteness. The stickers attach to the wall so that the piece has no autonomy, but the whiteness of the wall and the people is bound to a larger structure. –Fia Backström



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David Allyn, American, b. 1972, (RISD MFA 2003, Ceramics)
General Electric Building Platter, 2015
Porcelain with screen print
Museum Purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2016.33.4

Using materials that may last thousands of years, I have taken my own steps toward preserving some of the forsaken spaces that occupy the city I call home. My hope is to create dialogue about the path of underutilized urban areas, as our culture learns to navigate the concept of adaptive reuse and the growing tendency towards renewed urbanism. With the trend in capitalism being to simply erase our history and build something new, I believe that developing a conversation in which we reimagine the habitat we create and honestly investigate why we do so is both worth our time and vital to our survival. –David Allyn



Sage Sohier, American, b. 1954
Bill and Ric, with Ric's daughter Kate, San Francisco, February 1987,
from the series At Home with Themselves: Same-sex Couples in 1980s
America 1987
Gelatin silver print
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2015.87.2

I began this project in 1986 because the advent of AIDS had led me to think about the prevalence, variety, and longevity of gay and lesbian relationships — the opposite of the promiscuity that was getting so much play in the press. My ambition was to make pictures that challenged and moved people and that were interesting both visually and psychologically. In the 1980s, many same-sex relationships were still discreet or a bit hidden. It was a time when many gay men were dying of AIDS, which made a particularly poignant backdrop for the project.

I was interested in how, as a culture, we weren't used to looking at two men touching, and was struck by the visual novelty yet total ordinariness of these same-sex relationships. –Sage Sohier



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Shimon Attie, American, b. 1957

Almstadtstrasse 5 (formerly Gendaiierstrasse 24): Former Jewish residence and hat shop, ca. 1930, from the series The Writing on the Wall, Berlin, Germany 1993

Color chromogenic print

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2001.5



For *The Writing on the Wall* project, I slide projected portions of pre-World War II photographs of Jewish street life in Berlin onto the same or nearby addresses where the photos were originally taken 60 years earlier. By using slide projection on location, fragments of the past were thus introduced into the visual field of the present. Thus parts of long-destroyed Jewish community life were visually simulated, momentarily recreated. The projections were visible to street traffic, neighborhood residents, and passersby. –Shimon Attie

Robert Arneson, American, 1930-1992

The Blessed John N. Neumann, 1976

Glazed ceramic

Gift of Richard Brown Baker 81.290



Everyone who breathes, high and low, educated and ignorant, young and old, man and woman, has a mission, has a work. We are not sent into this world for nothing; we are not born at random; we are not here that we may go to bed at night and get up in the morning, toil for our bread, eat and drink, laugh and joke, sin when we have a mind, and reform when we are tired of sinning, rear a family and die. God sees every one of us; He creates every soul for a purpose.

–John Nepomucene Neumann (American, 1811–1860), Roman Catholic priest and the first and only American citizen canonized as a saint

David Allyn, American, b. 1972, (RISD MFA 2003, Ceramics)

Municipal Maintenance Building Platter, 2015

Porcelain with screen print

Museum Purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2016.33.3



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David Allyn, American, b. 1972, (RISD MFA 2003, Ceramics)
Industrial Trust Building Platter, 2015
Porcelain with screen print
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2016.33.2

Using materials that may last thousands of years, I have taken my own steps toward preserving some of the forsaken spaces that occupy the city I call home. My hope is to create dialogue about the path of underutilized urban areas, as our culture learns to navigate the concept of adaptive reuse and the growing tendency towards renewed urbanism. With the trend in capitalism being to simply erase our history and build something new, I believe that developing a conversation in which we reimagine the habitat we create and honestly investigate why we do so is both worth our time and vital to our survival. –David Allyn



Allora & Calzadilla
Jennifer Allora, American, b.1974
Guillermo Calzadilla, American, b. Cuba, b.1971
Land Mark (Foot Print), *Land Mark2001*
Color chromogenic print
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2005.18.2

