

#### Bodies of Evidence: Contemporary Perspectives, July 1, 2005-September 25, 2005

This exhibition grew out of a desire to highlight work by women of color from The RISD Museum's collection and to display the many recent acquisitions in this area. After surveying the holdings, it was determined that the most cohesive presentation could be assembled from art created since 1960 and focused thematically on the body. The exhibition's title also refers to the show as a testimony to the creative vitality of women of color, a group whose work has increasingly been recognized internationally as an invigorating presence.

In many examples the artists use their own bodies as poignant agents of expression. Marta María Pérez Bravo photographs herself in staged ritualistic performances referencing Cuban Santería and Palo Monte religions. Renée Stout alludes to the Haitian voodoo deity Erzulie as she poses in a photographic narrative of unrequited love. Annu Palakunnathu Matthew mimics the stance of Native Americans portrayed in late-19th and early 20th-century photographs to expose constructions of "otherness" and compares these historical portrayals to those of her East Indian cultural birthright. Conceptual artist and philosopher Adrian Piper documents her existence over the course of a summer in response to a metaphysical text that led her to question her own physical embodiment. Her nearly impenetrable photographs are analogous to the challenges of understanding people simply by looking at their exteriors. In many images she is naked, metaphorically stripped to her core being, and by so presenting herself in both her intellectual and physical essence, she confronts innumerable gender issues as well. In her video, performance artist Patty Chang presents the unpleasant and intimate act of consuming an onion, which is passed back and forth between her mouth and the most unexpected partners in a stark portrayal of the physical and emotional bonds of family.

Iona Rozeal Brown and Kara Walker use stylized representations of the figure to comment on social issues. Brown draws upon the tradition of late-18th-century Japanese woodblock prints to portray the contemporary phenomenon of ganguro – Japanese youths who mimic hip-hop audio artists by darkening their skin and coiling their hair into dreadlocks. Like Brown, Walker appropriates an historical genre to depict her characters. Using the familiar 19th-century silhouette, she relates explosive visual narratives that reveal unspoken truths of racial and sexual taboos. By embedding charged imagery within the polite tradition of the silhouette, she greatly enhances the potent and seductive power of her art.

Alison Saar, Lorna Simpson, Joyce Scott, and Ana Mendieta work with generalized representations to speak to historical and cultural concerns. Saar's striking woodcut *Ulysses* appropriates a classic Greek myth to transpose the theme of resistance and perseverance into an African-American context. Her powerful clothed male figure, hanging from his feet, conjures images of lynching and defenselessness, yet his calm composure defies his situation and his oppressors. Lorna Simpson's photographic print Counting gives the viewer quite limited information – a Black woman seen from behind, a smoke house and slave quarter, and a coil of braids along with numerical references to time and counting – that nonetheless conjures the plight of African Americans past and present. Critics have noted that Simpson's coded visual language is consistent with the tradition of African-American musical forms, among them spirituals and blues. Joyce Scott's dazzling and mysterious



beaded sculpture *Spirit Siamese Twins* mixes references to many cultures as she literally threads symbolic imagery into her female figure. The twins in the piece are Mexican wooden skeletons used in Day of the Dead celebrations, but the reference garners rich meaning from contexts for double births embedded within all cultures. The skeleton, a common image in her work, appears again the monoprint, wherein she addresses the vulnerability of children. Ana Mendieta, too, borrows freely from many cultures. An influential performance and earthwork artist, she created *Furrows* in 1984 during an artist residency at RISD. Formerly installed in the space where the Museum's Farago Wing now stands, Furrows outlined the shape of an earth goddess in one ton of sod. Drawing inspiration from ancient cultures that she believed to possess knowledge of and respect for nature, her work points to the association of the female gender with the fecund earth.

Milagros de la Torre and Raquel Paiewonsky use objects as stand-ins for human bodies. De la Torre presents feminine accoutrements – a dress, stockings, a hanger and shoes – in a series of photogravures printed in the negative on delicate paper. Her treatment suggests that these are the ghostly remnants of a fragile life. Paiewonsky's "dress," entitled \*Parida (Birthed)\*, is made up of small plastic and rubber baby dolls, a far larger number of which are white- rather than brownskinned, reflecting the variety of dolls available for purchase in Santo Domingo. The piece comments on deep-seated prejudices within Dominican culture.

