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HOWARDENA PINDELL: What Remains to Be Seen

First major survey of Howardena Pindell's work to be exhibited at VMFA



Untitled #5B (Krakatoa), 2007, Howardena Pindell (American, born 1943), mixed media on paper collage. Courtesy of the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Richmond, Virginia – The work of groundbreaking, multidisciplinary artist Howardena Pindell will be featured in an exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts from Aug. 25 through Nov. 25, 2018.

Howardena Pindell: What Remains To Be Seen is the first major survey of the New York–based artist’s five-decades-long career. Organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and co-curated by Valerie Cassel Oliver, VMFA Sydney and Frances Lewis family curator of modern and contemporary art, and Naomi Beckwith, Marilyn and Larry Fields curator at

the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the exhibition features Pindell’s early figurative paintings, abstract and conceptual works, as well as personal and political art. The exhibition traces themes and visual experiments that run throughout her work up to the present, and includes her photography, video, film and performance art. The exhibition will be on display in VMFA’s Evans Court and 21st Century Galleries and is free to the public.

“We are elated that Valerie Cassel Oliver is making her curatorial debut at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts with this important exhibition that provides long-overdue recognition to the important artistic contributions of Howardena Pindell,” said VMFA Director Alex Nyerges. “The diverse works in *What Remains To Be Seen* not only demonstrate the evolution of Pindell’s career as an artist but also speak to some of the most important social issues of the past half century.” “Howardena Pindell has proved herself to be ahead of her time and ahead of the curve in conversations around painting, works on paper and even photography and what can be accomplished with the camera,” said Cassel Oliver. “Through her innovations as a painter, she has provided solid groundwork for so many artists and yet, she has been woefully under-recognized. It has been our — my and Naomi Beckwith’s — goal in organizing this exhibition that we can finally acknowledge the intellectual and artistic rigor of this artist and place her squarely in the canon as an iconic figure in contemporary art.”

Trained as a painter, Pindell has challenged the staid traditions of the art world and asserted her place in its history as an African American woman. Since the 1960s, she has used unconventional materials such as glitter, talcum powder, sewing thread and perfume to stretch the boundaries of the rigid tradition of painting on a rectangular

canvas. Her work is infused with evidence of her labor, such as creating rich, layered surfaces by obsessively affixing dots of pigment and paper circles made with an ordinary hole punch. Pindell's use of rich colors and unconventional materials gives her finished works a lush textural and ethereal quality.

The work Pindell has created since 1979, when a life-threatening car accident left her with short-term amnesia, explores the world beyond the painting studio. Expanding on the experimental formal language she previously developed, Pindell has explored a wide range of subjects, from the personal to the social and political. Her *Autobiography* series transforms postcards from her global travels, which she used to reconstruct her memories, into photo-based collages. Other bodies of work, such as her *Rambo* series, respond to broader cultural concerns and critique sexism, racism and discrimination.

“Pindell was among the first wave of academically trained artists to dismiss the separation between pure abstraction and political art,” said Michael Taylor, VMFA's chief curator and deputy director for art and education. “She asserted that the pressures, prejudices and exclusions placed upon her as an African American artist and as a woman — both in the art world and the world at large — were fair and necessary themes to explore in her art.”

What Remains To Be Seen also highlights Pindell's work with photography, film and performance—media she has used to explore her place in the world as an African American, a feminist and an activist. Her chance-based experiments include photographing her drawings juxtaposed over a television screen, as well as creating *Free, White, and 21* (1980), a filmed performance based on her personal experiences of racism. Recent works from the last two years draw on the beauty and innovation of Pindell's approach to abstraction to build upon contemporary conversations around equity and diversity.

Catalogue

Howardena Pindell: What Remains To Be Seen, a significant monograph of the artist's paintings, drawings, works on paper, and video work, is available in the VMFA Shop and online. The publication includes essays by art historians, a selection of texts by Pindell, the transcript of a roundtable discussion about Pindell's craft, and full-color reproductions of her work organized by series and introduced by Pindell herself. Price: \$60 (VMFA members \$54)

Sponsors

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The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences, and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA's permanent holdings encompass nearly 40,000 artworks, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris, and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, and French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British sporting, and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan, and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened its doors to the public after a transformative expansion, the largest in its history.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.vmfa.museum.