

We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85

This exhibition presents the work of more than forty artists and activists who built their careers—and committed themselves to political change—during a time of social tumult in the United States. Beginning in the 1960s, a number of movements to combat social injustice emerged, with the Black Power, Civil Rights, and Women’s Movements chief among them. As active participants in the contemporary art world, the artists in this exhibition created their own radical feminist thinking—working broadly, on multiple fronts—to combat sexism, racism, homophobia, and classism in the art world and within their local communities.

As the second-wave Feminist Movement gained strength in the 1970s, women of color found themselves working with, and at times in opposition to, the largely white, middle-class women primarily responsible for establishing the tone, priorities, and methods of the fight for gender equity in the United States. Whether the term *feminism* was used or not—and in communities of color, it often was not—black women envisioned a revolution against the systems of oppression they faced in the art world and the culture at large.

The artists of *We Wanted a Revolution* employed the emerging methods of conceptual art, performance, film, and video, along with more traditional forms, including printmaking, photography, and painting. Whatever the medium, their innovative artmaking reflected their own aesthetic, cultural, and political priorities.

Favoring radical transformation over reformist gestures, these activist artists wanted more than just recognition within the existing professional art world. Instead, their aim was to revolutionize the art world itself, making space for the many and varied communities of people it had largely ignored. The art included here captures this urgent imperative, advanced by a group of artists who were politically active, socially engaged, and culturally responsive. Their dynamic work reveals anew just how contested the histories of art and social change in the later twentieth century remain for us today.

We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85 is organized by the Brooklyn Museum. The exhibition is organized at the Albright-Knox by Curatorial Fellow Andrea Alvarez and Curatorial Assistant Jasmine Magaña.

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We believe that the most profound and potentially the most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else’s oppression. In the case of black women this is a particularly repugnant, dangerous, threatening, and therefore revolutionary concept because it is obvious from looking at all the political movements that have preceded us that anyone is [considered] more worthy of liberation than ourselves. We reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind. To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough.

—Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement” (excerpt), April 1977

Spiral and the Black Arts Movement

Active between 1963 and 1965, Spiral was a collective of black artists who came together as a creative and professional support network. Sharing a desire to participate in the fight for civil rights, they simultaneously debated the role of art as a significant catalyst for social change.

Led by the influential artists Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, Charles Alston, and Hale Woodruff, the all-male Spiral group invited Emma Amos, then in her early twenties, to join as the only woman. As Amos later recalled, they “weren’t comfortable with women artists as colleagues.” She thought they likely saw her as less threatening than the more established (and outspoken) women artists in the community, such as Camille Billops, Vivian Browne, and Faith Ringgold.

By the mid-1960s, as the Civil Rights Movement gave way to the Black Power Movement, new political strategies and cultural agendas developed. A loose confederation of artists, writers, musicians, and dancers who celebrated black history and culture became known as the Black Arts Movement. Members focused on developing a more popular audience for their work, rather than seeking to influence elite cultural communities as had some earlier generations of black artists.

Emerging in New York City, the Black Arts Movement quickly spread to other urban centers, putting down strong roots in Chicago, where related groups, including AfriCOBRA (African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists), grew. Committed to a socially responsible and community-oriented art, they promoted black pride by developing an identifiable aesthetic inspired by African cultures.

“Where We At”: Black Women Artists

In early 1971, Kay Brown, Dindga McCannon, and Faith Ringgold gathered a group of black women at McCannon’s Brooklyn home to discuss their common frustrations in trying to build their careers as artists. Excluded from the largely white downtown art world, as well as from the male-dominated black art world, the women found juggling their creative ambitions with their roles as mothers and working heads of households left little time to make and promote their art.

Out of this initial gathering came one of the first exhibitions of professional black women artists. “*Where We At*”—*Black Women Artists, 1971*, opened at Acts of Art Gallery that June. Adopting the show’s title as its name, the collective began meeting at members’ homes and studios, building support systems for making their work, while assisting each other with personal matters such as childcare.

Influenced by the Black Arts Movement, members worked largely in figurative styles, emphasizing black subjects. While the group engaged politically with racism, their work also spoke to personal experiences of sexism, and members contributed to publications including the *Feminist Art Journal* and *Heresies*. Though the group’s mission was not explicitly feminist, Where We At recognized the power of collectivity—empowering black women by creating a network to help attain their professional goals as artists.

Art World Activism

The political and social upheavals of the 1960s included the Civil Rights, Ecology, Gay Rights, and Women's Movements as well as international struggles to end colonialism and the Vietnam War. These movements for equity and progressive change prompted artists to organize, agitating for broader, more inclusive representation in museums, galleries, and alternative spaces. Multiple ad hoc arts groups formed to address specific issues via protests, guerrilla actions, mail art, and group exhibitions. One of the earliest such groups was the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition, organized by artists outraged by the exhibition *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900–1968*, which opened at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1969. Presenting documentary photography of Harlem's daily life in displays resembling those of a science museum, the exhibition was devoid of contemporary art by African Americans.

Emerging concurrently, the Art Workers' Coalition sought to pressure museums to institute progressive reforms. The demands made of art institutions included respect for artists' intellectual property rights, divestment from funders who profited from the Vietnam War, free admission for artists and students, and greater parity in exhibitions across lines of class, gender, and race. Important splinter groups of the Coalition included Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation, Women Artists in Revolution, and Artists Against Racism in the Arts, all of which were committed to more forceful, nimble, and creative actions to combat racism and sexism in the mainstream art world.

Dialectics of Isolation

In 1980, artist Ana Mendieta curated *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States* at New York's A.I.R. Gallery. Featuring eight women artists of the Third World—Judith Baca, Beverly Buchanan, Janet Henry, Senga Nengudi, Lydia Okumura, Howardena Pindell, Selena Whitefeather, and Zarina—the exhibition was conceived as a conversation, or “dialectic,” between the artists and the primarily white, middle-class female members of the gallery. As a space for truth-seeking through critical dialogue, *Dialectics of Isolation* stressed the need to confront the dominant culture with the existence and value of nonwhite experiences, in and out of the art world.

