

SMART TO THE CORE

# Medium / Image

Large Print Exhibition Texts



“Just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long historical periods, so too does their mode of perception. The way in which human perception is organized—the medium in which it occurs—is conditioned not only by nature but by history.”

Walter Benjamin “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility” (1936)

The world we inhabit is saturated with images. But when do you wonder how one or another medium—painting, photography, film, television, the computer screen—shapes your sensory experience? When do you pause to ask how visual media inform the history of human perception, not least the history of our present? Alone and in combination, images provide access to “reality” but that reality is always mediated. Mediation—the production, reproduction, and circulation of still and moving images—underlies convictions about *what happened* and visions of what might be.

Since Plato denounced artistic imitation (*mimêsis*) in the *Republic* (circa 375 BCE), philosophers have deliberated about the role of art in society while reflecting on different artistic media, from music and poetry to sculpture and architecture. No less forcefully, visual artists have for centuries produced works of art that highlight questions of mediation, representation, and illusion. They have made it clear that the image, however immaterial it may seem, has size and shape and weight. Images depend on platforms—on material substrata, on the materiality of media.

Organized by the Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry, *Smart to the Core: Medium/Image* is co-curated by Berit Ness, Assistant Curator of Academic Initiatives; Bill Brown, Karla Scherer Distinguished Service Professor in American Culture; Benjamin Morgan, Associate Professor in the Department of English; and Issa Lampe, Deputy Director for Academic and Curatorial Affairs and Director of the Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry, with assistance from Calvin Wang (AB'20), Daisy Coates (AB'22) and Ruofan Zhao (AB'24).

Support for this exhibition has been provided by the Carl and Marilyn Thoma Foundation, the Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry Fund, and the Museum's SmartPartners.

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# Metapictures

Engaging in a long art historical tradition, artists often reflect on their own practice and the general practice of image production by referring directly to themselves, their artistic media, the dynamics of representation, and systems of reception. Metapictures—or pictures about pictures—self-reflexively draw attention to the structures that underpin perception. The artists in this section consciously participate in such traditions, whether by exploring the mimetic medium of mirrors, reinterpreting a canonical painting through film and photography, reasserting the artist at work, or emphasizing the limitations and possibilities of various artistic media. In a counter-allegory of our surveillance culture, Daniel Rozin’s interactive digital work may depend on an image of *you*, as you become both spectator and spectacle, but that image dissipates “into” the medium. Among Kerry James Marshall’s many paintings about painting, this exquisite example grants his female artist, looking back at the spectator, full authority to represent herself. She may look like she’s painting by number, as though asked to follow a script, but she’s clearly and confidently breaking the rules. All of these artists address the pictorial and social apparatuses that can be said to function as a different order of media, mediating our ways of seeing and thus, most simply, what we see.

# Daniel Rozin

Israeli, active in America, born 1961

## Selfish Gene Mirror

2015

Interactive generative custom software (color, silent), computer, video camera, monitor

Collection of the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation

Introduced by biologist Richard Dawkins in the 1970s, the “selfish gene” theory proposes a gene-centric view of Darwinian evolution. Instead of individual animals or organisms that survive and reproduce, selfish gene theory suggests that genes and the traits they produce are the driving force behind natural selection.

Daniel Rozin’s *Selfish Gene Mirror* simulates the behavior of these so-called selfish genes over images of the viewer. Using custom software, Rozin’s work displays live images via a video camera, upon which strings of pixels compete to propagate. While mirrors and genes seem to be completely unrelated, they do share a propensity for reproduction—mirrors in their reflective capacity and genes in that they can be reproduced with near-total fidelity. Rozin’s broader artistic practice explores the capacity of human perception by building and programming kinetic mirrors out of unconventional materials, such as wood, stuffed animals, and trash.

