

Colefax & Davidson Galleries  
25 September 2022 – 15 January 2023

### Checklist + Labels

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Please check with Lauren for updates.

Can an artist create a portrait without a face, a body, or even a life story? Can an artist create a portrait that is not even recognizable as a portrait? The answer is yes. This unusual idea of portraiture originates from Martinique-born poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant. In his book *Poetics of Relation* (1990), he called for “the right to opacity for everyone.” Glissant argued that transparency through definition and clarifications ignores the aspects of self that are difficult to grasp. Opacity, instead, simply accepts that everything that makes us *us* cannot be understood completely. Only by being opaque can portraiture most fully and authentically represent the shadowy parts of a person, those hard-to-explain aspects that cannot be depicted in conventional ways. This selection of works from the Museum’s permanent collection explores this expanded idea of portraiture and offers several approaches to seeing and recognizing these invisible parts of being.



Daniel Lind-Ramos (Puerto Rican, b. 1953)

*Figura Emisaria*, 2020

Steel, palm tree branches, dried coconuts, palm tree trunks, wood panels, burlap, concrete blocks, glass, aluminum, fabric, lights

Museum purchase with funds provided by the

Luria/Budgor Family Foundation, 2022.7

Image courtesy of The Ranch and the artist

© Daniel Lind-Ramos

*Figura Emisaria* evokes a ghostly, humanoid presence through its upright stance and bilateral symmetry. A native of Colobó, an Afro-Puerto Rican community in Loíza, Puerto Rico, Lind-Ramos incorporates traces of the Caribbean region and its connection with Africa. The figure’s moon-shaped headdress emulates ceremonial reliquaries like those of the Kota in Central Africa. Its cape is made from a coconut palm tree, which is used for shelter, trade, arts and crafts, and traditional dishes throughout the Caribbean. A handmade yucca grater is encased in a glass vitrine as a sacred relic. The artist describes being given the grater by his 92-year-old neighbor, who inherited it from her grandmother: “In that precious moment, I felt that she was an old emissary, passing to me through the symbolism of her action the ancestral knowledge related to nourishment based on the coconut and the yucca, two of the principal ingredients in our traditional food and two ingredients that were, on many occasions during hazardous times, our source of nourishment.”

### RECENT ACQUISITION



David Hammons (American, b. 1943)  
*Self-Portrait*, 1971  
Grease and dry pigment on paper  
Gift of Norma Bartman, 1985.73.1

The artist's face emerges from the black abyss. His "breath"—in reality, impressions of the artist's fingers—manifests as a ghostly ectoplasm. In one regard, the work is a corporeal lamentation, a spectral record of the body that once was but now is absent. In another, it recognizes a spiritual dimension. The fingers' ghostly imprints at once break down the body's solidity and draw it into an abstract unknown.

"I'm still trying to find out how severed the link was cut between African Americans and Africa and the damage we suffer of that," Hammons told friend and cultural theorist Manthia Diawara in 2009. "Why not be from outer space?" By the time of this portrait, the composer and Afro-futurist pioneer Sun Ra, of whom the artist self-identifies as a disciple, had experimented with extraterrestrial themes in his work, imagining the African diaspora as having emigrated from the cosmos. Hammons explains that because he lost his ancestral link through the transatlantic crossing, he gives himself "permission to be from another dimension," "another galaxy and not talk about the earthly, which [still has] barriers." While some of his body prints on black paper feature impressions of the "earthly"—an American flag, playing cards, and clothing—here, the artist abandons the material and appears adrift in time and space. After all else is lost, the spirit is what remains.



Tetsuya Noda (Japanese, b. 1940)  
*Diary: Jan. 22nd '72*, 1972  
Lithograph  
Gift of Betty and Bob Klausner, 1986.77.2

The *Diary* series spans more than 50 years and 500 works, capturing intimate and public moments of the artist's life. Noda first selects a photograph and then adjusts it in various ways—drawing lines, adding shading, removing parts. He places the modified photograph in a mimeograph machine, creating a stencil of the image. Finally, he prints the manipulated image onto a colored sheet of handmade Japanese paper. The result is a familiar but distant trace of the sourced photograph, which has been distorted in its memorialization.

"I don't want to explain everything," Noda says. "I often wish to give a mysterious feeling to my works, to leave viewers with enough space to use their imaginations." Feeling like a memory, the image prompts us to act and move with it as such, to imagine what the experience was like, and to search for its impact or meaning.



Umar Rashid (Frohawk Two Feathers) (American, b. 1976)  
*"Tabac Et Banane" Maria, (Now) Empress of Frengland (After the Death of Francis IV) and Her Servant, Gannival in the Courtyard of the Royal Palace at Calais, 1870, 2008*  
Ink, acrylic, and tea on paper  
Museum purchase, 2010.22

Artificially aged with tea, this "19th-century Frenglish" portrait belongs to a series of 10 portraits of characters involved in Umar Rashid's imagined "50 Years War" (1742–90). For the past 17 years, the artist has documented the mytho-historical saga of the Republic of Frengland, a French-English colonial empire. Despite its fiction, he casts himself as a servant, while his real-life gallery representative, Alex de Cordoba, plays an empress. "People ask, 'how come you don't make black people the kings?'" The artist responds, "It didn't go down that way." His revisionist history neither erases nor amends the injustices of colonialism.

Plunging himself and his contemporaries into this historical fiction, Rashid conceives of present-day realities in dialogue with the past. "We need to re-explore the events in our shared past that make us who we are today," he explains. "Once here, we all [begin] the search for our identity."



