

Pre- & Post-visit Materials for Teachers

Images & Additional Information

2010

Whitney Biennial

February 25-May 30, 2010



Charles Ray, *Untitled*, 2009. Ink on paper, 47 x 31 1/2 in. (119.4 x 80 cm). Collection of the artist; courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

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Images for Pre and Post Discussions and Activities

2010



James Casebere, *Landscape with Houses (Dutchess County, NY) #1*, 2010. Digital chromogenic print, Edition of 5. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Photography Committee and the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation E.2009.1141

Images for Pre and Post Discussions and Activities

2010



James Casabere, *Landscape with Houses (Dutchess County, NY) #2*, 2010. Digital chromogenic print, Edition of 5. Collection of the artist; courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery, New York E.2009.1142

Images for Pre and Post Discussions and Activities

2010

For additional information about 2010 artists, please visit <http://www.whitney.org/Exhibitions/2010Biennial>

James Casebere's photographs transport viewers into ambiguous, evocative, and surreal environments. Casebere's process involves constructing tabletop models out of modest materials, such as Styrofoam, plaster, and cardboard. He then dramatically lights these constructions and carefully positions his camera to manipulate the composition and the mood of the resulting photograph. For *Landscape With Houses (Dutchess County, NY) 1* and *2*, Casebere constructed his grandest, most detailed model to date—a subdivision based on one in Dutchess County, New York.

Images for Pre and Post Discussions and Activities

Collecting Biennials



Duane Hanson, *Woman with Dog*, 1977. Cast polyvinyl polychromed in synthetic polymer, with cloth and hair, 46 x 48 x 51 1/2 in. (116.8 x 121.9 x 130.8 cm) overall. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from Frances and Sydney Lewis 78.6

Art © Estate of Duane Hanson/Licensed by [VAGA](#), New York, NY

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Collecting Biennials



Edward Hopper, *Early Sunday Morning*, 1930. Oil on canvas, 35 3/16 x 60 1/4 in. (89.4 x 153 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney 31.426

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Although **Duane Hanson** cast directly from an individual, his finished sculptures are never portraits of one particular person. He used his models as a starting point to create a type of person or character. Hanson's models for *Woman with Dog* were a housewife from Fort Lauderdale, near where he lived, and his cousin's pet poodle. Hanson's casting technique allowed him to create life-size, realistic sculptures of his subjects. Following the setting and assembly of the limbs, the artist accurately painted skin, veins, and blemishes adding to the life-like quality of his figures. He also included many real elements, such as her dress and underwear (purchased at a discount store, along with her slippers), her watch, her glasses, the chair she sits in, the rug, and the letters she is reading. The dog is made of ceramic but includes the poodle's actual hair clippings, collected from visits to the groomer. In a private moment, the woman is oblivious to the viewer's presence. Hanson's realism catches and retains the viewer's eye through the simple humanity of his subject.

One of **Edward Hopper's** most evocative works, *Early Sunday Morning* conveys the sense of isolation and solitude for which his art is renowned. Hopper described this painting as "almost a literal translation of Seventh Avenue" in New York City, yet he eliminated recognizable details and reduced the street to its bare essentials. Hopper also created a dramatic play of light and shadow on the empty street and buildings to convey an atmosphere that seems more theatrical than real. His "realism" is less involved with recording the photographic truths of a site than revealing a psychological reality, an emotion, or feeling.

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2010 Artist Information

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Nina Berman's photographs document the rarely explored effects and harsh realities of contemporary warfare. She engages the viewer with intimate images of the consequences of war that is often given short shrift in the popular media. The 2006 photographs on view in *2010* document the marriage of former Marine sergeant Ty Ziegel, then twenty-four, to his high school sweetheart, Renee Kline, twenty-one. After being severely disfigured in a suicide bomber's attack while stationed in Iraq, Ty underwent fifty reconstructive operations. Berman took spontaneous photographs of Ty and Renee in the weeks leading up to their wedding day and accompanied them when they had their wedding portrait taken. Berman returned to photograph Ty in 2008 and describes the later images as suggestive of "a comfortable acceptance with military culture despite the cost."

Dawn Clements's large-scale drawings depict interior domestic spaces, either her own surroundings or those in classic 1940s and 1950s Hollywood melodramas. She is especially interested in the idea of the home as a place of both comfort and confinement: "They are places, no matter how beautiful and wonderful they may appear, that are incarcerating of all these characters. The doors may be unlocked, but somehow the women can't walk out the door."