# **Edward Steichen**

**American, 1879–1973**

## **Self-Portrait with Brush and Palette**

**From Camera Work, No. 2**

**1901; printed April 1903**

Photogravure

Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Photography  
at Columbia College Chicago

## **Published by Alfred Stieglitz**

**American, 1864–1946**

### **Camera Work, No. 2**

**1903**

Printed book with photogravures

Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center,  
University of Chicago Library

Edward Steichen was a prominent member of the Photo-Secessionists—a group of artists who advocated for the artistic value of photography. In its early stages, photography was more closely associated with scientific or commercial uses and not considered for its beauty or aesthetics. Originally published in the Photo-Secessionist's influential quarterly, *Camera Work*,

this photographic self-portrait of Steichen was made during a period when he continued to pursue both painting and photography, as evidenced by the palette and brush he is seen holding. The tension between the two mediums extends into the picture itself. An example of a genre called pictorialism, here Steichen manipulated his portrait during the printing process to create a softer, more painterly quality.

# Eve Sussman

American, born in England, 1961

## De Espaldas

2004

Still photograph from *89 seconds at Alcázar*

Courtesy Locks Gallery, Philadelphia

Eve Sussman's video work *89 Seconds at Alcázar* continuously meanders around the room depicted in Diego Velázquez's well-known painting *Las Meninas*. Struck by the transitory, snapshot-like quality of this iconic painting's figures in mid-gesture, Sussman sought to recreate the scene and imagine the animating moments before, during, and after its painting. This film still from the project, *De Espaldas*, or "backwards" in Spanish, compositionally relates to the Velázquez and is consequently destabilizing, as it both reproduces and subverts our assumptions about the original, which famously shows the artist himself working on a painting of subjects beyond the canvas.



**Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez**

Spanish, 1599–1660

*Las Meninas*, 1656 Oil on canvas, 126 x 111 in.

© Museo Nacional del Prado



# **Lee Godie**

**American, 1908–1994**

## **Daisies / Fall Leaves**

**circa mid-1970s**

Ink and paint on canvas, with applied photograph and stitching

Gift of Dennis Adrian in honor of Martha Renner

2015.119

**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT**

## **Bill Brandt**

**British, born in Germany, 1904–1983**

## **René Magritte with His Picture**

**“The Great War,” Brussels**

**1966**

## **Max Yavno**

**American, 1911–1985**

## **Aaron Siskind at Old Yuma Jail**

**1947**

## **Felix H. Man**

**British, born in Germany, 1893–1985**

## **Max Liebermann and Self-Portrait**

**1930**

Gelatin silver prints

Gifts of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.167; 2014.864; 2014.544

# Kerry James Marshall

American, born 1955

## Untitled (Painter)

2009

Acrylic on PVC

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago,

Gift of Katherine S. Schamberg by exchange

Kerry James Marshall's celebrated paintings confront the deeply rooted omission of Black artists and subjects in Western art history, often by including art historical references to interrogate and recontextualize the canon. From his series foregrounding Black artists at work, here a painter sits with brush and palette in hand at her unfinished self-portrait, which is charted out in a paint-by-number system. This image in an image offers a meditation on paintings themselves and their democratic potential. The gestural brushstrokes on the artist's large palette, reminiscent of Abstract Expressionist compositions, contrast with the fine rendering of the figure's face—demonstrating Marshall's own masterful handling of the medium.

# The Medium Has a Message

Images appear in many kinds of media: not only in artistic media like painting, photography, or cinema but also in bus station ads, doodles in book margins, tattoos on skin. The “medium” of an image is the material with which it is made and the context in which it appears. We often ignore a medium, focusing instead on what an image represents. But the medium itself always conveys meaning. Here, a seventeenth-century still-life painting by Abraham van Beyeren portrays a table laden with fruit, meat, and fine silver. But its medium—an oil painting—says something, too: that its owner is wealthy and that the painting itself, like the fine tableware it portrays, is a valuable possession. Although Laura Letinsky similarly depicts the remnants of a meal in *Untitled #37*, the medium of her work communicates something very different. Her subtle combination of magazine cutouts and images snipped from her own photographs among actual objects on this tablescape defamiliarizes the medium of a photograph, underlining the gap between the present image and the absent object it represents. Photographing replicas of objects that appeared in James Van Der Zee’s studio portraits, Lorna Simpson explores how the “same” object shifts meaning as it travels from one medium through others, moving from the background of a photograph to the foreground of a richly textured lithograph printed on wool. Gerhard Richter has overpainted photographs since the 1980s, bringing attention to idiosyncrasies in both painting and photography, and considering the problems and possibilities inherent in both mediums.

