Art Since 1950

Gallery 12

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ACKLAND ART MUSEUM
The University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill
101 S. Columbia Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
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Wed – Sat 10 AM – 5 PM
Sun 1 PM – 5 PM
2nd Fridays 10 AM – 9 PM
Closed Mondays & Tuesdays.
Closed July 4th, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve
Christmas Day, & New Year’s Day.
About the Art

- George Segal designed this piece to blur the boundary between art and viewer, placing the life size principal figure in front of the painting.

- The piece is based on the biblical story of Lot, who fled his home in the land of Sodom before its destruction. The separation of Lot, expressively modeled in white plaster, from the boldly defined figurative painting underscores the theme of exile as he leaves his home and wife behind. The two-dimensional figure at the left of the canvas also represents Lot.

- At the time Segal made The Legend of Lot, his art was transitioning away from his earlier work. He stopped making paintings of figures in the Abstract Expressionist style in favor of plaster-cast figures set amid actual life-sized environments.

About the Artist

1924: Born November 26 in New York
1947–49: Studied in New York at the Pratt Institute of Design and the University of New York
1949: Bought a chicken farm
1958: Made the Legend of Lot; sold his chickens and converted the farm to an art studio
1964: Focused exclusively on sculpture, rather than painting
1976: Began casting sculptures in bronze
2000: Died June 10

Chat with this work of art using ARTBOT. Instructions available at the Visitor Services desk.
About the Art

- The description of materials on the label for *Ogun*—wood, metal, and other materials—alludes succinctly to a large number of objects not often associated with works of art. They include car parts, pieces of musical instruments, fragments of dolls, cloth bags, nails, pulleys, tools, text, the motherboard of a computer, and tintype photographs.

- In this work, Renee Stout combines the twentieth-century art technique of assemblage with two African art traditions. Like a Kongo power object, or *nkisi*, *Ogun* is composed of materials appended to a central figure. Moreover, the title and the emphasis on metal materials tie it to Ogun, the Yoruba god of war and metal work.

- This sculpture responds to the constructive use of metal in tools and machines, and to its destructive use, as in the weapons of gang warfare. Stout has described it as a therapeutic means of handling pain, and as an homage to “our male ancestors so that they will give guidance to future generations of young black men.”

- The god Ogun symbolizes strength and protection, and his energy affects machines. Stout feels a family connection to this energy: her grandfathers worked in Pittsburgh steel mills, her father is a mechanic, and she uses power tools herself as a sculptor.

About the Artist

1958: Born in Junction City, KS
1980: Graduated from the Carnegie Mellon University
1985: Moved to Washington DC; began making assemblages
1993: Had a solo exhibition at the National Museum of African Art
1995: Made the Ackland’s *Ogun*
About the Art

- Barkley Hendricks sets a realistic figure against an unreal, abstract, blue field of color. The absence of any environment or accoutrements emphasizes the presence and power of Charles Harvey’s body.

- Hendricks matches the subject’s self-confident, proud pose with the title’s forceful use of a vernacular version of a traditional racial slur sometimes used by African Americans as a gesture of reclamation.

- Harvey was an acquaintance of Hendricks’ and posed for him on several occasions. Hendricks kept this painting for over thirty years, until the Ackland bought it in 2008.

About the Artist

1945: Born April 16 in Philadelphia
1967: Graduated from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
1972: Graduated from Yale University, receiving a bachelor’s and master’s degree; began teaching at Connecticut College
1975: Made the Ackland’s painting
1984-2002: Turned to photography instead of painting
2010: Retired from Connecticut College
2017: Died April 18
Julie Heffernan
American, born 1956
Self-Portrait as Dirty Princess, 2004
oil on canvas
Ackland Fund, 2005.2

About the Art

• Instead of a traditional ball gown, Julie Heffernan adorns her semi-nude body with a huge skirt composed of flowers, dead fish, and dead animals, combining elements of traditional portraiture with still life painting.

• Heffernan set this portrait in the Long Gallery at the Royal Palace in Brussels, Belgium, which she represents in shimmering splendor. Light from a glowing chandelier and ornate sconces is reflected in the mirrored doors and the polished floor.