A.I.R. Gallery, the first all-women artists' cooperative gallery in the United States, was founded in 1972 by second-wave feminist artists who, like other groups including “Where We At” Black Women Artists, believed that female-only spaces were necessary to build a culture of support. While the core membership of A.I.R. lacked racial and economic diversity, limiting their ability to be truly representative, the Cuban American Mendieta became an active member in 1979. She withdrew in 1982, however, concluding that the mainstream Feminist Movement had again “failed to remember” its nonwhite counterparts and their struggle with issues of race, gender, and class.

Heresies

Founded in 1976, the Heresies Collective set out to write and document a politicized history of female artists to encourage creative collaborations among women. Their most significant

project was producing *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* from 1977 to 1993, with each issue focused on a single theme related to feminism and the art world. The journal was organized through a unique, nonhierarchical structure in which a group of women composed of Heresies members and interested outsiders would come together to collectively edit each issue.

Charges of racism and exclusion were raised in 1977 after the publication of the third issue, "Lesbian Art and Artists." Responding to the complete absence of lesbian artists of color in the issue, the Combahee River Collective, a black feminist organization, took the all-white editorial group to task, demanding that the oversight be addressed. In a gesture of reconciliation and openness, the Heresies Collective published Combahee's letter in their next issue, noting that future issues, intended to right the imbalance, were already in the works. Charges of tokenism and privilege persisted, and two subsequent volumes devoted to women of color were published: "Third World Women—The Politics of Being Other," 1979, and "Racism Is the Issue," 1982.

Just Above Midtown Gallery

In 1974, Linda Goode Bryant, an arts professional who had worked at both The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Studio Museum in Harlem, founded Just Above Midtown Gallery (JAM) in the then heart of New York's commercial art world on West 57th Street. JAM's mission was to provide a platform for the exhibition and sale of work by black artists equal to the venues available to their white counterparts. The gallery focused on artists working in noncommercial, nonrepresentational styles, including Maren Hassinger, Senga Nengudi, Lorraine O'Grady, and Howardena Pindell.

In 1977, JAM moved to Tribeca, a neighborhood in downtown Manhattan. While the relocation was forced by rent increases, it was also motivated by a desire to join a more like-minded part of the art world. On 57th Street, the goal had been to cultivate a black collector base to create financial sustainability for the gallery and its artists, as well as to empower black participation in the mainstream art world. Downtown, JAM continued to operate as a commercial space, but Bryant and her cohorts prioritized live events, including performances, group meals, readings, and lectures, eventually making the transition to a nonprofit gallery.

As part of the downtown alternative space movement until its closing in 1986, JAM championed "new concepts and materials," eventually showing the work of artists of all races and collaborating with other downtown spaces. Bryant described JAM as a "laboratory" and provided her artists with a monthly stipend to free them from both the financial concerns and the constraints of the market.

The 1980s

While many of the artist-led protests of the 1960s and 1970s unfolded as internal art world matters, these efforts were later drawn into a broad cultural backlash against the progressive gains of the Black Power, Civil Rights, Ecology, Gay Rights, and Women's Movements. During the 1980s, artists and activists fought on multiple fronts against growing conservatism in what became known as the "culture wars." Black women led their

fellow artists in protest, questioning conservative viewpoints while continuing to struggle against gender- and race-based discrimination.

Living through the cultural shifts of that decade, these artists were increasingly skeptical of power structures and authority. They examined how images and language—whether in art, media, or advertising—shape and often distort the representation of identity. Using their own subjectivity and personal experience, they deconstructed how dominant political and cultural narratives undermine and misrepresent women and communities of color.

Often combining photography and text, Lorraine O’Grady, Lorna Simpson, and Carrie Mae Weems were active participants in this critical discourse, part of what became known across multiple disciplines as postmodernism. Photographers Coreen Simpson and Ming Smith documented the African diaspora, from Harlem to Côte d’Ivoire. Dancers, filmmakers, and theater and performance artists—including Ayoka Chenzira, Blondell Cummings, Julie Dash, and the Rodeo Caldonia High-Fidelity Performance Theater collective—pushed these critiques in new directions.

While the artists of the 1980s used different strategies than some of their predecessors, they were united in their commitment to self-determination for black women and an end to oppression on all fronts.

Prints and Posters

As an efficient and inexpensive method for widely disseminating information, printmaking has long been associated with protest and freedom of expression. Many artists in the 1960s explored printmaking as a primary means for making art, prioritizing utility and accessibility over preciousness or market value. Their posters, prints, announcements, and other forms of printed ephemera were relatively easy to produce in bulk and distribute, allowing artists to circumvent and undermine an increasingly commercialized art world.

For artists of the Black Arts Movement, screenprints and posters became a primary medium for creative experimentation and sharing political ideas. Displaying a diverse aesthetic vocabulary, this wall of prints and posters samples the activist history of printmaking in this period—a rich and complex collection of creative voices.

Faith Ringgold
American, born 1930
For the Women's House, 1971
Oil on canvas
New York City Department of Correction, Rose M. Singer Center, East Elmhurst

The mural *For the Women's House* was dedicated to the women incarcerated in the Correctional Institution for Women on Rikers Island, New York City, in January 1972. The mural remained on view until the facility became a male detention center in 1988. Deemed inappropriate for the incoming male prisoners, the painting was whitewashed, but it was later saved by a guard, restored, and reinstalled in the new women's prison, the Rose M. Singer Center, where it remains on view.

Imagining the first female president and professional women basketball players among other positive female role models, *For the Women's House* incorporates suggestions offered to Faith Ringgold by incarcerated women. The play on words in the imaginary route and destination of the bus in the upper quadrant—"2A to Sojourner Truth Square"—speaks to the "long road leading out of here" that the women had asked to see depicted.

In an April 1972 interview with her daughter, writer Michele Wallace, Ringgold described her goals for the piece: "If I hadn't done it for the Women's House then it probably would have been more political; but these women have been rejected by society; they are the blood guilt of society, so if this is what I give them, then maybe that is what we should all have. Maybe all that other stuff we're talking about is jive because these women are real. They don't have anything to be unreal about."

Maren Hassinger
American, born 1947
Leaning, 1980
Wire rope and wire
Courtesy of the artist

A supporter of the growing Ecology Movement, sculptor and performance artist Maren Hassinger evokes an artificial landscape within the elegantly minimal sculptural environment of *Leaning*. Bush-like forms made from twisted, welded, and bent wire rope build a complex site for group interaction and personal reflection. Transforming industrial detritus into an abstract and formally rigorous garden, Hassinger creates a contemplative experience that is charged with different meanings—about natural versus artificial, and personal versus communal.

