Art Since 1950

Gallery 12
QUESTIONS?
Contact us at acklandlearn@unc.edu

ACKLAND ART MUSEUM
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
101 S. Columbia Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Phone: 919-966-5736

MUSEUM HOURS
Wed – Sat 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Sun 1 – 5 p.m.
Closed Mondays & Tuesdays.
Closed July 4th, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, & New Year’s Day.
George Segal
American, 1924 – 2000
The Legend of Lot, 1958
plaster, wood, burlap, chicken wire, and oil on canvas
The William A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund and Gift of The George and Helen Segal Foundation, Inc., 2009.1

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, just before God destroyed it as punishment for the sins of its other inhabitants. Against the instruction of the angels who urged Lot’s family to flee, his wife looked back at Sodom and was turned into a pillar of salt.

- 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 his 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, New York
1947–49: Studied 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
1999: Presented with the United States National Medal of Arts
2000: Died June 10 in South Brunswick, New Jersey

Chat with this work of art using ARTBOT. Instructions available in the Museum Lobby.
Christopher Myers
American, born 1974
Fish Pieta, 2020
appliqué fabric
Purchase through the generosity of Schwanda Rountree, Kate Nevin, and Libby and Lee Buck, 2021.18

About the Art

• Myers draws on the pietà form, a common Christian visual tradition in which Mary is depicted mourning over the dead body of Jesus in her lap. Here, instead of a body, the central figure holds a large, slumped fish.

• Myers’s tapestries are meant to be reminiscent of the Asafo flags made by people from the Fan culture in Ghana. Myers has stated: “In this tapestry, I am specifically thinking of Alice Lakwena, the leader of a religious cult in the North of Uganda during the 1980s who often held fish as a sigil of her office as the leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army.”

• Myers frequently works collaboratively with other artists and creative makers throughout the globe. This work was designed and conceived by Myers but was sewn by Egyptian artists from a community that has a tradition of working with appliqué fabric across generations.

About the Artist

1974: Born in New York, New York
1998: Won a Caldecott Honor for his illustrations in the book Harlem
2020: Myers designed Fish Pieta.
2021: The Ackland acquired Fish Pieta.
About the Art

- Barkley Hendricks sets a realistic figure against an unreal, abstract, blue field of color. The absence of any environment and of any objects in Charles Harvey’s hands emphasize the presence and power of his 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 lent Harvey the Yale t-shirt he wears in this painting; he preferred the way its white color contrasted with the blue background to the black t-shirt Harvey had been wearing. Hendricks kept this painting for over thirty years, until the Ackland bought it in 2008.

About the Artist

1945: Born April 16 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1967: Graduated from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia
1972: Graduated from Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, receiving a bachelor’s and master’s degree; began teaching at Connecticut College in New London
1975: Made the Ackland’s painting
1984–2002: Turned to photography instead of painting
2008: New London Niggah/Big Chuck (Charles Harvey) was included in the exhibition Barkley L. Hendricks: Birth of the Cool, organized by the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina
2010: Retired from Connecticut College
2017: Died April 18 in New Haven, Connecticut
About the Art

- Instead of a traditional ballgown, 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, Illinois
1985: Graduated from Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, 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, Montclair, New Jersey
2004: Painted the Ackland’s Self-Portrait as Dirty Princess
2011: Elected National Academician to the National Academy of Design in New York, New York
2014: Co-founded the online journal Painters on Paintings
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 in Beijing, China
1984: Immigrated to the United States; attended graduate school at the University of California at San Diego
1990: Began teaching at Mills College in Oakland, California
2002: Painted the Ackland’s Peaches
2014: Retired from Mills College

Dish with Peaches and Bats, 18th century; Porcelain with overglaze enamels. 20.7 cm. diameter. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Rozzell Sykes
American, 1931 – 1995
Head of a Man (The Face of Evil), c. 1972
oil on composition board
Ackland Fund, 72.44.1

About the Art

- Rendered in a sulfurous yellow emerging from brown shadow, this bearded and mustachioed head of a man fills the available space, from forehead to chin and cheek to cheek. Wide staring eyes confront the viewer in an almost threatening manner that seems to justify the artist’s title, Man of Evil.

- This work was chosen by the then Museum director during a June 1972 visit to St. Elmo Village, an experimental art school and colony established by the artist with friends and family members in central Los Angeles a few years earlier. In the words of a newspaper article of the time, “Every Sunday, the artists display their works outside, on the walls of the houses, on the front lawns, over the windows – anywhere they can drive a nail and hang a painting or put a sculpture.” According to the director, this painting was hanging “on the side wall of the building at the end of the row of garages.”

- Not much is known about the artist. He seems to have exhibited nationally and maybe in the United Kingdom around the time of this painting.

- The artist’s sentiments on the Ackland acquisition of the painting are expressed in a message written on the back: “To you – - the people of Chapel Hill .... Thank you for the desire of my child. Thank you for being a person that care. I, Rozzell Sykes of St. Elmo Village..say be then of care to have a nice forever.”

