The New School's
University Art Collection
Walking Tour
2006/07

The Vera List Center
for Art and Politics

Public Domain

Public Domain: A thematic and partial tour of The New School Art Collection is the second-annual self-guided tour highlighting pieces from The New School's acclaimed University Art Collection, which is publicly displayed throughout the University's urban campus. The collection was established in 1960 with a grant from the Albert A. List Foundation and has grown to include over 1,800 works to-date.

The theme for this year's tour follows the 2006-2007 annual programmatic focus of The Vera List Center for Art and Politics: The Public Domain. Founded in 1992 and named after the late philanthropist, the Vera List Center organizes public programs dedicated to discourse on the role of the arts in society at-large. The Public Domain addresses areas of public exchange, interaction, and participation, and explores how individuals navigate these communal spaces: physically, socially, legally, and artistically.

The Public Domain. A thematic and partial tour of The New School Art Collection features ten works from The University Collection dispersed throughout five buildings. Not coincidentally, all of the work included in this program was created using print media. Overall, the selection of these works was guided by the idea that if making art can be a political act, then perhaps printmaking is the most radical of all methods.

Radical, in that creating a print is a fundamentally collaborative effort; there is an accessible grunginess to the process – cutting linoleum, inking plates, setting aside numerous wet prints in-process – it takes many hands to make this work light. Additionally, printmaking challenges many myths surrounding art and artists; it dispels the notion that art can only be created in solitude by a lone genius, and that a work of art acquires its value from its status as a unique, "original" object.

That a print is by its very nature mass-produced, it is the ideal activist medium – to disseminate information to the populous. So although printmaking is inherently democratic, it is also employed as a commercial mass-marketing technique, as well as a powerful tool for totalitarian propaganda. This ambivalence has given artists a visual language ripe for re-appropriation, using prints as carriers of effective social and political commentary.

From Claes Oldenburg's proposals of impossible monuments to Kara Walker's racially-charged shadow plays, the artists and works featured in this tour explore various aspects of The Public Domain. So whereas we encourage you to use this map to navigate The New School Art Collection, we also hope you'll veer off course: considering notions of public versus private space, as well as questions of authenticity, appropriation, consumerism, propaganda, and activism out in the public domain of the world itself.

The Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School is dedicated to serving as a catalyst for the discourse on the role of the arts in society and their relationship to the socio-political climate in which they are created. It seeks to achieve this through the organization of public programs that respond to the pressing social and political issues of our time as they are being articulated by the academic community and visual and performing artists. The center strives to enhance the university's educational mission by bringing together scholars and students, the people of New York, and national and international audiences in an exploration of new possibilities for civic engagement.

For further information on The Vera List Center for Art and Politics and on our upcoming public programs, please call (212) 229-3436 or visit www.nsu.newschool.edu/vlc/

Text by Carrie Schneider

Design by Neil Donnelly

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With thanks to Co-Curator Silvia Rocciolo and The New School University Art Collection

Printed with vegetable and soy inks on recycled paper using a chemical-free production process.

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4th Floor
General Idea
***AIDS*, 1987**
Silk screen print on paper
26¾ x 16¾ inches
One of an edition of 1,000

4th Floor
Bruce Nauman
***Partial Truth*, 1997**
Etching
22 x 28 inches
Edition 2/50

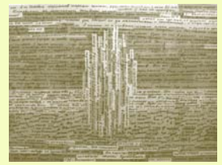
55 W. 13th Street

6th Floor: Guitar Center
Felix Gonzalez-Torres
***Untitled*, 1991**
Offset print on paper
One of an unlimited edition
45 x 38 inches

4th Floor
Adrian Piper
***Pretend #1*, 1990**
8 framed gelatin
silver prints
with silk screened text
Dimensions vary

Mezzanine
Erika Rothenberg
***Greetings*, 1993**
Silk screen print on paper
Edition of 125