• By presenting a royal figure standing grandly in this lavish hall and dressed in an abundance of flora and fauna, Heffernan critiques the excesses of power - both historical and contemporary - in which decisions by those in authority can foment disorder and destruction in faraway places.

About the Artist

1956: Born in Peoria, IL
1985: Graduated from Yale University with a master’s degree in painting
1992–93: Taught at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro
1997: Began teaching at Montclair State University
2004: Made the Ackland’s painting
Hung Liu
American, born in China,
born 1948
Peaches, 2002
oil on canvas
Ackland Fund, 2002.7

About the Art

• The central figure in this painting is based on a historical photograph, one of a group of photographs of Chinese prostitutes that Hung Liu discovered in a Beijing archive in 1991.

• While in some places the oil paint is noticeably thick (as in the blossom at the woman’s collar), there are also drip marks extending down the surface of the canvas, made with much thinner mixtures of paint. The drips, together with the woman’s impassive expression, convey a mood of sadness.

• The peaches and bats (often symbols for happiness) swirling around the woman’s head were inspired by an eighteenth-century ceramic plate that the artist studied at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. An image of a similar plate is printed to the right.

About the Artist

1948: Born February 17 in Changchun, Jilin Province, China
1968: Worked as a farm worker during the Cultural Revolution in China
1981: Completed graduate study at the Central Academy of Fine Arts
1984: Immigrated to the United States; attended graduate school at the University of California at San Diego
1990: Began teaching at Mills College
2002: Painted the Ackland’s Peaches
2014: Retired from Mills College
About the Art

- Boeing is rendered flatly in John Wesley’s characteristic nursery room color palette of sweet baby blues and gentle pinks. The depiction of a fleshy, fishlike airplane, propelling itself upward with tail fins rather than wings is more like a friendly character from a children’s book or cartoon than an actual airplane.

- The airplane seems to soar energetically toward the upper right, but when its nose reaches the corner, it seems to bend a little, as though it is constrained by the picture’s frame.

- Wesley is known for infusing his painting with details from his personal life. Early in his career, he worked as a draftsman for an aircraft manufacturer and later – during the 1970s and early 1980s when Boeing was made – he and his wife traveled frequently between Europe and the United States.

About the Artist

1928: Born November 25 in Los Angeles
1953: Began working as an illustrator for an aircraft manufacturer
1960: Began working in New York City as an artist
1982: Painted the Ackland’s Boeing
About the Art

• Stella Waitzkin made hundreds of cast sculptures in her lifetime. These objects filled her rooms by the time of her death, so much so that her living space had evolved into a sort of site-specific installation. Many of these sculptures were molds of books that she recreated in different colors of resin.

• Waitzkin once told poet Allen Ginsberg her opinion that “words are lies,” so it is tempting to view her continuous creation of these empty, closed tomes as an effort to render their previous falsehoods impotent.

About the Artist

1920: Born in New York City
1960s: Began to focus on books as subject matter for her art
1971: Divorced and moved to the Chelsea Hotel in New York
2003: Died in New York City
Tony Oursler
American, born 1957
Eye in the Sky, 1997
Mixed-media video installation: Sony projector, DVD, DVD player, eighteen-inch fiberglass sphere, acrylic paint, and tripod light stand
Ackland Fund, 2000.11a-b

About the Art

• Without a body or face to convey expression, a single eye, belonging to artist’s collaborator, the performance artist Mary N., compulsively watches the rapidly changing channels on a television screen that is reflected in its iris.

• By using a liquid crystal display projector, Oursler is able to show this video on a convex surface, rather than on a flat television monitor.

• One of the major themes in Oursler’s work has been the psychological effects of mass media and the visual processing of information. Watching and being watched are important topics.

• Like some strange creature from a science fiction film or surrealist dream sequence, Oursler’s disembodied eye is a metaphor for the human condition in a media-saturated age.

• The artist makes no attempt to hide the mechanics of this work.

