

# Patrons of Progress

The New School University Art Collection

Maurice Berger



THE VERA LIST CENTER  
FOR ART AND POLITICS



New School University

Cover

Kara Walker

*The Means to an End...A Shadow Drama in Five Acts*

1995

Etching/aquatint

Five plates, 34 1/2" x 23" each

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# **Patrons OF Progress**

The New School University Art Collection

**Maurice Berger**

This essay on the New School University Art Collection, published as the sixth Occasional Paper of The Vera List Center for Art and Politics, was commissioned before Vera List passed away. We wanted to pay homage to her vision of the role the arts play in assuring the vitality of a democratic society, for it was her generosity that enabled us to launch the Center. With her passing, this paper and visual representation of a collection for which she was the guiding spirit becomes a tribute to her legacy. The University Art Collection, like the Center, strives to examine issues of contemporary relevance and political significance. It is no coincidence that both began with major contributions from Vera. She always held our feet to the fire with big questions: How do the current times put our liberal principles—our commitment to individual freedom, our respect for a plurality of values—to the test? How do we cultivate ourselves while recognizing what binds us to others? How do the arts help us to become—in her favorite phrase—“humans all”?

—Sondra Farganis  
Director, The Vera List Center for Art and Politics

The New School University Art Collection shares the progressive and challenging philosophy of its founding institution. Vera List, whose generosity and stewardship as the first Chair of the Advisory Committee for the Collection, was an early and important proponent for many of the Collection's unique characteristics. Vera believed that art should enrich everybody's life. For her, the opportunity to hang challenging contemporary art in the University's public spaces—hallways, classroom, and offices—made this collection both exciting and unusual and underlined its political importance. Contemporary artists continuously challenge what we understand and how we understand things. Vera wanted this debate to be held where everybody could hear and see it.

Under the thoughtful guidance of Gabriella De Ferrari, the present Chair of the Collection Advisory Committee, the University Art Collection continues to challenge, entertain, and excite the communities that make up New School University.

—Stefano Basilico  
Curator, University Art Collection



Figure 1  
Robert Colescott  
*The Choctaw Nickel*  
1994  
Acrylic and gel  
medium on canvas  
83 3/4" x 71 3/4"  
Gift of Vera List



The life-size sculpture in the lobby of New School University's Graduate Faculty building looks, at first glance, like many other monumental public statues of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. It is classical in both style and content: a beautiful male nude in contrapposto, a cherub perched near his right shoulder. The figure wears an exquisitely carved loin-cloth, no doubt to shield his sex from easily distracted eyes. The sculpture appears to reflect the grand, dignified ambitions of academia and the high culture of its day. On closer inspection, however, the work reveals its ironies and contradictions. It is composed not of an opulent material such as bronze or marble, but of concrete. It stands not on a towering pedestal but directly on the ground, intruding into the viewer's space. The "cherub" sits not on the figure's shoulder but on his head. And rather than a naked, sprightly angel, he is an unsmiling black male child, in shirt and overalls, his sleeves rolled up to his elbows.

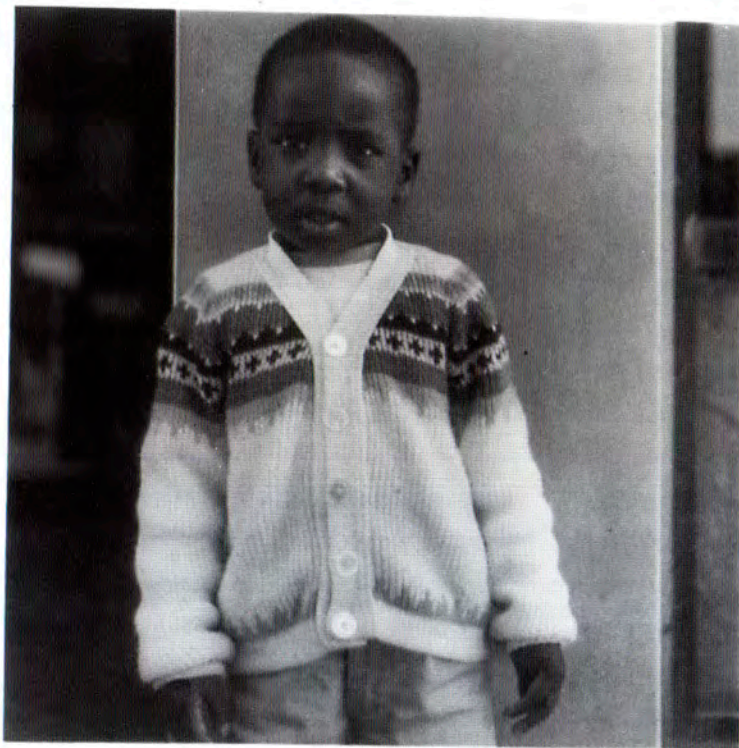
This sculpture—*Pride and Prejudice*, a contemporary work by the artist Fred Wilson—is not a