# Gerhard Richter

German, born 1932

**7. Dez. 2014**

**2014**

Oil on color photograph

Collection Brien O'Brien

In the mid-1980s, following his practice of translating photographs into paintings, Gerhard Richter began smearing oil paint onto his snapshots from daily life, which included images of landscapes, friends and family, travel photos, and visits to museums. Begun as private experiments, these overpainted photographs eventually spanned three decades, combining crucial elements from Richter's body of work.

In *7. Dez. 2014*, the photograph is both splintered and complemented by vibrant layers of paint. Its vivid colors correspond to subtle tonalities in the underlying photograph and Richter's undulating brushwork echoes the relationship between the waves and beach in the image below. In contrast, the paint's viscous sheen diverges from and brings out the photograph's flatness. This work intervenes in and elongates the brief temporality of the photographic moment, further expanding the dialogue between these two mediums.

# **Laura Letinsky**

**American, born in Canada, 1962**

## **Untitled #37**

**From the series: Ill Form and Void Full**

**2012**

Archival pigment print on Hanemuhle paper

Commission, Smart Museum of Art; Gift of the artist

2012.22

# Abraham van Beyeren

Dutch, 1620–1690

## Still Life

circa 1670

Oil on canvas

Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign,  
Museum Purchase through the Ellnora D. Krannert Fund, 1972-2-2

While many seventeenth-century Dutch still-life painters became specialists in a particular subject for stronger competition in the art market, Abraham van Beyeren was a generalist, well-versed in depicting a variety of objects. In this painting, Van Beyeren shows his mastery by imitating multiple surface textures—accentuating the soft tactility of assorted fabrics, gleam of silver vessels, matte-like qualities of porcelain, and the brilliance of flowers. On closer inspection, an image of the artist is reflected in the polished silver pitcher's surface. Six other vessels with the same self-portrait can be found in Van Beyeren's other paintings, disclosing his approach to composing still lifes. He would first record perishable and reflective items in a study, which would then be reproduced and rearranged in his other paintings, a process that calls attention to modes of reproduction before the advent of photography.

# Lorna Simpson

American, born 1960

## 9 Props

1995

Lithograph, mixed media

Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Photography  
at Columbia College Chicago

In *9 Props*, Lorna Simpson draws inspiration from and pays homage to the acclaimed photographer James Van Der Zee, whose work is included on the nearby wall. A prominent artist of the Harlem Renaissance, Van Der Zee is most celebrated for his portraits of Black New Yorkers, often taken in his ornately adorned studio. Simpson worked with fellow artists to recreate the vases, bowls, and glassware decorating Van Der Zee portraits. She then photographed these objects and printed them on felt—a material she has often deployed—along with a caption that carefully describes the original Van Der Zee. Through Simpson’s act of replication and rephotographing, as well as pairing the photos with descriptions of the original portraits, these objects become stand-ins for the very scenes they once graced—giving “props” to an artistic vanguard who came before.



# The Photographic Record

Fingerprints, fossils, stencils, and death masks—such objects have been used as metaphors to understand how photographs appear to physically imprint a moment in time and space. As theorist Roland Barthes put it, trying to capture the magic of the medium, “From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here.” And yet, since its emergence in the 1830s, photography has been entangled in a wide range of debates: about what reality the photographic image in fact discloses, about its impact on art, about its social power. What Edgar Allan Poe applauded (in 1840) as “perhaps the most extraordinary triumph of modern science,” poet and art critic Charles Baudelaire denounced (in 1859), claiming that the “invasion of photography” confirmed the stupidity of the masses by satisfying their addiction to reality. And yet, Frederick Douglass, one of the most photographed subjects in the nineteenth century, regarded photography as a democratic art that could both document the horrific facts of slavery and portray, via portraiture, the humanity of Black Americans. Of course, photographers themselves have repeatedly demonstrated the medium’s immense manipulability, which does not necessarily diminish its reality-effect. This section brings together a broad range of photographs, across time, place, and technique, to explore variations and technological innovations within this medium that helped to define modernity by fundamentally altering the world’s media ecology.