About the Artist

1931: Born December 25 in Aberdeen, Mississippi
1961: Moved to Los Angeles, California
1969: With his nephew Roderick Sykes, acquired property on St. Elmo Drive in Los Angeles
1971: St. Elmo Village was incorporated; Rozzell and Roderick Sykes received a Human Rights Award from the Baha’is of Los Angeles County
C. 1972: Painted the Ackland’s Head of a Man (The Face of Evil)
1994: Died December 18
About the Art

- Stacey Kirby specifically chose bronze as a medium because she notes that works in bronze by women artists are rarely found in art collections, unless the artist is depicting the likeness of a male.

- In response to North Carolina's ban on same-sex marriage and the 2016 NC House Bill 2 (known as the “bathroom bill”), Kirby developed performances in which a Civil Validation Officer performs acts of validation.

- This sculpture is cast by Carolina Bronze Sculpture from an enlarged three-dimensional scan of the VALID stamp that Kirby has utilized for engaging thousands of participants in her performances.

About the Artist

1976: Born on June 21 in Erie, Pennsylvania
1999: Graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a B.A. in Studio Art and Journalism
2012: Began VALIDnation, a series of performative interactions in which she used the stamp from which Bronzed VALIDity is modeled
2016: Received the Juried Grand Prize of ArtPrize 8 (Grand Rapids, Michigan) and was a finalist for the 1858 Prize (Charleston, South Carolina)
2018: Installed a billboard on NC-147 as part of the nationwide For Freedoms public art project
2019: installed The Department of Reflection in the Ackland’s ART& space; made Bronzed VALIDity

Investigate more perspectives on this work at www.ackland.org/close-looks.
Mel Kendrick
American, born 1949
Untitled, 1980
laminated pine, paint, and plaster
Gift of J. Kenneth Chance and Ellen Turner Chance, 2020.22.1

About the Art

- This sculpture is composed of simple wood pieces, including fragments of furniture elements that suggest a distorted chair. It explodes off the wall in a way that contradicts our expectations of traditional sculpture: that it be a more-or-less solid object placed on a pedestal or on the floor.

- Kendrick frequently explores the nature of sculpture, prompting viewers to look at the materiality and form of his works. In deconstructing and twisting a chair, Kendrick makes a recognizable form appear abstract.

- This is a relatively early work in the career of an artist who has for four decades made provocative investigations into the fundamentals and possibilities of sculpture.

About the Artist

1949: Born in Boston, Massachusetts
1974: Had his solo debut at Artist’s Space, New York
1980: Kendrick created Untitled
1985: Included in the Whitney Biennial
2009: Commissioned to create five sculptures for Madison Square Park
2020: The Ackland acquired Untitled
About the Art

- This painting’s seemingly flat surface is actually made up of several layers of color, including a metallic one, which have then in some places been sanded away to reveal strata of varying depths, even down to the wood support. Paint and gold leaf are layered upon wood and carved and sanded down to provide depth, creating a sculptural quality.

- Villacis was one of the leading modern painters in Ecuador in the 1960s and 1970s. He traveled and studied in Europe in the 1950s. On his return to Ecuador, he was an important part of the artist collective VAN (Vanguardia Artística Nacional), a group which opposed the dominant visual culture of the time that was tied to social realist traditions.

- Around the time this painting was made, prominent critic José Gómez-Sicre wrote: “Aníbal Villacis, fascinated by the texture of rocks, massive forms, and hieroglyphics, creates works of pure fantasy written in the legacy of pre-Hispanic forms.”

About the Artist

1927: Born in Ambato, Ecuador
1949: Villacis began exhibiting work in his hometown
1953–1959: Villacis studied in Paris and Madrid
1960: Villacis returned to Ecuador
c. 1960: Villacis and friends found the artists’ collective VAN (Vanguardia Artística Nacional)
1962: Became the first Ecuadoran abstract artist to exhibit at the Pan American Union
c. 1965: Villacis created *Untitled*
2012: Died in Ecuador
2021: The Ackland acquired *Untitled*
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 New Britain, Connecticut  
1990s: Moved to San Francisco, California  
2004: Made the Ackland’s sculpture; graduated with a Master of Fine Arts degree from Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York  
2009: Commissioned to make an original, multiple-edition piece for the Norton Family Christmas Art Project  
2012: Elected to the Board of Governors, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine
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 in Düsseldorf, Germany, under Joseph Beuys
1980: Represented Germany at the Venice Biennale in Venice, Italy
1981: First exhibition in the United States; made March Sand
1992: Relocated to France
2007: Became the first artist in fifty years to install a permanent work at the louvre Museum in Paris, France
2018: Was awarded Austrian citizenship
Peter Halley
American, born 1953
Arranged, 2007
acrylic and Roll-a-Tex on canvas
Ackland Fund, 2020.20

About the Art

- Geometric forms in stark colors combine to form a structure that seems to stand on a low horizontal base. The artist sees his repertoire of shapes as “prisons” (here the vertical rectangle with bars), “cells” (the bright red square), and “conduits” (the connecting channels and paths).

