

INNOVATIVE DIRECTORS OF AMERICAN MUSEUMS

BY JAN GARDEN CASTRO

How is the deep recession affecting the museum world? Many—or, shall we say, most?—museums are downsizing staff, programs, and otherwise cutting costs. Curiously, there is also a high turnover rate among museum directors. How is it possible, then, that some museums are growing, building, expanding, and smartening-up their priceless collections? Several museum directors on our list point out that now is the time when we should turn to the arts to give us solace and pleasure; now is the time when new art infrastructures and programs stimulate economic and cultural growth in their communities.

The directors we've chosen are changing American museums by creatively addressing shrinking endowments, by embracing diversity, by attracting new and younger audiences, and by validating new technologies and art forms. In fact, most of the directors on our list are builders who have recently supervised or are presently supervising the construction of light-infused architecture

(Pictured): The lobby of the Asia Society's New York headquarters at 725 Park Avenue. Image by Frank Oudeman. Courtesy of Asia Society.

A SHORT GUIDE TO THE INNOVATORS SERIES

The Innovative Directors and Artists series grew out of our passion for art and desire to look more deeply into how disparate arts communities and artists are facing the most financially disastrous period since the Great Depression. To form our list, we polled foundation directors, museum directors, and gallery directors to arrive at a non-scientific list of museum directors and artists with new ideas. Of course, there are too many innovators to all be included here. We chose talented individuals fully and passionately engaged in their fields and moving beyond cautious institutional models. Our list does not imply rank; rather, it is a group of people whose achievements and arts contributions we strongly admire.

or new outdoor sculpture parks. They are transforming their indoor and outdoor spaces, using bright concepts of design, conservation, restoration, and installation. Of course, this calls for creative fundraising. In some cases, great patrons are stepping forward.

Just as photography was once outside the bounds of museum spaces, these directors have added film, performance, installation, and technologies. At the same time, stewardship of ancient art from cultures around the world is more important today than ever

before. Civilizations often track their histories through their artifacts, and these earliest mysteries and visions of life have much to teach us. In this vein, innovative museum directors give new life to—and fight for—freedoms we can never take for granted.

Now, on to career highlights for each director and their answers to one question: *Given the economic downturn and global strife, what are some aesthetic, financial, and cultural issues you're addressing at your institution?*



GRAHAM W.J. BEAL

DIRECTOR, DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Art has always been important to me and, as a child, I always wanted to be a painter. I turned to art history when I failed to get into any of the universities in England that offered studio classes but was accepted by Manchester University, that didn't—I can take a hint. After a graduate degree in 17th-century art from London University's Courtauld Institute and marriage to an American, I moved to the U.S. I gravitated to contemporary art, working as a curator at Walker Art Center and SFMOMA. As director at Omaha's Joslyn Art Museum, I began to grasp how removed our art historical framework was from what general visitors expected from art museums. Two museums later, the result is the visitor-centered installations at the DIA.

STATEMENT

One of the most striking things to come out of the extensive research conducted over the years leading up to the reinstallation of our collections was the degree to which general visitors looked to the museum as a place of solace and confirmation. Call it what you will—a tiny vacation, a reaffirmation of the good in humankind, the reassurance found in “Cultural DNA”—people visit art museums to find out about themselves. But to pursue this quest, visitors need first to feel in control. Introducing them to the specialist terminology/jargon of the connoisseur/art historian, more often than

not, has the opposite effect. “What does this have to do with me?” is the basic question people are asking themselves. Explaining that the term “Baroque” derives from the Portuguese word for a deformed pearl is not a good place to start an exploration of the profound faith and love of life that lie at the root of Rubens’ art.

Detroit is in permanent crisis, so current economic and political conditions are par for the course. We wanted to make our collections accessible to all and the institution a place to visit regardless of special exhibitions. As the great majority of our visitors are from our region, we want them to feel a sense of ownership, to regard the museum as their proverbial “Town Square.” After 18 months of the New DIA, I think most agree that we have done this without unduly disrupting

the more traditional gallery experience.

Apart from its great collection, the DIA is known for its perennial financial problems, and, despite the great generosity of many, these remain as bad as ever. Such problems were not the driving force behind the changes; they stemmed from the convictions and passion for art shared by many of us. We hope, though, by reaffirming the value of the institution, we will eventually be in a position to fix those financial problems permanently. □



JAMES CUÑO

PRESIDENT AND ELOISE W. MARTIN DIRECTOR,
ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. James Cuno became the President and Eloise W. Martin Director of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2004, halfway through the museum's largest expansion project since the construction of its original 1893 building. In May of this year, the city of Chicago celebrated the opening of this Modern Wing and, with it, the completion of the largest fundraising campaign in the history of cultural institutions in the city. Dr. Cuno is an active advocate and scholar on the issue of cultural patrimony and on the role of museums in civic life, and he has written and spoken extensively on these topics, most recently in his authored work,

Who Owns Antiquity?, and in his edited collection *Whose Culture?* For the past several years, he has developed programming with other cultural institutions (such as Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Project) to present at the Art Institute year-long themed seasons of exhibitions, lectures, performances, and readings—all with the goal of bringing together cultural production around such central ideas as American identities, cultural exchange, "art beyond borders," and, this year, the concept of the modern on the occasion of the opening of the Modern Wing.

STATEMENT

Here at the Art Institute of Chicago, we have taken a very long view of the current economic and cultural climate. Historically, museum attendance has increased dramatically during periods of economic stress, such as the Great Depression or the recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s. This fact tells us that museums provide solace, inspiration, and perspective during difficult times. Now more than ever, it is of paramount importance that we continue to uphold our mission as a truly civic institution. Most immediately, we are striving to remain as accessible as possible to all visitors, which we are able to do through offering more than 400 hours a year of free admission and by consciously designing our new addition, the Modern Wing, to create more civic space

in the form of our bridge into Millennium Park, our sculpture terrace, and our education center. All of these new spaces are completely free and open to the public. We aim to be at the center of the cultural life of the city by offering not just exhibitions and the display of our permanent collection but also by offering musical performances, lectures, poetry readings, and, this year, even a residency with one of the leading modern dance companies in Chicago. All of these efforts are, of course, accompanied by creative fundraising, but we are lucky that Chicago has always been—and continues to be—a city that generously supports its world-class cultural institutions. □

(Pictured): James Cuno. Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.



VISHAKHA N. DESAI

PRESIDENT AND CEO, ASIA SOCIETY

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. Desai is the sixth President and CEO of Asia Society, a leading global organization committed to strengthening partnerships among the people, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the United States. Dr. Desai sets the direction for the Society's diverse programs relating to culture, commerce, and current affairs—from major U.S.-Asia policy initiatives and national partnerships for global learning to path-breaking art exhibitions and innovative Asian American performances. Guided by Dr. Desai's leadership since 1990 and welcoming her as president in 2004, Asia Society has expanded the scope and scale of its activities, including opening new offices in India

and Korea, inaugurating a new center for U.S.-China relations, and developing new initiatives on the environment, Asian women leaders and partnership among the next generation of exceptional leaders in Asia and the United States. Dr. Desai managed the Society's \$40 million, Bartholomew Voorsanger-designed renovation of its New York City headquarters in 2001 and is overseeing two new multimillion-dollar building projects currently under construction: one in Houston designed by Yoshio Taniguchi and another in Hong Kong designed by Tod Williams Billie Tsien.

