Ree Morton
b. 1936; Ossining, NY
d. 1977; Chicago, IL

Signs of Love, 1976
Acrylic, oil, colored pencil, watercolor and pastel on nitrocellulose-impregnated canvas, wood, and canvas with felt

Gift of the Ree Morton Estate 90.2a–n

Ree Morton's *Signs of Love* combines painting, sculpture, and aspects of theater design, using the wall and floor as both canvas and stage. This sprawling installation features objects and words associated with romantic love but lacks a clear narrative. Festooned ladders lead nowhere, for example, and the subjects of a pair of portraits in a faux-Renaissance style are a mystery. Emboldened by the growing feminist movement, Morton explored the possibilities of what she termed a "female sensibility," both embracing and skewering the trappings of conventional womanhood. The imagery, palette, and objects in *Signs of Love* are unapologetically sentimental and lighthearted. The work's decorative ribbons, garlands, and banners—key motifs in her art—were crafted from Celastic, a plastic material that becomes pliable like fabric for a brief period when wet but hardens upon drying.

Anni Albers
b. 1899; Berlin, Germany
d. 1994, Orange, CT

Line Involvements II, 1964
Lithograph

Line Involvements VI, 1964
Lithograph

Purchase with funds from the Drawing and Print Committee and Sheree and Jerry Freidman T.2019.313.3, T.2019.313.7

Anni Albers's *Line Involvements*, a suite of seven lithographs, is among the artist's first efforts at printmaking. Albers is primarily known for abstract, woven wall hangings and tapestries. She first learned to weave in 1922 as a student at the Bauhaus, an experimental German art school, and she went on to become a prolific innovator in the field and to influence countless artists working both on and off the loom. Albers turned to printmaking in 1963; "In lithography," she explained, "the image of threads could project a freedom I had never suspected." By the end of the 1960s Albers had stopped hand-weaving altogether and instead focused on printmaking for the rest of her career.

Curator Jennie Goldstein discusses these prints.

603

Ruth Asawa
b. 1926; Norwalk, CA
d. 2013; San Francisco, CA

Untitled (S.270, Hanging Six-Lobed, Complex Interlocking Continuous Form within a Form with Two Interior Spheres), 1955 (refabricated 1957–58)
Brass and steel wire

Gift of Howard Lipman 63.38

On a 1947 visit to Toluca, Mexico, while a student at Black Mountain College, Ruth Asawa was introduced to a local method of crocheting wire to create baskets for carrying eggs. The discovery led Asawa to experiment with weaving wire into continuous, organic forms like *Untitled*. These works challenged conventional ideas of sculpture by embracing utilitarian craft methods and relying on the ceiling instead of the floor for support. In the early 1950s, Asawa later explained, the art establishment passed over her work because "it wasn't traditional sculpture. They thought it was craft, or something else, but not art." For Asawa, woven wire offered many possibilities of form and resulted in a work that was both transparent and airy, qualities that make the surrounding space part of the experience of the work and emphasize the connection between the interior and exterior of the object.

Hear about Asawa's explorations in wire.

▷ 601 ▷ 601 Kids

Sheila Hicks
b. 1934; Hastings, NE

Vanishing Yellow, 1964 (reconstructed 2004)
Cotton

Untitled, 1969
Cotton

Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody

Sheila Hicks first created small textiles like *Untitled* in the late 1950s. Inspired by precolonial artifacts she saw and contemporary weavers she met while studying painting in Latin America, and with the encouragement of her teachers Josef and Anni Albers, Hicks began to experiment with form and color in textiles. She first produced these works on an improvised hand loom fashioned from the wood bars used to support a canvas, literally merging the materials of her old practice with her new mode of making. Rather than pursue the look of technical standardization, Hicks used variable coloring, uneven edges, and clotted lines to evoke a gestural sketch—like a drawing in thread.

Agnes Martin
b. 1912; Macklin, Canada
d. 2004; Taos, NM

Untitled, c. 1960
Ink on paper

Untitled, 1964
Ink and wash on paper

Promised gift of Emily Fisher Landau P.2010.203, P.2010.204

In the 1960s, Agnes Martin used repeated, interwoven lines to create meditative, minimalist drawings. In the wake of Abstract Expressionism, an artistic movement that favored a bold and expressive use of paint, Martin's approach was noteworthy for its simplicity and subdued color palette. Rather than pulling the eye to a single form, her drawings convey a sense of balance in which the faint pencil lines over- and underlap one another—each integral to the overall work, like the weave of fabric. Martin worked in close proximity to artists Lenore Tawney and Ann Wilson during this period as part of the Coenties Slip artist community, and shared, especially with Tawney, an interest in Indigenous textiles of the Americas. Though not a weaver herself, Martin conjured the ethos and look of this technique in her drawings through their gridded regularity as well as their handmade imperfections.