We worked in collaboration with various activist groups involved with the land-reclamation actions in the disputed U.S. Navy bomb-testing range (in Vieques, Puerto Rico). Initially we designed custom-made shoe soles for the protestors to use during civil-disobedience actions. The images on the bottom of the shoes were chosen by each individual user and depicted territories (geographical, bodily, linguistic, and so on) that functioned as counter-representations of the site. The marks made onto the terrain--indexes of bodily presence and imagery of alternative aspirations--resulted in a collective portrait of this diverse constellation of individuals who mutually gathered for this common purpose. – Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla



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Faig Ahmed, Azerbaijani, b.1982

Wave Function, 2016

Hand-knotted wool

Museum purchase: Museum Works of Art Fund and Museum property, by exchange 2017.40

We believe in a stable world which is based on spiritual culture. And talking about culture and its products, we assume a long and complex process of human relationships. This process can drastically change at any moment. Substance seems stable as long as it is interacting and could be measured, but there is always the probability of an instantaneous change in a particle-wave and space-time. If something has changed inside, it will change outside as well. Unity consists of the stability of the processes undergoing in chaos. —Faig Ahmed



Duane Slick, American (Meskwaki/Ho-Chunk), b. 1961, (RISD Faculty 1995-present, Painting and Printmaking)

Oration at Dawn, 2005

Acrylic on linen

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2005.111

In narrative traditions, to tell the story of tragedy, one must always begin by telling the ending first. I once believed that the weight of such expectations functioned as a cultural given for the artist of Native American descent. Its rules stated that we cry for a vision and place ourselves in a single grand narrative of history and representation. . . .

But the laughter of Coyote saturated and filled our daily lives. It echoed through the lecture halls of histories and it was so powerful and it was so distracting that I forgot my place in linear time and now I work from an untraceable present. —Duane Slick



Yinka Shonibare, MBE, British, b.1962

Un Ballo in Maschera (Courtiers V), 2004

Three mannequins on glass bases, Dutch wax-printed cotton fabric, leather shoes

Richard Brown Baker Fund for Contemporary British Art 2005.52

On the one hand, the masquerade is about ambiguity, but on the other hand—and you could take the masquerade festivals in Venice and Brazil as examples—it involves a moment when the working classes could play at being members of the aristocracy for a day, and



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vice versa. We're talking about power within society, relations of power.

As a black person in this context, I can create fantasies of empowerment in relation to white society, even if historically that equilibrium or equality really hasn't arrived yet. It's like the carnival itself, where a working-class person can occupy the position of master. . . . So the carnival in this sense is a metaphor for the way that transformation can take place.

This is something that art is able to do quite well, because it's a space of transformation, where you can go beyond the ordinary. —Yinka Shonibare

Liz Collins, American, b. 1968, (RISD BFA 1991; MFA 1999; RISD Faculty 2003-2013)

Gary Graham, American, b. 1969

Griz, American

Pride dress, From the collection Seven Deadly Sins Series 2003

Cotton, synthetic fiber, wool; plain weave, machine knit-grafted

Gift of Liz Collins and Gary Graham 2008.75.1

I wanted people to think about the American flag and to see it defaced on the ground, walked on, as a way to express my pain surrounding the contemporaneous war in Iraq and to consider the ramifications and meaning of patriotism gone awry.

My work is materially and process driven, and the fabric that I make, manipulate, or embellish is at the core of my process. In this piece I was motivated not only by the act and history of knitting itself (one richly intertwined with gender and labor), but the emotional and physical experiences of queerness. Although it seems chaotic, the process is tightly structured and technically rigorous at its core. —Liz Collins



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Hank Willis Thomas, American, b. 1976
Kandace Fields
Negroes to be Sold, 2009
Laser-cut relief print on paper
Gift of the Brandywine Workshop and Archives, Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania 2014.66.41

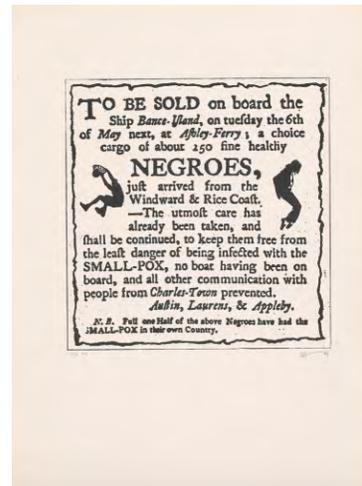
Black bodies were spectacles in slave markets and on lynching trees and whipping posts. They are spectacles in the NCAA, NBA, NFL drafts, and combines. Their ancestors may have worked the cotton and tobacco fields that later became football fields. Their ancestors may have been lynched.

