

WHITNEY

Press Release

Whitney Museum of American Art
945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street
New York, NY 10021
whitney.org/press

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

WHITNEY EXHIBITS SELDOM SEEN POSTWAR TREASURES IN *SINGULAR VISIONS*, AN EXPERIMENTAL NEW INSTALLATION

Opening December 16, 2010



Paul Chan, *1st Light*, 2005 (installation view, *2006 Whitney Biennial: Day for Night*, Whitney Museum of Art, 2006). Digital animated projection, black-and-white and color, silent; 14 minutes, dimensions variable. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

NEW YORK, December 6, 2010 – On December 16, 2010, the Whitney Museum of American Art debuts *Singular Visions*, a new installation of its fifth-floor Leonard & Evelyn Lauder Galleries, devoted to works from the Permanent Collection. Taking a fresh approach, Whitney curators Dana Miller and Scott Rothkopf are presenting just twelve rarely seen postwar works, some of which have not been on view for decades,

each individually installed in a separate gallery to encourage and provoke a direct and intimate encounter.

The installation will remain on view for a year – with periodic substitutions – and will be complemented by a series of collection exhibitions on the Museum’s second floor, beginning in spring 2011.

“*Singular Visions*,” explained Donna De Salvo, the Whitney’s Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Programs, “is a bold first step within a broader Whitney initiative to reconsider the Museum’s collection, especially our most challenging and complex works, as we prepare for our downtown expansion. The organizing premise of *Singular Visions* stems from the Whitney’s long-held belief in the primacy of the authentic art experience.”

Curators Miller and Rothkopf note: “At a time when people are constantly barraged by images everywhere from their TVs to their mobile phones, *Singular Visions* encourages viewers to slow down and experience artworks in a focused way. Each work was selected to convey a distinct impression and a powerful sense of its maker’s vision, whether somber or celebratory, figurative or abstract, quiet or bold. Some of the works on view require their own spaces because they are large or comprise many parts, while others explore difficult topics or emotions that we might wish to consider more privately.”

The following are the twelve works to be shown:

- **Jonathan Borofsky (b. 1942), *Running People at 2,616,216*, 1979**

Jonathan Borofsky’s variable wall drawing will traverse three walls in the Museum’s sky-lit stairwell to envelop viewers completely in its graphic energy. Painted directly onto the wall, *Running People at 2,616,216* enlarges to heroic proportions a small sketch of jagged figures inspired by a dream. Using an overhead projector and a transparency owned by the Whitney, the artist will work with the Museum’s staff to re-paint this piece at the Whitney for the first time in a decade.

- **AA Bronson (b. 1946), *Felix Partz, June 5, 1994*, 1994 and 1999**

AA Bronson’s *Felix Partz, June 5, 1994* is a moving portrait of the artist’s General Idea collaborator pictured hours after his death to AIDS-related causes. Printed in lacquer on a fourteen foot–long canvas, the image shows the physically wasted Partz surrounded by colorful bedding and objects of simple comfort, such as a remote control and cigarettes. Befitting the exhibition’s concept of fostering

intense and intimate encounters with works of art, the piece will be shown alone in a small gallery, creating an almost chapel-like setting.

- **Paul Chan (b. 1973), *Ist Light*, 2005**

Paul Chan's *Ist Light* is the inaugural work from his ambitious series *The 7 Lights* (2005–2007), a group of stunning digital animations that reflect on the legacy of 9/11 and the role of religion in contemporary society. The work was last seen at the Whitney in the 2006 Biennial, where it was singled out as a highlight of the exhibition and subsequently purchased by the Museum.

- **Sarah Charlesworth (b. 1947), *The Arc of Total Eclipse, February 26, 1979*, 1979**

Stretching more than forty feet, *The Arc of Total Eclipse* comprises twenty-nine photographs of the front pages of newspapers from towns along a solar eclipse's geographical path, from the Pacific Northwest, across Canada, toward Greenland. Each features a "local" image of the eclipse, but none of the accompanying text, save for the newspaper's title. By isolating these pictures, Charlesworth's sweeping photographic suite charts the cosmic event across the continent and around the walls of the gallery in which it is shown.

- **Robert Grosvenor (b. 1937), *Tenerife*, 1966**

Spanning more than twenty feet and finished in shiny purple automobile lacquer, Robert's Grosvenor's *Tenerife* is one of only two extant hanging sculptures from the seminal period during which the artist experimented with cantilevered structures that stretched from ceiling to floor in feats of engineering. Purchased by the Whitney within a year of its making, the sculpture has not been shown publicly in more than four decades due to conservation concerns. In preparation for its display in *Singular Visions*, Whitney curators and conservators have undertaken a major conservation project to restore the work's surface to its original luster. Following extensive archival research, analysis of the paint layers by Harvard University conservation scientists, and discussions with the artist, the work is being resurfaced by a restorer of vintage automobiles.