5TH AVENUE



Mezzanine: Room M106
Conference Room
Svetlana Kopystiansky
***Untitled*, 1990**
From *The Moscow Portfolio: Artworks by 20 Russian artists*
30 x 22¾ inches
Edition 55/100

65 5th Avenue

66 W. 12th Street

6th Floor
Andy Warhol
***Mao*, 1972**
Silk screen print on paper
36 x 36 inches
Edition 160/250

9th Floor: The Vera List Center
Kara Walker
***A Means to an End… A Shadow Drama in 5 Acts*, 1995**
Etching/aquatint
5 plates, 34½ x 23 inches each
Edition 5/20

W. 14TH STREET

W. 13TH STREET

W. 12TH STREET

2 W. 13th Street

6th Floor:
Critical Studies Hallway
Claes Oldenburg
***Notes*, 1968**
Four lithograph prints
on paper
22½ x 15½ inches each
Edition 54/100

6th Floor: Lobby
Sol LeWitt
***Untitled* (red on blue)**
***Untitled* (blue on red), 1999**
Serigraph print on paper
15 x 12 inches each
Editions of 60

66 5th Avenue

50 feet

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General Idea
***AIDS*, 1987**

Working collaboratively from 1969 to 1994, Canadian-based General Idea (comprising A.A. Bronson [b. 1946 Vancouver], Felix Partz [b. 1945 Winnipeg, d. 1994 Toronto], and Jorge Zontal [b. 1944 Italy, d. 1994 Toronto]) created work that addressed the mass media, the artist's role in the social sphere, and later AIDS awareness and activism. One famous example is AIDS (1987), a piece parodying Pop Artist Robert Indiana's 1968 brightly-colored and often-reproduced poster LOVE, which was originally commissioned by MoMA as a Christmas card design. General Idea more than just appropriated Indiana's benign cultural icon and infected it with controversy; in the mid-1980s, simply mentioning the word "AIDS" was political. In fact, President Reagan, up until 1987, would not utter the word publicly. It is important to the understanding of AIDS to know that in November of 1987, General Idea hung hundreds of prints (from this same edition of 1,000) throughout the streets of New York City. Essentially, the piece became an activist campaign in itself to reduce the stigma surrounding the word AIDS, thus decreasing ignorance and raising knowledge and awareness of the disease.

"What we were trying to do was more of a public relations campaign for a disease. AIDS was a lot like cancer had

Felix Gonzalez-Torres
***Untitled*, 1991**

Felix Gonzalez-Torres (b.1957 Cuba, d.1996 New York) spent his artistic career – cut short by his AIDS-related death in 1996 – pushing the limits of the artistic experience. Famous for enlarging photographs of ephemeral moments (such as a bird in flight or a recently-vacated bed) onto outdoor billboards, piling mounds of shiny hard candy in the corner of a gallery, and creating unlimited editions of offset prints for visitors to take away – Gonzalez-Torres created opportunities for the viewer to become an active participant, making literal the exchange relationship between the artist (giver) and the viewer / society (recipient).

Untitled (1991) is one of a series of works in which Gonzalez-Torres set stacks of offset prints in a gallery, allowing a viewer to take as he or she saw fit. A social experiment, Gonzalez-Torres' work is the ultimate in the democratization of the artistic experience – its mass production and distribution overhauls the aura of the art object – that the museum visitor from the suburbs and the art collector in Manhattan may partially possess the same work of art. Then perhaps ironically, the "true" owner of the work, in purchasing the rights to exhibit the entire stack, also assumes the financial burden of unlimited reproduction of the work, as well. Commenting that he

Svetlana Kopystiansky
***Untitled*, 1990**
From *The Moscow Portfolio: Artworks by 20 Russian artists*