I am really trying to draw people out to talk about these very likely possibilities, so that we can think more critically about the present moment. Exploitation is what our country was founded on. It's the American way. We should be more upfront about it. The NCAA is a multi-billion-dollar business built primarily off of the free labor of descendents of slaves. What a bargain! —Hank Willis Thomas

Elizabeth Duffy, American, b. Japan, b. 1962
Beth Brandon, American, b. 1982
Maximum Security, 50 States: Rhode Island, 2018
Silkscreen
2018.13

I began the *Maximum Security* project in the tumultuous summer of 2016, when President Obama was bringing mass incarceration into the public conversation, just before the subsequent election forcibly reminded us of the responsibilities that come with freedom. The neo-Gothic prison seen in this paper is part of the structures of labor, power, trade, and exchange that developed during the Industrial Revolution, alongside textile mills, schools, and hospitals. By inserting the ACI [Adult Correctional Institution in Cranston, Rhode Island] into this pastoral tole, I point out the malignant system that undermines our common humanity. . . .

By altering wallpaper patterns, I am pointing to the societal debt we all pay in investing in this vast but mostly hidden system. —Elizabeth Duffy



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David Levinthal, American, b. 1949

Untitled, from the series *Mein Kampf* 1993-1994

Dye diffusion print (Polaroid Polacolor ER Land Film)

Anonymous gift 2017.32.2.5

I think that the defining idea behind my work is to try and get the viewer to enter the world between fantasy and reality. When you can create something so believable out of toys it starts to call into question what is fantasy and what is reality in our minds. –David Levinthal

Guerrilla Girls, American, 1985

Guerrilla Girls' code of ethics for art museums., 1989

Offset lithograph on wove paper

Gift of Jan Howard in honor of Guerrilla Girls' 25th Birthday

2010.79.2

We believe that some discrimination is conscious and some is unconscious and that we can embarrass the perpetrators into changing their ways. We don't do posters and actions that simply point to something and say, "This is bad," like a lot of political art. We try to twist an issue around and present it in a way that hasn't been seen before, using facts and humor, in the hope of changing people's minds. We use information in a surprising, transgressive manner to prove our case. We take on issues we are passionate about, but we don't always succeed. If we don't come up with something we think is worth putting out there, we don't. We've never been systematic; we just go after one target after another. There are plenty to choose from. –Guerrilla Girls



Guerrilla Girls, American, 1985

When racism and sexism are no longer fashionable, what will your art collection be worth, 1989

Offset lithograph on wove paper

Gift of Jan Howard in honor of Guerrilla Girls' 25th Birthday

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Pia Camil, Mexican, b. 1980
The little dog laughed, 2014
Hand-dyed and hand-stitched canvas
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2016.3.a-z



The curtain works are abstractions from billboards. In Mexico, the urban landscape has been taken over by billboards and they have become totally integrated into the landscape. For me, it was very important to begin to document and start noting where there were spaces—I call them the blind spots of this mass culture where the eye could actually rest. I began to get more involved and interested in them. I like the sense of overuse and reuse of the panels of the billboards. I have spoken to other people in different countries and it seems only in Mexico are they built this way in a vertical panel fashion, where they get reshuffled and recycled.

I wanted this curtain to work as a screen, wherever you were positioned it wasn't this flat thing on the wall but it would block the space, you could be either inside or outside the curtain. –Pia Camil

Dawoud Bey, American, b. 1953
Imani Richardson and Carolyn Mickel, from the portfolio Birmingham: Four Girls, Two Boys 2014
Gelatin silver print
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2017.11.6



September 15, 1963. On this day, in Birmingham, Alabama, the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church killed four young African-American girls: Addie Mae Collins, aged fourteen, Denise McNair, aged eleven, Carole Robertson, aged fourteen, and Cynthia Wesley, aged fourteen. Several hours later, two young African-American boys: Johnny Robinson, aged sixteen, and Virgil Ware, aged thirteen, were shot and killed in related violent incidents.

