MOMENTS OF IMPACT

November 30, 2016–May 28, 2017
Mills College Art Museum, Back Gallery

This catalogue is published on the occasion of *Moments of Impact*, an exhibition organized by members of the Fall 2016 Mills College Museum Studies class: Marilyn Claes, Lily Drabkin-Hoover, Sarah Pearce Hart, Zana Ito, Elizabeth Martin, and Lena Toney.

The exhibition was presented at the Mills College Art Museum, November 30, 2016 through May 28, 2017.

The Mills College Art Museum is a forum for exploring art and ideas and a laboratory for contemporary art practices. As a teaching museum at a dynamic liberal arts college for undergraduate women and co-ed graduate studies, the museum is dedicated to engaging and inspiring the intellectual and creative life of Mills students through innovative exhibitions, programs, and collections.

COVER: Pirkle Jones, *Grape Picker, Berryessa Valley, California,* 1956, Gelatin silver print, MCAM Collection

MOMENTS OF IMPACT

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. Stephanie Hanor

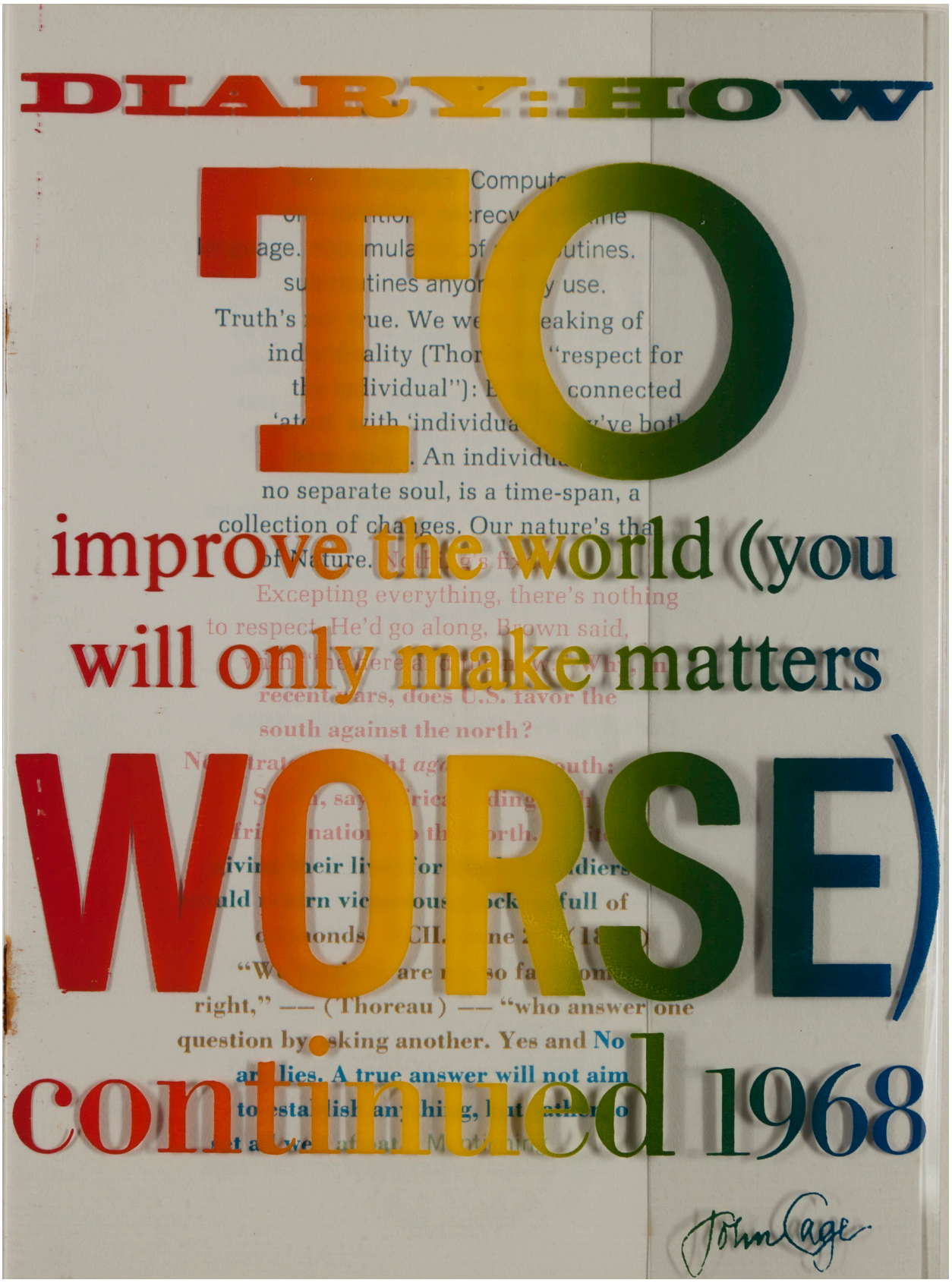
Featuring works from the Mills College Art Museum's collection, *Moments of Impact* examines ideas around environmental and social justice. The exhibition includes both contemporary and historical works in a wide range of media and explores the ability of objects and artists to evoke questions around cultural appropriation, inequality, and agency.

The exhibition examines moments of cultural impact from the environmental and cultural domination of Indigenous people and their lands to the continued struggle for civil rights in the United States. Some of the featured artists, such as Carrie Mae Weems, Yolanda Lopez, and Rashid Johnson, blur the lines bewteen activism and art by making politically charged work that is directly engaged in the issues of our time. Other works by photographers Robert Heinecken and Iain Baxter can be seen as more abstract reflections on the erasure of identity.

Environmental and social extinction is explicitly addressed in Clayton David Pinkerton's anti-nuclear war poster while the works of Kathryn Spence, Stephanie Syjuco, and Pae White illuminate the tenuous juncture between humans and nature. Whether overtly activist or not, art can play a pwerful role in helping us understand issues such as the extinction of species, water rights, e-waste, and the histories of land usage. *Moments of Impact* demonstrates the myriad ways art can help build awareness—the first critical step in changing our collective story from one that exploits and destroys to one that coexists, nurtures, and values.

The exhibition showcases the museum's unique holdings, including Native American objects and works by Iain Baxter, The Bruce High Quality Foundation, John Cage, William Alexander Coulter, Julian Greenwell, Robert Heinecken, Rashid Johnson, Pirkle Jones, Yolanda Lopez, Eleanor Milder, Roi Partridge, Clayton David Pinkerton, Faith Ringgold, Kathryn Spence, Stephanie Syjuco, Carrie Mae Weems, and Pae White.

Moments of Impact is curated by Marilyn Claes, Lily Drabkin-Hoover, Sarah Pearce Hart, Zana Ito, Elizabeth Martin, and Lena Toney. Their research and writing are featured in this catalogue and bring new interpretations to the significant group of works they have selected for this exhibition.


DIARY: HOW
TO
improve the world (you
will only make matters
WORSE)
continued 1968
John Cage

INTERPRETING OUR IMPACT: JOHN CAGE IN WRITING

Marilyn Claes

Why include the work of a man largely known for being a composer in an art show about social justice issues? It is with a biting tongue, in *Diary: How to Improve the World (You Will Only Make Matters Worse), Continued 1968,* that John Cage seemingly mocks anyone working toward a greater good.

This small, beautifully printed book—stuffed neatly inside a clear plastic cover sleeve—contains stream of consciousness style writing in multiple fonts and colors. Reading, indeed, like a diary of Cagian sentence fragments and phrases, the text is punctuated by roman numerals, arbitrarily starting at 91. Throughout its pages, Cage name-drops architects, designers, theologians, ethnologists, other composers, artists, and poets. The most recurring of these is the designer and father of the geodesic dome, Buckminster Fuller.

Shortly before he died, Cage wrote an autobiographical artist statement in 1990 that now lives on his official website. In this statement—a kind of greatest hits of his life's work—Cage tells an elucidating story about this particular piece:

> In the sixties the publication of both my music and my writings began. Whatever I do in the society is made available for use. An experience I had in Hawaii turned my attention to the work of Buckminster Fuller and the work of Marshall McLuhan. Above the tunnel that connects the southern part of Oahu with the northern there are crenellations at the top of the mountain range as on a medieval castle. When I asked about them, I was told they had been used for self protection while shooting poisoned arrows on the enemy below. Now both sides share the same utilities. Little more than a hundred years ago the island was a battlefield divided by a mountain range. Fuller's world map shows that we live on a single island. Global Village (McLuhan), Spaceship Earth (Fuller).

John Cage, *Diary: How to Improve the World (You Will Only Make Matters Worse), continued 1968*, [from SMS #4 Portfolio], 1968, Ink and silkscreen on Mylar and heavy paper stock, MCAM Collection

> Make an equation between human needs and world resources (Fuller). I began my *Diary: How to Improve the World: You Will Only Make Matters Worse.* Mother said, "How dare you!"[1]

Dairy, then, can be seen as an astute attempt by Cage to respond to these thinkers'—Fuller and McLuhan (who crafted the assertion, "the medium is the message" and foresaw the advent of the internet in the 1960s)—ideas about how we interact with the world and what impact our choices might have on the future. Within his musical compositions, Cage embraced the element of chance to dictate the parameters, and the "notes" played (or not played) in his works. Much like in his compositional work, Cage devised a system of chance in order to dictate the content and structure of *Dairies* (which is part of a series of booklets with this title.)[2] Referring to the passages as mosaics, he describes this process:

> For each day, I determined by chance operations how many parts of the mosaic I would write and how many words there would be in each. . . I used an IBM Selectric typewriter to print my text. I used twelve different typefaces, letting chance operations determine which face would be used for which statement. So, too, the left marginations [sic] were determined, the right marginations being the result of not hyphenating words and at the same time keeping the number of characters per line forty-three or less.[3]

This technique renders the writing in *Diaries* into snippets that are then much up to the reader to interpret. Though in places his own views can clearly be observed, Cage writes, "Power and profit structures're [*sic*] out of cahoots with current technology. Aware of new inventions, corporations put them aside, waiting for competitive reasons until they're obliged to use new gimmicks."