# Rafael Lozano-Hemmer

Mexican and Canadian, born 1967

## Pulse Index

2010

Interactive generative custom software (color, silent), computer, digital microscope, industrial camera, plasma monitor

Collection of the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation

Indexicality is a critically important facet of photography, where the traces of an image rendered through light on photosensitive paper signify a real, authentic occurrence. Even at a time when digital images can be easily manipulated, photographs are still viewed as factual and truthful.

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's *Pulse Index* captures and displays an image of the participating viewer's fingerprint beating at the rhythm of their pulse. The title is a play on words, referring to both the index finger and the indexicality of a fingerprint. Furthermore, the work ties this indexical trace left by the viewer to a larger act of "tracing"—surveillance—a common theme in Lozano-Hemmer's work. The pulsating images seemingly remain onscreen endlessly, becoming smaller with each new finger introduced. However, the images are lost once they are finally pushed out by hundreds of others. Describing this, Lozano-Hemmer remarked: "This is not a repository or an archive of these fingerprints but it's rather just a flow. We call it a *memento mori*, because it's just a reminder that we're here for just a little bit of time."

**You are invited to participate by inserting your finger into the scanner.**

# Dawoud Bey

American, born 1953

## Mark and Eric

1994

Six Polacolor ER prints

Partial Gift of the artist and Partial Purchase,

Paul and Miriam Kirkley Fund for Acquisitions

2006.14a-f

After developing as a street photographer with a small 35 mm camera, Dawoud Bey turned to formal studio portraits to forge a more reciprocal relationship with his subjects. He came to realize that the fleeting interactions in street photography more often “privileged the photographer at the expense of the subject.” The studio, however, offered a more neutral and contemplative space.

For this series of large-scale portraits, Bey gained access to a massive 20 × 24 Polaroid view camera, weighing 265 pounds, and invited friends and fellow artists to sit for him. Although the Polaroid produced prints instantaneously, Bey found that maneuvering the monumental camera along with a technician could be slow and laborious. *Mark and Eric*, like others in the series, is a portrait made up of multiple images. This arrangement provides further expansion of the subject and explores how photographs can comprise multiple moments rather than a single instant.

