

# Contemporary Art

# 29

## TIME PERIOD: 1980-PRESENT

**ENDURING UNDERSTANDING:** Traditional forms of art history have been enhanced by technology.

**Essential Knowledge:**

- Traditional skills have been challenged by digital works, works that were meant to last only a short time, works captured on video, computer generated works, etc.
- Diverse art forms are created that reflect and challenge the environment in which they were made.
- Artists appropriate works from the past which reveal layers of meaning beyond what was perhaps intended.
- Cities seek to be defined by an iconic landmark.

**ENDURING UNDERSTANDING:** Contemporary art is global.

**Essential Knowledge:**

- Art history has traditionally ignored contemporary art from non-American and European sources. Excellent contemporary art is being produced globally.
- Eurocentric views have been downplayed by the rise of the Internet and political power shifts around the globe.
- Artists now come from a multitude of backgrounds, not just the traditional white heterosexual male.
- There are many more venues for displaying art in the world today than ever. Galleries, exhibits, and annual exhibitions proliferate.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The devastation of World War II formed the backdrop for much of the rest of the twentieth century. Far from solving the world's problems, it just replaced the Fascist menace with smaller conflicts no less deadly in the world's traditional hot spots. With the invention of television, global issues were brought into the living rooms of millions as never before. One disillusioning world problem after another—racism, the environment, weapons of mass destruction—has contributed to a tense atmosphere, even in parts of the world not physically touched by conflict. Artists are quick to pick up on social and political issues, using them as springboards to create artwork.

But not all is bleak in the contemporary world. The rapid growth of technology has brought great advances in medical science and everyday living. Inventions formerly beyond the realm

of possibility, like home computers or cell phones, have turned into the necessities of modern life. New media has become fertile ground for artistic exploration. Artists exploit materials, like plastics, for their elastic properties. Video projections, computer graphics, sound installations, fiberglass products, and lasers are new technologies for artists to investigate. One challenge posed to the artist concerns how these media will be used in a way that will thoughtfully provoke the audience. Certainly the modern world has much to offer the artist.

## MODERN ARCHITECTURE

Everything about architecture has changed since 1980, and most of the changes have been brought about by the computer. No longer are blueprints painstakingly drawn by hand to exacting specifications. Programs like AutoCAD and MicroStation not only assist in drawing ground plans, but also automatically check for errors. They also make feasible designs that heretofore existed only in the mind. Frank Gehry's **Guggenheim Bilbao Museo** (Figure 29.1) is a good

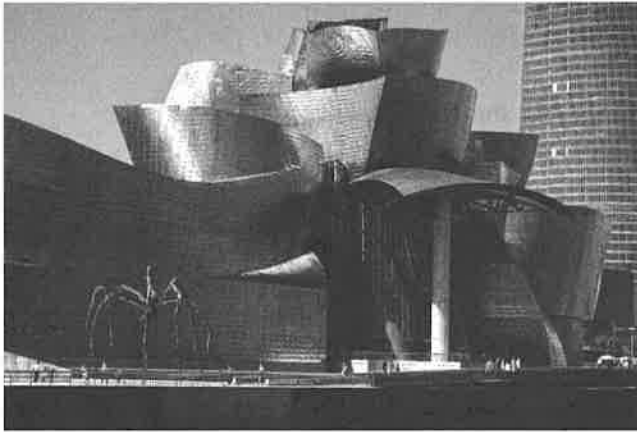


Figure 29.1a: Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Bilbao Museo, 1997, titanium, glass, and limestone, Bilbao, Spain



Figure 29.1b: Detail of interior of Guggenheim Bilbao Museo

example of how computers can help architects render shapes and meaningful designs in an imaginative way.

New age technology has produced an array of products that make buildings lighter, cheaper, and more energy efficient than before. All these developments, however, come aligned with new challenges for architects. How can cost efficiency and expensive new technology be brought into a meaningful architectural plan? The resources are there for the future to explore.

One would be hard-pressed to find a modern building with pediments, Doric columns, or flying buttresses; historical associations have been downplayed in modern architecture. What exists is a proud display of technology: Innovative materials like titanium in Gehry's work, or unusual shapes like the buildings of Hadid.

Dark interiors, as in Gothic or Romanesque buildings, are out. Natural light supplemented by artificial light is in. Domes presage a modern fascination, almost obsession, with glass and its properties.

### Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Bilbao Museo, 1997, titanium, glass, and limestone, Bilbao, Spain (Figures 29.1a and 29.1b)

- Canadian-American architect based in Los Angeles
- Swirling forms and shapes mark a contract with the industrial landscape of Bilbao
- From the river side, the building resembles a boat, referencing the Bilbao's past as a shipping and commercial center
- Curving forms designed by a computer software program called Catia
- Fixing clips make a shallow dent in the titanium surface; effect of having a shimmering surface that changes according to atmospheric conditions
- Revitalized the port area of Bilbao; "Bilbao effect" refers to the impact that a museum can have on a local economy
- Appearance of asymmetrical exterior with outside walls giving no hint to interior spaces

- Irregular masses of titanium walls
- Sweeping curved lines
- Called Deconstructionist architecture—architecture that seeks to create a seemingly unstable environment with unusual spatial arrangements
- **Cross-Cultural Connections: Curvilinear Forms**
  - Borromini, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (Figures 17.2a, 17.2b)
  - Walls of Saqsa Waman (Figure 26.8c)
  - Great Zimbabwe (Figures 27.1a, 27.1b)

**Zaha Hadid, MAXXI National Museum of XXI Century Arts, 2009, glass, steel, and cement, Rome, Italy (Figures 29.2a and 29.2b)**