Prior to joining Asia Society in 1990, Dr. Desai was a curator at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and taught at Columbia University and other institutions.

STATEMENT

The financial crisis, more than any other in recent history, comes at a time when a seismic shift in world order is underway. For those of us who have been committed to furthering greater understanding among Asians and Americans, the crisis has also been a clear indicator of the growing importance of Asia, especially China, in the world.

Thus, at the Asia Society, while we have faced economic challenges (as have all cultural institutions in the country), we have redoubled our efforts in educating Americans about the nuanced nature of Asian cultures and societies.

Recognizing that during hard times more people visit museums to find an oasis of calm pleasures and thoughtful contemplation, we have committed ourselves to providing fresh perspectives on

*the arts of Asia. Our exhibitions *Hanging Fire: Contemporary Art from Pakistan* and the upcoming *Arts of Ancient Vietnam* (on view Feb. 2-May 2, 2010) are both designed to provide new dimensions to understanding countries with which the U.S. has engaged in a one-dimensional way.*

I feel strongly that during troubled times we have to be even more vigilant about our core mission without being afraid to experiment. This is the time to ask tough questions and be willing to let go of old habits, institutionally and personally. □

(Pictured): Vishakha N. Desai. Image by Jack Deutsch. Courtesy of Asia Society.



J E F F F L E M M I N G

DIRECTOR, THE DES MOINES ART CENTER

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

I was appointed Director of the Des Moines Art Center in the fall of 2005 and earlier served there in directorial and curatorial positions. I envision the Art Center as a leader in the contemporary art field, responding most often to younger artists in their first, one-person museum exhibitions, as seen in our numerous projects investigating the work of Cecily Brown, John Currin, Ellen Gallagher, Christian Jankowski, Tom Sachs, and Yan Pei Ming, among others. My focus as director has been and continues to be on welcoming diverse audiences, presenting qualitative art of our time, upgrading the physical facilities, and placing the institution on solid financial ground.

Prior to my positions at the Des Moines Art Center, I served over

sixteen years as senior curator and curator at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art. At SECCA, I organized two national exhibition programs: *Maya Lin: Topologies*, which toured nationally, and the Awards in the Visual Arts program, which helped gain recognition for Ann Hamilton, David Ireland, Mike Kelly, Andre Serrano, and numerous others.

STATEMENT

2009 is the best year yet for the Des Moines Art Center. We are presenting significant exhibition projects, enhancing our physical infrastructure, building new audiences, and opening a new sculpture park in the heart of the city. Challenging times often lead to creative thinking, and we believe this is the moment to reevaluate how the Art Center, with its three extraordinary buildings by Eliel Saarinen, I.M. Pei, and Richard

Meier as well as its internationally acclaimed collection of modern and contemporary art, accomplishes its mission.

The economic crisis is forcing us to create new methodologies for doing almost everything, from exhibitions to marketing to fundraising. Our community remains supportive, but our major challenge comes from diminishing returns on endowment investments. We realize that we do not necessarily have to do less; we just have to do what we do differently. Most importantly, the staff works to ensure that the institution is relevant to our community. A recent example is our major exhibition, After Many Springs: Regionalism, Modernism and the Midwest. This project contributed significantly to the overall cultural record while finding a noteworthy relationship to our community. The response, both at home and beyond, was impressive. While this way of thinking is not

always possible and not continuously required, contributing to and positively shaping our community should be.

The Art Center is doing this with the creation of the John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park, which opened in September. This unique collaboration between the city, the Art Center, and numerous donors is four-and-a-half acres in size with 24 major works by artists including Mark di Suvero, Jaume Plensa, Richard Serra, and Louise Bourgeois. This park has literally changed the aesthetic, cultural, economic, and social landscape of the community as it greets every downtown worker and visitor daily. By following our intuition and by positioning ourselves as a leader in the field, we have taken risks, and we will continue to do so even in the current climate. □

(Pictured): Jeff Fleming. Courtesy of Des Moines Art Center.



MICHAEL GOVAN

CEO AND WALLIS ANNENBERG DIRECTOR,
THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

As Chief Executive Officer and Wallis Annenberg Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Michael Govan oversees all activities of the museum, including art programming and *Transformation*, the multi-faceted building project that is expanding, upgrading, and unifying the museum's seven-building, twenty-acre campus. Since Mr. Govan's arrival at LACMA in 2006, he has realized his vision of engaging contemporary artists and developing the museum's historic collections, as evidenced by John Baldessari's installation of *Magritte and Contemporary Art: The Treachery of Images* and Jorge Pardo's innovative design of the Art of the Ancient Americas galleries. As part of

Transformation, Mr. Govan has additionally orchestrated the commission and installation of the artist projects that dot the museum's campus, beginning with Chris Burden's *Urban Light* and Robert Irwin's evolving palm garden.

Prior to LACMA, Mr. Govan was president and director of Dia Art Foundation in New York City, where he spearheaded the creation of the critically acclaimed Dia:Beacon. Prior to the Dia Art Foundation, he served as the Deputy Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, where his work extended to Guggenheim branches in New York, Venice, and Bilbao.

STATEMENT

Most cultural institutions are struggling in this economic downturn. Fortunately, LACMA has enough steady support from the county and its patrons to maintain most of our planned programs, including major exhibitions of Renoir, American masterpieces,

photography, and contemporary art. And thanks to the generosity of Lynda and Stewart Resnick, we will open our new Renzo Piano-designed exhibition pavilion in September 2010. In this economic downturn, it is even more important to invest in cultural and civic projects that can be shared by all and reflect the indefatigable creative spirit of Los Angeles. □



*ERIC
McCAULEY
LEE*

DIRECTOR, KIMBELL ART MUSEUM

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Eric McCauley Lee has been director of Fort Worth's Kimbell Art Museum since March 2009. During this time, the Kimbell has acquired *The Torment of Saint Anthony*, the only known painting by Michelangelo in the Western Hemisphere. Previously, Dr. Lee served as director of the Taft Museum of Art in Cincinnati and as director of the University of Oklahoma's Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art. A native of North Carolina, Dr. Lee received his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees, all in the history of art, from Yale University.

STATEMENT

The Kimbell Art Foundation, which owns and operates the Kimbell Art Museum, has weathered the current financial storm better than most. The economy has, however, affected the museum's membership and earned-income revenues. Fortunately, while—as always—monitoring

*expenses, we have been able to avoid significant cuts and will continue to present outstanding exhibitions and educational opportunities to the public. Acquisitions have long been the lifeblood of the Kimbell, and this tradition remains strong with the recent purchase of Michelangelo's *The Torment of Saint Anthony*. We are also moving forward with plans for a new building by Renzo Piano, with groundbreaking expected in late 2010.*

Admission to the museum's permanent collection is always free but there is usually a charge for special exhibitions. The museum is also offering a wide array of free programming, including family

activity days and a variety of lectures and gallery talks. As many in our community are choosing to forgo vacation plans and spend their time at home, we are an educational and entertainment option—as well as a refuge from the cares of everyday life—that our neighbors and friends turn to at little or no expense. □

(Pictured): Eric McCauley Lee. Courtesy of Kimbell Art Museum.