Cage had a penchant for invention and would often craft his own instruments, such as the prepared piano. Through the insertion of screws, nails and other objects into their already existing framework, he would render the piano nearly unfunctional in a traditional sense. This augmentation of the possible sounds a piano could produce allowed for a greater platform of chance from which Cage would then write his pieces. Again, from his autobiographical statement, "My work became an exploration of non intention. To carry it out faithfully I have developed a complicated composing means using *I Ching* chance operations, making my responsi-

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1 "John Cage: An Autobiographical Statement," accessed October 26, 2016, http://johncage.org/autobiographical_statement.html.
2 Richard Kostelanetz, *John Cage (ex)plain(ed)* (New York: Schirmer Trade Books, 1996), 88.
3 Ibid.

bility that of asking questions instead of making choices."[4] The question then raised by the title of this piece—how will I only make matters worse—serves as a provocation, and becomes a task passed on to the viewer to reckon with.

Cage himself was a product of the times, existing within the framework of the 20th century. His lifespan covered all of the trauma experienced by the modern world—two World Wars, the conflict in Vietnam, the Cold War, etc. He witnessed the harm and suffering humans are capable of inflicting on one another; most likely bearing a palpable weight on his artistic inclination to utilize chance as a means of production. Born in 1912 as the son of an inventor, his early life in California included a penchant for piousness and intelligence, serving as valedictorian at his high school.[5] Cage initially expressed an interest in pursuing a religious career.[6] Possessing and finding a comfort in his Christian faith, and later, an interest in Zen Buddhism likely led Cage to discover the appeal of the reliance on chance in his creative endeavors.

To Cage, having a preordained vision of an improved future without engaging with the chance inherent in all actions could only result in the unwanted, unhelpful side effects he eludes to in the piece's title—that through deliberate actions enacted by corruptible beings, the resulting consequences will bear the fruit of that corruption. Cage's text in *Dairies* serves as a warning to at the very least consider the implications of one's conduct before acting, and that perhaps, as counterintuitive as it may seem, sometimes inaction best serves the whole. Excerpts from *Diaries* like, "Protest actions fan the flames of a dying fire. Protest helps to keep the government going," and "They taught us art was self-expression. (You had to have "something to say." They were wrong: you don't have to say anything,)" best reflect Cage's title's appeal for inaction.

The particular edition of *Diaries* in the Mills College Art Museum's collection was part of an intentional compilation of materials from artists of the 20th century, called the SMS Portfolios. An experimental production intended to allow for unencumbered communication between artists and the public, the American Surrealist William Copley ended up fashioning six volumes in editions of 2000 each.[7] Other participants in the project included Man Ray, Yoko Ono, Christo, and Roy Lichtenstein.[8] Copley's acronym title cheekily stood for Shit Must Stop.[9] These collections of multiples, as they are referred to, serve as time-capsules of sorts to the heady late 1960s, and Cage's contribution fits right in with the ideas of the most radical, anti-establishment thinkers of the time. To be on the receiving end of such a collection must have been an incredible experience—like a care

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4 "John Cage: An Autobiographical Statement."
5 Kenneth Silverman, *Begin Again: A Biography of John Cage* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 5-6.
6 Ibid.
7 Davidson Galleries | Seattle Washington, "SMS: A Collection of Multiples | Davidson Galleries | Antique Modern Contemporary Works On Paper," accessed November 3, 2016, https://www.davidsongalleries.com/sections/modern/sms-portfolios/.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.

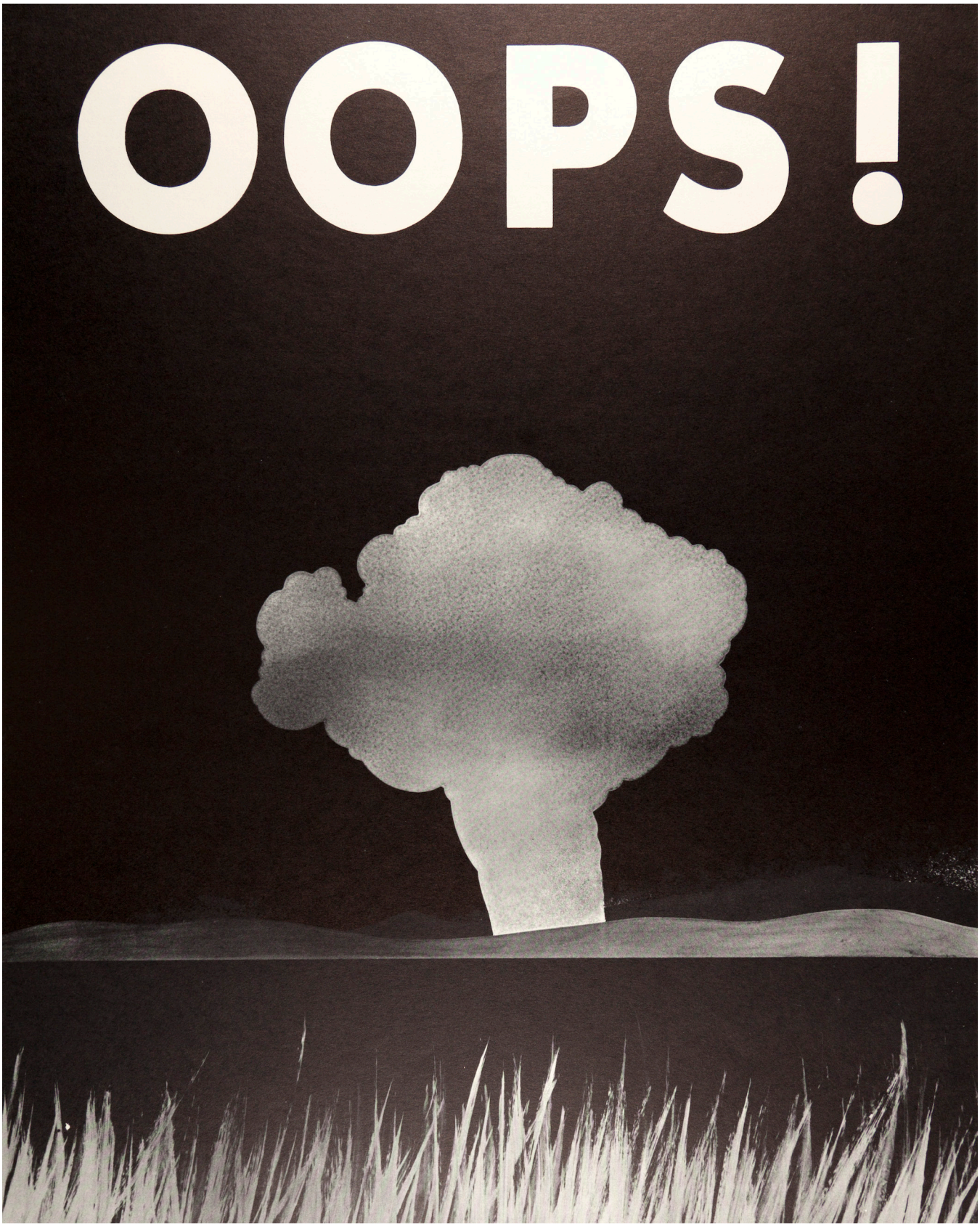
package from artists.

Besides possessing a piece of his work, Mills College has a deeper connection to Cage. He had an early interest in percussion, which he refers to as "the art of noise,"[10] that led him to the world of dance, Merce Cunningham, accompanying dance groups, and briefly, to a stint working at Mills College. While serving as a music faculty member over the summer period in 1940, Cage held a percussion concert on July 18th in which his wife and friends played the ensemble of ever-growing instruments at Lisser Hall, gaining him national attention in the process.

John Cage's *Diaries* interprets the world as not only a place of questions, but a place to question—what are the ramifications of human behavior? The impact our choices have on the world might not be readily visible or accessible, but it remains quite telling in the issues Cage focuses on within *Diaries* that have either become more significant in our time or have yet to improve. He warns against the use of fossil fuels, and instead advocates for wind and solar energy when those ideas would have been very futuristic—how far have we really come toward a more sustainable relationship with our world? Ultimately, Cage's piece, in its rainbow, utopian display undermines the darkness in his implied within the title.

John Cage with choreographer Marian Van Tuyl at Mills College, Courtesy Special Collections, F. W. Olin Library, Mills College

10 Silverman, *Begin Again: A Biography of John Cage*, 26.


OOPS!

OBSCURED OOPS: THE BLUNDERS OF HUMANITY HIDDEN IN ART

Lily Drabkin-Hoover

The exhibition *Moments of Impact* is physically grouped around the war poster *Oops*, part of the Group Commentary series. This poster, created in 1968, depicts a mushroom cloud ascending into the sky, above a deserted landscape. This dramatic scene is made ironic by the text on the image, "OOPS!" The juxtaposition of the very intentional and serious scene with severe consequences, and the word generally said after a minor mistake, creates a disturbing mirror of human apathy. Much of this exhibition was inspired by this image, and the colonialism and genocide that it alludes to.

A nuclear explosion, as depicted in this image, would have serious consequences for the location it was detonated in, and for humans and the natural world alike. "OOPS!", to say the least. This exhibition is likewise grouped into two rough categories, human oppression and environmental damage. *Oops* is a humorous, and yet deeply disturbing piece, due to its casual reference to catastrophic war crimes and environmental impact.

Obscured Figure #1 can be interpreted in a very similar way to *Oops.* The evaporation and disappearance of the figure echoes the hint of the action being done in *Oops.* As we know from historical atrocities, nuclear bombs can demolish, vaporize, and erase everything they hit. This includes objects, humans, and animals. The fading figure seen in the photograph is a somber reminder of the outlines and shadows left by the traces of *Hibakusha*, Hiroshima victims. This word translates roughly to, "explosion–affected people." Some of the people who died at Hiroshima left traces as they were incinerated by heat rays, and *Obscured Figure #1*, reminds the viewer of them, especially when paired with *Oops*.[1]

Both of these pieces speak about cultural genocide—*Oops* shows an act of war, the literal wiping out of a location. *Obscured Figure #1* shows what happens next, the fading and disappearance of everything and everyone affected. When combined, these two pieces tell a graphic story of the actions that those in power do to the less fortunate, and the results they have. They also show how little the people in power care about the impact of their actions.

Clayton David Pinkerton, *Oops!* (from Group Commentary series), 1968, Lithograph on paper, MCAM Collection

1 Antonio Martínez Ron, *Hiroshima, The Pictures They Didn't Want Us to See,* February 5, 2007, http://www.fogonazos.es/2007/02/hiroshima-pictures-they-didnt-want-us_05.html.