Faith Ringgold
American, born 1930
Early Works #25: Self-Portrait, 1965
Oil on canvas
Brooklyn Museum; Gift of Elizabeth A. Sackler, 2013.96

Faith Ringgold completed this self-portrait at the beginning of her career, concurrent with the rise of the Black Power and other radical political movements of the 1960s. Alluding to the hard-edged, mechanical line favored by Pop artists and the psychologically acute

portraiture of Pablo Picasso, the artist portrays herself with a determined gaze and folded arms, in a gesture simultaneously gentle and guarded. In reflecting on this painting and the political and artistic awakening she experienced during this time, Ringgold has said, "I was trying to find my voice, talking to myself through my art."

Emma Amos
American, born 1938
Flower Sniffer, 1966
Oil on canvas
Brooklyn Museum; William K. Jacobs, Jr. Fund, 2017.35

"For me, a black woman artist, to walk into the studio, is a political act." —Emma Amos

Amos was the youngest member—and only woman—of the New York collective Spiral, assembled as a support and networking group for black artists interested in social change. Spiral sought space and greater visibility for black artists in a racist art world, and its members debated art's role in political activism. In this self-portrait, Amos presents herself alone in a vast, abstract field of paint, simply enjoying the fragrance of flowers. The artist nonetheless steadily returns the viewer's gaze, asserting and defining her own place within her work.

Emma Amos
American, born 1938
Sandy and Her Husband, 1973
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and Ryan Lee Gallery, New York

Emma Amos was raised in Atlanta, Georgia, where her family was involved in the rich cultural scene cultivated by African American colleges, businesses, and community leaders in the face of the legal segregation of the time. Relocating to New York in 1960, Amos found herself closed off from the art world owing to her race and gender, both of which are exalted in *Sandy and Her Husband*. Utterly of its moment, Amos's depiction of the happy couple in her apartment spotlights contemporaneous fashions as well as another of her own paintings, *Flower Sniffer*, 1966, also on view in this gallery. The combination of vibrant color and patterns presages Amos's later use of African *kangas*, Dutch wax prints, and other textiles in her figurative paintings of the 1980s.

Jae Jarrell
American, born 1935
Ebony Family, ca. 1968
Velvet dress with velvet collage
Brooklyn Museum; Gift of R.M. Atwater, Anna Wolfrom Dove, Alice Fiebiger, Joseph Fiebiger, Belle Campbell Harriss, and Emma L. Hyde, by exchange, Designated Purchase Fund, Mary Smith Dorward Fund, Dick S. Ramsay Fund, and Carll H. de Silver Fund, 2012.80.15

Urban Wall Suit, ca. 1969

Sewn and painted cotton and silk, two-piece suit

Brooklyn Museum; Gift of R.M. Atwater, Anna Wolfrom Dove, Alice Fiebiger, Joseph Fiebiger, Belle Campbell Harriss, and Emma L. Hyde, by exchange, Designated Purchase Fund, Mary Smith Dorward Fund, Dick S. Ramsay Fund, and Carll H. de Silver Fund, 2012.80.16

As one of the cofounders of the Black Arts Movement collective AfriCOBRA, fashion designer Jae Jarrell made one-of-a-kind clothing using the bright hues the collective called "Coolade" colors, a wordplay on a popular children's beverage. Jarrell's vibrant garments exalt black families and culture and were worn by the artist in her daily life. She wrote that her *Ebony Family* dress "always got good vibes from our [AfriCOBRA] members, no doubt, because my political stance on nurturing the strong loving Black family is real, and personally experienced. We regarded the members as extended family."

Lois Mailou Jones

American, 1905–1998

Ubi Girl from Tai Region, 1972

Acrylic on canvas

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Hayden Collection—Charles Henry Hayden Fund, 1974.410

A pioneer of the explosive creative moment in the 1920s known as the Harlem Renaissance and a professor of visual art at Howard University from 1930 to 1977, Lois Mailou Jones was part of an older generation of artists whose work remained influential for younger artists involved in the Black Arts Movement. Inspired by decades of work in Haiti and research on artists of the African diaspora, Jones traveled extensively throughout Africa in the late 1960s and 1970s to conduct research and meet contemporary artists. Both works on view here, *Ubi Girl from Tai Region* and *Ode to Kinshasa*, were made during her travels to Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Inspired by the arts and cultures she was experiencing firsthand in Africa, they also reflect the Black Arts Movement's engagement with African imagery.

Lois Mailou Jones

American, 1905–1998

Ode to Kinshasa, 1972

Mixed media on canvas

National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the artist, 1997.105

Jeff Donaldson

American, 1932–2004

Wives of Shango, 1969

Watercolor with mixed media on paper

Brooklyn Museum; Gift of R.M. Atwater, Anna Wolfrom Dove, Alice Fiebiger, Joseph Fiebiger, Belle Campbell Harriss, and Emma L. Hyde, by exchange, Designated Purchase Fund, Mary Smith Dorward Fund, Dick S. Ramsay Fund, and Carll H. de Silver Fund, 2012.80.13

Unidentified artist
WEUSI Art Creators, early 1970s
Painting on terry cloth
Collection of Ronald Pyatt and Shelley Inniss

The artist collective Weusi (a word meaning “blackness” in Swahili) was largely made up of male artists who worked out of their cooperative gallery, Nyumba Ya Sanaa (“House of Art”), in Harlem. As one of the key groups of the Black Arts Movement, they expressed African themes and imagery and political solidarity with the Black Power Movement. Kay Brown, one of the founders of the Where We At collective, was the sole woman in Weusi for three years, serving as the assistant to the directors and the official secretary of the group. Fellow “Where We At” artist Dindga McCannon was also a member. This painting appears in the group portrait of the collective included nearby in this exhibition.