ARNOLD L. LEHMAN

DIRECTOR, BROOKLYN MUSEUM

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Since joining the Brooklyn Museum in 1997, Dr. Arnold Lehman has transformed the nearly 200-year-old museum by prioritizing the visitor experience, diversifying and expanding audiences, re-envisioning the permanent collections, and organizing an enormous range of highly regarded traditional and non-traditional special exhibitions. One of these shows, *Sensation: Young British Artists*, led to a highly publicized court case reported around the world in which the museum prevailed. Major capital projects have included a celebrated new front entrance and plaza designed by Polshek Partnership; the creation of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, the centerpiece of which is *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago;

new contemporary art galleries; and a massive climate control program.

STATEMENT

Last year, a record number of 80,000 visitors attended our Target First Saturdays, a monthly free evening of art and entertainment. First Saturdays, now in its tenth year, is a prime example of the museum's goal of engaging new, racially diverse, and younger visitors. By demystifying the museum experience, Brooklyn has engaged hundreds of thousands of visitors who had never been in a museum. The enormously lively 9-11 p.m. dance party and the exhibition galleries are overflowing, as are the art-making programs for families, dance performances, lectures, and films.

Every museum initiative—including our mission statement—focuses on the visitor experience;

every aspect of Brooklyn's far-ranging curatorial and educational activities is designed to speak directly to visitors, to let them feel that they are represented within our vast collection.

One of the most successful tools in building our new constituencies was the wholehearted adoption of new technologies: an interactive web site in which visitors can "tag" images of collection objects, exceptional blogging by staff members who invite and respond to comments, online exhibitions submitted and selected by web visitors, documentation of installations on YouTube, a new membership category on-line, cell phone-based exhibition and collection tours, and constant experimentation with every new media available.

The average age of visitors—now 35—dropped 20+ years in the past 10; more than 45% of our visitors are people of color. And to further our visitor experience goals, a massive multi-year climate

control project has given us the rare opportunity to re-envision the presentation of our renowned permanent collections from a 21st-century, global perspective, which reinforces our temporary exhibition and educational programs. Our educational and curatorial staff is wholly committed to this new way of thinking.

The Brooklyn Museum and cultural organizations worldwide have recently experienced extraordinary economic challenges. With the support of our dedicated trustees and outstanding staff, the Brooklyn Museum will continue to take the risks necessary to create new and highly engaged audiences while protecting and enhancing our great collections for the future. □

(Pictured): Arnold L. Lehman. Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum.



ANN PHILBIN

DIRECTOR, HAMMER MUSEUM, UCLA

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

In January 1999, Ann Philbin became director of the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Under her leadership, the Hammer's public profile has increased dramatically through the establishment of dynamic exhibitions and public programs. Ms. Philbin has also instituted an active acquisition program, the Hammer Contemporary Collection, and has overseen the building and opening of the Billy Wilder Theater in December 2006.

Prior to her arrival at the Hammer, Ms. Philbin was director of The Drawing Center in New York for nine years. Before taking the helm of The Drawing Center, Philbin was an independent

curator, organizer of large-scale public art exhibitions, and director of the Curt Marcus Gallery. Ms. Philbin sits on the board of directors of the Foundation for Arts Initiatives (formerly the American Center Foundation) and the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD). She is a past board member of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts (2000 to 2008). Ms. Philbin was also a committee member of the National Endowment for the Arts' Federal Advisory Committee on International Exhibitions as well as the Mayor's Los Angeles Economy and Jobs Committee (LAEJC).

STATEMENT

No doubt, we are all experiencing challenging times. The silver lining of the situation is that institutions are forced to be flexible and to think creatively about their programs and resources, which can lead to exciting innovation. For example, the Hammer has long suffered from not having a visitors' services department, which is standard at most museums. Resources would not allow us to simply build a new department. However, when the James Irvine Foundation invited us to apply for their Arts Innovation Grant, we took the opportunity to address our need for visitor services in a new and creative way.

Beginning in the fall of 2009, artists began work with our curatorial staff to create a new kind of interactive museum featuring an artist-driven visitor engagement and education program that encourages daily contact among visitors, artists, and museum

staff and activates the spaces, exhibitions, and Hammer website in imaginative ways. Artists explore and address all aspects of a visit to the Hammer, from basic amenities, wayfinding and maps to visitor engagement and the creative activation of spaces around the museum. The Hammer also intends to create more transparency between its staff and audiences by exposing some of the inner workings of the museum. For example, visitors may be presented with spontaneous opportunities to have a brown bag lunch with curators and the director or to visit the Hammer conservation studio. The Hammer has created an organic way of working with artists, not only in their capacity as object makers but also as problem solvers. They are helping us to be a better, more dynamic institution. □

(Pictured): Ann Philbin. Courtesy of Hammer Museum.



JOCK REYNOLDS

HENRY J. HEINZ II DIRECTOR, YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Jock Reynolds, the Henry J. Heinz II Director at the Yale University Art Gallery since 1998, is overseeing a major renovation and expansion of the Yale University Art Gallery's exhibition, teaching, and collection facilities. One recent curatorial project, *Sol LeWitt: A Wall Drawing Retrospective*, a collaboration of the Yale University Art Gallery, MASS MoCA, and the Williams College Museum of Art, opened in November of 2008 and will remain on public view for the next 25 years at MASS MoCA. He is currently organizing *Robert Adams: The Place We Live, A Retrospective Selection of Photography, 1964-2009*, which will begin an extensive tour of American and International museums in the fall of 2010.

(Pictured): Jock Reynolds. Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery.

As an artist, Reynolds has garnered numerous grants and awards, including two National Endowment for the Arts Visual Artists Fellowships, a Fulbright Fellowship, and multiple NEA Art in Public Places project awards. He frequently collaborates with his wife, Suzanne Hellmuth. Their performances, installations, and photographs have been commissioned, exhibited, and collected in Japan, Australia, France, the Netherlands, and across the United States.

From 1973 to 1983, he was an associate professor and director of the graduate program at the Center for Experimental and Interdisciplinary Art at California State University at San Francisco and also a co-founder of New Langton Arts, one of San Francisco's premier alternative artists' spaces. From 1983 to 1989, he served as the executive director of the Washington Project for the Arts (WPA), a multidisciplinary visual artists'

organization in Washington, D.C., which hosted the exhibition *The Perfect Moment: Robert Mapplethorpe Photographs* in 1989, one month after the show was abruptly cancelled by the Corcoran Gallery. Following his work at the WPA, he became the director of the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts and held the position until September 1998.

STATEMENT

In this time of economic uncertainty, I feel it is essential for museums to share their resources as generously as possible. Museums aren't meant to hoard their collections and expertise, and at the Yale University Art Gallery, my colleagues and I are making a concerted effort to reach out to sister institutions regionally and nationally to share our greatest

assets more broadly. By making it easier for other museums to host our traveling exhibitions with reduced loan fees or by collaborating with these institutions to develop new exhibitions and publishing projects, audiences who might not otherwise get to encounter and enjoy artworks from our collection can see them in their own communities.

