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Winter/Spring 2020 Exhibition Program

*Recent Acquisitions: Mary Henry*
December 17, 2019–June 7, 2020

*Subspontaneous: Francesca Lohmann and Rob Rhee*
January 25–April 19, 2020

*Rebecca Brewer: Natural Horror*
January 25–April 19, 2020

*Agnieszka Polska*
February 15–April 19, 2020

*Black Refractions: Highlights from The Studio Museum in Harlem*
May 9–August 2, 2020

Please note that the following information is subject to change. Please confirm all dates, titles, and other details with the Frye Art Museum communications department prior to publication.
The Frye is pleased to announce the second installation of *Recent Acquisitions*, a biannual series highlighting works that have been gifted to or purchased for the Frye Art Museum’s permanent collection. A long-time resident of Whidbey Island, Washington, Mary Henry (1913–2009) devoted nearly four decades to creating distinctive works of geometric abstraction. This focused presentation will display two gifts from the artist’s estate, *North Slope #15, Kuparuk* and *Brooks Range*. These diptychs exemplify the opportunities for experimentation and growth Henry found within the confines of Minimalism during the 1970s. Part of the *North Slope* series (1975–77), inspired by the artist’s stay in Wiseman, Alaska for several months during 1975, the drawings distilled her impressions of the pale tones and broad glacial expanses of the Brooks Range and other natural aspects of the North Slope region. Henry later created large paintings based on these drawings. “It’s just that I was so enamored, I suppose, of these shapes,” Henry said. “And there are so many different varieties and things you could do with them that there’s no end to it.”

Although her paintings and drawings were virtually unseen by the public until she began exhibiting late in her life, during the late 1990s, she gained recognition for large-scale, audacious canvases that push against societal expectations for women and speak to her role as a “matriarch of Modernism.” Committed to a daily, labor-intensive practice that imbued her formal explorations with soft lines, emotional tenor, and notes of humor, Henry’s work has been exhibited in major museums and galleries on the West Coast, while her broader influence within art history has only just begun to be recognized. These drawings are the first works by Henry to enter the Frye’s collection.

Confounding the distinction between the natural and the manufactured, so-called “subspontaneous” plant species are introduced by humans but spread without further intervention, traveling across ecological boundaries and living in diverse forms of symbiosis. The term has double resonance in this exhibition, which presents a curator-cultivated but organically developed collaboration between Francesca Lohmann and Rob Rhee, Seattle-based artists who each collaborate with the forces of nature in their sculptural practices. Gravity, time, and unpredictable processes like biological growth play a significant role in the creation of both artists’ works, which are often executed in series that foreground material experimentation and formal variation. Subspontaneous brings works from each individual artist into relationship within an installation designed by the duo, proposing a mutualistic model of co-creation and celebrating contingency, entanglement, and interdependence.

Trained in printmaking, Francesca Lohmann employs sculptural methods such as casting—in which a fluid substance is poured into a mold and allowed to harden—that are related to imprinting, repetition, and mutation. Her bulging, body-like plaster cast lumps and coils retain impressions of the woven fabric tubes and sacks in which they cured, evidence of the once-liquid plaster’s gravitational strain against its textile “skin.” Sprouted potatoes cast in bronze suspend a process of organic transformation, while a new series of large, plaster-filled sausage casings bear the permanent coloration of transient mold blooms. Bringing an aspect of site-specificity to the installation, Lohmann will cast a set of delicate, draped plaster swags and coils directly on the gallery wall and create botanical arrangements for the opening reception.

Rob Rhee’s work is primarily concerned with structural anomalies and environmental manipulation, combining volatile substances with artificial constraints to find slippages in rule-based systems. For his long-term project The Occupations of Uninhabited Space, Rhee distributes cage-like, welded steel sculptures to regional farmers who grow gourds inside them, which then dry and harden into hollow shells. Protruding from their enclosures according to their own obscure sensibilities, the enmeshed gourds create unforeseeable shapes and dictate the sculpture’s orientation. Other featured bodies of work include castings made by pouring incompatible materials like plaster and alginate—a polymer derived from seaweed—into plastic soda bottles wherein the two elements interact in unpredictable ways.
 Appearing together in the exhibition as a decentralized field of “motivated forms” on bases of unusual dimension and composition, the works in Subspontaneous shift attention from the singular, autonomous object toward phenomena, processes, and sites of contact—the places where disparate types of matter meet, give way, or remain in tension.

Francesca Lohmann (American, b. 1986, San Francisco, California) lives and works in Seattle. Recent exhibitions of her work have been held at Ditch Projects, Eugene, Oregon; Seattle Freezer; Coffin Farm, Redmond, Washington; Veronica, Seattle; and Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle. In 2017, Lohmann was a finalist for the Brink Award. She received her BFA from Rhode School of Design and MFA from Cornell University.

