

# WHITNEY

## Press Release

Whitney Museum of American Art  
945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street  
New York, NY 10021  
[whitney.org/press](http://whitney.org/press)

Contacts: Stephen Soba, Molly Gross  
Tel. (212) 570-3633  
[pressoffice@whitney.org](mailto:pressoffice@whitney.org)

### AN EXTRAORDINARY PROMISED GIFT OF WORKS OF ART FROM THEA WESTREICH WAGNER AND ETHAN WAGNER



*Ethan Wagner and Thea Westreich Wagner. Photograph by Bill Orcutt*

**NEW YORK, March 15, 2012** – The Whitney Museum of American Art and the Centre Pompidou Foundation have received an unprecedented promised gift of works of art from the noted art collectors Thea Westreich Wagner and Ethan Wagner, announced Adam D. Weinberg, the Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney, and Alain Seban, the Chairman and CEO of the Centre Pompidou, which expects to receive a loan of works being given to the Centre Pompidou Foundation. This magnanimous promised gift consists of more than 800 works of art by leading figures in American and international art spanning the last several decades. Nearly 500 works by about seventy American artists (about forty of

whom are represented by multiple works) will enter the Whitney's collection, while some 300 works by twenty-seven European and international artists will be exhibited by the Centre Pompidou.

The Whitney and the Centre Pompidou will each present both the American and international works in major upcoming exhibitions. The Whitney's presentation, organized by Elisabeth Sussman, Curator and Sondra Gilman Curator of Photography at the Whitney, is scheduled for 2015-16, the opening year of the Whitney's new downtown building, currently under construction. The Pompidou's exhibition will take place after the New York presentation and will be curated by Christine Macel, chief curator at the Centre Pompidou. An illustrated catalogue documenting the collection will accompany the exhibitions.

Mr. Weinberg noted, "This gift is a rousing statement of support for the Whitney's future building and an immense catalyst for us as we begin construction downtown. We are proud to share this gift with our friends at the Pompidou, and we are profoundly grateful to Thea Westreich Wagner and Ethan Wagner for recognizing us with their generosity. Their remarkable collection is a testament to their perspicacity, their exceptionally keen eyes, and their central role in the art world over the past several decades. Their gift strengthens the Whitney's permanent collection in extraordinary ways."

For Alain Seban: "This gift will definitely extend the scope of the international representation of contemporary artists at the Centre Pompidou. The works gathered by Thea Westreich Wagner and Ethan Wagner give a wide but also focused approach to European art in the first decades of the twenty-first century."

Alfred Pacquement, director of the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, commented: "The majority of the artists in the portion of the gift to be received by the Centre Pompidou Foundation are not yet represented at the Centre Pompidou and will be a significant enhancement. We are privileged that Thea Westreich Wagner and Ethan Wagner have selected the Centre Pompidou Foundation and that the Centre Pompidou will benefit from their choice. We will work with great pleasure with our colleagues at the Whitney Museum."

Ms. Westreich Wagner and Mr. Wagner noted, "For many years now we've collected with the idea of eventually donating our collection. The combination of the Whitney and the Pompidou provides the ideal permanent home for the artists we've collected and whom we so deeply admire. We're very excited for the artists, and otherwise thrilled to be making this announcement."

### Works Going to the Whitney

Among the artists whose works will go to the Whitney are Tony Conrad, Dan Flavin, Robert Gober, Gary Hill, Jenny Holzer, Jeff Koons, Zoe Leonard, Cady Noland, Steven Parrino, Jack Pierson, Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons, Lawrence Weiner, Christopher Williams, and Christopher Wool; nearly all of these artists is represented by multiple works. Included in the promised gift are a large number of works by important photographers such as Robert Adams, Diane Arbus, Larry Clark, Lee Friedlander, and Philip Lorca DiCorcia, as well as a number of works on paper by Richard Artschwager, Barry Le Va, Sol LeWitt, and Bruce Nauman.

The extensive collection amassed over several decades by Thea Westreich Wagner and Ethan Wagner spans a period ranging from the 1950s to the present, with an emphasis on work made after 1970, and is particularly rich in works from the 1980s and 1990s. Their recent gifts to the Whitney have included a major work by Cady Noland (*Patty Hearst*) and an important bench sculpture by Jenny Holzer. Among the works now promised are photographs by Diane Arbus, including a vintage print of *Puerto Rican Woman with a Beauty Mark, N.Y.C. (1965)*. Included in the promised gift are nearly fifty photographs by Lee Friedlander, ranging in date from 1958 to 2003. A number of works by photographer Robert Adams are also included, shot between 1968 and the early 1980s. Important works by Jeff Koons and Richard Prince are included, as well as a number of key works by Robert Gober, among them *The Ascending Sink (1985)*. Artist Christopher Wool is represented by a substantial number of works, covering a period from 1984 to 2005.

A considerable number of the works were produced by mostly younger artists over the last two decades, including Kerstin Brätsch, Matthew Brannon, Anne Collier, Liz Deschenes, Gareth James, Jutta Koether, Sam Lewitt, Robert Melee, Eileen Quinlan, Reena Spaulings, Frances Stark, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Cheyney Thompson.

