



Connecticut Collects: American Art Since 1960

The works in this exhibition were selected by Roni Feinstein, Branch Director, Whitney Museum of American Art, Fairfield County. Special thanks are extended to Pamela Perkins, Head, Branch Museums, for her advice and support through all phases of this project. To the fifteen collectors who graciously lent works of art go most profound and heartfelt thanks for having made this exhibition possible.

Copyright © 1986 Whitney Museum of American Art
945 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10021

Design: Jill Fisher, Fisher Design Inc.
Typesetting: Graphic Technology Inc.
Printing: Eastern Press, Inc.
Paper: Champion Kromekote®
Champion Wedgwood®

Photographs by Adam Fuss (Greenblat), Bruce C. Jones (de Kooning), and Robert E. Mates (Murray).

Cover: Katherine Porter, *Postcard from North Antrim*, 1982. Oil on canvas, 91 x 114½ inches. Private collection.

Connecticut Collects: American Art Since 1960

January 29–March 26, 1986

Whitney Museum of American Art
Fairfield County

Connecticut Collects: American Art Since 1960

Even before entering a collector's home one is often aware of having arrived at a special place—a place where the love of art and passion for collecting have taken hold. Sculptures are set into the landscape, and inside it is not unusual to find paintings and drawings occupying almost every available wall, sculptures resting on tabletops, shelves, and floors. Storage racks and specially constructed closets accommodate the overflow, as the acquisitive urge is not limited by space. More than one Connecticut collec-



Fig. 1. Willem de Kooning, *Untitled, Number 1*, 1975.

tor has a private museum on his property to house and display works of art.

Those tables and shelves not covered with sculpture are generally filled with books—artists' monographs, museum exhibition catalogues, and art periodicals. Collectors, particularly those who concentrate on contemporary art, keep themselves informed. They engage in an ongoing process of self-education: they frequent museums and galleries and are constantly looking and reading, familiarizing themselves with what is current and of particular interest and training their eyes to discern quality.

Why do some individuals spend time, energy, and money learning about and acquiring works of art? And why would they choose to concentrate on work created during the past twenty-five years, work that many people find difficult both to appreciate and understand? Collecting is, or can be, a passion. It is something that can get into the blood and under the skin; it is practiced by those who have a sensitivity to and thirst for the aesthetic and life-enhancing experiences offered by art. The urge to acquire works of art has its roots in the desire to be surrounded by man-made objects of beauty and significance, objects designed not for use but for intellectual stimulation, emotional evocation, contemplation, or amusement. The desire to collect the art of one's own time grows

out of the desire to *be* of one's own time—to be involved with artists who deal with ideas, feelings, and sensations relevant to contemporary existence. Collecting contemporary art requires a willingness to have one's preconceptions about the methods and materials of art-making and the very definition of what art can be constantly challenged and redefined, as art reaches out in new directions. Patronizing the work of young or lesser-known artists carries with it a sense of adventure; the collector has the opportunity to watch the artist's career develop and see if the artist's work will withstand the test of time. While it is true that contemporary art tends to be less expen-



Fig. 2. Roy Lichtenstein, *I Know How You Must Feel, Brad!*, 1963.



Fig. 3. Neil Jenney, *Husband and Wife*, 1969.

sive than works by older masters, and that it can sometimes be a "good investment," unless collectors are equipped with knowledge, experience, and instinct, their money is better spent elsewhere. Collecting can itself be a creative enterprise and mode of self-expression; collectors' choices reveal their tastes, preferences, and sense of style as well as their ability to judge that elusive value known as "quality."

While a number of the artists featured in the present exhibition are in their mid-twenties, none are "unknowns." Each has exhibited widely on both a national and international scale and enjoys a prominent



Fig. 4 Elizabeth Murray, *Duck Foot*, 1983.

place in the art world. Although the exhibition does not offer a comprehensive survey of the past twenty-five years of American art, it does shed considerable light on this period. It should be noted that formalist art—which emphasizes line, shape, and color over personal expression—is outweighed in the exhibition by expressionist work. This imbalance in favor of “hotter,” more impassioned styles reflects the prevailing taste of the art world at the present moment.