We are also developing more efficient methods for shipping and packing objects in order to make it easier and less expensive for individual or small groups of objects to be on view for active learning at other college and university art museums. Opportunities for living artists to come to Yale to create new artworks in residence are also being expanded. At our university teaching museum, admission is always free in order to encourage people from all walks of life to partake in visual culture, whether for a few minutes or a whole day at a time. □



OLGA VISO

DIRECTOR, WALKER ART CENTER

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Olga Viso became director of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis in January 2008 following twelve years at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution (two of which she served as director). Viso oversees the Walker's operations and its multidisciplinary, international art programs. She has led the development of new, long-range plans for the next decade that will expand the Walker's collaborations across disciplines and more deeply engage artists and audiences. Viso's expertise in contemporary Latin American art is wide-ranging; she is the author of the book *Unseen Mendieta* (Prestel), which showcases the late Cuban artist's ephemeral, time-based artworks. Viso is also the originating curator of the traveling exhibition *Everything:*

Guillermo Kuitca, Paintings and Works on Paper, 1980–2008, which she originated while at the Hirshhorn and will coordinate when the exhibition is presented at the Walker later this year.

Under Viso's leadership, the Hirshhorn shifted its focus to present more contemporary international art in all media. She extended the museum's presentations and programs beyond the gallery spaces, engaging the public with artists and installations in the museum garden, building and around the city.

STATEMENT

As a multidisciplinary art center that presents emerging talents in the visual, performing, and media arts from around the world, the Walker Art Center takes seriously its mission to be a creative catalyst. That mission inspires us through the most challenging times. While taking risks can be difficult for many institutions in

the face of fewer resources, for the Walker staff, board of trustees, and its generous community of donors, finding innovative ways of working together to better serve artists and audiences has always been our practice. Now, we are ever more emboldened to direct our energies and resources to advance cultural production through the direct support of artists and to foster our local and global arts ecology. Indeed, this work has never been more urgent.

For the Walker, this means collaborating more in the coming year across disciplines, finding new partners in our community and beyond, inviting artists and other cultural thinkers to help us re-imagine the potential of the museum, and embracing anew our civic mission. It also means harnessing the power of technology to share and shape knowledge collectively and more broadly. ArtsConnectEd.org, developed jointly by the Walker and the Minneapolis Institute of

Arts, is a good example of the potential of this vision. This powerful, Internet-based gateway for teachers, parents, and students combines the collections of both institutions and brings arts education into schools and directly into homes as funding for education across the country diminishes.

Over the past decade, 25 Walker-organized exhibitions have traveled to 57 museums in 14 countries. 2009–2010 will be our most internationally diverse dance season ever, including Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Senegalese, and Brazilian performers, many commissioned by us. In the Walker Cinema, new films from Iran will be a highlight. With over six million users online, the Walker Channel will continue to expand the ways artists and audiences come together—both on site and online—to examine the power of creative expression and the questions that inspire and shape us as individuals, cultures, and communities. □

(Pictured): Olga Viso. Photo by Cameron Wittig. Courtesy of Walker Art Center.



ADAM WEINBERG

ALICE PRATT BROWN DIRECTOR, WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Adam D. Weinberg has been the Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney Museum since October 2003. From 1999 to 2003, he was the director of the Addison Gallery of American Art at the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. Mr. Weinberg began his career in 1981 at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. He left his post there as director of education and assistant curator in 1989 to join the Whitney for the first time as director of the Whitney branch at the Equitable Center. He then moved to Paris, where he was artistic and program director of the American Center. In 1993, Mr. Weinberg returned to the Whitney as curator of the permanent collection, and he was named senior curator

in 1998. He serves on many boards and panels, is the author of numerous essays and catalogs, and oversees the Whitney Biennial, the 75th of which opens in February 2010.

STATEMENT

The most important thing we can do in a challenging time like the present is look ahead with optimism. Nothing could be more hopeful than following where art and artists lead us. This is the credo of the Whitney Museum of American Art. We are deeply focused on the creation of another great Whitney building downtown. We're moving ahead carefully

with plans for its construction in the Meatpacking District. There, we hope to provide a cultural anchor for the neighborhood and for the recently opened High Line.

The new building, designed by Renzo Piano, will provide long-awaited opportunities for us to show more of our great collection of 20th- and 21st-century American art and will offer desperately needed space for performances, lectures, panels, and other public programs. We'll engage directly a bustling community of artists, gallerists, students, educators, entrepreneurs, and residents in Chelsea and Greenwich Village. Of course, the Whitney Museum was founded by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1930 in the Village, so we are returning to our roots, so to speak.

We believe the new building will be a work of great architectural imagination that will enable the Whitney to contribute to the

neighborhood and to the city for many years to come. Our process for designing this building is inside-out: instead of looking at a site and figuring out the maximum envelope, we are thinking about uses. This building is about art first, program first. Working with our staff; we are deciding—imagining—what our museum needs in order to be an important force within 21st-century art.

Any true neighborhood has to have a balance of forces within it, but it is culture that becomes an anchor to a neighborhood and provides a sense of permanence. As Renzo Piano says, museums are about duration, things that are longstanding—commitment, roots, community. You can go there and always find something that will stimulate your eyes, mind, and heart. □

(Pictured): Adam D. Weinberg, Alice Pratt Brown Director, Whitney Museum of American Art. Photo © Dawoud Bey. Art © Sol LeWitt/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



American Art Now...

TWELVE INNOVATIVE ARTISTS

BY JAN GARDEN CASTRO

What does it mean to be an American artist today? First, let's think beyond the old genres of painting, sculpture, and drawing. Let's add installation, video, mixed media, and more. Let's also realize that old categories—minimalist, abstract expressionist, and postmodern—do not fit today's art world. American art now—by which we mean art being made by innovators based in America—has departed from iconic work produced by Frederick Remington, Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer, Ansel Adams, and Alfred Stieglitz as well as the Hudson River, Ashcan, and New York Schools. Most of today's innovators don't nod to Jackson Pollock or Andy Warhol. This doesn't mean that they, alongside generations of artists, have not benefited from the ideas of others—just that each follows his and her own antecedents.

Historically, art makers transform

the field in association with others. Where would Jackson Pollock be, for instance, if Lee Krasner, Peggy Guggenheim, Clement Greenberg, and Kirk Varnedoe had not supported and otherwise facilitated his body of work?

In most cases, one hopes, pure aesthetics rule: the artist's hand, the meaningful gesture. Yet today, an artist's work may require multiple processes—the work of hundreds. It may explore the human condition, protest war, racism, hunger, sexism; it may even mime detestable states itself. As we journey from the once-shocking realism of Eakins' 1875 masterpiece *The Gross Clinic* to American art now, beauty may include or involve ugliness and gross exaggeration. Art may be the daily stuff of life writ large. Art helps us to see itself, as well as the world around it, anew.

Some art realized in a few years changes the field forever: Maya Lin's 1982 *Vietnam Veterans*

Memorial newly connected land sculpture, architecture, language, and viewer participation. Christo and Jeanne-Claude made further interconnections—nature, architecture, site, sculpture, textiles, socio-cultural phenomena, and recycling. Some art may be toxic, as Eva Hesse learned too late. Some artists mix science, art, technology, collaboration. Some grow budgets as big as corporations: Anish Kapoor's popular, historically significant, 110-ton sculpture *Cloud Gate* in Chicago's Millennium Park cost \$23 million.

What determines art's value? Some art serves the public; some relates to a particular site. Some art sets world auction records. Historically, powerful leaders—not monetary value—have been prime movers in the art world. Art markets, the public, patrons, and some institutions liberalized the art field during the late 19th century. Now that art markets have shrunk along with the rest of

the economy, we should consider that they are not the only index of an artwork's value.