monument to an American hero or a lofty ideal. Originally created for the Atlanta Arts Festival in 1992 as part of Wilson's site-specific project *Reclaimed Monuments for Piedmont Park*, the sculpture is a withering social commentary on our nation's racist past. It reminds us that while neo-classical monuments are supposed to convey noble ideas and values—truth, heroism, justice, and similar principles—inevitably they serve also to perpetuate myths and disguise more problematic realities. They conceal what *Pride and Prejudice* makes manifestly clear: the history of inequality and injustice that Americans more often than not refuse to confront. In Wilson's hands, the classical male nude—an aesthetic embodiment of white male beauty, perfection, and power—carries the monumental history of black slavery and oppression on his head.

Wilson's statue—an artwork intended to make passersby stop and look and think—might seem out of place on a university campus. Art in such a setting usually falls into one of two categories: the celebratory or the decorative. The former is familiar

to anyone who has visited a college campus: portraits of school presidents and patrons; monuments to literary, scientific, or cultural exemplars; and allegorical figures meant to convey social and cultural ideals. The public spaces of New School University—from its courtyard recently redesigned by the artist Martin Puryear and the landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh to its corridors, offices, and classrooms—are filled instead with cutting-edge, challenging, and socially engaged contemporary art. Over the course of four decades, New School University has amassed among the most significant collections of contemporary art in American universities. Its ambitious acquisitions program actively seeks works reflecting the latest developments in the visual arts. Many works have been generously donated or loaned by artists, collectors, and dealers.

The New School University Art Collection was founded in 1960 as The New School Art Center. Established with a grant from the Albert A. List Foundation, the Art Center had as its primary mission to bring art into the public areas of the



WHEN ASKED WHAT HE WANTS TO BE  
WHEN HE GROWS UP, THE BLACK BOY  
SAYS, "I WANTA BE A WHITE MAN, CAUSE  
MY MAMA SAY, 'A NIGGER AIN'T SHIT.'"

Figure 2

Carrie Mae Weems

*Black Boy Said*

1987

Silver gelatin print

19 3/4" x 15 7/8"

Gift of Frank and Patty Kolodny

Figure 3

Adrian Piper

*Pretend #1*

1990

Eight framed black-and-white  
photographs with silkscreen text

Six 12 1/2" x 8 1/2"  
and two 12 1/2" x 12 1/2"

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new Graduate Faculty building, which housed the permanent collection and hosted special exhibitions. In the past forty years, three Chairs – Vera List, Agnus Gund, and Gabriella De Ferrari – have been indispensable to the development of the University Art Collection. And three curators have shaped it. The Art Center's first curator, Paul Mocsanyi, was responsible for more than a quarter-century of provocative exhibitions on art and social themes, and for an ongoing exhibition series, *The Artistic Thinking of Our Time*. From 1987 to 2000, Kathleen Goncharov, the first curator hired with the specific mission of building a collection, greatly expanded New School University's artistic holdings. She acquired more than a thousand pieces by noted artists and assembled a core group of generous donors, lenders, and advisors. Under her incisive direction, the collection focused on vanguard aesthetics, socially oriented art, and the work of women and people of color.<sup>1</sup> Under the watch of Stefano Basilico, who became curator in August 2000, the collection continues to bring

the visual arts into the lives of New School University students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

New School University has long seen itself as a vital center for civic dialogue and aesthetic and intellectual experimentation. With the significant majority of its collection of more than 1,800 objects installed throughout an urban campus, the University has transformed its public spaces into lively forums for examining contemporary art and its relationship to the cultural and social concerns of its day. "The place for contemporary art in our society today is that of a 'civic playground,' an arena where issues and ideas relevant to the times are explored and confronted in an open and engaged fashion," observes Stefano Basilico. "The collection should encourage this notion of *civic space*, not as architectural landscape but as discursive platform where dialogue about civic issues takes place through art."<sup>2</sup>