AfriCOBRA 1: Ten in Search of a Nation; Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, September 13–October 4, 1970
Printed poster
Collection of David Lusenhop

Dindga McCannon
American, born 1947
Revolutionary Sister, 1971
Mixed media construction on wood
Brooklyn Museum; Gift of R.M. Atwater, Anna Wolfrom Dove, Alice Fiebiger, Joseph Fiebiger, Belle Campbell Harriss, and Emma L. Hyde, by exchange, Designated Purchase Fund, Mary Smith Dorward Fund, Dick S. Ramsay Fund, and Carll H. de Silver Fund, 2012.80.32

Dindga McCannon wrote about her inspiration for making *Revolutionary Sister*:

In the 60s and 70s we didn’t have many women warriors (that we were aware of) so I created my own. Her headpiece is made from recycled mini flagpoles. The shape was inspired by my thoughts on the Statue of Liberty; she represents freedom for so many but what about us (African Americans)? My warrior is made from pieces from the hardware store—another place women were not welcomed back then. My thoughts were my warrior is hard as nails. I used a lot of the liberation colors: red—for the blood we shed; green—for the Motherland—Africa; and black—for the people. The bullet belt validates her warrior status. She doesn’t need a gun; the power of change exists within her. The belt was mine. In the early 70s bullet belts were a fashion statement, I think inspired by the blaxploitation movies of the time. I couldn’t afford the metal belts, probably purchased at Army Navy surplus stores, so I made do with a plastic one.

Kay Brown
American, 1932–2012
She Sees No Evil; She Hears No Evil; She Speaks No Evil, 1982
Collage on paper
Collection of Ronald Pyatt and Shelley Inniss

Kay Brown

American, 1932–2012

First Kick of Life, ca. 1974

Etching and aquatint on paper

Brooklyn Museum; Gift of R.M. Atwater, Anna Wolfrom Dove, Alice Fiebiger, Joseph Fiebiger, Belle Campbell Harriss, and Emma L. Hyde, by exchange, Designated Purchase Fund, Mary Smith Dorward Fund, Dick S. Ramsay Fund, and Carll H. de Silver Fund, 2012.80.9

Dindga McCannon

American, born 1947

Empress Akweke, 1975

Acrylic on canvas

Brooklyn Museum; Gift of R.M. Atwater, Anna Wolfrom Dove, Alice Fiebiger, Joseph Fiebiger, Belle Campbell Harriss, and Emma L. Hyde, by exchange, Designated Purchase Fund, Mary Smith Dorward Fund, Dick S. Ramsay Fund, and Carll H. de Silver Fund, 2012.80.31

Dindga McCannon painted this portrait of fellow “Where We At” artist Akweke Singho.

Kay Brown

American, 1932–2012

Sister with Braids, late 1960s–early 1970s

Etching on paper

Collection of Ronald Pyatt and Shelley Inniss

Carole Byard

American, 1941–2017

Yasmina and the Moon, 1975

Block print on paper

Collection of Alexis De Veaux

Betye Saar

American, born 1926

Colored Spade, 1971

Color video with sound

Running time: 1 minute, 19 seconds

Courtesy of Roberts & Tilton Gallery, Culver City, California

Betye Saar’s short film *Colored Spade* combines a song from the 1968 hit Broadway show *Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical* with a mash-up of both derogatory images of people of color and images of black power and solidarity. Made the year before she began her incendiary series *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima*—a work from which is also on view in this gallery—the film demonstrates the origins of her interest in deconstructing racist

representations of people of color in popular culture and politics. *Colored Spade* has not been publicly screened since its inclusion in the Brockman Gallery Film Festival in 1975.

Betye Saar
American, born 1926
The Liberation of Aunt Jemima: Cocktail, 1973
Mixed-media assemblage
Collection of Jane Logemann in honor of Gerald L. Rosen

Betye Saar's *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima: Cocktail* combines the iconography of the Black Power Movement, political violence, and aspirational middle-class American culture. It uses them to critique the racist stereotypes of black femininity and speak to the revolutionary aims of Black Liberation movements. Featuring a handmade label with a "mammy" figure on the front and a Black Power fist on the back, the ubiquitous California wine jug turned Molotov cocktail wryly comments on the potential and promise of armed resistance to oppression.

Elizabeth Catlett
American, 1915–2012
Target, 1970
Bronze
Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans

Though Elizabeth Catlett's career began in the Depression era of the 1930s, when she participated in the New Deal program called the Public Works of Art Project, her artwork was not regularly exhibited until the 1960s, when the Civil Rights Movement drew new audiences to her prints of revolutionary figures such as Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Malcolm X. Catlett employed the immediacy and legibility of the graphic arts to address sociopolitical causes in the United States and in Mexico, where she lived and worked. *Target* was made in response to the killing of Black Panther activists Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by Chicago police officers in December 1969. Using the crosshairs of a rifle scope as a framing device, Catlett indicates the viewer's complicity as a witness to injustice.

Faith Ringgold
American, born 1930
Feminist Series #1: Of My Two Handicaps, 1972
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of ACA Galleries, New York

Faith Ringgold's *Feminist Series* features quotations from important African American women, such as Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, combining language and gestural painting to evoke the complex experiences of black women in the United States. The inclusion of Shirley Chisholm in *Feminist Series #1*, as the only living figure in the series, marks her history-making 1968 triumph as the first African American woman elected to the U.S. Congress. In the year Ringgold painted this work, Chisholm also became the first black candidate for a major party's nomination for president, and the first woman to run for chair of the Democratic Party. Ringgold blends African American quilting techniques, Tibetan

thankga painting forms, and Chisholm's own words in a colorful tribute to her pioneering breakthrough at the intersection of gender, race, and politics.

Betye Saar

American, born 1926

Floating Figure with Seven Spades, 1977

Mixed media on handkerchief

California African American Museum, Los Angeles; Gift of the Wives of the Bench and Bar, 1983.33

Betye Saar

American, born 1926

Shield of Quality, 1974

Mixed-media assemblage

Newark Museum; Purchase 1998 The Members' Fund, 98.37

The New York Times Magazine, August 22, 1971

Facsimile of printed magazine

Brooklyn Museum Library Collection

Faith Ringgold

American, born 1930

People's Flag Show Poster, 1970

Design for poster: cut-paper collage and pen

Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody

The Judson 3, 1970

Silkscreen

Courtesy of ACA Galleries, New York

In November 1970, *People's Flag Show* was held at New York's Judson Memorial Church. The exhibition was designed as an open call for artworks interpreting the American flag, in a direct remonstrance of laws limiting its use and display. More than 150 works filled the church, many inherently political or even incendiary in their manipulation of the flag. After a performance in which a flag was burned, three of the organizing artists—Jon Hendricks, Jean Toche, and Faith Ringgold, dubbed "the Judson Three"—were arrested and subsequently charged with desecration of the American flag. A protracted, costly, and ultimately failed legal battle ensued over the fundamental right of artistic license. Ringgold designed *People's Flag Show Poster* to publicize the exhibition and the silkscreen *The Judson 3* during the subsequent legal battle.