Obscured Figure #1, created by Robert Heinecken in 1965, depicts a figure turned to the side, but the lighting is manipulated so that the eye can discern only a fragmented sliver of silhouette. Otherwise, this body's form has disappeared completely, hiding any distinguishing characteristics such as age or race. As this woman's race is ambiguous, the image's meaning is up to interpretation. More than just a beautiful image, this piece has deep political power. We cannot see this presumably female figure—we cannot see her age, race, or even gender. This alludes to the marginalization and dehumanization of the oppressed, as we can see no identifying characteristics of the figure.

Heinecken worked in California in the late 20th century. He liked to experiment with art and push the boundaries between high culture and popular culture. He described himself as a "Para-photographer" because he tried to go beyond the traditional boundaries of this medium.[2] Indeed, Heinecken was not just a photographer, he worked in a variety of mediums. For his photos, he would collage or assemblage found imagery, and use a lens to capture and distort his images. These photos explore the American ideals of sex, body, and gender.

Obscured Figure #1 was created chronologically in-between two of his well-known series. He began producing works in "Are You Rea" in 1966, one year after he made *Obscured Figure #1*.[3] This series was com-

2 Andy Grundberg, "Robert Heinecken, Artist who Juxtaposed Photographs, is Dead at 74," May 22, 2006, *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/22/arts/heinecken.html?_r=0.

3 James Enyeart, ed., *Heinecken* (The Friends of Photography, Inc. 1980), 139.

TOP: Yosuke Yamahata, *Traces left by Hibakusha, at Hiroshima,* 1945

RIGHT: Robert Heinecken, *Obscured Figure #1,* 1965, Gelatin silver print, MCAM Collection

posed of his collaged and photographed images. He did not use photography to document what he saw, but he thought that photographing collage was a good way of expressing cultural iconography, and did this to express the sexualization of women and the commercialism that he saw in everyday life. The works in the "Are You Rea" series look very different than *Obscured Figure #1*, yet thematically are similar to the aforementioned, in that the subject is sexuality and the body.

In 1964, one year before *Obscured Figure #1* was created, Heinecken produced "Cliché Vary," a series of collaged and photographed naked women in sexual poses.[4] It was likely meant as a comment on consumerism and the body.[5] These two series, and much of his work in the 1960s, showed the female body in a sexual—almost aggressively sexual—way. *Obscured Figure #1* depicts a possibly nude woman, but it is not a sexual image. The pose is standing, and the woman's face and body are both hidden. The only thing erotic about this image is its mystery.

Heinecken used imagery for his collages found from a variety of sources—occasionally Heinecken repurposed imagery from pornographic magazines.[6] This speaks to women's autonomy, because men have been taking ownership over women's bodies for centuries, and it is only recently that women have reclaimed them. As *Obscured Figure #1* shows a silhouette of a female form, it is possible that this image was repurposed from porn.

Taking a found image of a person and reproducing it into fine art for personal gain raises the question of possession, or ownership. It has been a problem in our society that colonists claim whatever they want for their own, such as the land or women of a native people. Taking a pornographic image of a naked woman and appropriating it for a new purpose without the woman's consent is another tricky subject, especially when the artist is a white man. In one sense, if the photo was public it was fair game. On another hand, exploitation of people sexually is another controversial topic, as sex (or implied sex) for commerce is rife with opportunities for wrong doing and abuse, and has direct ties to the fetishization and exoticism that people of color experience. *Obscured Figure #1* is interesting because it has so many possible interpretations. The inability to see the figure hints to human oppression, and the marginalization or dehumanization of the oppressed.

From simply looking at *Obscured Figure #1*, the viewer would not know that the artist did anything unusual in terms of technique. However, Heinecken's unusual process was important to the work. He used this process in order to rebuke the conventional photography of the day, and once stated, "Many pictures turn out to be limp translations of the known world instead of vital objects which create an intrinsic world of their own. There is a vast difference between taking a picture and making a photo-

4 Ibid.
5 Curatorial statement, *Robert Heinecken: Object Matter,* Hammer Museum, https://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2014/robert-heinecken-object-matter/.
6 Enyeart, *Heinecken*, 115.

graph."[7]

Clayton Pinkerton, the artist who created *Oops*, was also based in California in the late 20th century. His art was centered around death, family, and political art about social consciousness. As we can see in *Oops*, Pinkerton used titles to enhance and perhaps explain his work.[8] Around the time when *Oops* was created, his work was mainly satirical, but some more intense topics were featured as well.

These two works were made in the 1960s, and yet both are relevant today. Mankind is erasing and ignoring thousands of species and many cultures. When whole cultures or species are wiped from the planet, everyone who is left suffers. This is an example of colonialism, apathy, and ego-ism.

These two works both show the action of colonialism: human oppression, sexualization, genocide. All that these pieces reference is happening now—as it was in the 1960s, when these were created. This show as a whole focuses on these themes, and on other themes relating to capitalism and oppression. Sadly, this is not a historical and archaic exhibition viewed through a modern amused nostalgic eye, as these pieces are current and foreboding in today's world.

7 Grundberg, *Juxtaposed Photographs*.
8 Farhat Cultural Center, "Clayton Pinkerton (1931-1993)," January 13, 2016, https://farhatculturalcenter.wordpress.com/2016/01/13/clayton-pinkerton-1931-1993/.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1a
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4a
b

TECHNOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENTS AND STEPHANIE SYJUCO'S *COMPARATIVE MORPHOLOGIES 3*

Sarah Pearce Hart

While the environment tends to be referenced when discussing ecological issues, this exhibition uses a broader definition of environment that includes ecological issues but also defines the environment as a space for interpersonal interaction and individual experience. The pieces that have been selected from the Mills College Art Museum's permanent collection take a variety of forms, and were created in a variety of sociocultural contexts. This variety highlights the many ways in which people have impacted the environment, from early European colonialists to the modern-day consumer. In addition to considering how people impact the environment, many of the pieces in the exhibition look beyond the initial moment of impact, and investigate how these influences continue to affect the lives of others. *Comparative Morphologies 3* is a print created in 2001 by Bay Area artist and educator Stephanie Syjuco as part of her *Comparative Morphologies* series. The print embodies many of these concepts, connecting a scientific art form loaded with colonialist history to issues of consumption, waste, and labor.

At first glance, Syjuco's piece appears to be a biological illustration drawn by a 19th century naturalist aboard a maritime voyage, the kind of drawing one might see in a natural history museum or in a leather-bound book at an antique store. Children learn that these maritime voyages were opportunities for explorers to see the world and learn about the faraway places that they read about in storybooks. It is true that some of these missions were survey voyages that embarked with the aim of observing and recording different parts of the world (Charles Darwin was on a survey voyage when he documented the comparative morphologies of various finches in the Galapagos Islands), however the information that was gathered on these voyages was often passed on and used by Naval expeditions to establish colonies and reap benefits of the land that they established control over. The historical connection between biological illustrations and the history of colonialism adds a veil of gloom to the otherwise nostalgic and almost whimsical art form.

Upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that Syjuco's piece is not a chart of plant specimens, but an arrangement of electronic components. By mimicking the style of naturalist biological illustrations and arranging the various cords, wires, adaptors and plugs in ways that resemble the

Stephanie Syjuco, *Comparative Morphologies, 3,* 2001, Iris print on watercolor paper, MCAM Collection

branches of plants, Syjuco draws attention to the way that technology has been integrated into our lives to the extent that it really is second nature to many of us. In a 2002 feature with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Syjuco stated that the ideas for her *Comparative Morphologies* series came to her while working at the Exploratorium, an interactive children's science museum in San Francisco. It was there that Syjuco began to think about science and technology "as sources of authority."[1] Children growing up today will know no other world but one filled with and controlled by technology. Science, which used to be something that was pondered, figured out, or contemplated, has become the ultimate truth, something that people believe without further inquiry simply because science is science. It is these technological "sources of authority" that Syjuco depicts in her piece as a reminder of how personal relationships with the natural world have been tremendously reconstructed since the integration of technology into everyday life.

Syjuco was born in the Philippines and grew up in San Francisco. Her identity as a Bay Area artist is relevant when discussing this piece since the Bay Area has made a name for itself as the technology center of the United States. Today's San Francisco skyline is in a state of constant change, with cranes working to construct new buildings that will house new tech companies. These companies work to release new products that are innovative, but also offer something that similar products cannot. The planned obsolescence of technology helps ensure that the consumer will always be willing to replace something that they already have with a new model. Syjuco's piece begs the question of what happens to all the obsolete technology when it is no longer the latest and greatest. To answer Syjuco: Usually it ends up disposed of in the trash. By viewing mass-produced computer parts in the form of a natural history study, one is forced to wonder how our habits will affect the future of the planet. The piece urges one to consider what we as a culture of consumers are leaving behind for future generations to excavate and rediscover. The cables in *Comparative Morphologies 3* might look like natural branching plants, but one quickly realizes that these pieces do not break down the way that plant matter does, and biologists looking through soil in centuries to come will find remnants of our discarded gadgets. Syjuco's piece calls attention to the way that people are filling our earth with technological waste to a point where its composition is being completely altered.

When faced with issues of waste and the environment, it is important to recognize the people that are dealing with the waste; the individuals who make the products as well as the individuals who dispose of them. Both groups suffer the repercussions of being exposed to dangerous pollutants and unsafe or unfair workplaces. It is easy to forget that there are other people involved in the process of upgrading a smartphone aside from the sales associate ringing up the transaction. The phone is so perfectly designed and constructed that it looks like something that arrived in

Stephanie Syjuco, *Labor Relations (After Stickley, After Morris),* 2008, Upcycled shipping boxes and moving blankets built to exact specificiations

1 Kenneth Baker, "Young Artists on the Verge," *SFGate*, August 25, 2002. Accessed October 27, 2016, sfgate.com.


DODGE
UP

a time machine. While products might be designed to look like they are made by robots from the future, a further reminder that it is time for consumers to upgrade, the products such as those depicted in *Comparative Morphologies 3* pass through many hands before and after the item is in use. The contrast between the plastic adaptors and the living organisms whose shapes they mimic is further strengthened when considering the origins of the two. Plants can be self sufficient with the presence of enough sun, water, and nutrients, but technological goods require the efforts of many individuals before they are used by the consumer.

