

Contemporary Gallery Installation

October 2015

Andy Warhol

American, 1928–1987

Diamond Dust Shoes, 1981

Polymer paint, silkscreen and diamond dust on canvas

Gift of Sydney and Walda Besthoff, 2012.10

Andy Warhol was a keen observer of American popular culture whose work often explores the darker side of pop. Warhol created his first images of women's shoes while working as a commercial fashion illustrator in the 1950s, and returned to the motif throughout his career. For Warhol, bejeweled stilettos epitomized the opulence and utter impracticality of American consumerism— qualities Warhol both adored and condemned. *Diamond Dust Shoes* revels in glitz and glamour while at the same time exposing its ephemerality, with Warhol's "diamond dust" making his shoes appear as spectral as the advertising images on which they are based.

Skylar Fein

American, born 1968

Black Flag for Georges Bataille, 2012 Acrylic on plaster and wood

Museum purchase, P. Roussel Norman Fund, 2012.89

Skylar Fein is a New Orleans-based artist known for his pop sensibility and hard-nosed politics. Fein's work often incorporates imagery drawn from American history and popular culture, from flags to magazine advertisements. Fein's *Black Flag* series envelops the American flag in a steady stream of bargain basement prices and cheap advertising slogans that run alongside texts written by famous political philosophers like Georges Bataille, calling attention to questions of economy and human value at the heart of how we define America. He had his first solomuseum show, *Youth Manifesto*, at the New Orleans Museum of Art in 2012.

Thornton Dial

American, born 1928

Lower Ninth Ward, 2011 Mixed media

Gift of Souls Grown Deep Foundation, 2014.38

Thornton Dial is a self-taught artist who grew up in rural Alabama. Inspired by a neighbor's found-object lawn sculptures, Dial began creating his own paintings and assemblages from discarded materials in the 1940s and 1950s. Although rooted in the American South, Dial's art addresses issues of global concern, from class and race to the war in Iraq, 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. Dial's *Lower Ninth Ward* is part of his larger *Disaster* series, which explores Hurricane Katrina, the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan, and the Texas drought as part of the same global environmental struggle.

Lynda Benglis

American, born 1941

Vulpecula, 1984

Bronzed wire, zinc and nickel

Gift of the Muriel Bultman Francis Collection, 86.149

In the 1960s, Lynda Benglis startled the art world with her electric-hued pours of polyurethane and provocative video and performance work. Benglis' art ran counter to the more austere aesthetic of much art of the time, especially minimalism. The sensuous, fabric-like folds of Benglis' twisted knots from the 1970s and 1980s countered this austerity, transforming materials often derisively dismissed as merely decorative—fabric, gilding, glitter—into dynamic works of art that challenged many of the biases of the art world at the time.

Regina Scully

American, born 1975

Cosmographia, 2015 Acrylic on canvas

Collection of the artist

New Orleans-based painter Regina Scully draws from map-making, cartography and the history of abstract art to create landscapes that feel both familiar and unknown. Referencing the urban look and feel of cities from New Orleans to New York, Scully's labyrinthine paintings distort perspective and fracture any coherent sense of space, simultaneously offering multiple perspectives and points of view. Her paintings convey our experience of the world as an amalgamation of diverse spaces and contexts, capturing the jumble of urban existence and offering a point of access to the subconscious mind.

Robert Colescott

American, born 1925

Pick a Ninny Rose, 1999 Acrylic on canvas

Collection of Claude Albritton

Robert Colescott's paintings investigate the role of racial and sexual stereotypes in American culture, using ribald humor and biting satire to capture the contradictions at the core of American cultural identity. In *Pick a Ninny Rose*, Colescott juxtaposes references to Mexican, Native American, Christian and African-American culture with imagery derived from American pop culture and cartoons, suggesting both the superficiality of racial and sexual stereotypes and their wide dispersion across all forms of American pop culture. Colescott studied with French painter Fernand Léger, and his roiling, brightly colored canvases reflect the influence of Cubism as well as Léger's progressive world-view.

Wayne Gonzales

American, born 1957

Seated Crowd, 2011 Acrylic on canvas

Museum purchase, Carmen Donaldson Fund,
2011.68

To create his meticulously hand-painted canvases, Wayne Gonzales manipulates and modifies found images until they bear little trace of their original source material. Gonzales sometimes culls his crowd scenes from photographs that document important historical events, and at other times alters anonymous images he finds online. Such scenes convey an ambivalent attitude towards crowds, capturing both their potential for collective action and also their frequent complacency. Gonzales often pictures his crowds as passive—seated, waiting—but his paintings also call attention to the power of human agency, implying that such crowds might come together as a positive force for social change.

James Rosenquist

American, born 1933

Pop Eye—Speed of Light, 2011 Oil on canvas

Gift of Sydney and Walda Besthoff, 2008.140

James Rosenquist began his career as a commercial billboard painter, and was one of the first American artists to bring the visual language of advertising into the realm of fine art. Rosenquist culls many of his images from advertising but often radically alters their size, scale and context. The mad rush of colors, shapes and textures in his *Speed of Light* paintings are reminiscent of modern forms of media like television, movies and the Internet. *Pop Eye—Speed of Light* captures the frenetic, fast-paced nature of contemporary American life, and explores its impact on our perception of space and time.

Radcliffe Bailey

American, born 1968

Untitled, 1997

Mixed media on wood

Gift of the Estate of Robert Gordy by exchange, 97.656

Radcliffe Bailey is a mixed media artist whose work explores themes of ancestry, race and memory. He often collages resonant imagery and materials drawn from his own past to create sculptures and installations that speak to larger, more universal cultural concerns.

Here, Bailey surrounds an old tintype photograph taken from a family album he inherited from his grandmother with a painted wood frame that variously calls forth African Kongolese power figures, the Georgian red clay of his childhood home, and modern spray-paint graffiti.

Kendall Shaw

American, born 1924

Emma Lottie Marches for the Right to Vote, 1979 Acrylic, glitter, buttons, jewels and mirrors on canvas with silver fringe and leatherette belting frame

Gift of James R. Lamantia Jr., 2000.155

Shaw created *The Emma Lottie Series* in remembrance of his suffragette grandmother, who was an important early Southern feminist activist as well as a skilled quilter and weaver. Creating minimalist squares of color out of ornate embellishments like glitter and jewels, Shaw transforms materials we might think of as merely frivolous and fun into meaningful social commentary. Originally from New Orleans, Shaw moved to New York to become an important early exponent of the “Pattern and Decoration” movement, which challenged the derisive attitude towards traditionally feminine forms of art-making like quilting and weaving in the 1960s and 1970s.

Sol Lewitt

American, 1928–2007

Inverted Spiraling Tower, 1987 Painted wood

Gift of Sydney and Walda Besthoff, 2012.12

Sol Lewitt's art bridges conceptual art, minimalism, and performance to create intricate sculptures and wall drawings based on elemental shapes and forms. Lewitt designed this colossal tower from basic white cubes that make the finished piece appear perplexingly weightless, as if hovering just above the ground. To create such large-scale sculptures, Lewitt often issued written instructions that invited the public to complete the work, showing how sophisticated structures like *Inverted Spiraling Tower* can develop from the repetition of simple building blocks.