Fully embracing this notion of civic engagement, the University Art Collection is wide-

reaching and disparate, in its array of media and aesthetic styles and in the geographic, ethnic, racial, and sexual diversity of its artists. It is particularly rich in the work of artists of color and in works that examine questions of race, racism, and anti-Semitism in Western culture. Among the representative works are: Shimon Attie's *Rueckerstrasse 4* (1993), Robert Colescott's *Chocktaw Nickel* (1994, Figure 1), Jimmie Durham's *Just Ignore the English Text* (1992), Wendy Ewald with Brandon Clark's *Black Self* (1997, Figure 9), David Hammons's *African American Flag* (1990), William Kentridge's *Baedeker Series (Cambio, Dogana, Pensione)* (1999), Glenn Ligon's *Condition Report* (2000, Figure 4), Whitfield Lovell's *Uncle* (1990, Figure 10), Lorraine O'Grady's *Dream 1-4* (1991), Adrian Piper's *Pretend #1* (1980, Figure 3), Lorna Simpson's *Cure/Heal* (1992, Figure 12), Kara Walker's *The Means to an End—A Shadow Drama in Five Acts* (1995, Figure 8), and Carrie Mae Weems's *Black Boy Said* (1987, Figure 2).

**I AM  
A  
MAN**

**I AM  
A  
MAN**

Figure 4  
Glenn Ligon  
*Condition Report*  
2000  
Silkscreen  
on Iris print  
31 1/2" x 22 1/2"  
each  
Purchase



Figure 5  
Mariko Mori  
*Tea Ceremony III*  
1995  
Cibachrome print  
47 7/8" x 59 7/8"  
Purchase  
in memory of  
Eugene Schwartz



Reflecting the multicultural spirit of both the University and its art patronage, other works in the collection explore the rituals, sensibilities, and everyday life of a number of cultures: Candida Alvarez's *Nueva York* (1991), James Luna's *Half Indian/Half Mexican* (1991), Mariko Mori's *Tea Ceremony III* (1995, Figure 5), and Tseng Kwong Chi's *Disneyland, California* (1979). Some works question the bedrock institutions of American society and culture—education and medicine, for instance, in Clegg and Gutman's *Assembly of Deans* (1989), Lynne Cohen's *Classroom* (1994), General Idea's *AIDS* (1987)—and government and corporate culture in Alan Belcher's *Jordache* (1987) and Tom Friedman's *Untitled* (2000). Others speak of personal identity, sexuality, and sexual orientation: Nicole Eisenman's *Young George* (1993, Figure 14), Lyle Ashton Harris's *I Longed for the Relationship* (1993), Nikki S. Lee's *The Lesbian Project #1* (1997), Zoe Leonard's *Bullfight* (1990), Laurie Simmons's *Ventriloquist* (1986, Figure 6), and David Wojnarowicz's *Tommy's*

*Illness/Mexico City* (1987, Figure 11). Still others offer powerful insights into the contemporary realities of war, violence, terrorism, and aggression, as do Alfredo Jaar's *Geography=War* (1990, Figure 13), Robert Longo's *Gun Study* (1993), Martha Rosler's *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful/Balloons*, (1967-1972), Peter Saul's *Amboosh: Typical Veet Nam* (1975), and Nancy Spero's *Female Bomb* (1966).

The scope of the collection is not limited to political or activist art but extends to progressive works that established or continue the aesthetic traditions of minimalism, conceptualism, and geometric abstraction.<sup>3</sup> Here, paintings, drawings, photographs, and prints by Joseph Beuys, Ross Bleckner, Mel Bochner, Petah Coyne, Rachel Harrison, Sol LeWitt, Robert Mangold, Brice Marden, Vik Muniz, Katherine Porter, Bridget Riley, Dorothea Rockburne, Robert Ryman, Richard Serra, and Joel Shapiro enrich the collection.

The University's attitudes about art patronage and collecting are consistent with its historical and its present-day educational mission. The recent flowering of the collection (the vast majority of its holdings have been purchased by or donated or loaned to the University in the last ten years) finds a parallel in the intellectual work of the fellows and staff of The Vera List Center for Art and Politics. The philanthropist Vera List, along with her husband, Albert, supported the artistic activities of New School University for decades. Indeed, says the Center's director, Sondra Farganis, List was the key patron of the University's art collection. She always used her discerning eye, always thinking about work that would fit into the collection, which she saw as a vehicle for supporting contemporary art and emerging young artists.<sup>4</sup>

The Vera List Center for Art and Politics, founded in 1992 with an endowment from Mrs. List, advances this goal. The Center, the University's conduit for debate and research on the generative







**Figure 6**  
**Laurie Simmons**  
*Ventriloquist*  
 1986  
 Portfolio of three  
 Photogravure  
 (black-and-white)  
 Photo-lithograph  
 (color)  
 33 1/4" x 26 1/4" each  
 Purchase

and essential relationship between social concerns and art, is committed to viewing the arts— theater, film, dance, literature, music, architecture, urban planning, popular culture, as well as visual art—through the filter of ideology. Its activities investigate the extent to which the arts reflect broader political, social, and cultural realities. Can art help shape public opinion and political practice? What is the role of social activism in art? How does art function in an increasingly pluralist and populist society?

