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Manual / Issue 13 / Storage

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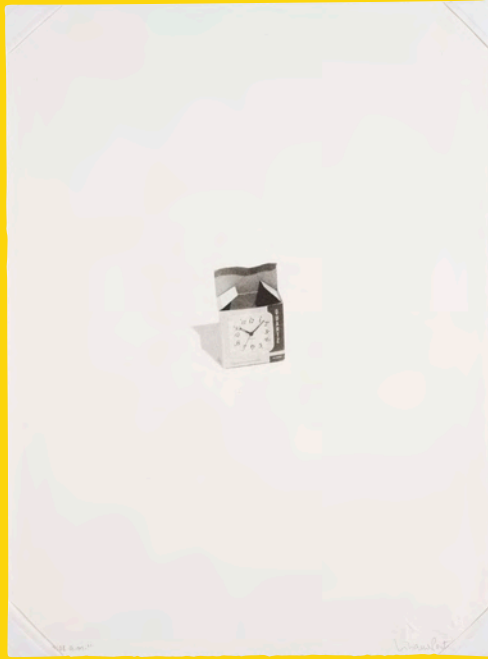
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Manual

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MOTEX
DA TOLL
GIUSEPPE RICCI
212 2559261 551



(clockwise from top)

Liliana Porter
Argentine, b. 1941
10:08 A.M., 2001
Lithograph and drypoint on paper
37.7 x 28 cm. (14 13/16 x 11 in.)
Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin
American Art 2002.52.3
© Liliana Porter

Jacquemart et Bénard, manufacturer
French, 1791–1840
Fabric Design, 1794–1797
Woodblock printed
Length: 29.2 cm. (11 1/2 in.)
Mary B. Jackson Fund 34.1113

Douglas Koch
American, b. 1952
Tray of Shells, 1976
Silver print
19.5 x 23.8 cm. (7 11/16 x 9 3/8 in.)
Museum purchase with funds from the National
Endowment for the Arts 76.089
© Douglas Koch

American
Locket, 1800s
Gold with enamel, pearls, hair, photograph, and
glass
Width: 2.2 cm. (7/8 in.)
Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 31.387

Manual

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Issue—13 / Fall/Winter 2019 / Storage

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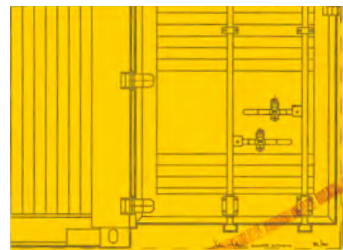
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(cover)

LOT-EK

Italian, 1993–present

Exit Art, publisher

American, 1982–2012

Container Flat

From the portfolio *Six x Four*, 2004

Acrylic pigment and inkjet on Tyvek

112 × 532 cm. (44 1/8 × 209 7/16 in.)

Gift of Exit Art 2012.133.7.4

© LOT-EK

Issue—13



Justin Kimball (RISD BFA 1985, Photography)
American, b. 1961
Lewis Drive, 2013
From the series *Pieces of String*
Color inkjet print
50.8 x 76.2 cm. (20 x 30 in.)
Gift of Richard S. Press and Jeanne Press 2015.89.5
© Justin Kimball

Christina Alderman is the assistant director for family and teen programs at the RISD Museum. She has a BA in art history from Chapman University and is a master's candidate in public humanities at Brown University.

Isaac M. Alderman (PhD, Catholic University) is the author of *The Animal at Unease with Itself* (Fortress/Lexington, forthcoming 2019), and is a co-author of a commentary on Jonah (Peeters, forthcoming 2020).

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Wai Yee Chiong is the assistant curator of Asian art at the RISD Museum. She specializes in Japanese art but loves to work with all things Asian.

John Dunnigan is a designer, maker, and educator. He is a former Mellon Faculty Fellow at the RISD Museum and currently holds the Schiller Family Endowed Chair in the Furniture Design Department at RISD.

Maria Morris Hambourg, an independent curator and consultant, wrote her dissertation on Atget then co-authored the four-volume *Work of Atget* (MoMA, 1981–1985). She joined the Metropolitan Museum and founded its Department of Photographs in 1991.

David Hartt (b. 1967, Montreal) lives and works in Philadelphia, where he is an assistant professor in the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania. His work explores how historic ideas and ideals persist or transform over time.

Elaine Tyler May is the Regents Professor of American Studies and History at the University of Minnesota. She writes and teaches about US history, with a particular interest in the Cold War era.

Claire McCardell (American, 1905–1958) was a women's fashion designer.

Denise Murrell most recently curated *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* at Columbia's Wallach Art Gallery and its expansion, *The Black Model from Géricault to Matisse*, at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Ingrid Schaffner is an American curator, art critic, writer, and educator specializing in contemporary art.

Holly Shaffer is an assistant professor in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture at Brown University. She specializes in South Asian and British arts in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Tanya Sheehan is the distinguished scholar and director of research at the Lunder Institute for American Art at the Colby College Museum of Art, the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Art at Colby College, and the executive director of the Archives of American Art Journal.

John W. Smith was appointed director of the RISD Museum in 2011. Prior to joining the museum, he served as director of the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art (2006–2011) and director for collections, exhibitions, and research at the Andy Warhol Museum (1994–2006).

Mimi Smith (b. 1942) is a pioneer in early feminist and conceptual art focusing on clothing sculpture and drawing installations. She lives and works in New York City.

Sassan Tabatabai is a poet, translator, and scholar of medieval Persian literature. He is a master lecturer in Persian and the core curriculum at Boston University.

Allan Wexler (RISD BFA 1971, BArch 1972) has exhibited, taught, and lectured internationally. He creates drawings, multimedia objects, images, and installations that alter perceptions of domestic activities. The book *Absurd Thinking: Between Art and Design* (Lars Müller, 2017) explores his work and creative process.

Fred Wilson is a conceptual artist whose work investigates museological, cultural, and historical issues, which are largely overlooked by museums and cultural institutions. His most recent project, *Afro Kismet*, was exhibited in Istanbul, London, New York, and LA.

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Storage

Fred Wilson

Warhol is most interesting when he is at his most dispassionate. For the exhibition *Raid the Icebox* (1969–1970), he went into RISD Museum storage and brought the masses of objects he found there—along with their racks and display cases—directly into the gallery. Racks of shoes. Dozens of chairs. Stacks of paintings. Much of what he found was the sort of early American objects that he collected himself.

Warhol wasn't making judgments; he was just laying it all out there, putting everything on the same level. He presented the museum as omnivorous, rather than as selective and hierarchical. Museums usually make choices for viewers, their curators presenting what they think most important within a category. They can be so good at doing this that visitors sometimes don't realize there's anything else to see: they don't realize the nature of the decisions behind an exhibition, and they accept that the elites have made a judgment about which shoe is *the* shoe to see. Visitors can learn about what's great, but they don't necessarily consider the process of discernment.

Raid the Icebox helped visitors break out of the pattern of not having to think. Or, if they already had been thinking, they were thinking only within a range set by the museum. This isn't necessarily a bad thing—a great selection of objects is important for telling history. But if you're presented with the same range, built on the same assumptions, over and over and over again, you can begin to believe that there's nothing beyond it, or at least nothing of value.

I was raised in New York, and I spent a lot of time at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In high school I took a program there, and to get to the classrooms I had to walk through a hallway where there were major sculptures unceremoniously draped in plastic. Or at least I thought they were major sculptures; they were actually plaster casts. But seeing them displayed like that was an eye-opening moment for me. It made me recognize that objects do not live in one particular way—that they're not born in the gallery. Even when they are important they are still objects, like everything else in the world. It is what is done with them and to them and what's around them that makes us understand what they are and how we are supposed to relate to them. In museums, artworks are subject to procedures of storage, study, care, and cataloguing, as well as display. I wouldn't have used these words in high school, but by then I began to notice the frame. By bringing storage areas into the galleries, Warhol brought attention to how museums frame the objects on view.

When a frame is applied, a selection is made, and something is invariably left out. I didn't know about *Raid the Icebox* until after I completed *Mining the Museum* at the Maryland Historical Society in 1992. I was less interested in the divide between storage and the gallery than in drawing attention to what I thought was missing. I'm not big on denial, and museums are full of denial. I don't think you have to think about slavery every time you go to a museum exhibition about American art, but there has to be acknowledgment of the history. Life is complicated and museums should be, too. They should be able to reveal that things like beautiful silver sets for the wealthy and iron shackles for the slaves could, and did, exist at the same time.

With Warhol you get a sense of everything happening all at once. His paintings show celebrities and commodities but also the race riots and electric chairs, all presented in the same way. With *Raid the Icebox* there's something pointed about the sheer volume of beautiful objects that he brought together. There were big families in the North who owned large plantations in the South, and now a lot of institutions like RISD and Brown University in Providence are attempting to understand the connections between Northern wealth and the slave system. Insurance, banking, textiles manufacturing: all of these Northern industries that made New Englanders rich were tied to slavery. The question is, can you see that in the material culture? Sometimes in the sheer volume you see how deep the investment was. You can look at all the opulence on display in a museum and begin to understand that something nefarious might be behind it.

Storage, for me, is where the action is. If I can't visit storage, I can't do an installation. The only time this happened was at MoMA. I was to create a work for *Museum as Muse*, an exhibition curated by the late great Kynaston McShine. At the time MoMA had many, many binders of photographs of the collection. This was before digitalization of the collection was obligatory for museums. I looked through the photographs of paintings and sculpture and chose a few to see, and perhaps use, for my installation. I showed them to Kynaston and he approved, until he realized I wanted to actually see them in person (let alone consider using in my installation). His eyes widened and he said, "Oh, you actually want to see the Brancusi!" and he threw his head back and had a hearty laugh. This idea was out of the question. The work was off-site and expensive to move, so it was completely "impossible." I never did see the objects in MoMA's storage. However, I did create a work (now in their collection) and a project for their website using their photographs of the collection, the galleries, and the people at museum events from over the museum's history—all of which I found in the museum's archives. Like storage, museum archives contain material that tells other stories, other realities that are not necessarily the narrative that the museum projects in the galleries but that are equally important and true to its core.

If the galleries are the face of a museum, the offices are its brain, and storage is its unconscious.



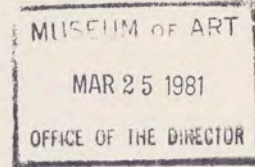
Painting and sculpture storage, RISD Museum.
Photo by Derek Schusterbauer

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Founded 1930 by Gertrude V. Whitney
945 Madison Avenue at Seventy-Fifth Street New York, New York 10021 (212) 570-3600

Direct Dial (212) 570 3635

March 20, 1981



Mr. Franklin W. Robinson
Director
Museum of Art
Rhode Island School of Design
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Frank:

We greatly appreciate your proposal for the Whitney Museum of American Art to present the exhibition A Century of Black Photographers which you are currently organizing. We have discussed this proposal with interest and it has been decided that we can not present it at the Whitney Museum of American Art. This decision is in part influenced by the fact that our schedule is almost completely filled through 1984. In addition, a decision was made several years ago that we would not present exhibitions where extra esthetic considerations were a concern. Separating black photographers from the history of photography is not of interest to us. We greatly appreciate your suggesting our inclusion in the travel itinerary of the exhibition and we look forward to working with you on projects in the future.

Yours very truly,

Thomas N. Armstrong, III
Director

TNA:sk

Howard Lipman, Chairman

Flora Miller Irving, President

Thomas N. Armstrong III, Director

Flora Whitney Miller, Honorary Chairman

David M. Solinger, Honorary President

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Issue—13

From the Files

Miniature Models

Wai Yee Chiong



Origin:	Japanese	Dimensions:	32.9 x 39 cm. (12 7/8 x 15 3/8 in.)
Artist:	Unknown	Acquisition:	Gift of Marshall H. Gould 43.509
Object:	Miniature Palanquin, probably 1800s		
Materials:	Lacquered wood with gold and metal fittings (exterior); ink, colors, and gold on paper (interior)		

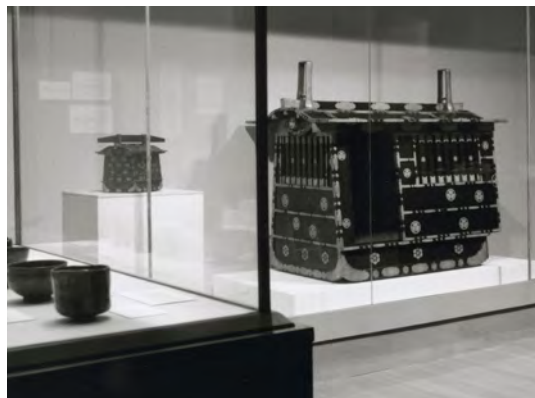
Currently housed on the RISD Museum's sixth floor is a Japanese palanquin, a magnificent lacquered carrying box from the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century. With the Tokugawa family crest of golden roundels with the trifoliolate hollyhock (*mitsuba aoi*) on its exterior and the Ichijō family crest of wisteria in its interior, this bridal palanquin paraded a high-ranking woman from the aristocratic Fujiwara clan who married into the Tokugawa family. Colorful paintings from *The Tale of Genji*, an eleventh-century epic, and auspicious imagery of cranes, pine, and plum blossoms adorn the interior. Ornately decorated, these luxurious carriers were as much intended for display as they were for transporting the important personages they were made for.

There is also a miniature palanquin in the collection, seen displayed alongside its larger counterpart in the photo at right.

The smaller palanquin is lacquered like the bigger one and decorated with golden paulownia crests, the Toyotomi family emblem. It too has gilded metal trimmings and sliding doors on both sides and a roof that opens to reveal landscape and floral paintings in its interior. Other than this photograph and a small card describing it as a model and a "miniature kago or Japanese carrying chair," there is little information in the files about this intriguing object, which was given to the museum in 1943 by Marshall H. Gould, who also gifted a miniature two-panel screen to the collection, along with other objects.

These miniature objects were in fact decorations for the Japanese Doll Festival or *Hinamatsuri*, one of the five seasonal festivals celebrated on the third day of the third month of the year. The festival, which was popularized in the seventeenth century and still celebrated today, involves children and their families putting up elaborate displays of dolls along with an assortment of miniature accessories. Palanquins and screens often formed part of these exhibits. As the practice of displaying dolls gained currency, doll makers began fashioning more elaborate dolls and accessories for the festival. The RISD Museum's miniature palanquin, richly decorated with gold and inset with miniature paintings, was likely a complement to equally exquisite dolls.

In an eighteenth-century print triptych of the Doll Festival by Utagawa Kunisada, a small palanquin sits on a shelf that has been put up for displaying dolls, while women and children busily prepare other decorations for the occasion.



Installation photograph of the full-size palanquin with the model, RISD Museum gallery, 1997.



Japanese
Miniature Screens of Pines, Bamboo, and Nandina Berries,
late 1800s–early 1900s

Two-panel folding screen; ink, color, and gold on paper
32.9 × 39 cm. (12 7/8 × 15 3/8 in.)
Gift of Marshall H. Gould 43.502



Utagawa Kunisada
Japanese, 1786–1865
The Third Month: The Doll Festival
(Yayoi: Hina matsuri) from the series
The Twelve Months (Jūni tsuki no uchi), 1854
Polychrome woodblock print
Ōban triptych: 36.4 × 24.8 cm. (14 5/16 × 29 3/4 in.)
Gift of Marshall H. Gould 30.039.11



Double

Take

Matthew Bird: For more than forty years, the Eames Office combined an understanding of consumer need with new materials and manufacturing techniques to create a remarkable legacy of design and commercial success. During World War II Charles and Ray Eames developed new methods of molding plywood that led to their now iconic collection of furniture, designed to be lightweight and affordable for use in smaller postwar homes. They pioneered the repurposing of fiberglass from wartime boat construction to seating, creating the even more ubiquitous Shell Chairs. When intercontinental air travel forced the rapid expansion of airports, and aluminum was newly plentiful, Eames Tandem Sling Seating provided a durable modular system introduced to Dulles and O'Hare airports and still used there and elsewhere today. The Eames Office created prefabricated furniture wall systems as college-bound Baby Boomers necessitated an increase in dormitory construction. The Eameses' ability to use design and manufacturing to solve real problems while also creating beautiful objects serves as an ideal.

The Eames Storage Unit stands out as one of their rare failures. Created to take advantage of inexpensive postwar surplus materials and shipped flat to keep cost down, the system was designed as

affordable freestanding storage. Available in multiple sizes that could be used independently or combined, the ESU was meant for use in homes as well as offices. Sliding panels, drawers, partitions, and sides came in a variety of materials, finishes, and colors. But the elements are unmistakably industrial, so not what most people wanted in a domestic setting in 1950. The cabinets and drawers were small, so not truly useful in an office setting. The legs bent when the steel corner angle proved too fragile, so a change was made to reinforced tubing. The ESU proved too difficult for customers to assemble, so manufacturer Herman Miller quickly switched to selling (and shipping) complete units, making them expensive. Because the ESU did not have the same clarity of purpose as other Eames designs, it could not match a customer well enough to succeed. Because there was no real material innovation involved, it did not transcend its combination of parts.

Today the ESU is considered an iconic Eames design that suits our domestic interiors in ways it could not in its own era. Put back into production by Vitra in 1996, it continues to sell well. Was the ESU then ahead of its time? Or are we so nostalgic for mid-century modern design that we no longer prioritize cost and function over aesthetics?