Rob Rhee (American, b. 1982, Bronx, New York) lives and works in Seattle. His work has been exhibited nationally at the Portland Museum of Art, Oregon; the Hunterdon Art Museum, New Jersey; White Columns, New York; the Fort Worth Contemporary Gallery, Texas; and the Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles, California and internationally at the 10th Berlin Biennale, KW Institute for Art, Germany; and the Ilmin Museum of Art, South Korea. In 2018 he was awarded the Korea Arts Foundation of America Award for Visual Art and was nominated for a Stranger Genius award in 2016. He received his BA from Yale University and MFA from Columbia University, and is currently an Assistant Professor at Cornish College of the Arts.

Subspontaneous: Francesca Lohmann and Rob Rhee is organized by the Frye Art Museum and curated by Amanda Donnan. Generous support is provided by the Frye Foundation and Frye members.

FRYE FOUNDATION

Rebecca Brewer: Natural Horror
January 25–April 19, 2020

Drawing on the histories and methods of psychoanalysis, art therapy, and expressionistic painting, Rebecca Brewer’s work straddles the boundary between abstraction and representation to evoke fragmented memories and flowing organic forms. *Natural Horror*, the Vancouver-based artist’s first solo museum presentation, features recent felted wool “scrims” as well as embossed enamel monoprints in cast resin frames—two bodies of work that operate in the idiom of painting but employ materials and techniques associated with non-canonical craft practices. The exhibition title—a reference to a subgenre of horror films in which a natural force or creature poses a threat to humans—alludes to both the artist’s interest in the relationship between aesthetics and psychological affects, and to the disintegrated botanical and bodily forms that appear within her works.

With meandering lines and acidic pops of color, Brewer’s large textile scrims are made using a labor-intensive wet-felting method in which masses of wool fibers are embedded in the gridded threads of silk gauze. The works are suspended from the ceiling and remain permeable to light in unfelted areas, casting shadows throughout the surrounding space. Brewer develops their compositions through an intuitive process that is—by necessity of her felting method—slower and less immediate than painting, the medium in which she was trained. This approach dovetails with the artist’s exploration into the possibilities of “direct” expressionistic visualization of inner states, including research into synesthesia, psychedelic experience, and tropes of therapeutic art-making which suggest, for instance, that jagged lines correspond to mental schisms or rapid, eruptive strokes represent pre-conscious emotional flows.
Brewer has variously compared her scrims to debris-filled fishing nets and organs attached by connective tissue, pointing to the ways in which she seeks to conflate the grid's art historical associations—as a formal device and means of structuring information—with its messier manifestations in the physical world. Play with analogies between the artificial and organic also characterizes the artist's Live Resin works, in which embossed monoprints on vellum are framed in cast-resin trays. The drips and imperfections of the casting process give the frames a crusty, time-worn appearance, as if they were mildew-layered ocean flotsam. The prints inside, meanwhile, feature painterly markings that were, despite appearances, made in an indirect way, by sprinkling colored embossing powder on the surface and heating it to a hardened state.

Hovering at the threshold of recognition, and confounding material expectations, Brewer's work teases the mind's impulse to find referents in indeterminate shapes and discern hierarchies of information. Her vision of a disarticulated natural order mirrors an important conceptual shift: a movement away from the human-centric perspective that places "man" outside of or above nature, toward one in which we are enmeshed in a delicate web of matter, energies, and beings.

Rebecca Brewer (Canadian, b. 1983, Tokyo, Japan) lives and works in Vancouver, Canada. She has had solo and two-person exhibitions at Oakville Galleries, Ontario; Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver; and Exercise, Vancouver. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery; Simon Fraser University Galleries, Vancouver; Marcelle Alix, Paris; and Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff. Brewer received an MFA from Bard College in 2013 and a BFA from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 2007. She was the winner of the 2011 RBC Canadian Painting Competition.

Rebecca Brewer: Natural Horror is organized by the Frye Art Museum and curated by Amanda Donnan. Generous support for this exhibition is provided by the Frye Foundation and Frye Members.

**Frye Foundation**

Agnieszka Polska
February 15–April 19, 2020

Agnieszka Polska creates hallucinatory computer-generated media works that operate at the intersection of language, history, and scientific theory to illuminate issues of individual and social responsibility. Combining original poetic texts with digitally manipulated imagery, her video works attempt to describe the overwhelming ethical ambiguities of our time. Polska’s exhibition at the Frye presents the U.S. debut of two video installations that address, in deeply affecting audio-visual essays, the urgent global issue of climate change and the specter of mass extinction.