During the Cold War, many countries (including the United States) used posters as a medium for propaganda, perhaps none more famously than Russia. Russian propaganda posters were used to curb and control behavior and to enforce the power of the Communist regime. In The Moscow Portfolio, Artworks by 20 Russian artists, twenty Moscow-based artists reclaim the poster as a medium for social critique. In her piece Untitled, Kopystiansky visually weaves together hand-written phrases to create almost a quilt of information, bordering on secret confession. In her work, Kopystiansky is interested in engaging with history as it affects the present and future, while pointedly rejecting a nostalgic or simplistic perspective on the past. In 1991 Kopystiansky (along with her husband-collaborator Igor) created a billboard pronouncing, "Art is the continuation of politics by different means," though she maintains that as an artist her relationship to politics is ambivalent. Considering this, and her contribution to The Moscow Portfolio, begs the question, What can be achieved through these "different means"?

"Each work of art is political because it is produced at a certain time, and in a

Sol LeWitt
***Untitled* (red on blue), 1999**
***Untitled* (blue on red), 1999**

Sol LeWitt (b. 1928 Connecticut) was a pioneer of conceptual art in the 1960s. Reacting against the painting-as-object concerns of what came to be known as high Modernism, conceptual artists like LeWitt asserted that the idea behind a work of art superceded its form. To subvert the dominant conventions in the art world at that time, LeWitt famously created works that were instructions for projects to be executed by others, raising questions of authorial voice (or, in this case, hand) as well as the market value of an "original" work of art.

In Untitled, a series of serigraph prints, LeWitt employs the formal device of the grid to map out a rainbow spectrum, creating eye-popping linear patterns of color. Whether he wrote instructions to be executed by a master printer or if he crafted the piece himself, LeWitt's use of the print medium, and thus his creation of multiple prints furthers his agenda that the concept driving the work is more important than the Objet d'art itself.

"In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work… all planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes the machine that makes the art." – Sol LeWitt

Bruce Nauman
***Partial Truth*, 1997**

Bruce Nauman (b. Indiana 1941) rose to fame in the late 1960s as a pioneering conceptual artist. Working in media as diverse as neon, video, and sound installation, Nauman's work often deals with language and all of its ambiguity and contradiction, impotence and power. Partial Truth plays with such ambivalences, using capital Roman letters – transferred onto paper through the classical process of etching – to reference not only the permanence and authority of a public forum, but also the impermanence of a piece of paper, and perhaps also the ideas inscribed onto it.

In addition to issues of ephemerality, Partial Truth brings into question the notion of truth – and by extension law, democracy, authenticity and originality– itself, beginning with: Can truth be partial?

"In art, the only one who really knows whether what you've done is honest is the artist." - Bruce Nauman

Claes Oldenburg
***Notes*, 1968**

Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929 Sweden), is perhaps best known for his large-scale often public sculptures of everyday household objects, such as the mechanized undulating Ice Bag (1969), a 14-foot high banana skin (Floating Peel, 2002), and the monumental needle and thread (Ago, Filo e Nodo, 2000) permanently installed in Milan's city center.

In the mid-1960s Oldenburg embarked on what he called Proposed Colossal Monuments, drafting up plans for delightfully impossible site-specific sculptures. In this same vein, Notes (1968) proposes monuments like a skyscraper-sized overturned ice cream cone jutting dangerously from a peaceful sea shore, or a gigantic drum set (complete with high hats) nestled in a canyon's valley. As with his realized sculptures, in creating Notes, Oldenburg subverts the traditional function of a monument – to memorialize or honor important events or people. Additionally, Oldenburg absurdly alters our experience of everyday objects – does something familiar become threatening when it is enlarged to one hundred times its original size? Notes also contemplates the implications: Who decides what man-made structures invade our public spaces? Whether for utilitarian or artistic or civic purposes, who and

Adrian Piper
***Pretend #1*, 1990**

As a philosopher and artist, Adrian Piper (b. 1948 New York) inspired by her own experience as a light-skinned African-American woman, addresses issues of gender, race and identity in a variety of media, including essays, photographs, video and performance. Pretend #1 features seven portraits of African-American men – six well-lit studio portraits featuring men in suits and ties (including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) – and one photograph of a young man with his head pressed to the ground by a combat boot. The portraits are accompanied by a photograph of a pencil drawing of "The Three Wise Monkeys" – "See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil" – as well as a threatening sentence silk screened atop of the photographs in blood-red: "Pretend you don't know what you know." The words, drawing, and image of police violence starkly contrast the calmness and self-composure found in the portraits, perhaps suggesting: Are racism, fear, anger and denial still present there?

