

PERSUASIVE IMAGES:

Selected Works from the Art Collections at the University at Albany

University Art Museum

University at Albany

State University of New York

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Cover Image:

Eduardo Paolozzi
General Dynamics F.U.N., 1970
709 An Empire of Silly Statistics...A Fake War for Public Relations
Photolithograph, 10" x 15"

Inside Cover, Front & Back:

Dieter Roth
Gesammelte Werke, Band 17, 246 Little Clouds, 1962
Book, 7" x 9 1/2"

Elliott Erwitt
New York, 1949
From *Masterprints Vol. II* Portfolio
Gelatin silver print
22" x 14 1/2"



FOREWORD

This exhibition and its accompanying catalog are an opportunity to highlight for a broad audience the quality and diversity of the permanent art collections housed at the University at Albany. The story of the formation of the various collections is a source of great pride to everyone who, past and present, has been part of its building. Friends of the museum, alumni and faculty artists, past museum staff members, generous donors, and administrative officials have all played a part in its assembly and growth.

To be sure, there are serious and demanding issues regarding the collections, both in acquisition needs and stewardship. From the beginning, the growth of the collections has been an organic process, subject as much to serendipitous factors as to any conscious grand design or mandate for development. The interests and backgrounds of the University's first art gallery director, Donald Mochon and his assistant Nancy Hyatt Liddle, coupled with those of then University Art Department chair Edward Cowley and department faculty member Thom O' Connor, played a special role in the initial shaping of the permanent collections during the years 1967–72.

The special interests of curators and donors have subsequently had a formative effect on the present-day collections. Additions of works by upstate New York artists have been made possible by purchases from the annual juried exhibition *Artists of the Mohawk-Hudson Region*. The collections have been steadily enhanced by other sources as well, leading, for example, to the formation of The Carol, Marvin, and Adam Brown Photography Collection, an ongoing commitment made by this family to support the museum by giving the works of some of America's most prestigious photographers.

Efforts to attract additional donors and acquisition funds continue, and the museum is developing a more structured program for collections development. Awareness of particular themes and categories within the permanent collections, as well as accessibility, are major concerns, so last year the museum turned to staff member Corinna Ripps to curate this exhibition, which targets some of the most visually persuasive and culturally loaded works in the permanent collections. Using her considerable curatorial skills and her own interest in and knowledge of developing trends in American art, she was able to mine the collections and put together this extraordinary exhibit. Joining her in the project's research and development is assistant curator Susan Hoffa, a student in the University's Art Department. The vision and hard work of their union saw this project to fruition, and I extend my deepest appreciation and congratulations to each for this stunning exhibition.

This is the first scholarly look at the permanent collections ever undertaken by the museum; my hope is that it will be the first of many such presentations that use the expertise of guest curators to examine our holdings and to further collections development.

Marijo Dougherty
Director
University Art Museum

INTRODUCTION

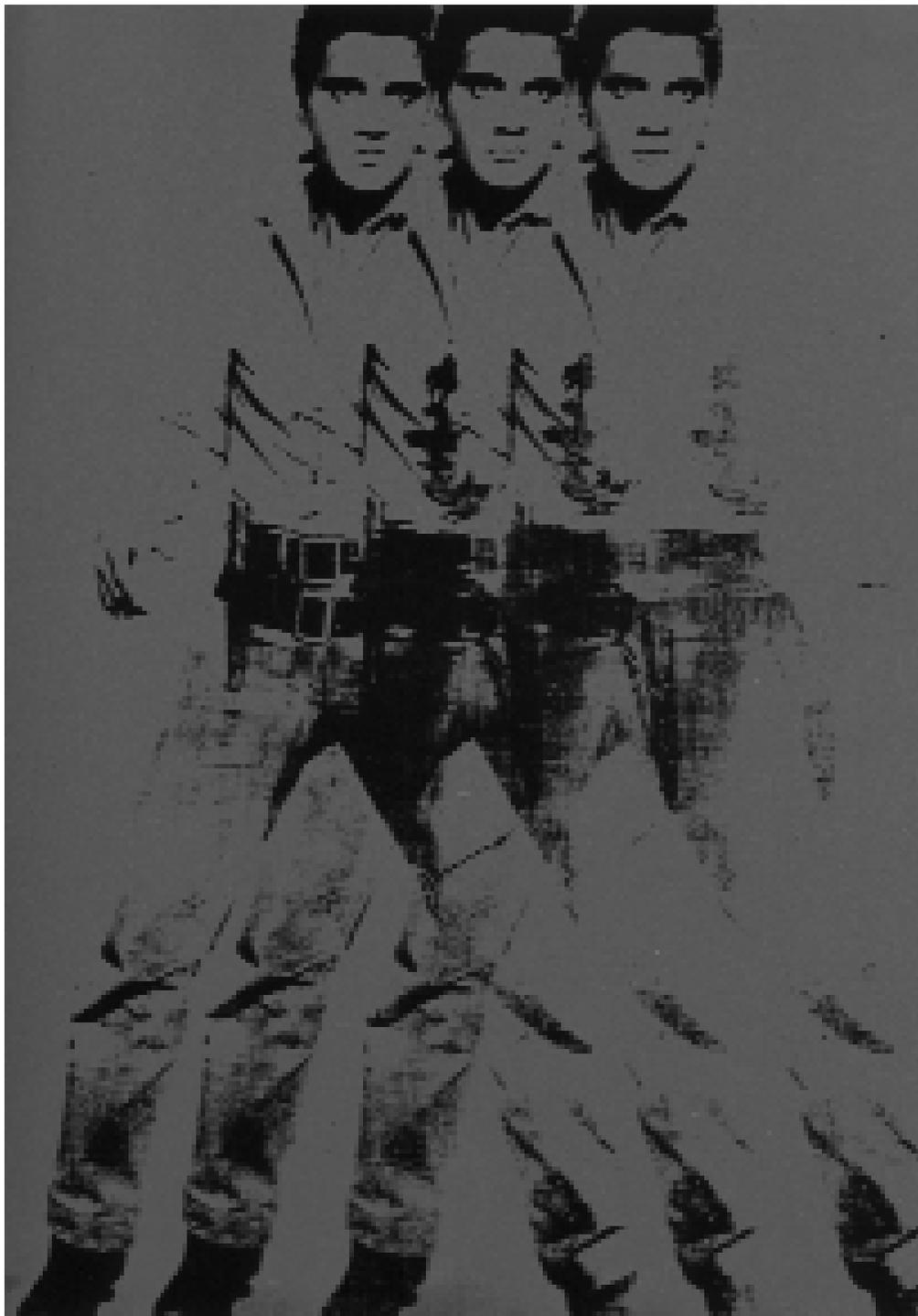
An exhibition curated from a museum's collections is never simple. There are many boundaries to consider, not the least of which are the boundaries of the collections themselves. The 3,000 works of contemporary art (primarily on paper) in the University Art Museum's collections are an eclectic mix. Assembled over the last thirty years through fits and starts, judicious directorial choices, and the generosity of friends and alumni, the collections reflect boom times as well as lean years for the museum.

