

GREY ART NYU GALLERY

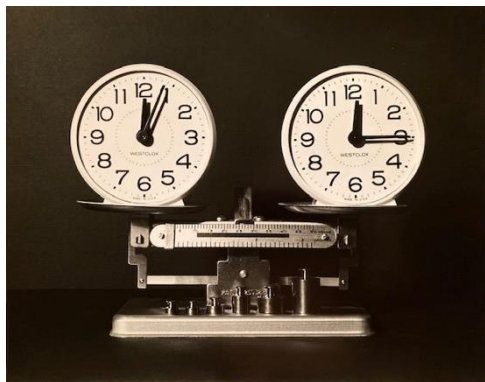
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EXHIBITION FOCUSES ON NEW YORK UNIVERSITY'S LANDMARK ART COLLECTION

Mostly New: Selections from the NYU Art Collection

On view at New York University's Grey Art Gallery
April 11–June 17, 2022



Kenji Nakahashi, *Time – (A)*
c. 1980; printed 1985. Gelatin silver
print, 11 x 14 in. Grey Art Gallery, NYU
Art Collection. Anonymous gift,
2021.4.5

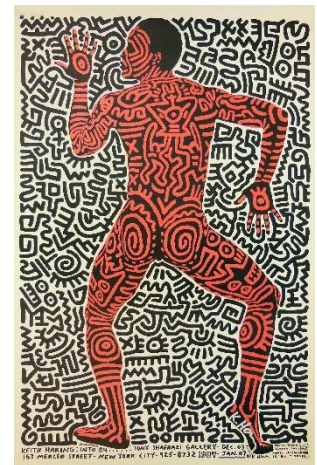
The Grey Art Gallery at New York University is pleased to present *Mostly New: Selections from the NYU Art Collection*, the museum's first exhibition since it closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The exhibition presents a compelling sampling of the New York University Art Collection, with more than 90 artworks by nearly 60 artists. Curated by the Grey Art Gallery's Lynn Gumpert and Michèle Wong, the show features recent acquisitions of modern and contemporary art from the Middle East by artists such as Farah Al Qasimi, Shahpour Pouyan, and Parviz Tanavoli and spotlights photography, with works by Harry Callahan, Peter Hujar, and Kenji Nakahashi, among others. *Mostly New* also debuts a selection of works from the Grey's newly acquired Cottrell-Lovett Collection, donated by longtime art patrons, social activists, and downtown Manhattan residents Dr. James Cottrell and Mr. Joseph Lovett. Included are paintings and prints by Downtown New York artists such as Donald Baechler, Deborah Kass, and Glenn Ligon. Established in 1958—and stewarded by the Grey Art Gallery since the museum's opening in 1975—the New York University Art Collection now comprises over 6,000 objects. Following such exhibitions as *New York Cool: Painting and Sculpture from the NYU Art Collection* (2008), *Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952–1965* (2017), and, most recently, *Modernisms: Iranian, Turkish, and Indian Highlights from NYU's Abby Weed Grey Collection* (2019), *Mostly*

New offers visitors the opportunity to view never-seen and rarely displayed gems from a landmark academic art collection.

“While the Grey has been closed to the public, our staff has continued to care for and build the NYU Art Collection,” notes Lynn Gumpert, director of the Grey Art Gallery. “As the museum undergoes a major period of transition—thanks to the transformative gift from Joe Lovett and Jim Cottrell—*Mostly New* offers a fitting opportunity to refocus on the Grey’s core identity as a collecting institution.” Michèle Wong, the Grey’s Associate Director and Head of Collections and Exhibitions, adds, “As a longtime Grey staff member, I relish seeing both newer and older collection works together and on view—and reminding both the university community and our other audiences that the Grey provides a home for art and dialogue on NYU’s campus.”

