



PARRISH ART MUSEUM

125 Years of Engagement, Vision, and Excellence

Artists Choose Parrish Part II

FINAL Artist Statements

As of August 18, 2023

MARINA ADAMS | ARTIST STATEMENT

When I was asked to be part of the Parrish's 125th anniversary, I sensed even before looking at their collection that if they had a Willem de Kooning, I would want to show my work alongside his. When I saw *Untitled XXXVIII* (1983), which was a later painting by de Kooning, like the ones I had seen at Xavier Fourcade's gallery in the '80s when I first arrived in New York, the ones that opened up a world to me, I knew I wanted to hang it in dialogue with my painting *Brown in Red between Yellow and Blue* (2022).

ALICE AYCOCK | ARTIST STATEMENT

The contra dance diagrams that Alice Aycock based her fourteen-part drawing *Dance Me to the End of Love (Leonard Cohen)* (2022), a virtual earthwork, dialogue with Dennis Oppenheim's photo documentation of his executed earthwork *Polarities* (1972), based on his daughter's first drawing and the dying gesture of his father. Oppenheim's earthwork, five hundred feet long, was enlarged, plotted with red magnesium flares, and executed in 1969 in Bridgehampton, New York. Both Aycock and Oppenheim made work that emerged during the conceptual/earthwork period of the late 1960s and 1970s and have had a deep sense of community with the artists whose lives and work were influenced by their experience on the East End.

VIJA CELMINS | ARTIST STATEMENT

In Ellen Phelan's piece, I like the way the brush and paper interact to make the subtle indication of a light-filled landscape. The paint is gesture and image, being both abstract and representational.

My print is a mezzotint, which is built by scraping out the image on a rough surface of copper. I worked on it most of 2016, and ended up with a dense, nightlike image of this complicated stretch of water. The work is made bit by bit, not spontaneously. Maybe the opposite of Ellen's landscape.

For me, both works seem somewhat mystical but also strong.

RACHEL FEINSTEIN | ARTIST STATEMENT

I have been interested in universal symbols since studying religion and philosophy in college alongside art. My mother was Catholic, and my father was Jewish, and I was secretly baptized as a newborn, then attended a Hebrew elementary school. I started to take art lessons when the other students were learning Hebrew for their bar and bat mitzvahs. The images of Jesus and the Virgin Mary and other saints do not appear to me as only significant for Catholics but as universal images joining each culture and time together through symbols. The image of a mother and her child exists in every culture in the history of the world. I chose Audrey Flack's work called *Lady Madonna* for this reason. Like me, Audrey Flack is a contemporary artist who has a deep affinity with the past and enjoys using female imagery in her work



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to make the connection between her life and art to those who lived and worked before her. My sculpture called *See You Soon* is based on a statue from a German porcelain factory in the eighteenth century of Jesus and the baby angels amongst frothy clouds in Heaven.

RALPH GIBSON | ARTIST STATEMENT

I have admired Philip Guston's work throughout my entire career. Mostly his abstract work, I might add. But his courage to change has also been an inspiration. When I saw this image on Prince Street, I immediately knew it was an homage, influenced by a great artist. And the opportunity to exhibit this work along with one of his great paintings is a true honor.

SHEREE HOVSEPIAN | ARTIST STATEMENT

I chose the artist Gertrude Greene because we both engage in collage/assemblage work. My practice investigates the ways that photographic imagery gains material, formal, and sculptural relevance. In frames made in the studio, I construct multimedia assemblages with silver gelatin photographs, ceramic, string, and other ephemera found in my home. There is a structural dependence between the frame and the interior image; the container and contained exist in equilibrium.

Likewise, Greene's playful but simple compositions are delicately balanced. Though the palette, consisting of soft, earthy neutrals, is minimal, the medium of collage necessitates a building up or additive process. I admire the precision and restraint with which she constructs her collages, and the quiet beauty of her abstractions. I make my own assemblage work with a similar sensibility.