Faith Ringgold

American, born 1930
Woman Free Yourself, 1971
Cut-paper collage
Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody

Howardena Pindell
American, born 1943
Free, White and 21, 1980
Color video with sound
Running time: 12 minutes, 15 seconds
Courtesy of the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York

"I had faced de facto censorship issues throughout my life as part of the system of apartheid in the United States. In the tape I was bristling at the women's movement as well as at the art world and some of the usual offensive encounters that were heaped on top of the racism of my profession."

So wrote Howardena Pindell in 1992 about *Free, White and 21*. This intensely personal and political film, whose title comes from a rebellious catchphrase often heard in Hollywood movies of the 1930s and '40s, was a stark departure from the abstract works on paper for which she was primarily known. The film was first shown in *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States*, curated by Ana Mendieta at A.I.R. Gallery in 1980.

Beverly Buchanan
American, 1940–2015
Wall Column, 1980
Painted cast concrete
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Mrs. Wilson Nolen Gift, 1981, 1981.8a-d

After receiving a master's degree in public health from Columbia University in 1969, Beverly Buchanan traded her ambition to become a doctor for a working career as an artist, living in New York until 1977. Buchanan explored the cultural and social history of sites and ruins, coupling a poignant sense of the transience of historical memory with an active engagement with post-Minimalism and Land art.

Wall Column, which was included in *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States*, was acquired by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Lowery Stokes Sims, who was a curator at the museum in the 1980s, brought the work into the collection. As Sims recalls: "I was impressed by the relationship of her conceptual approach to the seductions of the landscape and the engagement of materials that resonated with historical artmaking by African Americans in the South."

Janet Henry
American, born 1947
Juju Box for a White Protestant Male, 1979–80

Mixed media, clear vinyl, toys, and dolls
Courtesy of the artist

Janet Henry's *Juju Box* series demonstrates the complex layering in the stories we create to describe ourselves. Drawing on the visual lexicon of children's play and alluding to both West African beliefs and exclusionary social systems in the United States in the title, Henry here imagines a white Protestant male whose persona is crafted from a pair of rowing oars, a cable-knit sweater, and a neatly dressed female companion with a shopping cart in tow, among other items.

Janet Henry
American, born 1947
The Annual Trip Home Christian Cullid Lady, 1981
Mixed media
Courtesy of the artist

Ana Mendieta
American, born Cuba, 1948–1985
Untitled (Facial Cosmetic Variations), 1972
Chromogenic prints
Courtesy of the Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC and Galerie Lelong, New York

Emma Amos
American, born 1938
Preparing for a Face Lift, 1981
Etching and crayon on paper
Courtesy of the artist and Ryan Lee Gallery, New York

Emma Amos's wry work on paper mimics several tropes of fashion magazines, transferring the advice column model of self-improvement to her experience as a black woman trying to make it in the art world. Here she scrutinizes the physical toll of racism, sexism, and the tyranny of cultural expectations for women's beauty.

Janet Henry
American, born 1947
Untitled, for Heresies #15: Racism Is the Issue, 1982
Cut-paper collage, ink, correction fluid, and adhesive on paper mounted on illustration board
Courtesy of the artist

Virginia Jaramillo
American, born 1938
Visual Theorem, 1984

Linen rag fiber with earth pigments
Courtesy of the artist and Hales Gallery, London

Part of Virginia Jaramillo's *Visual Theorems* series, this work was first shown in 1984 as part of the group exhibition *Women Artists in the 80s: New Talent* at New York's A.I.R. Gallery. In 1979, Jaramillo was coeditor of an issue of *Heresies* that looked specifically at the experiences of women of color in the mainstream Feminist Movement and art world. That issue, "Third World Women—The Politics of Being Other," featured a similar work by Jaramillo: *Visual Theorems #170*, 1979.

Virginia Jaramillo
American, born 1938
Untitled, 1971
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and Hales Gallery, London and New York

After she relocated to New York City from Los Angeles in the mid-1960s, Virginia Jaramillo's work evolved in response to her new environment and artistic community. In a studio on Spring Street in SoHo, an artist-centric neighborhood in Lower Manhattan, she began to produce paintings bold in scale, composition, and formal experimentation, reacting to the gestural nature of Abstract Expressionism. The precision of the curves in her paintings and the flatness of the paintings' surfaces demonstrate Jaramillo's affinities with hard-edged painting and Minimalism.

Senga Nengudi
American, born 1943
Ceremony for Freeway Fets, 1978
C-prints
Courtesy of the artist, Lévy Gorvy, New York, and Thomas Erben Gallery, New York

In March 1978, a group of artists known as StudioZ came together under a freeway overpass in Los Angeles to activate Senga Nengudi's first public performance, the environmental installation *Ceremony for Freeway Fets*. Participants in the improvisatory gathering included the artists Houston Conwill, David Hammons, Maren Hassinger, Ulysses Jenkins, Franklin Parker, Joe Ray, and RoHo, among others, with the event captured by photographer Roderick Kwaku Young and filmmaker Barbara McCullough. The performance included elements of African masquerade with participants wearing Nengudi's sculptures as costumes while dancing and playing musical instruments.

The artist viewed the work as a symbolic vehicle for healing divisions between black men and women. Describing the work's concept and realization, Nengudi said:

Some of the forms and columns were representative of male energy, the others of female energy. On one column I inscribed names of our children, on another the names of ancestors, relatives, and personal friends, some of whom succumbed to the disease of being black in America. I had grave concerns about the tenuous relationships between black men and women. I wished to portray myself as a uniting spirit, a harmonizing spirit between those two factions. I asked David Hammons to be representative of male energy and Maren Hassinger to be representative of

female energy. . . . As I gave myself up to the music and the situation, I became other than myself. The concept took over and fulfilled itself.

