Wall texts

The Guggenheim Collection

In 1937, the American businessman Solomon R. Guggenheim established a foundation in his name for "the promotion and encouragement and education in art and the enlightenment of the public." Ten years earlier, Guggenheim had begun to amass a modern art collection, with the German-born artist Hilla Rebay as his advisor. The works he acquired reflected Rebay's committed belief in non-objective painting, an approach developed in the early twentieth century and best exemplified by the work of the Russian artist Vasily Kandinsky.

In 1939, the foundation opened its first New York venue for the display of art, the Museum of Non-Objective Painting, with Rebay as director. By 1943, to meet the demands of the by-then flourishing museum, Rebay initiated her campaign to build a permanent structure to accommodate the Guggenheim collection. She selected the renowned American architect Frank Lloyd Wright for the project. The museum was renamed the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 1952, and seven years later its signature building opened on New York's Fifth Avenue.

Since that time, nearly fifty years have passed, and the Guggenheim has grown in several ways. The addition of other great collections – chief among them those of Peggy Guggenheim, Justin K. and Hilde Thannhauser, Karl Nierendorf, and Giuseppe Panza di Biumo–has played a major role in expanding the range of the Guggenheim's holdings beyond the initial focus on non-objective paintings. These contributions have been augmented through the years by numerous acquisitions and gifts to form a single collection that is not encyclopedic, and is fundamentally characterized by long-term commitments to particular artists.

The physical and conceptual bases that house these works have also continued to evolve. Today the Guggenheim encompasses the New York flagship as well as four additional museums sited in four countries and on two continents: the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice; the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao; Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin; and the Guggenheim Hermitage Museum in Las Vegas. Four of these museums have their own remarkable collections, and the fifth, the Guggenheim Hermitage Museum, provides a critical place of connection for Guggenheim works and masterpieces from the collection of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.

The Guggenheim Collection brings together approximately 200 masterpieces from the Guggenheim's global collection. This exhibition represents the first time that the classical modern, postwar, and contemporary masterworks of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, and Deutsche Guggenheim have been jointly displayed on such a broad and rich scale.

A Temple of Non-Objective Art: Hilla Rebay, Solomon R. Guggenheim, and Rudolf Bauer

Hilla Rebay—a German-born artist who beginning in the late 1920s guided Solomon R. Guggenheim in assembling his collection of modern art—was profoundly influenced by Vasily Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912), a treatise expressing the view that only through the rejection of representation, of any vestiges of the external, material world, could painting at once access the depth of inner life and the height of the heavenly cosmos. Rebay zealously believed that non-objective art could transcend the boundaries of language and experience, and in 1937, the year the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation was chartered, she proclaimed: "Non-objectivity will be the religion of the future."

Together with her long-time lover and fellow artist Rudolf Bauer, Rebay encouraged Guggenheim to become the champion of this "art of tomorrow" and to establish a museum unlike any other to exhibit his collection, which came to include more than 150 Kandinskys, as well as paintings by Bauer, Robert Delaunay, Fernand Léger, László Moholy-Nagy, and Rebay, among other artists also collected in depth. In contrast to the Museum of Modern Art, founded in New York in 1929 to present an encyclopedic history of the modern movement, Guggenheim's museum was based on a single idea: the spiritually redemptive power of abstract painting.

With Rebay as its first director, the Museum of Non-Objective Painting, as the Guggenheim was then called, opened on the eve of World War II, on June 1, 1939, in a former automobile showroom on East Fifty-fourth Street in Manhattan. Installed with works by Rebay's favorite artists, the museum offered a special atmosphere in which to view art: paintings were encased in large frames and hung low on walls covered with pleated fabric; lighting was innovative and subtle; floors were thickly carpeted; and classical music could be heard throughout the galleries. Rebay also devoted significant memorial exhibitions to

Kandinsky and Moholy-Nagy, organized traveling exhibitions, and continued to expand the collection with Guggenheim's support.

Rebay and Guggenheim's friendship and professional relationship resulted in one of the finest collections of early twentieth-century modernism and changed the history of modern art in America. Perhaps the most important testament to their achievement is the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum on Fifth Avenue, planned as a "temple to non-objectivity" and designed by their chosen architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. The new museum would finally open on October 21, 1959, ten years after Guggenheim died, six months after Wright's own death, and seven years after Rebay had resigned from the museum.