Lenore G. Tawney
b. 1907; Lorain, OH
d. 2007; New York, NY

Four Petaled Flower II, 1974
Woven linen and steel rods

Gift of the Lenore G. Tawney Foundation 2014.298

Four Petaled Flower II exemplifies the "open warp" weaving technique developed by Lenore Tawney. At the center of the work, the fabric opens into exposed warp (the vertical support threads of a woven textile), revealing the otherwise invisible internal structure of the weave and allowing light to peek through the expanse of black. Moving beyond the flat, rectangular forms of traditional weaving, Tawney broke new creative ground by re-imagining textiles as three-dimensional sculptural objects hung away from the wall.

The film on view nearby, *Cloud Dance*, captures an improvised performance by Andy de Groat within Tawney's *Four-Armed Cloud* (1979), an installation comprised of 13,000 linen threads, which hung alongside *Four Petaled Flower II* at the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton.

Hear curator Elisabeth Sherman on Tawney's work.

604

Ann Wilson
b. 1931; Pittsburgh, PA

Moby Dick, 1955
Acrylic on found quilt mounted on canvas

Purchase with funds from The Dietrich Brothers Americana Corporation 71.184

Ann Wilson created *Moby Dick*, the first of her abstract "quilt paintings," after finding a discarded quilt in a seaside dump. For Wilson, quilts were reminders of her upbringing in Western Pennsylvania and the handiwork of her female relatives. Using the salvaged quilt as a canvas, instead of as a functional object, Wilson partially overpainted grids along the fabric's seams, revealing the form's underlying geometry. At the time, Wilson was working in Coenties Slip among a community of artists who kept studios in vacant buildings near Manhattan's southern harbor that had been abandoned by the declining shipping industry. The work's title evokes the area's maritime history—Coenties Slip is mentioned in the opening chapter of Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (1859). Rather than exalting this epic American narrative, the methods Wilson uses to make *Moby Dick* emphasize the complicated layers that create history—like a patchwork of tradition, subject to decay and regeneration.

Claes Oldenburg
b. 1929; Stockholm, Sweden

Giant BLT (Bacon, Lettuce, and Tomato Sandwich), 1963
Vinyl, kapok, painted wood, and wood

Gift of The American Contemporary Art Foundation Inc., Leonard A. Lauder, President 2002.255a–s

In the early 1960s Claes Oldenburg began creating comically large send-ups of common household items and foodstuffs using a variety of soft materials. Like many artists working at this time, he depicted consumer culture in order to both reflect on and critique a rapidly changing society. To make *Giant BLT (Bacon, Lettuce, and Tomato Sandwich)*, Oldenburg enlisted the assistance of his then-wife Patty Mucha to sew the forms in vinyl before he filled them with kapok, a type of tree fiber. Oldenburg's choice to make sculpture from custom-stitched fabrics underscores the anxiety felt by many who worried that handwork would be entirely replaced by mechanized fabrication. He further emphasized the tension between carefully made bespoke items and mass-produced consumer goods by commissioning Richard Artschwager—whose work is on view nearby—to fashion the finely carved wooden toothpick that holds the sandwich together.

Oldenburg shares his thoughts on scale and vinyl.

▷ 610

Yayoi Kusama
b. 1929; Matsumoto, Japan

Accumulation, c. 1963
Sewn and stuffed fabric, wood chair frame, enamel paint

Purchase 2001.342

In 1961, Yayoi Kusama began to densely cover everyday objects such as chairs, tables, bookcases, and clothing with phallic forms. She constructed these components from sewn canvas stuffed with fabric, and then coated the resulting sculptures with monochrome enamel paint. Kusama has referred to her obsessive production of these protuberances as “psychosomatic” art through which she could work out her anxieties around sex and her frustrations with the patriarchal systems she encountered in both Japan and the New York art world.

Hear about Kusama’s “psychosomatic” art.