Today's artists seem to have their collective eyes on world history. As Julia Peyton-Jones, director of the Serpentine Gallery in London, told *The Art Newspaper*, "As the world travels deeper into uncharted economic territory, the role of contemporary artists as social commentators is more relevant than ever. Significant developments in art history have often coincided with moments of great change. It will be interesting to see if today's climate produces new approaches to contemporary art and architecture." It has. These twelve artists have transformed some ways art is made and seen.

Bounteous thanks to those who contributed to research for this compilation. Each quotation is used with its author's permission.

(Pictured): Kiki Smith, *Maiden & Moonflower*. Wallpaper for Studio Printworks. Studio Printworks: 212.633.6727 or studioprintworks.com.



JEFF *KOONS*

Also in 2008, a solo show at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago exhibited 60 works.

Koons' work is in numerous public and private collections, and he has lectured at many distinguished institutions. His awards and honors include the 2009 Gold Medal for Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Arts Club, New York and the 2008 Officier de la Légion

d'Honneur, nominated by French President Jacques Chirac. In 2007, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, along with The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, developed the Koons Family International Law and Policy Institute for the purpose of combating global issues of child abduction and exploitation. □

Jeff Koons (b. 1955) has captured hearts—and auction records—with monumental sculpture of beloved icons from his ceramic *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* to the floral *Puppy* along with edgier images including nude self-portraits of himself and his first wife; basketballs floating in water tanks; pristine, sealed Hoover vacuum cleaner models; and soft porn versions of Popeye and his gang. He earned renown for his public sculptures such as the monumental, floral *Puppy* (1992), shown at Rockefeller Center and

permanently installed at the Guggenheim Bilbao. Another floral sculpture, *Split-Rocker* (2000), was installed at the Palace of Versailles in the summer of 2008.

Most recently, the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin presented a solo exhibition of Koons' large-scale *Celebration* sculptures, three of which were displayed on the Metropolitan Museum roof in 2008.



(Pictured): Above, Koons in his New York studio. Photo by Chris Fanning. Right, Jeff Koons' *Puppy* at the Guggenheim Bilbao. Courtesy of the artist.

LOUISE BOURGEOIS



inaugural exhibition at the Tate Modern in 2000, suggests that we variously isolate ourselves and hide our “skeletons” in different ways.

The potency and larger-than-life qualities of her images and themes is what makes her art great. Who doesn't know the Robert Mapplethorpe photo of Bourgeois carrying—or wielding—what appears to be a giant phallus?

What about those performance pieces and costumes from 1978? And her exacting humor? Bourgeois is a living treasure who deserves all of the honors she has received, including the French Legion of Honor medal presented by President Sarkozy at the artist's Chelsea home in 2008; the Praemium Imperiale Award in the sculpture category from the Japan Art Association in 1999; the Golden Lion for a living master of contemporary art at the Venice Biennale in 1999; and the National Medal of Arts presented by President Clinton at the White House in 1997. Her most recent retrospective exhibition, from October 2007 through May 2009, traveled to the Tate Modern, the Centre Georges Pompidou, the Guggenheim New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.

“My work has its own internal rhythms, and yet the outside world filters in slowly in an unconscious way,” The artist tells *Art and Living*. “I sense that everyone is struggling, and you feel it.” □

(Pictured): Left, Louise Bourgeois, 2008. Photo: Dimitris Yeros. Above, Louise Bourgeois' *I DO, I UNDO, I REDO* (1999-2000) installed in the inaugural exhibition of the Tate Modern at Turbine Hall (5/12/00-11/26/00). Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Cheim & Read, New York. Photo: Marcus Leith.

At 98, Louise Bourgeois is, in many ways, the mother of us all and seer of the past half century. After living in the shadows of her parents, restorers of tapestries in Paris, and in the shadow of her art historian American husband in New York, Bourgeois was given her due at 71 in a retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, and she's been knocking our socks off ever since. Using wood, marble, glass, bronze, fabric, print, and mixed media, Bourgeois is adroit at exploring taboo subjects—from the idea of the baby in the womb to her father's affair with her tutor and the many psychological issues that involve notions of home, self, family, and relationships. Even when Bourgeois is her most literal—using her own old clothes as pale, delicate reminders of former selves—she shows us the larger picture.

The artist often works in series. The anthropomorphic objects and images in her great spider series zero in on relations between mothers and their offspring. Her large scale tower series *I DO, I UNDO, I REDO*, installed in the



CHRISTO & JEANNE-CLAUDE

Christo and Jeanne-Claude (both born June 13, 1935) began their artistic lives as nomads and still selectively wander the globe. The early art of Christo is packages and wrapped objects. In 1962, Christo and Jeanne-Claude built a wall of multi-hued oil barrels blocking Paris' rue Visconti. Spot on! Oil, cylinders, and color turning a street into an iron curtain—doesn't that image foreshadow the last 50 years in world history?

Whether they are wrapping the Reichstag, erecting an orange curtain over a valley, or creating orange-saffron gates to celebrate Central Park's winding pathways,

their projects involve networking on many levels: they use art sales to privately fund their projects, which themselves raise world aesthetic and environmental consciousness.

Even though their reach is global, Christo and Jeanne-Claude have chosen to "settle" in New York. Their lasting contributions to American art include new ways of documenting work; planning and making site-specific work; and creating work that involves time, seasons, and impermanence.

Over the River, projected for 2013, will be sited on the Arkansas River in Colorado. At

the end of each public exhibition, the artists, along with their professional team and their workers, deconstruct the art, recycle it, and depart like ecology-minded gypsies. Their traces remain on film, in Christo's drawings and collages, and in the mind's eye.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude are represented in hundreds of museum and private collections world-wide. As they tell *Art and Living*, "We do not make statements. We create works of art of joy and beauty."

On November 18, 2009, Jeanne-Claude died suddenly as a result of complications due to a

ruptured brain aneurysm. Christo is deeply saddened by the passing of his wife, partner and collaborator and is committed to honoring the promise they made to each other many years ago: The art of Christo and Jeanne-Claude will continue. □

(Pictured): Above left, Jeanne-Claude and Christo during the installation of *The Gates, Central Park, New York City, 1979-2005*. Photo: Wolfgang Volz. ©Christo and Jeanne-Claude 2005. Above right, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Wall of OIL BARRELS - IRON CURTAIN - RUE VISCONTI, PARIS, 1961-62*. Photo: Jean-Dominique Lajoux. ©Christo 1962.

JOHN CURRIN

John Currin (b. 1962) is a virtuoso painter whose work draws from a startlingly diverse inventory of cultural reference—from Renaissance paintings to porn

magazines. His edgy imaginings of women in pneumatic full bloom or sagging decline and his pointed, iconographical depictions of class are rendered, paradoxically, with all the technical refinements and mannerisms of classical oil painting. In recent compositions, he sardonically equates women as sex objects with precious porcelain accoutrements, forcing a contemplation of the work that is as complex as it is titillating.