The first installation comprises two videos entitled The New Sun and What the Sun Has Seen (both 2017) that function as a looping diptych, depicting a child-like sun with huge melancholic eyes that is witness to environmental and ethical collapse on Earth. In the videos, the sun speaks directly to the audience in half-sung monologues, moving through a range of emotional states and modes of address, from professing love and telling silly jokes, to pondering the power of language to construct a new world order. Certain passages refer to the effect in quantum mechanics in which the observer influences the event observed through the act of interpreting it, collapsing a dynamic, indeterminate system into one definite state. The sun character is seen in this light to be both helpless witness to and cause of the transformation it beholds, while suggesting, conversely, that a horizon of possibility remains for humankind to re-write its own destiny.

Poetic meditation on scientific phenomena also underlies the second installation, entitled The Happiest Thought (2019) after the idea that inspired Albert Einstein to write his Theory of General Relativity. Extending from Einstein’s notion that space-time is relative to the perspective of the observer, Polska’s immersive video revisits a prehistoric environment that might echo our own: Earth’s biosphere prior to the Permian-Triassic extinction event,
which occurred more than 250 million years ago and annihilated as much as ninety percent of life on the planet. The piece offers a hypnotic exploration of lush and alluring ancient environs while contemplating humanity’s potential to overcome enormous threats like the current climate crisis. Looking to Italian media theorist Franco “Bifo” Berardi’s notion that poetry is “the premonition of a possible harmony inscribed in the present chaos,” The Happiest Thought takes viewers on an evocative journey through the past to bring us closer to the truth of our contemporary circumstances.

Polska’s videos incorporate visceral stimuli like ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) triggers and emotional mimicry to craft a mesmerizing atmosphere that can compete with what she calls the “environment of seduction” surrounding consumer marketing and organized religion. By doing so, the artist aims to create “a common territory of exchange, a territory for involvement in ritual” in which we can confront our collective calamity.

Agnieszka Polska (Polish, b. 1985, Lublin, Poland) lives and works in Krakow and Berlin. Polska has presented her works at international venues including the New Museum and MoMA in New York, Centre Pompidou and Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Tate Modern in London, Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC, and Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. She also took part in the 57th Venice Biennale, 11th Gwangju Biennale, 19th Biennale of Sydney and 13th Istanbul Biennial. In 2018 she was awarded German Preis der Nationalgalerie.

Agnieszka Polska is organized by the Frye Art Museum and curated by Amanda Donnan. Generous support is provided by the Frye Foundation and Frye members.
**Black Refractions: Highlights from The Studio Museum in Harlem**

May 9–August 2, 2020

With works in all media by nearly eighty artists dating from the 1920s to the present, *Black Refractions* presents close to a century of creative achievements by artists of African descent. Celebrating The Studio Museum in Harlem’s role as a site for the dynamic exchange of ideas about art and society, this landmark exhibition proposes a plurality of narratives of black artistic production and multiple approaches to understanding these works. Organized by the American Federation of Arts and The Studio Museum in Harlem, the exhibition reveals the breadth and expansive growth of The Studio Museum’s permanent collection and includes iconic pieces by artists such as Barkley Hendricks, Faith Ringgold, Lorna Simpson, Alma Thomas, and James VanDerZee, as well as Seattle’s own Jacob Lawrence and Noah Davis, among many others.

The Studio Museum in Harlem has served as a nexus for artists of African descent locally, nationally, and internationally since its founding in 1968—a watershed year that saw the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, major demonstrations against the Vietnam War, and Tommie Smith and John Carlos’s Black Power salute at the Summer Olympics. The Museum’s founders were a diverse group of artists, activists, and philanthropists, all committed to creating a working space for artists and a forum in which communities could view and interpret art in Harlem. At the same time, they sought to foreground the work of black artists amid larger discussions of exclusionary practices in cultural institutions across the United States.
The Studio Museum's *Artist-in-Residence* program—providing the “Studio” in the Museum’s name—was established as an opportunity for emerging artists to create new work in the heart of Harlem, a neighborhood historically associated with black cultural production. The program has supported many distinguished creators at decisive stages in their careers, including Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Chakaia Booker, David Hammons, Kerry James Marshall, Mickalene Thomas, and Kehinde Wiley, all of whom have work included in the exhibition. Now, as the Studio Museum celebrates its 50th anniversary, *Black Refractions* will allow audiences across the country to engage more deeply with this important collection and provide additional contexts in which we can understand its powerful works.

