ABOUT THE ART

Art Since 1950

Gallery 12

ACKLAND
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.
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.

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.
Friedel Dzubas
American, born in Germany, 1915 – 1994
*Credo*, 1975
acrylic (Magna) on canvas
frame: 73 1/8 × 73 1/4 in. (185.7 × 186.1 cm)
Gift of Charles Millard in honor of the Museum’s 60th Anniversary, 2018.32.6

**About the Art**

- In this powerfully resonant painting, Friedel Dzubas deploys massive, conflicting forms seemingly engaged in a powerful struggle, with the religious title invoking the spiritual drama that seems to underlie Dzubas’ work. Hard-edged forms feather and dissolve into the white ground. Blocks of color seem to rotate around a corner axis, anchored by a singular stroke of yellow-green. This is all set against a dark, romantic blue.

- Dzubas emigrated to New York from his native Germany in 1939. By the 1950s, he was closely associated with the leading tendencies in abstract art of the time, friend of the influential critic Clement Greenberg and studio-partner of Helen Frankenthaler.

- *Credo* is painted with Magna paint, a type of acrylic paint that was thinner than earlier forms of the medium.

**About the Artist**

1915: Born April 20 in Berlin, Germany
1939: Moved to London, England
1940: Moved to New York City, then to Chicago, Illinois
1952: Having moved back to New York, shared his studio with abstract Expressionist artist Helen Frankenthaler
1964: Exhibited in the exhibition *Post-Painterly Abstraction*, curated by the prominent art critic Clement Greenberg
1966: Began using Magna acrylic paint; won a Guggenheim Fellowship
1968: Won another Guggenheim Fellowship
1976: Moved to Massachusetts; taught at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston until 1983
1994: Died December 10 in Auburndale, Massachusetts
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
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.

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
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 25 November in Los Angeles, California
1953: Began working as an illustrator for an aircraft manufacturer
1960: Began working in New York, New York as an artist
1982: Painted the Ackland’s *Boeing*
2022: Died February 10 in New York, New York
Tokumaru Kyōko
Japanese, born 1963
*Rising Snake Island*, 2014
unglazed porcelain
16 1/8 × 11 3/4 in. (41 × 29.8 cm)
Gift of Mina Levin and Ronald Schwarz, 2020.8

**About the Art**

- Because the porcelain is unglazed, viewers more easily notice what appear to be shimmering pools of water cupped in descending leaves. This effect was probably achieved by introducing glass during the firing of the piece.

- The artist states, “Since Japan's ancient Jomōn Era, the snake has been perceived as a god of wisdom in disguise or god’s messenger.”

- Tokumaru Kyōko’s works that include “island” in their titles are intended as representations of the divine spirit, or objects to which such a spirit is drawn, even in contemporary life.

**About the Artist**

1963: Born in Tokyo, Japan
1992: Earns her MFA in ceramics from Tama Art University Graduate School
2003: Guest artist at Philadelphia’s The Clay Studio
2006: Receives a grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation
2012: Guest artist at Taiwan’s Yinge Ceramic Museum
2013: Receives the Takashimaya Art Prize, an award given to artists who represent the highest levels of Japanese art and design
2014: Created *Rising Snake Island*
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
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: “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
1960: Villacis and friends founded the artists’ collective VAN (Vanguardia Artística Nacional)
1962: Became the first Ecuadorian abstract artist to exhibit at the Pan American Union
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
About the Art

- This artwork commemorates the artist’s great-aunt, Sarah Dial Lockett, who was an active quiltmaker.

- Instead of using fabric, the artist uses salvaged painted metals to evoke the patchwork of a quilt.

- The grillwork attached to the lower left corner forms an earth-colored visual barrier against the vibrant colors of the other three quadrants, giving an impression of emptiness and isolation.