The Center also seeks to ensure “the future of democratic culture,” and to this end it facilitates analysis of institutional, legal, cultural, and economic aspects surrounding art: freedom of expression; arts policy and funding; arts education; political discourse on American culture; and the politics of art patronage, distribution, and display. The fellows of the Center are invited to consider these subjects through research projects, public lectures and symposia, occasional papers, and study groups and seminars.

Both The Vera List Center and the University Art Collection reflect the legacy of The New School's historic and activist involvement with art and culture. This involvement can be traced to 1918, when a group of independent-minded dissident scholars conceived an alternative learning environment to the traditionalist, conservative atmosphere of most American universities. They gathered a self-governing community of scholars devoted to the goal of critical research in the social sciences that would be so radical and far-reaching that it would engender a more just and egalitarian society. Some twenty years later, their utopian vision gave way to more immediate concerns: the plight of thousands of scholars expelled from European universities under the tyranny of Nazism and fascism. While most American universities did little for these men and women, the academic community of The New School created an affiliate institution—the University in Exile—that became a haven for refugee scholars. Later renamed the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science,

the University in Exile was The New School's permanent research institution for advanced study in the social sciences.

After World War II, The New School and the Graduate Faculty were incorporated as The New School for Social Research; the formal transition in no way dampened the institution's profile as an alternative university dedicated to the principles of democracy, political reform, intellectual experimentation, and educational innovation. The faculty became known for its support of such progressive and often controversial causes as the fight against racism and against anti-Semitism and other religious bigotry, and for its vocal opposition to totalitarianism abroad and McCarthyism at home. From the mid-1940s, The New School attracted maverick artists, scholars, and writers, and nurtured ground-breaking and influential ideas—from Claude Levi-Strauss's structuralism and Thorstein Veblen's theory of "conspicuous consumption" to Max Wertheimer's gestalt psychology and the Happenings of the composer and theorist John Cage.<sup>5</sup>

The New School University's interest in progressive art has been evident almost from its inception. Alvin Johnson, the institution's first president, envisioned a "dynamic center of modern culture in which adults could learn to appreciate new art forms, or even become artists themselves."<sup>6</sup> Like the other founders of the school, Johnson believed that the social sciences could reform society, support democracy, and liberate humanity from antiquated beliefs and habits, and that art was just as instrumental at achieving these ends. For Johnson and his colleagues, as the historians Peter Rutkoff and William Scott write, "a reconstructed society would need a reconstructed 'modernist' aesthetic for the performing and plastic arts as well as for design and architecture."<sup>7</sup> To help meet this utopian goal, Johnson commissioned the Viennese architect Joseph Urban to design the school's original building, now one of New York City's most important International Style structures. Urban's modernist design featured light-filled studios for art and dance, an art gallery, a six-hundred-seat





Figure 7

José Clemente Orozco

*Table of Universal Brotherhood*

(from The New School for Social Research murals)

1930-1931

Fresco

6' 6" x 14'





Figure 8

Kara Walker

*The Means to an End...A Shadow Drama In Five Acts*  
1995

Etching/aquatint

Five plates, 34 1/2" x 23" each

Purchase

auditorium, and other spaces for the practice and exhibition of art. Even the school's two principal noncreative spaces—a large seminar room and a dining hall—were to be energized with art, in the form of large-scale murals. It was almost impossible to visit The New School without encountering “some form of art and, more important, without being drawn to participate at some level.”<sup>8</sup>

For the seminar room and dining hall murals, Johnson turned to two socially engaged artists of the period: the American Thomas Hart Benton and the Mexican José Clemente Orozco (Figure 7). The commission of the two mural cycles, which were completed in time for the building's official opening on January 2, 1931, set the tone and direction of The New School's patronage of the visual arts for years to come. The terms of the commission were broad: Johnson asked Benton and Orozco to select subjects from contemporary life that the artists regarded as “so important that no history written a hundred years from now could fail to devote a chapter to [them].”<sup>9</sup>

Orozco's credentials as an uncompromising political artist were well established at the time of the commission. He had been a political cartoonist in Mexico and had more recently been enlisted by that nation's republican government to paint murals for public buildings in Mexico City, images depicting the misery of the nation's poor under the brutal pre-revolutionary class system. Orozco's New School murals were no less overt in their pro-worker, anti-imperialist ideology. Slated for the dining hall and a wall outside, the massive frescoes wrapped around the upper half of the hall, interrupted only by doors and windows; the cycle took more than forty days to complete. The images, rendered in muted tones of red, gray, black, and brown, were marked by an angular, abstract style that owed much to Cubism.