About the Artist

1957: Born in New York
1979: Earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California
1977-1989: Created installations involving handmade video tapes, sound, and language mixed with sculptural elements
1991: Began working with LCD video projectors
1992: Exhibited work in Documenta 9 in Kassel, Germany
1997: Created Eye in the Sky
1999-2001: Exhibited work in Introjection, a mid-career survey at Williams College Museum of Art
About the Art

- In *The Squeeze*, the biomorphic form comes alive through the luminous opalescence of its colored surface. Kenneth Price’s technique was to mold the clay by hand, fire it, and then paint the surfaces with acrylic. He layered colors and then sanded the work’s skin.

- His sculpture reflects a deep appreciation for the earth’s fundamental forms in flux, like volcanic eruptions and pounding ocean waves. He presents nature’s processes in abstract and whimsical interpretations.

- Price was a noteworthy sculptor who spent much of his career exploring the possibilities of ceramic as a medium. At the time, it was a slightly unorthodox choice of material, and his successes went far in breaking down the perception that ceramicists are craftspeople rather than fine artists.

About the Artist

1935: Born in Los Angeles
1959: Completed graduate study in ceramics at Alfred University in New York
1962: Went to Japan to learn about Japanese ceramics
1991: Became chair of the Ceramics Department at the University of Southern California
1995: Made the Ackland’s *The Squeeze*
2012: Died February 24 in Taos, NM
Marc Swanson
American, born 1969
*Untitled (Looking Back Buck)*, 2004
crystals, polyurethane foam, and adhesive
Ackland Fund, 2012.11

About the Art

- Placed above eye level, *Looking Back Buck* recalls the way hunting trophies are hung on the wall. But most hunting trophies are not covered in glittering crystals, and the animal heads face forward, not back.

- A hunting trophy like this complicates the ideas of manliness often associated with such totems. There is also a hint of vulnerability in the exposed neck and head position.

- A son of a small-town New England hunter, Marc Swanson spent his twenties immersing himself in San Francisco’s gay culture scene. His artistic practice investigates the dualities inherent in these disparate life experiences.

About the Artist

1969: Born in Connecticut
1990s: Moved to San Francisco
2004: Made the Ackland’s sculpture; graduated with a Master of Fine Arts degree from Bard College in New York
2009: Commissioned to make an original, multiple-edition piece for the Norton Family Christmas Art Project
Anselm Kiefer  
German, born 1945  
March Sand, 1981  
oil and sand on photograph printed on canvas  
Lent by Barbara B. Millhouse, L2019.14

About the Art

- This is a kind of landscape painting, though more conceptual than representational. It uses a mix of conventional and unconventional media applied over an almost completely obscured photograph.

- The title refers to the Brandenburg March, or Margravate, a sandy region of the northwestern lowlands of Germany, near Berlin. This area has witnessed great military events in German history.

- A popular patriotic song of the 1920s, “March Heath, March Sand” became a favorite of various Nazi organizations under Hitler’s dictatorship.

- Kiefer’s landscape evokes disaster and catastrophe, but also alludes to the redemptive power of art. A “frame” depicted as rough-hewn wood surrounds the scene, and the sand is formed into the shape of a painter’s palette.

About the Artist

1954: Born in Donaueschingen, Germany  
1970: Studied at the Düsseldorf Academy under Joseph Beuys  
1980: Represented Germany at the Venice Biennale  
1981: First exhibition in the United States; made March Sand  
1987: Major retrospective exhibition in Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York  
1992: Relocated to France
About the Art

- Julian Stanczak employs criss-crossing lines of intense color to define a circle that floats in the center of the canvas. He derives much of the effect from the fine, hard-edged parallel lines of varying widths, a practice achieved through many different stages of applying and removing painting tape.

- This painting is a classic example of Op Art (short for optical), which was a popular movement during the 1960s. Artists, often employing a precise painting technique, experimented with geometry and color to activate the vision of the viewer. Because the visual acrobatics of Op Art were easy to recognize and respond to, it became very well-known very quickly.