Double Take

Charles Eames, designer
American, 1907–1978
Ray Eames, designer
American, 1912–1988
Herman Miller Furniture Co., manufacturer
American, 1923
ESU (Eames Storage Unit) (model 270-C), 1950
Steel, plywood, plastic, paint, and brass casters
59.7 × 61 × 40.6 cm (23½ × 24 × 16 inches)
Gift of Samuel Cate 1999.86





Charles Eames, designer
 American, 1907–1978
 Ray Eames, designer
 American, 1912–1988
 Herman Miller Furniture Co., manufacturer
 American, 1923
 ESU (Eames Storage Unit) (model 270-C), 1950
 Steel, plywood, plastic, paint, and brass casters
 59.7 × 61 × 40.6 cm (23½ × 24 × 16 inches)
 Gift of Samuel Cate 1999.86

Take

Double

Matthew Bird /
 Elaine Tyler May

Elaine Tyler May: After World War II, Americans were eager to look to the future, not to the past. Their memories were filled with the hardships of the Great Depression and war. But the future looked bright. Unlike other combatant countries, which suffered massive devastation and death, the United States had experienced no fighting on mainland home soil and relatively few casualties. Rationing during wartime, along with the conversion of industrial production from consumer goods to military needs, such as cars to tanks in the automotive industry, led to pent-up consumer desires. With postwar prosperity and industrial reconversion, Americans were eager to spend their wartime savings in the expanding consumer economy. Unemployment was down, wages were high, and Americans eagerly established families. Especially for the white middle and working classes, new single-family homes in the suburbs, filled with new labor-saving appliances and products for the enjoyment of leisure pursuits, offered a piece of the American dream. Men took their place as breadwinners and women tended to the home, where they became the primary purchasers for the goods that would enhance domestic life.

The aspirations and tastes of postwar Americans were futuristic, fanciful, pragmatic, and utilitarian, and Eames designs fit the mood of the time. The Eames aesthetic embraced openness and simplicity, as well as practicality. Americans filled their homes with consumer goods, and they needed places to store these goods. Eames cabinets were both utilitarian—places families could put their things away to avoid clutter—as well as attractive. Cabinets, shelves, and closets became essential considerations for consumer-oriented postwar families.

The Eames Storage Unit (model 270-C), built in 1950, offered a cabinet where families could house their purchases, such as children's toys, books, and magazines. It has three drawers as well as a lower shelf, and a top surface where a television or record player could be placed to provide family entertainment in a living room or family room. Its practical design embodied simplicity and functionality, but this cabinet was not a success in the marketplace. Nevertheless, it reflects the work of these visionary designers. It also captures a moment in time for early Eames enthusiasts, who furnished domestic spaces that looked to the future and reflected their aspirations as affluent consumers, rather than their memories of the past.

Henry Ossawa Tanner
American, 1859–1937
The Wailing Wall, 1897
Oil on canvas
64.8 × 48.9 × 6.4 cm. (25 ½ × 19 ¼ × 2 ½ in.)
Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 84.234

Double

Christina Alderman /
Isaac Alderman

Take

Christina Alderman: In 2016 Henry Ossawa Tanner's *The Wailing Wall* was installed on the second floor of Pendleton House, the RISD Museum's decorative-arts wing, which features eighteenth and nineteenth-century American works. While one could read this placement of an African American artist's painting from 1897 as providing space for a marginalized voice and a critique of that space, that perspective requires navigating many different histories.

Charles Pendleton gifted his collection of American furniture, ceramics, carpets, and Chinese imports to the RISD Museum in 1904. A stipulation of the bequest was the reconstruction of his 1799 Federal-era house, which still sits just up the road at 72 Waterman. Pendleton House is clearly a reconstruction lacking a kitchen, servants' quarters, and other functional spaces, but this does not stop questions from museum visitors about the original occupants, servants, and enslaved people who lived and worked in the space. Their questions make sense; although a 1652 bill intended to abolish slavery in Rhode Island, around four hundred enslaved people were registered here in 1799, when Pendleton's own home was built. Houses up and down Benefit Street, which the museum faces, were slave-owning households.

Tanner was a prominent artist, and his works *Banjo Lesson* (1893) and *The Thankful Poor* (1894) are seen as a celebration of black family values. A son of formerly enslaved people, he studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art but left for Europe because he knew his career would be limited by racism in the U.S. As a Western artist creating artworks about Western Asia, he can be called an Orientalist, a generally negative term that

now carries connotations of voyeuristic othering. Tanner's patron, department-store magnate Rodman Wanamaker, supported Tanner's trips to Palestine and North Africa to increase his exposure to the region. To Wanamaker, *Orientalist* was a compliment, implying that Tanner carefully depicted the settings and textiles of Western Asia. The study of *The Wailing Wall* is not overtly Orientalist. It does not essentialize Middle Eastern culture, serve as propaganda for European intervention, or feature white figures. Its focus is light, tone, and composition, rather than the culture. However, it does use Middle Eastern culture as a decorative element in a painting primary concerned with formal elements.

The artwork and its placement exhibit parallel and competing ideologies. The museum wing in which viewers find Tanner's work looks like a house, but is not. As a study, *The Wailing Wall* is a painting, but not the final painting, which now exists only as a black and white photograph. Tanner moved to Europe to escape the racism of the United States and acquire advanced training. He conducted research in the Middle East to lend authenticity to his biblical subjects, but such appropriation was also a problematic, if not racist, practice of Orientalism. The painting is currently displayed in a space that evokes the nineteenth-century American context that the artist fled.

There is public demand for museums to approach the art-historical canon with new values of equity and inclusion. However, long legacies of architecture, collection choices, and other institutional histories can complicate and obscure the good work of museums, as well as the profound stories within the artworks themselves.





Take

Christina Alderman /
Isaac Alderman

Isaac Alderman: While at first glance there seems to be no trace of politics in Tanner's *The Wailing Wall*, its depiction of gender integration and implied antiquity can be seen either to support or subvert current political and religious ideologies. The history of this site is complicated and has always been dominated by religious and political agendas.

Jerusalem's Western Wall (*Kotel* or Wailing Wall) is part of a retaining structure built by Herod the Great (73–74 BCE) to create a platform for the ancient Jewish temple and its courtyards. The wall was not part of the temple itself, which the Romans destroyed in 70 CE while crushing a Jewish revolt. Access to the wall has always had restrictions. After a second revolt in the 130s, Jews were barred from Jerusalem until the fourth century. The few that returned then would have found the wall still buried in rubble. In the seventh century, several Islamic structures were built upon the platform, effectively ending Jewish access to the site. The Christian crusaders permitted even less access. Only in the 1530s did the Ottoman Suleiman the Magnificent clear the area that we now see in Tanner's painting. Until the end of Ottoman rule in 1917, Jews could pray at the wall but were forbidden to treat the space as a synagogue, with benches or gender-dividing screens. The Ottomans did not want the minority Jews to claim the space as though it was theirs by right.

Tanner twice traveled the region, sightseeing and gathering ideas and images. As seen in his painting, the wall was then accessible only as a small alleyway, and the genders were not segregated.

Tanner saw this space as ancient, remembering that the stones were “worn smooth by the loving touch of tearful and devout worshippers.”¹ Though Tanner's image is a snapshot of nineteenth-century Jewish practice under Ottoman control, it appears to capture two thousand years in a single moment.

After World War I the British replaced the Ottomans, maintaining similar policies about use of the space. From 1947 to 1967 Jordan controlled East Jerusalem, refusing Jews access to the wall. Israel took control of the entire city in 1967 and razed the adjacent Moroccan Quarter to expand the alleyway seen in the painting into a plaza that accommodates thousands. The space then acquired characteristics of a conservative synagogue, with permanent screens relegating women to a small section. Israeli political and religious authorities responded to their new control by making their access to the site irreversible, but restricting the access of women.

While Tanner's painting suggests two thousand years of Jewish devotion at the wall—which supports the current ideology—it also undermines that agenda, reminding viewers that the way things are is not the way they have always been.

Henry Ossawa Tanner
American, 1859–1937
The Wailing Wall (detail), 1897
Oil on canvas
64.8 × 48.9 × 6.4 cm. (25 ½ × 19 ¼ × 2 ½ in.)
Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 84.234

¹ Naurice Frank Woods Jr., *Henry Ossawa Tanner: Art, Faith, Race, and Legacy* (Basingstoke, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2017), 124.



Claire McCardell, designer
American, 1905–1958
Claire McCardell Clothes by
Townley, manufacturer
American, 1940–1958
“Popover” Dress, ca. 1956
Screenprinted cotton plain weave
Gift of Mary L. Peterson in memory
of Thora Magnussen Buckley,
Conservator at The RISD Museum,
1950–1972. 2006.82.7



Claire McCardell, designer
American, 1905–1958
Claire McCardell Clothes by Townley, manufacturer
American, 1940–1958
“Popover” Dress, ca. 1956
Screenprinted cotton plain weave
Gift of Mary L. Peterson in memory of Thora Magnussen Buckley,
Conservator at The RISD Museum, 1950–1972. 2006.82.7

Double

Claire McCardell /
Hannah Carlson

Take

Claire McCardell

Fashion is surprisingly sensible. It answers not only whims, but needs. It is as new as now and often grows out of a current way of life. . . . Most of my ideas come from trying to solve my own problems—problems just like yours. I like to be able to zip my own zippers, hook my own eyes. I need a dress that can cook a dinner and then come out and meet the guests. Don’t you, too? . . .

The “Popover” started out as a wartime Victory Garden cover-up—moved into the house when servantless living arrived. It became a camel’s hair coat, tied wrap-around style in 1948. By the summer of 1951, it played its role as dress, coat, beach wrap or hostess dress. It went over everything from evening clothes to dungarees; it could be worn as a bathrobe or a quick something in which to answer the doorbell. The victory of the basic dress is this kind of versatility. It can be anything—everything—providing you made it a Fashion of your own. One of my Greenwich Village friends tells me that every authoress she knows “writes in a Popover.” And just as each talented lady has her own writing style, each undoubtedly has her own way of looking in her “Popover.” Perhaps she ties the sash with streamers in back, or knots it at one side, or winds it around and pins it with a jewel to make a girdled midriff. She may even, working on a hot summer day, wear it nightgown style with sash untied for cool comfort. . . . Discover, right at the start, how

many kinds of women you are expected to be. On the job. At home. At lunch. On the weekend. Fit your wardrobe to your scheme of things. You are the one who must decide how to dress your life. . . .

The term “American Look” has become a part of our Fashion vocabulary in recent years and it is a term we can be proud of. It is a clean-line look, just the opposite of too much dress. It is a comfortable look, neither threatening to burst at the seams nor to smother the wearer. . . . Flexibility is a word that belongs to the American Look. Our lives are tuned to ingenuity—in inventions, gadgets. We like amusing surprises—Shakespeare in modern dress, opera in English, Steinberg cartoons, the unexpected in an advertising layout. . . .

The inspiration for the “American Look” comes from you. You, demanding more change-about than women did thirty years ago when a cotton house dress, an afternoon dress and something for a formal party did the trick. You, with your full life, at home, at work, on the weekend. You, looking younger for your family, and slimmer for yourself. You, enjoying clothes that are comfortable and easy to take care of.

This essay is excerpted with permission from Claire McCardell’s *What Shall I Wear? The What, Where, When and How Much of Fashion* (1956; repr. New York: Rookery Press, 2012).

Hannah Carlson

In her 1956 manifesto, *What Shall I Wear?*, Claire McCardell described her “Popover” dress as “something that goes over anything.”¹ Drawing on aprons, wrappers, and housecoats—protective coverings women wore in the domestic sphere—the “Popover” began as a wraparound work dress and evolved into flexible sheath that one could throw over a bathing suit or wear belted to a cocktail party. Each of its various iterations nevertheless relied on the same proposition: Western women’s dress could be premised on the enclosure of the body rather than its revelation.

McCardell’s first version of the “Popover” resulted from a request by Harper’s Bazaar to design an attractive housedress that would meet the needs and budgets of the American housewife during the lean war years. In the November 1942 issue, a model poses in her “Popover” with one arm at an open door and the other on her duster: the housewife is “doing [her] own work,” as the caption explains, but she’s also ready, and perfectly dressed, to leave domestic confines.² McCardell had pulled off quite a feat: women were under pressure to “ooze feminine charm over the kitchen range,” and the dresses on offer (pants were considered disreputable) remained frilly simulacra of fashionable dress, made in cheap, washable cottons unsuitable for transition into public.³ Wearing them could be demoralizing: as one woman wrote in a 1941 piece, they inevitably made her feel “pot-and-pannish” rather than “woman-of-the-world-ish.”⁴

McCardell’s “Popover” was “frank and practical”—a single quilted pocket over the right hip flaunted its usefulness.⁵ “Austere in its denial of the ‘pretty,’” its wrap front pivoted across the body, flattering a range of body types.⁶ A woman could reject obsessive self-scrutiny when she felt confident in her partnership with her clothes.

The “Popover” lost most of its associations with housework after the war years: McCardell herself stressed that writers engaged in creative labor wore the “Popover,” while Lord & Taylor (which had exclusive rights to sell it) began marketing it to women of considerably more leisure. By the mid-1950s, the “Popover” was more dress than flexible covering. McCardell’s ca. 1955 version in the RISD Museum’s collection retains the wrap front and side closure, but the dropped V-shaped waist does not lend itself to wearing over dungarees, for example. This was a dress “that you put on to be casual in, and find yourself wearing about everywhere,” as a June 1955 advertisement asserted. The “Popover” had moved some distance from the original but still fulfilled one of McCardell’s central maxims: that dress should work in the service to the body.

1 Claire McCardell, *What Shall I Wear? The What, Where, When and How Much of Fashion* (1956; repr. New York: Rookery Press, 2012).

2 “I’m Doing My Own Work—And What’s More I’m Doing It Well,” *Harper’s Bazaar*, November 1942, 54.

3 Sylvia Weaver, “Glamourized Housedress Has Home Budget Appeal,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1940.

4 “Confidential Chat: Don’t We Dress Up for Ourselves?,” *Boston Globe*, January 24, 1941.

5 “American Dash and Vigor Seen in Claire McCardell Styles,” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 26, 1944.

6 Harold Koda, Richard Martin, and Laura Sinderbrand, *Three Women: Madeleine Vionnet, Claire McCardell, and Rei Kawabuko* (New York: Fashion Institute of Technology, 1987), n.p.

Take

Double

Claire McCardell /
Hannah Carlson

25

✓

120

Issue—13

Indian
Two Hindu Ascetics and a Dog,
 1600s with additions in the 1700s
 Ink and color on paper, mounted
 as an album page
 21 × 30.5 cm. (8 5/8 × 12 in.)
 Museum Appropriation Fund 17496X

Double

Holly Shaffer /
 Sassan Tabatabai

Take

Holly Shaffer

The picture nestled in this page was likely made by a Mughal painter in seventeenth-century India, but a collector reset it in borders of different colors and widths in an eighteenth-century album, juxtaposing it with a poem in the Persian script on the other side.¹ At once a place of storage and protection, this double-sided page is a site of selection and erudition. It is a place to think.

These two men are yogis: Hindu ascetics who cultivate their bodies through fixed postures (some of which would be familiar to practitioners of modern yoga) and exercise the mind through breath control and other means.² Specifically, they are yogis in the Nath sect, identified by the dog that accompanies them; their hair, which is twisted into dreadlocks; and their blue bodies smeared with ash scooped from a hearth or funeral pyre using the shovels they carry. These figures have abandoned the world; nevertheless, they are part of a hierarchic system. The yogi in gray holds a golden begging bowl, perhaps full of food, up to his superior, who is adorned with strips of colored cloth.³

The Mughals conquered northern India in 1526, and by the reign of Akbar (1556–1605) had established an Indo-Islamic dynasty that lasted until 1857. The Mughals were fascinated by the different communities and religious practices in India, including those of the Nath yogis. This order was theologically open—they had interacted with Sufis for generations and, unlike other sects, were not a militant threat. Akbar, and his son Jahangir, commissioned illustrated translations of Sanskrit texts into Persian that described yogic philosophy and practice.⁴ The yogis and dog in this painting are similar to those in Jahangir’s *Gulshan Album*; these artists could have consulted its design or that of another prototype.⁵ Both works also elicit proto-ethnographic types at the same time as they evoke tropes in Persian poetry.⁶

The poem opposite posits a text on god and the Muslim clergy and nobles, while this side offers an image of Hindu yogis, one a guru and the other his acolyte, to stage a comparison. This work is thus a storehouse of religious practice and courtly styles that could be remade by artists, poets, and collectors into a personal expression as an album was bound and rebound.

¹ I thank Wai Yee Chiong and Linda Catano at the RISD Museum for analyzing this page with me.

² Debra Diamond, “Yoga: The Art of Transformation” and David Gordon White, “Yoga in Transformation” in *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, ed. Debra Diamond (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2013), 28, 38.

