

# ABOUT THE ART

---

Art Since 1950

Gallery 12

ACKLAND

## **QUESTIONS?**

Contact us at [acklandlearn@unc.edu](mailto: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.

## About About the Art

The Ackland's *About the Art* guides offer information about every work of art from the Museum's collection that is on view in galleries 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17. All of these galleries are marked on the Gallery Map available at the desk in the Lobby. In the bottom right corner of the label beside each object, there is an open book symbol with a number. You can find the same symbol and number on the top of the corresponding page in *About the Art*.

Within each entry, you can find the following information:

- At the top of the page, you'll see a thumbnail image, the title of the object, who made it and with what materials, and where and when it was made
- Next, you'll see bullet points with information or observations about the object (more or fewer, depending on how much we know about the object so far). There is no standard formula for what kinds of information appears, but you will often find comments on historical context, style, and materials.
- In keeping with the Ackland's tagline, "Look Close, Think Far," the first bullet point will often highlight something visible in the work of art itself.
- You will find names, phrases, and concepts that could be good internet search terms for those who want to learn more
- When specialized terms are used, you'll see a definition, helpful contextual information, or language suitable for an internet search.
- Whenever we know the artist's name, there will be some details about the artist's life, often under the heading "About the Artist," but sometimes as one of the bullet points.

For those visitors who want to engage further with an object, we also suggest other resources to investigate on our website: [ackland.org/education/learning-resources](http://ackland.org/education/learning-resources).

The authors of *About the Art* include Ackland curators and educators who use a variety of sources. They consult museum records, art historical research, comments from outside specialists, and more.

## About Gallery 12: Art Since 1950

The works of art in this gallery were selected to suggest the variety of subjects, styles, forms, and materials that artists have engaged with during the last seventy-five years. The majority of these works were made by artists from the United States, but shorter-term installations of selected prints, drawings, and photographs on the angled walls sometimes include artists from other places, drawn from the Ackland's extensive collection of modern and contemporary art from around the world.



Edward Melcarth  
American, 1914 – 1973

**Manhole**, 1959

oil on canvas, 70 x 70 in.

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art,  
Bentonville, Arkansas, Gift of Kip and Astrid  
Forbes, in honor of Alice Walton, L2022.21.5.  
Photography by Edward C. Robison III.

---

## About the Art

- This painting, with its suggestive title, celebrates the young male working class body, a recurring theme for Edward Melcarth who was a communist and openly gay.
- The unusual composition with the dramatic view from above seems to rotate around the empty center.
- Various objects throughout the painting evoke Christian symbolism: the dove of the Holy Spirit at upper left, the tools of the Crucifixion at lower right, and the ladder of the Descent from the Cross at the center.
- Melcarth once described his art as Social Romanticism, which “attempts to describe man’s idealized view of himself using the techniques closer to the Renaissance,” taking ordinary subjects and rendering them “extraordinary.”

## About the Artist

1914: Born Edward Epstein in Louisville, Kentucky. Later changed his surname to Melcarth, an ancient Phoenician god.

1930s: Studied at Harvard University, with artist Karl Zerbe in Boston, Massachusetts, and with printmaker Stanley Hayter in Paris, France

1942: The Museum of Fine Arts Boston acquired his self portrait

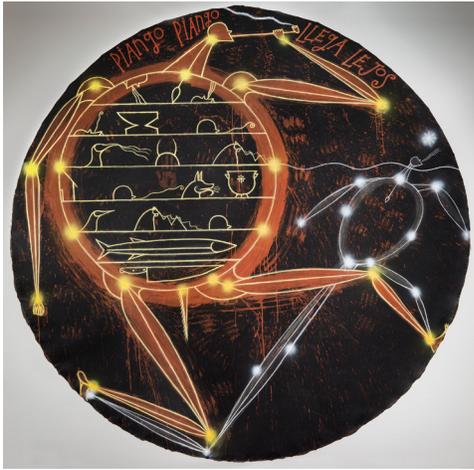
1950: Named one of the best American artists by *Life Magazine*

1959: Painted *Manhole*

1967: Painted commissioned murals at the Pierre Hotel in New York City, New York

Late 1960s: Left New York for Venice, Italy, where he focused on sculpture

1973: Died in Venice



José Bedia  
Cuban, born 1959  
**Piango Piango Llega Lejos (Step by Step, We Arrive Very Far)**, 2000  
acrylic stain and oil pastel on canvas  
Ackland Fund, 2001.2

