

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
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

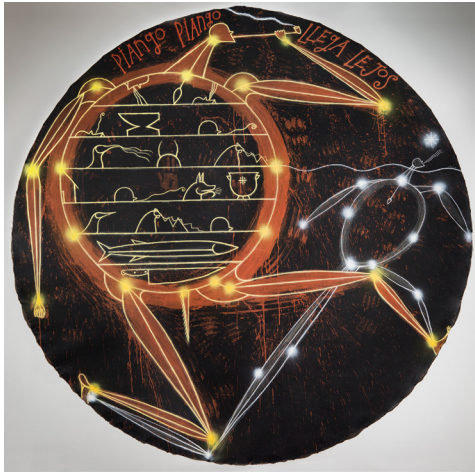
1964: Exhibited in the exhibition *Post-Painterly Abstraction*, curated by the prominent art critic Clement Greenberg

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

Auckland 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

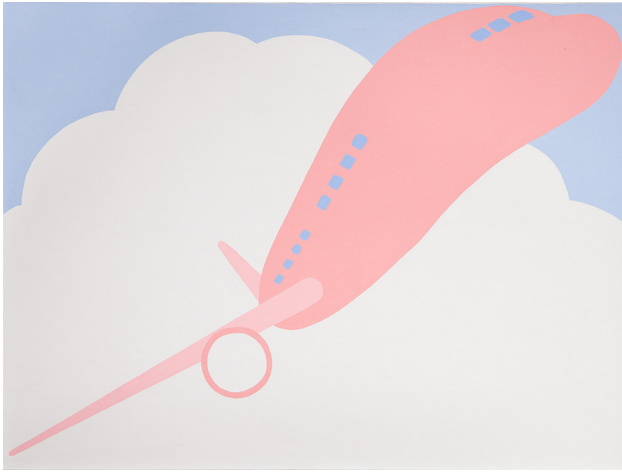
- The central figure in this painting is based on a historical photograph, one of a group of photographs of Chinese prostitutes that Hung Liu discovered in a Beijing archive in 1991.
- While in some places the oil paint is noticeably thick (as in the blossom at the woman's collar), there are also drip 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



John Wesley
American, 1928 – 2022
Boeing, 1982
acrylic on canvas
Ackland Fund, 2011.3

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
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

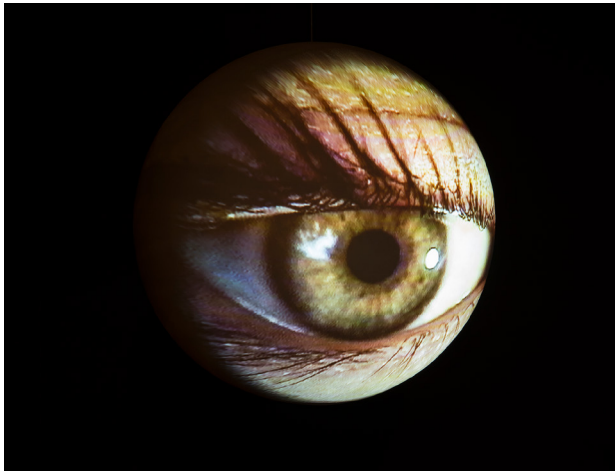
2003: Guest artist at Philadelphia's The Clay Studio

2006: Receives a grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation

2012: Guest artist at Taiwan's Yingee 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*



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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



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



12

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



Ronald Lockett

American, 1965 – 1998

Remembering Sarah Lockett, c. 1997

metal, wire, wood, and paint

Gift of the Arnett Collection and Ackland Fund,
2010.52.5

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



Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri
Australian Aboriginal, c. 1932 – 2002
Kangaroo Dreaming, 1993
synthetic polymer paint on cotton canvas
Anonymous Loan, L2023.5

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



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



Helen Frankenthaler
American, 1928 – 2011

Grove, 1991

color woodcut

Gift of Charles Millard in honor of Rani Gallagher,
2009.25

About the Art

- The artist carved four wood blocks and used ten different colors to produce *Grove*.
- Helen Frankenthaler accentuated the grain of the blocks to appear as elements in the final image by working the wood's surface with an electric gouge, routers, drills, a wire brush, and sandpaper.
- The "16/32" at the lower left indicates that this woodcut is the sixteenth pulled from an edition of thirty-two prints. The edition was published by Garner Tullis in New York City.

About the Artist

1928: Born on December 12 in New York, New York

1949: Graduated from Bennington College in Vermont

1950: Studied privately with artist Hans Hofmann (American, born in Germany, 1880 – 1966)

1951: Her first solo exhibition was at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery in New York, New York

1958: Married the painter Robert Motherwell (American, 1915 – 1991)

1991: Created the Ackland's *Grove*

2011: Died on December 27, in Darien, Connecticut



Felrath Hines
American, 1913 – 1993
Solar Light, 1983
monotype
Gift of Charles Millard, 2019.26.79

About the Art

- To create a monotype, an artist draws or paints on a smooth, non-absorbent surface and then transfers the image by pressing it against a sheet of paper.
- Because an artist cannot exactly duplicate their painting on the surface, monotypes are considered unique images that cannot be issued as editions.
- No information about the materials used accompanied this work when it entered the collection, but Felrath Hines seems to have made it using oil-based inks, as the red circle has yellowing that has spread across the paper and through to the back.

About the Artist

1913: Born on November 9 in Indianapolis, Indiana

1963: Joined the African American artist collective Spiral

1969–70: Taught at the Pratt Institute and the Art Students League, New York

1972: Moved to Washington, D.C. to become the Chief Conservator at the National Portrait Gallery

1983: Created the Ackland's *Solar Light*

1984: Retired as Chief Conservator from the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

1993: Died on October 3 in Silver Spring, Maryland



Sean Scully
American, 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