### Works Going to the Centre Pompidou Foundation

The works going to the Centre Pompidou Foundation include paintings, sculptures and objects, installations, photographs, works on paper, and videos by twenty-seven artists, some of whom are already in the collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, such as Martin Barré, Philippe Parreno, Danh Vo, Eija Liisa Ahtila, Jan Mancuska, Keith Tyson, and Miroslav Tichy. The collection will be strengthened with major ensembles of work by a number of artists, including more than thirty works from Keith Tyson; about twenty works from Philippe Parreno, including his Christmas tree (*Fraught Times, 2009*); and a

significant number of works by the painter Lucy McKenzie. An outstanding characteristic of the promised gift is that Thea Westreich Wagner and Ethan Wagner have collected with a focus on some artists very early in their careers and have built comprehensive groups of their works. Important works by such influential artists as Heimo Zobernig and Michael Krebber are also included in the promised gift.

Some important artists from the 1990s who were not yet in the collection will now be represented, including Simon Starling or Mark Wallinger with his major video piece *Angel* from 1997. There is also a strong presence of young emerging artists, mainly from the British art scene as well as Nordic, German, Austrian, and Northern Eastern Europe art scenes, among others. Several have already achieved considerable recognition, such as Ryan Gander or Paulina Olowksa. The chandelier from Danh Voh from 2009 (*16:32:15 – 26.05.2009*) is one of the major pieces of this new generation, a chandelier originally belonging to the interior of the assembly hall at the Hotel Majestic in Paris, where the Vietnam Peace Accord was signed in 1973. Some important figures in photography will enter the collection, including Peter Piller, Josephine Pryde, and Annette Kelm. The works of all these artists are mainly from the years 1990-2010, excepting those from Miroslav Tichy, whose photographs range from the 50s to the 80s; Martin Barré, with six paintings that span the 60s until the 90s; and three works by Gilbert & George dating from 1972 to 1980.

Among the younger artists in the gift are Mark Alexander, James Beckett, Pablo Bronstein, Merlin Carpenter, Jan De Cock, Matias Faldbakken, Uwe Henneken, Klara Liden, Melvin Moti, Henrik Olesen, Josef Strau, and Pdraig Timoney.

### **About the Whitney**

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the world's leading museum of twentieth-century and contemporary art of the United States. Focusing particularly on works by living artists, the Whitney is celebrated for presenting important exhibitions and for its renowned collection, which comprises over 19,000 works by more than 2,900 artists. With a history of exhibiting the most promising and influential artists and provoking intense debate, the Whitney Biennial, the Museum's signature exhibition, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in the United States. In addition to its landmark exhibitions, the Museum is known internationally for events and educational programs of exceptional significance and as a center for research, scholarship, and conservation.

Founded by sculptor and arts patron Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1930, the Whitney was first housed on West 8th Street in Greenwich Village. The Museum relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and, in 1966, inaugurated its present home, designed by Marcel Breuer, at 945 Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side. While its vibrant program of exhibitions and events continues uptown, the Whitney is moving forward with a new building project, designed by Renzo Piano, in downtown Manhattan. Located at the

corner of Gansevoort and Washington Streets in the Meatpacking District, at the southern entrance to the High Line, the new building, which has generated immense momentum and support, will enable the Whitney to vastly increase the size and scope of its exhibition and programming space. Ground was broken on the new building in May 2011, and it is projected to open to the public in 2015.

### **About the Centre Pompidou**

During its thirty-year existence, the Centre Pompidou has established itself as one of the world's foremost institutions in the field of modern and contemporary art. With over 60,000 works, the Musée National d'Art Moderne (France's national museum of modern art, housed in the building) holds one of the best collections in the world, and the finest in Europe. The Centre Pompidou is also home to Europe's largest public reading library, and produces around 25 temporary exhibitions each year, together with acclaimed programmes of performances, film, lectures and talks. The Centre Pompidou enjoys a worldwide reputation for modernity, quality and cultural innovation. The Centre Pompidou is recognised for its expertise as one of the world's premier producers of temporary exhibitions. In collaboration with other leading museums of the world, the Centre Pompidou's exhibitions tour the globe and attract exceptional loans, negotiated on the strengths of its unrivalled reputation, and the quality of its own permanent collection. The Centre Pompidou's temporary exhibitions achieve some of the highest visitor numbers in the world for modern and contemporary art. Exceptionally for a cultural institution, a quarter of visitors are under 25 years old. The Centre Pompidou continues to uphold its original mission to democratize access to culture, affirming its resolutely popular, anti-elitist approach, constantly striving to reach new audiences through its event programming and development of new projects such as the specially-created Centre Pompidou for teenagers, the mobile Centre Pompidou, and the cyber-Centre Pompidou.

### **About the Centre Pompidou Foundation**

The Centre Pompidou Foundation is an American foundation dedicated to supporting the Centre Pompidou in Paris. The Foundation's mission is to acquire and encourage major gifts of art and design for exhibition at the Museum.

### **Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art**

|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Whitney Biennial</b>    | March 1–May 27, 2012       |
| <b>Singular Visions</b>    | Through April 2012         |
| <b>Sharon Hayes</b>        | June 21–September 9, 2012  |
| <b>Signs &amp; Symbols</b> | June 28–October 28, 2012   |
| <b>Oskar Fischinger</b>    | June 28–October 28, 2012   |
| <b>Yayoi Kusama</b>        | July 12–September 30, 2012 |

*The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. General admission: \$18. Full-time students and visitors ages 19–25 and 62 & over: \$12. Visitors 18 & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6–9 p.m. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit [whitney.org](http://whitney.org).*

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