# **Eadweard Muybridge**

**American, born in England, 1830–1904**

## **Gallop: Thoroughbred Bay Mare (Annie G.)**

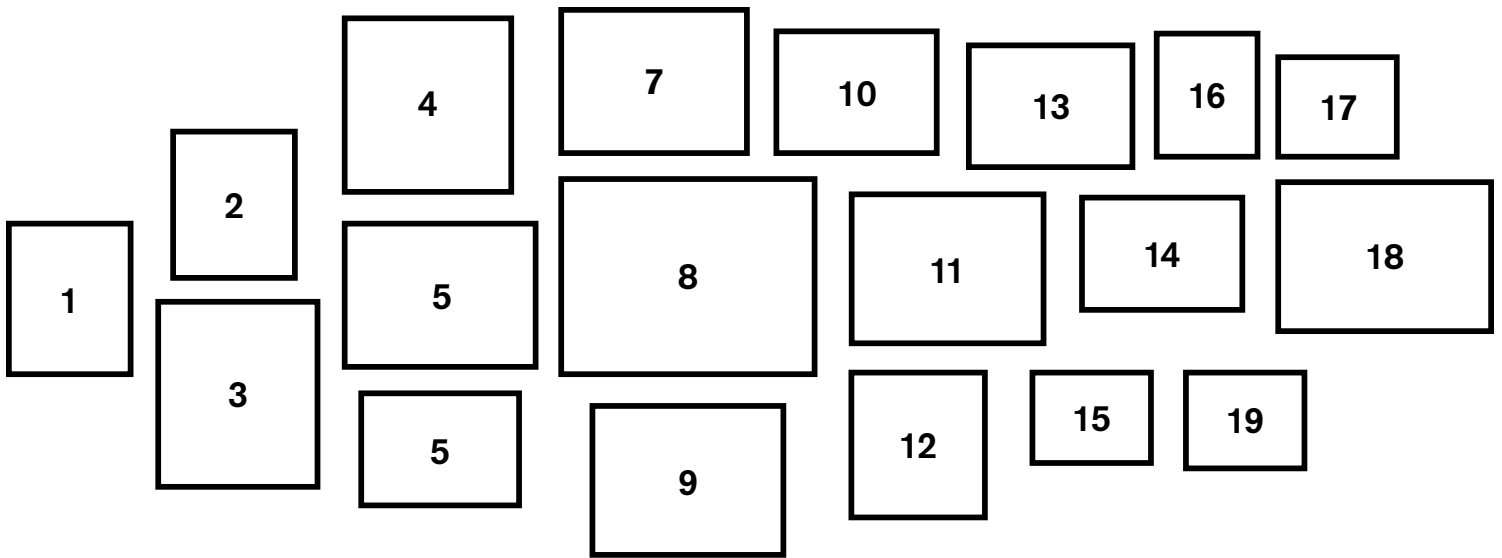
**From Animal Locomotion, plate 626**

**1887**

Collotype in printed portfolio

Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center,

University of Chicago Library



# 1 Hannah Höch

German, 1889–1978

## Masks: From an Ethnographic Museum (Masken: Aus einem ethnographischen Museum)

1929–1935

Gelatin silver print

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.400

## **2 Tina Modotti**

**American, born in Italy and active in Mexico, 1896–1942**

### **Yank and Police Marionette**

**1929**

Gelatin silver print

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.606

## **3 Toshiko Okanoue**

**Japanese, born 1928**

### **Floating**

**1952**

Photocollage

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.635

## **4 Manuel Álvarez Bravo**

**Mexican, 1902–2002**

### **Optical Parable (Parábola óptica)**

**1931**

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Joel Snyder

1981.83

## **5 Kenneth Josephson**

**American, born 1932**

### **Polapan**

**1970**

Internal dye diffusion transfer print

The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Ralph and Nancy Segall,  
2000.561

## **6 Bertha Evelyn Jaques**

**American, 1863–1941**

### **Untitled [Photogram of Plant Specimen]**

**circa 1900**

Cyanotype

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.432

## **7 Gordon H. Coster**

**American, 1906–1988**

### **Photogram (Cigarettes, Hands, and Matches)**

**1936**

Gelatin silver print

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.232

## **8 Abelardo Morell**

**American, born in Cuba, 1948**

### **Camera Obscura Image of Building Cluster in Office, LaSalle Bank, Chicago 2005**

Gelatin silver print, edition 2/30

The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Abelardo Morell,  
2005.125

## **9 Louis Faurer**

**American, 1916–2001**

### **Homage to Muybridge, Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 1940, printed 1991**

Gelatin silver print

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman  
2014.323



# 10 **Elio Luxardo**

Italian, 1908–1969

## **Marinetti**

**1930**

Gelatin silver print

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.531

# 11 **Lee Friedlander**

American, born 1934

## **New York City**

**1964, printed 1978**

Gelatin silver print

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.335

## **12 Sonia Landy Sheridan**

American, born 1925

### **Sonia in Time**

**From the portfolio: Photographs from the  
School of the Art Institute of Chicago  
1975**

Versatile Quality Copier (VQC-I) print

Gift of Arnold Gilbert

1981.61

## **13 Timothy H. O'Sullivan**

American, possibly born in Ireland, 1840–1882

### **Title Unknown**

**From the series: Expedition of 1871.  
1st Lieutenant George M. Wheeler.  
Corps of Engineers, Commanding  
1871**

Stereocard

Purchase, Gift of the Smart Family Foundation in honor  
of the 30th Anniversary of the Smart Museum,

2003.147.1d

## **14 André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri**

**French, 1819–1889**

**Untitled [Unidentified sitter, cancelled plate]  
circa 1860**

Albumen print from a wet collodion unmounted negative

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.271

## **15 William Henry Fox Talbot**

**British, 1800–1877**

**Effigy of Sir Walter Scott's Favorite Dog Maida  
by the Side of the Hall Door at Abbotsford  
From Sun Pictures in Scotland, 1845  
1844**

