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Howardena Pindell



Skowhegan: Wedding Duck, 1980–1981

For the 2020 edition of Art Basel, Garth Greenan Gallery presents an online solo exhibition of mixed media works on paper and board by Howardena Pindell. The exhibition will include 10 iconic works from the artist's pivotal Autobiography and Skowhegan series created between 1980 and 1989.

The period was difficult but profoundly formative 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.

The works that followed reflected Pindell's painstaking initial attempts to consolidate memories following her traumatic

concussion. In these 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. “I was trying to unite and heal my fractured brain,” she said.

Works in the series are phenomenological, blending the mnemonic and psychic with the experiential. In *Autobiography: India (Lakshmi)* (1984), the Hindu goddess Lakshmi is encircled India’s relics and ancient landmarks—likely stops during the artist’s 1984 National Endowment for the Arts Painting Fellowship trip. The deconstructed postcards are recomposed into organic shapes, ellipses, and meandering patterns. Lakshmi’s face is doubled by Pindell’s intervention, creating a sense of ascendance or spiritual dematerialization.

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; and in her affection for rationality, science, and mathematics, along with her interest in ritual, tradition, and spirituality.

In *Autobiography: East/West (Bridge #3)* (1983) postcards stand in for classical Western perspective, with singular horizons and linear depictions of time and space. In the work, the deconstructed postcards depict city and nature, night and day, land and sea, and twisting, interlacing horizons. Pindell depicts a polyphony of perspectives: a simultaneously fragmented and coherent organic whole.

Born in Philadelphia in 1943, Howardena Pindell studied painting at Boston University and Yale University. After graduating, she accepted a job in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books at the Museum of Modern Art, where she remained for 12 years (1967–1979). 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), the 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), *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; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; 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, D.C.; 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.

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.

The exhibition will be available via Art Basel's Online Viewing Rooms from Thursday, September 17 to Sunday, September 20, 2020.

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent Howardena Pindell.

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