- Iraqi-born, British-based architect
- Two museums (MAXXI Art and MAXXI Architecture), a library, auditorium, and cafeteria
- Internal spaces covered by a glass roof; natural light admitted into the interior, filtered by louvered blinds
- Walls flow and melt into one another, creating new and dynamic interior spaces
- Constantly changing interior and exterior views
- Transparent roof, modulate natural light
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Public Spaces**
  - Forum of Trajan (Figure 6.10a)
  - Angkor Wat (Figures 23.8a, 23.8b, 23.8c, 23.8d)
  - Forbidden City (Figures 24.2a, 24.2b, 24.2c, 24.2d)



Figure 29.2a: Zaha Hadid, MAXXI National Museum of XXI Century Arts, 2009, glass, steel, and cement, Rome, Italy



Figure 29.2b: Interior of MAXXI

## MODERN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

Oil on canvas is still the preferred medium. In the 1950s, however, a new type of paint—**acrylic**—was developed to wide popular appeal. Acrylics take very little time to dry, unlike oils, which can take weeks or even months, and unlike watercolor, acrylics do not change color when they dry. However, acrylics crack with time much faster than other paints do. Contemporary artists who are working “for the ages” still prefer oils, although commercially available extenders can prolong the life of acrylics.

While traditional painting techniques are still popular, many modern artists have abandoned the canvas for the computer screen and have reached into cyberspace to create new forms and modes of representation. Computer programs make the process easier, bringing with them a dizzy array of applications and alternatives. The computer has revolutionized the creative spirit of fine art.

Marble carving is dead. All the great advantages to marble—its permanence, durability, and lustrous shine—have been cast into the dustbin of history. Few artists want to spend years studying marble carving in a world that will offer no commissions for laboring over an art form that is associated with the ancients and has seemingly nothing to offer beyond that. Marble is also unforgiving; once chipped, it cannot be repaired without showing the damage.

Modern forms of sculpture are faster to produce and even easier to reproduce. Unlike marble or bronze they come in a variety of textures, from the high-polish porcelains by Jeff Koons



Figure 29.3a: Christo and Jean-Claude, *The Gates*, 1979–2005, mixed media installation, New York City

to the knotty fabrics of Magdalena Abakanowicz. Anything that can be molded, like beeswax, is experimented with to make a visceral impact.

On occasion, sculptors will combine objects into works of art, called **assemblages**. If the assemblages are large enough, they are called **installations** and can take up a whole room in a museum or gallery.

**Christo and Jean-Claude, *The Gates*, 1979–2005, mixed media installation, New York City (Figures 29.3a and 29.3b)**

- Christo is Bulgarian born; Jean-Claude is of French descent, born in Morocco
- 7,503 “gates” of free-hanging saffron colored fabric panels



Figure 29.3b: Detail of *The Gates*

- Framed all the pathways in Central Park, New York City
- 16-foot-tall gates formed a continuous river of color
- Covered 23 miles of footpaths
- Temporary installation, left up for sixteen days
- After the exhibition closed the materials were recycled

■ **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Gateways**

- Great Portal, Chartres (Figure 12.6)
- Todai-ji (Figure 25.1e)
- Forbidden City (Figures 24.2a, 24.2b, 24.2c, 24.2d)

**Maya Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 1982, black granite, Washington, D.C. (Figures 29.4a and 29.4b)**

- Artist an Ohio-born Chinese-American
- V-shaped monument cut into the earth with 60,000 casualties of the Vietnam War listed in the order they were killed or reported missing
- One arm of the monument points to the Lincoln Memorial, the other to the Washington Monument



Figure 29.4a: Maya Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 1982, black granite, Washington D.C.



Figure 29.4b: Maya Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 1982, black granite, Washington, D.C.

- Black granite as a highly reflective surface so that viewers can see themselves in the names of the veterans; black is an appropriate somber color for the memorial
- Strongly influenced by the Minimalist movement

**Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Horn Players*, 1983, acrylic and oil paintstick on canvas panels, Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica, California (Figure 29.5)**

- Artist born in Brooklyn, New York, of Puerto Rican and Haitian parents
- Artist rebelled against the middle class upbringing he was born into
- Some traditional forms: triptych, canvas, oil paint
- Modernist expression: influence of graffiti art
- Flattened darkened background; flat patches of color; thick lines
- Glorifies African-American musicians: salute to jazz musicians Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie in either wing
- Heads seem to float over outlined bodies and dissolve as you go down the body
- Focus is on contrast and juxtaposition, not on balance or scale
- Words are those attributed to the musicians (ornithology misspelled; reference to Charlie "The Bird" Parker)

**Song Su-nam, *Summer Trees*, 1983, ink on paper, British Museum, London (Figure 29.6)**

- Korean artist using traditional ink on paper
- Large vertical lines of various thickness
- Subtle tonal variations of ink wash
- One of the leaders of the "Sumukhwa," a new type of ink painting in the 1980s
- Ink painting a traditional form of artist expression in Korea; this movement revitalizes ink painting in a modern context
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Ink Technique**
  - Folio from the Qur'an (Figure 9.5)
  - Bichitr, *Jahangir Preferring a Sufi Shaikh to Kings* (Figure 23.9)
  - *Bahrum Gur Fights the Karg* (Figure 9.8)

**Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Androgyn III*, 1985, burlap, resin, wood, nails, and string, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Figure 29.7)**

