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## Howardena Pindell: Autobiography



*Autobiography: Artemis* (detail), 1986

**Garth Greenan Gallery** is pleased to announce **Howardena Pindell: Autobiography**, an exhibition of mixed media works at **545 West 20th Street**. Opening Thursday, October 17, 2019, the exhibition is the artist's third with the gallery and the first since her 2018 retrospective, *Howardena Pindell: What Remains To Be Seen* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. A selection of paintings and works on paper from the artist's *Autobiography* series will be on view, all created between 1980 and 1995.

The *Autobiography* series reflects a difficult but formative period for Pindell. In 1979, a car accident left the artist with acute memory loss. The crash, and her subsequent rehabilitation, literalized a metaphorical process of destruction and reconstruction she had begun exploring in her work of the preceding decade, cutting and sewing strips of canvas into swirling patterns, then building up the surfaces in elaborate stages.

The first of the Autobiography series, *Autobiography: Oval Memory #1* (1980–1981) reflects Pindell’s painstaking initial attempts to consolidate memories following her traumatic concussion. She had diligently collected postcards and photos for decades preceding the accident, relics that only revealed their full usefulness after the crash. In this and the following works, Pindell first cut postcards and photographs into strips before positioning them on the collage, alternating the photographic imagery with acrylic paint, and integrating fragmented images into layered fans of paint and paper. The swirling combinations of postcards, Cibachrome, and paint form a polyphony of perspectives.

The uncanny resonance between her embodied experience and her formal interests in fragmentation and integration extend beyond the car crash. Dialectical patterns, like that of rupture and healing, abound in Pindell’s life and ideas: in her seemingly opposed commitment to abstract and polemical political art; her sense of herself as an African-American and also as a composite of many cultures and backgrounds; her affection for rationality, science, and mathematics, along with her interest in ritual, tradition, and spirituality.

In *Autobiography: Fire (Suttee)* (1986–1987), Pindell traces the silhouette of her own body on the irregular ovoid canvas. In reference to the ancient Indian practice known as Suttee or “widow burning,” red, yellow, and orange fingers of paint overlap frantically atop a flame-blue background. Through her haunting use of her own body in the painting, she avoids both the ugly zeal of unqualified judgment of the Other and the academic trap of absolute cultural relativism. Her strong political commitments at home, along with her extensive travel and cross-cultural study, combine to form a dense and powerful work.

Pindell has alternately described her thick, layered paint strokes as both the “sounds of a mantra” and “symbolic of African ritual scarification.” In her work, she mines ritual and tradition seriously—exploring their roles in human healing and meaning—while remaining wary of their dangers. Her deep study of world cultures is simultaneously anthropological and profoundly personal.

Born in Philadelphia in 1943, Howardena Pindell studied painting at Boston University and Yale University. After graduating, she accepted a position at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, where she worked for 12 years (1967–1979). She held the role of Exhibition Assistant in the Department of Circulating National and International Exhibitions, before transitioning to the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, where she worked as a Curatorial Assistant, Assistant Curator, and finally as the Associate Curator and Acting Director. In 1979, she began teaching at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, where she is now a full professor.

Throughout her career, Pindell has exhibited extensively. Notable solo exhibitions include Spelman College (1971, 2015, Atlanta), A.I.R. Gallery (1973, 1983, New York), Just Above Midtown (1977, New York), Lerner-Heller Gallery (1980, 1981, New York), The Studio Museum in Harlem (1986, New York), Wadsworth Atheneum (1989, Hartford), Cyrus Gallery (1989, New York), and G.R. N’Namdi Gallery (1992, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2006, Chicago, Detroit, and New York).

Her work has also been featured in many landmark museum exhibitions, such as *Contemporary Black Artists in America* (1971, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York), *Rooms* (1976, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center), *Another Generation* (1979, The Studio Museum in Harlem), *Afro-American Abstraction* (1980, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center), *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s* (1990, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York), *Bearing Witness: Contemporary Works by African-American Women Artists* (1996, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta), *Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction, 1964–1980* (2006, The Studio Museum in Harlem), *High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting, 1967–1975* (2006, Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro), *WACK! Art and*

*the Feminist Revolution* (2007, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles), *Target Practice: Painting Under Attack, 1949–1978* (2009, Seattle Art Museum), *Black in the Abstract: Part I, Epistrophe* (2013, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston), *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–1985* (2017–2018, Brooklyn Museum; California African American Museum, Los Angeles; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston), *Magnetic Fields: Expanding American Abstraction* (2017–2018, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC; Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida), *Delirious: Art at the Limits of Reason, 1950–1980* (2017–2018, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power* (2017–2019, Tate Modern, London; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas; Brooklyn Museum), and *Outliers and American Vanguard Art* (2018–2019, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Los Angeles County Museum of Art). In 2018, Pindell was the subject of a major retrospective, *Howardena Pindell: What Remains To Be Seen*, which originated at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and traveled to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, through 2019.

Howardena Pindell is the recipient of numerous significant awards and honors. In 2019, Howardena Pindell was awarded the Archives of American Art Medal by the Smithsonian Institution, the Artist Legacy Foundation 2019 Award, and the College Art Association 2019 Distinguished Artist Award for Lifetime Achievement.

Pindell's work is in the permanent collections of major museums internationally, including the Fogg Museum, Harvard University; the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Princeton University Art Museum; the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University; The Studio Museum in Harlem; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent **Howardena Pindell**.

***Howardena Pindell: Autobiography*** will be on view at **Garth Greenan Gallery, 545 West 20th Street** (between Tenth and Eleventh avenues), through **Saturday, December 7, 2019**. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. For more information, **please contact the gallery at (212) 929-1351, or email [info@garthgreenan.com](mailto:info@garthgreenan.com)**.

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