SUZANNE McCLELLAND | ARTIST STATEMENT

"If you think of us next time, remember our silence is a silence of love and not of indifference. Remember, we are writing in the sky instead of on paper—that's our song. Lift your eyes and look up in the sky. There's our message. Lift your eyes again and look around you, and you will see that you are walking in the sky which extends to the ground. We are all part of the sky, more so than of the ground. Remember, we love you."

*John Lennon & Yoko Ono
May 27th, 1979*

Yoko Ono's 1992 unbound book, *Color, Fly, Sky*, is displayed in the vitrine at the center of this room. Her description of a powerful childhood experience struck me as a moment when an artist might develop her imagination as a refuge, literally a place to visit in the mind.

Many of the drawings in this selection reflect my attraction to line as inscription. Some suggest an aperture, portal, or pathway between here and there. I chose works that reflect my love for writing as drawing, drawing as writing, and the many ways that "edge" implies boundaries between forms in a painting... and between bodies of water and land.



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The horizon line acts as an anchor. Since working on the East End of Long Island, I've become keenly aware of this division and its stability. The horizon dissolves with the shifting light, fog, or darkness and this movement in our skies and waters is at the core of my relationship to landscape.

Examining the Parrish Art Museum collection deepened my curiosity about how institutions reflect our cultural priorities as well as the erasures. This invitation allowed me to position familiar artists with those less recognized. Collections like this one are a meaningful historical record and need to be shared with the public as often as possible.

ALIX PEARLSTEIN | ARTISTS STATEMENT

Philip Pearlstein is not my father. I am not related to Philip Pearlstein. But through the coincidence of our shared last name, I've formed a strange, lifelong relationship with his work. His rough-hewn bodies, foreshortened and cropped by the frame as if they're trying to escape the conventions of figuration and the malaise of their New Yorky, summers-on-Long-Island milieu—through sheer bodily aggression.

Aggression is also present in Annie Leibovitz's jewel of a portrait of Chuck Close. And it is there in his *Big Self-Portrait*, which I have festooned with young women's bodies. One of those bodies represents a very dear friend of mine.

I've been cutting out and collecting figures and objects for a long time, many from magazine or catalogue reproductions of artworks. A *Pearlstein* subset of my ongoing *Archive Collage* series formed recently. The entire series is replete with ties to the history of artists on the East End. Carolee Schneemann's first performance of *Interior Scroll* took place at Ashawagh Hall in East Hampton. It was long after Pollock's time, but deeply connected by place, and through the angsty lens of the Pollockian performative.

Bodies, paintings, sculptures, and landscapes populate the *mise-en-scène* of the collages, suggesting connections through history, form, and association. The back of Willem de Kooning's head, regarding his *Woman* painting in progress, points to an active state of reflexive reflection—looking at art, looking at artists looking through art.

NED SMYTH | ARTIST STATEMENT

I have always wanted to show my early minimalist architectural work at the Parrish. When I was asked to be part of *Artists Choose Parrish*, I immediately suggested showing my cast concrete two-by-four architectural pieces. I had cast concrete during a summer vacation, in the Virgin Islands. After graduating, I was asked to build a house in Aspen, Colorado, for a friend who had just graduated from Yale architecture school. The next year, I started casting concrete two-by-fours, at eight feet, four feet, and one foot. The idea was to make units to lean against the wall, relating to minimalism. After I made minimal pieces for a while, they reminded me of my youth, living in Italy. I started casting concrete arches, at six feet tall. This was the beginning of me moving away from minimalism toward creating architectural spaces. The pieces I'm showing were made in 1973.



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Wanting to show my 1973 concrete pieces, I looked in the Parrish collection for minimalist work. I didn't find any in the collection, but I did find a Louise Nevelson. Her sculpture was the same height as one of my pieces and was also monochromatic, like my concrete work. Both mine and Louise's sculptures were shown up against the wall. Louise also made large, commissioned work, as I did most of my career. In the end, I was pleased with finding Louise Nevelson.