611

Richard Artschwager
b. 1923; Washington, DC
d. 2013; Albany, NY

Description of Table, 1964
Formica on plywood

Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation Inc. 66.48

Howardena Pindell
b. 1943; Philadelphia, PA

Untitled, 1974–75
Acrylic and punched paper on canvas

Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody

To create this work, Howardena Pindell took the grid, a formal device closely associated with geometric abstraction, as a starting point for an exploration of process. She then spray-painted over the surface through stencils that she made from punching holes into stiff poster board and rather than discarding the paper chads, she scattered and affixed them across the surface. This accumulation process was inspired by techniques used in *adire eleko*, a textile tradition practiced by Yoruba women in Nigeria that uses stencils to transfer patterns. The frayed edge of *Untitled* highlights Pindell's textilelike treatment of her paintings. Here, the pastel-colored dots overlap and burst out of the grids—an expression of her desire to expand the possibilities of abstraction as an art form.

Pindell describes her creative approach to the grid.

612

Miriam Schapiro
b. 1923; Toronto, Canada
d. 2015; Hampton Bays, NY

The Beauty of Summer, 1973–74
Acrylic and fabric on canvas

Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody

In 1972, Miriam Schapiro began to incorporate textiles onto painted canvas surfaces. The materials she chose—including patterned fabric, lace, crocheted doilies, embroidered handkerchiefs, and aprons, among others—were associated with women's work in the home. She called this method "Femmage," combining the feminine associations of her chosen materials with her collage-based method. Works like *The Beauty of Summer* demonstrate her pointed rejection of the hard-edge abstract mode in which she had worked in the 1960s. This stylistic change coincided with a profound ideological one: Schapiro embraced feminism and realized that she no longer subscribed to the belief that art could be separated from social reality. Instead, she endeavored to celebrate "the decorative," a term that had long been pejoratively linked to femininity.

Schapiro talks about the politics of her work.

621

Faith Ringgold
b. 1930; New York, NY

Feminist Series: Of My Two Handicaps
#10 of 20, 1972/1993
Acrylic on canvas, framed in cloth

Collection of the artist; courtesy ACA Galleries, New York

This painting from Faith Ringgold's Feminist Series includes a quote from Shirley Chisholm, who in 1968 became the first Black congresswoman. The text, which reads "Of my two handicaps, being female put more obstacles in my path than being Black," helped Ringgold articulate her frustrations with gender and racial inequity.

Ringgold's chosen materials and format also refer to her growing investment in the women's movement. *"Of My Two Handicaps"* is made in the form of a *thangka*, a type of painted Tibetan hanging scroll. When Ringgold first encountered thangkas in 1972, she had been painting on stretched canvas, often at large scale, and she found this ancient format full of possibility. She had grown up around fabric and sewing—her mother, Willi Posey, worked as a fashion designer in Harlem—and was determined that she needed to "stop denying the part of me that loves making things with cloth."

Emmi Whitehorse
b. 1957; Crownpoint, NM

Another Blanket, 1983
Graphite wash, graphite pencil, colored pencil, and oil pastel on paper

Gift of Beth Elpern Burrows 2008.266

Emmi Whitehorse derives the imagery in her works from her experiences and memories of *Dinétah*, the Navajo homeland around Whitehorse Lake, New Mexico, where she spent her childhood. There, Whitehorse, who is Navajo, watched her grandmother weave blankets. "My grandmother wove a lot of contemporary images," Whitehorse recalled. "From watching her, I learned to see space. I got a sense from her about how to get three-dimensionality from a flat surface." In *Another Blanket*, Whitehorse's layering of materials results in an atmospheric ground from which delicate lines, forms, and colors subtly emerge. Rather than depicting a specific pattern, this drawing points to other ways of understanding textiles: as memory, as light, and as connected to land.

Betty Woodman
b. 1930; Norwalk, CT
d. 2018; New York, NY

Hydrangea, 1987
Glazed earthenware, two parts

Gift of Flora Miller Biddle 2014.90a–b

When Betty Woodman began her career in the 1950s, she worked as a potter, making objects for use in the home. Although she soon became more concerned with sculptural forms, many of her ceramics retained an element of functionality. *Hydrangea*, for instance, can be displayed with or without flowers. “The vase is the archetypal ceramic object,” Woodman explained. “It can operate as a vessel, it can be interpreted metaphorically, as a symbol for a (typically female) figure, and it can also hold numerous art historical references.” Throughout her career Woodman found inspiration for her forms, colors, and glazes from wide-ranging sources including ancient Greek and Etruscan sculpture, art made in China during the Tang dynasty, Italian Baroque architecture, and works by modern painters like Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. Ultimately, for Woodman, a vase is “a container; it has that connection for everyone.”