Labor is a theme that runs through Syjuco's work. In 2008 she created *Labor Relations (After Stickley, After Morris)* a series of recreations of classic Arts and Crafts furniture designs made out of shipping blankets and produce boxes, what Syjuco defines as "leftovers from today's globalized labor."[2] By taking the form of these iconic chairs, the artist recalls a time when items were investments that were made to last, as opposed to today's throwaway culture. Today's model of consumption values cheap, trendy products over well-made investment pieces. The Arts and Crafts movement was one that resisted the mass production brought on by the Industrial Revolution. The movement valued "honesty in materials, beauty that was an outgrowth of practical needs, unity between architecture and the allied arts, and a harmonious order in the environment."[3] These qualities are a stark contrast to those that define our model of production and consumption today. Contemporary times demonstrate that our economy serves the best interest of corporations, which is more powerful than the best interest of people or the planet. Syjuco's piece juxtaposes the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement with the reality of globalized capitalism in order to remind viewers of the decisions they make as consumers and the impact that those decisions have on people all over the world. This same theme underlies *Comparative Morphologies 3*, as the piece suggests technology is promoting wasteful habits that will have lasting affects on the world around us.

Yet *Comparative Morphologies 3* is not anti-technology, after all Syjuco was working at a museum that strives to teach children about science and technology when she created the piece. It does, however, reveal the negative side of technological progress by encouraging the viewer to reevaluate and consider why they have so quickly welcomed technology into every moment of their lives and the effects that this has on our environment. In exchange for the many benefits that technology has provided, we have given it our free time and our resources. Our values as a capitalist society tend to favor personal desires over the well being of people and the planet. Syjuco's piece is a snapshot of a dystopian future, like a page from the textbooks of future schoolchildren that will show how their habits have impacted the world in which they now live.

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2 Stephanie Syjuco, "Stephanie Syjuco: Labor Relations," *Stephanie Syjuco: Labor Relations,* accessed October 27, 2016, stephaniesyjuco.com.

3 Richard W. Longstreth, "At the Turn of the Century: The New San Francisco," *On the Edge of the World: Four Architects in San Francisco at the Turn of the Century (*New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1983), n.p.

William Alexander Coulter, *The Raising of the American Flag and Taking Possession of California by Commodore John Drake Sloat, U.S. Navy—at Monterey, July 7, 1846,* Photo-engraving on paper, MCAM Collection

THE LANDS ARE THE PEOPLE, THE PEOPLE ARE THE LANDS

Zana Ito

While *Moments of Impact* may seem like a display of two issues, environmental and social justice, it is more accurately a showcase of the way they are interrelated. Environmental and human exploitation cannot be separated; they are two sides of the same coin, flipped by the hand of colonialism. With the colonization of land follows the displacement of the indigenous; with the utilization of resources comes the exploitation of laborers; with the capitalization of location comes the fetishization of culture. William Alexander Coulter's *The Raising of the American Flag and Taking Possession of California by Commodore John Drake Sloat, U.S. Navy—at Monterey, July 7, 1846* and Carrie Mae Weems' *Commemorating Every Black Man Who Lives to See Twenty-One* effectively demonstrate both sides of narrative by representing, respectively, the roots of a colonialist mindset and the product of a society built upon such a troubled, violent history.

The Raising of the American Flag and Taking Possession of California by Commodore John Drake Sloat, U.S. Navy—at Monterey, July 7, 1846 is a photo-engraving that was made in the 20th century, by an Irish-American named William Alexander Coulter (b.1846), who left Northern Ireland at age 13 and settled in the San Francisco Bay Area after seven years at sea as an apprentice seaman.[1] The scene depicts the historical moment of Commodore John Drake Sloat's arrival in California and his claiming of the state for the United States government.

The "possession" of California was key in continuing Western expansion and was a grab at the prosperous land and Pacific port accessibility. Industrialization and colonization of the land forced the upheaval of Native people. Through the establishment of Spanish missions, the deculturalization and forced assimilation by the U.S., and the murder of hundreds of thousands of people, California has a grim history we must never forget. Pre-contact California was home to a Native American population of about 300,000, with over 70 distinct groups.[2] It was one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse regions of North America. But how has the state invested its resources in preserving the ancient memory

1 "Artist Biography: WIlliam Coulter, 1849-1936," *Edan Milton Hughes: Specializing in the Art of Early California since 1960,* accessed October 25, 2016, edanhughes.com.
2 K. Starr, *California: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2005), 13.

Carrie Mae Weems, C*ommemorating Every Black Man Who Lives to See Twenty-One*, 1992, Glaze and gold paint on Lenox porcelain plate, MCAM Collection

of indigenous communities?

Natural beauty is one of the biggest draws for people, internationally, to visit California. The sub-tropical climate of the southern beaches with perfect surf, mountain ranges and lakes fantastic for outdoor sports, and impressive redwood forests and beautiful deserts—there's no need to wonder why the state is such a popular vacation destination. And while the preservation of this beautiful terrain is an extremely important effort for the Earth and all of its inhabitants, it is also important for the capital California reaps through tourism. While economically and environmentally significant plots of land have been preserved through our National Parks system, indigenous cultures of this country have not been afforded the same privilege.

The history of Black/African Americans in this country has its roots in the forced slave trade by the colonialist white Americans. With the expansion of America, resting on the foundation of genocide and displacement of Native Americans, people were taken from their homes and forced into the slave trade—forced into entering a power dynamic that still prevails after the abolishment of legal slavery. This abolishment, while a progressive step, was seen as a threat to said power hierarchy and white supremacy. In response to this threat, a racist, degrading rhetoric was formed and solidified, a pattern that started with the demonization of Native American men and continued to be applied to each group whose oppression was seen as necessary in order to uphold the supremacy. In this case, a free Black man is dangerous, is aggressive. He is a sexual predator; the victims of which are white women—their innocence must be protected, and through them the white race is protected. A free Black man is seen as a threat, a direct resistance to the power structure that this nation was built upon. This stigma is still prevalent today. The United States has seen this description used against Native American, Black/African American, Asian, Latino, and Muslim and Middle Eastern men throughout history in order to create hysteria and a justification for the oppression of these communities.

Because of this, Carrie Mae Weems' *Commemorating Every Black Man Who Lives to See Twenty-One*, created in 1992, remains relevant 25 years later. Black/African Americans make up about 1 million of the roughly 2.3 million people incarcerated in present day America. Black/African Americans and Latinos together constituted about 58% of prisoners in 2008, despite making up only about one quarter of the total American population. Black/African Americans are incarcerated at 6 times the rate of their white counterparts.[3] The police killed 306 Black Americans in 2015.[4] With another resurgence in media focus on the targeting of Black men, typically young adults, by law enforcement, Weems' work reflects the way violence is seen as the only solution to a perceived problem

3 @NAACP, "NAACP | Criminal Justice Fact Sheet," accessed October 26, 2016, naacp.org.

4 Jon Swaine, et al, and Guardian U.S. Interactive Team, "The Counted: People Killed by Police in the United States—Interactive," *The Guardian,* accessed October 26, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com.

within our society. We live in a society where dominance is seen as the best solution to any circumstance, be it the claiming of lives or the land.

The connection between the attitude towards land and people has always been prevalent in the U.S. from the appearance of colonists. The obsession with material wealth through land ownership is the cultural feature that has, throughout history, driven colonialism. The same culture labeled Native American peoples as "uncivilized" and "lazy," effectively dehumanizing them and spurring racial elitism within white Europeans, because they did not share the behavior of aggressive, territorial possession and cultivation of the land and the accumulation of wealth that the whites held in high regard. This mindset is one that not only defined the use of land, but also the way colonists worked to marginalize oppressed people.

The urbanization and industrialization of California was effectively built on the exploitation of labor. The use of Asian (primarily Chinese) laborers was crucial to settlement and the connection of California to the rest of the United States. Chinese immigrants came to the West Coast and formed communities, looking for better opportunity and work. However, the subsequent history of Asian immigration is a clear example of the response to a threat to colonialist supremacy: First, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, barring Chinese immigration, then the Immigration Act of 1917, barring all persons from Asia Pacific from entering the United States. During World War II, resentment towards Japanese farmers and their economic success built the climate in which Executive Order 9066 was passed, which called for the internment of all persons of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast. These examples of continuous oppression of the economic and communal well being of people of color illustrate the perpetual onslaught of colonialist tyranny.

William Alexander Coulter's *The Raising of the American Flag and Taking Possession of California by Commodore John Drake Sloat, U.S. Navy —at Monterey, July 7, 1846* is a representation of a pivotal moment in the U.S.'s colonial history, and it's place in the exhibition continues the dialogue of the interdependence of environmental and social issues. Carrie Mae Weem's *Commemorating Every Black Man Who Lives to See Twenty-One* brings to the light how the influence of capitalism has permeated the lives of people, persisting to our modern life. *Moments of Impact* is a visual map of environmental and social justice issues, with specific commentary in each area: cultural genocide and erasure of indigenous cultures, the water crisis and global climate change, exploitation of labor, the continuous industrialization of our world, and the targeting and marginalization of people within a racial power structure are all an amalgamation and cannot be separated.

Carleton E. Watkins, *Bridal Veil Falls, Yosemite*, ca. 1880, Albumen print, MCAM Collection

WATKINS & WHITE: PATRONAGE WITHIN THE CALIFORNIA LANDSCAPE

Elizabeth Martin

Patronage of artworks created using the California landscape has evolved throughout time. The term patronage implicates both the artist and the commissioner, and represents a relationship between the two in the creation of a work of art. Mills College Art Museum's permanent collection contains two particular objects which begin to illuminate the shifting intent and meaning of funded artistic practices. In 1865, Carleton Watkins began his photographic survey of Yosemite National Park.[1] The project was funded by the California State Geological Survey, and produced works that would come to be considered art objects. Mills College Art Museum holds one of these albumen prints, *Bridal Veil Falls, Yosemite* (circa 1880). Divided vertically, the work features both the fast and the slow. Trees surround the left half of the work, while the rock formations characteristic of the area spray water on the right side of the image. To again consider the intent of the piece, a photographic survey taken from a sharp eye and stunning visual mode, introduces another binary—the fine art object and the artifact. The fine art object connotes value, prestige and institutional rigor. Falsely, the artifact connotes the earthen, the practical and the ritual.

