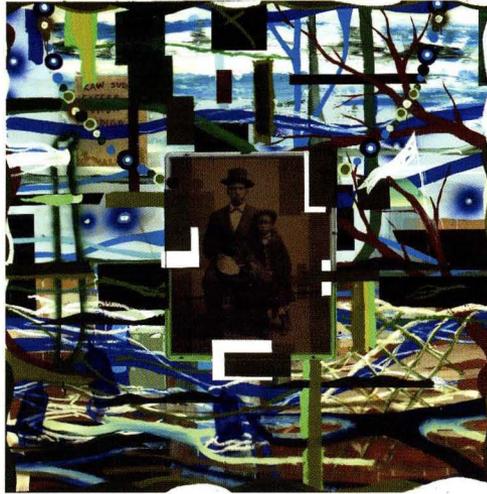




TAKING AIM

Selections from the Elliot L. Perry Collection

2007 september 7 through October 11
clough-hanson gallery, rhodes college, memphis, tn

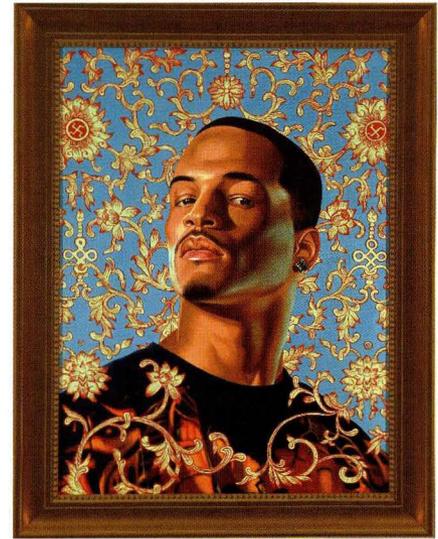


Taking Stock of Young Artists who are Taking Aim: Elliot Perry's Expanding Collection of Contemporary Art

Isolde Brielmaier, PhD

What rounds out a collection of contemporary art and holds it together in all its variation? One answer can be found in a viewing of Elliot Perry's newly formed collection of work by some of today's most influential young contemporary

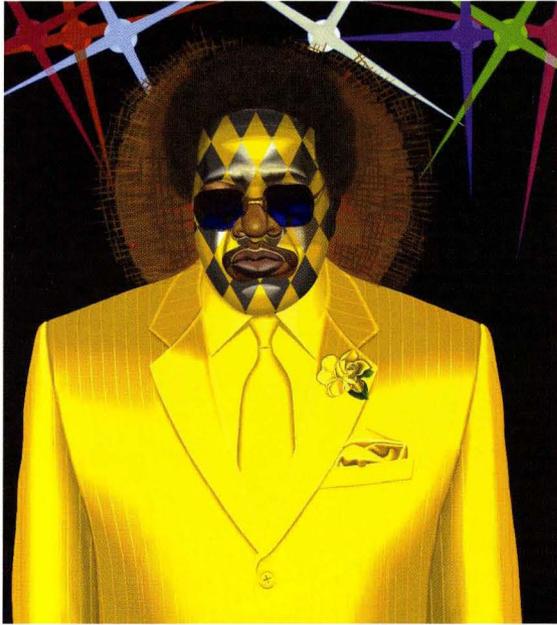
artists. That all of the artists in Perry's collection are of African descent is certainly a shared connection. However, for Elliot Perry, the glue that harmoniously bonds all of the work together is the relationship that he sees between the bold art of these young artists and the more subtle but equally powerful approaches of many of their predecessors. According to Perry, established artists such as Norman Lewis, Elizabeth Catlett, and Jacob Lawrence, all of whom maintain a prominent place in his broad art



collection, broke through rigid social, aesthetic and conceptual barriers during their time. Today, the young artists whose artwork Perry began to collect three years ago continue to tackle cultural and visual issues though Perry believes that, with greater freedom and flexibility, they are *taking aim* at today's key aesthetic and socio-political ideas in a more overt manner. In so doing, Perry's roster of artists who include Wangechi Mutu, Glenn Ligon, Kara Walker and Kehinde Wiley, provide continuity to a

rich history of art and practices by artists of color. They have built upon the foundation laid by their predecessors, establishing themselves as prominent cultural producers who creatively engage the critical ideas and artistic innovations of the present.

A former NBA player, Elliot Perry began collecting art in 1996, with the encouragement of then fellow player Darrel Walker. He focused first on learning about and acquiring work by the established "Old Masters" of African-American art.



a work by Kenyan artist Wangechi Mutu who looks to today's fashion, magazine and advertising industries combined with a range of materials—paint, sequins, glitter, beads, fur—to manipulate and eventually comprise the figurative forms of her collage works on mylar. Mutu's other-worldly female figures maintain a dynamic, almost theatrical presence on the surface and are always in motion, jumping, stretching and contorting across the picture plane, engaging in an expressive performance of culture, history and ideas.