- Polish artist
- Since 1974 artist makes figures often without heads or arms in large groups or singly
- Figure sits on a low stretcher of wooden legs, substituting for human legs
- Figure hollowed out, just a shell, hardened fiber casts made from plaster molds
- Figure placed to be seen in the round: the complete back, the hollow front
- Hardened fiber has the appearance of crinkled human skin set in earth tones



Figure 29.5: Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Horn Players*, 1983, acrylic and oil paintstick on canvas panels, Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica, California

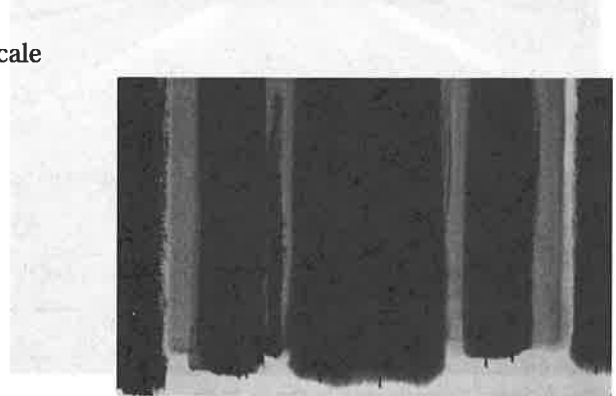


Figure 29.6: Song Su-nam, *Summer Trees*, 1983, ink on paper, British Museum, London



Figure 29.7: Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Androgyn III*, 1985, burlap, resin, wood, nails, and string, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

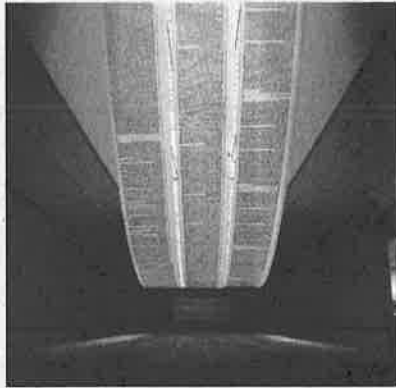


Figure 29.8a: Xu Bing, *A Book from the Sky*, mixed media installation, Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin

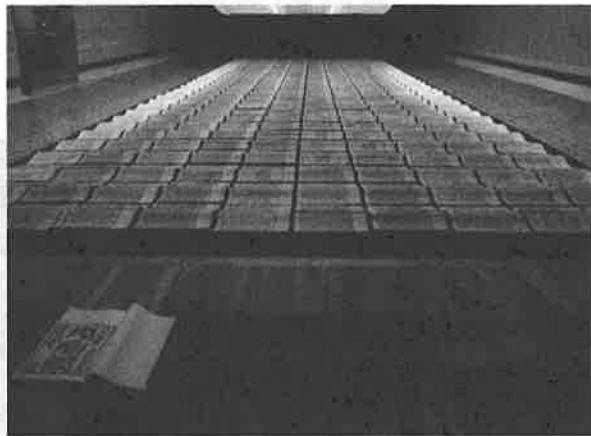


Figure 29.8b: Alternate view of Figure 29.8a

#### ■ Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Human Figure

- Tlatilco Female Figure (Figure 1.5)
- Lakshmana Temple detail (Figure 27.3b)
- Nlo Bieri (Figure 27.13)

**Xu Bing, *A Book from the Sky*, 1987–1991, 100 boxed sets of 4-volume woodblock printed books, variable numbers of scrolls hanging from the ceiling, and variable number of wall panels, installation, Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin (Figures 29.8a and 29.8b)**

- Chinese-born artist; U.S. resident
- Original title “An Analyzed Reflection of the End of This Century”
- Originally in the National Museum of Fine Arts in Beijing; filled a large exhibition space

- 400 handmade books placed in rows on the ground
- One walks beneath fifty printed scrolls which hang from the ceiling
- Uses traditional Asian wood block techniques
- Many of the Chinese characters are inventions of the artist and have no meaning
- Artist lost favor with the Communist government over this work
- Criticized as “bourgeois liberation” and it was claimed that its meaninglessness hid secret subversions
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Book Making**
  - *Book of Lindisfarne* (Figures 10.2a, 10.2b, 10.2c)
  - *Golden Haggadah* (Figures 12.10a, 12.10b, 12.10c)
  - Frontispiece of the Codex Mendoza (Figure 18.1)



Figure 29.9: Jeff Koons, *Pink Panther*, 1988, glazed porcelain, Museum of Modern Art, New York

**Jeff Koons, *Pink Panther*, 1988, glazed porcelain, Museum of Modern Art, New York (Figure 29.9)**

- Pennsylvania-born artist, working in New York
- Work exists as a commentary on celebrity romance, sexuality, commercialism, stereotypes, pop culture, sentimentality
- Artificially idealized female form: overly yellow hair, bright red lips, large breasts, pronounced red fingernails; overtly fake look
- Life-size
- Kitsch
- Creates a permanent reality out of something that is ephemeral and never meant to be exhibited
- Woman is Jayne Mansfield, a popular screen star
- Pink Panther, a cartoon character derived from a series of American movies
- Tender delicacy of the panther’s gesture
- Part of a series called “The Banality” at a show in the Sonnenbend Gallery in NY in 1988

- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Porcelain and Ceramic**

- The David Vases (Figure 24.11)
- Apollo from Veii (Figure 5.5)
- Terra-cotta Fragment (Figure 1.6)

**Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #228* from the History Portraits series, 1990, photograph, Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica, California (Figure 29.10)**

