

***MULTIPLEX: DIRECTIONS IN ART, 1970 TO NOW* HIGHLIGHTS DIVERSE STRATEGIES AND POSSIBILITIES IN CONTEMPORARY ART**

New Installation of Works from the Collection Explores Three Currents in Art of the Last Four Decades

Multiplex: Directions in Art, 1970 to Now

November 21, 2007-July 28, 2008

Contemporary Galleries, second floor

New York, November 20, 2007—*Multiplex: Directions In Art, 1970 To Now* comprises 72 works of contemporary art, on view from November 21, 2007, through July 28, 2008, bringing together painting, sculpture, prints, drawings, photography, and media works from the Museum's collection. The installation is organized thematically and presents three of what could be many distinct paths in art today. This is the most recent presentation in the Museum's second-floor galleries devoted to the contemporary period, which are reconfigured and reinstalled annually to show the Museum's vast collection of contemporary art from different viewpoints. This installation is organized by Deborah Wye, The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Chief Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books. It includes many recent acquisitions that reflect MoMA's commitment to contemporary art, including works by Jeremy Blake, Tacita Dean, Andreas Gursky, Rachel Harrison, David Hammons, Jenny Holzer, Lin Tianmiao, Sarah Lucas, Tobias Putrih, Richard Wright, Lisa Yuskavage, and Zhang Huan. Nearly half of the works included in *Multiplex* are on view at the Museum for the first time.

Multiplex takes as its starting point the period around 1970, when shifts in established values were taking place generally, and critical thinking about art began to embrace divergent practices. As Deborah Wye states: "It was a time when the term 'pluralism' came into wide use, and a narrow view of modernism, in which a mainstream flowed from one 'ism' to the next, gave way to a broader consideration of varying approaches." The traditional mediums of painting and sculpture began to be challenged by video, photography, performance art and other experimental modes. This broad framework for art continues today.

The first section of *Multiplex: Directions in Art, 1970 to Now* is devoted to formal and conceptual approaches to abstraction. The second deals with the thematic issue of mutability, in which change and memory play important roles. The final area explores art that provokes, whether ironic, humorous, outrageous, or disturbing. Together, they offer a perspective on the sense of vitality and openness in art since 1970.

Abstractions

The exhibition opens with several galleries that display varying ways contemporary artists work with an abstract visual language. Here there is painting and sculpture, along with work in

drawing, prints, photography, video, and digital formats, inspired by a range of sources, including mathematics, comics, architecture, maps, newspaper photographs, television signals, and scientific illustration.

Mathematical ideas have been at the root of Dorothea Rockburne's (American, b. Canada, 1932) work since her days at the experimental Black Mountain College in North Carolina. *A, C And D From Group/And* (1970) is a wall-size piece in which rolls of paper can define a site-specific installation that reaches from the floor towards ceilings of varying heights.

In the 1970s, Jack Whitten (American, b. 1939) moved away from an expressionist approach to explore experimental techniques for his works on canvas. The result was a series of paintings he called Energy Fields. *Kappa, I* (1976), from this series, shows his process of manipulating paint with a variety of tools, from Afro combs to squeegees to rakes and brooms.

Andreas Gursky (German, b. 1955), who is from the generation of photographers who came to prominence in the 1980s and '90s by challenging the primacy of painting through color and scale, is represented here by *Bahrain I* (2005), a recently acquired large-scale color photograph of a racetrack winding through a desert landscape.

For *The Shapes Project* (2006), Allan McCollum (American, b. 1944) employs a computer program to create an abstract composition representing each person on Earth. This system has the capacity to generate 31 billion shapes, far more than peak-population estimates for the mid-twenty-first century, when a decline is predicted to set in. A series of digital prints drawn from the project is included here.

Occupying a single gallery, Hanne Darboven's (German, b. 1941) *Wende >80< (Turning Point >80<)* (1980-81) comprises over 400 printed sheets, many of which are musical scores by the artist, accompanied by the sounds of one of her opuses. A pioneer of conceptual art who also trained as a pianist, Darboven created the scores from correspondences between her abstracted numerical system and musical notes.

Mutability

Works in this section reveal concerns with shifting perceptions of reality and self. The resonance of history, the passage of time, and the poignancy of memory are potent themes in works that explore elemental life forces, as well as transcendent experience. Since 1970, such impulses are found in Body art and Land art and in disquieting narrative modes of installation, performance, film, and video. In some works in this section of the exhibition, artists reflect on the fragility or the grandeur of nature and offer poetic interpretations of growth and regeneration.

Charles Simonds (American, b. 1945) began making outdoor sculptures he termed Dwellings early in the 1970s, situating them in spaces in the downtown Manhattan neighborhoods of the Lower East Side and Soho. This exhibition includes one of his indoor Dwellings, *People Who Live in a Circle. They Excavate Their Past and Rebuild it into Their Present. Their Dwelling*

Functions as a Personal and Cosmological Clock, Seasonal, Harmonic, Obsessive (1972), which the artist describes in terms of “mixed metaphors of landscape, body, house, and growth.”