Orozco's five murals were entitled *Creative Man*, *The Table of Universal Brotherhood*, *Homecoming of the Worker of the New Day*, *The Struggle in the Orient*, and *The Struggle in the Occident*. As if to proclaim at the outset the potential of art,

culture, and the intellect to transform society, *Creative Man*, on the wall outside the dining hall, allegorized the power of science and art to liberate the world from repression and bigotry. A meditation on world harmony and peace, *The Table of Universal Brotherhood* depicted a variety of ethnic, religious, and racial types seated together. In *Homecoming*, a robust male worker returned to the love, solace, and support of his wife and children. *Struggle in the Orient* represented the enslaved masses of Asia and Africa under British imperialism; the impression of despair was leavened by the hopeful appearance of the nonviolent freedom fighter Mohandas Gandhi. Finally, in *Struggle in the Occident*, Orozco celebrated the revolutionaries of the West—the peasant warriors of Mexico, and the Marxist leaders of Russia, Lenin and Stalin—and their struggle against economic greed and oppression.

If Orozco's frescoes were overtly critical of capitalism and modern society, Benton's murals



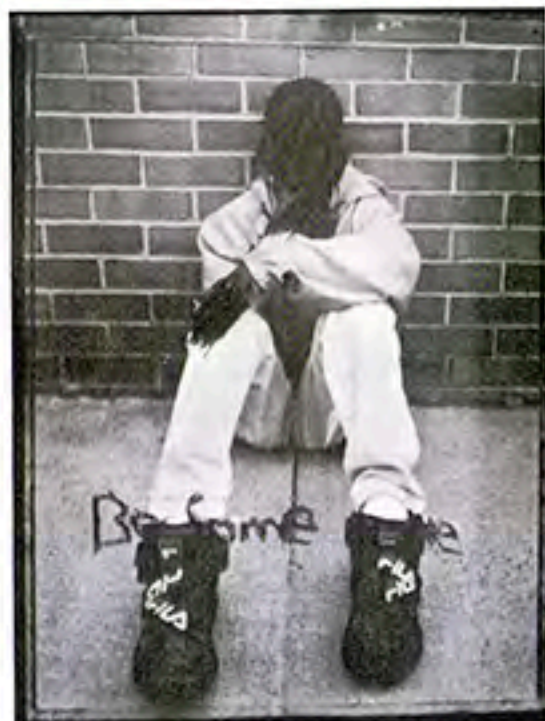


Figure 9  
 Wendy Ewald with Brandon Clark  
*Black Self*  
 1997  
 Silver gelatin print  
 19 3/4" x 15 7/8"  
 Gift of Anne Ehrenkrantz

were more ambiguous in their assessment of American life. Benton, who was born in Missouri and studied painting in Paris, was known for his sweeping, theatrical images of the "American scene"—large-scale canvases and murals of rural and urban life. His New School works, almost baroque in their voluptuous forms and exuberant coloration, were painted in the artist's studio with egg tempera on linen.<sup>10</sup> They depicted the human achievement, mechanical innovation, and power that characterized the United States in the 1920s. The nation's vitality was denoted through its industries (agriculture, mining, steel, lumber, construction, transportation) and sources of power (electricity, steam, internal combustion, coal), as well as its regional diversity—the Deep South, with its plantations; the midwestern plains; the socially and culturally transformative West; the teeming urban centers of the Northeast. Throughout the nine panels of the mural cycle, Benton represented a cacophony of American figures and activities: a baseball game,

a Salvation Army band, a subway train, a religious revival meeting, tawdry dancers, a stock exchange, prostitutes, an American Indian, a black sharecropper.<sup>11</sup> Benton's murals, though without the pronounced activism of Orozco's frescoes, were nevertheless openly pro-labor, counterposing the toil and sacrifices of the American worker with the evil deeds of ruling classes and repressive institutions, represented by smarmy stockbrokers, hyperbolic preachers, and patrician snobs.<sup>12</sup>