We began our curatorial assignment for this show by looking at everything. As we proceeded, we realized that if we wanted to exhibit the most challenging visual works in the collections, we needed to go for broad rather than thematic focus. How to do this without resorting to a "greatest hits" approach became the principal challenge. In the end we decided to let down our guard and be persuaded by the works themselves; our curatorial "gut" took hold and *Persuasive Images* took shape.

"Remember, it's about persuasion, not prescription:" the mantra that guided our selections is reflected in the two essays that follow. *An Ode to Persuasive Images* offers a personal curatorial response to the works selected; *Speaking in Tongues* explores the persuasive force of culturally prescribed identities in works by Kara Walker, Gayle Johnson, and Yasumasa Morimura.

The University Art Museum's collections are idiosyncratic and bountiful; may our selection of some (but by no means all) of its persuasive images lead to closer looking and deeper giving in the future.

Corinna Ripps
Susan Hoffa



Andy Warhol

Elvis, n.d.

From *Artists and Photography Portfolio*, Multiples Inc.

Offset-photolithograph

9 1/2" x 11 1/4"

AN ODE TO PERSUASIVE IMAGES

by Corinna Ripps

Images

Some say images have no feeling, I think there's a
deeper meaning
Mechanical precision or so it's seeming
Instigates a cooler feeling
I love multiplicity of screenings
Things born anew display new meanings
I think images are worth repeating and repeating
and repeating

from *Songs for Drella*

by Lou Reed and John Cale

Published by Metal Machine Music / John Cale Music Inc. BMI

1990

Songs for Drella, a brief musical by Lou Reed and John Cale, pays tribute to the life and times of the twentieth century's quintessential image-monger, Andy Warhol. Warhol liked all kinds of images from all kinds of places: sad, mean, dumb, pretty images found in everyday, out-of-the-way, extraordinary places. Warhol took images from everywhere; through multiple screenings they became his, and when he finished with them he turned them back at us. His images continue to frame contemporary art and culture. They persuade us to remain detached from all that we see and know, but beneath their multi-screened and colored surfaces also lies the faint hope that seeing things anew can sometimes persuade us to know them better.

What follows is one artist/curator's (and fellow image-monger's) reflections on the persuasive nature of seventy-two images selected from the University at Albany's art collections. Like Warhol's images, my thoughts are framed by a way of seeing that takes into account a world big enough to include just about anything, as long as it makes me want to look again. At the heart of these reflections lies the important distinction that it is one thing to be an image-*monger*—who looks, consumes, and quickly moves on—but it is a different thing altogether to be an image-*maker*—who looks, selects, and slowly reveals.

Elliot Erwitt's photograph, *New York, 1949*, is an elegant and lonely view through museum doorways. The museum experience it depicts (silent, crowdless, rarified) is quite unlike the museum visit of today, now that corporate-sponsored

blockbusters, digital tours, didactic label texts, and gift shop sales have changed the way we see. Compare Audrey Flack's photograph of an overly abundant floral arrangement, entitled *Time to Save*, 1979, with the subtle play of grays in Erwit's photograph. Flack's photograph, a contemporary take on seventeenth-century *vanitas* paintings, is gaudy. Its frozen lifelessness reminds me of grandiose floral arrangements often found at visitors' desks of museums with old masterpieces. Now look at Ralph Gibson's luminous color photographs of peripheral objects such as a curtain, a painter's easel, or a divan, and observe how they speak of luxurious moments without being precious or pretentious. Golden and sumptuous, these photographs glow from within. Although Gibson crops his images at odd spots, the cuts are not ambiguous or arbitrary; when viewed sequentially the images become fraught with hidden meanings, temporarily illuminating a forgotten era. Erwit, Flack, and Gibson persuade us to consider worlds that have lost their place in contemporary reality, but not their hold on our imagination.

I like to think that my perceptions reflect my time and place; perhaps that's why I long for the immediacy of the gestural hand, only to breathe a sigh of relief at the sight of mechanical reproduction. Is it nostalgic to long for a bygone state of grace? Probably, but even Warhol in his compulsive search for the blankest visage let himself be persuaded by moments of truth and beauty. Why is it that celebrity portraits taken seventy years ago by Edward Steichen seem so noble in their elusiveness, while Warhol portraits screened forty years later seem so familiar in their blankness? Why does Helmut Newton's portrait of Warhol (taken more than ten years before Warhol died) already look like a death mask? I think it is that, despite contemporary culture's ravenous need to move forward while appropriating, reconstituting, and regurgitating the past, through it all Warhol remains our most persuasive mirror. *Eakins*, 1964, is a meticulously delineated etching by Leonard Baskin done about the same time as Warhol's first midnight-blue *Jackies*. But while Baskin pays tribute to the American realist tradition born out of nineteenth-century Victorianism, Warhol sheds light on a sublimated sense of loss beneath late twentieth-century materialism. The nineteenth-century desire to "make it real" is replaced by the twentieth-century urge to "make it go away."

Often the artist's hand persuades me. I look at *Untitled*, 1967, a lithograph by Willem DeKooning, or *The Brank*, 1984, a lithograph by Leon Golub, or *Seated Woman No. 44*, 1966, a drawing by Richard Diebenkorn, and I feel the artist's hand sweep, scratch, and skip across the drawing surface. DeKooning's agitated scratchy line conjures up a genderless being. Hovering in blank space, this creature is an oddly endearing example of DeKooning's uneasy experience with figurative imagery. There is no ambiguity in Golub's jagged lines, in his vile image of cultural force that is dispatched in uncompromising riffs of red and black. And even though Diebenkorn's woman's face is cropped at the lip, the artist's rigorous charcoal lines and telling strokes offer an intimate picture of a *specific* woman—coy, graceful, hesitant.

Line hitting edge sucks me in; abstraction takes me away. In William Tucker's etching *Untitled*, 1986, Conrad Marca-Relli's collograph *Ibiza*, 1968, or Louise Nevelson's lithograph *Dusk in August*, 1967, I am again seduced by the strong presence of the artist's hand. Tucker's abstracted figuration, Nevelson's mysterious world of light and shadow, Marca-Relli's organized universe culled from scraps of yesterday's news are all fueled by formal rigor: no room for commonplace musings here. Such elegies to pure form are calming; the focus is singular and personal; the mad race to take it all in comes to a slow and thoughtful halt. I am in the realm of aesthetic experience. I enjoy the reprieve; to be made privy to the artist's internal world and to be seduced by it is a beautiful thing. Why, then, does it feel so exclusionary, and why do I end



Edward Steichen
Charlie Chaplin. New York. 1925
Printed from the original negative by George Tice
Selenium-toned gelatin silver print
16" x 20"

up staring longer at *General Dynamics F.U.N.*, 1970, by Eduardo Paolozzi, a portfolio of collaged images from three decades of print ads, instructional manuals, and science fiction trailers? Perhaps my restless, pedestrian, image-mongering roots are showing, or perhaps the artist's hand, with all its gestural and descriptive force, is really more about the artist's world than the real world—my world. Paolozzi bombards us with ominous signs of a doomed culture: color-rich images of gooey food, acrid interiors, faded movie idols, crash-test dummies, and grounded rocket ships commingle in a buoyant, non-hierarchical celebration of American post-war abundance as seen through the yearning and perceptive eyes of an outsider (Paolozzi is Scottish). Embedded in his network of images is a road map of promises and dangers that drives the American Dream.