Sculptor, urban planner, and performance artist **Theaster Gates** has transformed the Whitney's Sculpture Court into an installation that functions as a communal gathering space for performances, social engagement, and contemplation. The spare architecture of the Main Pavilion references the artist's respect for Eastern philosophy and art, while the main shoe shine temple and its activity of shoe shining infuses labor with dignity and humility. These architectural structures also elevate the status of simple and found materials. The wood that comprises the Main Pavilion and surrounding pathways was salvaged from the former Wrigley gum factory in inner-city Chicago and cleaned by Gates for its conversion into the walls of his sacred space. Throughout *2010*, Gates will collaborate with historians, artists, and street musicians on a series of "monastic residencies." These creative residents will transform and reinvent the Sculpture Court by adding what Gates describes as "commentary, bling, and acts of sincerity" to the installation.

Kate Gilmore's work explores themes of displacement, struggle, and female identity. She is the sole protagonist in her performative videos, in which she attempts to conquer self-constructed obstacles. For this work, Gilmore's obstacle is a tall column made of sheetrock. She tries to climb up the column by kicking and punching holes into its walls, and each puncture reveals splashes of bright yellow paint from the interior of the two layers of sheetrock. She works through the limitations imposed by her feminine clothing—high-heels and a polka-dot dress—with sheer muscle power and desperate determination. Shot in one take, the outcome of her endeavor is unknown before the performance begins. Gilmore's tragicomic displays posit physical situations as metaphors for present-day conflicts and social obstacles.

Thomas Houseago creates figurative sculptures that appear physically imposing and powerful in their size and positioning yet fragmented and vulnerable in their construction. To construct these works, Houseago begins with a structure of iron rods and then adds a variety of traditional sculptural materials such as plaster, hemp, and wood. Some of his works incorporate graphite or charcoal sketches of faces and anatomy on plaster and wood panels. Monstrous yet

unthreatening, this work, called *Baby*,--a part-human, part-animal being, is in a transitional pose between walking and crawling, weighted on the flat expanses of its plaster hands and feet.

Martin Kersels's oversized assemblage of found and fabricated objects is at once a sculpture and a performance space that he and other artists, musicians, choreographers, and directors will use throughout the Biennial. While Kersels's sculptures have long incorporated action or performance, this project suggests a specific parallel between making art and making a pop music album. Each section of the stage is titled as a different "song," and in the way that an album is composed of "singles," each functions as an individual work and as a part of a larger whole. Serving as a space for performance, the objects also take on a time-based quality, one inherent in music, but not often associated with sculpture, and raise questions about the nature and possibilities of the medium.

Daniel McDonald blends images from popular culture with political satire in dollhouse-scale narrative tableaux that address contemporary social issues. His precisely detailed, three-dimensional dioramas are peopled with toy figurines from different, incongruous cultural sources. In this work, McDonald presents an allegory of the current U.S. economic crisis. American pop-music icon Michael Jackson, wearing garb from his epic 1982 music video *Thriller*, steps onto the boat of Charon, the ferryman who, in Greek mythology, transports the recently deceased to the underworld. While Jackson dutifully offers a coin as payment for his voyage, Uncle Sam, unconscious and inebriated at the other end of the boat, has no money to appease Charon. The drama of the scene is heightened with theatrical effects such as stage lighting, a smoke machine, and variations in scale.

Curtis Mann's photographs contain fragments of scenes that are partially erased and obscured. Mann's process draws attention to the artifice of the photographic medium by demonstrating the malleability of images. He begins by culling images of strife and conflict in various international locations from photosharing websites such as Flickr and then has prints made. Once he has the prints in hand he covers portions of the photographs with a protective varnish and pours bleach over each one, stripping away areas not coated with varnish.

In *After the Dust, Second View (Beirut)*, Mann has arranged a grid of snapshots of the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. Taken together, the images resemble remnants of an explosion. What remains are mostly fragments of buildings in settings that lack substantive visual clues, preventing a coherent understanding of the larger context. Through the physical destruction and manipulation of these images, Mann questions the medium's reliability as a documentary tool, troubling the ability of the photograph to convey truth.

Although **Ari Marcopoulos** shot *Detroit* while visiting friends in that city, this work captures the energy and open-ended feel of the videos and photographs he makes at home with his own teenage sons in Sonoma, California. Since emigrating from his native Holland in 1979, Marcopoulos has documented the diverse subcultures of American youth—from the brash vitality of underground music to the rebellious athleticism of skaters and snowboarders—with anthropological sensitivity. *Detroit* merges his attention to particularities of cultural identity with the intimacy of a home movie. The kids in the video skillfully adapt the gritty conventions of noise rock for an audience of family and friends.

