
FRESH PERSPECTIVES *on the Permanent Collection* from DARTMOUTH'S STUDENTS

A SPACE *for* DIALOGUE

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CHECKLIST

Rebecca Belmore, Canadian (Anishinaabe), born 1960
Fringe, 2007, digital print (pigment on archival paper)
Purchased through the Elizabeth and David Lowenstein '67
Acquisitions Fund and the Olivia H. Parker and John O. Parker '58
Acquisitions Fund, 2010.65

Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie, American
(Diné/Seminole/Muscogee), born 1954
*Photographic Memoirs of an Aboriginal Savant
(Living on Occupied Land)*, 1994
15 prints with text and photographic and cartoon reproductions
Purchased through the Contemporary Art Fund; 2007.55

Carrie Mae Weems, American, born 1953
Not Manet's Type, 2001, offset photolithograph
Purchased through the Olivia H. Parker and John O. Parker '58
Acquisition Fund; PR.2002.17.1

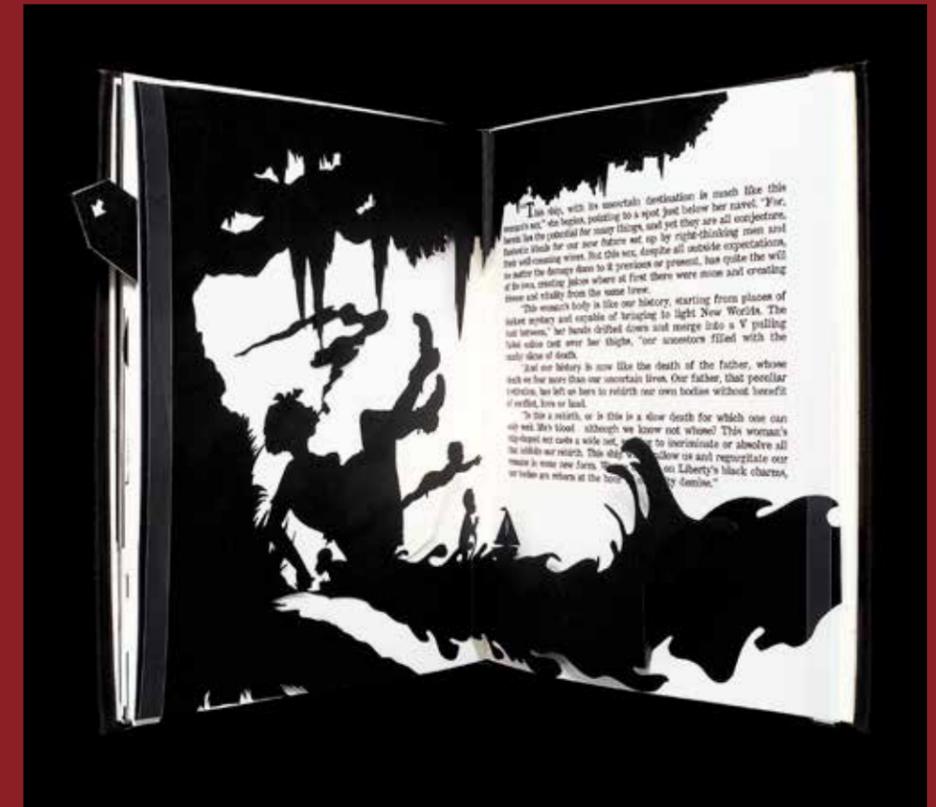
Donna Ferrato, American, born 1949
Blow Up Doll, Ethan Cohen Gallery Jay Street, from Tribeca 10013,
2008, pigment print on fiber paper
Gift of Charles E. Dorkey III, Class of 1970; 2010.79.13

Irina Crisis, Mexican, born 20th century
With or Without Papers, We Will Always Be Illegal,
from the portfolio *Migration Now*, 2012,
silkscreen print and letterpress on paper
Purchased through the Contemporary Art Fund; 2013.46.9

Kara Walker, American, born 1969
*Freedom: A Fable; A Curious Interpretation of the Wit of a
Negress in Troubled Times*, 1997, artist's book,
with text and pop-up black paper silhouettes
Gift of the Director of the Hood Museum of Art; MIS.997.53

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Kara Walker, *Freedom: A Fable; A Curious Interpretation of the Wit of a Negress in Troubled Times*, 1997, artist's book, with text and pop-up black paper silhouettes. Gift of the Director of the Hood Museum of Art; MIS.997.53

STILL WE RISE

Women of Color Existence/Resistance in Contemporary Art



Rebecca Belmore, *Fringe*, 2007, digital print (pigment on archival paper). Purchased through the Elizabeth and David Lowenstein Acquisitions Fund and the Olivia H. Parker and John O. Parker '58 Acquisitions Fund, 2010.65