---

### About the Art

- The title is drawn from the phrase painted at the upper edge of the work: Piango Piango Llega Lejos. About this phrase, Bedia said, “‘Piango Piango’ is a Kongo phrase that means ‘slowly, slowly,’ or ‘step by step.’ It is something that an elder would say to a young person. You know, step by step — be patient — you will get there. That’s why this guy has a turtle body.”
- On the main figure’s back are items related to the Palo Monte faith, an Afro-Cuban religion derived from Central African beliefs to which Bedia adheres. They include the iron reliquary vessel, Cuba’s *arriero* bird, and the anvil.
- Bedia has also spent significant time studying with the indigenous Lakota and participating in their sweat lodge rituals. The unframed circular canvas of this work can be seen as reminiscent of Plains Indian hide paintings.

### About the Artist

1959: Born on January 13 in La Havana, Cuba

1981: Received his BFA from the Instituto Superior de Arte de la Habana, Cuba

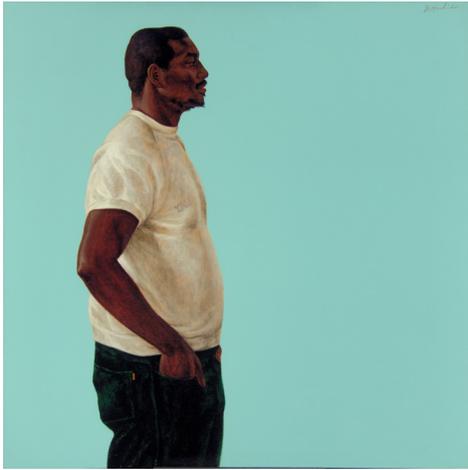
1983: Applied for and completed initiation into Palo Monte

1985: Apprenticed with a Lakota shaman

1990: Emigrated to Mexico

1993: Emigrated to Miami

2000: Created *Piango Piango Llega Lejos (Step by Step, We Arrive Very Far)*



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



Fritz Scholder  
Native American, 1937 – 2005  
**Indian and Storefront**, 1974  
acrylic on canvas  
Gift of the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable  
Trust to the Ackland Art Museum and the  
Nasher Museum of Art, 2020.6

---

## About the Art

- With brilliant yellow lines, Fritz Scholder divides the black and red areas of the background, marks the awning's scalloped edge and three letters RKS, and delineates the placket, pointed collar, pocket flaps, and snaps of the man's western-style shirt. Even amid the painting's other saturated hues, the yellow stands out.
- While he was an art student, Scholder became familiar with two important mid-twentieth-century art movements: abstract expressionism with its gestural brushwork and pop art with its bright color palette. Both styles are reflected in his work, including *Indian and Storefront*.
- Between 1967 and 1980, he painted controversial depictions of what he described as "real Indians." The year before he made this painting, he said:

People don't really like Indians. Oh, they like their own conceptions of the Indian – usually the Plains Indian, romantic and noble and handsome and somehow the embodiment of wisdom and patience. But Indians in America are usually poor, sometimes derelicts outside the value system, living in uncomfortable surroundings. We have really been viewed as something other than human beings by the larger society.

## About the Artist

1937: Born October 6 in Minnesota to parents of Native and European ancestry  
1957: Moved to Sacramento, California; studied art and exhibited throughout the region  
1964: Earned an MFA from University of Arizona; taught for a time at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico  
1972: Had a two-person exhibition with his former student, T.C. Cannon, organized by the Smithsonian and exhibited internationally  
1974: Painted *Indian and Storefront*; invited to have a one man show at the Basel V International Art Fair in Switzerland  
1984: Named a lifetime member of the prestigious Salon d'Automne in Paris  
2005: Died February 10 in Scottsdale, Arizona



Elizabeth Alexander  
American, born 1982

**Spit Cake**, 2014

hand-cut bone china, 30 1/4 in. x Dia: 11 1/2 in.

Courtesy Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art,  
Bentonville, Arkansas, L2022.21.11.

Photography by Edward C. Robison III.