Carrie Mae Weems and Howardena Pindell reference the body in more abstract ways. Weems's *A Place for Him, A Place for Her* was inspired by observing male and female references in the architecture of Djenne, Mali, on her first trip to West Africa. In this work she pairs stunning photographs of the Islamic-influenced architecture with her own text, an intermingling of creation myths with her interpretations of the male/female dynamic. Pindell's drawing of circles and ellipses connected by lines on graph paper, suggests some kind of scientific or measured notation consistent with the work of her minimalist and conceptualist peers. The circle is also associated with a profound childhood memory. While traveling to visit her grandmother in Hamilton, Ohio, her family stopped at a local eatery, where Pindell was served root beer in large glass mug with a prominent red dot on the bottom. Her father explained to her that the dot indicated dishware reserved for serving African-Americans.

In several of the works, memory helps to portray individuals. Donna Bruton (current RISD Faculty), in homage to her father, paints a psychological landscape filled with remembrances of comfort and stability in *Me and My Dad*. Yamamoto's *Eyes, Dark* presents a series of fifteen details of romantic longing in a photographic composition that evokes erotic memories of a girlhood friendship. Milhazes's artist's book explodes like a kaleidoscope of forms and colors. The book is a celebration of her relationship with her home, Rio de Janeiro, and in it she responds to the lyrics of twelve traditional and contemporary Brazilian songs that left their mark on her.

Bodies of Evidence: Contemporary Perspectives does not include all women of color represented in the Museum's collection. The show is a snapshot of RISD's collection at this moment and highlights its strengths and weaknesses in order to provide direction for continued acquisitions in this area. It is also hoped that the exhibition succeeds in bringing many important artists to the attention of the Southeastern New England community.

Fo Wilson RISD Graduate Student, Furniture Design, 2005



The exhibition was conceived by James Montford, the Museum's Coordinator of Community Programs; and co-curated by Fo Wilson and Jan Howard, Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs. We are grateful for the suggestions of our advisory group and those community members who have contributed "Footnote" responses to the works in the exhibition.

#### **CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION**

Lorna Simpson, American, b. 1960 *Counting,* 1991 Photogravure and screenprint Walter H. Kimball Fund 1993.001



Alison Saar, American, b. 1956 *Ulysses,* 1994 Color woodcut Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 1995.016



Kara Walker, American, b. 1969, (RISD MFA 1994, Printmaking) Landfall Press, Inc.

The Beginning, The Means to an End...A Shadow Drama in Five Acts, 1995

Etching with aquatint

Walter H. Kimball Fund 1996.1A



Kara Walker, American, b. 1969, (RISD MFA 1994, Printmaking) Landfall Press, Inc. The Hunt, The Means to an End...A Shadow Drama in Five Acts, 1995 Etching with aquatint Walter H. Kimball Fund 1996.1B

Kara Walker, American, b. 1969, (RISD MFA 1994, Printmaking) Landfall Press, Inc. The Chase, The Means to an End...A Shadow Drama in Five Acts, 1995 Etching with aquatint

Walter H. Kimball Fund 1996.1C

Kara Walker, American, b. 1969, (RISD MFA 1994, Printmaking)
Landfall Press, Inc.

The Plunge, The Means to an End...A Shadow Drama in Five Acts,
1995
Etching with aquatint
Walter H. Kimball Fund 1996.1D

Kara Walker, American, b. 1969, (RISD MFA 1994, Printmaking) Landfall Press, Inc. The End, The Means to an End...A Shadow Drama in Five Acts, 1995 Etching with aquatint Walter H. Kimball Fund 1996.1E

Kara Walker, American, b. 1969, (RISD MFA 1994, Printmaking)
Peter Norton
Typecraft, Inc.
Freedom -- A Fable: A Curious Interpretation of the Wit of a Negress in
Troubled Times, 1997
Pop-up laser-cut book
Anonymous gift 1997.107



Carrie Mae Weems, American, b. 1953 A Place for Him, A Place for Her, Africa Series, 1993 Gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 1997.40A



Carrie Mae Weems, American, b. 1953 A Place for Him, A Place for Her, Africa Series, 1993 Screenprint text Mary B. Jackson Fund 1997.40B