Vasily Kandinsky

Perhaps more than any artist, Vasily Kandinsky has been closely linked to the history of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Hilla Rebay, artist, art advisor to Solomon R. Guggenheim, and the museum's first director, introduced Guggenheim to Kandinsky at his studio at the Dessau Bauhaus in the summer of 1930. This meeting initiated a period of continuous acquisition of Kandinsky's oils and watercolors, beginning with, among others, his masterpiece *Composition 8* (July 1923), seen at the exhibition's entrance. Since that time, the Guggenheim's permanent collection has grown to encompass over 150 works by Kandinsky. This presentation of Kandinsky's masterworks traces the artist's development from his artistic beginnings in Munich to his time at the Bauhaus and then finally his years of exile in Paris. Over the course of his career, Kandinsky's style evolved from highly colored expressionist works to the complex, nonrepresentational or "pure" abstractions for which he is universally admired.

Kandinsky believed in the evocative power of carefully chosen and dynamically interrelated colors, shapes, and lines to reveal hidden aspects of the empirical world, express subjective realities, aspire to the metaphysical, and offer a regenerative vision of the future. Kandinsky thought that the inner vision of an artist could be translated into a universally accessible statement. In early works such as *Landscape with Rain* (January 1913) and *Small Pleasures* (June 1913), he retained fragments of recognizable imagery. By developing his abstract style gradually, he sought to foster public acceptance and comprehension.

When Kandinsky returned to his native Moscow after the outbreak of World War I, his expressive abstract style underwent changes that reflected the utopian artistic experiments of the Russian avant-garde. The emphasis on geometric forms, promoted by artists such as Kazimir Malevich in an effort to establish a universal aesthetic language, inspired Kandinsky to expand his own pictorial vocabulary.

After he returned to Germany in 1921 and joined the faculty at the Weimer Bauhaus in 1922, Kandinsky furthered his investigations into the correspondence between colors and forms and their psychological and spiritual effects. *In the Black Square* (June 1923) epitomizes Kandinsky's synthesis of Russian avant-garde and his own lyrical abstraction: the white trapezoid recalls Malevich's Suprematist paintings, but the dynamic compositional elements, resembling clouds, mountains, sun, and a rainbow, still refer to the landscape.

Kandinsky was forced to leave Germany for France in 1933 due to political pressure; he remained there until his death in 1944. His late works move away from the rigidity of the Bauhaus geometry and are characterized by a lighter palette and a new interest in organic imagery as seen in works such as *Dominant Curve* (April 1936), which echo the softer, more malleable shapes used by Paris-based artists associated with Surrealism, such as Jean (Hans) Arp and Joan Miró.

Classical Modernism and the Thannhauser Collection

The Impressionist and Post-Impressionist masterpieces in the Thannhauser Collection serve as a fitting introduction to the Guggenheim's holdings of twentieth-century modernism. Justin K. Thannhauser was the son of renowned art dealer Heinrich Thannhauser, who founded the Moderne Galerie in Munich in 1909. He worked closely with his father, building an impressive program of exhibitions that called particular attention to avant-garde art in Germany as well as France.

The Thannhausers made an early commitment to such artists as Vasily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Franz Marc and in 1911 presented the first exhibition of Der Blaue Reiter. The Moderne Galerie also organized group and solo exhibitions of Impressionists and Post-Impressionist artists active in France during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Paul Gauguin, Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, Pierre Auguste Renoir, and Vincent van Gogh. These artists' liberation of painting from academic genres and techniques, coupled with their exploration of subject matter from everyday life, constituted a pivotal moment in art history, later seen as the beginning of the modern era. Operating within a sphere of influence centered in the flourishing artistic capital of Paris, this rebellious avant-garde

developed formal innovations that prepared the ground for the rapid proliferation of radically new approaches to art in the first decades of the twentieth century, among them Cubism and the purely abstract, or non-objective, painting in which the Guggenheim collection is particularly rich.
Justin Thannhauser opened a branch of the gallery in Lucerne in 1919 and, having taken full control of the business after his father's retirement, shifted the main gallery to Berlin in 1927. By the late 1930s, he had relocated to Paris, where he would operate a private gallery for a few years. When the Germans occupied France in June 1940, Thannhauser fled Europe and moved to New York. In 1963, he decided to bequeath the essential works of his personal collection to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. To house the gift, the Guggenheim converted space at its museum on Fifth Avenue to be used for the permanent display of rotating selections from the Thannhauser Collection, which legally transferred to the foundation in 1978, two years after Justin's death. His second wife, Hilde, who would die in 1991, made possible the addition of thirteen more works. Together, their donations expanded the historical and stylistic range of the Guggenheim's permanent collection, adding works by otherwise unrepresented innovators and complementing other pieces already in the collection such as the three oil studies by Georges Seurat seen here.

Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque
In 1908, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque began to compare the results of their techniques and it became obvious to both that they had simultaneously and independently invented a revolutionary style of painting, later dubbed "Cubism" by poet and critic Guillaume Apollinaire. Cubism, which developed its most significant tendencies from 1907 to 1914, is widely regarded as the most innovative and influential artistic style of the twentieth century. The hallmarks of the phase known as Analytic Cubism, so called for the "analysis" or "breaking down" of form and space, are seen in Braque's *Piano and Mandola* (winter 1909–10) and Picasso's *Accordionist* (summer 1911). Objects are still recognizable in the paintings but are fractured into multiple facets, as is the surrounding space with which they merge. The compositions are set in motion as the eye moves from one faceted plane to the next, seeking to differentiate forms and accommodate shifting sources of light and orientation.
By 1913, Analytic Cubism was succeeded by Synthetic Cubism, in which the "analysis" of objects was abandoned and replaced by "synthesizing" them through the overlapping of larger, more discrete forms that seemed as if they might have been cut and pasted to the canvas. This new form of Cubism, which featured brighter colors, ornamental patterns, undulating lines, and rounded as well as jagged shapes—as in Picasso's monumental *Mandolin and Guitar* (1924)—was practiced into the 1930s.
The organic shapes and saturated hues of this period attest to Picasso's appreciation of contemporary developments in Surrealist painting and foretell the emergence of a fully evolved sensual, biomorphic style, as seen in his *Woman with Yellow Hair* (1931). The number and stylistic range of artworks by Picasso found in the Thannhauser Collection—thirty-two in total—testify to a longstanding friendship between artist and art dealer that lasted for sixty years, until the artist's death. The association between Picasso and Justin K. Thannhauser began in 1913, when Justin and his father, Heinrich, with the assistance of Picasso's Parisian dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, mounted the most comprehensive Picasso exhibition to date at their Moderne Galerie in Munich. Showcasing 114 paintings and works on paper, the exhibition documented Picasso's development from his Blue Period through his early investigations of Analytic Cubism and gave the artist unprecedented exposure and increased prominence in the European art world. The Picasso pieces from the Thannhauser collection, in addition to works purchased by Solomon Guggenheim and others over the course of the museum's history, have resulted in the Guggenheim's rich holdings of the artist's work, as well as that of Cubism in general.

Vanguard Art in Paris
During the first decades of the twentieth century, numerous painters and sculptors migrated to Paris, which had become the international nexus for vanguard art. The French capital appealed to artists who sought to liberate themselves from the provincial or academic training of their homelands. Bringing with them their variegated customs, these artists converged upon Montmartre and Montparnasse to absorb and contribute to the latest avant-garde developments, often fusing new elements with aspects of their respective traditions in their works. Not surprisingly, considering their various backgrounds, these artists did not adhere to one fixed style typical of a"school"; however, they were united in defiance of academicism, and many relied upon the human figure and immediate social conditions as subjects, dealing with themes such as poverty, moral dissolution, personal alienation, and the spectacle of the changing city.

Robert Delaunay and Fernand Léger both explored the concept of fragmentation and simultaneity as expressed through a dynamic interpretation of the visual language of Cubism and the presentation of largely urban subject matter. Marcel Duchamp fused elements of Cubism, Futurism, and chronophotography to produce a static representation of movement. In contrast to many of his contemporaries, he chose the traditional subject of the nude for several of his key works.

Marc Chagall merged Cubist fragmentation of space, the bold colors of Fauvism, and Delaunay's Orphic Cubism with memories of his hometown of Vitebsk and elements of Russian folklore and Jewish legend. Frantis¡ek Kupka likewise found formal inspiration in Fauvism, Orphism, and Cubism; yet as a follower of theosophy, a synthesis of philosophy, religion, and science, he also drew on ancient myths, color theory, and contemporary scientific developments such as the X-ray as sources for his art. Amedeo Modigliani was influenced by the type of primitive objects that inspired Constantin Brancusi, Paul Gauguin, and Pablo Picasso. His portraits are characterized by simplified forms evocative of African masks, with their elongated, oval faces, gracefully attenuated noses, and button mouths.