In the United States today, race relations are fraught with issues of violence, bias, xenophobia, and state control. There have been high-profile cases of white police officers shooting unarmed black men as well as the daily violence suffered by women of color and largely ignored by the media. One in three Native American women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime. Immigration reform is focused on securing the border instead of protecting people as Latina women struggle to keep their families together. Asian American women are grappling with racialized stereotypes and beauty standards as issues of mental health continue to rise in their communities. All around the country, women of color are organizing protests and empowering themselves. One of the most significant ways they have developed their voices is through art, and the violence and struggles endured by women of color are evident in the work of the contemporary artists featured in *Still We Rise*.

In the mainstream American feminist movement, white women are often credited with doing the bulk of the work. Yet women of color have existed/resisted all along as they live in the dangerous intersections of sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression. Their participation in institutions like academia, government, and the art world has proven to be a deeply political and personal form of resistance. By infiltrating the traditionally white, Western, and male-dominated art world,

the artists in *Still We Rise* use their bodies and art forms to resist oppression. Featuring a diverse mix of female artists of color from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, the exhibition includes political pieces dealing directly with racism as well as more identity-focused works.

All of the works are united through a common theme of existence/resistance and by the use of the body coupled with accompanying text. This exhibition brings together work from black American, indigenous, Asian American, and Latina artists who are utilizing the body to make social critiques. The female figure has long been a central object in Western art, depicted—more often than not by men—as an idealization and/or stereotype of femininity. These stereotypical depictions of female bodies in art have been particularly harmful for women of color, whose bodies are often deemed either hypersexual or de-sexual, exotic, and/or undeserving of respect or the right to self-determination. For artists like Kara Walker, who works with silhouettes of the ex-slave black female body in *Freedom: A Fable*, the reclamation of the body is a way to explore ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and race. These reclamations are particularly important given that, as Carrie Mae Weems reminds us in *Not Manet's Type*, art history has either treated women of color as objects and mere “types” or ignored us completely. *Still We Rise* features contemporary artists of color who reclaim their bodies and sexualities, and in doing so, open up a new realm of possibility for transformative change and self-expression.

The artists of color in this show were chosen for the ways in which their work embodies the theme of existence/resistance. *Fringe* by Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe) celebrates the Native body and all of its historical complexities. It features a brown-skinned Native woman lying on her side on what appears to be a hospital bed or operating table with her back to the viewer. The beaded scar running down her back reads as a historical text: while her body reminds us of the existence of Native women, declaring, in effect, “We are still here,” the scar shows us the resistance of indigenous people whose wounds from colonization are always mending. Belmore’s recumbent figure shows the ways in which women of color endure historical trauma and find beauty in struggle and especially in their triumph. Equally powerful is Irina Crisis’s *With or Without Papers*, which follows the long and rich tradition of protest art within communities of people of color. A part of the *Migration Now* poster series, the work was not intended to be art for art’s

sake, but instead a widely accessible means of social critique and call to action. *With or Without Papers* reminds us that if a picture says a thousand words, a combination of image and text says even more. By superimposing the word “illegal” on the Latina body, Crisis delivers a powerful message that forces viewers to confront their own privilege, bias, and il/legal status. In this way, Crisis exemplifies a politics of embodiment wherein asserting the existence of women of color is a politically resistant act.

As the artists in *Still We Rise* demonstrate, women of color are in the unique position of having to fight both sexism and racism. The struggle becomes even more multidimensional when one considers that some of these women of color are also queer. Works such as Donna Ferrato’s *Blow Up Doll* and Hulleah Tsinnahjinnie’s *Photographic Memoirs* are distinct because they suggest that the identities and lived experiences of women of color victimized by discrimination are also a source of power. By living in opposition to patriarchal and racial dominance, women of color upset systems of oppression. The artists use a range of artistic and literary mediums to embody the feminist mantra “the personal is political” by reclaiming the female body, appropriating traditionally male artistic tropes, and unapologetically taking up space as women of color. Although all these works were created in the last three decades, the artists are addressing centuries of social inequity. The photographs, prints, texts, and silhouettes are truly beautiful works of art, but more importantly, they are political documents that demand deep engagement from the viewer. The issues brought up in *Still We Rise* are meant to make us uncomfortable, but it is through that discomfort that the artists compel us to reflect, question, and bring about transformative change.

Taylor Payer '15
Kathryn Conroy Intern

Irina Crisis, *With or Without Papers, We Will Always be Illegal*, from the portfolio *Migration Now*, 2012, silkscreen print and letterpress on paper. Purchased through the Contemporary Art Fund; 2013.46.9



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