- New Jersey born, American artist
- Artist appears as the photographer, subject, costumer, hairdresser, and makeup artist in each work
- Artist's work comments on gender, identity, society, and class distinction
- This series sheds a modern light on the great masters
- Uses old master paintings as a starting point, but the works are not derivative
- This image explores the theme of Salome decapitating Saint John the Baptist
- Richness of costuming and setting acts as a commentary on late nineteenth-century versions of this subject
- Richly decorative drapes hang behind the figure
- Salome lacks any emotional attachment to the murder that has taken place
- Saint John the Baptist appears mask-like, alert, and nearly bloodless
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: References to the Past**
  - Jefferson, Monticello (Figures 19.5a, 19.5b)
  - Ringgold, *Dancing at the Louvre* (Figure 29.11)
  - Shinobare, *The Swing* (Figure 29.22)



Figure 29.10: Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #228* from the History Portraits series, 1990, photograph, Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica, California

**Faith Ringgold, *Dancing at the Louvre* from the series *The French Collection, Part I; #1*, 1991, acrylic on canvas, with fabric borders, Private Collection (Figure 29.11)**

- New York-born African-American artist
- Artist uses the American slave art form of the quilt to create her works
- Quilts were originally meant to be both beautiful and useful; works of applied art
- Quilting seen as a traditionally female art form
- Combines the traditional use of oil paint with the quilting technique
- These quilts are not meant to be placed on beds
- Quilt has a narrative element
- Feminist issues dominate
- Often figures in Ringgold works act out a history that might never have taken place, but the artist would have liked to take place
- Artist created a character named Willia Marie Simone, who takes her friend and three daughters to the Louvre museum and dances in front of three paintings by Leonardo DaVinci
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Woven Arts**
  - Bandolier Bag (Figure 26.11)
  - Hiapo (Figure 28.6)
  - *The Bayeux Tapestry* (Figures 11.7a, 11.7b)



Figure 29.11: Faith Ringgold, *Dancing at the Louvre* from the series *The French Collection, Part I; #1*, 1991, acrylic on canvas, with fabric borders, Private Collection



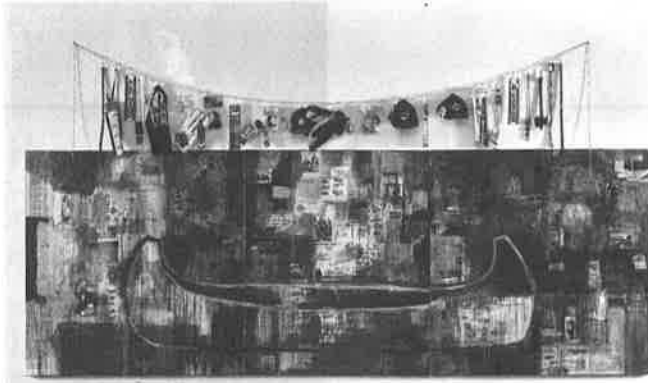


Figure 29.12: Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith, *Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)*, 1992, oil and mixed media, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk

**Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith, *Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)*, 1992, oil and mixed media, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk (Figure 29.12)**

- Member of the Salish and Kootenai American Indian tribes of the Flathead Nation
- Work meant as the “Quincentenary Non-Celebration” of European occupation of North America
- Collage elements and abstract expressionist brushwork
- Red paint symbolic of shedding of American Indian blood
- Newspaper clippings, images of conquest placed over a large dominant canoe
- American Indian social issues caused by European occupation stressed: poverty, unemployment, disease, alcoholism
- Array of objects sardonically representing Indian culture in the eyes of Europeans: sports teams, Indian-style knickknacks like toy tomahawks, dolls, and arrows
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Multi-Media Works and Installations**
  - Paik, *Electronic Superhighway* (Figure 29.17)
  - Osario, *No Crying Allowed in the Barbershop* (Figure 29.15a)
  - Shonibare, *The Swing (after Fragonard)* (Figure 29.22)

**Emily Kame Kngwarreye, *Earth's Creation*, 1994, synthetic polymer, paint on canvas, Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs, Australia (Figure 29.13)**

- Australian aborigine artist
- Simulates the color and lushness of the “green time” in Australia after the rains when the outback flourishes
- Dump dot technique using the brush to pound the color into the canvas and create layers of color and movement
- Four panels, eleven meters wide
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Landscape**
  - Fan Kuan, *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* (Figure 24.5)
  - Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (Figure 21.10)
  - Cole, *Oxbow* (Figure 20.6)



Figure 29.13: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, *Earth's Creation*, 1994, synthetic polymer, paint on canvas, Mbantua Gallery, Alice Springs, Australia



**Shirin Neshat, photo by Cynthia Preston, *Rebellious Silence*, from the Women of Allah series, 1994, ink on photograph, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York (Figure 29.14)**

- Iranian-born artist, raised in the United States
- Chador: a type of outer garment, like a cloak, that allows only the face and hands of Iranian women to be seen
- Chador keeps women's bodies from being seen as sexual objects
- Poem on face written in Farsi, the Persian language; poem expresses piety
- Poem by an Iranian woman who writes poetry on gender issues
- Gun divides body into a darker and lighter side
- Gun adds a note of ominous tension in the work
- Westerners view the work as an expression of female oppression
- Iranians could view the work as an obedient right-minded woman who is ready to die defending her faith and customs
- Black and white photograph
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Portraits**
  - *Sin Sukju* (Figure 24.6)
  - Roman Patrician (Figure 6.14)
  - Vigée Le Brun, *Self-Portrait* (Figure 19.2)

**Pepón Osorio, *En la Barbería no se Lloro* (*No Crying Allowed in the Barbershop*), 1994, mixed media installation (Figures 29.15a and 29.15b)**