Carrie Mae Weems, American, b. 1953 A Place for Him, A Place for Her, Africa Series, 1993 Gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 1997.40C



Carrie Mae Weems, American, b. 1953 A Place for Him, A Place for Her, Africa Series, 1993 Screenprint text Mary B. Jackson Fund 1997.40D



Donnamaria Bruton, American, 1954 - 2012, (RISD Faculty 1992-2012, Painting)

Me and My Dad, 1996

Acrylic on masonite

William H. Kimball Fund 1997.86



Marta Maria Perez Bravo, Cuban, b. 1959 Para la entrega [For the Offering], 1994 Gelatin silver print Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Barnet Fain 1998.16.2

"The reveal the spiritual richness of these religious manifestations by means of a connection between the physical and the imaginary, the personal and the mythical, perhaps with an ambiguous result for the spectator, who will be confronted with a different approach regarding our religious and popular traditions." (see file – "Cuba: Siempre Viva" 1997)



Ana Mendieta, American, 1948-1985 Furrows, 1984 Gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 1998.4.2

"My art is grounded in the belief in one universal energy which runs through everything; from insect to man, from man to specter to plant and from plant to galaxy."



Ana Mendieta, American, 1948-1985 Furrows, 1984 Gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 1998.4.3

"My art is grounded in the belief in one universal energy which runs through everything; from insect to man, from man to specter to plant and from plant to galaxy."



Ana Mendieta, American, 1948-1985 Furrows, 1984 gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 1998.4.4

"My art is grounded in the belief in one universal energy which runs through everything; from insect to man, from man to specter to plant and from plant to galaxy."



Ana Mendieta, American, 1948-1985 Furrows, 1984 gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 1998.4.5

"My art is grounded in the belief in one universal energy which runs through everything; from insect to man, from man to specter to plant and from plant to galaxy."



Marta Maria Perez Bravo, Cuban, b. 1959

Todo lo tengo, todo me falta [I Have Everything, I Have Nothing],
1997

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Barnet Fain 1999.12

"The reveal the spiritual richness of these religious manifestations by means of a connection between the physical and the imaginary, the personal and the mythical, perhaps with an ambiguous result for the spectator, who will be confronted with a different approach regarding our religious and popular traditions."



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961
Dusica Kirjakovic
Courtney Healey
Lower East Side Print Shop
Untitled (glove/hair), Eyes, Dark, 1999
Photogravure
Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4A



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961
Dusica Kirjakovic
Courtney Healey
Lower East Side Print Shop
Untitled (back of head), Eyes, Dark, 1999
Photogravure
Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4B



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961
Dusica Kirjakovic
Courtney Healey
Lower East Side Print Shop *Untitled (2 glasses), Eyes, Dark,* 1999
Photogravure
Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4C



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961 Dusica Kirjakovic Courtney Healey Lower East Side Print Shop *Untitled (teeth), Eyes, Dark,* 1999 Photogravure Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4D



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961
Dusica Kirjakovic
Courtney Healey
Lower East Side Print Shop
Untitled (hair under glass), Eyes, Dark, 1999
Photogravure
Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4E



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961
Dusica Kirjakovic
Courtney Healey
Lower East Side Print Shop
Untitled (belly button), from the portfolio, Eyes, Dark, 1999
Photogravure
Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4F



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961
Dusica Kirjakovic
Courtney Healey
Lower East Side Print Shop
Untitled (reflections), Eyes, Dark, 1999
Photogravure
Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4G



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961
Dusica Kirjakovic
Courtney Healey
Lower East Side Print Shop
Untitled (2 dolls), from the portfolio, Eyes, Dark, 1999
Photogravure
Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4H



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961 Dusica Kirjakovic Courtney Healey Lower East Side Print Shop *Untitled (underarm), Eyes, Dark,* 1999 Photogravure Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.41



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961 Dusica Kirjakovic Courtney Healey Lower East Side Print Shop *Untitled (towel), Eyes, Dark,* 1999 Photogravure Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4J



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961
Dusica Kirjakovic
Courtney Healey
Lower East Side Print Shop *Untitled (2 hands), Eyes, Dark,* 1999
Photogravure
Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4K



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961 Dusica Kirjakovic Courtney Healey Lower East Side Print Shop *Untitled (rose), Eyes, Dark,* 1999 Photogravure Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4L