About the Artist

1928: Born November 5 in Borownica, Poland
1939: Lost the use of his right arm while in a Siberian labor camp
1942-1948: Lived in a Polish refugee camp in Uganda; learned to write and paint with his left hand
1950: Moved to the United States
1956: Earned a Master of Fine Arts degree at Yale University
1957: Became a US citizen; began teaching in Cincinnati at the Art Academy
1964: Became a professor of painting at the Cleveland Institute of Art
1969: Painted the Ackland’s Glare
2017: Died March 25 in Seven Hills, OH
H. C. Westermann
American, 1922 – 1981
Vent for a Chicken House, 1967
wood, leather, and metal
National Endowment for the Arts and North Carolina Art Society Purchase Funds, 74.14.1

About the Art

- A fuller description of this work’s materials, recorded in the Museum’s files, reads as follows: “wood, metal, and leather construction with a plastic bas-relief of a log cabin, and a pen on paper drawing of a dog, affixed to interior surfaces. Cabin can be seen from top hole at front, drawing can be seen from top hole at PL [its left] side.”

- One of H.C. Westermann’s largest sculptures, this work refers to domestic architecture with its tall vertical walls and a steep pitched gabled roof. However, the artist renders the structure with contradictory elements and whimsical symbols that require interaction between the exterior and the interior.

- He built Vent for a Chicken House for his friends Mike and Marion Nevelson, who upon moving into an old chicken barn realized that their open ventilation system allowed various animals to enter their new home.

About the Artist

1922: Born December 11 in Los Angeles
1947–50: Studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago
1950: Served as a Marine in the Korean War
1955: Returned to Chicago
1967: Made the Ackland’s Vent for a Chicken House
1969: Built a house and studio in Connecticut
1981: Died November 3 in Danbury, CT
About the Art

- This figurative work by Larry Rivers combines the influences of Abstract Expressionism and Pop art and explores the tension between the two movements. The figure of the man is made up of contrasts. The expressive strokes and gray shading are in direct conflict with the matte pink and the vibrant yellow dots of the tie. A simpler work than that of his bustling collages and vivid paintings, this work encapsulates the broad movements within which Rivers worked.

- The piece is part of a portfolio, *The New York Collection for Stockholm*, which brought together 30 important American artists of the 1960s with the aim of each donating a work to a public museum. The Moderna Museet in Stockholm was selected to receive the collection of 30 pieces. To fund the collection, each artist created a lithograph or screenprint to be a part of a portfolio that could be sold to support the project.

About the Artist

1923: Born Yitzroch Loiza Grossberg in the Bronx
1940: Began a career as a professional jazz saxophonist and changed his name to Larry Rivers
1944: Studied music theory and composition at the Julliard School of Music, where he befriended Miles Davis and Charlie Parker
1945: Started painting after seeing a piece by Cubist artist Georges Braque
1947–48: Studied in Hans Hofmann’s school of painting, his only formal artistic training
1949: First solo exhibition at the Jane Street Gallery in New York
1951: Graduated from New York University with a degree in art education
1966: Designed the sets and costumes for Stravinsky’s Oedipus Rex at the New York Philharmonic
1970: Began working with videotape
1973: Created the Ackland’s print
1992: Published his autobiography “What did I do?”
2002: Died in Southampton, New York
Romare Bearden
American, 1911 – 1988

Mother and Child, from the portfolio Conspiracy: The Artist as Witness, 1971
lithograph
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Leonard Laufe, 81.40.1.2

About the Art

• In this intimate view of an African American mother and child, Romare Bearden explores the complexity of identity. The lithograph of a two-dimensional collage shows the mother and child as literally and figuratively made up of multiple parts. The downcast eyes of the mother and her cradling of the child calls upon the instantly recognizable art-historical image of a Madonna and child.

• Bearden began making two-dimensional collages in the early 1960s that integrated a variety of materials including painting, magazine clippings, posters, and old paper, into jigsaw puzzle images that wove together life in Harlem and the American South in order to show the diversity of the African American experience.

About the Artist

1911: Born in Charlotte, North Carolina
1935: Graduated from New York University with a degree in science in education
1936–37: Studied under German artist George Grosz at the Art Students League
1942–45: Served in the United States Army during World War II
1950: Returned to Europe to study art history and philosophy at the Sorbonne through the GI Bill
1951–54: Founded Bluebird Music Company with Dave Ellis
1963: Together with Norman Lewis, founded the Spiral Group, an organization that produced works of art in response to the Civil Rights Movement
1968: Founding member of The Studio Museum in Harlem
1971: Created the Ackland’s print
1988: Died in New York on March 12
Atul Dodiya
Indian, born 1959

**Sabari with Her Birds**, 2005
four-color lithograph and Chiri Bark paper collage
on handmade STPI cotton and linen paper
Ackland Fund, 2007.4

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**About the Art**

- Experimenting in all media, Atul Dodiya used collage and printmaking in collaboration with the Singapore Tyler Print Institute. The result is a series titled *The Wet Sleeves of My Paper Robe (Sabari in her Youth after Nandalal Bose)*.