- Puerto Rican-born artist living in New York
- Large installation recreating the center of Latino male culture: the barbershop
- Challenges the viewer to question issues of identity, masculinity, culture, and attitudes
- Interior of a barbershop in which “no crying is allowed”—a masculine attribute
- Photos of Latino men on the walls
- Video screens on the headrests depict men playing, a baby being circumcised, and men crying
- Appropriately tacky and grimy setting
- Kitsch items used everywhere as symbols of consumer culture
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Gender Identification**
  - Veranda post (Figure 27.14)
  - Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People* (Figure 20.4)
  - Hogarth, *The Tête à Tête* (Figure 19.3)



Figure 29.14: Shirin Neshat, photo by Cynthia Preston, *Rebellious Silence*, from the Women of Allah series, 1994, ink on photograph, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York



Figure 29.15a: Pepón Osorio, *En la Barbería no se Lloro* (*No Crying Allowed in the Barbershop*), 1994, mixed media installation



Figure 29.15b: Alternate view of Figure 29.15a



Figure 29.16: Michel Tuffery, *Pisupo Lua Afe (Corned Beef 2000)*, 1994, mixed media, Collection of the Artist

**Michel Tuffery, *Pisupo Lua Afe (Corned Beef 2000)*, 1994, mixed media, Collection of the Artist (Figure 29.16)**

- Artist born in New Zealand of Samoan, Cook Islands, and Tahitian descent
- Interest in Polynesian heritage
- Life-size sculpture of a bull made from flattened cans of corned beef
- Canned corned beef a favorite food in Polynesia; exported from New Zealand
- Canned meat (pisupo) given as gifts on special occasions in Polynesia
- Canned meat a major contributor to Polynesian obesity
- Introduction of canned meat caused a fall in traditional cultural skills of fishing, cooking, and agriculture
- Static sculpture with small concealed wheels at the feet for ease of movement
- Theme of recycling emphasized by the reuse of these cans
- Two motorized bulls often engage in multi-media performance art called *The Challenge*

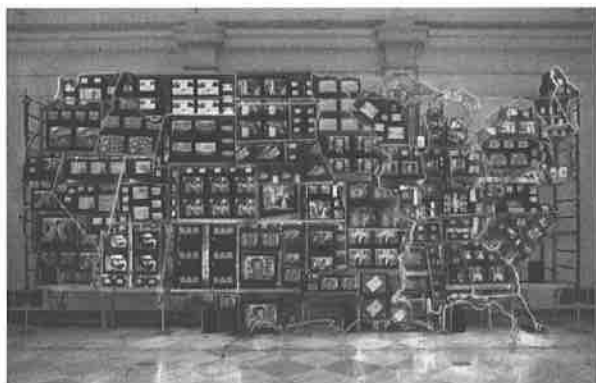


Figure 29.17: Naum June Paik, *Electronic Superhighway*, 1995, mixed media, Smithsonian American Art Museum

**Naum June Paik, *Electronic Superhighway*, 1995, mixed media (49-channel closed-circuit video installation, neon, steel, and electronic components), Smithsonian American Art Museum (Figure 29.17)**

- Korean-born artist who lived in New York City
- Neon lighting outlines fifty states and District of Columbia (Alaska and Hawaii are on side walls)

- Each state has a separate video feed; total of 313 monitors
- A camera is turned on the spectator and its TV feed appears in the monitors for New York State; it turns the spectator into a participant in the artwork
- Paik intrigued by maps and travel: neon outlines symbolize multi-colored maps of each state; fascination with the interstate highway system; neon symbolizes motel and restaurant signs
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: New Media for Its Time**
  - Daguerre, *Still Life in Studio* (Figure 20.8)
  - The Colosseum (Figures 6.8a, 6.8b)
  - Cranach, *Allegory of Law and Grace* (Figure 14.5)



Figure 29.18a: Bill Viola, *The Crossing*, 1996, video and sound installation, room dimensions: 16 × 27.5 × 57 ft, performer: Phil Esposito, photo: Kira Perov

**Bill Viola, *The Crossing*, 1996, video and sound installation, room dimensions: 16 × 27.5 × 57 ft, performer: Phil Esposito, photo: Kira Perov (Figures 29.18a and 29.18b)**

- Artist born in Queens, New York
- Promoted video as an art form
- Video installations are total environments

- Two channels of color video projections from opposite sides of large dark gallery onto two large back-to-back screens suspended from ceiling and mounted to floor; four channels of amplified stereo sound, four speakers
- *The Crossing* is two channels of video projected on to a twelve-foot-tall double-sided screen. On one side, a figure approaches from a long distance. As he stops, a small flame appears at his feet and spreads rapidly to engulf him in a roaring fire. When it subsides, the man is gone.
- On the opposite side a similar scene unfolds. But when the figure stops, a stream of water begins to pour upon his head. It quickly turns into a raging torrent, inundating the man. When the water slows, the man is gone.
- Two video screens: free-standing, double-sided projections
- Fire: flames consume the figure of a man, beginning at his feet
- Water: man walks toward the viewer and water falls from above
- Figures walk in extremely slow motion
- Actions repeat again and again
- Interested in sense perceptions
- Implied cycle of purification and destruction
- Evokes eastern and western spiritual traditions: Zen Buddhism, Islamic Sufism, Christian mysticism
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Motion**
  - Muybridge, *The Horse in Motion* (Figure 21.5)
  - Nike of Samothrace (Figure 4.8)
  - Presentation of Fijian mats (Figure 2.10)