- **Eva Hesse (1936–1970), *No Title*, 1970**

One of Hesse's last sculptures and a treasure of the Whitney's collection, this work was installed in the artist's studio at the time of her death at age thirty-four. Hesse created the work by dipping knotted ropes into liquid latex and hanging the tangled mass from the ceiling with a network of wires. Due to the fragile nature and slow deterioration of its materials, the sculpture can be installed only rarely and with the utmost care. It was last exhibited at the Whitney in 2000.

- **Edward Kienholz (1927-1994), *The Wait*, 1964–65**

A signature masterpiece of the Whitney's collection, Edward Kienholz's haunting tableau *The Wait* features an elderly woman fashioned from cow bones and kept company in her living room by a taxidermied cat. A live parakeet perched in an antique cage offers a surreal counterpoint to the morbid scene. The Whitney has long supported Kienholz's work, purchasing this piece in 1966 and organizing the

artist's first joint retrospective with Nancy Reddin Kienholz in 1996. *Singular Visions* will be the first Whitney exhibition to include *The Wait* since that time.

- **Ree Morton (1936–1977), *Signs of Love*, 1976**

One of Ree Morton's most theatrical and complex installations, *Signs of Love* stretches more than forty feet and comprises multiple elements such as flowers, bows, ladders, and swags of drapery made from brightly painted Celastic and wood. An inherently variable work, *Signs of Love* was last installed by the artist in the 1977 Whitney Biennial, shortly before her untimely death in a car accident that year. The Estate of Ree Morton donated the piece to the Whitney in 1990 and it is currently being restored for its first installation at the Museum in over two decades.

- **Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986), *Ladder to the Moon*, 1958**

A significant painting from Emily Fisher Landau's recent gift of 419 artworks to the Whitney, *Ladder to the Moon* is among O'Keeffe's most surreal and dreamlike canvases. The twilight image of a ladder floating high above the Jemez mountains is based on a vision that the artist had at Ghost Ranch, her home in New Mexico for nearly forty years.

- **George Segal (1924–2000), *Walk, Don't Walk*, 1976**

Beloved by Whitney visitors but not seen for many years, George Segal's recently conserved *Walk, Don't Walk* introduces the exhibition with a striking tableau. The sculpture comprises three cast-plaster figures standing on a cement sidewalk next to a frenetically flashing pedestrian streetlight. Following Segal's instructions, the sculpture will be presented in a darkened gallery, dramatically spot-lit against a midnight-blue wall.

- **Gary Simmons (b. 1964), *Step in the Arena (The Essentialist Trap)*, 1994**

Bedecked with shoes and printed with a ghostly diagram of foot movements, Gary Simmons's imposing one-third-scale boxing ring serves as a lyrical reflection on the brutal choreography of sport and its relationship to spectacle and race. Featured in the seminal 1994 Whitney exhibition *Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art*, the work was acquired by the Whitney in 1995 as a gift from the Peter Norton Family Foundation and has not been exhibited in New York since then.

- **Tom Wesselmann (1931–2004), *Still Life Number 36*, 1964**

An enormous glass of milk, sandwich, and pack of cigarettes dominate this ten-by-sixteen-foot canvas by Tom Wesselmann, part of a series of still lifes made from commercial billboard cutouts that the artist began in 1962. With its imposing sense of scale and vivid color, this painting adds a dynamic Pop flourish to *Singular Visions*.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the preeminent institution devoted to twentieth-century and contemporary art of the United States, with a special focus on works by living artists. The Whitney's collection, which comprises over 18,000 works by more than 2800 artists, includes major works and materials from the estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, as well as significant works by Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists. With its history of exhibiting the most promising and influential American artists and provoking intense critical and public debate, the Whitney's signature show, the Biennial, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in America today. Founded in 1930, the Whitney was first housed on West 8th Street. The Museum relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and in 1966 inaugurated its present home at 945 Madison Avenue, designed by Marcel Breuer. The Whitney is currently moving ahead with plans to build a second facility, designed by Renzo Piano, located in downtown Manhattan at the entrance to the High Line in the Meatpacking District.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

Karthik Pandian: Unearth

Singular Visions

Paul Thek: Diver, A Retrospective

Slater Bradley and Ed Lachman: Shadow

Charles LeDray: workworkworkworkwork

Modern Life: Edward Hopper and His Time

Legacy: The Emily Fisher Landau Collection

Glenn Ligon: America

Opens December 15, 2010

Opens December 16, 2010

Through January 9, 2011

Through January 23, 2010

Through February 13, 2011

Through April 10, 2011

February 10-May 1, 2011

March 10-June 5, 2011

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 to the Kaufman Astoria Studios Film & Video Gallery only: \$6. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6–9 p.m. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit whitney.org.

####