While both mural cycles were at first widely criticized by writers on art and political partisans—Orozco, for example, was attacked for what many saw as his propagandistic tone and his glorification of Stalin—Alvin Johnson viewed them as unquestionable successes. More than merely visually pleasing works of art, he believed the murals were essentially civic in purpose; they were meant to provoke thoughts and feelings about contemporary society and culture. He measured their accomplishment by their ability to

attract public interest and a range of viewers.<sup>13</sup> It is this very support of socially responsive and public-minded art that has inspired the curators of the New School University Art Collection. "My philosophy was that the collection should reflect the diversity and international nature of The New School as well as its politics (or what had historically been its politics)," comments Kathleen Goncharov. She considered the Orozco murals as the starting point for the collection, and thus she "looked for work that was challenging, provocative and politically engaged."<sup>14</sup>

The progressive nature of the New School University's patronage contrasts with many if not most American museums, cultural institutions, and universities. To better understand the collection's position, one need only look at the milieu of the American art museum, which remains, as a rule, socially and politically detached. Despite the growth of socially engaged art historical methodologies, many museum collections of modern and

contemporary art continue to be assembled on aesthetic principles established more than seventy years ago by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the first director of New York's Museum of Modern Art and incontestably the father of modern curatorial studies. Barr was an extraordinarily innovative curator: He supported, among others, pioneering exhibitions of Latin American modernism. He reexamined the physical nature of the exhibition itself, and rethought the role of the exhibition catalogue in elucidating questions beyond the formal. Yet despite his exposure to debates on the role of politics and activism in the visual arts (particularly during his travels to Soviet Russia), Barr's writing largely overlooked the social underpinnings of culture. By focusing on stylistic concerns above all others, he produced a curatorial history constructed outside political or social concerns.<sup>15</sup>

Barr's reading of modern art—one considerably less "activist" than that of The New School's modernist founders—was motivated fundamen-



Figure 10  
Whitfield Lovell  
*Uncle*  
1990  
Oil stick and charcoal on paper  
70 1/2" x 49 3/4"  
Gift of Vera List



tally by his belief in the autonomy of art. This hermetic view of art and the art of exhibition was problematic precisely because it rarely considered the audience or the social imperatives for art. It presumed that such topics as patronage and the social temperature at an artwork's creation and at its reception had little or no bearing on the institutional interests of the art world. But the art object is not simply a beautiful thing to be preserved by a museum, effectively isolated from the rest of society. It is also a resonant cultural artifact that can tell us much about our histories, the world around us, and who we are as a people.

Over the four decades of the existence of the New School University Art Collection, the art world itself has changed significantly. The old-line, elitist notion of a "mainstream," where the supremacy of whiteness, maleness, and aesthetics was taken for granted, no longer holds. Multiple, overlapping, and even contradictory interests now compete in the once rarefied arena of high culture: the modernist avant-garde, interpreted by some as the

pinnacle of twentieth-century intellectual ideals and by others as an enigmatic, hostile hierarchy of exclusion and elitism, ceded to new aesthetic forms and sensibilities. Identity-based art histories are revealing and validating works by artists previously excluded from the canon. Such sacred art historical concerns as connoisseurship, style, and the marking of distinct periods and aesthetic movements are being replaced—or complemented—by compelling social and cultural interpretations of art.

This broader, animated view of the place of the visual arts in society, the idea of art as a way to understand greater social and cultural realities, is what has driven the patrons and curators at New School University. The University Art Collection seeks "not only to educate our public in an appreciation of contemporary art," writes curator Basilico, "but mainly to engage our public to consider the society they live in and understand and enjoy its diversity and conflict."<sup>16</sup> Notably, even the display of the

collection differs from that in most other universities, where modern and contemporary works are most often relegated to well-guarded museums and galleries. Although it may seem counterintuitive to the usual curatorial imperative to protect and distance the art object from the spectator, the deployment of New School University's collection throughout public areas reinforces the very idea of the university as a "civic playground." And while museums and university art galleries frequently build their collections with an eye toward monetary investment, the curators at New School University have acquired art solely for its aesthetic, cultural, and social value. In effect, this extraordinary collection has radically transformed the notion of patronage, turning patrons and curators alike into social activists. In so doing, New School University's is one of the most vital and public collections of art in any American institution. ♦



Figure 11

David Wojnarowicz

*Tommy's Illness / Mexico City*

1987

Acrylic and collage on masonite

36" x 35"

