

Frieze Masters

For the 2019 edition of Frieze Masters: Spotlight, Garth Greenan Gallery presents a solo-exhibition of paintings by Howardena Pindell. The exhibition will include three iconic works created between 1976 and 1992, demonstrating the artist's proclivity for both rigorous abstraction and political activism—perhaps the central tension in her career. Recently, both *Tarot: Hanged Man* (1981) and *Separate but Equal Genocide: AIDS* (1991–1992) featured prominently in her major traveling retrospective, *Howardena Pindell: What Remains To Be Seen*, which originated at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago in 2018 and traveled to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University through 2019.



Separate but Equal Genocide: AIDS, 1991–1992

Despite its expansive, ostensibly monochrome surface, *Untitled* (1976) is a prime example of the increasingly elaborate process the artist developed in her abstract work of the 1970s. Punched paper dots—varying in color and size—are scattered over the painting's vast white surface, introducing pastel blues, pinks, yellows, and oranges onto the canvas. Some dots float delicately on the painting's surface, while others sink beneath the thick white acrylic. The complex, three-dimensional interplay is accentuated by a final layer of paint squeezeed through “stencils,” or residual sheets from the punched paper chads. Pindell was one of a small coterie of African-American abstractionists, including Al Loving, Sam Gilliam, Jack Whitten and Frank Bowling, that occupied a thankless territory—making work that was not explicitly about the black experience, while also being excluded from the overwhelmingly white institutions that dominated abstraction.

Pindell's elaborate surfaces continued to evolve in subsequent works. In *Tarot: Hanged Man* (1981), the artist painstakingly cut canvas into dozens of irregular strips before loosely stitching it together again into a monumental 13-foot surface. The metaphorical process of destruction and reconstruction, cutting and sewing strips of canvas into various patterns, became an iconic feature of her work.

Over the course of her career, Pindell wrote countless essays about racism and sexism in the art world, collected in volumes like *The Heart of The Question* (1997), and helped found A.I.R. Gallery in New York, the first all-female artists' cooperative gallery in the United States. Throughout the 1990s, Pindell's artwork increasingly reflected her political commitments. Taking its title from the notorious *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruling which upheld the constitutionality of segregation in the United States, *Separate But Equal Genocide: AIDS* (1991–92) lists the names of children afflicted with AIDS on twin U.S. flags, one white and one black. Each monochromatic canvas has been cut and sewn along the stars and stripes. The work's subject was timely, at the height of the AIDS crisis, yet it was also uncomfortably personal. Pindell's own cousin observed superior medical treatment for white children first hand during the course of his AIDS treatments, as the disproportionate impact of the disease on the African-American community became harder and harder to ignore.

(more)

Born in Philadelphia in 1943, Howardena Pindell studied painting at Boston University and Yale University. After graduating, she accepted a job at the Museum of Modern Art, where she worked for 12 years (1967–1979), first as Exhibition Assistant, then as Assistant Curator in the Department of National and International Traveling Exhibitions, and finally as an Associate Curator and Acting Director in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books. 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, 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), the Wadsworth Atheneum (1989, Hartford), Cyrus Gallery (1989, New York), G.R. N’Namdi Gallery (1992, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2006, Chicago, Detroit, and New York), Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, (2015, Atlanta) Garth Greenan Gallery, New York (2014, 2017), and the Museum of Contemporary Art (2018, Chicago).

Howardena Pindell’s work has been featured in many landmark museum exhibitions, such as: *Contemporary Black Artists in America* (1971, Whitney Museum of American Art), *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), and *Bearing Witness: Contemporary Works by African-American Women Artists* (1996, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta).

Most recently, Pindell’s work appeared in: *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), and *Painting 2.0: Expression in the Information Age*, (2015–2016, Museum Brandhorst; 2016, Museum Moderner Kunst) and *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–1985* (2017, the Brooklyn Museum, New York). Howardena Pindell was the subject of the 2018 retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago titled *Howardena Pindell: What Remains to Be Seen*, which traveled to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (2018, Richmond) and the Rose Art Museum (2019, Waltham).

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; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Museum of Modern Art; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; 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; the Walker Art Center; and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent Howardena Pindell.