Howardena Pindell
American, born 1943

Untitled, 1969
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York

Carnival at Ostende, 1977
Mixed media on canvas
Collection of Garth Greenan and Bryan Davidson Blue, New York

Untitled, 1972
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York

Howardena Pindell's paintings from this period appear as austere color fields from afar, but their dense complexity is revealed on closer inspection. Pindell pushed or sprayed paint through stenciled or hole-punched paper templates, accumulating small dots in innumerable layers and with varying hues. The result is a shimmering surface that seems to vibrate with the interplay between markings.

Senga Nengudi
American, born 1943
Inside/Outside, 1977
Nylon, mesh, and rubber
Brooklyn Museum; Gift of Burt Aaron, the Council for Feminist Art, and the Alfred T. White Fund, 2011.21

At the forefront of the African American avant-garde in Los Angeles and New York in the 1970s, Senga Nengudi was first recognized for her anthropomorphic nylon mesh sculptures, such as *Inside/Outside*. The artist's background as a dancer and choreographer informs her practice, and she has often made use of her sculptures in her own performances, testing the limits of her constructions by wearing and stretching the nylons to the brink of bursting. During this period, Nengudi was involved with a multitude of spaces and collaborators, including Just Above Midtown Gallery and the dancer Blondell Cummings. *Inside/Outside* was included in her 1977 exhibition at Just Above Midtown, and she was also represented in *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States* in 1980.

Barbara McCullough
American, born 1945
Water Ritual #1: An Urban Rite of Purification, 1979
Black-and-white video with sound
Running time: 4 minutes

Third World Newsreel, New York

Filmed in an abandoned area in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, *Water Ritual #1: An Urban Rite of Purification* evokes spiritual and cosmological practices of African diaspora communities. After performing a series of ritualistic movements, the female character Milanda, played by Yolanda Vidato, symbolically purifies her own body and the neglected urban landscape she finds herself in by urinating inside a ruined building.

Barbara McCullough was part of the L.A. Rebellion at UCLA: a group of black film students who worked closely together over the two decades following the 1965 Watts Uprising. RoHo, one of the cinematographers for *Water Ritual #1*, was also involved in Senga Nengudi's *Ceremony for Freeway Fets* performance, which is set in a similarly desolate area of Los Angeles.

Lorraine O'Grady
American, born 1934

Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Costume, 1980
Costume made from white gloves
The Eileen Harris Norton Collection, Santa Monica, California

Untitled (Mlle Bourgeoise Noire), 1980–83/2009
Gelatin silver prints
Courtesy of Alexander Gray Associates, New York

Lorraine O'Grady's first public performance, *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire*, remains a pivotal work of race, gender, and class critique. Dressed in an elaborate costume made of 180 pairs of white gloves and carrying a cat-o'-nine-tails whip made from sail rope studded with white chrysanthemums, O'Grady made uninvited appearances at openings at the New Museum of Contemporary Art and Just Above Midtown Gallery as the farcical and indicting persona Miss Black Middle-Class 1955, demanding attention for black women artists.

Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Leaves the Safety of Home (New Museum performance 1981)

Mlle Bourgeoise Noire and Her Master of Ceremonies Enter the New Museum

Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Asks, Won't you help me lighten my heavy bouquet?

A Skeptic Inspects Mlle Bourgeoise Noire's Cape

Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Smiles, She Smiles, She Smiles

Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Continues Her Tournée

Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Removes the Cape and Puts on Her Gloves

Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Begins to Concentrate

Crowd Watches Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Whipping Herself

Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Beats Herself with the Whip-That-Made-Plantations-Move

Crowd Watches Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Shouting Her Poem

Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Shouts Out Her Poem

Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Leaves the New Museum

Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Celebrates with Her Friends

Senga Nengudi

American, born 1943

Rapunzel, 1981

Gelatin silver print (documentation of performance)

Courtesy of the artist, Lévy Gorvy Gallery, New York, and Thomas Erben Gallery, New York

Camille Billops

American, born 1933

Had I Know, July 1973

Print

Just Above Midtown Archive

Janet Henry

American, born 1947

Cover design for *Black Currant* #1, 1982

Mechanical for reproduction: acetate and rubber cement on Bristol board

Courtesy of the artist

Christine Choy

American, born 1952

Susan Robeson

American, born 1953

Teach Our Children, 1972

Black-and-white video with sound

Running time: 35 minutes

Third World Newsreel, New York

In 1971, inmates at the Attica Correctional Facility in Attica, New York, took control of the prison for four days to protest their living conditions and the denial of their basic political rights. Christine Choy and Susan Robeson's film *Teach Our Children* is a powerful document of the rebellion, featuring footage from the prison and interviews with the incarcerated.

Camille Billops
American, born 1933
Suzanne, Suzanne, 1982
Black-and-white video with sound
Running time: 30 minutes
Third World Newsreel, New York

In her film *Suzanne, Suzanne*, Camille Billops follows her niece, a recovering heroin addict with two young children. She frames her protagonist's struggles with addiction in the context of Suzanne's father's physical abuse of both her mother and herself, a lack of communication about mental health in her family, and the expectation that, as a woman, "what you did with family was endure." Asked by bell hooks in an interview in 1996 if she knew that *Suzanne, Suzanne* was a "feminist film" as she was making it, Billops replied, "No. How would you know? Domestic violence was not talked about the way it is now."

Camille Billops
American, born 1933
Finding Christa, 1991
Black-and-white video with sound
Running time: 55 minutes
Third World Newsreel, New York

In both her life and her work, Camille Billops refuses the strictures placed on her as a black woman by her family or society, creating films that air the "dirty laundry" of her own and her family's past. In *Finding Christa*, she turns the lens on her choice to put her daughter, Christa, up for adoption as a young child. Presenting her decision as difficult but ultimately better for herself and her daughter, Billops enacts a revolutionary refusal by neither hiding from nor apologizing for her choice. When combined with the film's unflinching assessment of what, in bell hooks's opinion, is the "lie" of contemporary feminism—namely that women "can have everything"—this radical refusal to judge herself gives *Finding Christa* its subversive power and potential.