When philosopher/critic Arthur C. Danto reviewed Currin's 2004 Whitney Museum midcareer retrospective for *The Nation*, he dubbed Currin "one of the brightest art stars of the early 21st century." Pointing to the artist's rising market value, the "political incorrectness" of his lascivious images, and his high mannerist aesthetics, Danto noted, "At a time when most of his contemporaries would cite Warhol, Duchamp and Nauman among their influences, Currin invokes Bruegel, Cranach and Parmigianino."

Currin told Calvin Tompkins in a 2008 *New Yorker* profile, "I've always felt insecure about being a figurative artist and about being an American painter. To me, oil painting is inherently European. My technique is in no way comparable with that of a mid-level European painter of the nineteenth century. They had way more ability and technical assurance. It's like learning to play tennis when you're four or five years old—you know things you don't even know you know. I suppose in the end what I do is my version of being progressive—that I thought my only chance was to regress in the face of everything. I wanted my paintings to be difficult—I just didn't think they'd be difficult in this way." □



(Pictured): John Currin, *Shrouded Woman*, 2009. Oil on canvas. ©John Currin. Private Collection, Fort Worth, Texas. Courtesy of Gagosian Gallery, New York.

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MAYA LIN



Recently, Maya Lin had large exhibitions at New York's PaceWildenstein and at Storm King Art Center and a show of playful, smaller work at Salon 94, also in New York.

Lin has used a range of materials and processes to make art since the work that started it all—the *Vietnam Veteran's Memorial*—in 1982. Notably, this commission melded and reshaped several fields—drawing, architecture, site-specific sculpture, memorial art, and land transformation.

What is Missing?, Lin's latest memorial, debuted at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco on September 17 and will debut online at *whatissmissing.net* on Earth Day 2010. *Storm King Wavefield*, an earth sculpture that transforms a former gravel pit into seven acres of undulating waves, opened this spring.

Sacajawea State Park, the site of the newest leg of her \$27 million *Confluence Project*, comprised of seven sites along the Columbia River in Oregon and Washington states, is about to open. The project, reflecting Lin's commitment to linking aesthetic creations with habitat and species preservation and with the histories of Northwest Coast Native

Americans and Lewis and Clark, is a huge undertaking that speaks directly to America's cultural heritage and future.

Lin has stated that her "creative process balances analytic study based on research with, in the end, a purely intuited gesture." She employs tools such as models, grids, and topographic drawings as well as more advanced scientific technology (sonar and radar mapping, satellite photographs) to study and respond to regions of the natural world that are often impossible to observe with the naked eye. Among her notable architecture projects, Lin designed the 14,000-square-foot Museum of Chinese in America at 211-215 Centre Street, New York City, which opened in the fall. □

(Pictured): Left, Maya Lin, January 2009. Above, an installation view of Maya Lin's *Water Line*, 2006; *Blue Lake Pass*, 2006; and *2 x 4 Landscape*, 2006. Materials: *Water Line*: aluminum tubing and paint. *Blue Lake Pass*: Duraflake particleboard. *2 x 4 Landscape*: SFI certified wood 2 x 4s. Art: ©Maya Lin Studio, Inc./Courtesy of PaceWildenstein, New York. Photos by G.R. Christmas/ Courtesy of PaceWildenstein, New York.



Bruce Nauman's *Topological Gardens* earned him the Golden Lion at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009—the first Golden Lion for Best National Participation awarded to an American since 1990. This mixed media, multi-site investigation into the American psyche and culture includes his famed, subversive neon work *Virtues and Vices* along with a series of works that weave in and out of the themes of heads and hands, fountains and neons, and sound and space. At the awards ceremony, Paolo Baratta, president of La Biennale Foundation, stated that Nauman's work "reveals the magic of meaning as it emerges through relentless repetition of language and form." Michael Kimmelman of the *New York Times* wrote, "Bruce Nauman commands

center stage unlike any American representative since perhaps the young Robert Rauschenberg, 45 years ago."

Reportedly, Nauman (b. 1941) turned down a few previous offers to represent the United States in Venice before he agreed to work closely with Philadelphia Museum of Art curators Carlos Basualdo, Michael Taylor, and Erica Battle. The two new works

that had their international premiere in Venice are debuting stateside in the museum's current exhibition *Notations/Bruce Nauman: Days and Giorni*, slated to run until April 4, 2010. These two sound installations—in which voices emanate from directional, flat panel speakers, reciting the days of the week to tantalizing effect—proved an overall highlight for many visitors to the Biennale.

The artist's personal magnetism and aura is so powerful that Juliet Meyers, director of education and public programs at SITE Santa Fe and Mr. Nauman's studio manager, tells *Art and Living*, "He is a fine person who also happens to be a great artist. Bruce is awesome in every way and his work only gets better." □

(Pictured): Bruce Nauman portrait by Jim McHugh.

BRUCE NAUMAN



ROXY PAINE

dendroid sculptures are installed at museums and foundations including the Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle; Wanås Foundation, Knislinge, Sweden; Montenmedio Arte Contemporaneo NMAC, Cadiz, Spain; the St. Louis Art Museum, the Museum of Modern Art Fort Worth, and the

North Carolina Museum of Art. Upcoming installations are slated for the National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. and The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. □

(Pictured): Left, Roxy Paine, 2009. Photo: Jeremy Liebman. Below, Roxy Paine, *Roxy Paine on the Roof: Maelstrom*. The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. April 28 - October 25, 2009. Photo: Sheila Griffin.

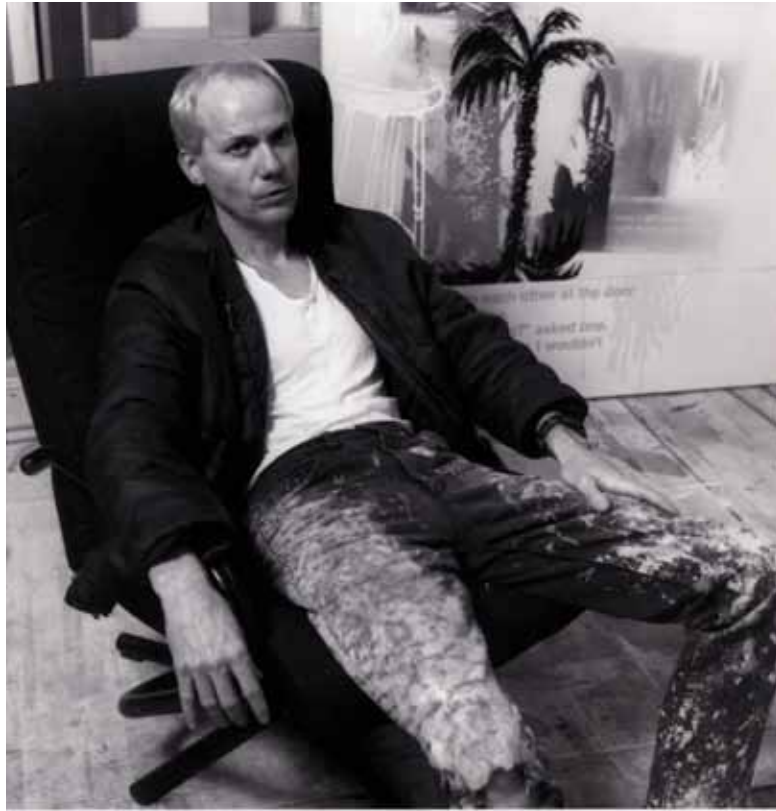
Roxy Paine (b. 1966) sculpts paradoxes that intermix beauty and death. Paine's art approaches Harold Bloom's take on *Hamlet*, being simultaneously "totally theatrical and totally inward." *Maelstrom*, his seven-ton, gleaming, welded-steel, monumental sculpture of wildly gyrating, tree-like forms, dominated The Met's roof for a season in 2009. As *Maelstrom*'s metal limbs mutated, at points resembling everything from industrial pipes to a berserk human nervous system, the work alluded to a range of things—from the 1908 Tunguska meteor strike in Siberia to brain activity during an epileptic seizure.