DONALD SULTAN | ARTIST STATEMENT

Every work of art is an ideological statement. Each is a point of view unique to the artist. I chose works by artists in the collection that exemplify this. All of the art I chose is abstract in nature even if it contains a kind of image—the images are loaded. They are art historical torn from the natural world but not bound by it. The artists are all mature and yet have a certainty of their craft. There is no guesswork in the making, only in the message. They are specific messages insisted upon by the artist and titled as such. They are their own reality and hence deeply thought out. The more the viewer knows about art history, the richer and more complex the experience. I also wanted to choose artists who emphasize material and iconic images with visual and actual weight. The scale of the imagery within the size is not tentative, it is sure, like an arrow hitting a bull's-eye.

The fact that these works are in the collection of the Parrish, some shown perhaps only once, made it a great pleasure for me to assemble. They are all very different in their points of view yet speak clearly to their historical prerogative.

I have known these artists' works for many years. I was thrilled to be able to have their voices heard again.

JOHN TORREANO | ARTIST STATEMENT

Splash Building (2009) was one of the first works I thought of when asked to choose from the Parrish's permanent collection. I was attracted to its scale, the combination of materials and mix of colors and light, but most important, its potential multiple interpretations: a building or a splash building, a Pop artwork, a three-dimensional drawing, etc. My experience with it is always a delightful surprise. Most people would not associate Dennis Oppenheim's work with mine. He was a conceptualist who did performances, installations, earthworks, and "mind-twisting" sculptures. I am thinking, for example, of *Device to Root Out Evil* (1997), an upside-down church. I love the humor I get from this sculpture. In fact, I find humor in most of his work.

He has been linked to artists like Robert Smithson, Alice Aycock, Bruce Nauman, and Stephen Kaltenbach. (Stephen is an old friend from that time, late '60s, and his work is a good example of conceptually based art that would easily relate to Dennis's work.)

There is a paradoxical character between Dennis's work and mine. He was a conceptualist, to be sure, but also made objects such *Splash Building*. And conversely, I am a painter/object maker but also



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experimented with film and did stand-up comedy. (For example, I performed in several group shows curated by Michael Smith.)

A simultaneously contradictory experience is something I look for in art. I refer to it as contradistinction. My choice of the painting *4 x 4* (1990) is an effort to cause a dynamic closure with Dennis's *Splash Building*. They are extremely different, but with enough similarities in material and content to make that happen. (Let me know if you think it does or doesn't.)

The painting is very physical. It is huge, made from plywood panels with routed ovals, colored balls, and stains. I see a contradistinction between its materiality and the illusion of a swirling space. When the illusion of space is experienced, the weight and materiality lifts, and conversely, when its physicality is experienced, the illusion disappears. (In those moments I like to think of it as "furniture for the eye.")

The last time I talked to Dennis was at a dinner to honor our mutual friend Dale Chihuly. It was to celebrate the opening of *Chihuly at Marlborough* (2001). Dennis and I had been artists in residence at Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood, Washington. The school was created by Dale, founded in 1971. We were comparing Dale Chihuly with Andy Warhol.

For many years Dennis and I lived on Franklin Street in New York City. I visited his loft a few times and remember appreciating how his space was a combination of open generosity and intimacy, akin to my experience with *Splash Building*, which is a big and generous opening shape, inspired by the intimacy of a splash.

We were both from the "silent generation," having been born before the U.S. joined World War II and raised during the war. We entered the art world in the '60s and, I believe, shared the idea that art making was an act of principled communication, an intellectual enterprise that meant exploring new ideas. Dennis died too soon. It would have been fun to have had a conversation with him about this installation and these ideas. I want to dedicate this installation to Dennis's memory.

STANLEY WHITNEY | ARTIST STATEMENT

On Philip Guston, *The Street*, 1970

I met Philip Guston in 1968, when I was a student at the Summer Six art program at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs. I was moving towards abstraction, and he was moving towards figuration. It was an important time in my work, and Guston had a big impact on me as an artist. It was Guston who pushed me to move to New York City.

On Romare Bearden, *Before the First Whistle*, ca. 1974

I kept thinking about this Romare Bearden piece after I first saw it. It's one of the best Bearden's I've seen in a long time. I was struck by the color. It's a beautiful, powerful piece.