Sho Kidokoro (Japanese, 1934–1988)  
*Portrait Looking Back, 1960*  
Color woodblock, ed. 2/30  
Gift of Carol L. Valentine, 1991.146.20

*Portrait Looking Back* gives an illusion of mobility. A block may slide, revealing and concealing the parts behind it. A circle may rotate and expose additional elements. French sculptor and author Gaston Petit noted this sense of motion during a visit with Kidokoro to a Buddhist temple in Nakano, Japan: "For the sixty sliding doors of the meeting hall, [he] had printed the flora of his native [Hachioji, a city near Tokyo]. When all the panels are closed, the effect is of a meadow. At any given moment, one can redefine the space and reorganize the surface at will to give a new significance to each fragmented entity."

Harnessing the potential for spontaneity in these small irregularities to its initial composition, this work perhaps considers the odd mechanics of retrospective gazing, which allows present-day perception to unmoor the past from a fixed position, reshape it, and shift its supposed truths.



Kerry James Marshall (American, b. 1955)  
*Frankenstein*, 2010  
Hardground etching, ed. 10/50  
Museum Purchase with funds provided by the Cohn Acquisition Fund,  
2012.5.2

A black figure, contoured by the hatch marks that represent light falling upon his skin, emerges from the shadows. With its title referring to Mary Shelley’s 1818 novel *Frankenstein*, the work presents the nude black male as the novel’s artificially created “monster,” a creature that evokes fear and misunderstanding. In all his nudity, Marshall’s “monster” is neither menacing nor malicious but rather anguished, without anything left to give.

Shrouded in darkness, the body is barely perceptible against the background. Perhaps the work illustrates the artist’s understanding of blackness. “You can be there and not be there at the same time,” Marshall explains, “and be fully visible all the time.” This portrait of a black man by a black man depicts being visibly present but barely seen in the white world, hidden in the shadows, ignored or dehumanized.

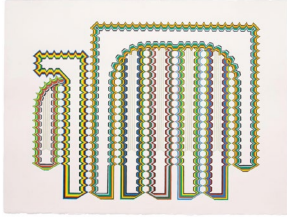


Lezley Saar (American, b. 1953)  
*No Guests Eating Other Guests*, 2006  
Ink and photo collage on board  
Museum purchase with funds provided by the General Art Acquisition  
Fund, 2020.13.2  
Courtesy of Walter Maciel Gallery and the artist

Black-and-white photographs, taken by the artist, are entangled in networks of roots, drips, tendrils, tentacles, and extrusions. The fantastical ink drawings float in otherworldly space, and the photographs they ensconce resist settling into a clear narrative, much less portrait.

“I feel that I am creating a language from five sources: botany, anatomy, tattoos, cartoons, caricatures, and Japanese landscapes,” the artist says. “I use different styles or sources as parts of speech.” The photographs may be nouns; the botanical elements, verbs; the anatomical elements, adjectives. While its logic is difficult or impossible to understand, Saar’s visual language is inspired by her autistic daughter’s imaginative but mystifying use of words. The work’s peculiar title references a statement made by her daughter, and the piece itself visualizes her internal world. “I heard a mother of an autistic daughter say that after a while other people think you are autistic too,” Saar recounts. “To make your life work, you have to embrace your daughter’s world.”

## RECENT ACQUISITION



Edie Fake (American, b. 1980)

*Union Station*, 2016

Goauche and ink on paper, 22 x 30 in.

Museum purchase with funds provided by the Basil Alkazzi Acquisition Fund, 2021.16

Image courtesy of Western Exhibitions and the artist

© Edie Fake

In this work, architectural spaces merge with abstraction. Without oversimplifying, abstraction renders the nuances of trans and gender-nonconforming identities. “Part of understanding myself as a trans person is about creating language,” Fake expresses. “Abstract forms help sort out a language that I don’t have words for necessarily.”

Here, a train station emerges as a radiantly colored structural abstraction. Jagged waves contract, expand, and wind through one another. “Lives intersect in the trans community,” the artist describes. “We pass through and meet up again.” Depicted through joyous and whimsical forms, perhaps the train station acts as a metaphor for the journeys that trans people take as they explore identity and forge new ways of being in the world.

### RECENT ACQUISITION



Roland Reiss (American, 1929–2020)

*The Morality Plays: Philosophy of Process*, 1980

Mixed media

Bequest of Leatrice and Eli Luria, 2021.23.2

Cigarettes, unfinished meals, bottles of wine, and cups of coffee are littered throughout an empty living space. A credit card appears on the floor behind an end table. Cash flows from an opened security box. A rifle rests beside a child’s wooden toy. While human figures are absent, the goods strangely left behind suggest a rush of activity that ceased abruptly.

Framed as a crime scene, the miniature mise-en-scène investigates family life through its traces. Reiss not only implies that material possessions offer insight into the dynamics and values of a family but also shows the limitations of what can be discovered through them.

### RECENT ACQUISITION



Tom Marioni (American, b. 1937)  
*The Results of a Theatrical Action to Define Non-Theatrical Principles*, 1979  
Graphite on paper  
Museum purchase, 1980.15

At the Santa Barbara Museum of Art on November 3, 1979, Tom Marioni sat in front of a large scroll of paper with a projector casting harsh light onto him. Before a seated crowd, the artist quickly sketched his silhouette.

This work recognizes the beautiful potential of a moment by preserving it. The artist, the light, the paper, the pencil, and the audience are all, in some way, captured. The drawing addresses a key question that Marioni has considered throughout his career: “What significance do you place on ordinary life?” He answers, “If art is an appeal to your passions, to your capacity for empathy, it will bring you close to life, draw you into it, and the question will be: how is art different from anything else?”