History of the NYU Art Collection

The creation of the New York University Collection was inspired by A.E. Gallatin’s Gallery (later Museum) of Living Art, which opened in 1927 on the same site the Grey currently occupies. As the first institution in the U.S. to exhibit work by living artists—including Picasso, Léger, Mirò, Mondrian, Arp and members of the American Abstract Artists group—Gallatin’s Museum provided an important forum for intellectual and artistic exchange. When the Museum closed in 1942, Professor Howard S. Conant of NYU’s Department of Art Education bemoaned the lack of original art on campus and initiated the NYU Art Collection in 1958. The collection expanded quickly, with many sculptures, drawings, prints, and photographs installed throughout the campus. With a fast-growing academic art collection joining the artistic milieu of Greenwich Village—where New York School artists like Willem de Kooning, Arshile Gorky, and Ad Reinhardt lived and worked alongside NYU’s impressive faculty of artists, art historians, and scholars—NYU continued to play a crucial role in the city’s cultural life.



Keith Haring
Bill T. Jones, 1984
Color offset lithograph
35 x 23 in.
Grey Art Gallery
NYU Art Collection
Gift of Denise Green
2016.9.2

The university remained without a permanent museum until 1975, when a generous gift from Abby Weed Grey enabled renovation and improvement of the historic space, and the doors reopened as the Grey Art Gallery. This gift, along with the donation of her prescient collection of contemporary art from the Middle East and Asia, greatly augmented the university’s art holdings and provided a space for temporary exhibitions. In 2021 the NYU Art Collection again significantly expanded thanks to a donation of

approximately 200 artworks by Downtown New York City artists from the collection of Dr. James Cottrell and Joseph Lovett.

For nearly 50 years, the Grey has produced numerous exhibitions and publications on the NYU Art Collection, including *New York Cool* (2008), a survey of Lower Manhattan's disparate art world in the 1950s and early '60s; *Abby Grey and Indian Modernism* (2015), which explored the vital art scene that blossomed after Indian independence in 1947; *Inventing Downtown* (2017), the first show ever to survey this vital period from the vantage point of its artist-run galleries; and *Modernisms* (2019), an examination of how artists from Iran, Turkey, and India engaged in global discourses around key issues of modernity.

Exhibition Overview

Mostly New highlights one of the NYU Art Collection's strongest components—modern American art from the 1940s to the present, particularly paintings and prints by artists who lived and worked in the rich cultural landscape of downtown New York City. Figurative works by luminaries like **Keith Haring** and **Andy Warhol** introduce viewers to other influential figures of the downtown arts scene in the 1980s, such as dancers Bill T. Jones and Jock Soto. Work by artist **Donald Baechler**, who emerged in the '80s as



49
64

Donald Baechler

Donald Baechler
The Lucky Ring, 2008
Silkscreen on paper,
19 x 14 in. Grey Art
Gallery, NYU Art
Collection, Gift of
Cottrell-Lovett
Collection, 2021.5.3

part of the East Village creative community alongside the likes of Warhol and Haring, reveals the artist's interest in formal issues of line, shape, and color. Likewise, Brooklyn-based artist **Deborah Kass** explores pop culture as it intersects with art history. A late painting by **Grace Hartigan**, an influential member of the New York School, shows how the artist blended her signature Abstract Expressionist sensibility with a renewed interest in the figure. Influenced by 1960s counterculture and life in her native California, work by **Mary Heilmann** presents an upbeat, eccentric view of geometric abstraction. While **Glenn Ligon** is best known for works comprising stenciled fragments of famous texts, a 2004 print presents a more abstract exploration of issues of identity and the Black experience. A rare portrait by photographer **Adam Fuss** commemorates art patrons Dr. James Cottrell and Joseph Lovett, who maintain vital friendships with artists whose work they collect.