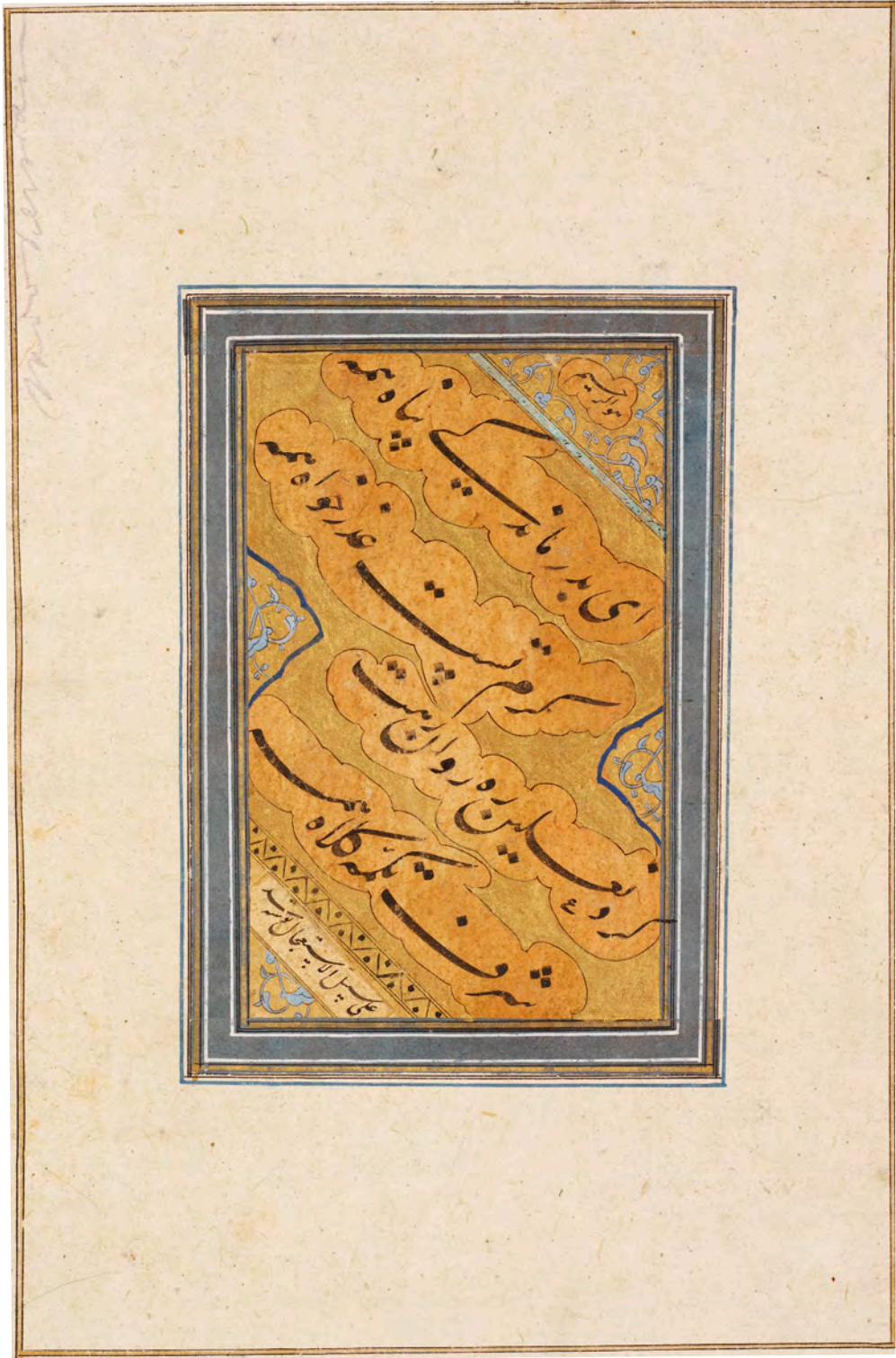
³ On Nath attributes see James Mallinson, “Yogis in Mughal India” in *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, 73.

⁴ Elaine Wright, *Muraqqa: Imperial Mughal Albums from the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin* (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 2008), 22–23; Diamond, *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, 70–75, 150–59.

⁵ Diamond, *Yoga*, 223–27.

⁶ Sunil Sharma, “Representation of Social Groups in Mughal Art and Literature: Ethnography or trope?” in *Indo-Muslim Cultures in Transition*, ed. Alka Patal and Karen Leonard (Brill’s Indological Library, vol. 38, 2011): 17–36.





Sassan Tabatabai

The Persian calligraphy on the back of the image of the two yogis roughly reads:

The poor find shelter in you
 Your kindness is grace to all
 You light the path of the pious
 The noble finds honor in you

The poem is a *ruba'i*, a Persian poetic form that dates back to the tenth century CE and was favored by Persian Sufi poets—Islamic mystics—who found the quatrain well suited to express terse meditations on divine love and mysticism. This poem is concerned with the inner spirituality of the two Hindu ascetics, something hidden from the viewer of the painting.

Here we see the ash-covered ascetic as a container, the repository of mystical knowledge. Each yogi has an esoteric understanding of existence that resides outside the realm of the intellect and cannot be gained through the traditional paths to piety or prestige. Here the ascetics have turned their backs on the material world and, in effect, withdrawn into the spiritual world within themselves. But the agent of withdrawal is also the agent of transcendence. The ascetic at left has transcended the frame of the painting that indicates the physical boundaries of the material world, breaking through to the boundless macrocosm of the mystical universe.

The beggar's bowl can be seen as a symbol of the ascetic's dependence on others for physical sustenance, as well as an expression of his spiritual poverty before the divine. Paradoxically, this poverty is also a sign of spiritual wealth, making the poor a

Take

Holly Shaffer /
 Sassan Tabatabai

shelter for the poor. The dog, an iconic companion to the yogi and a symbol of loyalty, emphasizes the sense of empathy and charity. The mystic would share the dry crust of bread he has received as alms not just with his fellow human being, but with his fellow living being.

A more literal translation of the last couplet of the *ruba'i* sheds more light on the nature of the mystic who has access to a more profound reality, something hidden from one who seeks it inside the traditional framework of social and religious hierarchy. The couplet reads: "He who walks in *na'lein* follows your path / you provide dignity to the button on the hat." *Na'lein* are sandals typically worn by the clergy in a mosque. The button on the hat is probably a reference to the medallion worn on the turbans of the nobility. This is where Persian poetic idiom and Indian art, printed on opposite sides of the page, stand face to face in dialogue with one another and find common ground on the value of the spiritual life. Accordingly, the ascetic's humility is aggrandized as a source of authority, and the social structure is turned on its head. The nodes of religious and political power, as identified by their respective accoutrements, are in turn humbled before the yogis, who, bareheaded and shoeless, stand poised to break out of the frame that constrains the material world.

Indian
Two Hindu Ascetics and a Dog,
 1600s with additions in the 1700s
 Ink and color on paper, mounted
 as an album page
 21 × 30.5 cm. (8⁵/₁₆ × 12 in.)
 Museum Appropriation Fund 17.496X



Rereading the King Arthur Chest

John Dunnigan



Maybe you have experienced the difficulty of trying to make sense of a world where there is rapid technological growth and accelerating environmental change. You can't avoid hearing news about the instability of financial markets, protectionist tariffs, global interventions, and war. You are subjected to xenophobic rhetoric about how immigration is threatening established ways of life. It is likely this comes along with a nostalgia for the values of an earlier time when, it is proposed, things were better. This last phenomenon depends on a mythology regarding those earlier times that includes popular stories about swords and thrones. These scenarios may sound current, but they are also what you would have encountered if you lived in Providence at the end of the nineteenth century, when industrialization, urbanization, and immigration had transformed the city.

This was the context in which Sydney Richmond Burleigh, Julia Lippitt Mauran, and Potter & Co. created the King Arthur chest [Fig. 1–6] in 1900. But what can an old storage chest with figurative carving and gold leaf tell us about the social relations and culture of the time? Like most historical artifacts, the chest no doubt contains meaning and identities, past and present. Rereading the object will help us see what is “stored” in it and what can be learned from it now.

First observations include the carvings: we wonder who the figures on the front of the chest are and what message they are intended to convey. A closer look reveals the names Guinevere and Arthur. The story of Queen Guinevere and King Arthur is about love and the consequences of infidelity. For her alleged adultery, Guinevere was condemned to death but was dramatically rescued by Lancelot, and the battles that ensued contributed to the demise of Camelot. The legends of King Arthur, Queen Guinevere, Lancelot, the knights of the Round Table, and Merlin captured the imaginations of European poets and musicians for centuries, and by the fifteenth century had formed the basis of the mythology surrounding the creation of English culture.¹

Guinevere and Arthur gaze at one another across the golden dragon that symbolizes their court, and each wears the golden crown of royalty. This could imply a poignant narrative, but despite the balanced composition that establishes a relational equality, the title of the piece refers only to King Arthur. Why not call it the Arthur and Guinevere chest? While Guinevere's role in the myths has been analyzed by contemporary feminists, few questioned it in the nineteenth century. One was English designer and writer William Morris, who wrote a poem in 1858 titled “The Defence of Guenevere,” in which she speaks for herself. Setting up her speech, the narrator says, “Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk, / But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!”²



2

FIG. 1-6

Sydney Richmond Burleigh, designer
 American, 1853–1931
 Julia Lippitt Mauran, carver
 American, 1860–1949
 Potter and Company, cabinetmaker
 American, 1878–1910
 King Arthur Chest, ca. 1900
 Oak with paint and gilding
 55.2 × 101.6 × 55.6 cm. (21⁵/₁₆ × 40 × 21⁵/₁₆ in.)
 Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.429

By the middle of the nineteenth century, in reaction to the social upheaval of the Industrial Revolution, artists like Morris turned to the symbols of medieval England to conjure a time before what they believed was the corruption of art and labor by capitalism and industrialization. Today we can see that these representations are gendered, class-based, and non-inclusive, but in the second half of the nineteenth century, the use of medieval iconography was intended as a strategy of dissent and an attempt at progres-

sive reform. References to the Middle Ages took on new meanings for artists, critics, and social reformers who believed that art, design, and craft should be at the center of the debate about politics, larger cultures of production, and how individuals might live and work.

One of the key goals of the Arts and Crafts movement was to challenge the academic hierarchies of fine arts versus applied arts that had arisen since about 1800 and to reunify all the arts and crafts as equals. This was attempted in part by blending the functional and the ornamental, which contributed to the often decorative quality of Arts and Crafts works. Another key aspect was the celebration of the vernacular as an expression of the belief in art and craft as part of everyday life and in the right of everyone to find joy in their labor.







ART

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7

This English movement found an enthusiastic audience in America, as it appealed to the sense of honest workmanship that overlapped with the Colonial Revival accompanying the Centennial Exhibition of 1876.³ Anglo-Americans promoted a nostalgia for the old-fashioned values of home and hearth and the independent self-sufficiency of the colonial era as an antidote to the accelerated pace and commercialism of industrializing cities like Providence in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Among the wide range of people who embraced the Arts and Crafts movement, many were attracted to its socialist tendencies and its fundamental rejection of industrial capitalism. Still greater numbers embraced the movement primarily as design reform without the critique of industrial capitalism; for them it was a way of promoting the social value of taste and beauty. Many enthusiasts combined aspects of both attitudes. Some philanthropists and civic leaders believed that by encouraging the establishment

FIG. 7
Julia Lippitt Mauran, carver
American, 1860–1949
Joined Chest, 1896
Oak, poplar, wrought iron
80 × 128.3 × 58.4 cm.
(31 ½ × 50 ½ × 23 in.)
Museum Purchase: Gift of Friends
and Family in Memory of Paul Tucker
and Mary B. Jackson Fund 2004.8

of guilds, clubs, schools, and museums, improving the appreciation of taste and beauty and increasing the public good was possible without dismantling the existing culture of production.⁴

Materials and technology play key roles in the Arthur and Guinevere chest. It was made using a basic type of woodworking called frame and panel construction. Since wood is a natural material that expands and contracts as it gains and loses moisture according to relative humidity, it also has a tendency to warp, as that movement occurs unevenly. The frame and panel system makes it possible to build wood structures of a larger size without warping or cracking by creating a stable, fixed frame that holds panels flat. This method allows individual panels to expand and contract within grooves cut into the frame because they are not fixed with glue or fasteners. Frame and panel woodworking was well developed at least three thousand years ago, as seen in ancient furniture, and was the most common way of making chests and doors before the availability of veneer on a commercial scale after 1830 created new styles. By 1900, frame and panel construction signified an older, vernacular type of woodworking.

In the same way that frame and panel construction referenced pre-industrial woodworking, the selection of wood species was very important to the aesthetic and message of the chest. Within the Arts and Crafts movement, oak was the wood of choice as it signified the English medieval period. In fact, oak is the national tree of England. The Arthur and Guinevere chest is probably made of American white oak tinted with a brown stain that makes it look more like English oak. The brightness of the gold leaf offsets the modesty of the brown oak and calls attention to the remarkable carving. While oak was often used for carving, it has a relatively open grain, which makes it difficult to achieve fine detail without breakage. Skillful carving requires a keen eye, steady hands, very sharp tools, and a sensitivity to the limits of the material. The quality of carving on the chest, clearly the most labor intensive part of the project, indicates a very skilled craftswoman at work in the person of Julia Lippitt Mauran (1860–1949).

Mauran attended RISD between 1890 and 1896, and during her last year she made a joined and carved chest with wrought-iron hardware that is now in the collection of the RISD Museum [Fig. 7]. She taught carving in Providence for several years and in 1904 helped establish the Handicraft Club, an all-women organization for craftwork in wood carving, metal working, weaving, ceramics, and basketry. The Handicraft Club still exists today at the corner of Benefit and College streets.

Among her many distinctions, Mauran is also known for being the first woman in Rhode Island to have a driver's license and supposedly the last person in the state to be buried in a small family cemetery at home.



8

Apparently embracing the “Back to the Land” movement, she was an independent woman who moved out to the country and ran a farm for almost forty years. According to an article in the *Providence Journal*, Mauran raised livestock including a dairy herd as well as poultry, grew vegetables, and operated Lippitt Hill as a subsistence farm, churning her own butter and cutting ice from the pond.⁵ She built a studio in one of the barns, and well into her eighties she chopped firewood and maintained buildings, including shingling a shed roof. Her gardens were renowned and she was the founder of the Providence County Garden Club. Her obituary describes her as a well-known craftswoman and gardener, which is how she preferred to describe herself.⁶

Both Mauran and Burleigh were involved in education at the time they created RISD’s Arthur and Guinevere chest.

Mauran was first a schoolteacher who taught wood carving in Providence after attending RISD and Sydney Richmond Burleigh (1853–1931) was a member of the RISD faculty from 1897 until 1906 and served as a trustee from 1919 until his death.⁷ Burleigh is best known now for the Fleur-de-Lys Studio on Thomas Street in Providence [Fig. 8]. In 1885 he collaborated with the architect Edmund R. Willson on the design of the building and did much of the construction with two friends, painter Charles W. Stetson and arts patron John G. Aldrich. This building made a unique contribution to the architectural landscape and culture of Providence as its first purpose-built artists’ studio, a function it still maintains today. During his lifetime, Burleigh was known as a successful painter, illustrator, designer, and craftsman. The success of the Fleur-de-Lys Studio prompted Burleigh to found the Art Workers Guild in 1886, a Providence collaborative based on the English model of 1884, producing a range of objects and interiors.⁸ Burleigh’s work in fine arts, crafts, architecture, and education had a lasting social impact on the Providence community.

FIG. 8
The Fleur-de-Lys Studio on
Thomas Street in Providence.
Photograph by Daniel Case

FIG. 9
King Arthur chest (lower left)
in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition,
Providence Art Club, 1901.
A bellows by Mauran hangs to
the right of the fireplace.

The Arthur and Guinevere chest was one of two similar pieces, the other being the Shakespeare chest, which had its panels painted by Burleigh. Although both Burleigh and Mauran knew how to make furniture and had each been producing works since the 1880s, they seemed to have been committed to the idea of collaboration in the spirit of the Art Workers Guild. Although using different materials and finishes, the two chests share the same dimensions and construction details, which suggests they were made at the same time. It is possible that the chests were produced specifically for the first Arts and Crafts exhibition in Providence, which was held at the Providence Art Club in 1901. Photographic evidence does show the Arthur and Guinevere chest displayed in that exhibition [Fig. 9].⁹

The third party in the collaboration, Potter & Co., was a local furniture company established as a small shop in 1848 that grew into a large retail operation. By 1871, the company had expanded into three floors of a building at 137 Westminster St, occupying almost forty thousand square feet for showrooms, warehouses, and offices as well as upholstery and finishing spaces. A separate shop of eight thousand square feet at 14 Williams Street was apparently where most of the woodworking was done. Approximately eighty craftsmen were employed, most of whom had been trained in Europe before immigrating to Providence. According to the *Providence Board of Trade Journal*, in 1899 the company was filling orders from Boston to Philadelphia and was cited in a New York newspaper as “one of the most effective and interesting stores in the country.”¹⁰ The company morphed through several partnership iterations until 1910, when it was bought out by Tilden-Thurber. Unfortunately, shortly afterward, all the records of Potter & Co. were destroyed in a fire, and along with that the information about who those craftsmen were.¹¹



9



10

FIG. 10

Just two generations ago, the hope chest was still popular with women planning for marriage, but as new ways of thinking about marriage emerged, its popularity declined. This image from the Lane Furniture Company shows another reason for its decline, as the scope of things acquired and the level of consumption exceed the scale of the chest.

FIG. 11

American
Joined Chest with Drawer,
1690–1725
Oak and pine
88.9 × 111.4 × 47 cm.
(35 × 43 3/4 × 18 1/2 in.)
Museum Appropriation Fund 19.293

The Arthur and Guinevere chest seems to have been made as an artwork for exhibition, purchased by a collector shortly after it was shown, and then donated to the RISD Museum in 1913, limiting its life of gathering meaning through use in the domestic interior. Ironically, this storage chest has itself been in storage for many years. But there is a long history of the practical and social functions of such objects that our chest builds upon.