American art in the 1950s was dominated by Abstract Expressionism, where gestural brushwork and contorted forms represented the artist’s inner passions and anxieties. Willem de Kooning, one of

the originators of this movement, continues to produce expressionist masterworks to the present day (Fig. 1). The Pop and Minimalist artists who emerged during the 1960s rejected the emotionalism and painterliness of their elders. These younger artists favored styles and methods of art-making that emphasized clarity of form and structure and removed all trace of the artist’s personality and hand. In Minimalist painting, this meant asserting the flatness of the picture surface through controlled lines and evenly rendered surfaces; in sculpture, it meant asserting the work’s objecthood through smooth, reductive forms. Pop Art, as seen in the work of Roy Lichtenstein (Fig. 2), exhibited a similar emotional detachment and formal control, while relying for its subject matter on such mass-media sources as comic books, advertisements, and Hollywood movies. What



Fig. 5. R. M. Fischer, *Harvest Moon*, 1982.

followed has been referred to by the critic Harold Rosenberg as "the dematerialization of the art object." During the late sixties, Conceptual Art (an art of verbal constructs and ideas), Earthworks (art projects involving the manipulation of the natural landscape), and other forms challenged through their ephemeral nature or enormous scale the concept of art ownership and the traditional museum-gallery structure. Painting and other more conventional forms of art-making were distinctly out of fashion.

By the early seventies, a reaction against the reductivism and impersonality of the preceding decade had begun. This reaction took so many forms that the seventies became known as the decade of "pluralism." Certain fundamental characteristics nevertheless unite the work of this decade: a return to the painted and the handmade, to representation, and to subjective forms of expression. All three principles are found in the work of Neil Jenney (Fig. 3) who, during the late sixties and early seventies, used figuration and a purposefully crude painting style to extend Conceptual Art's preoccupation with words into an implied narrative. During the mid-seventies, Elizabeth Murray's animated and colorful biomorphs appeared (Fig. 4), infused with the artist's personality and marked by the touch of her hand. Despite this shift toward more personal expression and formally complex and even decorative forms, there remained in much seventies art a formal control and emotional reserve carried over from the previous decade. For all the eccentricity of R. M. Fischer's lamp constructions

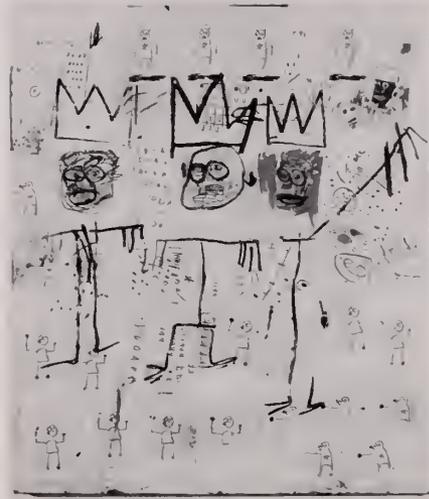


Fig. 6. Jean-Michel Basquiat, *The Ruffians*, 1982.

begun in the mid-seventies (Fig. 5), and for all the wit contained in their allusive titles, these works display a symmetry and predilection for geometric forms that reveal the continued influence of Minimalism.

It was not until the 1980s that a generation of artists emerged which was free from the constraints imposed by the reductivist sensibilities of the sixties. While the emotional tone of seventies art had been lighthearted and mild, artists in the eighties sought to give form to their innermost passions, frustrations, and fears. The psychological and confessional nature of this work led it to be called "Neo-Expressionism,"

a term that designates not a style but an attitude or set of intentions. While it takes a variety of forms, almost all of them involve the human figure. In the work of Jean-Michel Basquiat (Fig. 6), for example, one finds crudely drawn, contorted figures which have their roots in primitive art as well as in the graffiti scrawled on schoolyard walls. Basquiat's gritty works, which speak of urban struggle and survival, stand in contrast to Rodney Alan Greenblat's mechanized sculptures that evoke a protected, Saturday-morning cartoon childhood world (Fig. 7). Greenblat represents another aspect of eighties art, one often referred to as "New Wave." It is a playful and exuberant art that finds inspiration in mass-media imagery. Like the expressionist styles of the 1980s, it is a mode that leaves the purity and reductivism of the Minimalist aesthetic far behind.

During the past quarter century, then, American art appears to have come full circle: from Abstract Expressionism to Neo-Expressionism and from Pop to New Wave. These cycles do not represent a repetition but a renewal, each generation bringing with it a new orientation and an approach relevant to its own time.

Roni Feinstein



Fig. 7. Rodney Alan Greenblat,
Nomad, 1985.

Works in the Exhibition

Dimensions are in inches; height precedes width precedes depth.

Gregory Amenoff (b. 1948)

Hot Sleep, 1982

Mixed media on paper, 21¾ x 23⅞

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard E. Anderson

Alice Aycock (b. 1946)

Second Proposal for Groningen:

"The Paradise Romance," 1979

Pencil on vellum; two panels, each 24 x 30

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard E. Anderson

Jean-Michel Basquiat (b. 1960)

The Ruffians, 1982

Acrylic, oil stick, and collage on canvas, 69 x 59

Collection of Dr. Donald Dworken

Lynda Benglis (b. 1941)

Kalgi, 1982

Bronze wire, metalized zinc, copper, and aluminum, with acrylic lacquer coating, 25 x 31¼ x 7½

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Graham, Jr.