Though the distinction has dissipated some in recent decades, the institutions of the art world—museums and commercial galleries—still lend credence to the art *object*. To further analyze collections— private and public, personal and institutional—as understood in art today, the *multiple* must also be brought into consideration. The multiple is a limited edition work commissioned for the purpose of sale, often times the product of an exhibition. The number of editions created can illuminate the intent of the artist and their institutional collaborator, such as a larger number of editions that would theoretically reach a wider audience. *Moments of Impact* features one such work, Pae White's *Five Nesting Bowls* (2009). The bowls were created from hand-harvested materials pressed into bedrock mortars in rock formations along the Yuba River. Matte black and fragrant charcoal in smell, the bowls were not the first human creation within the cut-outs. Originally, the Maidu tribe of Northern California used the indentations as grinding stones for acorns and seeds. Each bowl reflects the past on the exterior, a perfect mold of the grinding

1 "Brief Biography of Carleton Watkins," 2003, carletonwatkins.org.

stone, while the interior is refined and smooth. Again, the viewer encounters the artist and their intervention in the Californian landscape.

Watkins' photograph and Pae White's raku-fired bowls provide their respective modern and contemporary lenses to patronage and multiplicity in art. White's work was acquired through an exhibition that originated at San Francisco's now-closed New Langton Arts. The alternative arts space was not-for-profit, and it began its operations from government-funded National Endowment for the Arts grants. While White's work was created within the context of the art world, it shares a commonality of directed authorship with Watkins' piece: both were funded pieces. White's piece was created in the last year of operation at New Langton Arts, which moved from government funding to more alternative funding approaches. The closure of the space draws attention to the tenuous viability of alternative arts spaces, and differentiates White's piece from Watkins' in respect to the state of the funding institution.

In the 19th century, photography was seldom recognized as an artistic practice. The aid of a machine and the automatic function of image-making rendered the medium beyond the scope of what was considered art at that time. Furthermore, Watkins' photograph is an albumen print, the first type of photographic print that could be widely distributed due to its use of the film negative from which positive copies were then generated. The multiple also echoes the automatic, as White's commission provides more than one copy that will permeate the art market. With this lack of uniqueness comes an ambiguity for collections. Mills College Art Museum, a collecting institution, has worked to dispel the ideology of the "original" as the only works of great import for museums. Mills College Art Museum has proportionally large holdings instances of the multiple, especially of the photographic variety. To unstick the untouchable and the precious from understandings of art and its value, the museum has actively subverted the now-fraught distinction of the multiple and the unique, along with the art object and the artifact.

Although neither work provides a reality of the landscape, both mediate the histories of the land through the human perspective at a particular moment. Present within both works, too, is the colonization of California. The photographic "discovery" of Yosemite was created by Watkins. *Bridal Veil Falls, Yosemite* invokes the colonial lens among the land that was known then and previously to Indigenous peoples. The original intent of the object wanders along the path of those implicitly involved in colonization: How did the photographs shape government movements throughout the land? The artist, privy to the funds of an institution, presents an interesting point for the examination of intervention in the human-rights sense.

Conversely, White's piece was funded by a not-for-profit arts organization. Still, at what vantage point does the artist enter into the realm of appropriation? Art, one could argue, can no longer be viewed as a solely aesthetic enterprise as every work lives and travels through places and time. Through the vision of creation in *Five Nesting Bowls*, what is the artist's impact in the history of those occupying the land of the past? The

Pae White, *Five Black Nesting Bowls,* 2009,
Hand harvested clay embedded with
cattails, Raku-fired using resinous plants,
MCAM Collection

grinding rocks were created by the Maidu, Indigenous peoples of Northern California. At the time of the Gold Rush, the Maidu were displaced from the banks of the Yuba. White transformed the formations into an object of clay and cattails, fired in Kit Kit Dizzy, pine needles and cannabis. Born and raised in California, White looked to the past to shape objects of contemporary art, both invoking the roughness of the grinding stones and the smoothness of skin. Through the effort, perhaps a new art audience was exposed to the practice of the Maidu.

In 2016, California hums with conversations of intent, impact, cultural appropriation, and Indigenous rights. Still today, colonial forces intervene and contaminate Indigenous land and health. In Standing Rock, North Dakota, the Sacred Stone Camp is fighting to stop the construction of a pipeline that would destroy local sacred sites, and would pollute the area's water supply upon rupture. The fight comes from a long line of government interference in the land returned to Indigenous peoples in the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty.[2] This particular injustice threatens to bring to life a prophecy of a black snake that would ravage the Sioux's land and water. Despite strong efforts to protect the land from the Dakota Access Pipeline, the pipeline is still scheduled to arrive in early 2017.

In 2016, White's piece within the exhibition is an effort to direct viewers to the urgency of these conversations of impact, resources, and landscape. Alongside Watkins' piece, *Five Nesting Bowls* provides a particular moment into the rich history of the California landscape, and the artistic interventions it has seen. Within the same country, the works provide separate views into how forces work among various agendas at different moments. Now in the 21st century, the United States can only hope to acknowledge the strength and contributions of Indigenous peoples, something that begins with respect for the cultural and natural resources that have illuminated their path.[3]

2 "Excerpts from Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Resolution No. 406-15," 2015, sacredstonecamp.org.

3 rezpectourwater.com

WATER ACCESS THROUGH OBJECTS

Lena Toney

The Mills College Art Museum exhibit *Moments of Impact* surveys the MCAM permanent collection, including traditional art, historical artifacts, and contemporary art practices viewed through the lens of social justice. The exhibit scrutinizes cultural and global issues such as water and land access, Black lives, Indigenous populations, and women's key roles in addressing these social issues. Water, one of the most important substances on Earth, is pivotal for equality across humanity. Water is necessary for hydration, sanitation, and life. Throughout history, water has been a vital need for people and access to water has determined people's ability to prosper and thrive. Ancient human habitations had to be built next to water sources. A person's access to clean water impacts their ability to live: access to safe drinking water fights against poverty and disease. In current times, access to safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation is considered a human right, yet billions of people across the globe still lack access to safe drinking water everyday. Through art and historical objects we can view how water access impacts people today and remind ourselves of how it has affected people throughout history.

Eleanor Milder's gelatin silver print, *Man Drinking Water From His Hands* taken in 1936, is a visual for the vital role water plays in our world. This photograph was taken during the United States' Great Depression and at this time the 1936 North American Heat Wave struck the continent. The heat wave caused crop failure and severely limited access to water. This devastating event had a huge toll on the people of the United States and resulted in thousands dying. Milder's contemporary was photographer Dorothea Lange, whose famous image *Migrant Mother,* also taken at this time, depicts a mother and her two children struggling during the Great Depression. The heat and limited access to water impacted people across the United States and played a vital role in people's ability to survive. Knowledge of this struggle reached a large public because the Farm Security Administration of the United States government funded photographers to document the people struggling during the Great Depression.

Man Drinking Water From His Hands came to the museum as a purchase directly from the artist in 1939. A letter that accompanied the work thanking the museum's Director, Dr. Alfred Neumeyer, was signed

Eleanor Milder, *Man Drinking Water From His Hands*, 1936, Gelatin silver print, MCAM Collection

Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother,* 1936, Gelatin silver print

with the name Eleanor Milder Kaplan. The museum later purchased two additional works from Milder, one piece showing a deserted factory during the Great Depression, the other a portrait of Darius Milhaud, a Mills music professor and refugee from WWII occupied France.[1]

Another object in the exhibition that reveals societal challenges in relation to water and who has access to water is the Native American Paiute twined water jug. This plant fiber basket was created for storing and carrying water by the Paiute people in the Western United States, Sierra Nevada, and surrounding regions. The Paiute people (also called Piute) spanned more than thirty million acres of present-day California, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona. In 1891 the first Paiute reservation was established. The land was lacking in resources for the Paiute to be self-sustaining. The Paiute became dependent on aid from the U.S. Federal Government and Mormon settlements. In the 1950s the Federal Government changed their policy of aid and began to enforce assimilation. This had a devastating effect on the Paiute people. Nearly half of all tribal members died between 1954 and 1980, primarily because of a lack of basic health resources. This connects to the struggle of lacking resources Milder depicted in her photographs during the Great Depression.[2]

The Paiute twined water jug came to the Mills College Art Museum collection as a gift from Laurette Schorcht in honor of her life partner of nearly 70 years, Doris Dennison, who was a Mills music faculty mem-

1 "Darius Milhaud," *Wikipedia*, accessed October 28, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darius_Milhaud.

2 University of Utah, Utah Division of Indian Affairs, and Utah's Tribes, "History: The Paiutes," *The Paiutes: History*, University of Utah, 2008, accessed October 28, 2016, https://utahindians.org/archives/paiutes/history.html.

Paiute twined water jug, 20th Century,
Plant fiber, MCAM Collection

ber.[3] The Paiute twined water jug is one of many donated by Schorcht in honor of Dennison. It is unknown why Schorcht collected the baskets, if the baskets were used by the Paiute in daily life, or it they were meant for income from tourism.

A current issue that echoes the trials of the Paiute and the history of water rights in the United States is the North Dakota Pipeline, also called the Bakken Oil Pipeline or Dakota Access Pipeline. The proposed North Dakota Pipeline would transport crude oil from North Dakota to Illinois. One of the concerns surrounding the pipeline would be endangerment of safe drinking water for the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and surrounding area. The pipeline would be placed beneath the Missouri River, a prime source of drinking water.

The controversy surrounding the North Dakota Pipeline highlights many issues around how governments manage resources, such as water, and who is given priority for access to those resources. The recent Flint, Michigan water crisis of an entire town's drinking water being contaminated continues to bring attention to water issues in the United States. The Flint water crisis could have easily been prevented if the government agencies responsible for providing water access for the city had either not moved the water source to a low quality origin or properly treated the water to remove the lead that was causing contamination. As a result of government agencies' negligence, long-term consequences on the health of the community, economic resources, and infrastructure for safe water will be a challenge for a long time to come.