Julie Dash
American, born 1952
Four Women, 1975
Color video with sound
Running time: 4 minutes
Third World Newsreel, New York

The Diary of an African Nun, 1977
Black-and-white video with sound
Running time: 16 minutes
L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema is a project by UCLA Film & Television Archive developed as part of *Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A., 1945–80*

Illusions, 1983
Black-and-white video with sound
Running time: 34 minutes

Third World Newsreel, New York

Filmmaker Julie Dash is renowned for breaking boundaries of race and gender in Hollywood. Her first three films are presented here, and her first feature-length film, *Daughters of the Dust*, will be screened in association with this exhibition.

Her first film, the dance-based short *Four Women*, 1975, takes its name from a Nina Simone ballad and focuses a critical lens on common stereotypes of black women. *The Diary of an African Nun*, 1977, adapted from a short story by Alice Walker, portrays the inner strife of a Ugandan nun struggling with her commitment to Christ. *Illusions*, 1983, exposes the myths of both the film industry and racial categorization, following a black woman who "passes" for white in her job at a 1940s Hollywood studio.

Dash is a part of the L.A. Rebellion, a group of black filmmakers who attended UCLA's School of Theater, Film, and Television starting in the late 1960s.

Coreen Simpson
American, born 1942

Church "Praise Dancer," Harlem, NYC, ca. 1970s/2017
Photographic print
Courtesy of the artist

Harlem Church Lady, ca. 1970s/2017
Photographic print
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, ca. 1980s/2017
Photographic print
Courtesy of the artist

Raven Chanticleer with Girlfriend, NYC, ca. 1980s/2017
Photographic print
Courtesy of the artist

The Club, ca. 1980s/2017
Photographic print
Courtesy of the artist

The Wiz Opening, NYC, 1978/2017
Photographic print
Courtesy of the artist

A photographer and jewelry designer, Coreen Simpson was well-known for documenting the fashion worlds of New York City and Paris as a photographer for the *Village Voice* and *New York Amsterdam News*. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, she photographed the vibrant cultural and social worlds of New York's communities of color, from Harlem church ladies to theater attendees and nightlife devotees. In 1979, Simpson had a photography exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum's Community Gallery, and she was also involved with the "Where We At" collective's *1 + 1 = 3: Joining Forces* exhibition in 1986.

Carrie Mae Weems
American, born 1953
Family Pictures and Stories, 1978–84
Gelatin silver prints and audio
Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

In 1965, Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote a highly controversial report, titled *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, which blamed “the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society” on a weak family structure. Carrie Mae Weems’s *Family Pictures and Stories*, featuring her own Portland, Oregon, family, was intended to refute the Moynihan Report. Incorporating candid photographs of her family with written text and audio recordings that document their history, Weems creates a deeply felt and realistic account of black family life in the United States.

Carrie Mae Weems
American, born 1953
Mirror, Mirror, 1987–88
Gelatin silver print
Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

White Patty You Don’t Shine, 1987–88
Gelatin silver print
Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Coupling her sardonic wit with the direct, uncompromising gaze of her subjects, Carrie Mae Weems eviscerates the racism embedded in jokes made at the expense of people of color. These photographs are part of the *Ain’t Jokin’* series, one of Weems’s earliest bodies of photo-text works.

Ayoka Chenzira
American, born 1953
Hair Piece: A Film for Nappyheaded People, 1985
Color video with sound
Running time: 10 minutes
Women Make Movies

Ayoka Chenzira’s animated short questions the unattainable beauty standards imposed on women of color in the United States. As the first black woman animator; one of the first black women to write, produce, and direct a feature film; and one of the first people of color to teach film production in higher education, Chenzira is a groundbreaking presence in film.

Ming Smith
American, date of birth unavailable

Untitled (Self-Portrait with Camera), New York, NY, ca. 1975/2017
Gelatin silver print
Courtesy of Ming Smith and Steven Kasher Gallery, New York

Untitled (Self-Portrait with Camera), New York, NY, ca. 1975/2017
Gelatin silver print
Courtesy of Ming Smith and Steven Kasher Gallery, New York

Untitled (Grace Jones in Ballet Costume), New York, NY, ca. 1975/2017
Gelatin silver print
Courtesy of Ming Smith and Steven Kasher Gallery, New York

Symmetry on the Ivory Coast, Abidjan, Ivory Coast, ca. 1972/2017
Gelatin silver print
Courtesy of Ming Smith and Steven Kasher Gallery, New York

In 1972, early in her career as a photographer, Ming Smith was invited to join Kamoinge, an association of black photographers formed in 1963 to produce images of empowerment to counteract negative portrayals of black people during the struggle for civil rights. Smith's contributions to the group include portraits of avant-garde composer-performers Grace Jones and Sun Ra, in which indistinct focus lends an enigmatic mystery and a sense of immediacy. In addition to a long-term interest in self-portraiture, Smith traveled extensively, capturing life in the United States and abroad.

Ming Smith
American, date of birth unavailable
Sun Ra Space II, New York, NY, 1978/2000
Gelatin silver print
Collection of Jason Moran

Lorna Simpson
American, born 1960
Gestures/Re-enactments, 1985
Silver gelatin prints
Collection of Raymond Learsy

Gestures/Re-enactments was Lorna Simpson's first work combining photography and text. The large-scale yet fragmented images of a young black man wearing white combined with enigmatic and distressing texts offer an incomplete narrative that can be read as vulnerable and powerful.

Rodeo Caldonia High-Fidelity Performance Theater

Rodeo Caldonia core group: Donna Berwick, Celina Davis, Raye Dowell, Candace Hamilton, Kellie Jones, Lisa Jones, Suzi Kelly, Alice Norris, Alva Rogers, Lorna Simpson, Pamala Tyson, Amber Sunshower Villeneuve, Sandye Wilson, and Derin Young

Carmella and King Kong, 1985
Color video without sound
Running time: 23 minutes, 49 seconds
Courtesy of the artist

Combination Skin, 1986/1991
Color video with sound
Running time: 74 minutes, 4 seconds
Courtesy of the artist

Formed by Lisa Jones and Alva Rogers in the mid-1980s, the Rodeo Caldonia High-Fidelity Performance Theater collective was a loose confederation of black women artists, writers, actors, and musicians. Combining the blues term *caldonia*, meaning “a hard-headed and independent woman,” with *rodeo*, for its athletic and social meanings, the Caldonias wanted to “get out in public and act up; to toss off the expectations laid by our genitals, our melanin count, and our college degrees.”