## About the Art

- The column of altered and mostly inverted ceramics might almost be a model for a modern monument.
- The artist has changed the china by removing parts of the decorative elements, leaving irregular patterns around the edges. She carefully cuts the china with a high-powered drill while holding the piece under water.
- The work is part of an ongoing series, begun in 2011, called *Heirloom*.
- The artist has described her practice, including the alteration of objects as “my methods for deconstructing domestic vignettes of traditional success and beauty. This labored breakdown of archetypes unveils a rot behind the shiny exterior while mirroring the cultural pressure to gloss over personal turmoil and carry on.”
- The work’s title refers to a type of cake made with layers of dough or batter deposited, one at a time, onto a tapered cylindrical rotating spit. Generally, spit cakes are associated with celebrations such as weddings and Christmas. This seems appropriate for the stacked layers of elegant and formal china.

## About the Artist

1982: Born in Natick, Massachusetts

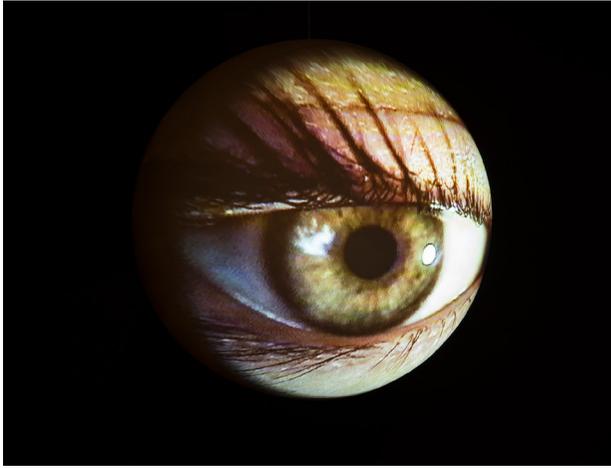
2009: Received MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield, Michigan

2014: Made *Spit Cake*

2014: Participated in State of the Art: Discovering American Art Now exhibition at Crystal Bridges Museum of Art and other venues

2015: Joined the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem, North Carolina as assistant professor

2022: Joined Montserrat College of Art in Massachusetts as Associate Professor



Tony Oursler

American, born 1957

**Eye in the Sky**, 1997

mixed-media video installation: 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 the 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 the Ackland's *Eye in the Sky*

1999-2001: Exhibited work in *Introjection*, a mid-career survey at Williams College Museum of Art



Mariana Heyward Taylor Manning  
American, 1914 – 2004

**Untitled**, c. 1973/74

acrylic on canvas with metal leaf and  
collaged elements

Lent by Children of Mariana Heyward  
Taylor Manning, L2023.1

## About the Art

- Manning utilizes acrylic paint to create a predominantly abstract composition, but pockets of representational scenes appear within the collaged elements affixed to the canvas.
- The artist also had training as a sculptor; her application of the metal leaf – allowing it to fold and bunch rather than lie flat – demonstrates an interest in texture and dimension.
- While the artist has signed the painting “1974” on its front, she has also dated it “November 1973” at the back of the canvas.

## About the Artist

1914: Born July 8 in Columbia, South Carolina

1936: Graduated from Smith College (Northampton, Massachusetts) after studying art

1940: Joined the fine arts faculty of the University of South Carolina to teach sculpture

late 1950s: Served as an early board member on what becomes the North Carolina  
Museum of Art

1960s: Moved away from sculpture and turns to regularly painting with collage work

1973/74: Made this painting and gave it to her son for his graduation from law school

2004: Died July 13 in Raleigh, North Carolina



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



## 13

Ida Rittenberg Kohlmeyer  
American, 1912 – 1997

**Monoliths #2**, 1978

mixed media on canvas

Lent by The McConnell Trust, L2015.17.2

### About the Art

- Structured as a loose grid filled with different patterns, this painting is characteristic of her “cluster” compositions for which she is best known.
- The artist was very interested in signs, pictographs, hieroglyphs and other forms of pictorial writing, and she worked to establish an individual code of symbols for her works.
- The device of soft-edge rectangles floating against an atmospheric field may owe something to the example of artist Mark Rothko (American, 1903 – 1970) who set up his studio at her family home when he visited New Orleans.