Partial gift of Gracie Mansion



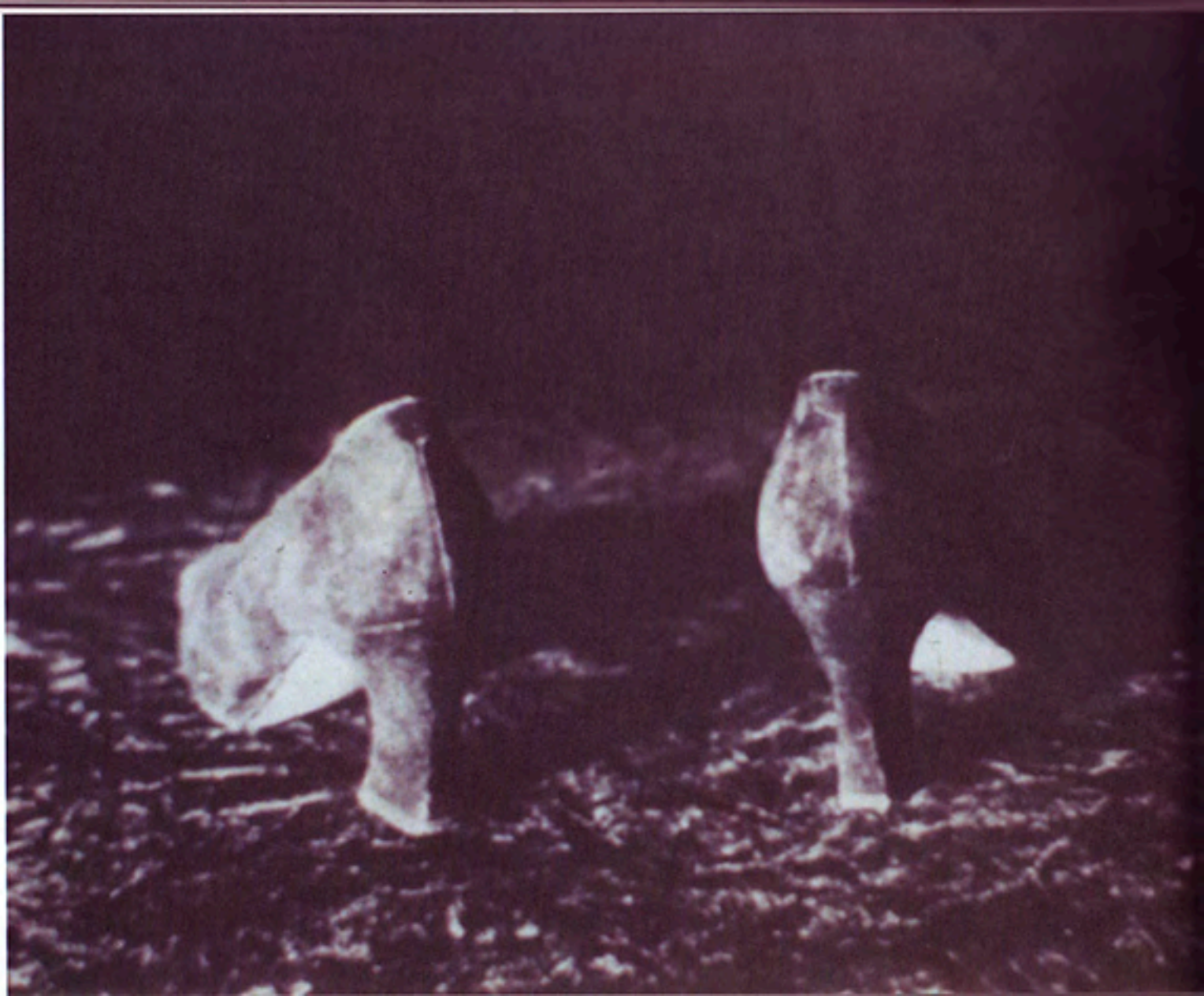


Figure 12

Lorna Simpson

*Cure/Heal* (from *so: Artist as Catalyst*)

1992

Serigraph

26" x 26"