Through carefully composed installations, photographs, and films, **Josephine Meckseper** exposes the political ramifications of America's culture of consumption. In this work, Meckseper uses a video camera to explore Minneapolis's Mall of America—one of the top tourist destinations in the United States—pausing to examine window displays, sale signs, and dormant rides in its indoor amusement park. Meckseper then manipulates the footage, employing ironically patriotic red and blue filters—a technique inspired by French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard. The artist also turns the footage on its side and adds a vaguely sinister soundtrack. The result is an abstraction

of otherwise documentary images and a sense of alienation and disorientation. The mall becomes a hostile, dangerous place.

Rashaad Newsome has created a video of a man dancing by himself in a white room. He asks dancers to perform “vogue” dance moves. Vogue is a form of modern dance that is inspired by poses in fashion magazines. The artist says, “I view these videos as drawings with the dancers acting as my pens creating lines, shapes, landscapes, and ...narratives.”

Charles Ray’s drawings of flowers are at once cheerfully lifelike and eerily abstract. Rendered in bright hues or deep blacks, the flowers occupy the page in fluid arrangements. Yet the individual petals are also composed of discrete plumes of color, as though Ray conceived of each as a separate formal element before joining several in a tenuous whole. Ray is best known for sculptural works that painstakingly replicate everyday objects, but with subtle, psychologically charged alterations that confound the distinction between real and unreal. His depictions of flowers extend a longstanding interest in the beauty of natural forms that characterize his three-dimensional work.

Aki Sasamoto’s installations and performances explore the nuances and peculiarities of everyday life. She uses sculpture, movement, video, and sound to transform mundane actions into theatrical events. *Strange Attractors* consists of a careful arrangement of sculpturally altered, found objects that take on new roles and provide guidance for Sasamoto’s improvisational performances that take place within the installation.

Ania Soliman’s work, NATURAL OBJECT RANT: The Pineapple comprises twenty-six montages, each corresponding to a letter of the alphabet, and twenty-six text panels that explore the pineapple’s history as an exotic commodity tied up with the politics of colonialism. Reminiscent of Dadaist photomontages from the 1930s such as those by German artist Hannah Höch, each montage is a hybrid of two digital images, sourced from the internet. The accompanying panels of text are written by the artist and informed by her research and impressions on the subject of the pineapple and its historical significance.

Storm Tharp builds his strange and beautiful characters from a series of ink drops in water, improvising and developing the image from feathered lines and washes of ink as he works. Tharp takes his inspiration from a wide-ranging set of influences including 1970s American cinema and Japanese portrait prints. His characters have names, histories, and narratives, but suggest multiple interpretations.

According to **Tam Tran**, she trains her camera on “everything and anything my eyes see and love.” Tran’s series of photographs presents her subjects as multi-faceted characters, who explore and experiment with their respective identities by taking on a multitude of personas. In the series *Raising Hell* (2008), the artist’s nephew enacts a typical childhood fantasy of being a superhero. He is featured wearing a costume of pajamas and a cape and uses a broomstick as a weapon. Each of the five photographs captures a different moment in the battle between the boy and his imagined backyard adversary.

Pae White's work encourages viewers to take a deeper look at familiar encounters and ordinary objects to the end of enriching everyday experience. Ignoring traditional boundaries between the applied and fine arts, White draws attention to what she calls “the spaces between things” in transient sculptural installations and graphic design projects that are temporary by nature. In 2006 White began creating tapestries with photographic images of crumpled aluminum foil and, later, plumes of smoke. *Still, Untitled* (2010) is the latest of the smoke tapestries, which stage what White describes as the cotton’s “dream of becoming something other than itself” by contrasting an image of something immaterial with the physicality of fabric.

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Collecting Biennials Artist Information

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Lee Bontecou's work, *Untitled*, 1961 hangs on the wall and emerges two feet into space, merging mediums of painting and sculpture. It includes materials such as saw blades, wire, and canvas. Beginning in 1959, Bontecou began making large-scale abstract works by scavenging for burlap and canvas, the latter cut from worn out conveyor belts discarded from the laundry below her house. A consistent motif quickly emerged: a central cavity built up from the rectangular frame of the metal skeleton, projecting a foot or more off the wall, and opening into the blackness of a layer of velvet or soot. The forms and evocations of Bontecou's wall reliefs are frequently described by an abiding tension between the organic and mechanical, the handmade and mass-produced, the biomorphic and the military-industrial.