There is the persuasion of youth in America, too. Mary Ellen Mark's photograph *Three Girls in Plaid*, 1986, is a wistfully intense image; Isabel Bishop's etching *Students Walking*, 1971, suggests a contemplative evasiveness. Both images depict young female students who seem somewhat uneasy in their surroundings. Awkward confidence is coupled with a gnawing sense of inadequacy. Some (myself included) might say that this too is the stuff of which American dreams are made. Of course, the weight of false hope can come crashing in unexpectedly, as it does in Elizabeth Blum's staged photographic compositions, or it can turn into unrequited role-playing as it does in Gayle Johnson's meticulously rendered gouaches. Conversely, the work of Helmut Newton, Yasumasa Morimura, and Richard Lindner exude restrained Weimarian decadence rather than plaintive American neediness. Newton uses suggestive narrative and Morimura uses arch manipulation to create photographic images that turn the girls next door into perverse sexual icons. In *We Are All One*, 1967, Lindner uses razor-sharp lines to depict a man and woman physically intertwined yet emotionally disengaged. All three artists serve up a persuasive, calculated sexuality more about role-playing than genuine feeling.

Resignation replaces titillation in the straight-up photographs of Larry Clark. In *Untitled*, 1963, he presents a cigarette-smoking girl who hides her vulnerability behind Kohl-blackened eyes and Liz Taylor-like hair. By reminding us of their presence, Clark gives his disaffected subjects a place in the American social fabric; their loss is no one's gain. There is a different sense of loss in Manuel Alvarez Bravo's photographs and Manuel Guerra's etchings. Rooted in Mexican tradition, their poetic images merge fantasy and allegory to create mysterious images filled with contradictory meanings; resignation is made whole through awareness. Here life and death mingle within the same frame, and redemption is not ruled out; it may come, but only to those who bend instead of crumble beneath the weight of its promise.

What happens when all hope fades and the dark side of persuasion sets in? In Mary Ellen Mark's portrait *Roy Cohn with the American Flag 7/1986*, a casual, seemingly benign Roy Cohn languishes in an armchair holding an American flag. But forget the warm and welcoming V-neck sweater and leather mocs; look at the cocked head, tight lip, furrowed brow. The other Roy Cohn lurks here like a menacing cloud waiting to darken the view. In *Flag Face*, 1984, Vito Acconci carries flag-waving to different heights. An oversized lithograph segmented in three frames forms a cascading banner, and a black mask-like shape hovers over a friendly blue ground. Gaping holes become eyes, nose, and mouth through which tall buildings, tangled highways, and generic city crowds are revealed. Puffy clouds drift past. An anonymous harbinger of doom, Acconci's menacing mask floats over the American landscape, and we know all is not bright on the horizon. In Nicholas Monro's screenprint *Cosmic Consciousness*, 1970, an oversized head of Lyndon Baines Johnson floats across a patterned surface suggestive of television airwaves. Monro, a Scottish artist with an eye keenly tuned to America's shifting

(left)
Manuel Alvarez Bravo
Dia de Todos Muertos, 1933
Photograph
8" x 10"



(right)
Larry Clark
Untitled, 1963
From *1986 Survey* portfolio
Gelatin silver print
8" x 10"



fortunes, gives us an unflinching portrait of LBJ whose omnipresent image loomed over American life during the Vietnam era, when even a happy suburban kid like me knew that people were angry, divided, and dying. Like everyone else, I saw those images on television, in magazines, in newspapers. Images of street-fighting men and women like those depicted by Juan Genoves in *System of Vigilance, 1971*, or *Broken Man, 1971*, are now etched in the collective conscience. The dark silhouettes of Genoves' figures fall in and out of view like a blurry freeze frame; their violent actions are masked by an almost lovely formal rhythm of raised fists against a blank ground.

Kara Walker uses silhouetted cutouts in the form of a children's pop-up book in *Freedom, 1997*, to tell the fictional tale of a nineteenth-century slave girl who dreams of living in a better world, a world where color will not matter. Her wishful vision is mocked by her white master and by her fellow slaves. The artist-student collaborative Tim Rollins + K.O.S. uses literature and visual images to tap into universal messages found in both media. In *The Temptation of St. Anthony, 1989*, black stains smolder across actual book pages, slowly obliterating Gustave Flaubert's text; first words, then sentences, and finally whole paragraphs disappear beneath encroaching blackness. By stripping away extraneous information and creating visually seductive surfaces, artists like Walker and Rollins + K.O.S. neutralize images of violence and disillusionment; they bring into high relief falsehoods and thwarted dreams generated by historical biases and sublimated desires.

In the photographic portrait *Product Managers, 1979*, by Neal Slavin, a group of suited men stand watch, holding things in check as they survey the intricacies of their domain. I wonder: does their managerial proficiency extend into their personal lives, or do they live with messy contradictions like the rest of us? The hitch with narrative photography is that the viewer is always trying to imagine what happens outside the frame. Such is not the case with Edward Ruscha, Mel Bochner,

and Joseph Kosuth, artists for whom facts rule. Fact devotees, these artists give the cold shoulder to Modernist photography and all its artistic flourishes. Ruscha's tiny artist book *Babycakes* begins with an unremarkable black-and-white snapshot of a baby; his weight (15 pounds 8 ounces) is typed below. Each subsequent page features a different cake (a cupcake, a birthday cake, a wedding cake), with its weight (4 ounces, 2 pounds 8 ounces, 8 pounds 12 ounces) typed below. There is little room for aesthetic nuance in Ruscha's deadpan approach. In Bochner's *Misunderstandings: (A Theory of Photography)*, 1969, and in Kosuth's *Notebook on Water 1965–1966*, defined text is given top billing over descriptive image, only to play up the impossibility of either producing a valid depiction of reality. Bochner's handwritten quotes on the power of photography are attributed to such indisputable sources as Marcel Proust, Mao Tse-tung, Marcel Duchamp, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and the Encyclopedia Britannica. It turns out that Bochner has made up three of the quotes, although he never reveals which ones. By interfering with written authority in this way, Bochner persuades me to question the veracity of authorship; all those random quotes collected at the end of Susan Sontag's *On Photography* come to mind. In *Notebook on Water 1965–1966*, Kosuth provides pertinent facts about water: its ubiquity, its chemical properties, its dictionary definition, its potential to become ice or steam. Lackluster black-and-white images accompany the facts: a map of the world, a photograph of a radiator, a drawing of an ice cube. Such a literal presentation produces a variety of overlapping realities; it offers little in the way of aesthetic experience, yet after the intellectual burn fades, the visual components linger on—modularity, regularity, banality. In hindsight, I'd say minimalist visual strategies give conceptual art some of its best, and most persuasive, moments.

In Robert Smithson's *Torn Photograph from the Second Stop (rubble)*, n.d., a photograph of nondescript rubble is torn into four near-equal sections. No longer part of a larger natural landscape, Smithson's debris enters the realm of man-made experience. He charts a course that points toward depletion and exhaustion as both nature and culture disintegrate around us; perhaps in the end it's their mutual cancellation that continues to propel us forward. The man-made intrusions that mar the landscapes in Marilyn Bridges' photographs and Stephen Poleskie's prints are what make the images more compelling. Bridges' aerial photographs of remote landscapes are sharply incised by things unseen by the grounded eye; Poleskie's prints of imaginary flight maps are riddled by unknown targets. Both artists heighten perceptions of unfamiliar terrain by mapping out and honing in on elusive boundaries.