Mike Kelley
b. 1954; Detroit, MI
d. 2012; South Pasadena, CA

More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid and *The Wages of Sin*, 1987
Stuffed fabric toys and afghans on canvas with dried corn; wax candles on wood and metal base

Purchase with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee 89.13a–d

More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid is an assemblage of stuffed animals, handmade dolls, and blankets that Mike Kelley found in thrift stores, stitched together, and attached to canvas. The artist does not designate to whom the more "love hours" of the title are owed, but simply puts forward the conditions of loving something too much, or of receiving too little in return—like the cast-off items that make up the sculpture. Kelley considered craft to be "the literal embodiment of the Puritan work ethic" and the handmade object a labor of love; here he transformed the worn and orphaned toys into a swirling mass of unrequited affection. Similarly, the collection of melted candles in the related work at left, *The Wages of Sin*, becomes an altar to teen angst and the rite of passage into an "adult" world of labor, debt, and atonement. The influence of Kelly's Roman Catholic upbringing can be seen throughout his work, which frequently considers the symbolic nature of objects: how they are often idealized as relics but ultimately fail to achieve what they promise.

Kelley discusses childhood, love, and guilt.

▷ 631 ▷ 631 Kids

Rosie Lee Tompkins
b. 1936; Gould, AR
d. 2006; Richmond, CA

Three Sixes, 1986
Quilted polyester double-knit, wool jersey, and cotton

Purchase with funds from the Contemporary Painting and Sculpture Committee 2003.70

To make this quilt, Rosie Lee Tompkins drew on many techniques developed by Black women quilters in the American South, who blended West African textile traditions, European patterning, and individual improvisation in their art. Tompkins, who learned to quilt from her mother while growing up in rural Arkansas, sought solace in patchwork after struggling with mental health issues while working as a nurse in the late 1970s. Tompkins credited prayer as the inspiration for her abstract compositions and each of her quilts is coded with deeply personal significance. For *Three Sixes* she composed long strips of fabric by sewing together small, irregular rectangles—in this case six per strip—ensuring that no scrap went unused. The resulting complex grid pays homage to three of her relatives whose birth dates all include the number six.

Pepón Osorio
b. 1955; Santurce, Puerto Rico

Angel: The Shoe Shiner, 1993
Painted wood, rubber, fabric, glass, ceramic, shells, painted cast iron, hand-tinted photographs, paper, mirror, two video monitors, *Spitting* (video, color, silent; 00:05 min. looped), and *Shining* (video, color, silent; 00:40 min. looped)

Purchase with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee 93.100

This trinket-encrusted throne by Pepón Osorio pays tribute to a shoe shiner named Angel, whom the artist frequented for years. “His job was about giving and bringing light to other people,” Osorio explained, “but very little was given to him. So I made this piece in his honor.” Osorio incorporated two looping videos into the chair itself: on the top monitor a man spits and on the bottom one he buffs, a reference to the act of using saliva to add luster to a shine job and an acknowledgment of the repetitive nature of Angel’s daily work. Osorio—who moved from Puerto Rico to New York in 1975—draws from aspects of Nuyorican (New York Puerto Rican) aesthetics and culture. Through his use of plaster Virgin Mary figurines, ceramic baby shoes, and metal leaf, Osorio’s installation reflects both the practice of imitating material riches and the delight found in a glittering array of cultural references and artifacts.

Hear Osorio on his encounters with Angel the shoe shiner.

630

Liza Lou
b. 1969; New York, NY

Kitchen, 1991–96
Beads, plaster, wood, and found objects

Gift of Peter Norton 2008.339a–x

Liza Lou worked for five years to make this installation. Her labor-intensive process included sourcing used appliances; constructing numerous elements in wood, plaster, and papier-mâché; and meticulously applying the small beads that cover every surface thoroughly, even those that are not visible, like the inside of the bowl on the table, which says “yum!” under the cereal.

Despite the work’s alluring surface, a biting critique emerges from beneath the shimmering veneer. An excerpt of a poem by Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) speaks to the subjugation of women in marriage. In this context, the cheerfully branded products in Lou’s *Kitchen* expose the contradictions that run throughout the marketing of American household goods, which promises the delights of homemaking while strategically ignoring the gender inequality of the traditional division of labor. On the open oven door, there is an image of Aunt Jemima—a racist logo depicting a Black woman as a smiling domestic servant. Less problematic products appearing in the work may be read ironically—the bottle of Joy dish detergent, for example, implies that one ought to feel a certain way when cleaning.

Nick Cave
b. 1959; Fulton, MO

Soundsuit #20, 2005
Found sequins and hand-beading on fabric

Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody

Soundsuit #20 belongs to a series of wearable sculptures Nick Cave has imagined as both symbols of protection and assertions of strength. He created the first Soundsuit in response to the violent 1991 beating of Rodney King, an African American construction worker, by Los Angeles police officers. Reflecting on the danger that such institutionalized racism poses for Black men in particular, Cave conceived of a garment that, like this one, is based on the scale of his own body and conceals individual identity.