"I really think there is a connection between conceptual art and political content. I mean, it's the quality of the concept that makes the art exciting. So you have to deal with big issues and obviously the biggest issues are political issues." – Adrian Piper

Erika Rothenberg
***Greetings*, 1993**

Artist Erika Rothenberg (b. 1950 New York) is well known for her interactive public installations such as Freedom of Expression, a touring monumental megaphone that Rothenberg installs in public squares (including Foley Square in lower Manhattan) inviting passersby to voice their opinions as if on a gigantic soap box.

Conversely, in Greetings Rothenberg brings the public debate into the private sphere. Using the format of the drugstore greeting card, Rothenberg addresses issues of international concern such as the deportation of refugees, euthanasia, and civilian death ("collateral damage") during wartime. For example, the front of one "card" states in bubble letters "Sorry my country BOMBED your country…" against the backdrop of bright flames and billowing smoke. Adjacent is displayed the interior of the card, where upon a smoldering heap of ashes Rothenberg states – in the same wobbly letters – "I want you to know that I was against it." Using irreverence and humor, Rothenberg juxtaposes dire situations with perhaps the most generic medium of personal expression, bringing to the fore our own inadequacy to respond to real issues of public concern.

"What I love about art is that it can give you space to have a variety of

Kara Walker
A Means to an End…
***A Shadow Drama in 5 Acts*, 1995**

Artist Kara Walker (b. 1969 California) appropriates the Silhouette – brought to America in the nineteenth century from France along with vaudeville – to carry racially-charged shadow plays, full of a cast of stereotypical characters from the antebellum American South: lecherous slave owners, cowering slaves, privileged white children, etc. In A Means to an End, Walker illustrates activities – ranging from slap-stick to savage – surrounding a small pond. The action unfolds in five panels, populated by a half-naked female slave with a white toddler greedily suckling her breast, a weak-chinned white man dressed in tails and a top hat strangling a naked prepubescent slave girl, and the tops of heads of (assumedly) other slaves, swimming (or sinking) in the water. Walker employs the polite parlor craft to address contemporary issues surrounding race, calling into question: If these stereotypes still exist as part of our popular imagination, then must they succeed in shaping racism today?

"[In my work] I wanted accessibility, something that was easily read and could operate on some sort of innocuous level to engage people - then I could pull the rug out from under them." - Kara Walker

Andy Warhol
***Mao*, 1972**

Pop artist Andy Warhol (b. 1928 Pittsburgh, d.1987 New York) famously appropriated images from the mass media that he would then re-produce through the photographic silk screen process, mimicking the mass production of celebrity, tragedy, and consumerism in the media itself. In his travels, Warhol visited China, and was interested in the official state portrait of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung, which hung in every public space, from train stations to Tiananmen Square, as if Mao was the only celebrity in all of China. As the official state photograph, the iconic portrait contributed to the cult of personality surrounding the Chairman world-wide. Warhol appropriated this official image to make literally hundreds of eye-popping multi-colored portraits (the largest of which was almost 15 feet high), simultaneously vilifying and celebrating the controversial Communist leader at the height of the Cold War. Warhol's appropriation and repetition of mass-produced cultural images raises the question: What is the effect of seeing something over and over again? Does it find its way deeper into our psyche? Do we become numb to it?

"Because the more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away, and the better

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