The portraits were made in Birmingham over five months in two locations: the original sanctuary of Bethel Baptist Church and the

Birmingham Museum of Art. During the Civil Rights era, Bethel Baptist

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Church was the heart of The Movement. . . . My second location, the Birmingham Museum of Art, founded in 1951, was for many years a segregated public institution, allowing black visitors only one day a week, on Negro Day. I wanted to use both the communal space of the black church and the public galleries of the formerly segregationist museum as the social and historical context in which to make these photographs. –Dawoud Bey

Curator's note: Bey took these images in 2014. Each pair of photos includes a portrait of a child who was the same age as one of the 1963 bombing victims, coupled with a portrait of an adult who was the age that child would have been in 2014, had they not been killed.

Dawoud Bey, American, b. 1953

Braxton McKinney and Lavon Thomas, from the portfolio Birmingham:

Four Girls, Two Boys 2014

Gelatin silver print

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2017.11.5

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The portraits were made in Birmingham over five months in two locations: the original sanctuary of Bethel Baptist Church and the Birmingham Museum of Art. During the Civil Rights era, Bethel Baptist Church was the heart of The Movement. . . . My second location, the Birmingham Museum of Art, founded in 1951, was for many years a segregated public institution, allowing black visitors only one day a week, on Negro Day. I wanted to use both the communal space of the black church and the public galleries of the formerly segregationist museum as the social and historical context in which to make these photographs. –Dawoud Bey

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Dawoud Bey, American, b. 1953

Mary Parker and Caela Cowan, from the portfolio Birmingham: Four Girls, Two Boys 2014

Gelatin silver print

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2017.11.4

September 15, 1963. On this day, in Birmingham, Alabama, the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church killed four young African-American girls: Addie Mae Collins, aged fourteen, Denise McNair, aged eleven, Carole Robertson, aged fourteen, and Cynthia Wesley, aged fourteen. Several hours later, two young African-American boys: Johnny Robinson, aged sixteen, and Virgil Ware, aged thirteen, were shot and killed in related violent incidents.

The portraits were made in Birmingham over five months in two locations: the original sanctuary of Bethel Baptist Church and the Birmingham Museum of Art. During the Civil Rights era, Bethel Baptist Church was the heart of The Movement. . . . My second location, the Birmingham Museum of Art, founded in 1951, was for many years a segregated public institution, allowing black visitors only one day a week, on Negro Day. I wanted to use both the communal space of the black church and the public galleries of the formerly segregationist museum as the social and historical context in which to make these photographs. –Dawoud Bey

Curator's note: Bey took these images in 2014. Each pair of photos includes a portrait of a child who was the same age as one of the 1963 bombing victims, coupled with a portrait of an adult who was the age that child would have been in 2014, had they not been killed.



Dawoud Bey, American, b. 1953

Fred Stewart and Tyler Collins, from the portfolio Birmingham: Four Girls, Two Boys 2014

Gelatin silver print

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2017.11.3

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Dawoud Bey, American, b. 1953

Betty Selvage and Faith Speights, from the portfolio Birmingham: Four Girls, Two Boys 2014

Gelatin silver print

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2017.11.2



September 15, 1963. On this day, in Birmingham, Alabama, the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church killed four young African-American girls: Addie Mae Collins, aged fourteen, Denise McNair, aged eleven, Carole Robertson, aged fourteen, and Cynthia Wesley, aged fourteen. Several hours later, two young African-American boys: Johnny Robinson, aged sixteen, and Virgil Ware, aged thirteen, were shot and killed in related violent incidents.