- When he arrived back in New York City in 1980 after education elsewhere, Halley was deeply struck by the geometry of Manhattan’s urban grid and its connections.

- The painting derives visual energy from the contrast between the smooth surfaces in acrylic and the textured ones in Roll-a-Tex, a paint commonly found on the walls of suburban condominiums of the 1980s.

About the Artist

1953: Born in New York, New York
Late 1970s: Halley began his abstractions
1978: Halley had his first solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans, and he spent a semester teaching art at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette
1980: Halley moved back to New York City
1992: First US solo exhibition at a museum
1996-2006: Published index magazine
2007: Halley painted Arranged
2020: The Ackland acquired Arranged
Louise Nevelson
American, born in Ukraine, 1899 – 1988

*Untitled*, 1982
painted wood
Gift of Jeanne Berry in Honor and Memory of B. Carroll Berry, Jr.
Class of 1954, 2020.35

---

**About the Art**

- Nevelson is known for her assemblage sculptures consisting of everyday items painted uniformly to create cohesion. Here, boxes are stacked against a wall and negative spaces between them are filled with moldings, spindles, dowels, and other fragments of furniture.

- The disparate objects, painted a monochromatic black, play with vertical lines and shapes and harken back to the Cubism and Constructivism movements, both of which used geometric shapes and lines to explore dimension and space.

- Although primarily a sculptor, Nevelson shared with the Abstract Expressionist painters who were her contemporaries an interest in creating large works that play with line, flatness, and scale. Although they appear as a collaged jumble, each piece has been deliberately placed, to evoke a sense of order.

---

**About the Artist**

1899: Born in Kiev, Russia
1905: Nevelson’s family emigrated to Maine
1930s: Nevelson traveled across Europe and studied with Hans Hofmann in Munich
1941: First solo exhibition at Nierendorf Gallery
1956: First major museum acquisition by the Whitney Museum of American Art
1967: First retrospective held by the Whitney Museum
1982: Nevelson created *Untitled*
1988: Died in New York, New York
2020: The Ackland acquired *Untitled*
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
Eduardo Luigi Paolozzi 
British, 1924 – 2005

offset photolithograph on Bex propylene clear film
Gift of Edward J. Safdie through the Ackerman Foundation, 81.42.1.1

**Cucumber Night Cream, from General Dynamic F.U.N., Volume E**, published 1970
offset photolithograph on Bex propylene clear film
Gift of Edward J. Safdie through the Ackerman Foundation, 81.42.1.27

**Calling Radio Free America, from General Dynamic F.U.N., Volume E**, published 1970
offset photolithograph on Bex propylene clear film
Gift of Edward J. Safdie through the Ackerman Foundation, 81.42.1.5

---

**About the Art**

- Paolozzi is considered one of the pioneers of pop art. His works, often collages, are made of different media such as newspaper clippings, advertisements, magazines, and other found materials. In these works one can see a variety of patterns and images including advertisements, sporting events, recognizable artworks, an anamorphic figure with a disco ball on its head, and food.

- Paolozzi’s collages seek to reflect the way society and mass media influence individual identity during the massive technological, social, and economic upheaval of post-war Europe.

- The Surrealism and Cubism art movements were major artistic influences on Paolozzi. He often combined technology with human forms, creating disparate, contrasting, and sometimes unnerving imagery.

---

**About the Artist**

1924: Born in Leith, in north Edinburgh, Scotland
1944-1947: Studied at University College’s Sald School of Fine Art in London
1970: Paolozzi published the portfolio General Dynamic F.U.N.
1981: The Ackland acquired General Dynamic F.U.N
1989: Queen Elizabeth II knighted Paolozzi
Guerrilla Girls
American, active since 1985

10 Trashy Ideas About the Environment, from Portfolio Compleat, 1994
offset lithograph on plastic bag
Ackland Fund, 2014.16.50

Guerrilla Girls
American, active since 1985

Horror on the National Mall, from Portfolio Compleat, 2007
laser or inkjet print
Ackland Fund, 2014.16.75

About the Art

- The Guerrilla Girls is a group of feminist activist artists who frequently use collages, posters, books, and public demonstrations to accomplish what they refer to as “culture jam” and directly challenge biases in the art world, politics, and pop culture.

- The Guerrilla Girls’ works often contain a sense of irony; for example, 10 Trashy Ideas About the Environment discusses environmental concerns but is printed on a plastic bag.

- Horror on the National Mall uses sensationalist headlines from magazines to call attention to the practice in Washington, D.C. museums of collecting but not displaying art by women and African American artists. The Guerrilla Girls frequently call out institutions and public figures by name to create awareness and enact change.

About the Artist

1985: Guerrilla Girls is formed in New York City
1991: First career survey at Falkirk Cultural Center, San Rafael, California
1994: Guerrilla Girls created 10 Trashy Ideas About the Environment
2007: Guerrilla Girls created Horror on the National Mall
c. 2014: Guerrilla Girls published Portfolio Compleat
2014: The Ackland acquired Portfolio Compleat