### About the Artist

1912: Born November 3 in New Orleans, Louisiana

1956: Received a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Newcomb Art School of Tulane University. She then studied with artist Hans Hofmann (American, born in Germany, 1880 – 1966) in Provincetown, Massachusetts

1972: Had her solo exhibition *Retrospective* at High Museum of Art (Atlanta, Georgia)

1978: Created *Monoliths #2*

1983–85: Her solo exhibition *Ida Kohlmeyer: Thirty Years* opened at the Mint Museum (Charlotte, North Carolina) and then traveled to six additional museums

1997: Died January 24 in New Orleans, Louisiana



Kelsey Brookes

American, born 1978

**One Pointed Attention 2**, 2014

acrylic on canvas

Courtesy Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, L2022.21.12

Photography by Edward C. Robison III.

---

## About the Art

- Brookes's *One Pointed Attention* series references his engagement with a Buddhist meditative practice called Shamatha that he utilizes to create the paintings.
- In other works Brookes made around this time, he began paintings by mapping out a diagram of a particular molecule on the canvas and then built outward from the center point of each atom, randomly changing colors with every layer, until the entire canvas became a bright abstraction.
- On the intersection of his paintings of molecules and his *One Pointed Attention* series, Brookes writes, "Molecules are made of atoms. I created various patterns to render those individual atoms. . . . I isolated that pattern (one atom) and made it large, and this was where the *One Pointed Attention* paintings came from. . . . Now that the pattern was no longer confined to groups of atoms, as in a molecule, it was free to grow and stretch out."

## About the Artist

1978: Born in Denver, Colorado

2000: Completed his studies in biology at Colorado State University

2005: Left his work as a microbiologist to pursue a full-time career as an artist

2012: Fused his interest in science and art by turning to the structure of molecules for formal inspiration

2014: Painted *One Pointed Attention 2* which was then included in the exhibition *State of the Art: Discovering American Art Now* at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art



## 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



Ernest C. Withers

American, 1922 – 2007

**Sanitation workers assemble in front of Clayborn Temple for a solidarity march, Memphis, Tennessee, March 28, 1968. I Am A Man was the theme for the Community on the Move for Equality (C.O.M.E.), which helped spearhead the Sanitation Workers' strike, 1968, printed 2001**  
gelatin silver print  
Ackland Fund, 2017.26.10

---

## About the Art

- The Memphis sanitation strike in 1968 was in response to the deaths of sanitation workers Echol Cole and Robert Walker in a defective garbage compactor. It lasted from February 12 through April 16; Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis during the strike period on April 4.
- “Am I not a man and a brother?” was a catchphrase printed on a popular anti-slavery medallion produced by potter and abolitionist Josiah Wedgwood in 1787. The “I Am a Man” signs held by participants in the Memphis sanitation strike were intended as an answer to that question.
- In this photograph, Withers uses the rock walls of the temple seen behind the assembled workers to give a sense of solidity and permanence to the composition. Clayborn Temple was a staging ground for many activities of the Civil Rights Movement in Memphis.

## About the Artist

1922: Born on August 7 in Memphis, Tennessee

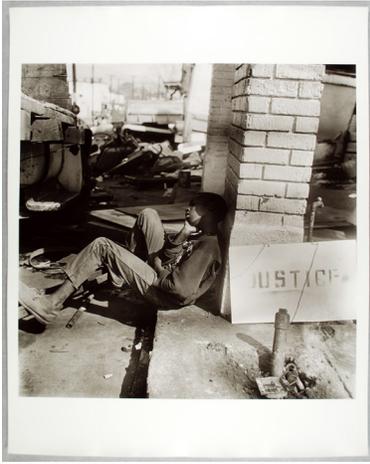
1956: Took the first of many photographs of Martin Luther King Jr.

1968: Photographed the Memphis sanitation strike pictured here

2007: Died on October 15 in Memphis, Tennessee

2013: In response to a Freedom of Information Act request, the FBI released documents that suggest Withers was an FBI informant starting in 1968

2023: *The Picture Taker*, a documentary about Withers's life and photography career, is released.