The ancestors of the Arthur and Guinevere chest are the hope chest and the dowry chest, both of which had their origins in the ancient, globally practiced traditions of families exchanging goods and money on the occasion of marriage. Marriage was often socially strategic, and dowry chests served not only as places for women to store personal possessions but also as signifiers of their identity and status [Fig. 10]. Out of this tradition came what are called Hadley chests, which were made in the Connecticut River

Valley beginning in the seventeenth century. These are frame and panel chests in oak and pine that use a low relief carving of flowers and leaves typical of English Renaissance ornament which, according to scholar Thomas Michie, was likely transmitted from England by immigrant craftsmen in the seventeenth century.¹² An example of this type is the joined chest with drawer (1690–1725) in the RISD collection [Fig. 11], which has the letters HS carved in the central front panel and may have been made for Hester Smith of Hadley, Massachusetts, who married Nathaniel Ingram in 1696.

Although Mauran's carving is of a higher relief and generally more sophisticated, the technique in the Arthur and Guinevere chest is indebted to the style of carving on Hadley chests. Being from old New England families, Sydney Burleigh and Julia Lippitt Mauran could have been familiar with carved Hadley chests. Whether that was the case or not, they probably would have seen another example that is also now in the RISD Museum collection when it was on display in an exhibition at the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1892.



11

The Arthur and Guinevere chest combines inspirations from the forms, materials, and technologies of the Colonial Revival. This work also compellingly demonstrates the ideas of the Arts and Crafts movement, including the permeability of the boundaries between art, design, and craft. It is a cooperation in the spirit of the Art Workers Guild with the painter Burleigh designing the piece, the woodworkers at Potter & Co. building it, and the carver Mauran producing the panels. In addition to the important medieval references in the material and technology, the choice of frame and panel construction allowed Potter & Co. to make the chest with blank panels that could be given to Mauran for carving. This allowed for fluid collaboration and integration of skills across creative disciplines from expert craftsman to expert craftsman, keeping production within their domain, which was a key tenet of the Arts and Crafts movement.

This work is a good example of how objects can store profound ideas like love and fidelity, individual or group identities, and opinions on how people might live in different cultures of production. Through its materials, technology, and iconography, we can learn something

about its creators and read what it stores about them. The context of its production helps us understand its historic meanings, which change over time and are subject to evolving interpretations. It can also prompt us to consider its relevance today, especially considering the cultural similarities between 1900 and now, creating questions about the current agency of art, craft, and design in contemporary culture.

- 1 Thomas Malory and John Rhys, *Le Morte d'Arthur: Printed by William Caxton, 1485* (London: J. M. Dent, 1906).
- 2 William Morris, "The Defence of Guenevere," in *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems* (London: Ellis & White, 1858).
- 3 Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 31–32.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Martha Smith, "Julia Lippitt Mauran," *Journal-Bulletin* (Providence), March 26, 1997.
- 6 Obituary, *Providence Journal*, May 22, 1949.
- 7 Dawn Barrett and Andrew Martinez, *Infinite Radius: Founding Rhode Island School of Design* (Providence: Rhode Island School of Design, 2008), 31.
- 8 Pedro Beade, "New England Brotherhood: Sydney Burleigh, the Fleur-de-Lys House and the Art Workers Guild," *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 2 (Spring 1993): 32.
- 9 Christopher P. Monkhouse and Thomas S. Michie, *American Furniture in Pendleton House* (Providence: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 1986), 58.
- 10 *Board of Trade Journal* (Providence) XII, no. 6 (June 1900): 261.
- 11 Elizabeth Wayland Agee Cogswell, "The Henry Lippitt House: A Document of Life and Taste in Mid-Victorian America," (master's thesis, University of Delaware / Winterthur, 1981), Appendix N: Profile of Anthony, Potter and Dennison.
- 12 Monkhouse and Michie, *American Furniture in Pendleton House*, 53.

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objects are identified on page 120















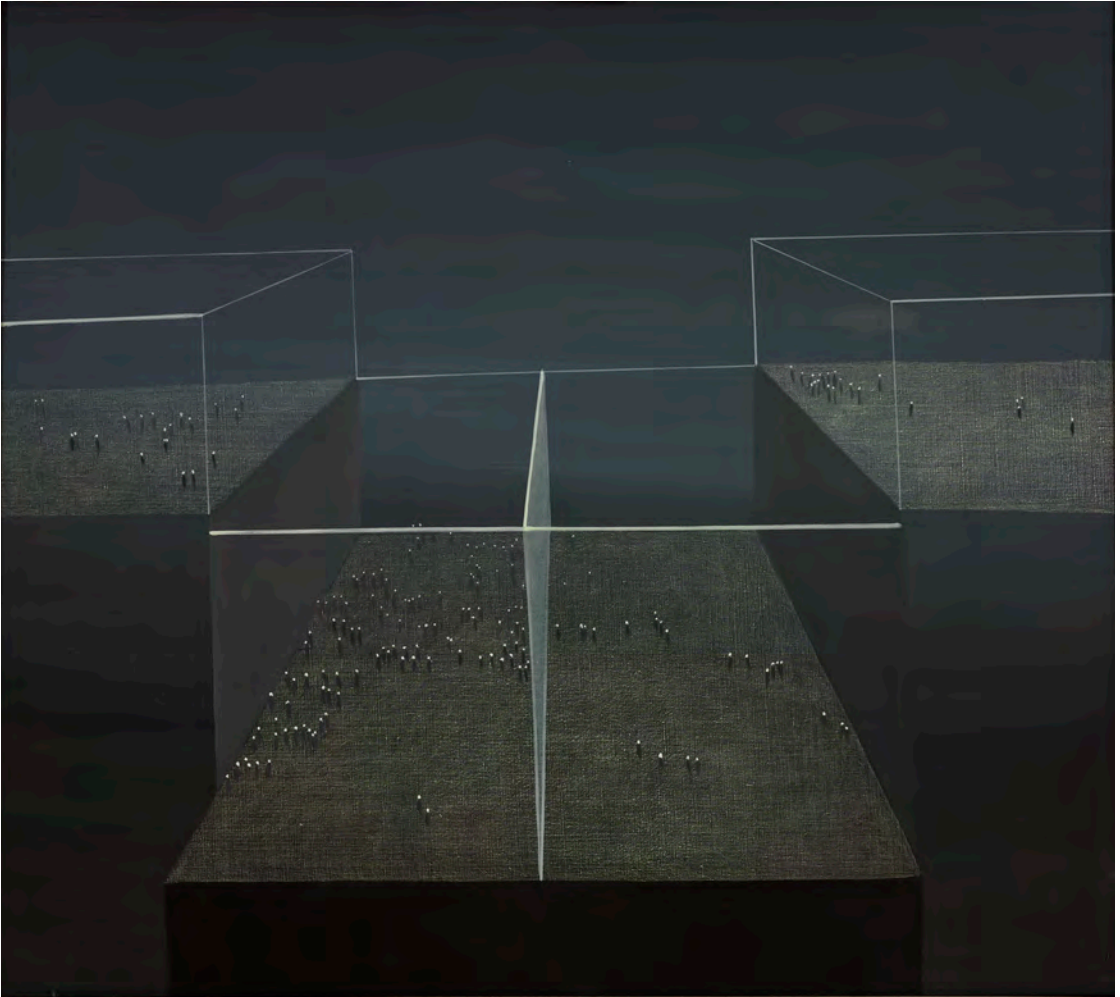








FIG. 1

Joseph Cornell

American, 1903–1972

Untitled, 1949–1952

Wood, glass, and sand

31.1 × 21.6 × 11.7 cm. (12 ¼ × 8 ½ × 4 ¾ in.)

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 82.107

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The Sand Fountain & the Ice Box

Joseph Cornell at RISD

Ingrid Schaffner

CURTAIN RISES: *Inside an antique wooden bread box, behind a lid of glass, a broken wine goblet figures like a colossus in an imaginary desert of loose white sand. Had Joseph Cornell's mysterious Untitled (White Sand Fountain) been part of the RISD Museum collection fifty years ago, Andy Warhol surely would have put it into Raid the Icebox 1. At once an object of storage and display, Cornell's sculpture might even be taken to be a conceptual model for Warhol's landmark exhibition. Commissioned by the museum to select works from its permanent collection, Warhol created an eccentric installation of art and decorative-arts objects, along with the very racks, shelves, boxes, and crates used to organize and store them. In one Cornelian tableau, a row of figurative sculptures faces off a jumble of gilt-framed paintings, propped against a wall by sandbags; an empty vitrine stands guard. Raid the Icebox has since been hailed the provocative progenitor of that sturdy form of museum practice: the artist-as-curator exhibition. In tribute to what might have been had Cornell's sculpture been in place in 1969 when Warhol came trawling, let's imagine another work—an ice box—by Cornell.¹*

In the midst of one of his routine peregrinations around New York in search of materials (and impressions) for his art's many forms of collage, Cornell froze at the sight of "ice being loaded on to trains, seen through grill gates" at Grand Central Station.² The scene transported him instantaneously from midtown Manhattan, circa 1940, to a snowy moonlit night in Russia one hundred years ago. The famous ballerina Marie Taglioni is dancing for a highwayman who—according to Romantic ballet legend—robbed the star of her command performance. Jump to the next link Cornell forged in a chain of associations and objects. It's a wooden case, open to reveal a sparkling necklace, twelve icy cubes of glass, and a short typewritten text that ends, enticingly: "to keep alive the memory of this adventure so precious to her, Taglioni formed the habit of placing a piece of artificial ice in her jewel casket....where, melting among the sparkling stones, there was evoked a hint of atmosphere of the starlit heavens over the ice covered landscape."

Now a gem in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, *Taglioni's Jewel Casket* (1940) sets down nicely next to RISD's *Untitled (White Sand Fountain)* (1949–1952). Side by side, the two boxes, which were constructed about a decade apart, may be seen to introduce something of the totality of Cornell's art. Each represents one of the many thematic bodies of work he developed over forty years of practice, starting in the 1930s. Sparkling with narrative, nostalgia, and fairy dust, *Taglioni's Jewel Casket*, the centerpiece of a group of objects titled *Homage to the Romantic Ballet*, is emblematic of the readymade souvenirs of the imagination for which Cornell became originally known. RISD's sculpture is a member of a set of sand fountains: austere constructions that communicate the sense of profound emptiness, of physical and spiritual transcendence, that Cornell made increasingly manifest throughout his work.³

In other words, these two boxes appear polar opposites. One openly appeals with diamonds and ice; the other—arid, almost broken-looking—is sealed as if to contain silence itself. But which of the two is actually more accessible, less severe, more abstract, less precious—or, to use a french term Cornell favored, *féerique*? As alluring as the jewel casket appears, it too holds a frigid fountain of sand, annealed into glass ice. And the sand fountain? It's nothing more remote than a cheap cocktail cordial, perhaps one of the many dime-store bibelots Cornell scored at the Woolworth's he frequented just down the street from Grand

FIG. 2
Joseph Cornell
American, 1903–1972
Taglioni's Jewel Casket, 1940
Velvet-lined wooden box containing glass necklace, jewelry fragments, glass chips, and glass cubes resting in slots on glass
Gift of James Thrall Soby 474.1953
The Museum of Modern Art
Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY
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On a moonlight night in the winter of 1820 the
savage of Meke Tuckah was killed by a British highlander, and that remarkable creature succeeded in doing for the welfare of our
house a gemstone's due regard over the case towards the stone. From this incident arose the legend that to keep alive the memory
of this adventure we propose to let, Tuckah's friend the lady of giving a piece of evidence to be her jewel under no showing table
when, meeting some of the marking stones, there was cooked a list of the composition of the middle business over the concerned landscape
August 1818 Joseph Elphinstone

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Central Station. Yet the more one sees Cornell's work together, the more one sees his art's overall capacity to operate like a magnetic field, drawing every piece and particle into flux and fusion with the polarizing energy of objects that are both very much of the world and completely otherworldly.

Cornell never drew from thin air. He spent a lifetime turning throw-away things into works of art that had uncanny power to transform what we ascribe cultural value to. *Métaphysiques d'ephemera* is what he called the alchemy of his collage. And for changing the game on painting and sculpture, his work was celebrated and relegated to the always *other* category of assemblage. So has the significance of Cornell's work been relatively contained, if not diminished, by its association with Victorian pastimes, folk art, Surrealism, femininity, craft, and other secondary-to-rebuked concerns within the modernist canon. Thankfully, there emerges from art history's icebox another context for considering Cornell's achievements anew: storage.

The glue that holds Cornell's work together is as invisible as the wide-ranging research he poured into it. His diaries read like the field notes of a butterfly collector whose specimens were those fleeting moments of emotional and aesthetic intensity that were his art's most volatile material.⁴ The search for these moments led Cornell to be widely and deeply engaged with the culture at large. In jotted lines and fragmentary bursts of writing, he recorded and described the effects of specific pieces of music, poems, books, works of art and exhibitions, snatches of radio programs, newspaper articles, trips to the ballet, the movies, the New York Public Library Picture Collection (whose curator, Romana Javitz, was a special friend and kindred spirit), the passing scene, the weather, nature, people, sweets. A loner, Cornell was no recluse. Marcel Duchamp, Greta Garbo, Marianne Moore, Susan Sontag, the ballerina Allegra Kent were among the many luminaries he admired and cultivated—as avidly as any other of his interests—with exquisite pieces of collage correspondence.

Correspondence is exactly the phenomenon Cornell sought to capture through the conduit of his art. Frustrated by the finiteness of frames and boxes, he developed a body of work called dossiers that took the form of open files that allowed him to continuously add and subtract in the midst of a process of collecting material that was never ending. And so all of his work was a dynamic proto-internet form of collecting and research, of building networks and affinities—between disparate

FIG. 3

Joseph Cornell
American, 1903–1972
Untitled, 1949–1952
Wood, glass, and sand
31.1 × 21.6 × 11.7 cm. (12 ¼ × 8 ½ × 4 ¾ in.)
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund
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moments, objects, emotions, ideas, people. The sand fountain, the jewel casket, the fan mail, the diaries, the dossiers are all contiguous, along with the many other surprising nodes of Cornell's work. To take one last example from MoMA's case, there is the recent role played by *Taglioni's Jewel Casket* in the intersectional art history that was the 2019 exhibition *Lincoln Kirstein's Modern*.⁵

A curatorial raid on the Museum of Modern Art's own icebox, this fantastic exhibition took a look at the impact and aesthetic one of the museum's foundational figures, Lincoln Kirstein. A champion of figurative art, the founder of a short-lived department of dance, and a central figure in New York's queer art world of the 1930s and '40s, Kirstein held a vision of modernism that has long been closeted within the very institution he helped to build—with the occasional services of Joseph Cornell. *Taglioni's Jewel Casket* was shown to represent the rewarding exchange between Kirstein, who routinely hired Cornell, the consummate artist/researcher, to find rare prints and film footage for the museum's nascent dance collection, and Cornell, who credits the hunt with turning him on to the Romantic ballet in the first place. Seen within the larger context of this exhibition, the relevance of Cornell's work to those searching for new narratives of modernism seems boundless.

Now, at last, let's pick up RISD's *Untitled (White Sand Fountain)* and turn it upside down. Don't be alarmed! Cornell intended viewers be handlers of his work. And listeners. The whooshing has already mostly subsided, in concert with the sand's disappearance into the upper cavities of the box construction. Meanwhile the little blue glass fountain holds firm, its spiral stem screwed directly into the wood floor. Turn the box again, right side up, and voilà, the fountain overflows. Sand, as fine as sugar, cascades into the turquoise bowl, spilling over in jagged torrents. Quickly a chip of old paper slips by. Especially delightful—and weirdly satisfying—is watching a stream of sand escape from a strategic hole above the fountain, as if into a broken hourglass.

Of course, one needn't handle the box. Modeled on a sand toy, the drama is implicit. An early form of animation, sand toys are among those Victorian curiosities that played a serious role in the history of the moving image and cinema—an evolution Cornell witnessed in his own lifetime and reproduced. He made objects based on zoetropes, thaumatropes, and other optical toys. Using found footage, he created some of the first film collage, which he screened at specially conceived programs. Relative to this family of delightful approaches, RISD's sand fountain is the constructivist cousin starkly baring its

FIG. 4
Mechanical Sand Toy,
1860–1870
Wood, glass, paper, sand
Museum of Childhood Collection
Victoria and Albert Museum, London



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pictorial mechanism. Crack open a sand toy and behind the little acrobat, clown, or ballerina on its paper stage are the bellows and chutes that trap and spill the cascading particles, triggering the performance.

How does *Untitled (White Sand Fountain)* perform the art of storage? Among other things, it contains the process of its own making. Photographs of Cornell's studio show a messy workroom brimming with boxes, labeled in the artist's handwritten script, holding the component elements of his work: Seashells, Tinfoil, Owl Cutouts, Map Tacks, Cordials, for instance. There are stacks of boxes, piles of frames, and signs of light carpentry. It's as if Cornell's whole studio was one macro assemblage. The back of RISD's box reveals more micro preparations: a thick skin of silvery paint buckles and blisters over a thin coat of red pigment, on top of a layer of paper firmly fixed to the wood. The entire antique effect—of gilt

separating from the bole of a grotesque mirror—is sealed under a coat of varnish. The front and sides of the box—lightly gilded, rubbed with stain, scratched and abraded—are comparatively untouched. Around the edge of the glass, making it resemble an abandoned shop window, a narrow trim of newspaper adds a further friable note of age. As does the artist's signature, written on another piece of old paper and stuck to the back of the box like a calling card [Fig 5].

Inside the box are hidden pieces of other works—or so it seems to a Cornell cryptographer. Surprisingly full of significance is that slat with a hole in the center. Its distinctive wood grain will make some experts think of the frottage drawings of Max Ernst, whose collage novel *La Femme 100 têtes* (1929), cut and pasted from a world of 19th-century illustrations, was of seismic importance to Cornell. Taking scissors to his own collections of ephemera, Cornell started making collages that would appear alongside Ernst's in one of the first exhibitions of Surrealism in New York. Held in 1931 at the Julien Levy Gallery, the exhibition and the gallery, which continued to represent Cornell, established his art's initial reception within a Surrealist context.