- Dodiya interprets a story from the Indian epic, The Ramayana. A tribal woman living in the forest as a hermit waits her whole life to be blessed by the crown-prince Rama, an incarnation of the deity Vishnu. In contrast to traditional depictions of Sabari as an old woman, Dodiya emphasizes her youthful sensuality.

- Sabari is made up partly of shadows and partly of x-ray views of her skeleton. The artist’s contemporary depiction of an ancient figure personifying patience and devotion blends aspects of South Asian culture with modern abstraction.

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**About the Artist**

1959: Born in Mumbai, India
1982: Graduated from Sir J.J. School of Art, Mumbai, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts
1982-83: Fellowship at Sir J.J. School of Art, Mumbai
1989: First solo exhibition at Gallery Chemould, Mumbai
1991-92: Studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris after being awarded a scholarship by the French government
2005: Created the Ackland’s print
About the Art

- Over the course of his career, Sean Scully has developed a vocabulary for the stripe that expresses a wide range of emotions and ideas. Within a seemingly narrow iconography, the artist has produced brilliantly nuanced effects by experimenting with the dimension, color, and composition of the stripe in its vertical, horizontal, and diagonal orientations.

- By constructing his paintings on a heroic scale in deep, multi-paneled arrangements, he injects a sculptural quality that heightens the work’s texture and design.

- The title of this work refers to the Mexican city and state, an area rich in minerals and ferrous metals.

About the Artist

1945: Born in Dublin, Ireland on June 30
1949: Family moved to London
1965–67: Studied painting at Croydon College of Art
1971–72: Studied at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne
1972: Awarded a Knox Fellowship to study art at Harvard University for a one-year residency
1975: Moved to the United States and settled in New York City
1983: Became a United States citizen; received a Guggenheim Fellowship and an artist fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts
1989 and 1993: Nominated for the Turner Prize by the Tate Gallery in Britain
1991: Painted *Red Durango*
2013: Became a member of the Royal Academy of Arts in London, England
Orly Genger
American, born 1979

*Untitled*, 2018
recycled lobster rope and paint
Anonymous Loan, L2019.1a-c

About the Art

- Genger knots and weaves recycled rope, in a laborious process that traditionally counts as “women’s work.” The resulting cube, in this case, alludes to the kind of obdurate Minimalist sculptural form associated with renowned male artists, such as Richard Serra and Donald Judd.

- The atmospheric blue, shaded from pale to dark as it rises up the sculpture, dematerializes the geometric form, inverting its stability.

About the Artist

1979: Born in New York City, New York
2001: Graduated from Brown University
2002: Received a Postbaccalaureate degree from the Art Institute of Chicago
2013: Created the large-scale public sculpture called *Red, Yellow and Blue* covering some 4,500 square feet of Madison Square park
2018: Created the sculpture on view at the Ackland
About the Art

- The artist’s veneration of the breast form is underscored by the gold leaf used to delineate it and the central placement of the form against a dark background.

- The artist also associates the breast form, which she sees as a nurturing vessel, with the form of the stupa, the sacred mound-like structure built to house Buddhist relics.

- This allusion to Asian traditions is echoed also in the small scrap of paper with Asian-inspired patterns affixed at the upper right on the canvas.

- The surface of the painting is a many layered, with lines scraped away to reveal what lies beneath. Some of these lines at the upper left echo the breast/stupa form in a more ghostly outline.

- The painting exemplifies the artist’s feminist themes and sensitivity to delicate materials, qualities that also characterize her later installations and actions.

About the Artist

1961: Born in Bangkok, Thailand
1981-1986: Studies visual arts and communication design in Japan
1995-96: Creates the Ackland’s *Gold Breast*
1998: First sculptural installation
2002: First solo exhibition in the United States