Figure 29.18b: Bill Viola, *The Crossing*

**Mariko Mori, *Pure Land*, 1998, color photograph on glass, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California (Figure 29.19)**

- Japanese artist
- Artist uses a creative interpretation of traditional Japanese art forms
- Romanticized views of popular culture
- Mori herself appears as if in a vision in the guise of the Heian deity Kichijōten
- Kichijōten is the essence of beauty and harbinger of prosperity and happiness
- She holds a wish-granting jewel, a *nyoi hōju*, which has the power to deny evil and fulfill wishes
- Jewel symbolizes Buddha's universal mind
- Animated figures of lighthearted aliens play musical instruments on clouds
- Merging of consumer entertainment fantasies with traditional Japanese imagery
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Photography**
  - Daguerre, *Still Life in Studio* (Figure 20.8)
  - Muybridge, *The Horse in Motion* (Figure 21.5)
  - Stieglitz, *The Steerage* (Figure 22.8)



Figure 29.19: Mariko Mori, *Pure Land*, 1998, color photograph on glass, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California

**Kiki Smith, *Lying with the Wolf*, 2001, ink and pencil on paper (Figure 29.20)**

- American artist, born in Germany, lives in New York City
- Nude female figure; theme of Smith's work is the human body
- Large wrinkled drawing, pinned to a wall; reminiscent of a table cloth or bed sheet
- Female strength emphasized in the woman lying down with the wild beast
  - Wolf seems tamed by the woman's embrace
  - Wolf seen as a traditionally evil or dangerous symbol, but not here
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Stereotypes**
  - Osario, *No Crying Allowed in the Barbershop* (Figure 29.15a)
  - Salcedo, *Shibboleth* (Figure 29.26)
  - Lawrence, *The Migration of the Negro, Panel no. 49* (Figure 22.19)



Figure 29.20: Kiki Smith, *Lying with the Wolf*, 2001, ink and pencil on paper

**Kara Walker, *Darkytown Rebellion*, 2001, cut paper and projection on wall, Collection Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg (Figure 29.21)**

- California-born, New York-based, African-American artist
- **Technique:**
  - draws images with a greasy white pencil or soft pastel crayon on large pieces of black paper; cuts paper with a knife
  - images adhered to gallery wall with wax
  - traditional silhouette forms
  - overhead projectors throw colored light onto the walls, ceilings, floor
  - cast shadows of the viewer's body that mingle with the black paper images
- Exploration of African-Americans in the antebellum South: teenager holds a flag that resembles a colonial ship sail; one man has his leg cut off; a woman aborting a child; a woman caring for newborns
- Viewer interacts with the work, walking around it, engaging in elements of it; we are part of the history of the piece
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Wall Surfaces**
  - Lascaux Caves, Great Hall of the Bulls (Figure 1.8)
  - Tomb of the Triclinium (Figure 5.3)
  - Michelangelo, *Sistine Chapel Ceiling* (Figure 16.2a)



Figure 29.21: Kara Walker, *Darkytown Rebellion*, 2001, cut paper and projection on wall, Collection Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg

**Yinka Shonibare, *The Swing (after Fragonard)*, 2001, mixed media installation, Tate, London (Figure 29.22)**

- Artist is British born of Nigerian descent; lives and works in London
- Inspired by Fragonard's *The Swing* (Figure 19.1)
- Life-size headless mannequin



Figure 29.22: Yinka Shonibare, *The Swing (after Fragonard)*, 2001, mixed media installation, Tate, London

- Dress made of African print fabric
- Flowering vines cast to the floor
- Two men in the Fragonard painting are not included; audience takes the place of the men; erotic voyeurism
- Headless figure: guillotined by the French Revolution

**El Anatsui, *Old Man's Cloth*, 2003, aluminum liquor bottle caps and copper wire (Figure 29.23)**

- Artist born in Ghana, spent much of his career in Nigeria
- 1000 drink tops joined by wire to form a cloth-like hanging
- Bottle caps from a distillery in Nigeria
- Artist uses power tools like chain saws and welding torches
- Converts found materials into a new type of media that lies someplace between painting and sculpture
- Recycling of found objects
- Colorful textured wall hangings; relates to West African textiles
- Combines aesthetic traditions of his home country of Ghana, his adopted country of Nigeria, and the global art movement of abstract art
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Cloth**
  - All-T'oqapu Tunic (Figure 26.10)
  - Hiapo (Figure 28.6)
  - Funeral Banner of Lady Dai (Figure 24.4)

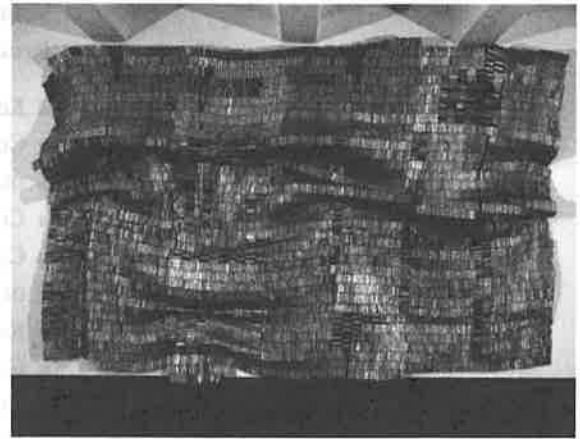


Figure 29.23: El Anatsui, *Old Man's Cloth*, 2003, aluminum liquor bottle caps and copper wire

**Julie Mehretu, *Stadia II*, 2004, ink and acrylic on canvas, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (Figure 29.24)**