In his desire to assemble a collection of the most important examples of non-objective painting, Solomon Guggenheim bought such key masterworks from this period as Delaunay's *Simultaneous Windows (2nd Motif, 1st Part)* (1912) and Léger's *Contrast of Forms* (1913). He also purchased works by these artists and others that could not be characterized as non-objective, despite the fact that they clearly reflected advanced tendencies in art.

Constantin Brancusi and Piet Mondrian

During the first decade of the twentieth century, Constantin Brancusi and Piet Mondrian assimilated the lessons of Cubism and from them derived visual languages uniquely their own. While both artists worked in an abstract mode, they continued to look to the forms and subjects of the natural world in their art.

Brancusi, who came to Paris from his native Romania in 1904, rejected nineteenth-century sculptors' emphasis on theatricality, detail, and narrative in favor of radical simplification and abbreviation. Two of his most important subjects were the bird and the human head. His preoccupation with the image of the bird as a plastic form began as early as 1910 with the theme of the *Maiastra* (the version in this gallery is dated 1912), the name of a magically beneficent, dazzlingly plumed bird in Romanian folklore. These sculptures reflect Brancusi's mystical inclinations and his deeply rooted interest in peasant superstition, as well as his practice of making bases of contrasting materials for his works. In a later series of sculptures on the theme of *Bird in Space* (1932–40), the artist stripped the bird of its individualizing features and radically streamlined its form, thereby emphasizing the notion of flight itself rather than describing the appearance of a particular bird. Brancusi's heads, generally consisting of a unitary ovoid shape separate from the mass of the body, also have an elegant simplicity. An example is *Muse* (1912), whose barely articulated facial features nonetheless embody the proportions of classical beauty.

Mondrian's early works, which reflect diverse influences ranging from academic realism to Symbolism, are characterized by generally loose brushwork and natural subjects. A 1912 trip to Paris, during which he encountered Georges Braque's and Pablo Picasso's Cubism, inspired him to move toward the rejection of naturalistic representation in favor of abstraction. In *Still-Life with Gingerpot II* (1911–12), Mondrian replaces the sense of volume, realistic scale, and traditional perspective of his first version of this subject with a schema of predominantly straight horizontal and vertical lines. In subsequent works such as *Tableau No. 2/Composition No. VII* (1913), he broke down his forms into a network of interlocking black lines and planes of colors chosen from a muted palette of close-valued ocher and gray tones characteristic of Analytic Cubism. Yet he went beyond the Parisian Cubists in his pursuit of abstraction by eschewing any suggestion of volume and allowing the scaffolding to fade at the painting's edges. By the early 1920s, Mondrian restricted his canvases to predominantly off-white grounds divided by black horizontal and vertical lines that often framed subsidiary blocks of individual primary colors, in which the grid became both an end in and of itself and his principal subject.

Expressive Painting

The very elastic concept of Expressionism refers to art that emphasizes the extreme expressive properties of pictorial form in order to explore subjective emotions and inner psychological truths. Although much influenced by the work of Paul Gauguin, Edvard Munch, and Vincent van Gogh, the artists who pioneered Expressionism in the early twentieth century departed even further from traditional depictions of material reality than had the Post-Impressionists or the Symbolists. They were also influenced by Henri Matisse and

Fauvism, Cubism, African and Oceanic art, and the folk art of Germany and Russia. They championed idealist values and freedom from the repressive materialism of bourgeois society.

Many expressionist works entered the Guggenheim's collection in 1948 as a result of the purchase of the entire estate of Karl Nierendorf, a New York art dealer who specialized in German paintings. This acquisition enriched the museum's holdings by some 730 objects, including 110 works by Klee and one of Oskar Kokoschka's legendary paintings, *Knight Errant* (1915). Other representative works of this movement were added to the collection in succeeding years, for example, Max Beckmann's *Paris Society* (1931), which is seen here. A number of artists' groups formed within the context of Expressionism. One of them, *Die Brücke*, was active from 1905 to 1913 and included artists such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. Members of *Die Brücke* employed emotion-charged images, a "primitive" simplification of form, deliberate crudeness of figuration, agitated brushstrokes, and powerful, often violent juxtapositions of intense color. Artists involved in the more stylistically diverse *Der Blaue Reiter*, founded in 1911 in Munich by Vasily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and Gabriele Münter, sought to convey spiritual states through the abstraction of forms. The Guggenheim's holdings of Marc are particularly varied and extensive. A former seminarian and philosophy student, the artist found inspiration in a nature-oriented quest for spiritual redemption. His vision of nature was pantheistic; he believed animals possessed a certain godliness that men had long since lost. To complement his representations of animals in nature, through which he expressed his spiritual ideals, Marc developed a theory of color symbolism.