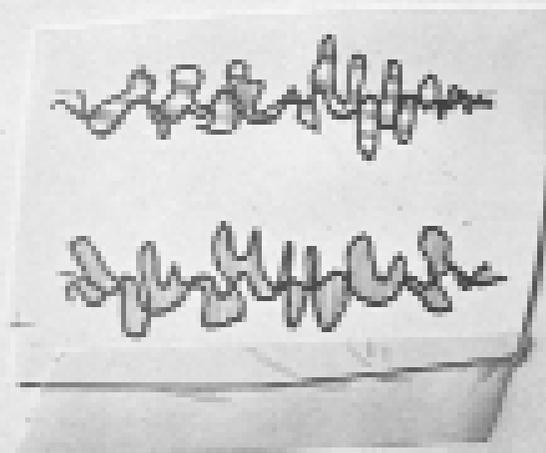
Shifting destinations mark the course of many contemporary artists' best digressions; it's what keeps art moving and I, for one, like the ride. Pop art: manic, foolish, dangerous, cluttered, pathetic, exhilarating; call it real life, only shinier. The metaphoric snap in Roy Lichtenstein's comic assaults like *Explosion*, 1967, make me want to come up for air, and when I do I know that I'm not breathing something pure or rarefied. Rummaging beyond the fray, collecting trash, filling the gaps is Robert Rauschenberg, who wrings a visceral poetry out of life's detritus. He's not like Lichtenstein, who serves it up big and silly, or like Paolozzi, who brings it together clearly and brightly, or like Warhol, who hones in on it only to shrug and walk away. For Rauschenberg, art's about the hard-won renewals that follow life's ironic, poignant, violent, beautiful obfuscations. In *Storyline I (Bonnie and Clyde)*, 1968, or *The Week in Review*, 1973, images from movies, magazines, and newspapers are partially wiped out; Rauschenberg's layer of violation on top of the initial saturation becomes a conflicting act of reclamation and disavowal. In *Revolver*, circa 1967, five Plexiglas disks are silk-screened with images cropped from ads and art history. By gently turning the disks, an endless combination of images is revealed and concealed; this time



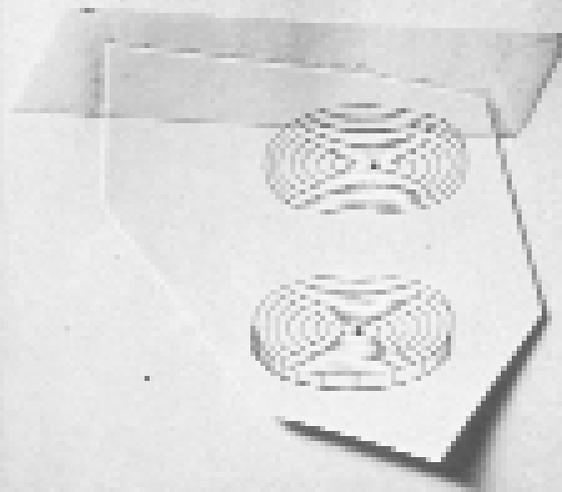
Robert Rauschenberg
Storyline I (Bonnie and Clyde), 1968
From *Reels (B+C) Series*
Lithograph
21 1/4" x 17"

200. hey, that COULD, I never found
a 5 in me what I didn't put
there

201 my life in two worlds



202
He reads with Salcedo's name on them
the videotape with one line on them



203
THE LEFT YOU KNOW THE MORE I FEEL
THE MORE YOU KNOW THE MORE I FEEL
THE MORE YOU KNOW THE LESS I FEEL
THE LESS YOU KNOW THE LESS I FEEL

Rauschenberg lets the viewer determine the course. His open-endedness leads me down a thousand paths; at times this type of freedom is revelatory, at other times it's debilitating.

Looking for temporary solace, I turn to the work of artists whose vision is so impenetrable that impure moments never sully the view. Clarity abounds in the eloquently distilled vision of Ellsworth Kelly or the unitary world of Donald Judd—and then it's back to the fray. Dieter Roth's artist books and his *Speedy Drawings* deliver a visceral, pungent response to all that life offers. Whether contained within the pages of his books or let loose in the reckless focus of his drawings, Roth's approach takes nothing for granted. Through the combined forces of inclusive vision and audacious hand, Roth's experimentation with unlikely art materials such as cheese, chocolate, and molded dung further the stakes of making art out of dross. He takes a mordant look at the life of the artist in his book *Gesammelte Werke, Band 17, 1962*. Filled with comic sketches, cryptic messages, and confessional musings, the book calls to mind similar efforts by R. Crumb, Philip Guston, and more recently Sean Landers. In his book, Roth writes:

The less you show the more I see
The more you show the more I see
The more you show the less I see
The less you show the less I see...

I accept these words at face value. Like Lou Reed and John Cale's song about Warhol, they too are an ode to persuasive images; and contained within their contradictions are the chords of this artist/curator's unceasing infatuation with the nature of persuasive images, in and beyond this exhibit.

Vito Acconci
Flag Face, 1984
Three lithographs
20" x 30", 16" x 30", 12" x 30"







Kara Walker
Freedom (detail), 1997
Book with paper constructions
17" x 19"

SPEAKING IN TONGUES:

Addressing Questions of Identity in the University Art Collections

by Susan Hoffa

Step into the trappings of another's identity and you may reveal a great deal about yourself. One way to challenge the concept of identity and preconceived cultural construct is to speak with the visual vocabulary of another. This kind of crossover gesture, spoken in the vernacular of inclusion and exclusion, is particularly well-represented in the University's art collections. Works by Kara Walker, Gayle Johnson, and Yasumasa Morimura illustrate the value of taking on roles. Through seemingly familiar images these artists are able to explore the stereotypes, issues, and emotions which define us as a whole in society. And like the popular children's game, they ask you to discover "what's wrong with this picture."

Kara Walker has said that to be rendered black is to become half-invisible. Within her work silhouetted figures have the freedom to assume an alternate identity, an anonymity which enables them to play out powerful roles. Drawing from both slave narratives and kitschy romance novels, Walker sets the stage for a psychodrama in the exquisitely genteel language of plantation parlor games.

Silhouette, a traditional folk art, reached the height of its popularity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A pleasant diversion for ladies sequestered in their sitting rooms, silhouette has traditionally been considered a craft. In *Freedom: A Curious Interpretation of the Wit of a Negress in Troubled Times*, Walker has revived a marginalized art to reveal the surreptitious history of race in America.

Freedom is the story of an emancipated slave named N_. Following the dispersal of her master's property she sets sail for Liberia, a land which is described as sounding "remotely like a disease or a bit of genitalia." Packed into the cargo hold, N_ muses about a land where her brown skin means nothing, dreams of making love to her former master, and formulates a plan for racial harmony.