- Artist born in Ethiopia, lives and works in New York City
- Paints large scale paintings
- Although paintings done with abstract elements, titles allude to meaning
- Stylized renderings of stadium architecture
- Forms suggest the excitement, almost frenzy, of a competition held in a circular space surrounded by international images
- Dynamic competition suggested in sweeping lines that create a vibrant pulse
- Uses multi-layered lines to create animation in the work
- Sweeping lines create depth, focus of attention around a central core from which colors, icons, flags, and symbols resonate
- Cf. Kandinsky's abstractions (Figure 22.2)
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Images of Entertainment**
  - The Colosseum (Figure 6.8a, 6.8b)
  - *Seated Boxer* (Figure 4.10)
  - Basquiat, *Horn Players* (Figure 29.5)

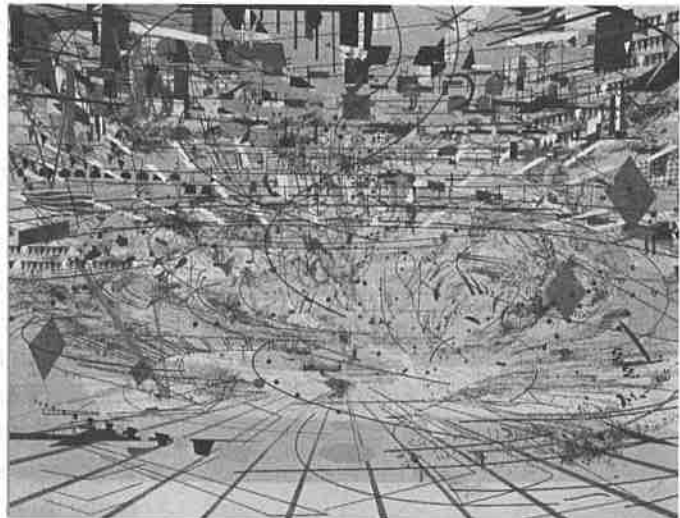


Figure 29.24: Julie Mehretu, *Stadia II*, 2004, ink and acrylic on canvas, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh

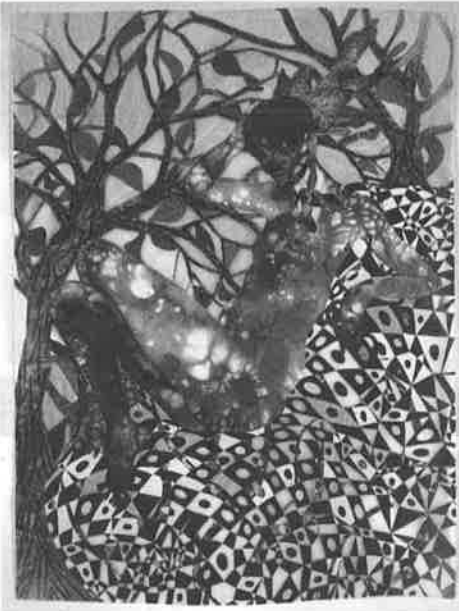


Figure 29.25: Wangechi Mutu, *Preying Mantra*, 2006, mixed media on mylar, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York

**Wangechi Mutu, *Preying Mantra*, 2006, mixed media on mylar, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York (Figure 29.25)**

- Kenya-born, New York-based artist
- Collaged female figures composed of human, animal, object, and machine parts
- Commentary on the female persona in art history
- Cyborg: a person whose function is aided by a mechanical device or whose powers are enhanced by computer implants
- Reclines in a relaxed position
- Green snake interlocks with her fingers; bird feathers in the back of the head
- Left ear lobe has chicken feet, insect legs, and pinchers
- Blotched skin
- Ironic twist on the praying mantis:
  - suggests religious rituals
  - *mantis* means “prophet” in Greek
  - insects use camouflage; this figure seems camouflaged

**Doris Salcedo, *Shibboleth*, 2007–2008, installation, Tate Modern, London (Figure 29.26)**



Figure 29.26: Doris Salcedo, *Shibboleth*, 2007–2008, installation, Tate Modern, London

- Colombian sculptor
- Installation that features a large crack that begins as a hairline and then widens to two feet in depth
- Floor of the museum was opened and a cast of Colombian rock faces was inserted
- Stresses the interaction between sculpture and space
- *Shibboleth*: a word or custom that a person not familiar with a language may mispronounce; used to identify foreigners or people of another class
- Shibboleth is meant to exclude people from joining a group
- The crack emphasizes the gap in relationships; a reminder of the disruption in spaces
- References racism and colonialism; keeping people away or separating them
- Installation now sealed, but exists as a scar, commemorates life of the underclasses
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Works on the Ground**
  - Smithson, *Spiral Jetty* (Figure 22.26)
  - Great Serpent Mound (Figure 26.4)
  - Weiwei, *Sunflower Seeds* (Figure 29.27)



**Ai Weiwei, *Kui Hua Zi (Sunflower Seeds)*, 2010–2011, sculpted and painted porcelain, Tate Modern, London (Figure 29.27)**

- Chinese artist
- Installation containing millions of individually handcrafted ceramic pieces resembling sunflower seeds
- They symbolically represent an ocean of fathomless depth; each seed is made in Jingdezhen, a city known for its porcelain production in Imperial China
- 600 artisans worked for two years, each seed hand-painted
- Sunflower seeds were eaten as a source of food during the famine era under Mao Tze-tung
- Ideology of Chairman Mao: he was the sun, his followers were the seeds
- Originally you could walk on the installation, but it raised harmful ceramic dust, viewing was then limited to the sidelines
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Installations**
  - Osario, *No Crying Allowed in the Barbershop* (Figures 29.15a, 29.15b)
  - Bing, *A Book from the Sky* (Figures 29.8a, 29.8b)
  - Shonibare, *The Swing (after Fragonard)* (Figure 29.22)