Gift of Vera List

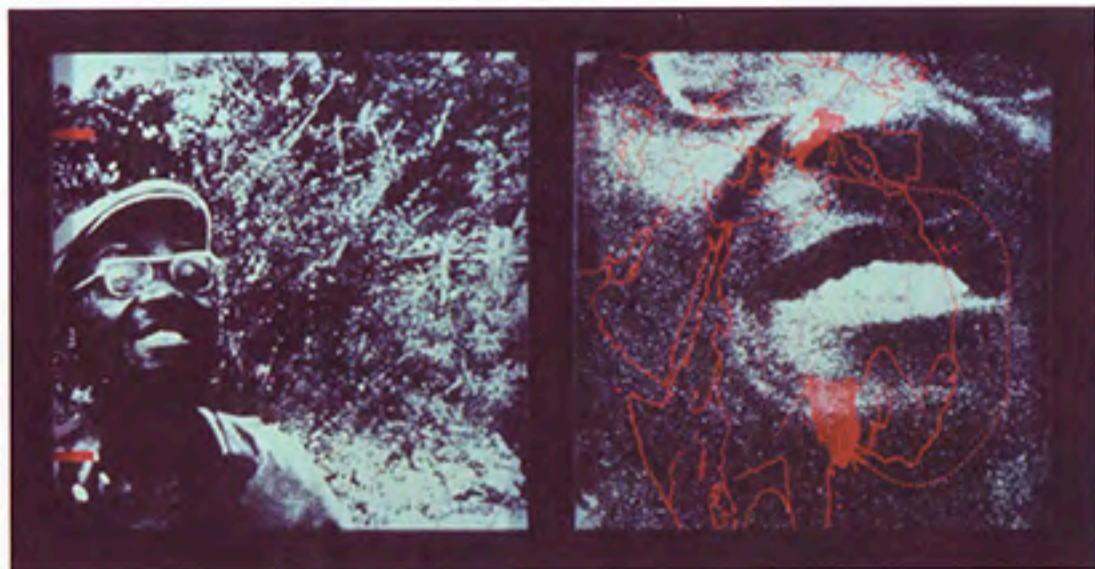


Figure 13

Alfredo Jaar

*Geography=War*

1990

Cibachrome and serigraph

12 1/2" x 26"

Gift of Vera List



Figure 14  
Nicole Eisenman  
*Young George*  
1993  
Gouache on paper  
22" x 29 1/2"  
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## Notes

1. Goncharov's interest in socially oriented art and the work of artists of color dates to the early 1980s, when she was a curator at Just Above Midtown/Downtown, an alternative space in Manhattan's Tribeca district that supported the efforts of artists of color.
2. Stefano Basilico, unpublished position paper on the future of the New School University Art Collection, February 22, 2001, p. 1.
3. Such work, with its emphatically shifted relationship to the spectator and its interest in altering the experience of viewing art, is not without its own larger social and cultural implications. For more on this subject, see Maurice Berger, *Minimal Politics* (Baltimore: Fine Arts Gallery, University of Maryland-Baltimore County, 1997).
4. Sondra Farganis, conversation with the author, March 15, 2002.
5. The content of this paragraph, as well as the discussion of the New School murals later in the essay, is indebted to Peter M. Rutkoff and William B. Scott, *New School: A History of The New School for Social Research* (New York: The Free Press, 1986).
6. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
9. Alvin Johnson, "Notes on the New School Murals," brochure (New York: The New School for Social Research, n.d.), p. 3.
10. The Benton murals were sold in 1984 to the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States (now part of AXA Financial, Inc.). They have been fully restored and are installed in the lobby of AXA's New York City headquarters.
11. For a detailed description of Benton's mural cycle, see Emily Braun and Thomas Branchick, *Thomas Hart Benton: The America Today Murals* (Williamstown, Massachusetts: Williams College Museum of Art, 1985).
12. Alvin Johnson commissioned one other mural cycle for The New School, a series of images of Ecuadorian life by the Ecuadorian painter Camilo Egas. The selection of Orozco and Egas reminds us that The New School's commitment to artists of color was early and unique, predating the "multiculturalism" of the 1990s by more than sixty years. For more on the three mural cycles, see Johnson, "Notes on the New School Murals," pp. 1-20.

13. "Several hundred thousand people have come to view the pictures. . . . Several thousand newspapers and magazines, not only in the United States but in Canada, Latin America, Europe and even in China, have asked permission to reproduce photographs of parts of the murals. A reasonable calculation would fix the number of people who have seen the murals and reproduced photographs of them at over one hundred million" (Johnson, "Notes on the New School Murals," p. 13).

14. Kathleen Goncharov, e-mail correspondence with the author, April 9, 2002. As Goncharov points out, there were practical concerns as well; most important, the safety of the work in open and often unmonitored public spaces: "On a practical level, I soon came to believe [that] work that could be at risk should not be collected, so I wanted to concentrate on works on paper that could be put under Plexiglas, or multiples. Public collec-

tions with no guards are always at risk [and] so I thought it was better to not have so many unique pieces that could be lost forever."

15. In effect, Barr retrospectively validated certain sectors of the modernist aesthetic at the expense of others. While he read the abstract symbolism of Paul Gauguin, for example, as a progenitor of German Expressionism, he omitted from his historical equation the activist realism of Gustave Courbet and Honoré Daumier. For a critique of Barr's practices, see Maurice Berger, "Of Cold Wars and Curators: The Case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg," *Artforum*, 27, no. 6 (February 1989), pp. 86–92; reprinted in Berger, *How Art Becomes History* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), pp. 23–45.

16. Basilico, position paper, p. 1.



## Acknowledgments

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## The Author

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