N_ preaches to her shipmates that this emancipation is a chance to be reborn as a society. Walker illustrates the soliloquy with a silhouette of N_, pipe in mouth, giving birth under a tree to a line of children whose exaggerated racial characteristics match her own. The reader is invited to pull a tab which moves the children in and out of her womb. This parade marches onto the final page of the tale, where N_'s weary traveling companions ignore the sermon and contemplate eating her.

The simplicity of form serves to highlight the reductive effect of the antebellum stereotypes embodied by Walker's silhouettes. Each character is reduced to an outline, clear-cut and empty. Ironically, these sharply delineated figures set in motion a tale with ambiguous protagonists. There are no sides, good or evil, no explicit condemnation: this is every stereotype for itself.

The figures themselves are charming, seemingly whimsical players in an all-American morality play. There is an elegance to the stark black-and-white silhouettes, yet the paper cutouts are deceptive in their beauty: the accessibility of the format allows Walker to address serio-comic undercurrents of American history to the fullest extent. Viewers are charmed just long enough to have the rug pulled out from under them in the most shocking way. This brutal bait-and-switch is at the core of Walker's mission to address the unspoken and empower the forgotten.

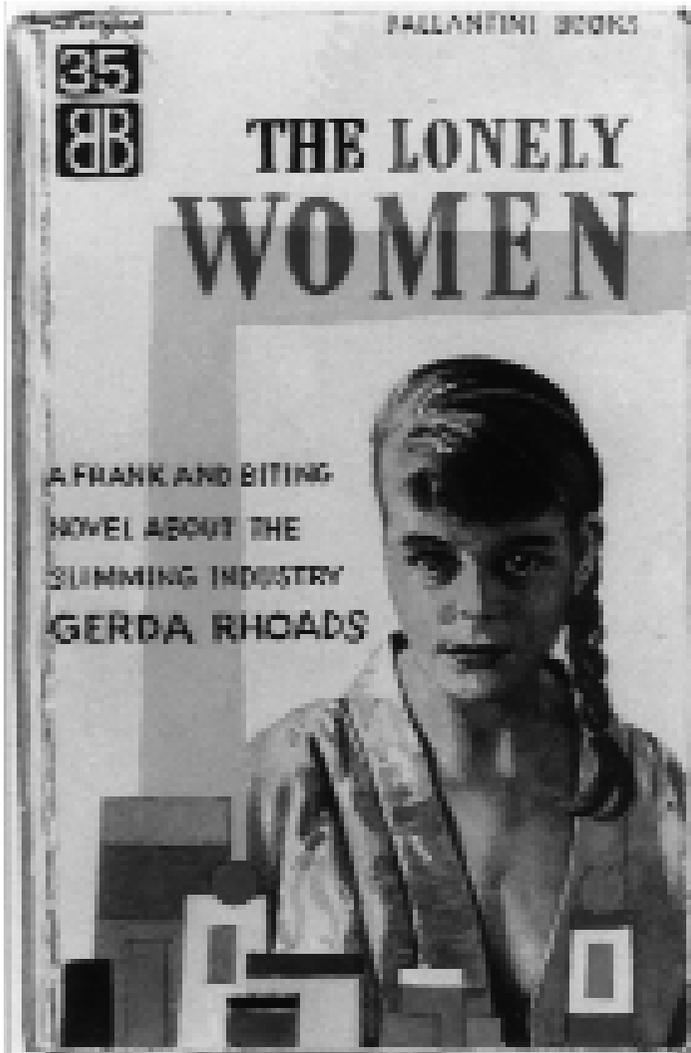
Walker's black-and-white tableaux are bold and startling in their examination of race relations in America. Other artists have taken a more subtle approach to this kind of social scrutiny, allowing the viewer to gain the impression of something more humble or familiar. Gayle Johnson's *Facts and Fictions Series* utilizes the visual vernacular of "pulp fiction"-style paperback novel covers. Her reassessment of this seemingly superficial art form highlights the powerful stereotypes and emotions inherent in their kitschy titles and overwrought cover art.

It is evident from the carefully delineated *trompe l'oeil* creases and dog-eared corners that these images are meant to appear frequently handled and thoughtfully rendered. Seemingly no detail has been spared, down to the prices and the shop-worn edges. Every brushstroke betrays the consideration given to their creation. These deceptively faithful re-creations portray nameless women defined by the titles over their heads. The sad stare of the ingenue and the knowing glance of the woman who's "been around" are framed and priced accordingly. The evocative titles, *The Lonely Women* and *These Items of Desire*, produce a multitude of questions and associations. Are these the "bad girls" we were warned about?

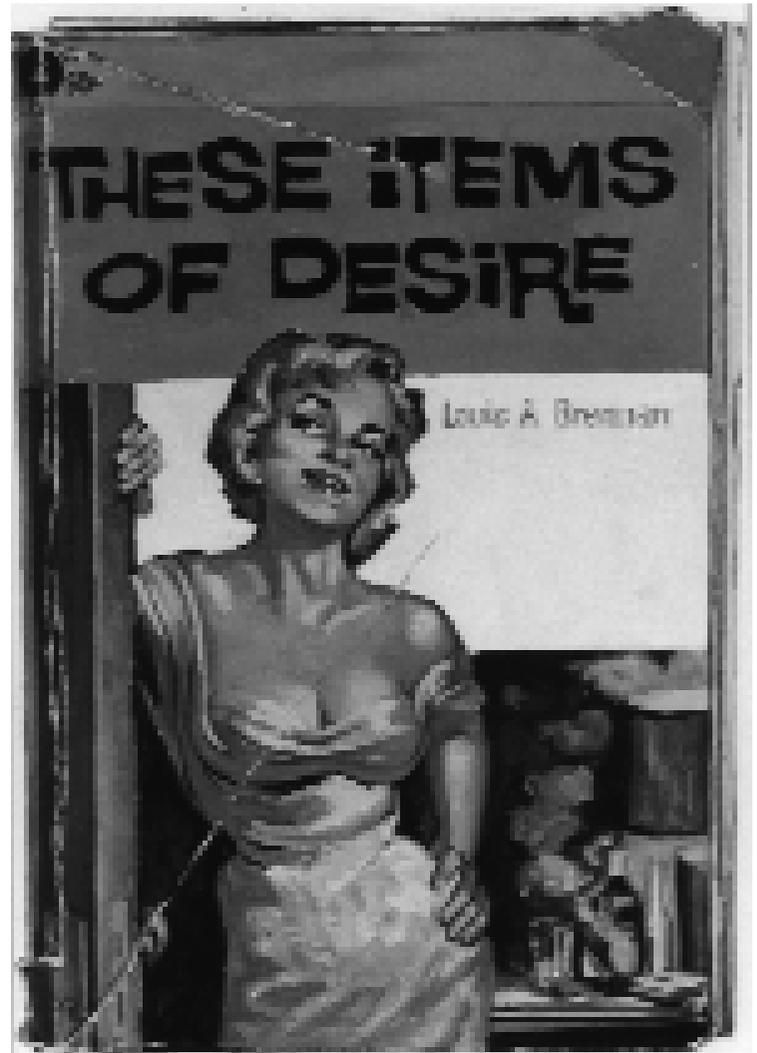
The kind of vintage paperback novels that Johnson references had their heyday from the late 1930s through the early 1960s. They were commercial products churned out with an appropriate emphasis on packaging. The authors of these tales often were not responsible for their titles and certainly had no control over the cover art by which their books would be judged. These editorial decisions were made to appeal immediately to the reader's first glance. In this sense they are an entity almost separate from the novel itself.