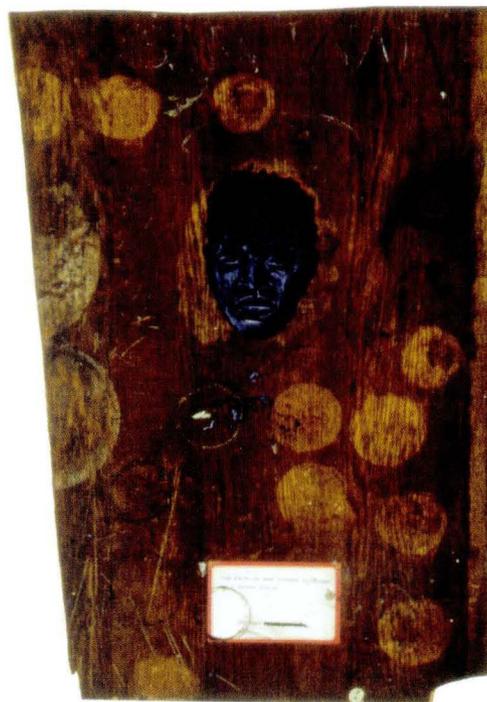


Also featured in the exhibition, is *Ball and Chain*, a photograph by Hank Willis Thomas that blurs the lines between art and graphic and examines both historical and current connections between race, the economy and black bodies, as well as *Sweet Surrender*, a work by Mickalene Thomas, that probes the medium of painting as well as ideas about women, beauty and power.

When Elliot Perry is asked how he would characterize his collection he is often intentionally

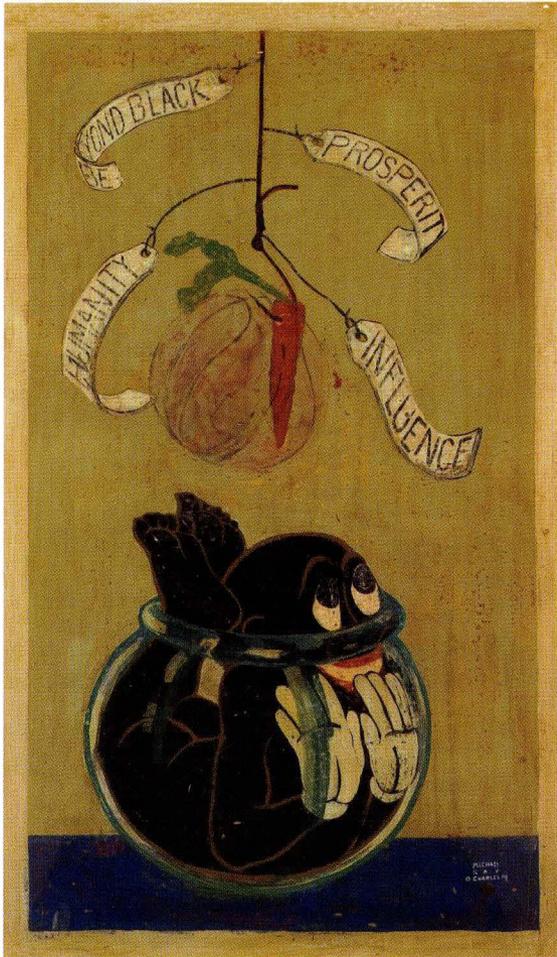


a bit evasive. He acknowledges his clear interest in figurative work, but above all he notes that his collection is about a process of learning and continual expansion. He expects that his eye and taste will evolve over time. He intends to explore new art forms like video in the future. Perhaps most importantly, Perry reiterates his interest in challenging himself and others in how they think about history, culture and art. And in *Taking Aim*, he underscores his dedication to this exploration—by



providing a visible and solid platform for today's young artists, so that audiences can experience the present here and now through the eyes of some of the most powerful and creative cultural players of today.

Isolde Brielmaier is an independent project consultant, curator and writer as well as Visiting Assistant Professor of Art at Vassar College and Guest Professor at Barnard College/ Columbia University. She holds a Ph.D. in Art History from Columbia University and is based in New York City.



1. Wangechi Mutu, *Buck Nose*, 36" x 26.5", Ink, collage, contact paper on Mylar, 2007, image courtesy the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co. NYC
2. Radcliff Bailey, *Untitled*, 60" x 60", Mixed media on wood panel, 1998
3. Glenn Ligon, *Untitled (Negro Sunshine)*, 5" x 48", Neon, 2006, image courtesy the artist and Bill Hodges Gallery, NYC
4. Renee Cox, *American Beaute*, 84" x 65", C-print, 2001
5. Xaviera Simmons, *High Season Brown*, 30" x 40", C-print, 2004
6. Kara Walker, *Good Counsel*, 31" x 21", Cut paper on Paper, 2003
7. Kehinde Wiley, *Joseph Barrell (Hanna Fitch)*, 37" x 28.5", Oil on canvas, 2006,
8. Leslie Hewitt, *Riffs on Realtime* (2 of 10), 30" x 25", C-print, 2002-2005
9. Wardell Milan, *Tropicks*, 30" x 40", Cibachome print, 2005, Image courtesy the artist and Samson Projects, Boston, MA.
10. Demetrius Oliver, *Till*, 29" x 38", C-print, 2004, image courtesy the artist and inman gallery, Houston, TX.
11. Hank Willis Thomas, *Basketball and Chain*, 61" x 41", Lightjet print, 2007, image courtesy the artist and Charles Guice Contemporary, Berkeley, CA.
12. Robert Pruitt, *Sandinista*, 77" x 60", Conte on butcher paper, 2005, image courtesy the artist and Clementine Gallery, NYC
13. Jeff Sonhouse, *Toussaint*, 36" x 32", Mixed media on wood, 2007
14. Mickalene Thomas, *Sweet Surrender*, 36" x 48", Acrylic, enamel and rhinestones on wood, 2005
15. Chakaia Booker, *Untitled*, 24" x 24" x 18", Rubber tires, wood, and metal, circa 2000 (not included in exhibition)
16. Kerry James Marshall, *The Face of Nat Turner Appeared in a Water Stain*, 25" x 35", Mixed media on wood, 1990 (not included in exhibition)
17. Michael Ray Charles, *Untitled*, 59" x 35", Acrylic latex, stain and Copper Penny on Paper, 2004

All images courtesy the artist unless otherwise noted.



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