David Hammons finds inspiration in the streets and everyday life of his Harlem community, where he gathers ordinary, discarded, or ephemeral materials and transforms them in sculptures. In this untitled sculpture, he has planted copper wires in stones and wrapped the wires in hair picked up from the floors of barber shops. The overall effect is of a giant, spidery insect—or a spiky head of dreadlocks. He's been working with hair since the mid-1970s. It's significant to him that it's acquired free-of-charge (like bottle caps and many of his other preferred materials), and seems in a sense like a gift. Also, it has a past—many people are literally woven into a work like this one, and so it has an almost magical, animate presence.

Mike Kelley's work, *More Love Hours*, includes a multitude of animals, dolls, and blankets that have been sewn together. Kelley has created art in different media including sculpture, drawing, video, performance, and painting. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, he began working with stuffed animals and afghans found at thrift stores and yard sales, to create art that explores and questions what it means to grow up in America. By using cast-off animals and objects, Kelley was able to strike a common chord—the thrown-away objects that were once greatly used and loved now signify growing up, and a society in which one can be too old to cherish a blanket or stuffed monkey.

Glenn Ligon is interested in words and text and how they might represent or misrepresent a given idea. In *Untitled (I Do Not Always Feel Colored)*, Ligon borrowed a phrase from Zora Neale Hurston's 1928 essay "How It Feels to Be Colored Me." In this essay, Hurston described how she did not see herself as black or different from other people until, at the age of thirteen, she was sent to school outside of Eatonville, Florida, the tightly-knit African-American community where she grew up. The words in this work were created by rubbing black oil stick through plastic letter stencils onto the white painted surface of a door painted with gesso. The door was a support that Ligon liked because its proportions suggested the human body. As he worked his way down the door, and with repeated use of the stencils, the greasy oil stick stuck to the stencils and the text became smudged and illegible. The process of repetition and smudging created a surface of paint and language that can be both read and seen at the same time, suggesting multiple meanings and associations.

Claes Oldenburg has made giant, soft, sewn and stuffed sculptures of everyday objects such as hamburgers, lipstick, toilets, sinks, and bathtubs. He has recreated these objects in unexpected ways, separating them from their original function, scale, or physical context. Oldenburg was part of the Pop Art movement. *Soft Toilet* is one in a series of sculptures relating to the theme of "the home," in which common domestic objects—a washstand, a medicine cabinet, a bathtub—behave more like soft, pliable bodies than rigid, industrially produced objects. Oldenburg created sculptures of these objects by changing their material and scale. *Soft Toilet* has similar proportions to a toilet, but it is about twice the size of a real one.

Paul Pfeiffer uses digital technology to alter images from sports broadcasts and Hollywood cinema in sculptures, installations, and photographs. Through these alterations, such as stops, stutters, and reverse action, he draws out subtexts and creates scenes of heightened physiological tension.

From 1954 to 1964, **Robert Rauschenberg** created a new form of art that he called combines. These works of art brought together elements of painting, sculpture, and collage in free-standing structures or wall reliefs. *Satellite* is one of Rauschenberg's earlier combine paintings. Attached to the canvas are comic strips, postcards, pinups, scraps of wallpaper, two doilies, a washcloth, and a pair of socks. On to many of these found objects, Rauschenberg applied areas of brightly colored paint that dripped down the canvas, and narrow horizontal lines of thick oil paint. Perhaps the most startling component of this work of art is the stuffed, painted pheasant that appears to be strolling along a shelf that runs along the length of the painting's top edge. For Rauschenberg, everyday objects were suitable, because they grounded his art in reality. "I don't want a picture to look like something it isn't. I want it to look like something it is. And I think a picture is more like the real world when it's made out of the real world."

Mark Rothko applied thin layers of paint so that the layers of color showed through and the paintings appeared to glow. He wanted his paintings to express emotions and change the space where they were, so they would affect the viewer's mood, feelings, and thoughts. Rothko said that he painted large pictures so that the viewer could be surrounded by color and feel like he or she were in the painting. He felt that the works could express emotions but without recognizable imagery. The impact of these works is often described in spiritual as well as emotional terms. Rothko however, avoided explaining the content of his work. He believed that the abstract image could directly represent the human condition: "My current pictures are involved with the scale of human feeling, the human drama, as much of it as I can express."

George Tooker was part of a small group of artists whose precise, physiologically charged artwork set them apart from the era's more mainstream practitioners of Abstract Expressionism. His work often deals with the isolation and injustices of contemporary urban society, giving a visual form to cold war America's confusion and despair.

Andy Warhol is one of the central figures of the Pop Art movement and has become one of the most influential artists of the second half of the twentieth century. His works, often comprised of images of consumer products, reflect the experience of popular culture, mass production, and the American Dream.