Figure 29.27: Ai Weiwei, *Kui Hua Zi (Sunflower Seeds)*, 2010–2011, sculpted and painted porcelain, Tate Modern, London

## VOCABULARY

**Action Painting:** an abstract painting in which the artist drips or splatters paint onto a surface like a canvas in order to create his or her work (Figure 22.26)

**Assemblage:** a three-dimensional work made of various materials such as wood, cloth, paper, and miscellaneous objects (Figure 29.13)

**Earthwork:** a large outdoor work in which the earth itself is the medium (Figure 22.26)

**Installation:** a temporary work of art made up of assemblages created for a particular space, like an art gallery or a museum (Figure 29.22)

**Kitsch:** something of low quality that appeals to popular taste (Figure 29.9)

## SUMMARY

Contemporary art defies categorization because artists easily adapt to new styles and artistic impulses. Therefore, movements are intense but fleeting, and influenced by current politics and culture. Minimalists designed works that show a modern predilection for clean, open, and simple forms. Site Art expresses an awareness of the surroundings a work of art may have, and insists on a mutual coexistence of the object and its environment. Awareness of feminist issues influenced not only the production of Feminist Art, but also spurred the growth of female collectors, artists, and gallery owners.

Contemporary artists have a great range of materials and venues to express themselves—perhaps more than any other time in history. Artists experiment both with new art forms and with new ideas to create a dynamic range of effects. Architecture has been particularly affected by the growth of technology, both in the planning stages by using a computer, and in the construction phases by using new types of metal and glass.

Modern art is sensitive to all contemporary issues—setting, world politics, technological advances, new techniques, and to the dynamics of the art market itself.



## PRACTICE EXERCISES

### Multiple-Choice

- All of the following are site specific works EXCEPT
  - Maya Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial
  - Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*
  - Doris Salcedo, *Shibboleth*
  - Bill Viola, *The Crossing*
- Song Su-nam's *Summer Trees* references the
  - Asian tradition of painting with ink
  - Chinese tradition of painting on the scroll format
  - Korean tradition of painting screens that separate rooms
  - Japanese tradition of woodblock prints popular in Europe
- Australian aboriginal artists such as Emily Kame Kngwarreye rely on their traditions for their work, while maintaining a presence in the contemporary global art world. Kngwarreye's work differs from traditional Pacific art in that it
  - has no emphasis on color
  - does not use patterns and markings
  - is not done for display
  - does not have figures
- The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is designed so that the viewer would
  - think about the glory of war and ultimate victory
  - descend into a grave-like setting to remember the dead
  - commemorate the ultimate sacrifice people made to ensure peace
  - be able to protest American involvement in foreign wars
- The anthropomorphized human figure in Wangchi Mutu's *Preying Mantra* symbolizes
  - the ancient tradition of combining human and animal forms in a single figure as a commentary on natural selection
  - a commentary on the depiction of females in works of art
  - an overreliance on computers and machines rather than direct human contact
  - the crisis in global warming and its effect on all of us

## Short Essay

This work is *Electronic Superhighway* by Nam June Paik, created in 1995. Paik was fascinated by new media and what it can bring to the artistic expression.



What new media is being explored here?

Using specific evidence, discuss how the new media is being used *and* what commentary it has on the American experience.

Identify another work from the art history curriculum that uses new media *and* discuss how the new media creates a new way to express artistic ideas.

### ANSWER KEY

1. **D** 2. **A** 3. **D** 4. **B** 5. **B**

### ANSWERS EXPLAINED

#### Multiple-Choice

1. **(D)** Although Bill Viola's work does need a darkened room to play effectively for an audience, the room can be placed anywhere. It does not have to be in a particular location. The other works were designed for their exact locations.
2. **(A)** Painting with ink is an Asian specialty. Su-nam's work continues that tradition.
3. **(D)** Most art from the Pacific region is traditionally figural. Kngwarreye's work is primarily abstract.
4. **(B)** The Vietnam Veteran's Memorial is about remembering the dead, and so it is appropriate that the viewer descend into a grave-like setting to see the impact of the names as they rise above them.
5. **(B)** Mutu's work *Preying Mantra* references depictions of females in art history from Titian to Manet.

## Short-Essay Rubric

Question	Points	Key Points in a Good Response
What new media is being explored here?	1	Closed-circuit video installation, with video recorders, televisions, neon frames, steel compartments, and various electronic components
Using specific evidence, discuss how the new media is being used <i>and</i> what commentary it has on the American experience.	2	<p>Answers could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Each state has a separate video feed; total of 313 monitors</li> <li>■ A camera is turned on the spectator, and its TV feed appears in the monitors for New York State; it turns the spectator into a participant in the artwork.</li> <li>■ Paik was intrigued by maps and travel as part of the American experience:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- neon outlines symbolize multi-colored maps of each state</li> <li>- fascination with the interstate highway system</li> <li>- neon symbolizes motel and restaurant signs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Identify another work from the art history curriculum that uses new media <i>and</i> discuss how the new media creates a new way to express artistic ideas.	2	<p>Answers could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Bill Viola, <i>The Crossing</i></li> <li>■ Kara Walker, <i>Darkytown Rebellion</i></li> <li>■ Mariko Mori, <i>Pure Land</i></li> </ul>