ALMINE RECH

When You See Me: Visibility in Contemporary Art/History

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The Dallas Museum of Art presents *When You See Me: Visibility in Contemporary Art/History*, a permanent collection exhibition that grapples with the complexities of visibility.
Taking its title from Deborah Roberts's work of the same name, the exhibition showcases numerous recent acquisitions by a diverse, intergenerational group of 50 artists, mostly artists of color, women and queer artists, whose work contends with visibility both socially and formally. Featuring nearly 60 works in various media, *When You See Me* broadens and complicates official histories and their corresponding visual strategies to allow for richer representations of those who have been traditionally excluded or erased. Employing a wide range of formal and conceptual devices—from abstraction to figuration, fiction to documentary, and the shades of nuance in between—the featured artists explore invisibility, hypervisibility, the desire to be seen and the right to be private. Many of the works included in *When You See Me* were acquired through the TWO x TWO for AIDS and Art Fund, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this fall.

"Whether or not they are seen, the stories of underrepresented people have a pivotal impact on history, culture and our society," said Dr. Agustín Arteaga, the DMA's Eugene McDermott Director. "We will never be able to tell every story, but it is our responsibility, as a leading cultural institution, to introduce our audiences to as many perspectives as possible as our world changes and grows."

The multivocal nature of this show is reflected in its co-curation by the Museum's entire Contemporary Art Department, which comprises Dr. Anna Katherine Brodbeck, Dr. Vivian Li, Ade Omotosho and Veronica Myers.
The exhibition is held in the Museum's Barrel Vault and adjoining Hoffman, Rachofsky, Stoffel and Hanley galleries, each organized by one of the four curators.

The section curated by Dr. Anna Katherine Brodbeck, Hoffman Family Senior Curator of Contemporary Art, opens the exhibition by asking, What is at stake for those seen and unseen? Gerhard Richter's *48 Portraits*, a photographic series derived from the artist's contribution to the 1972 Venice Biennale, displays the official portraits of white European and American men prominent in political, cultural and academic fields from the mid-19th to mid-20th century. This work is juxtaposed with Samuel Levi Jones's *48 Portraits (Underexposed)* from 2012, a response to Richter's series that reminds us how much work is needed to make history more inclusive of Black people. This section also marks the DMA's debut of *America*, a 2019 film by Garrett Bradley that intersperses newly shot vignettes with excerpts from the 1913 silent film *Lime Kiln Field Day* to reimagine aspects of Black life seldom, if at all, recorded in the archive of American cinema.

The section curated by Dr. Vivian Li, The Lupe Murchison Curator of Contemporary Art, presents the recent resurgence and engagement with figuration, particularly by BIPOC artists. The artists in this section celebrate the ability to represent themselves and their own narratives, while simultaneously recognizing the historic and continued surveillance of their identities. Works by emerging artists such as Anna Park, Wangari Mathenge and Ren Light Pan are put in dialogue with those by earlier generations of artists who have broached ideas around the stakes of visibility in American life. These works include William Pope.L's iconic *The Great White Way*, Pacita Abad's *How Mali Lost Her Accent* from Abad's "Immigrant Experience" series and Shigeko Kubota's video sculpture *Video Haiku – Hanging Piece*.

The section curated by Ade Omotosho, The Nancy and Tim Hanley Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, is devoted to works by Black artists who use techniques of found-object assemblage to resist visibility, to defy the pressures of the art market and to confront political conditions. Artists such as Nari Ward, Senga Nengudi and Theaster Gates, among others, pursue varied approaches, but are united by their shared commitment to breathing new life into overlooked and discarded materials. Their works are concerned less with representational aesthetics than with the formal possibilities of abstraction.

The section curated by Veronica Myers, Curatorial Assistant for Contemporary Art and Asian Art, is composed solely of works by queer artists. The space reimagines queerness as an evolving interpersonal dialogue and act of community-building rather than as an innate, static identity. The artists, ranging from late 20th-century photographers Peter Hujar and David Wojnarowicz to contemporary Dallas native Puppies Puppies (Jade Guanaro Kuriki-Olivo), prove that queer life is forged through vital networks of care, pleasure and solidarity.

The Barrel Vault presents a confluence of each curator's perspective as envisioned by Brodbeck. This section includes *Cupboard*, 2022, a recently acquired monumental gilt bronze sculpture by Simone Leigh; *Pocket Rocket*, 2020, a mixed-media work by Tschabalala Self; and a ceramic vessel created by David Drake, a literate enslaved potter who made stoneware in the Antebellum era.

"In recent years, representation has increasingly become a focus in our cultural landscape," said the co-curators. "This phenomenon, spurred by an array of social and political transformations, has prompted artists working in various disciplines to contemplate its demands—and its limits. We hope that viewers will meditate on how such concerns have been inherited and engaged by several generations of artists, as well as how these concerns shape their own lives."