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Dawoud Bey, American, b. 1953
*Mathes Manafee and Cassandra Griffin, from the portfolio
Birmingham: Four Girls, Two Boys*2014
Gelatin silver print
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2017.11.1



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2x4 Inc., American
Michael Rock, American, b. 1959, (RISD MFA 1984, Graphic Design)
Susan Sellers, American, b.1967, (RISD BFA 1989, Graphic Design)
Georgianna Stout, American, b.1967, (RISD BFA 1989, Graphic Design)
Knoll International, Inc., American, 1938-
*Pause Wallcovering, from the Chatter collection*2005
Vinyl
Gift of KnollTextiles 2015.13



The *Chatter* collection creates a pattern out of simple, mundane graphic elements, [and is] composed entirely of punctuation. *Pause* uses commas and periods, **Plus** is made entirely of plus signs, and *Command* uses only exclamation marks to make repeating patterns.
-2 X 4 Inc.

RISD MUSEUM

An-My Lê, American, b. Vietnam, b. 1960
29 Palms: Corporal Hoepper, 2003-2004
Gelatin silver print
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2007.7.1

The day the [Iraq] war started I was extremely distraught. I thought about all the consequences of war, the young men and women shipping out and the effect it would have on them, their families, and their communities. I was still trying to deal with what happened to me three decades ago in Vietnam. Now a new set of young people were being sent abroad and given a complicated history they are going to have to deal with for the rest of their lives.

I tried to make some pictures that day, but I just couldn't find anything. . . . When I saw photographs of the Marines training in the high desert near Joshua Tree National Park, I got impatient. I decided to just go to California. —An-My Lê



Allora & Calzadilla
Jennifer Allora, American, b.1974
Guillermo Calzadilla, American, b. Cuba, b.1971
Land Mark (Foot Prints), *Land Mark*2001
Color chromogenic print
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2005.18.1

We worked in collaboration with various activist groups involved with the land-reclamation actions in the disputed U.S. Navy bomb-testing range (in Vieques, Puerto Rico). Initially we designed custom-made shoe soles for the protestors to use during civil-disobedience

actions. The images on the bottom of the shoes were chosen by each individual user and depicted territories (geographical, bodily, linguistic, and so on) that functioned as counter-representations of the site. The marks made onto the terrain--indexes of bodily presence and imagery of alternative aspirations--resulted in a collective portrait of this diverse constellation of individuals who mutually gathered for this common purpose. — Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla



RISD MUSEUM

Roberto Lugo, American, b. 1981
A Century of Black Lives Mattering, 2016
Porcelain with enamel and glaze
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2018.14

This piece was inspired by the recent losses of Black lives through controversial means. Through these tragedies, the statement “Black Lives Matter” was made popular and has created conversation about race equality in contemporary society. . . .

By creating an urn, I am creating an object that will live beyond current events. In the same way that royalty has been given tribute in the past, I am paying homage to these lives by placing their images on this piece. My claim is that all of humanity is equal. Rather than take a side, my work hopes to appeal to reverence for all lives lost regardless of race, in the belief that we are all kings. —Roberto Lugo



Ann Hamilton, American, b. 1956
malediction, 1991
Wood table and chair, enameled metal bowl, wicker casket, bread-dough mouth molds, recorded voice on compact disc
Mary B. Jackson Fund and Gift of George H. Waterman III 2002.1

Containing the quality, pace, and tone of an internal dialogue, the sound of a voice reading Walt Whitman’s **Song of Myself** and **The Body Electric** [both 1855] was that of a voice reading softly to oneself, and the text was perceived as recounting to oneself, as if to remember, rather than as performative projection.

Seated at a table between a bowl of raw dough and a basket used at the turn of the century to deliver bodies to the morgue, I slowly stuffed a piece of dough into my mouth until it took the form and impression of the mouth’s hollow space. The dough containing the impression of this inner orifice was then placed in the bottom of the casket. The activity, repeated slowly, half-filled the basket over the course of two weeks. —Ann Hamilton



RISD MUSEUM

assume vivid astro focus, American, founded 2001
The ecstasy of pope benedict (curtain), 2005
Anodized aluminum
Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez 2017.19.4

We had the pope chain curtain . . . at the entrance of our [disco-themed installation]. That year the previous pope, Benedict XVI, had affirmed that homosexuality was a serious sin comparable to rape. For this reason we decided to create a chain curtain (the material also relating to self-repenting Christian practices) with an image of a saluting pope being attacked by an upside-down rainbow triangle.