Marketed as cautionary tales and sociological studies, these serials were often little more than a salacious collective glare. In this capacity the human characters can be reduced to something as cheap and worn as the paperback covers. The images devised for these covers reflected the "types" that most interested literary voyeurs. In truth, these paperbacks provided an opportunity to capitalize on prevalent fears and attitudes toward sex and women. Scenes of violence with the appropriate female prey, "bad" girls, lonely types, rebels, and other deviants from society were often the most saleable subjects. It seems to be more than coincidental that women were being so prominently displayed as victims, ingenues, and captives just as they sought equality in the real world. In fact, these images were so interchangeable, their characters so predictable, that several books might be published with the same cover art. But on closer examination, *These Items of Desire* and *The Lonely Women* are different. Isolated from their original function, these tableaux are surprisingly more potent and poignant. In Gayle Johnson's depiction, the "types" stare back.

Johnson manages to restore humanity to the commodified roles of pulp fiction heroines. This kind of faithful yet sensitive transformation only serves to reinforce the impact of the original. Other re-creations address the original by less-faithful means. Rather than revealing the nameless person behind the stereotype, Yasumasa Morimura offers himself up for the role.



Gayle Johnson
The Lonely Women, 1993
From the *Facts and Fictions Series*
Gouache on paper
8 1/4" x 5 1/4"



These Items of Desire, 1993
From the *Facts and Fictions Series*
Gouache on paper
8 1/4" x 5 1/4"

Morimura is the primary actor, director, and producer of his pictures, but the scripts have already been written by us. Displaying a clear understanding of the power of recycled images, Morimura inserts himself into the roles of Western culture and stares out from them with Japanese sensibilities. In addition to race, Morimura also questions gender identity festooning himself in the literal and social trappings of Marilyn Monroe and other actresses.

Ambiguous Beauty, Morimura's paper construction, is the kind of strange hybrid form characteristic of his work. The fan, a quintessentially Asian art form, has been married to a decidedly Western photograph. What at first appears to be a familiar portrait of Marilyn Monroe is in fact Morimura himself. A brassy blond wig and unmistakably fake breasts only highlight his Japanese facial features and his gender. His confident stare only intensifies the awkward nature of the scene. He is asking you to consider his interpretation, and he is daring you to object to it.

Marilyn Monroe is not the first cultural icon Morimura has inhabited. He has already addressed five hundred years of Western art and culture, playing roles from the Mona Lisa to Michael Jackson. He has dissected the concepts of beauty and glamour, artistic creation and originality, and blurred the distinctions between the visual arts and theater.

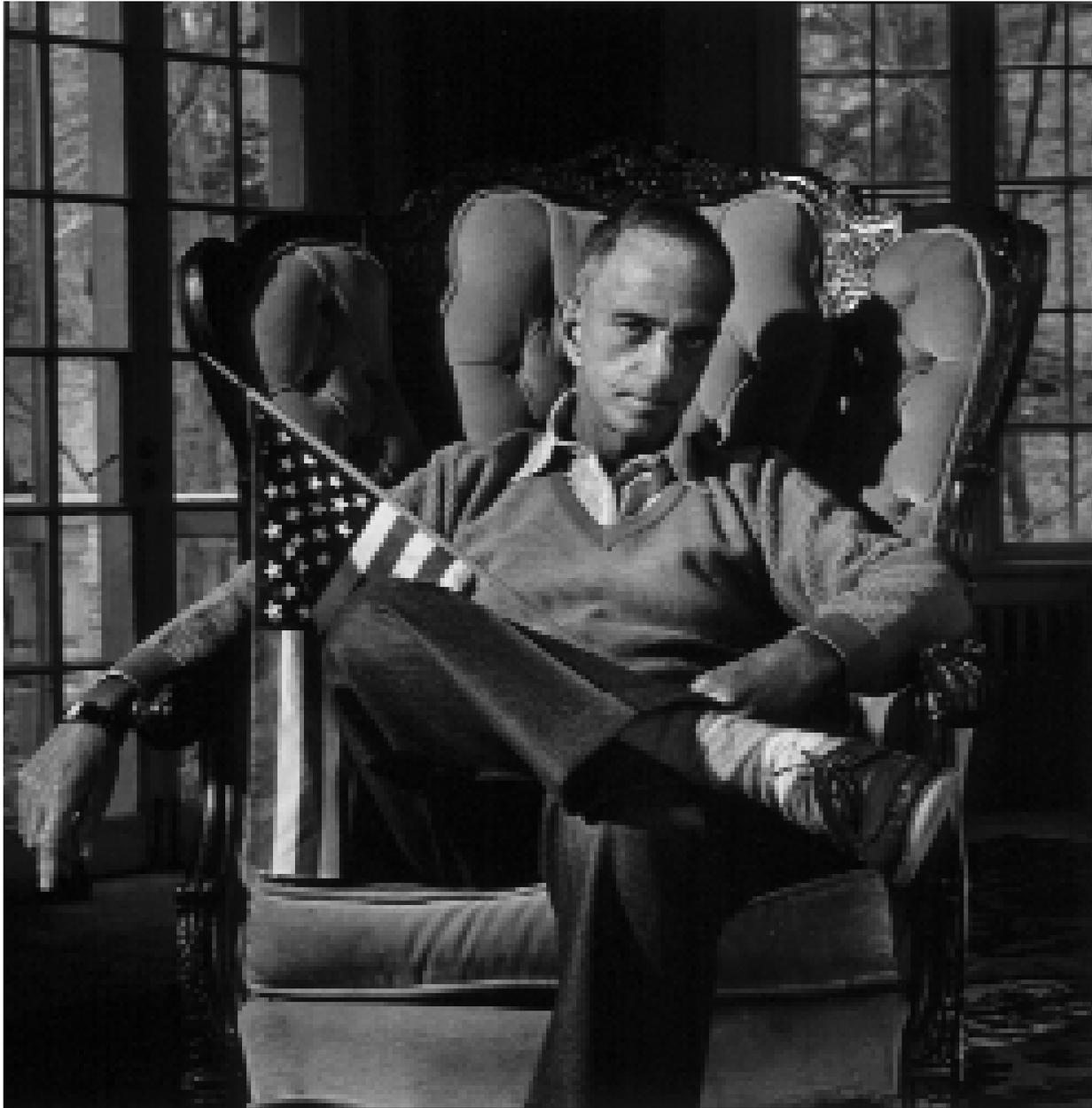
Every photograph that Morimura presents has been produced in the manner of a Hollywood blockbuster. Sets are built, makeup and costume personnel are consulted, camera angles are considered. The subjects he chooses—great paintings from coffee table tomes and women of the Silver Screen—are icons from the common culture that we all experience second-hand. In his *Actress* series, the artist has chosen to adopt the defining role of an actress' career. Vivien Leigh in *Gone With the Wind*, Elizabeth Taylor in *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof*, Monroe in *The Seven-Year Itch* are all explored in a spirit of both parody and reverence. Each piece is a study in the difference between seeing and being seen. Morimura recreates this packaging, developed to make desirable objects veritable "eye candy" for the viewer, and then perceptively returns that gaze.