As a historic movement, however, Surrealism is only a point of departure for Cornell's work, which bears more allegiance to the poetry of Emily Dickinson and the inspirational writings of Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, a faith he practiced, than to the doctrines of André Breton. The degree to which his art found its own critical and cultural path may be espied by looking backwards through the hole in the slat in RISD's box and watching it become the slot in the *Medici Slot Machine* (1942), the peephole in the *Untitled (Penny Arcade Portrait of Lauren Bacall)* (1945–1946), or the pigeonholes in the *Colombiers* or *Dovecote* series, which Cornell was working on simultaneously with the sand fountains. A diary entry from June 1952 animates their co-construction with the artist's thinking and some music:

*listening to Brahms Violin Concerto—
painting Colombier wooden balls—
finding more broken glass fragments
for sand fts.—the turquoise spiral one
working out that day to a beautiful per-
fection—speedy, effective revision
from stagnant materials...although
better day than many with the turquoise
glass sand ft. working out all in a day—
revision of box done for 3 yers. or so.
Masterwork/Magnificent/Inspiration*

FIG.5

Joseph Cornell
American, 1903–1972
Untitled, 1949–1952
Wood, glass, and sand
31.1 × 21.6 × 11.7 cm. (12 ¼ × 8 ½ × 4 ⅝ in.)
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 82.107
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The “turquoise spiral one” is most probably RISD’s sand fountain, since no similar one is known to exist. Certainly, there is “beautiful perfection” to be found in this work’s encapsulation of lost time. The image of a broken hourglass seems no more oblique than the reference to Proust, whose *À la recherche du temps perdu* could be called a “research” as correctly as *The Search for Lost Time*. After hearing the following passage on the radio, Cornell made a transcription that reads as if Proust had written it with the theater of the sand fountain in mind: “Time as it flows, is so much time wasted and nothing can ever truly be possessed save under the aspect of eternity which is also the aspect of art....Yes, art because it gives the past a form, saves it from change and disintegration.”⁷

CURTAIN FALLS: *On Tuesday, June 25, 1963, Andy Warhol paid Joseph Cornell a visit as part of a small entourage, duly noted by Cornell: “In the wake of the foursome: C. H. Ford, Andy Warhol, Robert Indiana, James Rosenquist.”⁸ By the 1960s, Cornell’s home on Utopia Parkway in Queens was a site for art pilgrims to go and meet the pioneering American inventor of assemblage. Cornell’s box constructions in particular were being shown and seen in connection with emerging forms of Pop Art, Minimalism, and—most significantly, in advance of Robert Rauschenberg’s 1964 triumph at the Venice Biennale—the Combine. For an American postwar art history on the rise, Cornell was already the missing link.*

Warhol secretly might have considered Cornell his doppelgänger. Their art welled from mutually deep and private reserves of fascination with the nearly cosmic power of beauty, celebrity, and popular culture to connect with the ineffable. On a less awesome note, both were extremely shy men who possessed driving ambition and lived with their mothers. According to Robert Indiana, the foursome sat down to tea with Cornell and his mother after a tour of the artist’s garage and basement workrooms.⁹ (They seem not to have met Robert, Cornell’s adult brother, whom he also cared for.)

Little is known to have been recorded of the visit. As Indiana recalled, “The boxes were wrapped up in newspaper to protect them, so we didn’t see anything except wrapped up boxes.” Fast forward six years to the opening of Raid the Icebox: possibly, for Warhol, that spectacle of storage was exactly enough.

- 1 The sculpture was acquired by the RISD Museum in 1982, purchased from Allan Stone Gallery, New York, which obtained it directly from the artist's estate.
- 2 Joseph Cornell papers, 1804–1986, Series 4, Source Material, Box 26, Folder 2: "Romantic Ballet" Portfolio 1831–1951, undated. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The episode and its aftermath are recounted in by Christine Hennessey, in "Joseph Cornell: A Balletomane, Archives of American Art," *Archives of American Art Journal* 23, no. 3 (1983): 9.
- 3 Perhaps most analogous to the work in the RISD Museum's collection is the Art Institute of Chicago's *Untitled (Yellow Sand Fountain)* from the early 1950s. For other examples, see the exhibition catalogue *Joseph Cornell* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1981), plates 191–96.
- 4 To sample Cornell's diaries and letters, see *Joseph Cornell's Theater of the Mind*, edited and with an introduction by Mary Ann Caws and a foreword by John Ashbery (New York and London: Thames and Hudson, 1993).
- 5 Organized by curators Sara Friedman and Jodi Hauptman, *Lincoln Kirstein's Modern* was held March 17–June 15, 2019, at the Museum of Modern Art, where it was accompanied by a catalogue publication, programming, and excellent online content, including Friedman's essay "Lincoln Kirstein: Man of Letterheads" (which finds correspondence between the powers of institution building and design) and a Kirstein reader compiled by Elizabeth Welch and illustrated by librarian Jennifer Tobias.
- 6 Joseph Cornell papers, 1804–1986, Series 3: Diaries, Box 6, Folder 13: May–June, 1952. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. I credit this reference to Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, whose original scholarship is referenced in an essay on the acquisition of *Untitled (White Sand Fountain)* in *Rhode Island School of Design Museum Notes* 70, no. 2 (October 1983): 28.
- 7 The quote appears in a discussion of *Swann's Way* that Cornell transcribed from memory—after hearing it on the radio—and inserted into one of his dossier works of art. See Lindsay Blair, *Joseph Cornell's Vision of Spiritual Order* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), page 67 and note 84.
- 8 Joseph Cornell papers, Series 3: Diaries, Box 8, Folder 6: June, 1963. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
- 9 Deborah Solomon, Utopia Parkway: *The Life and Work of Joseph Cornell* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 280.



Manfred Nisslmüller
Austrian, b. 1940
Brooch, 2001
Metal, pearl, gold, and stones
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2002.90.1

A. H. Jerriod Avant

Felonious States of Adjectival Excess Featuring Comparative and Superlative Forms

my mo' favoriter and mo' better is my most favoritest
 is mo' simpler this way is mo' fluidier mo' wetter most hottest
 cause the most beautifullest is mo' beautifuller mo' meaner
 mo' flyer and most flyest mo' shyer and the most shyest
 is more than more intelligenter than the panels' most ugliest
 and most selectivest is the most goodest is the most burnttest
 is mo' burnter and mo' unrulier is the most meekest
 and even mo' meeker is the most ownablest is mo' purchasabler
 and the most purchased thus becomes the most purchasablest
 at the site of the most shiniest coins
 my most funkiest is also my most stolenest but the most stolenest
 can't ever be mo' funkier than the most oldest the most thievin'est
 be the most brokest cause the most thieved from be the most oldest
 so becomes the most richest who also be the most fundedest
 and that makes me the most confusedest when I'm in the most
 keptest buildings that be mo' keeper than all the most
 time keepin'est kats they keep in the back up keepin' 'em.

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Atget's Corsets and the Sideshow of Modern Life

Maria Morris Hambourg

In France, a reserve of something valuable is a “big cheese in the cellar,” for such a stash—the nutritional essence of a summer of pastured sunshine—is a treasure in store. The expression applied to a hoard of photographic negatives slumbering quietly beneath the seventeenth-century arches of the Palais Royal in Paris; some 2,600 of those fragile glass plates bore images of the splendid architecture and decoration created in and around Paris during the ancien régime by Eugène Atget (1857–1927). He had carried them up from the basement of his Montmartre apartment building after the cessation of the bombardments of the First World War and in 1920 sold the collection—his cellared cheese—to the Commission des Monuments Historiques.

FIG. 1

Eugène Atget
Boulevard de Strasbourg, 1912
Gelatin silver print from glass negative
22.1 x 17 cm. (8 11/16 x 6 11/16 in.)
Museum Works of Art Fund 70.009.3

The other main repository of Atget's work is the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where, as a graduate student and intern, I had pored over it, image by image, evening upon evening. I had become mesmerized by the thousands of discrete perceptions this man had recorded as he crisscrossed Paris and its environs for three decades, gradually gathering up a vast archive of evidence—something like a national art history seen through a single eye. As I studied Atget's work in Paris and New York, I had also learned to love museum storage, which is not a dead zone but an inner sanctum where we can contemplate the handiwork of great artists quietly and learn more than is at first revealed. Atget's *Boulevard de Strasbourg* [Fig. 1], which resides in the RISD Museum's print storage, is a case in point.

Atget was educated at the National Conservatory of Music and Drama in Paris and began acting in the French provinces. After a number of years, he gave up the stage and took up a big stand camera, which he toted around the country making photographs of various things—plants, buildings, animals, boats. His intention was to sell these images as documents for artists, and he hung out a shingle to this effect in Paris around 1897.

His first urban photographs were pictures of Parisians at work and play in the city's parks, streets, and open-air markets [Fig. 2]. This was the first phase of Atget's endeavor to depict common aspects of contemporary Parisian life. He called his accumulation of these scenes *Paris Pittoresque* (Picturesque Paris). He also began to create a stock of photographs of the townhouses, churches, palaces, and other historic buildings of Paris and its environs—of interior and exterior decoration, doorknockers, stairways, gardens, statues, and fountains. While these images also might appeal to artists, Atget had an eye to expanding his clientele with architects, craftsmen, and designers, as well as museums, libraries, and other collectors of images of *Vieux Paris* (Old Paris), then a major focus of preservation interest and much in vogue. Until the outbreak of the Great War, Atget was known primarily for this ever-expanding series of documents of architecture and decoration.

In addition to being a photographer, Atget was also a small-time publisher. His early images of people gathered at a street fair or browsing at the *bouquinistes* along the quais he published as lithographic postcards, and he also composed an album of original prints of these images, *La Vie à Paris* (Parisian Life), which was purchased by the National Library in 1900. Unlike his photographs of architecture and decoration, which were scattered topographically across the print collection, this bound album was kept intact.



2

Around 1910 Atget returned to the habits and customs of Parisians and began to produce additional bound albums for the library. Today we would consider these bound albums artists' books. Each concerns a discrete topic: Parisian interiors (*Intérieurs parisiens, début du XXe siècle; artistiques, pittoresques et bourgeois*) was followed by vehicles (*La Voiture à Paris*), then trades, shops, and displays (*Métiers, boutiques et étalages de Paris*). Eventually he made three more albums, each consisting of some sixty single examples of a type of the subject, generally one example in each image, one image to a page. Compared to the early street scenes in which the gathering around an activity—a puppet show, street dance, or book stall—was the main subject, in the second phase of *Paris Pittoresque* the Parisians disappeared: Atget was now interested in describing the purpose underlying their activity. The focus was primarily

on the nature of work or commerce together with their attributes or style. While his earlier views appealed to tourists as scenes of local color, in these photographs Atget worked more like an anthropologist scrutinizing local customs of the early twentieth century. He detailed the ways Parisians furnished their salons and bedrooms, documented the heavy timbered carts they built to haul coal and the fine carriages they decorated to convey their

FIG. 2
Les p'tits métiers de Paris;
sur les quais—Les bouquinistes
 (The Small Trades of Paris;
 On the Quais—The Book Sellers),
 1897–1900
 Lithographic postcard,
 V.P. Paris series, no. 11
 Private collection



dead, the various ways in which they displayed their magazines, flowers, or leeks, posted their notices, and arrayed their street stalls and shop windows [Fig. 3].

Boulevard de Strasbourg [Fig. 1] is this sort of picture. Here is the typical undergarment that a woman might buy from a small store near the Gare de l'Est, and here is the way A. Simon displayed a gamut of garments to win her favor. By the time Atget discovered this lingerie store in 1912 he had already wrapped up *Métiers, boutiques et étalages de Paris* and sold it to the library, so that album did not include this image, but his interest in the shop's window and the way he framed it were largely determined by the parameters of the concerns he had developed for that publication. However, what he managed to capture and the way it sailed into the future would far transcend the limited derivation of its original inception.

After four years of inactivity during the war (1914–1918) and the sale of his negatives in 1920, Atget experienced a burst of renewed energy for photographing. He was still obsessed with evidence of popular life and commerce, but he became increasingly interested in describing the stylistic and expressive idioms of what he discovered. No longer constrained by album formats to try to capture exemplary versions of a subject, he began exploring how the things in front of his camera truly appeared. He not only allowed the contingencies of the captured moment to invade his images, he audaciously prioritized the unconventional, unseen, and untoward. His photographs of shop windows in the 1920s are striking. The images have a conspicuously more up-to-date allure than *Boulevard de Strasbourg* due to the contemporary clothing and modish mannequins, but more importantly, Atget had the brilliance to allow reflections of the street to enter and animate the images, so that the dummies seem uncannily immersed in the city, responsive to unseen forces and ready to speak, like actors momentarily arrested mid-scene [Figs. 4, 5].

What the comparison of the earlier and later images suggests is true: both Paris and Atget had undergone drastic changes in the interim. The pace of everything in the city had accelerated: horse-drawn cabs and trundling trolleys had been overtaken by automobiles and

motorized buses, hand-delivered mail was superseded by telephones, film projectors and Victrolas made cinema and jazz all the rage, and small hand-held cameras made photography a snap. Not only had the heavy Haussmanian Second Empire style of architecture slimmed into svelte Art Nouveau—and by 1925 streamlined into Art Deco—but in the first quarter of the century Matisse, Picasso, and coteries of avant-garde artists had churned up

FIG. 3
Eugène Atget
Boutique Journaux (Newspapers),
Rue de Sèvres, Paris, 1910–1911
Matte albumen silver print from
glass negative
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Gilman Collection, Purchase Mr.
and Mrs. Henry R. Kravis Gift, 2005



FIG. 4
Eugène Atget
Magasins du Bon Marché, 1926–1927
Modern print by Chicago Albumen Works, 1978
The Museum of Modern Art, New York,
Abbott-Levy Collection, 1968
Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/
Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY



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FIG. 5
Eugène Atget
Avenue des Gobelins, 1925
Gelatin silver print from glass negative
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Ford Motor Company Collection, Gift of Ford
Motor Company and John C. Waddell, 1987
Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum
of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY

the art world with the wild colors of Fauvism and the facets of Cubism, only to see these revolutions further evolve into the dynamics of Futurism and the psychic dream worlds of Surrealism. The old world had morphed into the modern.

Atget, for his part, had become a man free of obligations. No longer tethered to the expectations of his architectural and craftsmen clientele and no longer willing to submit to the judgments and the restrictions of the commissions of librarians and curators, he declared his self-sufficiency, concluding that “others do not know what to photograph.” The sale of negatives liberated him to pursue his art as he wished, with the result that tendencies in his vision that had begun to manifest before the war now developed more idiosyncratically and decisively. What had been surprising now became quite surreal, what had been charming now became poignantly beautiful, and what had been infused with history now became a commentary on time.

Although Atget had lived in Montparnasse since the turn of the century, in the 1920s many other artists moved into the studios and small hotels of the district, where they gathered with colleagues from across the globe in a ferment of new ideas. The elderly photographer encountered the new generation when he offered his photographs for sale at the La Rotonde and Le Dôme cafés. That cohort would have found the shape of the corsets in *Boulevard de Strasbourg* particularly salient. Between the bulwark of raised breasts and the curvaceous hips, the tiny cinched waists clinched the iconic shape of the Parisienne of the Belle Epoque. In style roughly from 1890 to 1910, this feminine form looked distinctly outdated after the war. The liberated young women on those terraces, with their cloche hats and cigarettes, could thank Paul Poiret for introducing a trend of unstructured clothing in 1906 that celebrated boyish figures and physical comfort, and Coco Chanel for confirming the trend toward practicality with trim profiles and shorter skirts after the war. Thus, by the 1920s, Atget’s photograph of wasp-waisted mannequins had an archaic air; it was a curiosity from an earlier epoch when the Western idea of female fashion involved submission to constricting corsets and long, hobbling skirts. But that was not all.

With its six shapely mannequins perfectly arrayed like sardines in a can, *Boulevard de Strasbourg* instantly seduces the viewer. The breeze-ruffled petticoat that seems to levitate below the bust pulls us in further, then we notice that the nearest corset on the bottom row has inexplicably swooned, this as we are imaginatively drawn into the dark interior by the door left ajar and the shop front’s sly slant. Little wonder that this picture became a hit with the young Surrealists: it perfectly illustrated their belief that certain pockets of the real could possess bizarre, supernatural potency, and

that this was especially so in arcades, shop windows, and other shadowy realms, including those realms in photographs, which were ripe with implications to infect the imagination.

Unlike the button shoes, toupees, or hernia trusses that Atget inventoried in other windows, *Boulevard de Strasbourg* does not simply concern the arts of window display and fashion. These corsets are not just any objects to be worn on the body; they resonate as surrogate bodies. And though the corsets have a feminine daintiness in their rosettes and lace trimmings, the repetitive insistency of their hourglass shapes, together with the energy of the negative, interstitial spaces, creates a light and dark patterning that is bewitchingly incantatory. Indeed, a macabre air flirts about the scene: at one moment the hanging figure is just a commercial come-on, while the next it seems to dangle as from a gibbet while the chorus of corsets mutates into mortuary witnesses. Because the picture effortlessly holds its antique charms and sinister undertones in exquisite equipoise, it continually vibrates, refusing any single signification. Once seen, it is lodged in the mind.

One of the first to grasp the picture's alternating current was the American expatriate photographer Man Ray, who lived a few doors down the street from Atget. This image was one of four photographs he and some of his fellow Surrealists selected from Atget's stock to reproduce in *La Révolution Surréaliste* in 1926. It was also among the images selected by two other Americans living in Paris: Berenice Abbott, Man Ray's former assistant, and Julien Levy, a wealthy Harvard undergraduate who was buying art for the gallery he would open in New York to champion Surrealism and photography.

