

# ABOUT THE ART

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Art Since 1950

Gallery 12

ACKLAND

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## **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 literal separation of Lot, who is 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 type of Christian image 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 signal 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

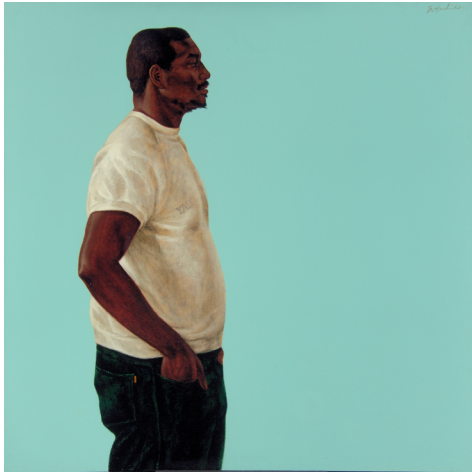
1995: Myers published his first book

1998: Won a Caldecott Honor for his illustrations in the book *Harlem*

2020: Myers designed *Fish Pieta*

2021: The Ackland acquired *Fish Pieta*

Investigate more perspectives on this work at [www.ackland.org/close-looks](http://www.ackland.org/close-looks).



Barkley L. Hendricks  
American, 1945 – 2017  
**New London Niggah / Big Chuck (Charles Harvey)**, 1975  
oil and acrylic on linen canvas  
Ackland Fund, 2008.6

## 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 term that is a vernacular version of a traditional racial slur that is 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



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 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 scene 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 1948–2021  
**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.



*Dish with Peaches and Bats*, 18th century; Porcelain with overglaze enamels. 20.7 cm. diameter. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

## About the Artist

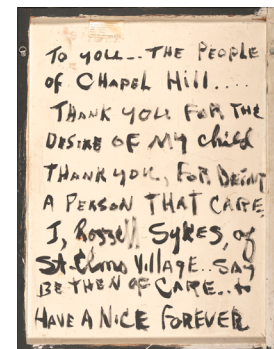
1948: Born February 17 in Changchun, Jilin Province, China  
1968: Worked as a farm worker during the Cultural Revolution in China  
1981: Completed graduate study at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, China  
1984: Immigrated to the United States; attended graduate school at the University 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  
2021: Died August 7 in Oakland



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



Stacey L. Kirby  
American, born 1976  
**Bronzed VALIDity**, 2019  
cast bronze  
Ackland Fund, 2020.7

## About the Art

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

## 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](http://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



Aníbal Villacis  
Ecuadorian, 1927 – 2012  
**Untitled**, c. 1965  
oil and metal leaf on wood panel  
Gift of Caroline Taylor, 2021.4.2

## 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.
- Aníbal 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: "Anibal 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 Ecuadorian abstract artist to exhibit at the Pan American Union

c. 1965: Villacis created *Untitled*

2012: Died in Ecuador



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 a conceptual than representational one. 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

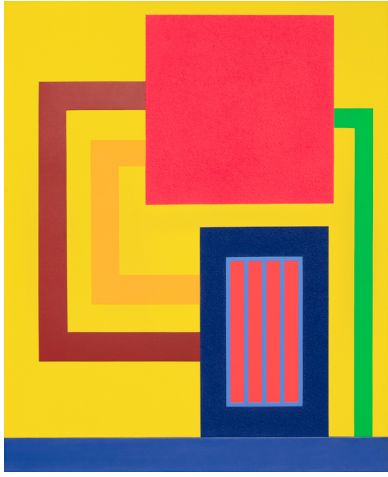
1981: First exhibition in the United States; made *March Sand*

1987: Major retrospective exhibition in Chicago, Illinois, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and New York, New York

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*



## 16

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

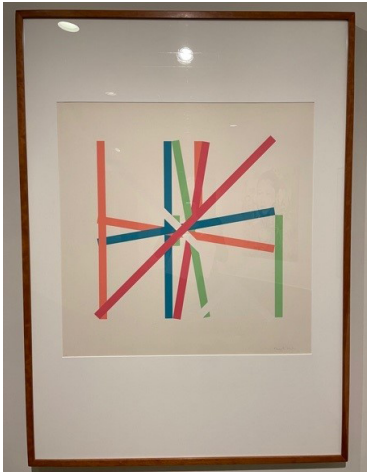
1941: First solo exhibition at Nierendorf Gallery

