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The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
announces

Visual Art at The REACH



featuring
Six Works on Loan from Glenstone Museum
and
Permanent Sculptures by Joel Shapiro
and Deborah Butterfield

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts today announced its inaugural presentation of visual art to be featured at the REACH, the Center’s 21st-century expansion project. Ten works in a rich diversity of media will be on display at the facility upon opening, including six pieces on loan from Glenstone Museum in Potomac, Maryland; sculptures by Joel Shapiro, Deborah Butterfield, and Roy Lichtenstein; and a wall hanging by Sam Gilliam. All works will be on view for the public beginning September 7, 2019.

(more)

“As we prepare to open the doors of the REACH for the first time—with an action-packed 16-day celebration of the performing arts—we invite visitors to pause and consider this collection of visual works that augments our usual range of artistic programming,” remarks Kennedy Center President Deborah F. Rutter. “We are incredibly grateful to all of the artists and galleries—especially to Glenstone—whose works will grace the new campus, sharing a legacy of visual art that stretches from the time of President John F. Kennedy to today.”

“Glenstone is honored to help celebrate the opening of the expanded Kennedy Center and we applaud their efforts to increase public access to one of our nation’s treasures,” adds Emily Wei Rales, Director and Co-founder of Glenstone Museum. “The Glenstone works on loan span the period from JFK’s presidency to 2018 while sampling the diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints that is the essence of our democracy. We hope they will add to the magnificent new experience that the Kennedy Center offers the public.”

The six works on loan from Glenstone for the opening of the REACH mark the beginning of a loan program between The Kennedy Center and Glenstone, with the potential to loan dozens of works in the coming years. The ten works on display—a half-century of visual art that includes paintings, sculptures, photography, and mixed media assemblage—reflect a wide variety of expression, from pure aesthetic abstraction to direct social engagement. All artworks have been secured through gift and loan especially for the REACH.

ABOUT GLENSTONE

Glenstone, a museum of modern and contemporary art, is integrated into nearly 300 acres of gently rolling pasture and unspoiled woodland in Montgomery County, Maryland, less than 15 miles from the heart of Washington, D.C. Established by the not-for-profit Glenstone Foundation, the museum opened in 2006 and provides a contemplative, intimate setting for experiencing iconic works of art and architecture within a natural environment.

For more information visit www.glenstone.org.

ABOUT THE WORKS

Faith Ringgold

American People Series #4: The Civil Rights Triangle, 1963

Oil on canvas

Lent by Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland

Faith Ringgold spent summer 1963 on Martha’s Vineyard, staying with a friend who was a member of the NAACP and involved with the Civil Rights movement that was rapidly transforming the country. Ringgold watched the awkward social interactions between blacks and whites and was inspired to create the *American People Series* about “the paradox of integration felt by many black Americans.” Ringgold’s figures are not specific individuals, but they reflect the political structure within the movement. A white man is at the apex of this triangle, alluding to the longtime dominant white leadership in the NAACP. Two African American men in suits may refer to the

prominent role of NAACP lawyers, as well as preachers in the black church. Two young black men anchor the base, perhaps members of the youth councils who were “foot soldiers” in the movement. Ringgold, an ardent feminist, was acutely aware that women had not found a place in the Civil Rights movement, believing that “the world ignored women of all races.” She engages issues of identity and equality as an artist, writer, performer, social activist, and professor. She is best known today for her figurative story quilts.

Sam Gilliam

Carousel Light Depth, 1969

Acrylic on canvas

Lent by the artist

Sam Gilliam took artistic spontaneity to new levels, allowing thinned acrylic paint to flow across canvas like a river of lush glowing colors. Then he liberated the canvas from the stretcher to float free, furling and folding in sensual arrangements. *Carousel Light Depth* is 75 feet of fabric—dazzlingly saturated with pinks, purples, greens, blues, and silver—gathered and draped, majestic in its vast expanse. Gilliam was fiercely committed to aesthetic abstraction during a decade wracked by racial tension and a contested war. But in the same year that he made *Carousel Light Depth*, he also created a moving tribute to Martin Luther King, where red and purple stains evoke the bleeding wounds of the martyred Civil Rights crusader and anti-war activist. Gilliam served three years in the Army, then moved from Louisville to Washington, D.C. in 1962. His expansive canvases and exuberant colors evoke the fresh optimism of John F. Kennedy’s youthful presidency. His art has been celebrated in museums and collections worldwide for decades.

Roy Lichtenstein

Brushstroke, 1996-97

Painted aluminum

Lent by the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Roy Lichtenstein burst on the art scene in the early 1960s with paintings inspired by comic books; today they look disarming and playful, but when new, they seemed shockingly irreverent. For three decades, Lichtenstein amusingly used an isolated brushstroke as the emblem of high art. Dozens of paintings neatly rendered the rapid stroke of a fully loaded brush with a methodical approach that spoofed the spontaneity of abstract expressionism. Then Lichtenstein created his first *Brushstroke* sculptures, giving fluid “paint” a free-standing physical presence. The monumentality of this example evokes the heroism of the abstract expressionist painters, while its rapid calligraphic energy belies its static form.