This installation was an homage to the history of clubs and dance music and their close relationship to the birth of gay rights, at least in America. Clubs were not just simply hedonistic heavens, but spaces for unity within that community. —assume vivid astro focus

Part of *homocrap #1*, a multimedia installation featured in *Ecstasy: In and About Altered States* Geffen Contemporary at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2005–2006

Yohji Yamamoto
Yohji Yamamoto, Japanese, b. 1943
Kimono and dress ensemble, Autumn/Winter 1995
Shibori-dyed silk plain weave (kimono); wool and nylon gauze weave with silk satin-weave trim (dress)
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2015.6.2ab

I was born in the ruin [of World War II Japan]. I had no memory about Japanese culture, because those things were all destroyed. So maybe this is my root, the ruined Tokyo.

For a long time I didn't want to touch [my native culture]—I am Japanese and I didn't want to do souvenirs. Then one day, I thought it is time to touch it and to break all my taboos. —Yohji Yamamoto



RISD MUSEUM

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



We went to see Dr. No at Forty-Second Street. It's a fantastic movie, so cool. We walked outside and somebody threw a cherry bomb right in front of us, in this big crowd. And there was blood. I saw blood on people and all over. I felt like I was bleeding all over. I saw it in the paper last week that there are more people throwing them—it's just part of the scene—and hurting people.

My show in Paris is going to be called Death in America. I'll show the electric-chair pictures and the dogs in Birmingham and car wrecks and some suicide pictures.

—Andy Warhol

Cy Twombly, American, 1929 - 2011

Untitled, 1968

Oil and crayon on canvas

The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th-Century American Art
69.060



It's more like I'm having an experience than making a picture. So I've never had anyone around. I never have. People are different, but I have to really be with no interference. And it takes me hours.

Painting a picture is a very short thing if it goes well, but the sitting and thinking. . . . I usually go off on stories that have nothing to do with the painting, and sometimes I sit in the opposite room to where I work. If I can get a good hot story I can paint better, but sometimes I'm not thinking about the painting, I'm thinking about the subject. Lots of times I'll sit in another room and then I might just go in. It takes a lot of freedom. —Cy Twombly

RISD MUSEUM

Jordan Seaberry, American, b.1989, (RISD BFA 2013, Painting)

The Wanderer, 2015

Oil and mixed media collage on canvas

Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2017.62

I hope that what this painting lacks in place, it makes up for in context. Shifting, aimless, meandering, its horizonless world is both unending and, at the same time, claustrophobic.

Any parental relationship is complicated, but the backdrop here is of a dissolving family, a dissolving horizon, a dissolving black future. Amid that, there is the determination to march forward, row, row, row. *The Wanderer*: Hieronymus Bosch, Kerry James Marshall, Iron Man comic books, slavery iconography, and Bob Ross all in equal measure. The role of the ocean in the Black psyche, the role of Christianity in that ocean's slave trade, and the role of fantasy in the development of creative instinct all float and swim together in a borderless world, all the narratives equal. In the end, it's possible that we may just be treading water. —Jordan Seaberry



Joyce J. Scott, American, b. 1948

Spirit Siamese Twins, 2000-2002

Beads, wire, glass, wood, and thread

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2005.30

I believe it's about the importance of twins as luck, good especially (such as in Africa), or bad (such as in Korea). Something is being elevated just because they exist differently. They may hold no other powers. —Joyce J. Scott



RISD MUSEUM

Jessi Reaves, American, b. 1986, (RISD BFA 2010, Painting)

Bad House Shelf, 2016

Plywood, foam, leather, driftwood, plyboo, sawdust, marker, hand forged rails

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2016.51

The large black bolster is a readymade that sits within this piece. It's the headrest from a Percival Lafer sofa that I disassembled. I looked at it vertically and started building around it—like a column. It was structural and organizing.