In Morimura's work there is a constant tension between the impulses of assimilation and appropriation, submission and subversion. This disruption of the norm, the sheer absurdity of a middle-aged Japanese man in the pose and (un)dress of a twenty-year-old Hollywood sex goddess, is only the first level on which Morimura addresses us. These transformations are so involved that they border on self-obliteration, a way to comment from the inside. By applying an Eastern face to the Western goddess, Morimura is not only displaying his own submersion but the assimilation of the entire world by a Western, particularly American, culture machine.

A simple change of perspective reveals the unseen aspects of the familiar and the unspoken within the popular. Kara Walker, Gayle Johnson and Yasumasa Morimura explore the languages spoken by seemingly undistinguished cultural ephemera. The end product of all this role-playing is an insightful, disturbing, and ultimately cathartic art.



Yasumasa Morimura
Ambiguous Beauty / Aimai-no-bi, 1995
Paper construction
Fan (variable): 11 1/2" x 19 1/2"



Mary Ellen Mark
*Roy Cohn with the
American Flag 7/1986*
Gelatin silver print
11" x 14"

Exhibition Checklist

Vito Acconci

(American, born 1940)

Flag Face, 1984

Three lithographs

20" x 30", 16" x 30", 12" x 30"

Gift of the artist

Leonard Baskin

(American, born 1922)

Eakins, 1964

Etching

14" x 18"

Gift of the University at Albany Art Department

Isabel Bishop

(American, 1902–1988)

Students Walking, 1971

Etching

9 1/2" x 15 1/4"

Gift of Martin Shafiroff

Elizabeth Blum

(British, born 1958)

Heavy (Workload), 1996

Photocollage

24" x 25"

University at Albany Office of the President Alumni Purchase Award. 1997 Artists of the Mohawk-Hudson Region Juried Exhibition

Against the Mighty Mite, 1997

Photocollage

28" x 20"

University at Albany Office of the President Alumni Purchase Award. 1998 Artists of the Mohawk-Hudson Region Juried Exhibition

Mel Bochner

(American, born 1940)

Misunderstandings: (A Theory of Photography), 1969

From *Artists and Photography Portfolio*, Multiples Inc.

Ten offset reproductions of ten photographs with manila envelope

6" x 9" each

Manuel Alvarez Bravo

(Mexican, born 1902)

Dia de Todos Muertos, 1933

Photograph

8" x 10"

Gift of Robert Lesser

Cruce de Chalma, 1942

Photograph

8" x 10"

Gift of Robert Lesser

La Visita, 1935
Photograph
8" x 10"
Gift of Robert Lesser

Angel del Temblor, n.d.
Photograph
8" x 10"
Gift of Robert Lesser

Marilyn Bridges

(American, born 1948)
Lane Manned, NYC, New York 1985
From *Heightened Perspectives* portfolio
Gelatin silver print
11" x 14"
Gift of Adam Brown

Tweed Field, Le Roy, N.Y. 1981
From *Heightened Perspectives* portfolio
Gelatin silver print
11" x 14"
Gift of Adam Brown

Or Castillo from Perpendicular, Yucatan, Mexico 1982
From *Heightened Perspectives* portfolio
Gelatin silver print
11" x 14"
Gift of Adam Brown

Overview, Nazca, Peru, 1988
From *Heightened Perspectives* portfolio
Gelatin silver print
11" x 14"
Gift of Adam Brown

Larry Clark

(American, born 1943)
Untitled, 1963
From *1986 Survey* portfolio
Gelatin silver print
8" x 10"
Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Willem DeKooning

(American, born Netherlands, 1904–1997)
Untitled, 1967
From *Portfolio 9 Series*
Lithograph
17" x 22"

Richard Diebenkorn

(American, 1922–1993)
Seated Woman No. 44, 1966
Watercolor, charcoal, gouache and crayon
30 1/4" x 23 1/2"
Gift of the Faculty-Student Association and President Evan K. Collins to the Fine Arts Study Collection, University at Albany, State University of New York

Elliot Erwitt

(American, born 1928)
New York, 1949
From *Master Prints, Volume II* portfolio
Gelatin silver print
22" x 14 1/2"
Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Audrey Flack

(American, born 1931)

Time to Save, 1979

Photograph

20" x 24"

Gift of Stephen and Linda Singer

Juan Genoves

(Spanish, born 1930)

System of Vigilance, 1971

Aquatint

12 1/2" x 17 1/2"

Gift of Martin S. Ackerman Foundation

Broken Man (El Lugar y El Tiempo), 1971

Etching

12 1/2" x 17 1/2"

Gift of Martin S. Ackerman Foundation

Ralph Gibson

(American, born 1939)

Untitled (Curtain, Paris), 1984

From *L'Histoire de France* portfolio

Color photograph

11" x 14"

Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Untitled (Five Men, Paris), 1983

From *L'Histoire de France* portfolio

Color photograph

11" x 14"

Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Untitled (Divan, Paris), 1988

From *L'Histoire de France* portfolio

Color photograph

11" x 14"

Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Untitled (Painting On Easel, Hastings-On-Hudson), 1989

From *Theorem: A Portfolio of 10 Photographs*

Color photograph

11" x 14"

Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Untitled (Tapestry and Building, Hastings-On-Hudson), 1989

From *Theorem: A Portfolio of 10 Photographs*

Color photograph

11" x 14"

Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Leon Golub

(American, born 1922)

The Brank, 1984

From *Atelier Project 1983-1986*

Offset color lithograph

30" x 22"

Gift of SUNY Purchase

Manuel Guerra

(American, born 1969)

Por Querer A Una Burra, 1997

Etching

6 1/4" x 4 1/2"

University at Albany Museum Purchase. *1997 Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition*

Que Chillos se Miran Mis Padres, 1997
Etching
6 1/2" x 4 1/2"
University at Albany Museum Purchase. *1997 Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition*

Gayle Johnson

(American, 1953–1995)
The Lonely Women, 1993
From *Facts and Fictions Series*
Gouache on paper
8 1/4" x 5 1/4"
University at Albany Office of the President Alumni
Purchase Award. *1994 Artists of the Mohawk-Hudson
Region Juried Exhibition*

These Items of Desire, 1993
From *Facts and Fictions Series*
Gouache on Paper
8 1/4" x 5 1/4"

University at Albany Office of the President Alumni
Purchase Award. *1994 Artists of the Mohawk-Hudson
Region Juried Exhibition*

Donald Judd

(American, 1928–1994)
Untitled (Suite of 16 Etchings), 1978
Etching
35" x 30"
Gift of Martin Shafiroff

Ellsworth Kelly

(American, born 1923)
Untitled, 1967
From *Portfolio 9 Series*
Lithograph
17" x 22"

Untitled, n.d.
Screenprint
28" x 30"
Gift of Martin Shafiroff

Joseph Kosuth

(American, born 1945)
Notebook on Water 1965–1966, 1966
From *Artists and Photography Portfolio*, Multiples Inc.
Printed material
One piece: 14 1/4" x 22"; two pieces: 6" x 5 1/4";
eleven pieces: 9" x 11 1/4"