According to Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, the pediatrician whistle blower for discovering lead in the Flint's water supply, "If you were to put something in a population to keep them down for generation and generations to come, it would be lead, . . . it is one of the most damning things that you can do to a population. It drops your IQ, it affects your behavior, it's been linked to criminality, and it has multigenerational impacts. There is no safe level of lead in a child."[4]

The water crisis in the United States goes far beyond the incidents occurring in North Dakota and Michigan. Milder's photograph *Man Drinking Water From His Hands* and the Paiute twined water jug are two key works of art in the Mills Museum collection that provoke viewers to ponder the relationship of water in our lives and the power struggles that dictate the availability of water for many people and the long history of power.

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3 Rebecca Fuller, "Doris Adele Dennison," *Summer 2010 Mills College Alumnae Magazine, Mills Quarterly*, June 1, 2010, accessed October 28, 2016, https://issuu.com/millsquarterly/docs/2010summer/23.

4 Sara Ganim and Linh Tran, "How Flint, Michigan's Tap Water Became Toxic," *CNN,* Jan. 13, 2016, accessed October 28, 2016, www.cnn.com/2016/01/11/health/toxic-tap-water-flint-michigan/.

Roi Partridge, *Golf in Hawaii*, 1965, Pen and ink on paper, MCAM Collection

EXTENDED LABELS

THE BRUCE HIGH QUALITY FOUNDATION

Sometimes I Want to Kill the President
[from the Exit Art Print Portfolio, *Expose*], 2008
Hand-painted monoprint, pencil and watercolor on paper
30 in. x 22in.
Gift of Exit Art c/o John Koegel, The Koegel Group LLP, 2012.13.3.b

Exit Art was established in 1982 as a non-profit cultural center focused on establishing representation for artists who challenged social, political, and aesthetic norms through their artwork, and the interaction between art and the audience. The Mills College Art Museum is privileged to have four Exit Art portfolios, two pieces of which are on display in *Moments of Impact.*

Sometimes I Want to Kill the President, 2008, is an aesthetically simple piece. Its plain white background, basic shapes, and primary colors leave room for the penciled text to be the impact of the piece. The work was created during the second term of President George W. Bush's presidency, after the U.S. Patriot Act was passed—a decision that concerned many artists about their artistic freedom.

The blunt statement is complicated by the edits that are indicated, as though it is a thought being edited before spoken. But why is it edited? For clarity or censorship? The edit changes the statement from "we", as in, "I, too [want to kill the president]" to a frank "I" statement, begging the question, what did the figure really want to say?

Zana Ito

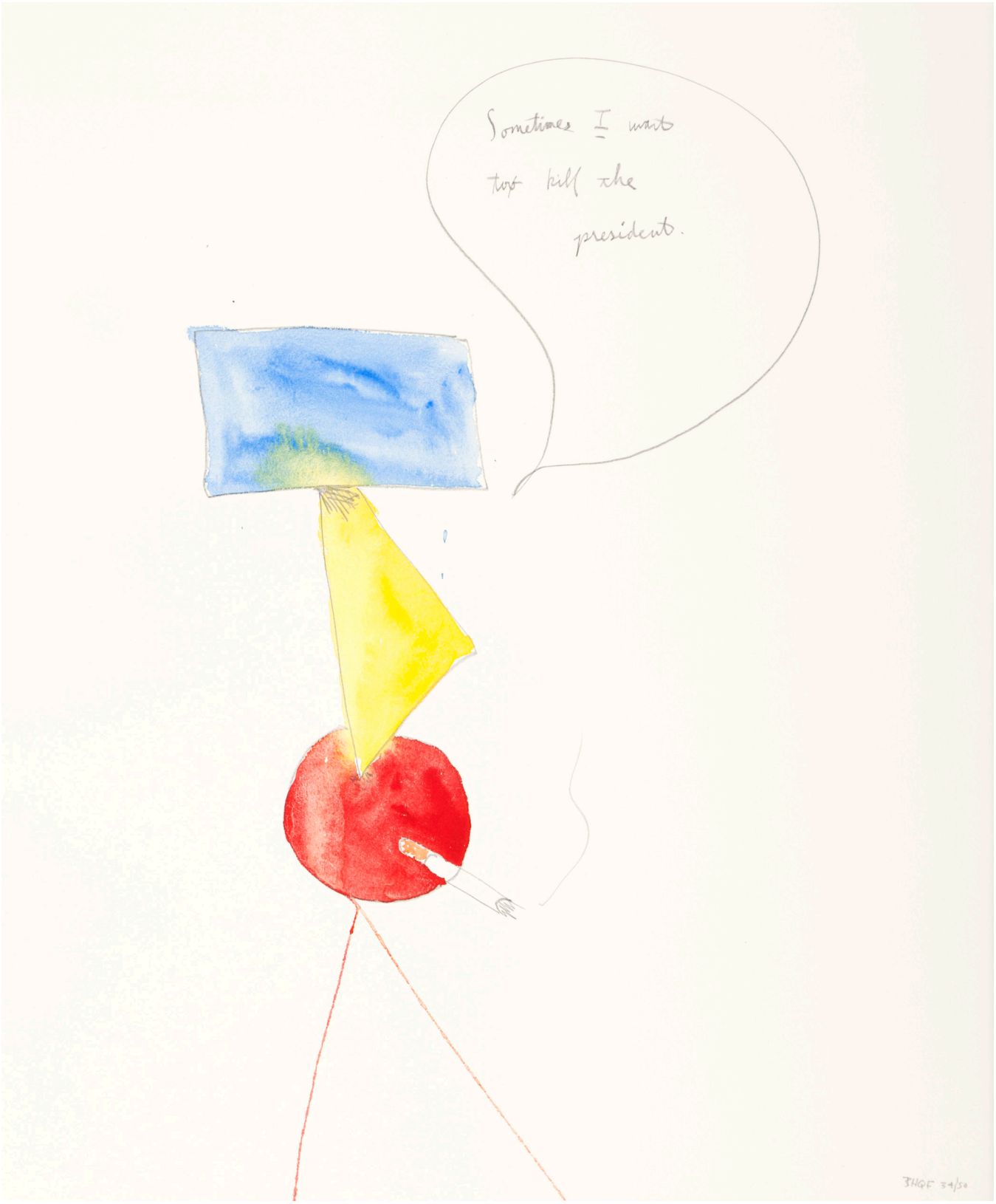

Sometimes I want
to kill the
president.
BHQF 34/50

PHOTO-ENGRAVING BY BOLTON & STRONG, SAN FRANCISCO
CARRUTH & CARRUTH, PRINTERS, OAKLAND

Custom House *Mexican Redoubt* *U. S. Sloop of War Cyane* *U. S. Frigate Savannah, Flagship* *U. S. Sloop of War Levant*

The Raising of the American Flag and Taking Possession of California by Commodore John Drake Sloat, U. S. Navy

AT MONTEREY, JULY 7, 1846

Drawn for and under the direction of Major Edwin A. Sherman, 33°, Editor and Publisher of the "Life of the Late Rear-Admiral John Drake Sloat, U. S. Navy"; Secretary of the Sloat Monument Association; Vice-President of the Associated Veterans of the Mexican War; California Pioneer of May 24, 1846. Editor of "Fifty Years of Masonry in California" and other works; Past National President of the Masonic Veteran Association of the United States; Right Venerable Grand Secretary of the Masonic Veteran Association of the Pacific Coast; Secretary of the California Pioneer Society of Alameda, Contra Costa and Adjacent Counties, etc.

SO FAR AS KNOWN AND CAN BE ASCERTAINED AFTER THE MOST DILIGENT RESEARCH, THIS IS THE FIRST SKETCH EVER MADE OF THIS GRAND HISTORIC EVENT

Mrs. C. T. Mills of Mills College, Alameda County, California, Compliments of her friend and of the College. Edwin A. Sherman, Secretary of the Sloat Monument Association of California and Chairman of the Committee of Design and Construction, Oakland, Cal. August 25, 1902. My 73d Birthday.

Note. The Mills College is the Pioneer of all Colleges, either Male or Female in California. Edwin A. Sherman.

WILLIAM ALEXANDER COULTER

(Ireland, 1849 - 1936, United States)
The Raising of the American Flag and Taking Possession of California by Commodore John Drake Sloat, U.S. Navy—at Monterey, July 7, 1846,
20th Century
Photo-engraving on paper
13 in. x 17 in.
Gift of Major Edwin A. Sherman, 1923.8

This historical print portrays Commodore John D Sloat and his troops arriving on the California coast during the Mexican-American War, illustrating the attitudes that encompass Manifest Destiny and the sense of entitlement that colonialists had for California. The language used in the inscription that accompanies the image reflects the glorification of colonialism that was celebrated by Americans during the Mexican-American War. The inclusion of this piece in an exhibition that highlights current environmental and social issues draws attention to specific moments in history that continue to influence individuals today.

Sarah Pearce Hart

JULIAN GREENWELL

(American, 1880 - 1960)
Hawaiian Volcano, ca. 1930s
Watercolor on heavy paper
6 3/4 in. x 9 in.
Gift of Serge Millan, 1988.10.5

This piece speaks volumes to the question of preservation—both environmental and cultural. *Hawaiian Volcano* was made in the 1930s, a time of increased plantations, forced assimilation, and capitalist encouragement of tourism in Hawaii in the decades following its forced annexation to the U.S. in 1901. Hawaii's tourist trade is focused on luscious beaches, beautiful views, and an image of relaxed and unassuming culture for wealthy outsiders, while the Native Hawaiian culture has been fetishized and exoticized for pleasure and money. Looking at this painting, made during this turbulent time by the white son of a wealthy cattle rancher in Hawaii, we are reminded to reflect on what has been preserved environmentally, what has been lost, and what depth of culture and people has been sacrificed without second thought for these features.

Zana Ito

ROBERT HEINECKEN

(American, 1931 - 2006)
Obscured Figure #1, 1965
Gelatin silver print
19 7/8 in. x 15 3/4 in.
Museum Purchase, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1966.16

This large photograph appears to be mainly black—until a closer look reveals the hint of a figure. This symbolically mirrors the struggle that oppressed people endure silently. In fact, this figure is erased by shadow, nearly blending completely into the background. While we can assume that this figure is female, we cannot tell their skin tone. This can represent the dehumanization that oppressed people go through—their cultural identity is taken away and they are reduced to being less than people.