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961 Dusica Kirjakovic Courtney Healey Lower East Side Print Shop *Untitled (eye), Eyes, Dark,* 1999 Photogravure Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4M



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961 Dusica Kirjakovic Courtney Healey Lower East Side Print Shop *Untitled (2 chairs), Eyes, Dark,* 1999 Photogravure Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4N



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961 Dusica Kirjakovic Courtney Healey Lower East Side Print Shop *Untitled (glove), Eyes, Dark,* 1999 Photogravure Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.40



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961 Dusica Kirjakovic Courtney Healey Lower East Side Print Shop *Untitled (pond), Eyes, Dark,* 1999 Photogravure Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4P



Lynne Yamamoto, American, 1961 Dusica Kirjakovic Courtney Healey Lower East Side Print Shop *Untitled (text), Eyes, Dark,* 1999 Screenprinted text Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.59.4Q

At that time she lived on a hill. Her house was shaded by many trees. Unlike my house it had no clutter, and when you gown on the floor it was cool. Her eyes were dark, like mine. Say down on the floor it was cool. Her eyes were dark, like mine. Say once again. When I remember her I think of the scent of eucalyptus, and the air cooling as the bus made it was us the hill.

Adrian Piper, American, b. 1948 Food for the Spirit, 1971 selenium toned gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.97.1

Searching for a better understanding of her own relationship to the art object, the cultural sphere, and to the world in general, Piper also increasingly made herself the subject of her art. Food for the Spirit, a series of fourteen black-and-white self-portraits shot with a Brownie camera, would represent a turning point for the artist. At the time she began working on the piece, she was writing a graduate course paper on Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. She became "obsessed" with Kantian thought, fasting, practicing yoga, and isolating herself. Fearful that she was losing tough with the physical world – as if she was, in fact, evaporating into a Kantian state of pure reason - she searched for ways of corporeal reassurance. "I rigged up a camera and tape recorder next to [a] mirror," Piper has written of the process of creating Food for the Spirit, "so that every time the fear of losing myself overtook me and drove me to the 'reality check' of the mirror, I was able to both record my physical appearance objectively and also record myself on tape repeating the passage in Critique that was currently driving me to self-transcendence."



Adrian Piper, American, b. 1948 Food for the Spirit, 1971 selenium toned gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.97.10



Adrian Piper, American, b. 1948 Food for the Spirit, 1971 selenium toned gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.97.11



Adrian Piper, American, b. 1948 Food for the Spirit, 1971 selenium toned gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.97.2



Adrian Piper, American, b. 1948 Food for the Spirit, 1971 selenium toned gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.97.3



Adrian Piper, American, b. 1948 Food for the Spirit, 1971 selenium toned gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.97.4



Adrian Piper, American, b. 1948 Food for the Spirit, 1971 selenium toned gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.97.5



Adrian Piper, American, b. 1948 Food for the Spirit, 1971 selenium toned gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.97.6



Adrian Piper, American, b. 1948 Food for the Spirit, 1971 selenium toned gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.97.7



Adrian Piper, American, b. 1948 Food for the Spirit, 1971 selenium toned gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.97.8



Adrian Piper, American, b. 1948 Food for the Spirit, 1971 selenium toned gelatin silver print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.97.9



Renée Stout, American, b. 1958 Red Room at Five (A), 1999 chromogenic color print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.98A

Renée Stout, American, b. 1958 Red Room at Five (B), 1999 chromogenic color print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.98B

Renée Stout, American, b. 1958 Red Room at Five (C), 1999 chromogenic color print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.98C

Renée Stout, American, b. 1958 Red Room at Five (D), 1999 chromogenic color print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.98D

Renée Stout, American, b. 1958 Red Room at Five (E), 1999 chromogenic color print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.98E











Renée Stout, American, b. 1958 Red Room at Five (F), 1999 chromogenic color print Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.98F



Joyce J. Scott, American, b. 1948 *Under His Skirt,* 2000 lithograph with hand-applied water-based ink and crayon Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2002.12



Milagros de la Torre, Peruvian, b. 1965 Sin Titulo (Untitled), 1992 Photogravure on Gampi paper Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 2003.45.1



Milagros de la Torre, Peruvian, b. 1965 Sin Titulo (Untitled), 1992 Photogravure on Gampi paper Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 2003.45.2