Salted paper print from a calotype negative

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.795

## **16 James Van Der Zee**

**American, 1886–1983**

### **Studio Portrait of a Woman**

**1943**

Gelatin silver print

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.819

## **17 Unknown Artist**

### **Untitled [Butterfly]**

**undated**

Cyanotype

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.871

## **18 Samuel Bourne**

**British, 1834–1912**

### **Bengali Village**

**1868**

Albumen print from a wet collodion negative

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.159

# 19 **Ottomar Anschütz**

**German, 1846–1907**

## **Lunging Ocelot**

**1889**

Albumen print

Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman

2014.95

# Daguerreotypes

Collection of Nicholas W. Skezas, MD

## 1 **Attributed to Platt D. Babbitt**

American, 1823–1879

**Untitled [Niagara Falls]**

1850s

## 2 **Unknown Artist**

American

**Untitled [Miniature Daguerreotype  
on Woven Hair Bracelet]**

1850s

## 3 **Unknown Artist**

American

**Untitled [Boy with Dog]**

1850s

## **4 Unknown Artist**

American

**Untitled [Hand-colored Portrait of a Man]**

1850s

## **5 John Adams Whipple**

American, 1822–1891

**Untitled [Harvard Medical School Class Photo]**

1850–1851

## **6 Unknown Artist**

American

**Untitled [Hand-colored Portrait of a Woman]**

1850s

## **7 Unknown Artist**

American

**Untitled [Hand-colored Portrait of a Woman]**

1850s

## **8 Unknown Artist**

**British?**

**Untitled [Military Portrait]**

**1850s**

## **9 Unknown Artist**

**American**

**Untitled [Portrait of a Woman]**

**mid-late 1840s**

## **10 Unknown Artist**

**American**

**Untitled [Portrait of a Woman]**

**1850s**



# The Original Copy

In one of the twentieth century's most widely read essays on the work of art, the critical theorist Walter Benjamin argued in 1936 that reproductive media (especially photography and film) fundamentally alter the status of all artwork. Technological reproducibility destroys the "aura" of the work of art—its "unique existence in a particular place," the "here and now of the original that underlies the concept of its authenticity." But this "shattering of tradition" also "emancipates the work of art," making its image available to anyone who, for instance, picks up a magazine. The destruction of aura has a democratizing effect.

As photographic and printmaking technologies rapidly advanced in the late-nineteenth century, artists themselves engaged questions about the status of the *original* and the status of the *copy*. The objects in this section complicate straight-forward assumptions around originality and reproduction. Comparing Childe Hassam's painting from the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago to a lithographic "reproduction" reveals differences that obscure the notion of a mere copy. And Marcel Duchamp's "portable museum" consists of carefully crafted miniature replicas of his major works, including several of his "readymades" and "assisted readymades," originally conceived from ordinary mass-manufactured objects that upended any suggestion of authenticity. Emerging from a postmodern perspective that demonstrates the originality of copying, Sherrie Levine's lithographs, made from photographic reproductions of Franz Marc's modernist paintings, interrogate how art can be regenerative, accumulating new meanings over time.

**LEFT TO RIGHT**

# **Childe Hassam**

**American, 1859–1935**

## **On the Lake Front Promenade, Columbian World Exposition 1893**

Oil on canvas

The Harold H. Swift Bequest, 1962

1976.146

## **An Autumn Day on the North Strand**

**From the portfolio: World's Columbian Exposition:**

**The Book of Builders**

**Published by The Columbian Memorial Publication Society**

Lithograph

Purchase, The Paul and Miriam Kirkley Fund for Acquisitions

2015.61.22

# Sherrie Levine

American, born 1947

## After Franz Marc: 1–6

1982

Six off-set lithographs

The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Mr. and Mrs.