Unconcerned with propriety or respectability politics, they sought to “stare down the same questions that artists who share [their] gender and race have faced since Phillis Wheatley: What does it mean to be both black and a woman in America? What is our language, who are our allies, and what would freedom mean?” Though their repertoire was small, Rodeo Caldonia’s significance lies in the joy and pleasure they took in themselves and their rejection of oppressive representations of black women.

Jones has described *Combination Skin* as “a one-act comedy . . . about a futuristic game show called *\$100,000 Tragic Mulatto*,” which “explores the tragic mulatto myth and the American crossover dream.” *Carmella and King Kong*, inspired by Jones’s experiences traveling in the Virgin Islands with her sister, is a “cautionary tale about how women reconcile feminism with heterosexual love,” telling the story of a young artist who “discovers that the man she has fallen in love [with] is [the] monster and cinema darling King Kong.” Although *Carmella and King Kong* was performed and recorded with an audio component, only the visual element remains. One page of the script is on view in a nearby case.

Lorraine O’Grady
American, born 1934
Rivers, First Draft, 1982/2015
Digital C-prints from Kodachrome 35mm slides
Courtesy of Alexander Gray Associates, New York

Performed in the Central Park Loch on August 18, 1982, *Rivers, First Draft* was conceived of as a “collage-in-space” with different actions taking place simultaneously on two sides of a stream and a nearby hill. Lorraine O’Grady describes its structure as a “three-ring circus” in which multiple narratives compete for attention to unite two different heritages, the Caribbean and New England, and three different ages and aspects of O’Grady’s self, family dynamics, and artistic identity. The full documentation of the performance consists of forty-eight images, which reflect the dreamlike quality of the original work. A subset of twenty-two images from the *Künstlerroman* (“becoming an artist”) section is on view here. O’Grady drew inspiration from Haitian Vodun for this installation, and the arrangement of images evokes the “crossroad,” a key concept in African-based religions in the Western Hemisphere.

The work's seventeen performers, including O'Grady, are identified by their vibrantly colored clothing, such as the Woman in Red (O'Grady's adult self), the Woman in White (O'Grady's mother), and the Teenager in Magenta (O'Grady's adolescent self). Serving as tableaux vivant of O'Grady's past are the Girl in White, who recites Latin grammar lessons through a megaphone; the Woman in White, who disinterestedly grates coconuts; and the Nantucket Memorial, a symbol of O'Grady's New England upbringing. The Woman in Red navigates her entrance into the 1970s New York art world through the characters of the Debauchees (representing her life in pop culture as a rock critic), Art Snobs, and Black Male Artists in Yellow. A decisive moment occurs when the Woman in Red spray-paints a white stove red, signifying not only when O'Grady begins her artistic transformation but also when she becomes her own person outside of her mother's indoctrination and aligns herself with feminist discourse. The ending sequence unites O'Grady's childhood, adolescent, and adult selves as the characters walk down the stream together. For her, this scene represents the moment before she performed her first artwork, the now iconic *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire* (on view nearby).

Rivers, First Draft was performed only once, for a small invited audience of friends from Linda Goode Bryant's Just Above Midtown Gallery and occasional passersby. For O'Grady, "doing *Rivers* in the context of Just Above Midtown was a unique artmaking moment, one when the enabling audience—the audience which allows the work to come into existence and to which the work speaks—and the audience that consumes the work were one and the same."

Alison Saar
American, born 1956
Sapphire, 1985
Wood and mixed media
Collection of Gai Gherardi and Rhonda Saboff

Finding Christa, undated
Facsimile of printed poster
Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta

Lorna Simpson
American, born 1960
Waterbearer, 1986
Gelatin silver print with vinyl lettering
Courtesy of the artist

Along with Carrie Mae Weems, Lorna Simpson represents the youngest generation of artists in this exhibition. Their work recasts the political concerns of earlier activist generations through the combination of photography and text that emerged in the 1980s.

In this work, the waterbearer disrupts her task, pouring water with abandon. The paired text describes how women's stories are often undermined and ignored. Personal and cultural memory are frequent themes of Simpson's work. *Waterbearer* was reproduced in *B Culture* magazine in 1987, where influential feminist author bell hooks first encountered it, referring to the disregard of the female subject's experience as "subjugated knowledge."

Barbara Chase-Riboud
American, born 1939
Pushkin, 1985
Polished bronze and silk
Courtesy of the artist and Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York

Having settled in Paris in 1960, Barbara Chase-Riboud was physically removed from the Black Arts Movement. However, her works—monumental abstract sculptures that combine metal and fiber, such as *Pushkin*—speak to larger social issues resonant with the movement.

Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation, founded by Faith Ringgold and her daughters Michele Wallace and Barbara Wallace, protested the lack of women and people of color in the Whitney Museum of American Art's influential Annual Exhibition in 1970. As a direct result of their activism, Chase-Riboud and Betye Saar became the first African American women to show at the Whitney.

Lorraine O'Grady
American, born 1934
"Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Goes to the New Museum," *Heresies #14: The Women's Pages*, 1982
Printed magazine
Brooklyn Museum Library Collection

Michele Wallace
American, born 1952
"For the Women's House," *Feminist Art Journal*, April 1972
Printed newspaper
Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University

In the April 1972 issue of *Feminist Art Journal*, art critic Michele Wallace interviewed her mother, artist Faith Ringgold, about the large-scale mural Ringgold created for the

Correctional Institution for Women on Rikers Island. Made with funds from a Creative Artists Public Service Program award, the mural features women as role models and incorporates suggestions offered to Ringgold by incarcerated women. It is on view in this exhibition.

Blondell Cummings
American, 1944–2015
Chicken Soup, 1981
Color video with sound
Running time: 16 minutes, 3 seconds
New York Live Arts

Oscillating between the realism of the artist working in a kitchen and the surrealism of a set of convulsively choreographed movements, Blondell Cummings's *Chicken Soup* presents an ambivalent view of gendered domestic work. This postmodern dance performance evokes Cummings's early memories of her grandmother working in the kitchen. It was named an American masterpiece by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2006. The video on view is documentation of Cummings's performance of *Chicken Soup* at the Dance Theater Workshop in 1983.