ALMINE RECH

By Way Of
Material and Motion in the Guggenheim Collection

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(NEW YORK, NY—March 15, 2024) One of the most salient features of contemporary art is the tendency, and desire, to abandon traditional creative practice, enacting both literal and figurative experimentations beyond the studio. The Guggenheim Museum presents *By Way Of: Material and Motion in the Guggenheim Collection*, an exhibition that examines artists on the move, demonstrating how saturated contemporary art has become with extramural modes of thinking and working. Open through June 8, 2025, the exhibition spans the 1960s to the present day and offers a suite of artworks from the museum's permanent collection and is particularly inspired by the D. Daskalopoulos Collection Gift.

For centuries, the studio possessed almost sacred significations around the act of creation: a site for making art, a place of inspiration, invention, experimentation, and technical virtuosity. While studio practice subsists, art-making's reputation has undeniably transformed. From the twentieth century onward, especially after World War II, contemporary artists became more invested in the potentials of the world outside and began to work in plein air, entrusting their eye over their formal training. Some artists located their inspiration in the street rather than in the academy; others depicted the responsibility of encapsulating memory and identity in a mobile form; while others pushed the boundaries of traditional art materials. *By Way Of* encompasses the scale and spirit of these investigations in artworks that cross media—video embedded in sculpture, tapestry as experimental painting, sound art housed inside found objects—all within the Guggenheim's iconic building.

Several post-war artists in this exhibition—Pier Paolo Calzolari, Jannis Kounellis, Mario Merz, Gilberto Zarrio—were part of a loosely defined art movement labeled Arte Povera by former critic and Guggenheim curator-at-large, Germano Celant (1940–2020), and engaged an anti-elitist aesthetic in their makings, incorporating ordinary elements drawn from everyday life and the organic world. More contemporary figures in the show further extend these limits. Anthony Akinbola's and Rashid Johnson's use of common grooming objects in Black communities introduces ideas of touch and bodily care into a dispassionate vocabulary of painterly critique. Others, such as David Hammons and Senga Nengudi, call attention to their status as beings-in-a-body, fashioning humanoid figures and self-portraits from cheap foodstuffs. Mona Hatoum takes this logic to a more abject place, creating a dining space but offering viewers the chance to "consume" her bodily interior.

The questions that vexed many artists on the most historic end of this exhibition's spectrum still persist: How can the postindustrial West continue to grapple with its material consumption and waste? How do we come to define national and cultural borders (and who can cross them)?
The results of these moving explorations challenge taste and even the neat system of medium categorization that specifies sculpture versus object versus installation. *By Way Of: Material and Motion in the Guggenheim Collection* demonstrates how artists' practices are grounded in a feeling of immanence, a full sensory experience, and an awareness of place, even if, at times, the artist seeks to make an escape elsewhere.

On the occasion of the exhibition, the Guggenheim Museum will host artist Shinique Smith in conversation with Naomi Beckwith for the Thirteenth Annual Robert Rosenblum Lecture on April 10, 2024.

By Way Of: Material and Motion in the Guggenheim Collection is organized by Naomi Beckwith, Deputy Director and Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator.

The curator wishes to thank the Guggenheim team members who worked to give shape to this exhibition.

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