In a series created one year earlier, Heinecken collaged images from pornographic magazines and photographed them. The figure that we see is a woman, so it is quite likely that her image was taken from porn as well. However, it is not a sexual image. This speaks to women's autonomy, because men have been taking ownership over women's bodies for centuries, and it is only recently that women have reclaimed them. Taking a found image of a person and reproducing it into fine art for personal gain raises the question of possession, or ownership. Taking a pornographic image of a naked woman, erasing all traces of her ethnicity, and appropriating it for a new purpose without the woman's consent is a tricky subject, especially when the artist is a white man. Exploitation of people sexually is another controversial topic, as sex (or implied sex) for commerce is rife with opportunities for wrong-doing and abuse, and has direct ties to the fetishization and exoticism that women experience. The inability to see the figure hints to erasure of struggle, and the marginalization or dehumanization of the oppressed.

Lily Drabkin-Hoover

YOLANDA M. LOPEZ

(American, born 1942)
Women's Work Is Never Done [from the 10 x 10 Portfolio], 1995
Silkscreen on paper
22 in. x 22 in.
Museum Purchase, Mrs. John C. Sigourney [Mary Singleton], B.A. 1949, Fund, 1995.12.f

Clichéd expressions, such as the title of this piece, are always grounded in a truth. The work of the Latina women depicted in this image remains, even to this day, largely unseen and unacknowledged. Yolanda Lopez's experiences as an activist and an artist allows her to make very personal art for and about the underrepresented and marginalized. Her use of the easily reproducible medium of silk-screening enables Lopez to blend her activism with her art. Like agricultural work, the myriad forms of print-making have often been at the crux of highly politicized social movements. In this piece Lopez honors the work of Dolores Huerta, the co-founder of United Farm Workers, for her efforts to instill better labor contracts and working conditions for Latinas over half a century ago. Her proud specter anchors the defiant women in the foreground as she holds a "Strike" sign. The women stand shoulder to shoulder, breaking out of the frame, demanding to be reckoned with.

Marilyn Claes


HUELGA
HOMENAJE A DOLORES HUERTA: 1965
CALIFORNIA BROCCOLI HARVEST: 1995
WOMEN'S WORK IS NEVER DONE

RASHID JOHNSON

(American, born 1977)
Thurgood in the Hour of Chaos
[from the Exit Art Print Portfolio, *America, America*], 2009
Photo lithograph
30 in. x 22 in.
Gift of Exit Art c/o John Koegel, The Koegel Group LLP, 2012.13.4.e

Brooklyn-based artist Rashid Johnson presents a photo lithograph of a polished intellectual. The portrait is of a man in the role of Thurgood Marshall, the first Black United States Supreme Court Justice. "The Hour of Chaos" is a nod to Public Enemy's 1989 hip-hop album of the same title, as are the milky crosshairs that reference the album's cover design. Painted over the image, the crosshairs are sharp against the lithograph's soft focus and marbled background.

This portrait appeared in an earlier series by Johnson called the *New Negro Escapist Social and Athletic Club*. Influenced by Harlem Renaissance photographer James Van Der Zee, Johnson wanted to depict Blackness without any evidence of a "problem," something he recognized in works from past Black artists. He imagined meetings and gatherings of his fictionalized characters— artists and activists. Johnson was also responding to the escapism present in works by artists such as Marcus Garvey, Sun Ra, and Paul Beatty.

In the Exit Art iteration of the work, Johnson's portrait remains astute with the addition of the dripping target that resembles graffiti. Within the portrait of an abstract string of references, the crosshairs remain a vital continuation of thought and a strong call for the future.

Elizabeth Martin

ELEANOR MILDER

(Active in the United States, early 20th Century)
Man Drinking Water From His Hands, 1936
Gelatin silver print
9 3/8 in. x 7 3/8 in.
Museum Purchase, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1939.28

Eleanor Milder's gelatin silver print, *Man Drinking Water From His Hands* was taken during the United States' Great Depression. The Dust Bowl heat wave during this time caused crop failures and severely limited access to water. This devastating event had a huge toll on the people of the United States. Milder's contemporary was photographer Dorothea Lange, whose famous image *Migrant Mother*, was also photographed during this time, and depicts a mother and two of her children struggling. Knowledge of the severe impact of heat wave on agricultural communities reached a large public because the Farm Security Administration of the United States funded photographers to document people struggling during the Great Depression. Milder's photograph provokes viewers to ponder the relationship of water in our lives and the long history of power struggles that dictate the availability of water.

Lena Toney

NATIVE AMERICAN

Adult moccasins, late 19th Century
Untanned animal hide with bead decoration
10 1/4 in. 4 1/2 in. 4 1/2 in.
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Suren H. Babington, 1973.33

The 19th century was an exceptionally cruel era of the mistreatment of Native Americans. The Indian Removal Act of 1830, passed by President Andrew Jackson, forced the Cherokee nation to give up their lands to the U.S. government and relocate. The journey and aftermath were dubbed the Trail of Tears by the Cherokee people, from the grief and suffering it entailed. The Indian Wars and the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, the cultural erasure of Native Americans and forced assimilation into white colonial society through boarding schools—the trauma of such events has been intergenerational. In looking at these moccasins—light weathering around the ankles, the gradual fraying of the beads—one wonders the history behind them. Why were they made, and for who? Why were they taken off? The unknown story of these moccasins is a reminder of so much of the rich diversity that we have lost through the violent trajectory of colonialism.

Zana Ito

NATIVE AMERICAN

Paiute twined water jug, 20th Century
Plant fiber
19 5/8 in. x 12 in.
Gift of Laurette Schorcht in honor of Doris Dennison, Music Director, Dance Dept. 1939-1972, 1997.14.12

This Native American Paiute twined water jug brings attention to societal challenges in relation to water and who has access to water. This plant fiber basket was created for storing and carrying water by the Paiute Tribe, who inhabited areas of the Western United States during the 19th century. The Paiute have had one of the longest water rights battles in the history of the United States, starting when settlers took over the Paiute irrigation systems while the tribe was returning from war.

A current issue that echoes the history of the Paiute people and the history of water rights in the United States is the North Dakota Pipeline. The proposed pipeline would transport crude oil from North Dakota to Illinois. One of the many concerns surrounding the pipeline if it is implemented, is endangerment of safe drinking water for the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and surrounding area. The controversy surrounding the North Dakota Pipeline highlights many issues around how governments manage resources, such as water, and who is given priority for access to those resources.

Lena Toney

N.E. THING CO. LTD.

IAIN BAXTER&
(Canadian, born in England 1936)

INGRID BAXTER
(American, born 1938)

North American Time Zone—Photo V.S.I. Simultaneity Oct 18, 1970
[from a suite of 18 photographs], 1970
Offset lithograph on paper
27 1/2 in. x 27 1/2 in.
Museum Purchase, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1971.30.q

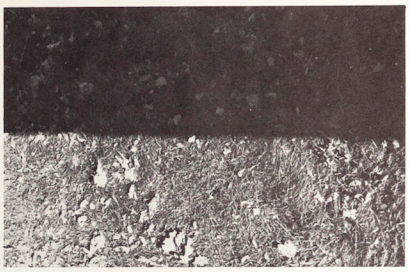
N. E. Thing Co. Ltd. was a collaboration between Iain Baxter& and Ingrid Baxter from 1966-1978. The company created works that highlighted the creative potential of ordinary spaces, utilizing a variety of mediums including the construction of their family home and the process of a transcontinental road trip. In *North American Time Zone Photo—V.S.I. Simultaneity*, the company arranged for photographers in each of the six time zones in North America to take photographs simultaneously of the same subject matter. By viewing these images on the same page, one is reminded of the effect that one's geographic location has on their life, experiences, privileges and hardships.

Sarah Pearce Hart

N.E.THING CO. LTD. Photography and Communications Departments. North American Time Zone Photo-V.S.I. Simultaneity. October 18, 1970 **13. SHADOW.**

11.00 a.m. P.D.T.

12.00 noon M.D.T.

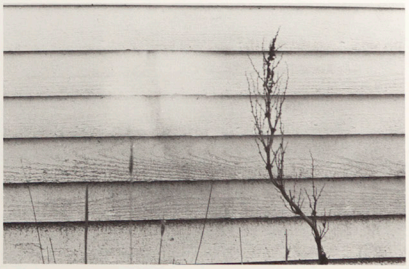


1.00 p.m. C.D.T.

2.00 p.m. E.D.T.

3.00 p.m. A.D.T.

3.30 p.m. Nfld.D.T.