Mike Kelley

Memory Ware Flat #24 and *Memory Ware Flat #25*, both 2001

Mixed media on wood

Lent by Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland

Mike Kelley first encountered the southern folk tradition of memory ware in 2000. He loved the way these objects evoke the joys and traumas of past lives, “disconnected morsels of information” that tell incomplete stories. He made his own memory sculptures and wall pieces (“flats”) by assembling buttons, charms, beads, badges, bottlecaps, pins, and coins in collages that combine a thrift store sensibility with the visual sophistication of abstract art. Kelley’s fascination with memory coincided with a growing public interest in repressed memories of early trauma, in the wake of child abuse scandals. Throughout his career, he used the most disarming, delightful materials to challenge authorities of every type.

Fred Tomaselli

Flipper, 2008

Leaves, photo collage, acrylic, and resin on wood panel

Lent by Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland

Tomaselli is a romantic, saying “I throw all of my obsessions and loves into the work.... I love nature. I love gardening. I love watching birds, and all of that gets into the work. ... Artists can help you re-see the world.” *Flipper* creates an immersive world, with looping rhythms that evoke sound waves traveling through space. Tomaselli builds this psychic space by affixing small leaves and flowers and cut-out printed images onto a wood panel, then embedding them in acrylic and polished resin. His works resemble reliquaries or insects fossilized in amber. Tomaselli grew up in California’s counter-culture world of music and experimentation—playing in bands, designing album covers, and making surfboards, while mastering techniques and ideas for his ambitious art.

Thomas Demand

Bloom, 2014

C print mounted on plexiglas

Lent by Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland

Thomas Demand meticulously constructs physical models from paper as subjects for his photographs. He destroys these hand-crafted models after photographing them. The resulting photographs, then, are the artworks—elaborate artifices that question our relationship to truth. *Bloom* shows a lush profusion of cherry blossoms that traditionally signify spring’s arrival and the passing of time. Knowing that every petal was made by hand from paper gives the work a deeper resonance, trading “reality” for “illusion.” Like all Demand’s works, *Bloom* conceals a disquieting undertone; it shows blossoms seen over a fence at the home of the Boston Marathon bomber. In Demand’s world, beauty and evil co-exist.

Glenn Ligon

Untitled (America), 2018

Neon and paint

Lent by Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland

Glenn Ligon uses texts by favorite authors to reflect on key fault lines in society, such as race and sexuality. Here the text is a single word, but one rich with myriad meanings for different groups: “America.” Spelled in all capital letters, in glowing red neon, and upside down, it conveys a sign of distress. Ligon’s works often address the aftershocks of slavery in American life and the continuing struggle for social justice. He says, “We always imagine that slavery is something in the past and that we as a society have gotten over it... But if you think about slavery as there when our laws and institutions are being created—when our Declaration of Independence is being written, when our courts are being formed—it is this moral dilemma at the core of our democracy and we still feel its effects.”

Deborah Butterfield

Milk River, 2019

Painted bronze

Gift of Samuel G. Rose

Deborah Butterfield assembled pieces of driftwood to create *Milk River*, then cast each piece in bronze, reassembled the metal pieces, and painted them. The sculpture is named for a river in Montana, where the artist works. Butterfield’s horses are unusual in that they are mares, not stallions as is more common in art. She says she wants to make “big beautiful mares that are as strong and imposing as stallions but capable of creation and nourishing life. It is a very personal statement.” The horse is among the most ancient and persistent images in art, familiar even in the caves at Lascaux. Within this long tradition, Butterfield’s mares occupy a special place; they are not work horses, nor transport, nor war horses. Her horses are thrilling and noble reminders of our once-close intimacy with nature.

Joel Shapiro

Blue, 2019

Painted aluminum

Gift of the artist

Joel Shapiro’s sculptures explode with the exuberance of youth. Their simple rectangles are assembled like stick figures that magically come alive. *Blue* is poised in mid-kick, turning the surrounding landscape into a giant stage as it prepares to pirouette across the grass. Shapiro spent two years in India in the Peace Corps, where he was inspired by the integration of art and culture. His sculptures are installed in scores of cities around the world. They achieve the goal set centuries ago by Egyptian and Greek sculptors—to endow base materials with movement and spirit of life.

Declaration of Independence and Other Works

Kennedy Center Chairman David M. Rubenstein has generously lent one of the few surviving William J. Stone copies of the Declaration of Independence to display at the REACH, engraved on vellum in 1823. In addition to the ten artworks secured through gift and loan, the REACH will also host several pieces by citizen artists including Michelle Ortiz, a 2019-2020 Kennedy Center Citizen Artist Fellow, and brothers Steven and William Ladd, who will be leading a “Scrollathon” workshop during the last week of the Opening Festival.

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