Both Abbott and Levy climbed the stairs to Atget's apartment on the rue Campagne-Première to purchase from his portfolios, and Abbott, who was making her living portraying artists and writers, asked to make his portrait. Returning to his apartment to give him the resulting prints, she found he had died, and began to worry that his marvelous inventory would be lost to posterity. She tracked down the executor of his estate and purchased his remaining negatives (more than 1,400) and prints (some 4,200 different images).

Once she owned the collection, Abbott brought Atget's work to the attention of French photography circles and the European avant-garde. She solicited articles and printed negatives to illustrate them, and whenever an exhibition included her work she made sure Atget's prints were also included. She sent *Boulevard de Strasbourg* to *Film und Foto*, a landmark exhibit of New Vision photography that opened in 1929 in Stuttgart, Germany, and traveled widely. Just as Man Ray had jumped on

this unforgettable image for *La Révolution Surréaliste*, so it was also reproduced in *Foto-Auge*, the critically acclaimed volume that served as that important exhibition's catalogue [Fig. 6]. From the seed planted by Man Ray and effectively nurtured by Berenice Abbott, *Boulevard de Strasbourg* became one of the most enduringly popular of all of Atget's images.

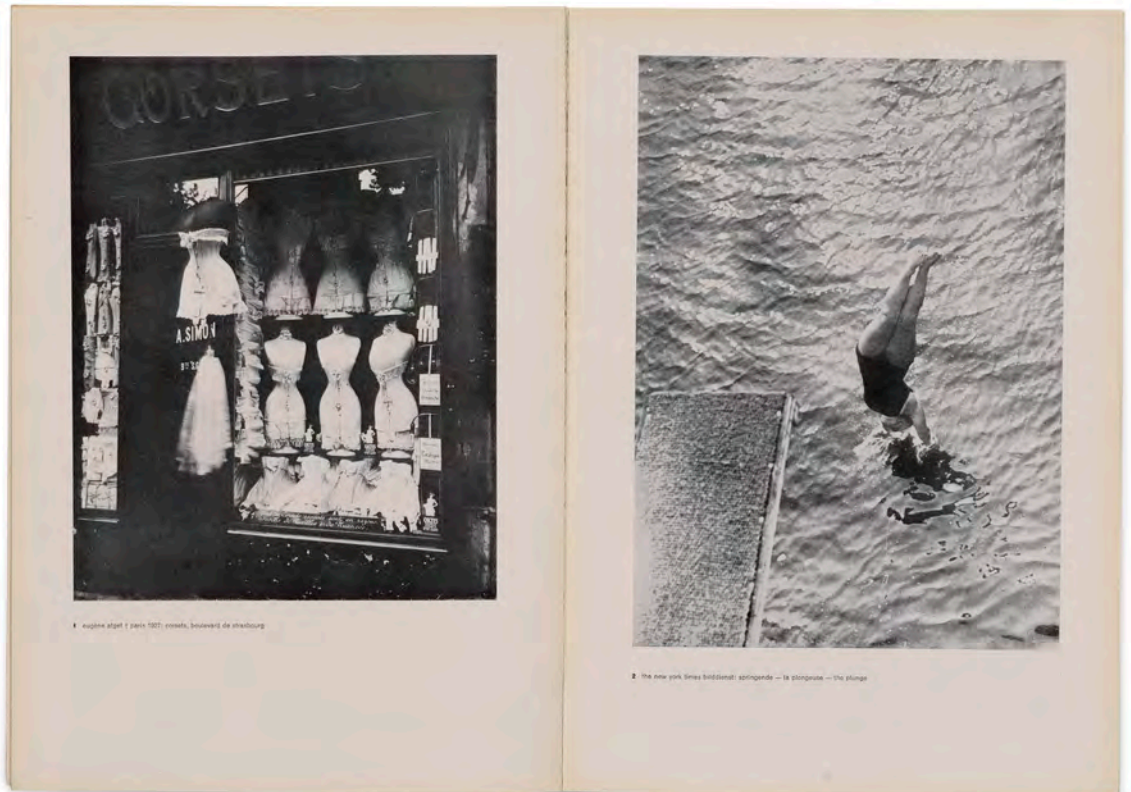


FIG. 6
Spread from Franz Roh and
Jan Tschichold, *Foto-Auge: 76
Fotos der Zeit* (Photo-eye: 76
photos of the Time), Stuttgart:
F. Wedekind, 1929.

Today, when anyone uses a smartphone to photograph the mannequins and the reflections in store windows, they are referencing—consciously or not—Atget’s shop windows of the 1920s, which in turn reference *Boulevard de Strasbourg*, one of the first published images of mannequins, of which many millions have now been made. These ready-made stand-ins for human models have become so ubiquitous that it is difficult to reimagine the originality of Atget’s vision of them as surrogate humans in the sideshow of modern life. What made them possible was not only the mass manufacture of clothing, which created the need for humanoid forms to model the offered clothing; also required were the wide avenues that Baron Haussmann bulldozed through medieval Paris, beginning in the 1850s with the Boulevard de Strasbourg. His wide boulevards were a surgical face-lift for Paris, providing broad, tree-shaded sidewalks lined with stores and ample space for Parisians and visitors to stroll, shop, and ogle one another and the offerings in the windows.

Thus, in the second half of the nineteenth century, Paris became a vast stage for herself and for all the world to see the spectacle of fashionable life. This history, as well as the rapid modernization of life in the early twentieth century and the propagation of the culture of photography in more recent decades,¹ are all embedded in Atget’s seminal photograph of corsets, which, like so many other treasures, resides in storage, in full possession of these and other untold stories.

1 After Abbott moved to New York in 1929, she sold an undivided partial interest in her Atget collection to Julien Levy. The latter helped bring the French photographer to the attention of the New York art world through the Weyhe Gallery, where Levy initially worked, and then through his own gallery. *Atget: Photographe de Paris* was published in New York by the Weyhe Gallery in 1930 and simultaneously appeared in French and German editions. Abbott made an edition of prints from the negatives in 1956, and in 1968 the Abbott-Levy Collection was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art. That important acquisition transferred the original negative and several prints of *Boulevard de Strasbourg* to a major hub of interest in photography, which further disseminated this image.

At least four public collections boast original prints of *Boulevard de Strasbourg*. The RISD Museum purchased its beautiful copy in 1970 from a group of duplicates winnowed from MOMA’s collection and brokered through New York’s Schoelkopf Gallery. The George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, owns Man Ray’s print. One of the prints that Julien Levy purchased from Atget is now in the Art Institute of Chicago, while a second print was acquired from him by the New York dealer Scott Elliot, who sold it to the Gilman Collection in 1977; it now belongs to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The prints at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the National Gallery of Canada were made by Berenice Abbott from the original negative, which was last printed by the Chicago Albumen Works for the Museum of Modern Art in 1981.

Fall 2019

Manual



Art/Storage

John W. Smith



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Issue 13

Storage is an issue that nearly every museum constantly struggles with. Collections grow at a pace that outstrips our ability to contain them. Tastes and audiences evolve, relegating once prized objects into the recesses of the vault. Museums previously devoted largely to the Western canon have recognized the need to expand their scope. And artists are producing works of a larger scale and complexity that demand not only bigger galleries but more space when they are not on view.

For older institutions such as the RISD Museum, with its accumulation of 140 years of collecting history, storage issues can be acute and chronic. At any given moment, we exhibit approximately three percent of our one hundred thousand objects—a ratio that is similar to that of other museums. Storage reveals institutional histories—narratives of taste, legacies of curatorial enthusiasms and mistakes, objects once imbued with value that have subsequently fallen out of favor. Museums grapple with storage in various ways. Some invest in more space while others undertake often radical deaccessioning measures to cull works deemed redundant or not of museum quality. For the RISD Museum, with its long-standing and central mission as a teaching museum, many objects in storage continue to be studied and used by students, scholars, and artists, complicating the question of where value lies.

This storage dilemma isn't new. In a 1969 essay entitled "Confessions of a Museum Director," RISD Museum director Danny Robbins lamented the "appalling, stuffed storage" which resulted in objects that had become inaccessible, forgotten, or worse. Robbins's essay contained a litany of examples of the intellectual and physical deterioration suffered by artworks due to improper storage conditions. If museum objects are meant to connect us with our shared pasts, then the deeper into storage these works recede, the more remote those connections become. His catalogue essay as diatribe was a bold indictment of the RISD administration and trustees for not providing the proper resources—in particular more gallery space—for the museum to adequately exhibit and care for historic works and its growing contemporary collection.

Robbins's essay appeared in the catalogue for the exhibition *Raid the Icebox 1 with Andy Warhol*, an artist-curated project conceived as a way to highlight the important objects lingering in storage and to underscore the institution's need for expansion. A few years earlier, Robbins had become acquainted with Houston-based collectors and philanthropists Jean and Dominique de Menil. While Robbins described the RISD Museum's dire storage situation to them, likely hoping they would offer to underwrite an expansion, Mrs. de Menil proposed the idea of inviting

FIG. 1 (previous page)
The dining room in
Andy Warhol's home, 1987.



FIG. 2
Left to right: David Bourdon,
Fred Hughes, Dominique de Menil,
and Andy Warhol, RISD Museum
storage area, 1969.

2

an artist to explore storage and curate an exhibition from their discoveries. She had recently met and become infatuated with Andy Warhol and suggested him as the perfect artist to take on this project. Although Warhol had no connection to RISD or Providence, he recognized the value of the de Menils as potential patrons and quickly accepted the invitation. While it would be another twenty-five years before the museum added more gallery and storage space, the exhibition would become a seminal moment in exhibition history and practice.

His celebrity aside, Warhol was an ideal choice for the project. A compulsive collector/hoarder himself, Warhol understood the problems that storage presented. By the time of his death in 1987, his seventeen-room townhouse was overflowing with objects, a collection that would ultimately be dispersed over the course of an eight-day sale at Sotheby's in 1988. Warhol's collecting taste ran the gamut from vintage cookie jars to museum-worthy nineteenth-century American furniture and Art Deco silver and jewelry. A chance to rummage through the RISD



3

Museum's vast and eccentric collection would be akin to the near daily excursions he made to Manhattan's antique shops and flea markets in search of forgotten and overlooked treasures.

According to writer David Bourdon, who accompanied Warhol on his initial visit to Providence to plan for the exhibition, the artist arrived "bedraggled," with a small entourage and, as usual, his Polaroid camera in tow. Despite Warhol's personal obsession with collecting and the astounding quantity of objects he encountered in the museum's store-rooms, he was largely a silent and impassive curator. While Robbins and the museum curators attempted to impress Warhol with the rare and important, the artist remained visibly and frustratingly unimpressed. But we can glean some insight into his tour of the "Black Hole of Calcutta," as Danny Robbins referred to storage, from the dozens of photographs he took.

For Andy Warhol, photography was the alpha and omega. The autographed publicity stills of Hollywood stars he collected as a child offered a glamorous escape from Depression-era Pittsburgh. Later, as an emerging commercial artist in New York in the 1950s, the photo

FIG. 3

Installation photograph of paintings, sculptures, and Native North American blankets, *Raid the Icebox 1 with Andy Warhol*, RISD Museum, 1970.

FIG. 4

Installation photograph of cabinets containing shoes, with hatboxes on top of the cabinets, *Raid the Icebox 1 with Andy Warhol*, RISD Museum, 1970.



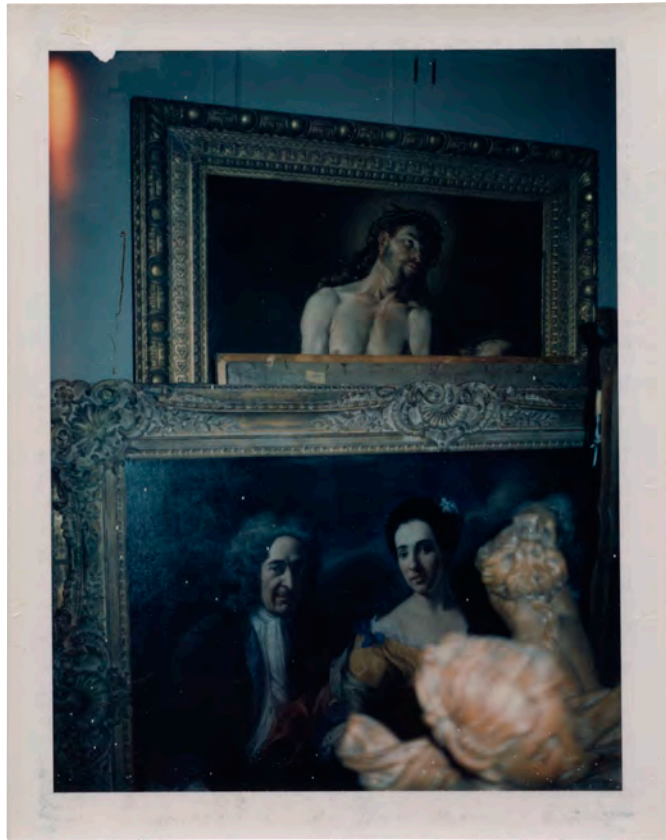
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archives of the New York Public Library provided a wealth of source images for his work. Indeed, photographs—his own and those appropriated from others—served as the foundation of most of his artwork, up to and including the haunting self-portraits he made shortly before his death.

A few of Warhol's photographs of RISD Museum storage are now part of RISD Museum storage. They came to the museum as a gift from Malcolm Greer, who designed the exhibition catalogue. These fading, out-of-focus color Polaroids are the only tangible record of Warhol's fleeting visits to Providence, as well as a rare look at what he encountered here. While museum galleries and exhibitions are heavily and carefully documented, storage rarely is.

Andy Warhol's *Raid the Icebox* exhibition and the many similar projects that it spawned in museums throughout the world over the past fifty years allow us to reconsider what storage is and might be. How do we recuperate the lost narratives residing in storage? How do we write new histories? How do objects that have become disassociated from their original contexts acquire fresh lives? How does storage evolve from a problem to be solved to an opportunity for discovery?





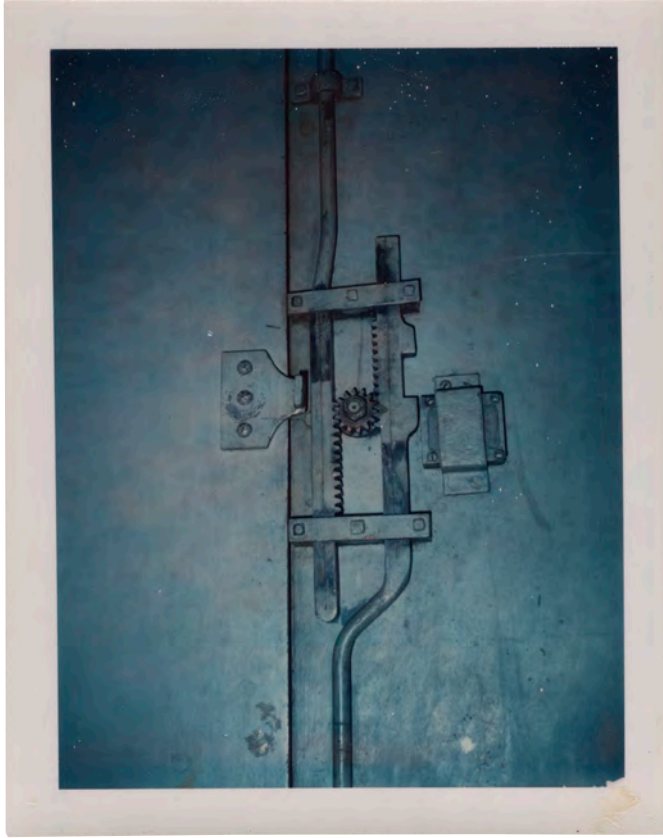






FIG. 5

Andy Warhol
American, 1928–1987
Untitled (Sculpture storage with *Portrait of Agrippina the Younger*), 1969
Dye-diffusion print (Polaroid Polacolor)
9.5 × 7.3 cm. (3¹³/₁₆ × 2⁷/₁₆ in.)
Gift of J. Malcolm and Clarice S. Grear
2002.120.10
© 2019 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

FIG. 6

Andy Warhol
American, 1928–1987
Untitled (Painting storage with *Christ at the Column* Matthias Stomer painting and *Neapolitan Actors* painting attributed to Pier Leone Ghezzi), 1969
Dye-diffusion print (Polaroid Polacolor)
9.5 × 7.3 cm. (3¹³/₁₆ × 2⁷/₁₆ in.)
Gift of J. Malcolm and Clarice S. Grear
2002.120.11
© 2019 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

FIG. 7

Andy Warhol
American, 1928–1987
Untitled (Metal door lock to storage), 1969
Dye-diffusion print (Polaroid Polacolor)
9.5 × 7.3 cm. (3¹³/₁₆ × 2⁷/₁₆ in.)
Gift of J. Malcolm and Clarice S. Grear
2002.120.16
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FIG. 8

Andy Warhol
American, 1928–1987
Untitled (Framed French wallpaper, photographed at angle), 1969
Dye-diffusion print (Polaroid Polacolor)
9.5 × 7.3 cm. (3¹³/₁₆ × 2⁷/₁₆ in.)
Gift of J. Malcolm and Clarice S. Grear
2002.120.8
© 2019 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

FIG. 9

Andy Warhol
American, 1928–1987
Untitled (Three shelves of shoes), 1969
Dye-diffusion print (Polaroid Polacolor)
9.5 × 7.3 cm. (3¹³/₁₆ × 2⁷/₁₆ in.)
Gift of J. Malcolm and Clarice S. Grear
2002.120.2
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FIG.1
Édouard Manet
French, 1832–1883
Children in the Tuileries Gardens,
ca. 1861–1862
Oil on canvas
37.8 × 46 cm. (14 7/8 × 18 1/8 in.)
Museum Appropriation Fund 42.190

Figuring Modernity in Manet's *Children in the Tuileries Gardens*

Denise Murrell

In late 1862, Édouard Manet (1832–1883) noted in his studio carnet that a model he described as “Laure, très belle négresse” (“Laure, very beautiful black woman”) sat for a portrait in his rue Guyot studio in northern Paris. This portrait was the second of Manet’s three known paintings posed by Laure, all made within a twelve-month period. During the previous summer, Manet had depicted a nursemaid figure with Laure’s deep-brown skin tones, but with indeterminate facial features, in a Parisian park scene [Fig. 1]. The portrait that resulted from this second sitting [Fig. 2] was completely different. If the nursemaid had been rendered as a “type,” one of several stock figures in a genre scene, Laure was now the subject of a carefully observed painting, in which the previously blank visage is rendered with the detail of a portrait in demeanor and attire. She is now the sole focal point of the viewer.