Roy Lichtenstein

(American, 1923–1997)
Explosion, 1967
From *Portfolio 9 Series*
Lithograph
17" x 22"

Richard Lindner

(American, born Germany, 1901–1978)
We Are All One, 1967
From *Portfolio 9 Series*
Lithograph
17" x 22"

Mary Ellen Mark

(American, born 1940)
Three Girls in Plaid, 1986
Gelatin silver print
11" x 14"
Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Roy Cohn with the American Flag 7/1986

Gelatin silver print

11" x 14"

Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Conrad Marca-Relli

(American, born 1913)

Ibiza, 1968

Collograph

20 1/2" x 25 1/2"

Gift of Martin S. Ackerman Foundation

Nicholas Monro

(Scottish, born 1936)

Cosmic Consciousness, 1970

Screenprint

40" x 27 1/2"

Gift of Martin S. Ackerman Foundation

Yasumasa Morimura

(Japanese, born 1951)

Ambiguous Beauty / Aimai-no-bi, 1995

Paper construction

Fan (variable): 11 1/2" x 19 1/2"

Gift of Peter Norton Family

Louise Nevelson

(American, 1899–1988)

Dusk in August, 1967

From *Portfolio 9 Series*

Embossed lithograph

17" x 22"

Helmut Newton

(Australian, born Germany, 1920)

16th Arrondissement, n.d.

From *15 Photos Portfolio*

Gelatin silver print

11" x 14"

Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Berlin Nude, n.d.

From *15 Photos portfolio*

Gelatin silver print

11" x 14"

Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Andy Warhol in Paris, 1974

From *15 Photos portfolio*

Gelatin silver print

11" x 14"

Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Roselyn in Arcangues, 1975

From *15 Photos portfolio*

Gelatin silver print

11" x 14"

Gift of Marvin and Carol Brown

Eduardo Paolozzi

(Scottish, born 1924)

General Dynamics F.U.N., 1970

Portfolio of fifty images, photolithographs, and screenprints

10" x 15"

Gift of Martin S. Ackerman Foundation

Stephen Poleskie

(American, born 1938)
Aerobatic Sky Art Project, 1979
From *Atelier Project 1983-1986*
Screenprint
30" x 20"
Gift of SUNY Purchase

Robert Rauschenberg

(American, born 1925)
Revolver, circa 1967
From *Artists and Photography Portfolio*, Multiples Inc.
Plastic disks and stand
9" diameter

Storyline I (Bonnie and Clyde), 1968
Lithograph
From *Reels (B+C) Series*
17" x 21 1/4"

The Week in Review, 1973
Screenprint
30" x 22"
Gift of J. Anthony Forstman and Joel B. Leff

Tim Rollins + K.O.S.

(American, born 1955)
The Temptation of St. Anthony, 1989
Aquatint
23 1/2" x 16 1/2"
Gift of the artist

Dieter Roth

(German, 1930-1998)
Gesammelte Werke, 125 Trophies, n.d.
Book
7" x 9 1/2"
Gift of Donald D. Phillips

Gesammelte Werke, Band 20, 1947
Book
7" x 9 1/2"
Gift of Donald D. Phillips

Gesammelte Werke, Band 18, 1953
Book
7" x 9 1/2"
Gift of Donald D. Phillips

Gesammelte Werke, Band 9, 1961
Book
7" x 9 1/2"
Gift of Donald D. Phillips

Gesammelte Werke, Band 17, 246 Little Clouds, 1962
Book
7" x 9 1/2"
Gift of Donald D. Phillips

Gesammelte Werke, Band 40, 1971
Book
7" x 9 1/2"
Gift of Donald D. Phillips

Edward Ruscha

(American, born 1937)

Baby Cakes, n.d.

From *Artists and Photography Portfolio*, Multiples Inc.

Book

6" x 7 1/2"

Neal Slavin

(American, born 1941)

Product Managers, 1979

From *Groups in America* portfolio

Color photograph

14" x 11"

Gift of Stephen and Linda Singer

Robert Smithson

(American, 1938-1973)

Torn Photograph from the Second Stop (rubble). Second Mountain of 6 Stops on a Section, n.d.

From *Artists and Photography Portfolio*, Multiples Inc.

Printed reproduction of color photograph

Approximate size: 11 1/2" x 11 1/2" each

Edward Steichen

(American, 1879-1973)

Charlie Chaplin. New York, 1925

Printed from the original negative by George Tice

Selenium-toned gelatin silver print

Mounted size: 16" x 20"

Gift of Stephen and Linda Singer

Gary Cooper. Hollywood, 1930

Printed from the original negative by George Tice

Gelatin silver print

Mounted size: 16" x 20"

Gift of Stephen and Linda Singer

Marlene Dietrich. Hollywood, 1931

Printed from the original negative by George Tice

Gelatin silver print

Mounted size: 16" x 20"

Gift of Stephen and Linda Singer

Greta Garbo. Hollywood, 1928

Printed from the original negative by George Tice

Gelatin silver print

Mounted size: 16" x 20"

Gift of Stephen and Linda Singer

William Tucker

(American, born 1935)

Untitled, 1986

From *Atelier Project 1983-1986*

Etching

44 1/2" x 32 1/2"

Gift of SUNY Purchase

Kara Walker

(American, born 1969)

Freedom, 1997

Book with paper constructions

8 1/2" x 9 1/2"

Gift of Peter Norton Family

Andy Warhol

(American, 1928-1987)

Elvis, n.d.

From *Artists and Photography Portfolio*, Multiples Inc.

Offset-photolithograph

9 1/2" x 11 1/4"

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The opportunity to present an exhibition of the University's art collections was both a privilege and a challenge. A privilege to become so well acquainted with the collection and its multitude of artists. A challenge, because to evaluate and choose from over 3,000 works is only the first step. The curators would like to sincerely thank those individuals whose support and assistance made this exhibition possible.

From the beginning, we have profited from the support of Museum Director Marijo Dougherty. The impetus for this project arose from her desire to showcase the strengths of the collection and her belief in our ability to present them.

The generosity and support of the museum staff has been essential to the realization of *Persuasive Images*. We would like to thank Zheng Hu, Exhibition Designer, for his enthusiasm and unwavering alertness to style. The physical reality of this exhibition profited greatly from the talents of Jeffrey Wright-Sedam, Museum Technician, and his student staff. Collections Manager Wren Panzella was a crucial link to the permanent collection, and her assistance was greatly appreciated. Joanne Lue, Museum Secretary, and her student assistant Brian Cronin provided guidance and support throughout the curatorial process.

In the course of production and research for this exhibition, we have relied upon the talents of others outside the museum. We are indebted to Jeanne Finley for her keen and unwavering editorial eye and to Visual Resources Curator Susan Travis for her photographic skills and good humor. Our efforts to present the collection in a fashion consistent with the artists' intentions led us to contact Marianne Stockebrand, Director of the Chinati Foundation. We would like to thank her for her prompt and expert assistance with our research on the prints of Donald Judd. We would also like to extend a special thanks to University at Albany student Brian O'Hare for his consistently capable assistance.

Finally, a debt of gratitude to the many fine professionals, talented alumni, and gracious donors who have made this collection and exhibition possible.