Paine uses irony and humor to invent forms that question the languages, processes, and materials of art-making. Paine's social themes include

environmental consciousness and natural and cultural disasters. His works combine the natural and synthetic, calling attention to the earth's ability to handle the toxins that humans create. In the 2009 Prestel book *Roxy Paine*, Eleanor Heartney links Paine's art to critiques of various art movements and examines Paine's statements that his machines employ different levels of language and intersecting languages.

Roxy Paine's work has been internationally exhibited and is in major collections such as the De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art, Tilburg, The Netherlands; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Whitney Museum of American Art. His





Born in 1949 in the Panama Canal Zone and currently residing in upstate New York, Richard Prince pursues his fantasies so intensely that we enter them. We know that Velázquez's Seville paintings, such as *Old Woman Poaching Eggs* (1610), took ordinary people as their main subjects and that Chardin was among the first to give the kitchen maid her close-up. In our era, Prince has followed his obsessions and laid bare their psychological trails and ramifications. His amazing oeuvre, including photos (or photos of photos) of cowboys, topless "girlfriends" on motorcycles, and

parties; paintings of nurses; and sculptures of car hoods, captures less lofty American dreams than those pursued by Hudson River or even Ashcan artists. His *Upstate* series shows a lone basketball hoop in a wilderness.

Spiritual America, titled after a Stieglitz photo of a gelded horse, juxtaposes Gary Gross's photo of a naked 10-year-old Brooke Shields with small religious and modernist statues. Regarding the work, Prince wrote, "You've got the management of an image, the questions of ownership of an image; finally you've got a big celebrity... And it's all happening



RICHARD PRINCE

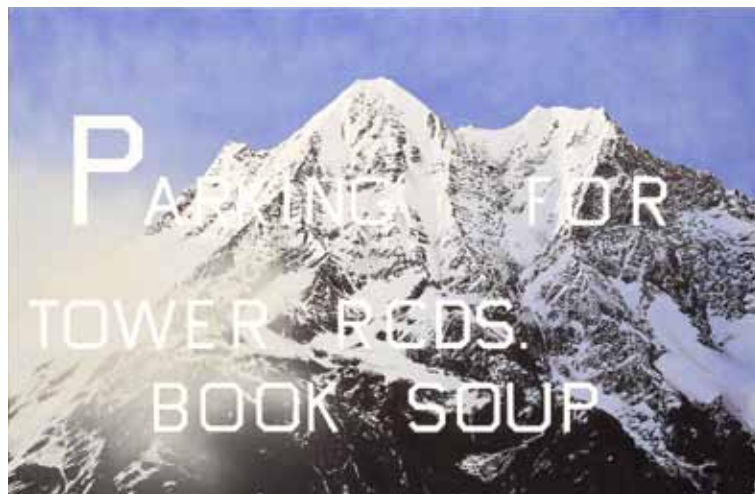
because of the truth or consequences of a photograph. The ecstasy of communication. It sounds like a bizarre game show. I don't know if any of the principals involved recognize exactly where the heart of the darkness is located."

Prince exposes the hypocrisies, the fantasies, and the realities of America. Curiously, *Spiritual America* was removed from its Fall 2009 *Pop Life* exhibition at the Tate Modern, London due to objections to its content.

Prince's work has been the subject of major exhibitions, including

the Whitney Museum of American Art; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg; Serpentine Gallery, London (2008). A retrospective survey of his work opened at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2007 and traveled to The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis in 2008. □

(Pictured): Above left, Richard Prince. Courtesy of Richard Prince Studio. Above right, Richard Prince, *Cowboys*, 1992. C-print. ©Richard Prince. Courtesy of Gagolian Gallery.



(Pictured): Left, Ed Ruscha, *Parking for Book Soup Tower Records*, 1993. Image courtesy of the artist. Below, Ed Ruscha. Portrait by Danna Ruscha.

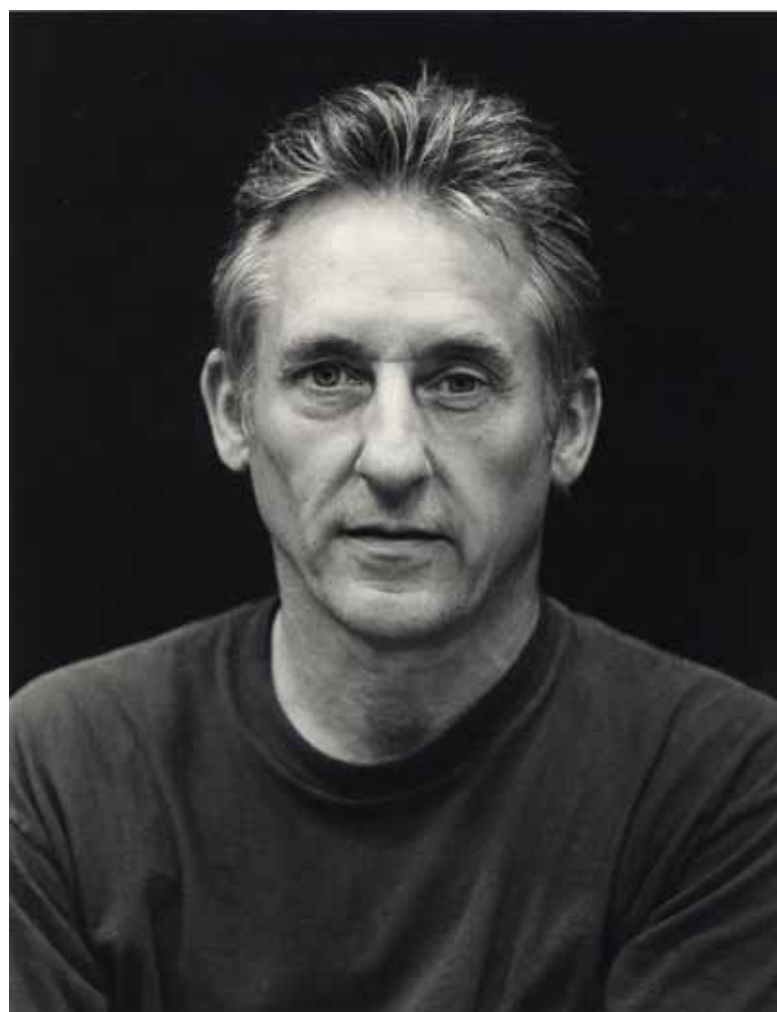
ED RUSCHA

Over the past 50 years, Edward Ruscha's incisive portraits of American culture have transformed American painting, offering new signs, language, processes, and perspectives. The artist, born in 1937 in Omaha, Nebraska, lives and works in Los Angeles. As his official web bio states, "Ruscha has consistently combined the cityscape of his adopted hometown with vernacular language to communicate a particular urban experience." In paintings, prints, photographs, drawings, light installations, films, and books, the artist has transparently focused on the ways that varied media deliver messages. His imagery, ranging from street signs to busted glass to pools, parking lots, gas pumps, and mountains, has influenced American and world art. Ruscha's language paintings show us the hard edges of words and how words become signs whose meaning may shift in different contexts. Ruscha has also experimented with a range of

substances, including gunpowder, blood, vegetable pigments, axle grease, and grass stains on a variety of materials.