Manet's presentation of Laure as a subject in her own right introduces us to her as a specific individual who compels the same sustained attention from the viewer that she received from the artist. Within months, Laure would return to the studio, to pose the maid figure to a prostitute in Manet's groundbreaking *Olympia* [Fig. 3]. The Laure of *Olympia* assumes such a markedly different stance from that of her portrait, one characterized by formal and thematic ambiguity, that this final pose situates the earlier portrait not as a mere study for *Olympia* but as a stand-alone work.

Manet's three representations of Laure can collectively be seen as an important manifestation of his defining artistic commitment—to paint what he saw in the daily life of modern Paris, in a radically modern style and in defiance of the romanticized classicism and exoticism that defined the academically sanctioned art of his day. Manet's images of Laure reflect a social, political, and economic modernity that was emerging in Paris in the 1860s, figuring it with formal pictorial values—a broad, loose brushstroke and flattened pictorial effect—that were antithetical to the illusionistic mimicry prevalent since the Renaissance. Laure also figures modernity through a simultaneous citation of, and evolution beyond, the stock figure of the exotic black serving woman, long featured in academic painting as existing irreducibly outside modernity. Manet, to the contrary, placed her squarely amid scenes of modern life in the Paris of his time.

Moreover, as Manet depicts her, Laure figures modernity with an ambiguity, a contingency, that captures the fraught interracial interface of the era, yet in a manner strikingly apart from the derisive stereotypes and caricatures with which the period's popular media more typically depicted black Parisians. And finally, Laure figures modernity as part of Manet's effort to assert the artistic merit of marginalized subjects, individuals whose ethnicity, class, regional origins, or occupation place them firmly outside bourgeois European society, at a time when only portraits of elite or historical subjects were sanctioned by academy convention.

Central to an expanded understanding of Manet's *Laure* is the multi-racial context of modern life in the newly rebuilt neighborhoods of northern Paris, where Manet lived much of his adult life. Manet was an artist firmly committed to painting the realities of everyday life that defined 1860s Paris. His three images of Laure capture a small black presence in Paris that took deeper root in the aftermath of the French abolition of territorial slavery in 1848. Nowhere was this free black presence in central Paris more manifest than in

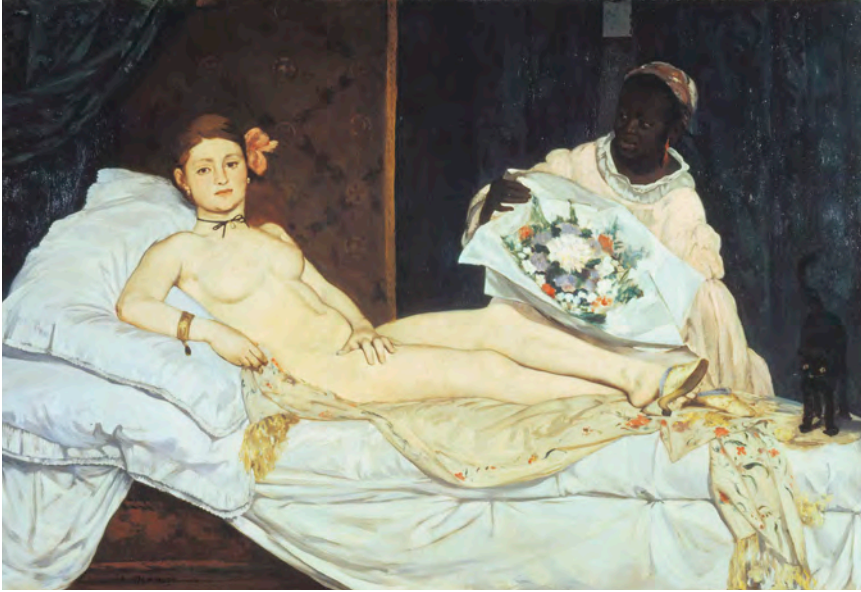
FIG. 2
Édouard Manet
French, 1832–1883
La négresse (Portrait of Laure), 1863
Oil on canvas
61 × 50 cm. (24 × 19 11/16 in.)
Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella
Agnelli, Turin
© Gilles Mermet / Art Resource, NY



the city's northerly ninth and seventeenth arrondissements, which were simultaneously home to Manet and the Impressionists. Manet's notebook revealed that Laure herself lived at 11 rue Vintimille, just below the Place de Clichy, less than a ten-minute walk from Manet's studio; this note is corroborated in 1860s rental records. Several notable Parisians of color resided nearby, including Alexandre Dumas père, who lived on Avenue Frochot, a private street just blocks away from the rue de Vintimille. This presence—while not measured by the French census, which does not record race—suggests that these northern areas have traditionally hosted some of the largest black populations in central Paris, a fact that persisted over successive generations and is manifest today, especially to the east and in the *banlieues* (suburbs) that have become home to more recent arrivals, including those from West Africa.

Manet also lived and worked in this area, along with his artist and writer friends Monet, Renoir, Bazille, Baudelaire, and Zola, especially in and around the Nouvelle Athènes quartier of the ninth arrondissement, and the Batignolles neighborhood in the adjacent seventeenth. The artists maintained studios along streets emanating from the Place de Clichy, and many of their paintings are set in specific locations throughout the area. They gathered in the cafés and cabarets lining Haussmann's new boulevard from the Place de Clichy east to the Place Pigalle. They walked south along newly built residential streets, through the Tuileries Gardens to the Louvre. Manet and his circle strolled the area's boulevards and parks on a daily basis. They departed from the Gare St. Lazare for leisurely outings in Argenteuil and other pleasure destinations along the Seine. They attended performances and society events at the Opéra and observed popular entertainments at the circus and cabarets in Places Blanche and Pigalle. The ninth arrondissement was a socially diverse area, where migrant workers, avant-garde artists, the bourgeoisie, and the demimondaines who served and entertained them lived in close proximity and mingled in public spaces.

Children in the Tuileries Gardens (ca. 1861–1862) depicts an everyday scene that Manet could well have observed during his regular strolls through the Tuileries, on his way from his studio to sketching sessions at the Louvre. This view of well-dressed children meandering through the gardens, carefully attended to by their uniformed nannies, is thus an example of Manet's commitment to painting ordinary events from daily life. These excursions may also have been a context for Manet's dawning awareness of Paris's changing black population, as black nannies became increasingly visible. In working with Laure, Manet followed his career-long practice of engaging models who were part of his daily lived



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experience. The evolving specificity of his images of Laure, from blank-faced nanny to portrait and finally as *Olympia's* maid, is perhaps an indication of Manet's gradual awareness of this expanding black presence.

The painting is an early manifestation of the formal strategies and subject matter that became hallmarks of Manet's art; in choosing to portray this scene, Manet embraced a well-established subject of genre painting, while updating it to reflect current realities. Its pictorial methods display the abrupt break with convention that characterizes his work. This becomes clear when *Children* is juxtaposed with Timoléon Marie Lobrichon's 1870 painting *Promenade des enfants* (Promenade of children in the Tuileries Gardens), a painting that typifies the Salon-sanctioned approach to this scene [Fig. 4]. *Promenade* fits within a conventional genre painting style—generalized figures arrayed before perspectival vistas sweeping over manicured gardens into a distant background expanse.

The palette of pleasant pastel pinks, blues, and greens accentuates the artist's depiction of a scene of charming and well-ordered bourgeois leisure—the children are regimented into a paradelike rank, yet display the inevitable unruliness of toddlers at play, even as their immaculately aproned nannies gently assert a semblance of discipline. The sunny skies and brilliant green foliage project

FIG. 3
Édouard Manet
French, 1832–1883
Olympia, 1863
Oil on canvas
130.5 × 190 cm. (51 3/4 × 74 13/16 in.)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris
© RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay) /
Hervé Lewandowski



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optimism, well-being, and security, the latter reinforced by the dignified gray-bearded gentlemen hovering nearby, ready to impose the masculine authority and protection valued by conservative Lobrichon admirers. It is a decorative scene, updated with uncomplicated realism, intended to please without provocation, and to adorn bourgeois interiors as a luxe backdrop for other luxury possessions.

Manet, like Lobrichon, captures the beguiling aspects of coming across a children's outing—the amusing efforts by the nurses to keep the youngsters moving ahead in formation, the charming round straw hats and loose cream-colored play clothes, the affectionate gestures of nannies adjusting the children's caps or shooing them back into line. But Manet mitigates the prettiness by depicting slightly older children, from a back view, in a far less open and sunny setting. The view into background depth is closed off by murky black tree trunks, and the distant view is indistinct, rendered with blanked-out spaces and loosely gestural brushstrokes that create a flattened picture plane. It is an economy of

detail, a pictorial simplification, that sets off a generation of modernizing depictions of such genre scenes. The slightly sinister sense of Manet's figures, who are pushed into the foreground by a garden that seems to close in on them, is underscored by the artist's version of the gray-bearded male presence. While idealized and dignified by Lobrichon, in Manet's work he now may be a vagrant, a

FIG. 4

Timoléon Marie Lobrichon
Promenade des enfants
 (Promenade of Children in
 the Tuileries Gardens), 1870
 Oil on canvas
 Private collection

figure that the children are perhaps being steered away from, rather than a soothing, protective presence. Manet modernizes the genre scene through both his formal pictorial devices and his figural presentation. If Lobrichon paints a scene of sanitized orderly cheer, Manet conveys something perhaps closer to observed reality—a rapidly changing city where displaced loiterers and bourgeois families intermingle at every turn.

Manet's rendering of the right-most nurse, who has the brown skin tones of his model Laure, further advances the picture's modern-world qualities. Where Lobrichon shows the nannies as his bourgeois viewers would perhaps prefer—elegantly uniformed European workers—Manet, even if marginally, injects a dose of the reality that nannies in 1860s Paris were a mix of races, albeit still predominantly European. This image of Laure captures the demographic fact that by the 1860s a Parisian nursemaid could very well be black. Manet tapped into a tradition dating back to the Renaissance: depicting affluent European subjects with black servants, to emphasize that their wealth was extensive enough to import costly exotic help. Yet this presence was often due to the controversial practice of recruiting household workers from the French Caribbean under employment contracts that the era's progressive voices viewed as exploitative.

The brown-faced nanny and foreboding graybeard in *Children* are, therefore, part of Manet's mode of escaping the most saccharine aspects of the genre, by painting everyday life in a way that indexes contemporary anxieties, both formally and in subject matter. *Children* depicted life as it was, not as the conservative upper classes may have wished it to be.

Still, Manet evokes tradition even as he transcends it. He uses the figural devices of genre types and at times echoes aspects of Lobrichon's figurations. Both the nannies and their children are composed as types—their sketched-in faces uniformly indistinct, so as not to distract from the detailing of the attire that defined their social position. These figures are clearly intended to depict an occupation or social position rather than specific individuals, a strategy that recalls Romantic painters' interest in depicting sweeping scenes, even in everyday life. It was Eugène Delacroix who advanced the idea, in paintings such as *Le 28 juillet. La Liberté guidant le peuple* (July 28. Liberty Leading the People; 1830), that a range of Parisian "types" should be depicted in paintings, but with all the metaphoric classicism of history painting rather than the specifics of actual appearance. From the revolutionary and the street urchin to the dandy flâneur, each is defined by costume and context; there are few or no portraits. The focus on costume as a key manifestation



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of socioeconomic status also typifies the popular media genres of fashion plates and the then-recently completed mega-opus *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (The French painted by themselves), for which Balzac was a contributor. From that time we understand that the expensive round straw hats and loose white play clothes of the bourgeois children are essential for understanding the social placement of these figures, as are the high-buttoned, white-collared dress and head scarf of their nursemaids, one of whom is posed here by Laure. The

head scarf is particularly characteristic of typing the black female servant: by showing it piled high on her head, and tied to the side—its red and yellow tones evoking the madras plaid foulards worn in the French Antilles—Manet deftly captures a reality also seen in anonymous photographs of black women holding their charges on their laps [Fig. 5].

Despite the benevolent effect of these images, satirical imagery reveals that the view of black women servants, as seen in mass media, was often denigrating and suspicious, despite the women's value to status-seeking employers. Black nannies and household maids were frequently caricatured and satirized in overt racial terms in popular media, and portrayed as crafty, deceptive, and uneducated. This genre of satire illustrates that prejudice was anything but obscure—it was common enough, and loaded enough with racist connotation that it was a highly effective gag line, instantly understood by all. This instant recognition is underscored when the subject is well known, as when the black writer Alexandre Dumas père is caricatured, with racially exaggerated features, as a nursemaid to the theater [Fig. 6].

It is further seen in at least one instance of derogatory racial commentary about the ostensibly engaging portrayal of a black nanny in Jacques-Eugène Feyen's 1865 painting *Le baiser enfantin* (The childlike kiss; [Fig. 7]). This little-known painting is important for its rare portrayal of one black and one white nanny as social and occupational peers,

as they sit together on a bench and enjoy watching their infant charges at play. By depicting both women as nannies, Feyen presents an aspect of everyday life that was typically overlooked by Salon artists in favor of the omnipresent imagery of white women with black maids.

Le baiser enfantin is moreover a fine representation of naturalistic painting, with the rich colors and textures of the nannies' attire framing the frilly whites of the infants' frocks. There are subtle ethnic differences between the nannies' attire, such as their contrasting Alsatian and French Caribbean headscarves, but both typify well-dressed servants in affluent Parisian households. The black nanny is particularly engaging for the viewer, her face more fully frontal, her downward glance drawing our attention to the antics of the temperamental toddler in her charge as she smiles in amusement. Critical reception for this benevolent gesture, however, belies the racist perceptions, whether intended by the artist or not, that any image of happily smiling servants can call forth; it is described by one admiring Salon critic as "this grin so specific to civilized *bamboulas*."

The critic's choice of this particular term for black women, perceived as extremely derogatory and racist then and now, reveals one reason that *Baiser* was well received by Salon critics in a year when Manet's *Olympia* was disparaged. Even as it captures the authentic charm of the black nanny it retains the racially coded trope of the contentedly smiling or grinning servant, a convention rejected in Manet's more unlovely, and more modern, portrayals of Laure.



6

FIG. 5
Unknown photographer
Femme noire tenant une petite fille sur les genoux
(Black Woman Holding a Little Girl on Her Lap), 1842–1855
Daguerreotype
Image: 7 × 6 cm. (2 ¾ × 2 ⅜ in.)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

FIG. 6
CHAM
Caricature of Alexandre Dumas père as a nanny, n.d.
Lithograph
36.5 × 25 cm. (14 ⅜ × 9 ⅞ in.)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris





FIG. 7

Jacques-Eugène Feyen,
Le baiser enfantin
(The Childlike Kiss), 1865
Oil on canvas
42 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 59 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (107 × 150 cm.)
Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille

Storage

- 1 Adolphe Tabarant, *Manet et ses oeuvres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), 79; see also Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999), 277.
- 2 Ibid. Pollock and Tabarant both suggest this sequencing and timeline for the two paintings.
- 3 For a discussion of the 1848 abolition and its short-lived 1796 precedent, see Pascal Blanchard et al., *La France noire: Trois siècles de présences* (Paris: Découverte, 2011), 23, 31. For an estimated size and a profile of the small late nineteenth-century black French population, see Pap Ndiaye, *La condition noire: Essai sur une minorité française* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2008), 126; see also Blanchard, *France noire*, 41–43.
- 4 Tabarant, *Manet et ses oeuvres*, 79; Pollock, *Differencing the Canon*, 255.
- 5 Pascal Blanchard et al., *La France noire: Trois siècles de présences* (Paris: Découverte, 2011), 42–44.
- 6 For discussions of *Manet's Children in the Tuileries* and other Impressionist-era paintings of nannies and children, see Laura Corey et al., *The Art of the Louvre's Tuileries Garden*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 88; see also Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 91, 111.
- 7 See Oruno D. Lara, *La colonisation aussi est un crime: De la destruction du système esclavagiste à la reconstruction coloniale* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007), 11, 93–94, for an assessment of post-abolition French colonial rule as being so exploitative as to be a crime against humanity comparable to that of slavery itself. For specific denunciations of the recruitment of Antillean women as domestic workers in France as the new slave trade, see Mireille Rosello, "Lettres à une noire de Françoise Ega: La femme de ménage de lettres," in *L'héritage de Caliban*, ed. Maryse Condé (Paris: Jasor, 1992), 178, 180.
- 8 Ségolène Le Men discusses the roots of genre painting in Romantic illustration and the use of durable formulaic types such as the "Creole" and the "Maure" in "Peints par eux-mêmes," in Luce Abélès, Nathalie Preiss-Basset, and Ségolène Le Men, *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes: Panorama social du siècle*, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1995), ix–xl.
- 9 These two photographs reveal a shared French-American affinity for nanny-and-child images; the version with the bareheaded nanny, while titled by the French collection from which it was acquired, is believed by Orsay curators to have been made in the United States, though perhaps by a French photographer or family while traveling in the United States; the baby may also be deceased.
- 10 During my May 22, 2015, visit to Lille, where I viewed *Le baiser enfantin* in storage at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, I noted in the Feyen files that *Le baiser enfantin* entered the Lille museum's collections in 1866, after it was shown at the 1865 Salon in Paris, and then at the Salon in Lille.
- 11 Gonzalez Privat, *Place aux jeunes, causeries critiques sur le salon de 1865* (Paris: F. Cournol, 1865), 97.