Stanley M. Freehling, 1984.1558a-f

*We know that a picture is but a space in which a variety of images,  
none of them original, blend and clash.*

—Sherrie Levine

A pioneer of appropriation art and a prominent member of the loosely knit group known as the Pictures Generation, Sherrie Levine is known for her photographic reproductions of canonical male artists, including Walker Evans, Edward Weston, and, in this case, Franz Marc, a key figure of German Expressionism known for his paintings of animals. Levine's practice takes full advantage of the photographic medium and presents near-exact reproductions of these originals. Her work not only tackles questions of authenticity and originality in photographic reproductions but also urges new critical consideration of the artists and works she reproduces. Always conscious of the gendered dynamics in Western art history and mass media, Levine challenges the dominant status of both male artists and painting by recontextualizing Marc's work. In doing so, she offers a generative place for new associations, interpretations, and meanings.

## IN CASE

# Marcel Duchamp

American, born in France, 1887–1968

## Box in a Valise (Boîte-en-valise)

1963

Mixed media

Gift of Mrs. Robert B. Mayer

1983.30.1-15

In 1941, after gaining success and notoriety as a painter, multimedia artist, and pioneer of the “readymade,” Marcel Duchamp presented his most important works as miniaturized replicas assembled in a handheld suitcase. Spanning three decades, Duchamp produced more than 300 of these so-called portable museums, which combine the format of a retrospective exhibition with that of an album.

Most of the reproductions contained in these suitcases, which later evolved into more simplified boxes, were reproduced by artisans using a technique called *pochoir*, a painstaking process utilizing stencils and color applied deliberately by hand. To recreate his iconic readymade *Fountain*, a commercial urinal Duchamp inverted and signed, he commissioned a potter to make a miniaturized mold based on photographs of the original, which was then cast into multiples. Throughout this process of reproduction, Duchamp once again affirmed and privileged the artist’s creative act as choice.

# Looking

How is the simplest act of looking intertwined with social structures, and how do images augment the relations of power that those structures support? In the late twentieth century, critics began to analyze the persistence of gender politics across visual culture. Writing about Hollywood cinema, for instance, theorist Laura Mulvey argued that “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female,” with the “determining male gaze” projecting “its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly.” She also pointed to avant-garde practices that destroyed such pleasure by challenging that fundamental split.

The works in this section engage the gendered and gendering, racializing, hierarchizing gaze. Sophie Thun’s composite self-portraits present the artist (cast as both looking subject and looked-at object) emphatically staring back at the viewer as she grips her camera’s shutter-release cable and makes love to herself. Foregrounding figures who also powerfully return the viewer’s gaze, Endia Beal’s series *Am I What You’re Looking For?* dramatizes the constrictive and subjugating space of white-collar office environments. While Kenneth Knowlton and Leon Harmon locate the groundbreaking advent of digital art within the long tradition of depicting the female nude, Jason Salavon’s practice of aggregating and overlaying a decade of *Playboy* centerfolds defamiliarizes these images that have become synonymous with the “pleasure in looking.” And Dara Birnbaum’s pioneering video work emphasizes how seemingly benign mass cultural products reinforce internalized gender and social codes.

# Endia Beal

American, born 1985

## Sabrina and Katrina

From the series: *Am I What You're Looking For?*

2015

Inkjet print

Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Photography  
at Columbia College Chicago

*Corporate America is intimidating, but my hope to succeed allows it to also be promising. I feel like I will have to fight twice as hard to exceed my competition for respect and wage.*

—Sabrina, age 23

*I join the band of minority women in corporate America as a faceless heroine. I believe corporate has let go of its service toward humanity and I feel obligated to supply it.*

—Katrina, age 23

From the series *Am I What You're Looking For?*, this portrait of sisters Sabrina and Katrina illuminates the stifling nature of a white-collar office environment. Endia Beal inserts a backdrop of an archetypal corporate hallway into the space of her sitters' family homes, defamiliarizing this comforting environment. While the subjects, all young Black women, and their surroundings vary throughout the series, this intrusive background remains constant and unchanged. Beal interviewed the women as she took their portraits, allowing them space to relay their personal

experiences in the workforce offering critical testimonies to experiences of alienation and forced conformity.

# Dara Birnbaum

American, born 1946

## Kiss the Girls: Make Them Cry

1979

Video (color, sound), 6 min. 50 sec.

