

The Hunter College Art Galleries present an exhibition curated by Katy Siegel focusing on the presence of traditional American forms in contemporary art

***Americanana* curated by Katy Siegel**

September 16 – December 4, 2010

The Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery at Hunter College

68th Street and Lexington Avenue, SW corner

New York, NY 10065

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 1 to 6 p.m., free admission

Opening reception: Thursday, September 16, 6-8 pm

NEW YORK, June 22, 2010 –*Americanana* brings together work by artists as different as Jasper Johns, H.C. Westermann, and Kara Walker that engages American creative traditions, revealing changing artistic and social attitudes towards the American past.

While many twentieth century American artists sought to overcome what they saw as provincial attitudes to art, looking to European modernism as their model, others deliberately referenced the "usable past"--from sign painting to wood carving--of pre-industrial, pre-Civil War America, even if they did so with ambivalence rather than nationalist boosterism. Artists have been particularly sensitive to the aesthetics of Americana, and the collections of artists like Charles Sheeler, Walker Evans, Elie Nadelman, and Yasuo Kuniyoshi (not to mention Andy Warhol and Allen Ruppersberg) influenced their own artistic production as well as the collecting of museums such as the Whitney and MoMA.

Revivals of this "real America" have occurred again and again, for countless reasons, in history as well as art. Recently, the distant past has been highly visible in contemporary art and culture as the identity and even survival of the United States amidst globalism has surfaced as a larger issue. This exhibition will feature art works from the 1960s through the present that reference American subjects and, even more, American traditions of direct making. Some of the artists, such as Donald Judd and James Turrell, made useful objects like furniture and ceramics as well as art; other artists, such as Faith Ringgold, Mel Edwards, Elaine Reichek, and Greely Myatt, build on craft traditions like quilting and metal work. Josephine Halvorson, the youngest artist in *Americanana*, makes

exquisite paintings in harmony with the plain aesthetics of Shaker objects. Artists featured in this exhibition include: Mel Edwards, Robert Gober, Josephine Halvorson, Phillip Hefferton, Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Allan McCollum, Greely Myatt, Elaine Reichel, Faith Ringgold, James Turrell, Kara Walker, and H.C. Westermann.

The exhibition is supported by the Foundation-to-Life, Inc. Additional funding is provided by the Bershad Exhibition Fund at Hunter College.

THE HUNTER COLLEGE ART GALLERIES: The Hunter College Art Galleries comprise the Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery at Hunter College's main campus on Manhattan's Upper East Side and the Hunter College/Times Square Gallery located on the first floor of the MFA Building in Midtown. The Hunter College Art Galleries present approximately ten shows annually, curated by studio art and art history faculty as well as alumni of the MA and MFA programs, often with the assistance of graduate students as part of the Curatorial Assistantship for Credit program. Since opening in 1981, the Hunter College Art Galleries has presented over two hundred exhibitions.

PUBLICATION: The catalog will explore the history of making and interpreting an American tradition of art, from the Great Depression forward, with a broad introduction by the curator, Katy Siegel, Professor of Art History at Hunter College; an essay by an M.A. student on the early years of MoMA curator Dorothy Miller highlighting the origins of her interest in American art; and original interviews with four of the artists in the show, conducted by graduate students. The exhibition emerges from a seminar in which students researched and wrote about the objects they grew up with—their own usable pasts, as it were—as well as working on American art history topics.

GALLERY INFORMATION:

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