Ruscha has been the subject of numerous museum retrospectives that have traveled internationally, including those organized by San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1982, Centre Georges Pompidou in 1989, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in 2002, and Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney in 2004. In 2005, Ruscha was the U.S. representative at the 51st Venice Biennale. In 2001, Ruscha was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In October 2009, he and Robert Redford were honored with National Arts Awards by the Americans for the Arts.

The artist's current retrospective at the Hayward Gallery in London (through January 10th) focuses exclusively on his paintings. In addition to exploring the impact



of print and graphic media on the artist's aesthetic strategies, it also focuses on the conceptual underpinnings of his approach to painting and on his incisive portrait of American culture. As

Larry Gagosian explains, "Richard Prince put it as well as anybody when he described Ed Ruscha as the West Coast Warhol." □



KIKI SMITH

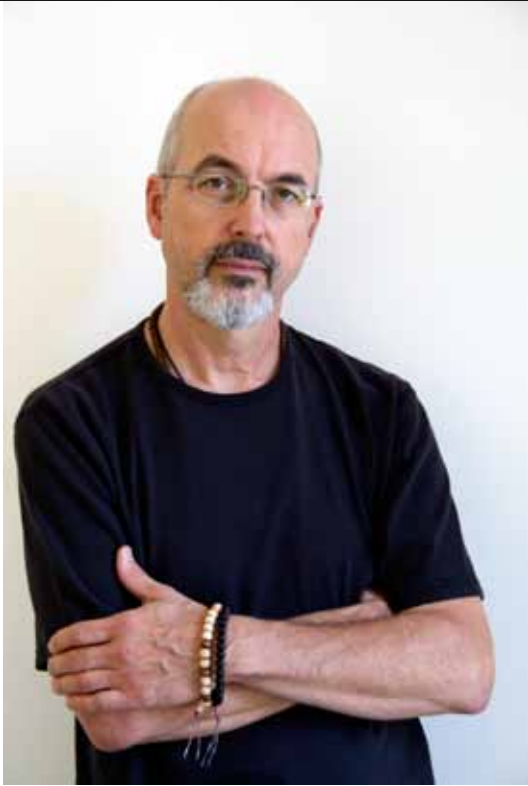
"I don't try to address any issues in my work," Kiki Smith (b. 1954) reveals. "My work has its own meandering course, and I try to follow it rather than impose any topical directive. We are certainly all affected by economic and global situations of the world. These, of course, impact our lives in sometimes overt and sometimes subtle manners, but there is no separation between our lives and our work. Work is, at best, a synthesis or a way for me to understand my life for a moment."

Smith has mounted over 150 one-person exhibitions at institutions like the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, and Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona, where her exhibition *Kiki Smith: Her Home* examined a woman's life from birth to death. From 2005 through 2007, the artist's retrospective, organized by the Walker Art Center, traveled around North America. Smith works in a wide range of media, from sculpture to prints; she has recently turned to stained glass and installation.

Smith was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2005. She received the Athena Award for Excellence in Printmaking from RISD in 2005 and the Edward MacDowell Medal and Brooklyn Museum's Women in the Arts honors in 2009. □



(Pictured): Above, portrait of Kiki Smith, 2007. Photo by Ellen Labenski/Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York. Left, Kiki Smith, *Realms*. March 14 through April 27, 2002. PaceWildenstein, 534 West 25th Street, New York City. © Kiki Smith. Courtesy of PaceWildenstein, New York. Photo by Ellen Page Wilson/Courtesy PaceWildenstein, New York.



BILL VIOLA

Bill Viola (b.1951) is internationally recognized as one of today's leading media artists. His potent themes combine Eastern and Western art and spiritual traditions, highlighting universal human experiences—birth, death, and the unfolding of consciousness. As part of his exploration of sense perception as an avenue to self-knowledge over the past 35 years, Viola has pioneered video installations, sound environments, electronic music performances, and flat-panel video pieces that envelop the viewer in image and sound environments. He developed his taste for exotic and earth-centered images and sounds during early experimental studies

at Syracuse University and his time in Florence, Italy; Southeast Asia; and Japan. In 2005, Viola, his wife/collaborator Kira Perov, and their two sons journeyed from their home in Long Beach, California to Dharamsala, India to record a prayer blessing with the Dalai Lama.

Music is an important part of Viola's life and work; his roster of musical collaborators includes composer David Tudor, rock group Nine Inch Nails, director Peter Sellars, and conductor Esa Pekka Salonen (for a Wagner opera at Lincoln Center and the Paris National Opera). Viola's works have been seen at venues including the U.S. Pavilion at the 46th Venice Biennale, 1995;

the Whitney Museum 25-Year Survey, 1997; the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin and the Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2002; and Tokyo's Mori Art Museum, 2006-2007 (one of his largest, best-attended exhibitions to date).

Bill Viola was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2000 and became a Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters in France in 2006.

His numerous awards include a 1989 MacArthur Foundation "genius" Award; MIT's 2009 Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts; and 2009's Catalonia International Prize. □

(Pictured): Left, Bill Viola. Below, Bill Viola, *Incarnation*, 2008. Color high-definition video on plasma display mounted on wall. Performers: Roxanne Steinberg and Oguri. Photos by Kira Perov.





KARA WALKER

Kara Walker (b. 1969) sees challenge within her work. “I am always partly aware of the way constructs like gender, race, class and nationality obstruct my understanding of art,” she says. “The challenge in making and viewing work is in embracing this kaleidoscope of often conflicting perspectives.”

The artist was born in Stockton, California and grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. She graduated from the Atlanta College of Art in 1991 and received her MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1994. She is the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Achievement Award (1997), the Deutsche Bank Prize (2004), and the Larry Aldrich Award (2005).

Walker’s works have been exhibited internationally in numerous group and solo shows. Her recent survey, *My Compliment, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, opened at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in February 2007 and traveled to the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles; and the Museum of Modern Art in Fort Worth. This

exhibition notably combined visual and quasi-literary modes, creating historical tales about the creation of “African-America” that also suggest present and future eras. As the artist told David D’Arcy (*Modern Painters*, April 2006):

“I don’t know how much I believe in redemptive stories, even though people want them and strive for them. They’re satisfied with stories of triumph over evil, but then triumph is a dead end. Triumph never sits still. Life goes on. People forget and make mistakes. Heroes are not completely pure, and villains aren’t purely evil ... whatever narratives people use to construct a group identity and to keep themselves whole—such activity has a darker side to it, since it allows people to lash out at whoever’s not in the group. That’s a contact thread that flummoxes me.” □

(Pictured): Right, Kara Walker portrait by Cameron Witting. Above, Kara Walker, *10 Years Massacre (and its Retelling) #3*, 2009. Mixed media, cut paper and acrylic on gessoed panel. Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