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Audio description:

The video opens with a rhythmic beat and a woman scatting.

She repeatedly sings the lyrics as they are written on the screen – her voice echoes. Singer Cheryl Lynn’s feature on Toto’s 1979 disco song “Georgy Porgy” plays, repeating the same lyrics:

*Georgy Porgy Puddin’ and Pie*

*Kiss the Girls and Make Them Cry*

When the screen goes to black, the woman from the beginning of the video starts singing again – her voice continues to echo. Ashford & Simpson’s 1979 disco song “Found a Cure” plays. The screen goes to black again and the woman sings again as the lyrics are written – her voice is distorted as she repeats “Love will fix it.” The video goes to yellow with two people singing the lyrics as written in a high pitch – they are out of tune. Their voices continue through the credits.



# Lynn Hershman Leeson

American, born 1941

## Seduction

1988, printed 2004

Gelatin silver print on paper

Collection of the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation

Lynn Hershman Leeson's photographs, sculptures, video work, and performance routinely present female "cyborgs," hybrid combinations of media technology and female bodies, often her own. In this black-and-white photograph, a woman lies suggestively at the foot of a bed. She's wearing a little black dress, high heels, and her head is replaced by a television displaying a close-up of her eyes, which are shut. In this series of photographs titled *Phantom Limbs*, Hershman Leeson replaces parts of female bodies with machinery, often visual apparatuses such as cameras, screens, and binoculars. This act of hybridization not only explores the increasingly uncanny nature of technological advancements, but more important, considers how images of femininity are captured, spread, and reflected in new media, as well as consumed by women.

# **Carrie Mae Weems**

**American, born 1953**

## **Not Manet's Type**

**2001**

Off-set photolithograph

Purchase, made possible by generous support from the Feitler Center

Curricular Art Acquisition Fund

2021.30

# Sophie Thun

German, born 1985

**Selbstbedienungstankstelle, 24.06.2019, KVG  
2019**

**Konkordia Strasse, 1.-2.06.2019, PMST  
2019**

**Martin Kremmer Strasse, 28.05.-7.06.2019, PMST  
2019**

Gelatin silver prints with contact prints and photograms on Baryta paper  
in artist's frames

Purchase by a donation from Dmitry Aksenov and Valentina Aksenov,  
acquisition selected by University of Chicago students at the  
Vienna Contemporary art fair  
2020.1-3

*I am interested in photography as a medium, and in what this medium  
does to people.*

—Sophie Thun

Sophie Thun uses her body as an apparatus to challenge the inherent  
violence she sees in image production. Although Thun is central to each of  
her photographs, she does not consider these self-portraits. Rather, she  
uses herself as subject to avoid the possible exploitation of others. Here,  
Thun assumes both the dominant and submissive positions of sexual acts

to speak pointedly, and humorously, to the power dynamics historically present in photography. By holding the photographs during the printing process—purposefully blocking light from hitting the emulsion of the undeveloped paper and leaving an image of her hands—she affirms her own role in the printing process and emphasizes how the act of image-making extends beyond the moment of shutter release.

**Jason Salavon**

**American, born 1970**

**Every Playboy Centerfold, The 1980s (normalized)**

**2002**

Digital chromogenic development print

Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Photography

at Columbia College Chicago

# Kenneth Knowlton

American, born 1931

# Leon Harmon

American, 1922–1982

## Studies in Perception I

1967

Screen print in black-and-white inks on paper

Collection of the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation

In this example of an early artwork made using a computer, Bell Labs engineers Leon Harmon and Kenneth Knowlton followed in the footsteps of Western art history's classical female nude. Created by scanning a photograph of the choreographer Deborah Hay and using an algorithm to convert grayscale values into differing symbols, the work solely focuses on Hay's naked, reclining figure. This enormous image, originally printed 12 feet long, accentuates her curves as her face is obscured. Initially hung in their colleague's office as a prank, this computer nude later gained infamy when it was published in *The New York Times* along with an article on art and technology. Despite the technological innovation, here the subject of art has not strayed far from its origins.