Milagros de la Torre, Peruvian, b. 1965 Sin Titulo (Untitled), 1992 photogravure on Gampi paper Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 2003.45.3



Milagros de la Torre, Peruvian, b. 1965 Sin Titulo (Untitled), 1992 Photogravure on Gampi paper Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 2003.45.4



Milagros de la Torre, Peruvian, b. 1965 Sin Titulo (Untitled), 1992 Photogravure on Gampi paper Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 2003.45.5





Beatriz Milhazes, Brazilian, b. 1960

Coisa Linda (Something Beautiful), 2002

Artist's book with thirty-four bound screenprints and one collage

Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 2003.47

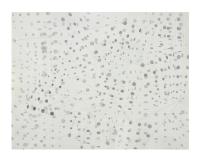


Howardena Pindell, American, b. 1943 *Space Frame*, 1968

Graphite on graph paper

Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2004.56

As a child in the 1940s, Howardena and her family would drive from Philadelphia to her grandmother's home in Hamilton, Ohio, near the border of Kentucky. Most motels would not accept blacks. Her father would bring a stove along so that they could cook their meals in the woods. It was on one of these trips that Howardena had an early experience with segregation and racism. It involved an outing to a local food stand in the southern Ohio- northern Kentucky area. Howardena asked her father why the large glass root beer mugs they were given had prominent red circles painted at the bottom. Her father then explained to her that in restaurants and food stands people of color were given separate utensils and that the red circles were used to distinguish 'their' mugs from the others. This left an indelible mark on Howardena, as years later, these red marks and dots appear in many of her current works.



Raquel Paiewonsky, Dominican, b. 1969 Parida (Birthed), from the "Vestial" series, 2001 Plastic and rubber dolls hand sewn onto fabric Mary B. Jackson Fund 2005.13

Joyce J. Scott, American, b. 1948 Spirit Siamese Twins, 2000-2002 Beads, wire, glass, wood, and thread Mary B. Jackson Fund 2005.30



Rozeal, American, b. 1966 *Untitled I (female)*, 2003 Color screenprint on paper Mary B. Jackson Fund 2005.5



Patty Chang, American, b. 1972 In Love, 2001 Two-channel video, color, silent Mary B. Jackson Fund 2005.81.1A

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, American, b. 1964

Dot/Feather, from the portfolio An Indian from India (vol. 2), 2004

Inkjet print

Gift from the Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2008.118.1

"As an immigrant, I am often questioned about where I am 'really from.' When I say that I am Indian, I often have to clarify that I am an Indian from India. In this portfolio, I look at the other 'Indian'. I find similarities how Nineteenth century photographers of Native Americans looked at what they called the primitive natives, similar to





the colonial gaze of the Nineteenth century British photographers working in India. In every culture there is the 'other.'"

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, American, b. 1964

Indian with White Man, from the portfolio An Indian from India (vol. 2), 2007

Inkjet print

Gift from the Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan
2008.118.10





Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, American, b. 1964

Types, from the portfolio An Indian from India (vol. 2), 2005

Inkjet print

Gift from the Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2008.118.2





Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, American, b. 1964

Quanah and Annu (Indian), from the portfolio An Indian from India

(vol. 2), 2004

Inkjet print

Gift from the Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2008.118.3





Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, American, b. 1964

Quanah and Annu (American), from the portfolio An Indian from India

(vol. 2), 2004

Inkjet print

Gift from the Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2008.118.4





Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, American, b. 1964 Braids/Plaits, from the portfolio An Indian from India (vol. 2), 2005 Inkjet print

Gift from the Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2008.118.5





Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, American, b. 1964

Fair/Dark, from the portfolio An Indian from India (vol. 2), 2005

Inkjet print

Gift from the Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2008.118.6





Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, American, b. 1964

Flags, from the portfolio An Indian from India (vol. 2), 2005

Inkjet print

Gift from the Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2008.118.7





Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, American, b. 1964 *Christian?*, from the portfolio *An Indian from India (vol. 2)*, 2007 Inkjet print

Gift from the Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2008.118.8





Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, American, b. 1964 *Transcultural Indian*, from the portfolio *An Indian from India (vol. 2)*, 2007

Inkjet print

Gift from the Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Chazan 2008.118.9