Adrian Piper (American, b. 1948) is represented here with a series of photographs from 1971 entitled *Food for the Spirit*. It was made over a summer during which she studied Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* while following a strict regimen of fasting, yoga, and isolation. *Food for the Spirit* represents her need for contact with her physical self during this period of intense intellectual preoccupation.

Rheinmetall/Victoria 8 (2003), a recent acquisition by Rodney Graham (Canadian, b. 1949), is a short film depicting a 1930s German typewriter slowly covered by a snow-like substance. His filmed homage is projected with a 1961 Victoria 8 projector issued by the Italian company Cinemeccanica. He describes this piece as “two obsolete technologies facing off.”

With the video installation *Face I* (1995-1996), Li Yongbin (Chinese, b. 1963) conflates genders and ages as he superimposes the image of an elderly neighbor’s face over his own, straining to match his expression to hers. The work is part of a series of videos the artist has made employing his own face to probe varying psychological states and to trace the passage of time.

Nancy Spero (American, b. 1926) became active in the feminist movement in the 1970s, and began a sustained exploration of the place of women in history. Here a room-size installation of her work, *Notes in Time* (1979) is featured. Comprising 24 sheets and measuring more than 200 feet, it acknowledges the fragmented nature of the historical record as texts and imagery travel across epochs and continents, mutating through time and space. Another room-size installation is Louise Bourgeois’ (American, b. France, 1911) *Articulated Lair* (1986), an enigmatic structure that the artist sees as “a protected place you can enter to take refuge.” But she acknowledges that “the security of a lair can also be a trap.”

Provocation

Artists have long used irony, humor, irreverence, and even anger and fright to unsettle viewers and subvert their expectations. Precedents for this approach can be found in the Dada movement of the late teens and 1920s. More recent practices include the mining of mass culture, the adoption of the role of performer, the challenging of stereotypes and taboos, and the general overturning of standards of good taste and decorum. Critique or commentary is often the result as art strips away the veneer of artificiality from conventional social practice to reveal hidden truths.

In the late 1960s and early '70s, British artists Gilbert & George [Gilbert Proesch (b. Italy, 1943) and George Passmore (b. 1942)] were among the artists creating alternatives to traditional painting and sculpture. Donning conservative business suits, they became “living sculptures” through performances that often poke fun at proper behavior in a deadpan fashion, with frequent references to drunkenness, sexuality, and other bodily functions. They are represented in this

section by the 12-minute, black-and-white video *Gordon's Makes Us Drunk* (1972) and by *Live's*, a 1984 large-scale photographic installation, both of which depict the artists themselves.

Robert Gober's (American, b. 1954) *Untitled* (1992-93) is black-and-white photograph of the artist wearing a wedding dress. Gober, whose childhood was spent in the American suburbs of the 1950s and '60s, often focuses on everyday artifacts and contradictory attitudes representing that cultural period that still resonate today.

Sarah Lucas (British, b. 1962) is part of a generation known as Young British Artists (YBAs) that came to attention in the 1990s for its often-sensational subject matter. Many works, like *Oh! Soldier* (2005), blur masculinity and femininity. The artist has said, "I like to play around with gender stereotypes."

Big Business & The Making of Big Business (2002), by Clemens von Wedemeyer (German, b. 1974), is a 25-minute film based on a 1929 Laurel and Hardy slapstick comedy. In this remake, the plot remains the same: salesmen try to persuade a homeowner to purchase a Christmas tree in the middle of summer, and violent destruction ensues. Von Wedemeyer relocates the scene from the sunny suburbs to a German detention center, with prisoners playing the actors' roles.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Deborah Wye is The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Chief Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books, a position she has held since 1996. She joined the Museum's staff as Assistant Curator in 1979, was appointed Associate Curator in 1982, and Curator in 1990. Ms. Wye has curated more than 25 exhibitions for MoMA on a range of subjects. Among these are the first sculpture retrospective of Louise Bourgeois in 1982 and that artist's first print retrospective in 1994. Other exhibitions include *Eye on Europe: Prints, Books & Multiples: 1960 to Now* (2006) (co-curated with Wendy Weitman); *Edvard Munch: Symbolism in Print* at Scandinavia House (2006); *Artists & Prints: Masterworks from The Museum of Modern Art* (2004–05); *Modern Means: Continuity and Change in Art, 1880 to the Present* (2004) at Tokyo's Mori Art Center; *The Russian Avant-Garde Book 1910–1934* (2002) (co-curated with Margit Rowell); *Collaborations with Parkett: 1984 to Now* (2001); *Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and Print Collecting* (1999); *Joan Miró's Red and Black Series* (1998); *Pollock and Printmaking* (1998); *Chuck Close Editioned Work* (1998); *Thinking Print: Books to Billboards* (1996); *Joan Miró: Prints and Books* (1993); *Antoni Tàpies in Print* (1992); and *Committed to Print: Social and Political Themes in Recent American Printed Art* (1988).

Ms. Wye completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Massachusetts and received a Master of Arts degree from Hunter College, New York. Prior to joining The Museum of Modern Art, Ms. Wye was assistant to the curator in the Drawing Department, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University. Before that, she was an assistant at Lucien Goldschmidt, Inc., a firm dealing in prints, drawings, and rare books.

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