Across hundreds of iterations of the suit, Cave has made elaborately ornamented garments out of found materials, such as the beaded coasters and sequined appliqués seen here. Evoking an array of masquerade attire, from various modes of African ceremonial dress to Mardi Gras parade costumes, this work also suggests a form of devotional labor and ritual performance that celebrates Black communities, cultures, and heritage.

Cave talks about his Soundsuits and protest.

▷ 642 ▷ 642 Kids

Simone Leigh
b. 1967; Chicago, IL

Cupboard VIII, 2018
Stoneware, steel, raffia, and Albany slip clay

Gift of Bridgitt and Bruce Evans 2019.15

A multilayered representation of Black womanhood, *Cupboard VIII*, is a larger-than-life figure composed of forms that suggest clothing, a pot, shelter, and a bust of a woman. A trained ceramist who has long engaged with radical Black feminist thought, Simone Leigh developed her unique visual language from a wide variety of sources, including the art of ancient Egypt, traditional West African adobe structures, American vernacular architecture, craft, and in some cases even racist forms stemming from the Jim Crow era. Using evocative, tactile materials—here, raffia and stoneware— she examines the ways in which objects can embody and communicate specific cultural traditions and histories through both material and form. Leigh acknowledges the specificity of these references, which center the knowledge and experiences of Black women whom she sees as her primary audience.
As the artist's complex and contradictory sources would suggest, the figure here resists being reduced to outmoded notions of the female body as a vessel.

645 Kids

Jordan Nassar
b. 1985; New York, NY

A Lost Key, 2019
Hand embroidery on cotton and wood frame

Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez 2019.388

In his embroidered works, Jordan Nassar examines how information can be lost in translation between generations or illegible across cultures. Born in New York to a Palestinian-American father and Polish-American mother and married to an Israeli, Nassar works with *tatreez*, an ancient Palestinian cross-stitch embroidery technique, as a way of addressing his complex relationship to the Palestinian diaspora. Traditionally, tatreez motifs adorn garments or domestic items and convey details of the owner's biography, such as their village of origin. To make works like *A Lost Key*, Nassar alters existing patterns, creating his own vocabulary of stitches. He then sends them to women in Palestine—experts in tatreez—who fill in his designs with the color arrangements of their choice, leaving a blank rectangle. Nassar subsequently completes the work himself with an embroidered landscape that results, in his words, in an "imaginary utopian homeland."

Shan Goshorn
b. 1957; Baltimore, MD
d. 2018; Tulsa, OK

Red Flag, 2015
Woven inkjet prints with acrylic and artificial sinew

Roll Call, 2016
Woven inkjet prints with acrylic and artificial sinew

Purchase with funds from the Director's Discretionary Fund 2019.380, 2019.381

In 2008, Shan Goshorn, a citizen of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, taught herself how to make traditional Cherokee baskets. The works on view here incorporate printed text to address the legacy of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, one of many boarding schools founded in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the aim of forcing Native children to assimilate into white, settler culture. Students were punished for speaking their tribal languages and they often returned home unable to communicate with their families.

Red Flag combines a definition of the word *genocide* with prayers in Hebrew and Native languages and with names of children from the Carlisle School roster, among other things. For *Roll Call*, Goshorn wove the names of Cherokee students into a pattern that resembles DNA. Goshorn's baskets are a powerful reminder of the devastating and lasting impact these schools have had on Indigenous communities in North America.

Marie Watt
b. 1967; Seattle, WA

Skywalker/Skyscraper (Axis Mundi), 2012
Reclaimed wool blankets and steel

Purchase with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee T.2018.27

In *Skywalker/Skyscraper (Axis Mundi)* Marie Watt has pierced a stack of blankets with an I-beam, a reference to the Mohawk ironworkers who helped build many of Manhattan's skyscrapers during the construction boom that began in the 1920s. The workers were called "skywalkers" because they labored without safety harnesses.

Watt is an enrolled member of the Seneca Nation of Indians, which along with the Mohawk is among the six tribal nations that make up the Haudenosaunee (People of the long house). For Watt, the desire to construct skyscrapers reveals the human preoccupation with "reaching" the sky. The blankets, on the other hand, provide necessary connections back on the ground. As she has explained, "We are received in blankets, and we leave in blankets. The work . . . is inspired by the stories of those beginnings and endings, and the life in between."

Watt links her work to twentieth-century Mohawk ironworkers.

643