Louisa Chase (b. 1951)

Untitled, 1980

Oil on paper, 27¾ x 39½

Collection of Dr. Donald Dworken

Christo (b. 1935)

Pont Neuf Wrapped, 1979

Mixed-media collage: pastel, charcoal, ink, cloth, and string on paper; two panels, 11 x 28 and 22 x 28

Collection of Virginia Lust

Willem de Kooning (b. 1904)

Untitled, Number 1, 1975

Oil on canvas, 80 x 70

Private collection

Rafael Ferrer (b. 1933)

Encuentro (Encounter), 1983

Oil on canvas, 80 x 60

Private collection

R. M. Fischer (b. 1947)

Harvest Moon, 1982

Chromed copper, steel, wood, aluminum, cast metal, glass, and electric lights; two units, each 48 x 48 x 19

Collection of Jeffrey Deitch

Charles Garabedian (b. 1923)

Untitled, 1981

Watercolor on paper, 9¼ x 33¼

Private collection

Leon Golub (b. 1922)

Two Mercenaries, c. 1982

Conté crayon, 30 x 22

Private collection

Rodney Alan Greenblat (b. 1960)

Nomad, 1985

Acrylic on wood with mixed media and sound tape, 42½ x 16 x 11

Collection of Jeffrey Deitch

Red Grooms (b. 1937)

Fishing Scene, 1978

Mixed media, 16 x 48 x 3½

Collection of Jacques Kaplan

Philip Guston (1913–1980)

Red Sky, 1978

Oil on canvas, 82 x 105½

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Lennard

Hans Hofmann (1880–1966)

Sun at the Wall, 1962

Oil on canvas, 48 x 36

Private collection

Robert Indiana (b. 1928)

Tilt, 1966

Oil on canvas, 51 x 51

Collection of Virginia Lust

Neil Jenney (b. 1945)

Husband and Wife, 1969

Acrylic on canvas, 56 x 76¼

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine

Alex Katz (b. 1927)

Luisa, Dana and Joan, 1979

Oil on canvas, 72 x 144

Private collection

Jon Kessler (b. 1957)

The Fall, 1985

Mixed media construction with lights and motor,
24 x 20 x 16

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard E. Anderson

Robert Kushner (b. 1949)

The Yellow Chair, 1984

Acrylic, ink, and wallpaper collage on paper, 77¾ x 24¾

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Gahagan

Sol LeWitt (b. 1928)

Incomplete Open Cube, 1974

Ink on paper, 11½ x 11½

Collection of Virginia Lust

Incomplete Open Cube, 1974

Ink on paper, 11½ x 11½

Collection of Virginia Lust

Roy Lichtenstein (b. 1923)

I Know How You Must Feel, Brad!, 1963

Pencil and tusche on paper, 23¾ x 20½

Collection of the Albert A. List Family

Elizabeth Murray (b. 1940)

Duck Foot, 1983

Oil on canvas, approximately 129 x 132

Private collection

Judy Pfaff (b. 1945)

Untitled, 1984

Mixed wire, wood, plastic, and metal collage, 69 x 68 x 21

Private collection

Katherine Porter (b. 1941)

Postcard from North Antrim, 1982

Oil on canvas, 91 x 114½

Private collection

Susan Rothenberg (b. 1945)

Untitled, 1977

Acrylic and pencil on paper, 29½ x 41½

Collection of Jacques Kaplan

Italo Scanga (b. 1932)

Figure Struggling with Nature, 1983

Oil paint on wood, 101 x 39 x 33

Private collection

Julian Schnabel (b. 1951)

Beethoven, 1984

Oil paint on maps, 49½ x 34¾

Collection of the Albert A. List Family

Alan Shields (b. 1944)

Untitled, c. 1970

Mixed-media collage, 21½ x 21½

Collection of Virginia Lust

Richard Stankiewicz (b. 1922)

Untitled, c. 1960

Welded steel, 30½ x 17½ x 17

Collection of Charles and Mary Grace Carpenter

Saul Steinberg (b. 1914)

Empire State Building, 1970

Ink, crayon, and acrylic on paper, 23 x 29

Private collection

Cy Twombly (b. 1929)

The Dawn Series, 1960

Pencil, pastel, and colored ink on paper, 19½ x 27½

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Bareiss

Neil Welliver (b. 1929)

Two Nudes in a Forest Pond, c. 1968

Oil on canvas, 61 x 60¾

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Bareiss

Whitney Museum of American Art Fairfield County

One Champion Plaza
Stamford, Connecticut 06921

Hours
Tuesday–Saturday 11:00–5:00

Gallery Talks
12:30 Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday

Staff
Roni Feinstein
Branch Director

Janet Satz
Manager

Cynthia Roznoy
Gallery Assistant

Supported by Champion International Corporation

Whitney Museum of American Art, Fairfield County
January 29–March 26, 1986