About the Artist

1965: Born in Bessemer, Alabama
1992: Lockett’s art was included in *At the Heart of Change: Cross-Cultural Currents in Southern Contemporary Art* at Kennesaw State College in Georgia
1994 or 1995: Diagnosed with HIV
1995: Lockett’s great-aunt, Sarah Lockett, died
c. 1997: Made *Remembering Sarah Lockett*
1998: Died in Bessemer, Alabama
2016: The Ackland organized *Fever Within: The Art of Ronald Lockett*, the first solo exhibition of Lockett’s art
About the Art

- In Aboriginal cultures, the word “dreaming” is sometimes used in reference to the characteristics of a specific place as it relates to the artist’s individual ancestral history. In Kangaroo Dreaming, Tjapaltjarri refers to an area of Mount Denison Station near Alice Springs.

- The patches of gathered white wisps symbolize decorations used in dance traditions where white cockatoo feathers are part of the costumes.

- The artist was affiliated with the Papunya Tula Artists who popularized contemporary Aboriginal “dot painting.” While much of their painting tradition emerged from sacred rituals, contemporary Aboriginal artists such as Tjapaltjarri employed dotting, as seen throughout Kangaroo Dreaming, both to evoke the vastness of the Australian landscape and to protect their heritage by obscuring some tribal imagery from mainstream audiences.

About the Artist

c. 1932: Born in Napperby Station, Australia
1972: Joined Papunya Tula Artists, a company entirely owned and directed by Aboriginal people from the Western Desert, as a founding director
1988: London’s Institute of Contemporary Art organizes a retrospective for him, his first solo exhibition.
1993: Painted Kangaroo Dreaming
2002: Appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia for his contribution to art and to the indigenous community. Died June 21 in Alice Springs, Australia
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
About the Art

- The *FIVE* of the series title references the five elements of vogue (a modern house dance that originated in the 1980s), which include hand performance, catwalk, duck walk, floor performance, and spin-dips.

- These prints originate from a performance in which highly accomplished vogue dancers demonstrated each of its major elements while having software that is custom designed by Newsome track their movements and convert them into line drawings. Scan the QR code on the right or visit vimeo.com/198741106 to watch a video of the performance.

- Catwalking, referenced in the title of this work, is the element of vogue where a performer walks crossing one foot in front of the other with knees slightly bent and hips moving side to side. Hands and arms move in opposition to the hips and legs.

About the Artist

1979: Born in New Orleans, Louisiana
2001: Received a B.F.A. in art history from Tulane University
2004: Received a certificate of study in Digital Post Production from Film/Video Arts Inc.
2010: Included in the Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art; began his creation of *FIVE*, a technology that is a generation 1-4 tool interactive virtual audio manipulation instrument with computer vision simulation, motion graphics, and generative art tools, using Kinect, Max/MSP, OpenGL, JavaScript, Python, Blender, Cinema 4D, After Effects, Leap Motion, Ableton Live, and Max for Live
2016: Performed *FIVE SFMOMA* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; worked with the Tamarind Institute to create the *FIVE SFMOMA* print series, two of which are displayed here
2023: Awarded an honorary doctorate in fine arts from the University of Connecticut
About the Art

- The *FIVE* of the series title references the five elements of vogue (a modern house dance that originated in the 1980s), which include hand performance, catwalk, duck walk, floor performance, and spin-dips.

- While these sheets utilize the very traditional form of lithography for part of their process, they also include affixed three-dimensionally printed elements to extend the gesture of the line into the viewer’s space.

- Duck walking, referenced in the title of this work, is the element of vogue where a performer crouches or squats down on their toes while kicking out alternating legs and hopping to the beat of the music. Hands and arms move in opposition to the legs.

About the Artist

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2001: Received a B.F.A. in art history from Tulane University
2004: Received a certificate of study in Digital Post Production from Film/Video Arts Inc.
2010: Included in the Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art; began his creation of *FIVE*, a technology that is a generation 1-4 tool interactive virtual audio manipulation instrument with computer vision simulation, motion graphics, and generative art tools, using Kinect, Max/MSP, OpenGL, JavaScript, Python, Blender, Cinema 4D, After Effects, Leap Motion, Ableton Live, and Max for Live
2016: Performed *FIVE SFMOMA* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; worked with the Tamarind Institute to create the *FIVE SFMOMA* print series, two of which are displayed here
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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
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