Maternity Dresses

Mimi Smith

107
/
120



Mimi Smith
American, b. 1942
Maternity Dress, 1966
Plastic, vinyl, zipper, screws, plastic and metal hanger
114.3 × 36.8 × 17.8 cm. (45 × 14 ½ × 7 in.)
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2007.8

Mimi Smith, MFA thesis, Rutgers University, 1966:

When a woman becomes pregnant, she usually buys a maternity dress, shaped like a tent, that is designed to conceal her. This is a strange illusion, because she usually cannot be concealed. I decided to make a maternity dress that would reveal. It seems like a very interesting idea to me to have a maternity dress through which one could watch the baby grow. . . . The maternity dress is probably the least cruel and most positive piece in the show. I have even attached the plastic dome with nuts and bolts so that it can be removed periodically to let the baby breathe.

109

✓

120



Mimi Smith
American, b. 1942
Mimi Smith wearing *Maternity Dress*, 1966
Courtesy of the artist

Mimi Smith, in conversation, 2019:

In 1965 I got this idea that girls intrinsically knew how to look at clothing just the way I had been taught to look at a work of art. I knew I wanted to say something about my life—and I didn't even know the word feminism yet, but I made some dresses. I didn't intend for them to be worn, however, I tried them on myself and took photos, to make sure that they hang right. I didn't want to make clothing as clothing, per se, but clothing as a visual sculptural object. I was pregnant and I had made clothes before. You want a dress to hang right, whether it's on the body or a hanger or in an art gallery.



Mimi Smith
American, b. 1942
Camouflage Maternity Dress, 2004
Fabrics, plastic dome, screws, metal hanger
119.4 × 55.9 × 22.9 cm. (47 × 22 × 9 in.)
Courtesy of the artist

Mimi Smith, in conversation, 2019:

I did make one other maternity dress, much later. About 2003 I was hearing stories on TV and on the radio about pregnant women in combat and at war. I kept thinking about them being pregnant, and how vulnerable you are when pregnant anyways, and how could you ever hide yourself pregnant in combat? So I used camouflage fabric for the dress and instead of a clear dome, the camouflage maternity dress has a black dome.

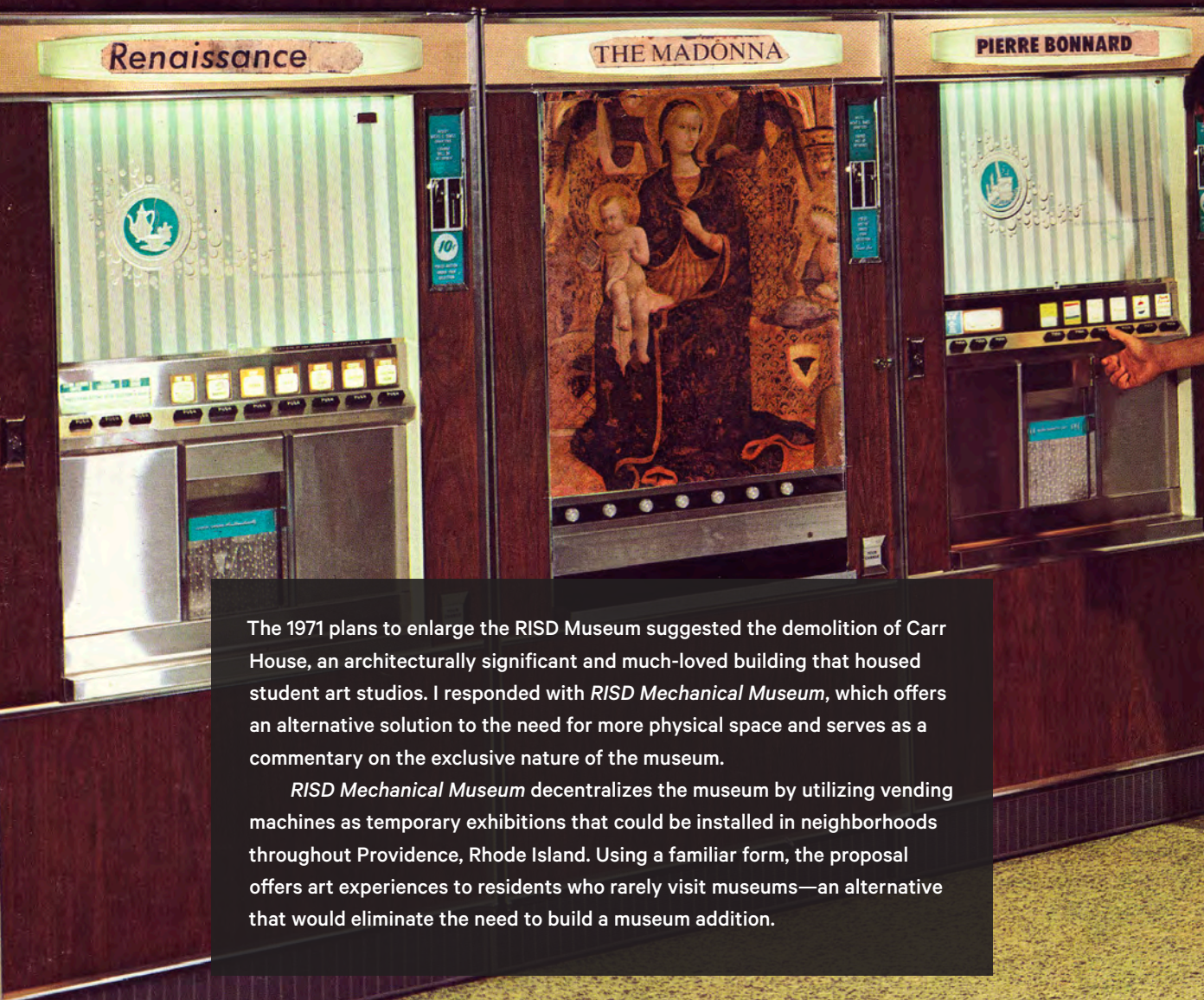
113

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120

How To

RISD Mechanical Museum by Allan Wexler



The 1971 plans to enlarge the RISD Museum suggested the demolition of Carr House, an architecturally significant and much-loved building that housed student art studios. I responded with *RISD Mechanical Museum*, which offers an alternative solution to the need for more physical space and serves as a commentary on the exclusive nature of the museum.

RISD Mechanical Museum decentralizes the museum by utilizing vending machines as temporary exhibitions that could be installed in neighborhoods throughout Providence, Rhode Island. Using a familiar form, the proposal offers art experiences to residents who rarely visit museums—an alternative that would eliminate the need to build a museum addition.



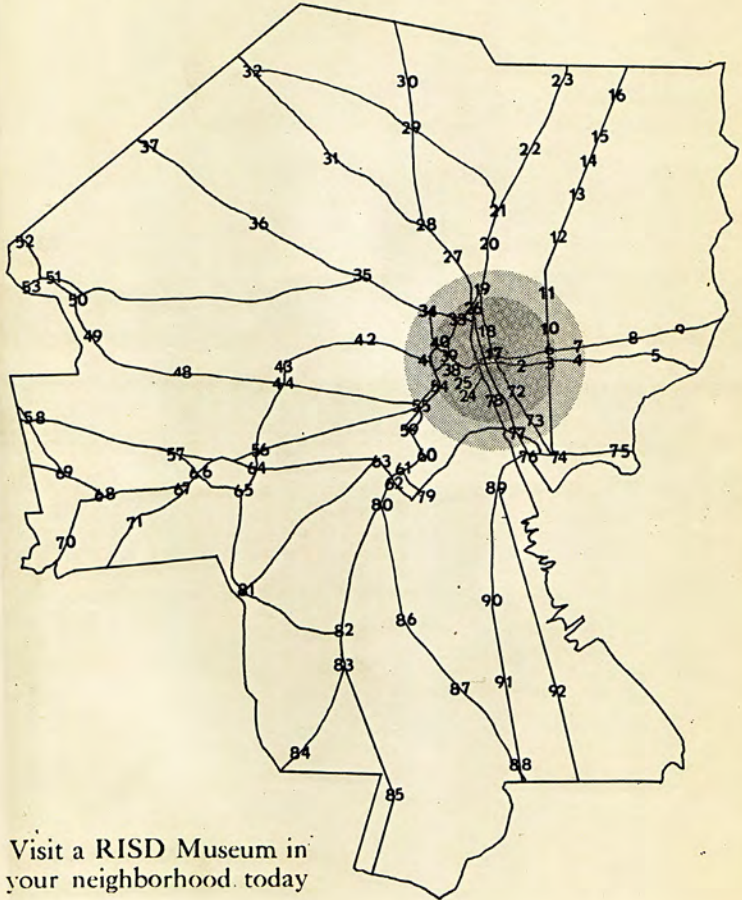
HOW TO VISIT A MECHANICAL MUSEUM

A guide to seeing, feeling, and understanding great art, through masterpieces that can be exhibited in the mechanical venders of the Rhode Island School of Design Museum

Visiting a mechanical museum is not a passive act. It must be approached with spirit, with a sense of involvement—giving as well as taking. Whether it is your first, visit or your hundreth, take along a full measure of enthusiasm. If your heart isn't in it—or your mind on it—wait for another day. A museum is for your enjoyment. You can move from one period of art to another along the exciting streets of Providence, Rhode Island—boulevards through history, where you can see the sights through eyes other than your own. But for all its excursions into the past, the road leads inevitably to today. Allow yourself to see the present as you saw the past, letting the eyes of contemporary artists serve as your looking glass.



RISD Museum Venders are conveniently located throughout the greater Providence area



Visit a RISD Museum in your neighborhood today

R.I.S.D. 830 SERIES (Painting Vender)



standard unit holds up to five paintings - exclusive color reception for a more inspiring experience - standard postcard with each viewing (choice of automatic or manual postcard dispensing)

There is no experience in the world more thrilling than to stand before a great painting - and to learn about it from someone who knows the work intimately. Suddenly everything you see takes on new meaning. You will be delighted with the thrilling visual experience offered in the vender.

R.I.S.D. 830 SERIES (Sculpture Vender)



the visitor merely adds water to his miniature sculpture to attain a size as seen in discriminating museums of the world



stunning styling plus more quality features add up to a better cultural experience

R.I.S.D. 830 SERIES (Artist at Work)



See a fascinating live art show. Watch Frank Stella create instant art. He will paint a beautiful picture in less than 10 minutes in front of your eyes.

HAVE FUN ENJOY AN
ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE

Mr. Stella will do a minimum of 4 or more different subjects, framed immediately. He will also show 25-50 paintings. Also laminated plaques of his famous paintings, postcard reproductions, and artists biography available to all.

R.I.S.D. 830 SERIES (Learn to Paint)



holds up to 9 lessons and up to 9 selections of artist's supplies used by famous artists the world over optional unit also accommodates temperas and acrylics print-out resembles a notebook in both size and shape

119
/
120

Leon L. Tadic, a professional artist is directing and illustrating the lessons that will appear in the vender. Tadic is a former assistant to Arthur Lidov, a renowned medical illustrator and creator of the Life Magazine body series.

Portfolio

(1)

Austrian
Bag, 1937
Silk petit-point needlework, silver gilt frame with enamel inset and marquise and half pearls, metal chain handle
13.3 × 21 cm. (5⁵/₁₆ × 8⁵/₁₆ in.)
Gift of Mrs. Harvey Baker 67104.1

(2)

Katsukawa Shunshō
Japanese, 1725–1792
Nakamura Nakazo I as “the luminary and leading Rokujurokubu pilgrim in Japan” (*Nakamura Nakazo: Nihon ichi Rokujuroku bu kokin mejjin*), 1780.11
Polychrome woodblock print
31.1 × 14.8 cm. (12¹/₄ × 5¹³/₁₆ in.)
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.1102

(3)

John Warren Udvardy (RISD faculty 1973–2008, Foundation Studies)
American, b. 1936
Lunar Bouquet (The Offering), 1994
Brass (alloy), wood, horn, and gourd
126.4 × 81.3 × 90.2 cm. (49¹⁷/₁₆ × 32 × 35¹/₂ in.)
Gift of the artist in memory of Danny Robbins 1996.47
© John Udvardy

(4)

Fernand Léger
French, 1881–1955
Flowers, 1926
Oil on canvas
92.2 × 65.4 cm. (36¹⁵/₁₆ × 25³/₄ in.)
Anonymous gift 81.097
© 2019 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

(5)

American
Thimble and Thimble Case, late 1800s
Carved coquilla nut
2.9 × 2.2 cm. (1¹/₄ × 7¹/₈ in.)
Gift of Miss Jack 1993.110

(6)

Wasco, Native North American
(Columbia River, Oregon)
Sally Bag, 1800s
Native hemp, tule, rush, grass; Z-ply elements, full-turn or external weft-wrapped (false-embroidery) twining
Height: 18.4 cm. (7¹/₄ in.)
Anonymous gift 1997.24.21

(7)

Wendy Olson
Chair Against Window, San Francisco, 1978
From *Society Portfolio, Rhode Island School of Design*
Color chromogenic print
35.6 × 27.9 cm. (14 × 11 in.)
Mary B. Jackson Fund 79.026.18
© Wendy Olson

(8)

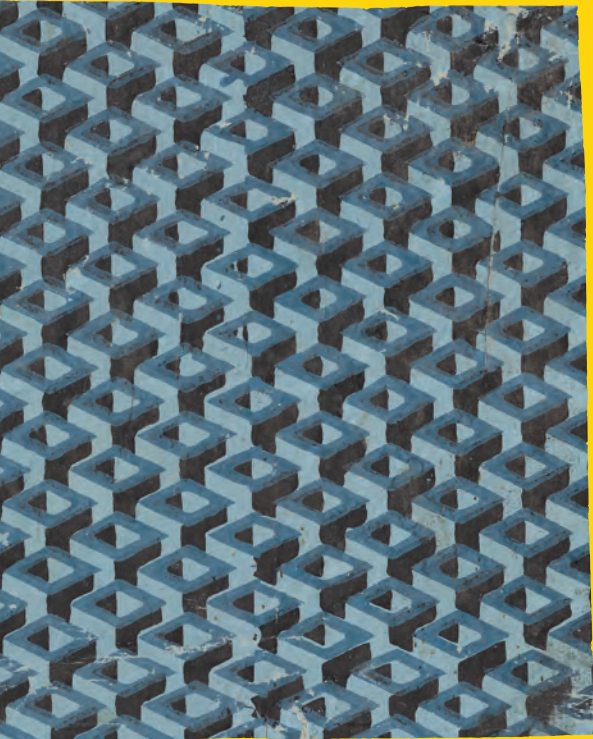
Nemesio Antúnez
Chilean, 1918–1993
New York, N.Y. 10007, 1968
Oil on canvas
76.2 × 86.4 cm. (30 × 34 in.)
Bequest of Richard Brown Baker 2009.92.4
© 2019 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / CREAMAGEN, Santiago

(9)

Stefano della Bella
Italian, 1610–1664
An Oval Fan Containing an Italian Rebus on the Subject of Love, 1600s
Etching
29.2 × 20.8 cm. (11¹/₂ × 8³/₁₆ in.)
Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 1989.055.1

(10)

Ray Johnson
American, 1927–1995
Untitled (Peter Beard), 1974–1992
Acrylic, collage, ink, and ink wash on illustration board
40.3 × 40.3 cm. (15⁷/₈ × 15⁷/₈ in.)
Anonymous gift 2012.123
© 2019 Ray Johnson Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/Doug



(clockwise from top)

Siebren Versteeg
 American, b. 1971
Boom (Fresher Acconci), 2007
 Internet-connected computer-program output
 to 20-inch CRT monitor
 61.9 x 44.5 x 50.8 cm. (24 3/8 x 17 1/2 x 20 in.)
 Mary B. Jackson Fund 2007.79
 © Siebren Versteeg

American
 Locket (open), 1800s
 Gold with enamel, pearls, hair, photograph, and
 glass
 Width: 2.2 cm. (7/8 in.)
 Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 31.387

American
 "To Mom, With Love," ca. 1940s–1960s
 Gelatin silver print
 10.7 x 6.5 cm. (4 3/16 x 2 9/16 in.)
 Gift of Peter J. Cohen in honor of Luke Cohen,
 RISD BFA 1971, BArch 1972, Architecture
 2018.61.57

Jacquemart et Bénard, manufacturer
 French, 1791–1840
 Fabric Design, 1794–1797
 Woodblock printed
 Length: 29.2 cm. (11 1/2 in.)
 Mary B. Jackson Fund 34.1113



RISD MUSEUM

Manual

Fall/Winter 2019

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US \$12