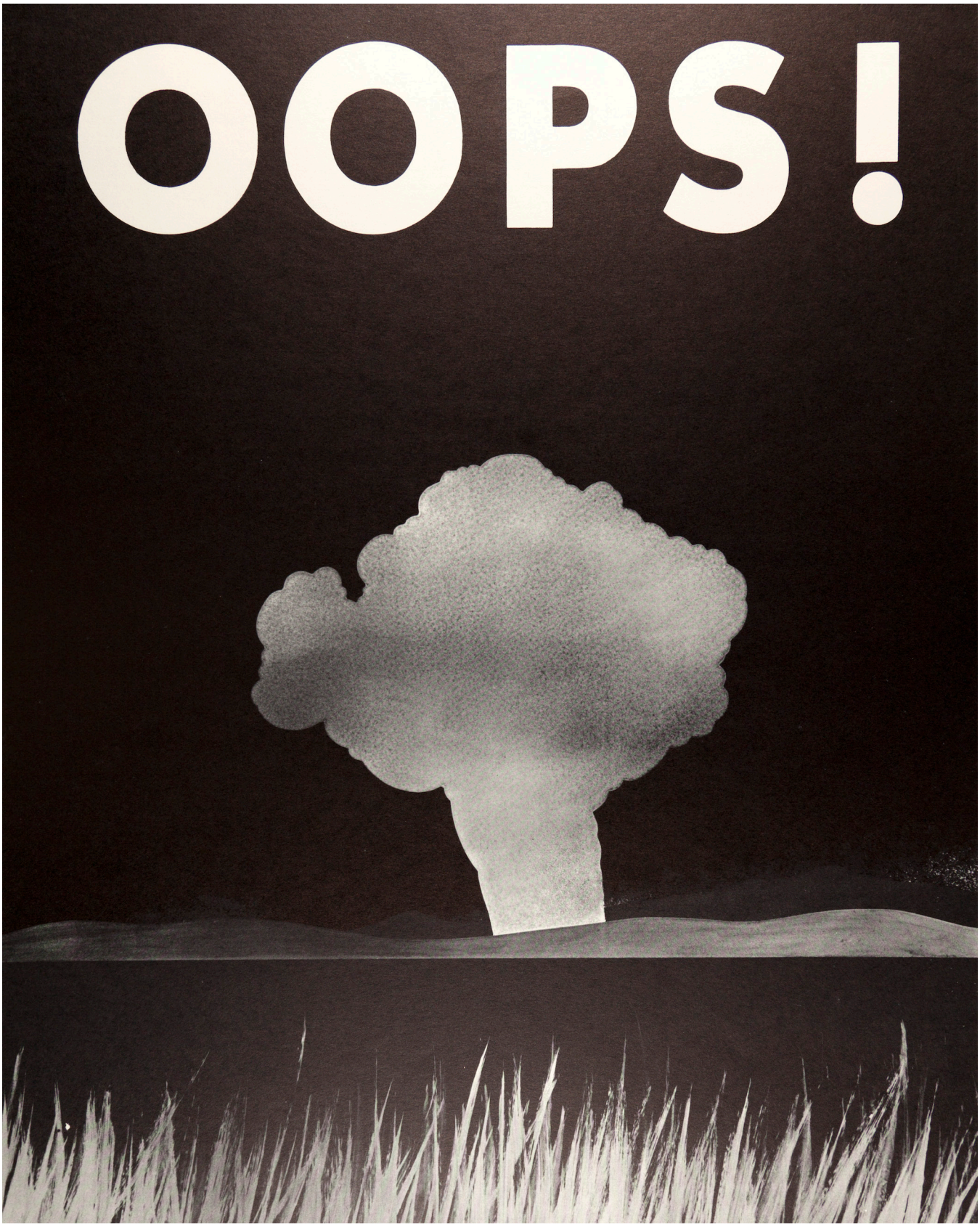
CLAYTON DAVID PINKERTON

(American, 1931 - 1993)
Oops! [from Group Commentary series], 1968
Lithograph on paper
23 in. x 17 1/2 in.
Gift of the Artist, 1969.53

In this piece, Pinkerton depicts an image of a rural landscape, topped by a mushroom cloud. This serious and devastating scene is reframed in a satirical and unsettling way by the text in the image, “OOPS!” This piece connects the exhibition’s two main focuses, the environment and human oppression. It shows the environment being destroyed, and alludes to human oppression because of the atrocities committed in history that have used nuclear weapons.

The word “OOPS!” creates a clear reminder of human apathy, and the ignorance that can be shown by Western society. Our natural resources are being contaminated and polluted, and that is put on focus in this piece. This piece produces a discussion about property and ownership, as well as military power. We are left with the impression of apathy, of an unsatisfactory “Oops, we didn’t mean to.”

Lily Drabkin-Hoover


OOPS!

KATHRYN SPENCE

(American, born 1963)
Untitled (Coyote), 2009
Sweaters, shirts, towels, stuffed animals, wood, pins, colored paper
13 in. x 31 in. x 12 in.
Gift of the Steven Wirtz Gallery and the Artist, 2014.19.b

For many North American indigenous peoples, the coyote is mythologically known as the trickster; changing form between animal and human, and generally creating mischief. Working in the medium of found materials, Mills College alumna Kathryn Spence repurposes thrift store towels, sweaters, shirts, and stuffed animals into her creations. She "tricks" the viewer with the visual conundrum of identifying an animal form, yet we recognize its composition to be that of man-made materials. In nature, the coyote is known as a scavenger animal, getting its sustenance through the work and effort of others. The utilization of recycled materials through her artistic practice embodies the essence and behavior of the coyote.

Spence's piece addresses issues of social justice in how we relate with animals and the greater environment, as well as ethical questions of how we operate as a consume-and-discard culture; a behavioral choice that has consequences for our world and all of its living creatures. The act of creating anew from that which has been abandoned as unusable speaks to the power we have in our daily lives to make a palpable impact on the world around us.

Marilyn Claes

PAE WHITE

(American, born 1963)
Five Black Nesting Bowls, 2009
Hand harvested clay embedded with cattails, Raku-fired using resinous plants
Dimensions variable
Museum Purchase, Susan L. Mills Fund, 2009.14.a-g

Not only is Pae White's work focused on material, but it also functions to complicated binaries within itself. The exhibited work features five bowls made from hand-harvested clay. The exterior of each bowl echoes a grinding stone carved into a large granite rock on the banks of the Yuba River. The stone cavities were created by the Maidu, a tribe of Indigenous peoples, and were used to grind acorns and seeds. The inside of each bowl is smooth, an indication of the fingers that pressed each bowl into form. The combination of exterior and interior introduces a conversation by the artist on the Californian landscape, the people who have known it, and the complicated history of occupation.

Born in Pasadena, White has lived and worked in California. Many of her projects involve a collaborative element, including scholars, keen selections from private collections, and the assistance of expert weavers. *Five Black Nesting Bowls* is such a project, as White enlisted the expertise of scholars Joseph Meade and Richard Hotchkiss to help realize the project. White, very much an artist with a research-intensive practice, earned her MFA from Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, and her BA from Scripps College, Claremont.

Elizabeth Martin

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

All works in *Moments of Impact* are from the collection of the Mills College Art Museum.

THE BRUCE HIGH QUALITY FOUNDATION
Sometimes I Want to Kill the President
[from the Exit Art Print Portfolio, *Expose*], 2008
Hand-painted monoprint, pencil and watercolor on paper
30 in. x 22in.
Gift of Exit Art c/o John Koegel, The Koegel Group LLP, 2012.13.3.b

JOHN CAGE
(American, 1912—1992)
Diary: How to Improve the World (You Will Only Make Matters Worse), continued 1968, [from SMS #4 Portfolio], 1968
Ink and silkscreen on Mylar and heavy paper stock
7 1/2 in. x 5 1/2 in.
Gift of Rena Bransten, 2012.2.4.d

WILLIAM ALEXANDER COULTER
(Ireland, 1849—1936, United States)
The Raising of the American Flag and Taking Possession of California by Commodore John Drake Sloat, U.S. Navy—at Monterey, July 7, 1846, 20th Century
Photo-engraving on paper
13 in. x 17 in.
Gift of Major Edwin A. Sherman, 1923.8

JULIAN GREENWELL
(American, 1880—1960)
Hawaiian Volcano, ca. 1930s
Watercolor on heavy paper
6 3/4 in. x 9 in.
Gift of Serge Millan, 1988.10.5

ROBERT HEINECKEN
(American, 1931—2006)
Obscured Figure #1, 1965
Gelatin silver print
19 7/8 in. x 15 3/4 in.
Museum Purchase, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1966.16

YOLANDA M. LOPEZ
(American, born 1942)
Women's Work Is Never Done
[from the 10 x 10 Portfolio], 1995
Silkscreen on paper
22 in. x 22 in.
Museum Purchase, Mrs. John C. Sigourney [Mary Singleton], B.A. 1949, Fund, 1995.12.f

RASHID JOHNSON
(American, born 1977)
Thurgood in the Hour of Chaos
[from the Exit Art Print Portfolio, *America, America*], 2009
Photo lithograph
30 in. x 22 in.
Gift of Exit Art c/o John Koegel, The Koegel Group LLP, 2012.13.4.e

PIRKLE JONES
(American, 1914—2009)
Grape Picker, Berryessa Valley, California, 1956
Gelatin silver print, dry-mounted on non-rag board
13 1/8 in. x 10 1/2 in.
Found in Collection, 1983.3.9

ELEANOR MILDER
(Active in the United States, early 20th Century)
Man Drinking Water From His Hands, 1936
Gelatin silver print
9 3/8 in. x 7 3/8 in.
Museum Purchase, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1939.28

NATIVE AMERICAN
Adult moccasins,
late 19th Century
Untanned animal hide with bead decoration
10 1/4 in. 4 1/2 in. 4 1/2 in.
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Suren H. Babington, 1973.33

NATIVE AMERICAN
Paiute twined water jug,
20th Century
Plant fiber
19 5/8 in. x 12 in.
Gift of Laurette Schorcht in honor of Doris Dennison, Music Director, Dance Dept. 1939-1972, 1997.14.12

N.E. THING CO. LTD.
IAIN BAXTER&
(Canadian, born in England 1936)
INGRID BAXTER
(American, born 1938)
North American Time Zone—Photo V.S.I. Simultaneity Oct 18, 1970 [from a suite of 18 photographs], 1970
Offset lithograph on paper
27 1/2 in. x 27 1/2 in.
Museum Purchase, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1971.30.q

ROI PARTRIDGE
(American, 1888—1984)
Golf in Hawaii, 1965
Pen and ink on paper
15 5/8 in. x 18 1/2 in.
Gift of the Estate of Roi Partridge, 2014.13.57

CLAYTON DAVID PINKERTON
(American, 1931 - 1993)
Oops! [from Group Commentary series], 1968
Lithograph on paper
23 in. x 17 1/2 in.
Gift of the Artist, 1969.53

FAITH RINGGOLD
(American, born 1930)
The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles, 1995-96
Lithograph on paper
22 1/2 in. x 30 in.
Museum Purchase, Mrs. John C. Sigourney [Mary Singleton], B.A. 1949, Fund, 1996.19

KATHRYN SPENCE
(American, born 1963)
Untitled (Coyote), 2009
Sweaters, shirts, towels, stuffed animals, wood, pins, colored paper
13 in. x 31 in. x 12 in.
Gift of the Steven Wirtz Gallery and the Artist, 2014.19.b

STEPHANIE SYJUCO
(American, born in the Philippines, 1974)
Comparative Morphologies, 3, 2001
Iris print on watercolor paper
27 3/4 in. x 20 3/4 in.
Museum Purchase, Susan L. Mills Fund, 2007.1.2

CARRIE MAE WEEMS
(American, born 1953)
Commemorating Every Black Man Who Lives to See Twenty-One, 1992
Glaze and gold paint on Lenox porcelain plate
10 5/8 in. diameter
Gift of Fay Pfaelzer and Jonathan Abrams, 2013.5.6

PAE WHITE
(American, born 1963)
Five Black Nesting Bowls, 2009
Hand harvested clay embedded with cattails, Raku-fired using resinous plants
Dimensions variable
Museum Purchase, Susan L. Mills Fund, 2009.14.a-g