This is one of the first times I was playing with the idea that recognizable elements of furniture would be trapped within these shelves/sculptures. The headrest isn't completely obvious as its former self, but it has the kind of sexual feeling of black leather and the quality and language of upholstery we associate with modernist furniture. Those ideas informed the title. The shelf space isn't very generous for the amount of space it takes up, and I hoped it would kind of hover in that awkward offering of functionality. —Jessi Reaves



Trevor Paglen, American, b. 1974

NSA Surveillance Base, Egelsbach, Germany, 2015

Chromogenic color print

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2015.117

A lot of what we think about as classical Western landscape photography was paid for by the military or by what was then called the Department of War, as part of what they called reconnaissance surveys.

My intention is to expand the visual vocabulary we use to “see” the U.S. intelligence community. Although the organizing logic of our nation's surveillance apparatus is invisibility and secrecy, its operations occupy the physical world. . . . If we look in the right places at the right times, we can begin to glimpse America's vast intelligence infrastructure. —Trevor Paglen



RISD MUSEUM

Michael Owen, American, b. 1967, (RISD BFA 1990, Painting)

Don't Tread on Me, 2011

Oil on PVC panel

Gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2011.103

This painting is part of a series I made while investigating the culture of so-called “Survivalists,” or “Doomsday Preppers”—people who are preparing for an imminent collapse of civilization and are storing food, water, and weapons.

I found many of the water-storage containers and much of the “gear” appealing, with their look of toughness and bright Day-Glo colors. While painting this hose, I noticed that it resembled the Gadsden flag from the time of the American Revolution. The flag and its motto, “Don’t Tread on Me,” have been appropriated by some on the American political right, including many “preppers,” so I used the motto as the title for the painting. —Michael Owen



Ree Morton, American, 1936-1977

Untitled (Signs of Love), 1976

Oil on plywood with celastic curtain

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2005.3

I was a housewife, right? I was a mother, I had children, I had a family to take care of. And [being an artist] was something I did in my extra time. The teachers would talk a lot about commitment, being *committed* to your work, and somehow that word had a lot of implications that I couldn’t accept, the kind of lifestyle that I didn’t think I wanted; that somehow if you are an artist you have to behave a certain way, you had a certain way of looking at the world that I didn’t think had anything to do with me, so I would just never be committed, I would never say that I was an artist. I would say that I did paintings, that I was a housewife, and that this was where my interest was. And I was going to school. I would call myself a student, but it was a long time before I would say I was an artist. —Ree Morton



RISD MUSEUM

James Montford, American, b. 1951
Holocaust Blankets with Smallpox, 2015
Cotton and wool blankets, vinyl lettering
Museum purchase: gift of Joseph A. Chazan, MD 2015.100

Holocaust Blankets with Smallpox is part of a larger body of work focused on the notion of who “owns” the use of the word holocaust. . . . I see this as being part of a longstanding tradition in art of addressing inequality, injustice, and intolerance, reaching as far back as Goya’s time-honored painting **The Third of May 1808**. As a Black Indian, the oppression I have experienced is due, in part, to the ongoing power we subscribe to hate words. I created this work to present a multilayered approach to the demystification of racial, ethnic, and gender-based discrimination.
—James Montford



Tina Barney, American, b.1945
The Reflection, 1994
Chromogenic print
Gift of Kristina Olsen 2010.14

I sometimes get commissioned to photograph families, and they see the results and say, “Oh, I look terrible.” And that’s when I realize the difference between the people I choose and the people who choose me. I am close to these people. I wasn’t in the first years because I wanted to show the interiors. But then each year I got physically closer because I wanted the picture to feel more personal. But wherever I’m photographing, I still feel as if I’m looking from a distance. I’m really a voyeur, examining everything. —Tina Barney



Bob and Roberta Smith, English, b. 1963
Tate Modern, 2008
Signwriter's paint on board
Richard Brown Baker Fund for Contemporary British Art 2009.10

A lot of what I do is to irritate people, really, and to make them think about things in different ways. . . . I was thinking it would be great to say actually that Tate Modern is as important as the National Health Service.



Society wants you to think that art is a nice-to-have and not a must-have. So governments and funders fund things, because they think art is about the excessive. But actually art is very important, because everything is made—these chairs, this microphone, the floor, your

RISD MUSEUM

shoes, my hat—by a human being. Art is a huge conversation between human beings who are alive, of the past, and human beings in the future, who will look at this after I'm dead, hopefully. —Bob and Roberta Smith