## 18

Ernest C. Withers

American, 1922 – 2007

**A young boy takes a rest during the Sanitation Workers' strike, 1968, printed between 1990 and 2000**

gelatin silver print

Ackland Fund, 2017.26.11

### About the Art

- This photograph is one of a series Ernest Withers took during the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike, to document supporters' response to the deaths of sanitation workers Echol Cole and Robert Walker in a defective garbage compactor.
- To the right of the resting boy sits a sign that says "Justice." During the strike, Reverend Malcolm Blackburn ended his "Sanitation Worker's Prayer," with the statement, "For ours is justice, jobs, and dignity, Forever and ever. Amen. Freedom!"
- Withers shows the figure against his surroundings, debris covering the ground and sidewalks. The sense of ruin evokes not just the direct effect of the strike (trash not being picked up) but also the chaos of the moments when the non-violent protest encountered a brutal response.

### About the Artist

1922: Born on August 7 in Memphis, Tennessee

1956: Took the first of many photographs of Martin Luther King Jr.

1968: Photographed the Memphis sanitation strike pictured here

2007: Died on October 15 in Memphis, Tennessee

2013: In response to a Freedom of Information Act request, the FBI released documents that suggest Withers was an FBI informant starting in 1968

2023: *The Picture Taker*, a documentary about Withers's life and photography career, is released.



Dread Scott  
American, born 1965  
**I Am Not a Man (Performance Still 220)**, 2009, printed 2021  
pigment print  
Charles and Isabel Eaton Trust,  
2021.32.1

## About the Art

- This photograph is one of several documenting a performance piece. The artist, Dread Scott, appears in the photograph in the midst of the performance, which lasted one hour in the streets of Harlem. Jenny Polak captured the images documenting it.
- Describing the performance, the artist shared, “I largely remained silent throughout the performance. There were minor interactions when some people approached me. But largely the interaction was to tell them this is a performance and they should follow me.”
- The “I Am Not a Man” sign references the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike, and Scott’s suit and hat appear as though they could also be of that earlier era.

## About the Artist

1965: Born in Chicago, Illinois

1989: As a student at the Art Institute of Chicago, created what he called the “installation for audience participation” *What is the Proper Way to Display a U.S. Flag?*, sparking conversations about free speech and flag desecration and contributing to the passage of the Flag Protection Act

1990: The Supreme Court ruled in *United States v. Eichman* to uphold the First Amendment and dismiss charges against Scott and his collaborators after their arrest protesting the Flag Protection Act by burning a flag on the steps of the US Capitol building

2009: Performed *I Am Not a Man* on September 9 in New York

2019: Performed *Slave Rebellion Reenactment* on November 8 and 9 in Louisiana over the course of twenty-six miles with over 300 participants



Mark Tansey  
American, born 1949  
**Landscape**, 1994  
oil on canvas, 71 3/4 x 144 1/2 in.  
(182.2 x 367.0 cm)  
© Mark Tansey.  
Crystal Bridges Museum of  
American Art, Bentonville,  
Arkansas, 2014.29. Photography  
by Edward C. Robison III.

## About the Art

- We see a large mound of randomly discarded and damaged sculptures – bust portraits and statues of powerful men and mythological figures from across history and culture, such as Joseph Stalin, Abraham Lincoln, Adolf Hitler, Julius Caesar, George Washington, and Constantine I, among unspecified Egyptian pharaohs, Mayan kings, Greek kouroi, the Sphinx, and more.
- The monumental scene is meticulously rendered in a reddish-brown monochrome that evokes an old, faded photograph, a fragile document of history.
- On the back, in addition to the title and date, the artist has written “Colossii,” the Latin word for statues of gigantic proportions and, by extension, people of immense significance.
- The artist’s creative process is slow and meticulous, as he selects image material from his extensive archive, combines it into elaborate collages, photocopies and re-photocopies the composition in the search for the density and contrast he seeks, and then uses the result as the basis for the painting.
- The artist has written, “In my work, I’m searching for pictorial functions that are based on the idea that the painted picture knows itself to be metaphorical, rhetorical, transformational, fictional.”

## About the Artist

1949: Born in San Jose, California, into a family of art historians

1969: Enrolled at Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles

1974: Moved to New York City, New York and enrolled in the graduate program at Hunter College

1982: First solo exhibition, at Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York

1990: Had a major retrospective exhibition, *Mark Tansey: Art and Source*, shown in Seattle, Washington, Montreal, Canada, St. Louis, Missouri, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Fort Worth, Texas

1994: Painted *Landscape*