Beginning in 2019, the exhibition will be shown at six venues across the United States, with each unique presentation configured to reflect the concerns of the local institutions and audiences. The presenting institutions are the Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA (January 16–April 14, 2019); Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston, SC (May 24–August 18, 2019); Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, MI (September 13–December 8, 2019); Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA (January 17–April 12, 2020); *Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA (May 9–August 2, 2020)*; and Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, UT (August 28–December 13, 2020).

*Black Refractions* is organized by the American Federation of Arts and The Studio Museum in Harlem. This exhibition is curated by Connie H. Choi, Associate Curator of the Permanent Collection at The Studio Museum in Harlem.

Major support for *Black Refractions: Highlights from The Studio Museum in Harlem* is provided by Art Bridges, a pioneering new philanthropic foundation dedicated to expanding access to American art for audiences across the country. Art Bridges is pleased to support *Black Refractions* and its vital role in bringing nearly a century of art by artists of African descent to new and diverse audiences across the United States.

Support for the accompanying publication provided by Furthermore: a program of the J.M. Kaplan Fund.

The installation at the Frye Art Museum is overseen by Amanda Donnan, curator. Generous support is provided by the Frye Foundation and Frye members.

**PUBLICATION**

*Black Refractions* is accompanied by a new publication of the same title co-published by the American Federation of Arts and Rizzoli Electa. The richly illustrated volume includes essays by Connie H. Choi and Kellie Jones; entries by a range of writers, curators and scholars (among them Lauren Haynes, Ashley James, Oluremi C. Onabanjo, Larry Ossei-Mensah and Hallie Ringle) who contextualize the works and provide detailed commentary; and a conversation among Choi, Thelma Golden, and Jones that draws out themes and challenges in collecting and exhibiting modern and contemporary art by artists of African descent.

**ABOUT THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS**

The American Federation of Arts is the leader in traveling exhibitions internationally. A nonprofit organization founded in 1909, the AFA is dedicated to enriching the public's experience and understanding of the visual arts through organizing and touring art exhibitions for presentation in museums around the world, publishing exhibition catalogues featuring important scholarly research, and developing educational programs.
ABOUT THE STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

Founded in 1968 by a diverse group of artists, community activists and philanthropists, The Studio Museum in Harlem is internationally known for its catalytic role in promoting the work of artists of African descent. As it celebrates its 50th anniversary, the Studio Museum is preparing to construct a new home at its longtime location on Manhattan’s West 125th Street, designed by Adjaye Associates in collaboration with Cooper Robertson. The first building created expressly for the institution's program, the new building will enable the Studio Museum to better serve a growing and diverse audience, provide additional educational opportunities for people of all ages, expand its program of world-renowned exhibitions, effectively display its singular collection and strengthen its trailblazing Artist-in Residence program.

While the Studio Museum is currently closed for construction, the Museum has opened Studio Museum 127, a temporary programming space located at 429 West 127th Street, and is working to deepen its roots in the community through inHarlem, a dynamic set of collaborative programs. The Museum’s groundbreaking exhibitions, thought-provoking conversations, and engaging art-making workshops continue at a variety of partner and satellite locations in Harlem and beyond.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

Community Day
Saturday, February 22, 2020
11 am to 2 pm

Families and visitors of all ages are invited to join us for Community Day at the Frye to explore the new exhibitions and to make art together. Family-friendly activities include art-making, storytelling, and other hands-on experiences. Guided tours of the galleries will also be available. Admission is free.

Creative Aging Conference 2020
Friday, March 6, 9 am–5 pm: Frye Art Museum
Saturday, March 7, 9 am–5 pm: Fort Worden State Part, Port Townsend

The 2020 Creative Aging Conference will explore the topic of legacy, from the perspective of making a positive difference in an imperfect world. The conference will bring together speakers from multiple disciplines and life experiences, inspiring participants to consider what legacy means to them and how they can meaningfully shape the world left to future generations.

Select confirmed presenters includes keynote speaker Eddie Gonzalez, Engagement Manager, On Being Project; Sonnet Kekilia Coggins, Executive Director, The Merwin Conservancy; Tom Ikeda, Founding Executive Director, Densho; Carol Kummet, LICSW, MTS, Palliative Care Social Worker, University of Washington; Pam McCluskey, Curator of African and Oceanic Art, Seattle Art Museum; and Dr. Katie Schlenker D.O., UWMC Palliative Care Physician, University of Washington.

The Frye Art Museum and Centrum are pleased to continue their partnership to bring the 2020 Creative Aging Conference to Fort Worden State Park. Friday’s program will be repeated Saturday at this second location.

Full program and registration details will be announced in December 2019.

Photos: Olli Tumelius, Katie Lamar.