The NYU Art Collection also boasts significant photography holdings. Brooklyn-born photographer **Emil Cadoo**, who eventually moved to Paris in hopes of escaping racism in the United States, combined images of human and botanical subjects with textured overlays that expressed the subject's inner psyche. Photojournalist and Lower

Manhattan resident **Danny Lyon** turned his camera toward large-scale demolition projects going on in the neighborhood in the late 1960s. **Harry Callahan**'s experimental prints represent an important juncture in the history of photography when the creative capacities of the camera were explored. **Cindy Sherman** assumes a variety of guises for her self-portraits, appropriating characters from well-known stories as well as art history. Like Sherman, drag performance artist and actor Ethyl Eichelberger donned the identities of influential historical figures, as seen in photos by **Peter Hujar**, a chronicler of downtown New York's creative vanguard and queer communities during the 1970s and '80s. Work by Japanese-born New York transplant **Kenji Nakahashi** reveals the abstract imagery in everyday settings, like city subway stations. **Miwa Yanagi** applies a more socially conscious eye to the world around her—her series *Elevator Girls* investigates gender norms for Japanese women in the late 1990s.

In line with the principles of the museum's founder, Abby Weed Grey, the Grey Art Gallery also collects modern and contemporary art from the Middle East. *Mostly New* particularly highlights work by artists from Iran, where Mrs. Grey traveled eight times in the 1960s and '70s. **Parviz Tanavoli** is one of Iran's foremost sculptors and, through his close friendship with Abby Grey, helped shape the museum's remarkable holdings. Like his sculptures, Tanavoli's works on paper utilize motifs from Persian culture, including symbols of folklore and mysticism and objects found in bazaars. A 1965 work by **Marcos Grigorian**—a pioneering Iranian artist and professor at the University of Tehran—reflects the artist's

preoccupation with earth and mud as artistic medium, recalling the Iranian desert. Informed by Persian miniature painting, work by Tehran-born artist **Shiva Ahmadi** features mythical creatures and enthroned figures characterized by ornate patterns, rich textures, and vivid hues. **Shahpour Pouyan**'s reinterpretation of traditional Persian miniature painting is absent of all figures, drawing attention instead to the landscape and domestic settings. Having moved away from her native Iran as a young child, **Samira Abbassy** uses her work as a means of exploring her relationship to Iranian culture and broader issues of identity. A photograph by the Emirati-born artist **Farah Al Qasimi**—donated by the founder of the Sharjah-based Barjeel Art Foundation, who collaborated with the Grey on *Taking Shape: Abstraction from the Arab World, 1950s–1980s* (2020)—offers viewers a playful glimpse into life in the Persian Gulf.



Farah Al Qasimi
Living Room Vape, 2017, Archival inkjet print, 26 1/4 x 35 in. Grey Art Gallery, NYU Art Collection, Gift of Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi on behalf of Barjeel Art Foundation, 2018.1

Sponsorship

Mostly New: Selections from the NYU Art Collection is organized by the Grey Art Gallery, New York University, and curated by Lynn Gumpert and Michèle Wong. Generous support is provided by the Grey's Director's Circle, Inter/National Council, and Friends; and the Abby Weed Grey Trust.

About the Grey Art Gallery

The Grey Art Gallery, New York University's fine arts museum, enables and encourages transformative encounters with works of art. Engaging with challenging issues in the study of material culture, the Grey serves as a museum-laboratory, sparking interdisciplinary scholarship. Uniquely positioned to cultivate visual literacy and critical thinking, the Grey shares NYU's fundamental commitment as a global research university to advance knowledge of different cultures, contexts, and histories across time. The Grey also fosters experiential learning through its collections and participates in the cultural, intellectual, and environmental spheres of NYU's Global Network, of New York City, and of the broader world. In 2025 the Grey will celebrate its 50th anniversary.

General Information

Grey Art Gallery, New York University
100 Washington Square East, New York, NY 10003
Tel: 212/998-6780, Fax: 212/995-4024
E-mail: greyartgallery@nyu.edu, Website: greyartgallery.nyu.edu
Current Hours: Monday–Friday: 12:00–5:00 pm. Closed weekends.

Admission

Suggested donation: \$5; free of charge to NYU students, faculty, and staff

COVID-19 Protocols

All visitors must present proof of vaccination and photo identification upon entering the museum. Documentation must show proof that the visitor has received an FDA-authorized or WHO-listed vaccine and is up to date on their vaccinations (including booster, if eligible). Everyone must wear a mask that covers both the mouth and nose at all times. Eating or drinking is not permitted inside the museum.