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



Kenneth Martin  
British, 1905 – 1984

**Rotation Frankfurt III, 1977**

color screenprint

Gift of Stanley Basickes through the Ackerman  
Foundation, 80.86.1

## About the Art

- The visual effect of this work of art mysteriously combines a sense of clarity with an impression of disarray. Movement seems possible, and the overlaid lines imply a sequence of making that also invokes time.
- The composition and color in this print derive from a disciplined application of objective structure and random information. It is part of an extensive series of paintings and works on paper, under the overall title *Chance and Order*, begun by the artist in 1969.
- This print is based on five underlying circles (four nested within one large one) with lines joining points on their circumferences. The artist described his method as he applied it to related compositions based on rectilinear grids: "The points of intersection on a grid of squares are numbered and the numbers are written on small cards and then picked at random. A line is made between each successive pair of numbers as they are picked out." Color is also chosen based on neutral permutations. The underlying geometries and coordinates are omitted in the final work of art.
- The artist recalled in 1979: "I could make sequence independent of my personality. I could be the spectator. Hence *Chance and Order*. These works were not made by knowledge or erudition."
- This print was part of a portfolio of four with the same title and consecutive numbering. The composition of each derived in part from rotating the various circles in differing directions. The reference in the title to the German city Frankfurt has not yet been clarified.

## About the Artist

1905: Born April 13 in Sheffield, United Kingdom

1927-1932: Studied at Sheffield School of Art and Royal College of Art

1956: Participated in This is Tomorrow exhibition at Whitechapel Art Gallery, London

1961: First public art commission

1975: Retrospective at Tate Gallery, London

1977: Created the Ackland's print

1984: Died 18 November in London



Jasper Johns  
American, born 1930  
**Ale Cans**, 1975  
lithograph on Japanese Washi paper  
Lent by The McConnell Trust, L2015.17.1

## About the Art

- In 1960, Johns made a sculpture of two ale cans, allegedly inspired by artist Willem de Kooning's remark that Johns' dealer, Leo Castelli, was so talented that he could even sell two beer cans. The motif of the two cans subsequently became a regular component in Johns' repertoire, appearing repeatedly across many different media.
- This print uses the technique of lithography to give the effect of a watercolor with liquid washes and irregular edges.
- Four colors of ink were used: two dark grays, a gray, and a black.
- The moody, impressionistic rendering makes the two cans seem like dream images, far removed but not entirely separated from their everyday, commercial origins.
- The artist often explores strategies of doubling, repetition, and mirroring, though always with attention to difference, variation, and individuality.

## About the Artist

1930: Born on May 15 in Augusta, GA

1948: Moved to New York City

1958: First solo exhibition, at Leo Castelli Gallery, from which the Museum of Modern Art purchased four works

1975: Created the Ackland's print

2011: Awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom

2021: Retrospective exhibition presented simultaneously, at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and at the Philadelphia Museum of Art



Sean Scully  
American, born in Ireland,  
born 1945  
**Red Durango**, 1991  
oil on linen  
Gift of Mary and Jim Patton  
to honor Josie Patton,  
2001.29

### About the Art

- The title of this work refers to the Mexican city and state of Durango, an area rich in minerals and ferrous metals.
- 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 thick, multi-paneled arrangements, he injects a sculptural quality that heightens the work's texture and design.

### 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

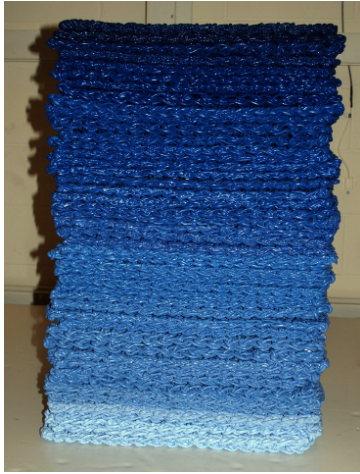
1977–1982: Taught at Princeton University

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

- The surface of this sculpture, which belongs to a category the artist refers to as “Stacks,” is varied in many ways: in the graded shades of blue and varying thickness of paint on some parts of the rope, in the uneven placement of the layers of rope, and in the rope’s braided surface.
- The atmospheric blue, shaded from pale to dark as it rises up the sculpture, dematerializes the geometric form, inverting its stability.
- Orly Genger knots and weaves recycled rope, in a laborious process that is often thought of as “women’s work.” The resulting form alludes to the kind of obdurate Minimalist sculptural form associated with renowned male artists, such as Richard Serra and Donald Judd.
- The lender of this sculpture requested that the Ackland install it in keeping with comments Genger made about her work, which she said is: “geared towards public involvement or interaction, so that people can feel like they aren’t looking at something that is on a pedestal or is separate from them.”

## 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, in Chicago, Illinois

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