Also seen in this gallery is the art of Paul Klee, whose work was embraced by *Der Blaue Reiter*, the European Dadaists, the Surrealists, and the Bauhaus. Klee formulated a personal pictorial language that oscillated freely between the figurative and the nonrepresentational. The artist conveyed meaning through an often whimsical fusion of form and text. Even in his figurative work, compositional design nearly always preceded narrative association. Klee often transformed his experiments in tonal value and line into visual anecdotes. This installation features a selection of work spanning his entire career.

Forms of Utopia

From 1910 through the period between the two World Wars (1918–1939), artists developed numerous experimental approaches to abstraction and non-objective art that stressed clarity and precision and thus contrasted with the basic tenets of Expressionism. Many artists also formed groups or associations and produced manifestoes and periodicals that set forth a wide range of theories and approaches to art, some in direct conflict with others. But despite their many differences, what united these artists was the utopian belief that art could bring about social change and provide a model for transforming daily life.

In 1917, Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian were among the founders of the De Stijl magazine and group, which promulgated a new plastic order of reductivist, non-objective art known as Neoplasticism. Like Mondrian, van Doesburg systematically divested his imagery of figurative references and relied on colors and geometric form, set in oppositional relationships, to express an underlying universal reality. About 1924, van Doesburg rebelled against Mondrian's insistence on the restriction of line to vertical and horizontal orientations, and produced his first *Counter-Composition*, in which the diagonal plays a dominant role and geometric planes are emphasized by contrasts of color, scale, and direction.

Jean (Hans) Arp, who was associated simultaneously with Neoplasticism and Surrealism in the 1920s and early 1930s, sought to create an abstract art that would provide a truer indication of reality than illusionistic representational work and would also serve as an expression of chance, which for him represented a fundamental law of the organic realm. The artist's *Constellation* reliefs of the 1930s took a given theme and recombined the defining elements into different configurations. These works poetically evoked the themes of metamorphosis and change inherent to the cycle of life.

László Moholy-Nagy's utopian view that the transformative powers of art could be harnessed for collective social reform reflected his long-standing affiliation with the Bauhaus (1919–33), the German artistic and educational community dedicated to the development of a universally accessible design vocabulary. Moholy-Nagy considered traditional, mimetic painting obsolete and turned to pure geometric abstraction filtered through the stylistic influence of Russian Constructivism. Inspired by the structural and formal capacities of modern, synthetic materials and the effects of light, Moholy-Nagy experimented with transparent and opaque plastics in paintings, film, photography, and transparent sculptures, such as the kinetic *Dual Form with Chromium Rods* (1946). Similarly, the Russian artist Naum Gabo used plastic as a tool for exploring space without depicting mass and produced pioneering works of kinetic art.

In the 1920s, Amédée Ozenfant, along with Le Corbusier, developed an aesthetic approach that drew on pre-1914 Cubism, particularly the coolly rational interpretation of Juan Gris, which stressed mathematical order, purity, logic, and geometry. Known as Purism, this art can be seen as part of a pervasive desire for a

"return to order" after World War I and the consequent widespread neoclassical tendency among European artists of the period.

Surrealism and Peggy Guggenheim

The writers and artists who were adherents of Surrealism—a movement inaugurated when André Breton's published his first Surrealist manifesto in 1924—attempted to give objective reality to Sigmund Freud's notions of repressed desires, dream imagery, and the unconscious mind. The Surrealists were influenced by Dadaist methods of experimentation such as automatism, chance, biomorphism, and found objects. Automatism, a concept essential to Surrealism, is a means of accessing a psychic state closely related to dreaming, by drawing with no composition or subject in mind. Techniques pioneered by the Surrealists—frottage (rubbing), decalcomania (transfer), fumage (smoking), grattage (scraping), and coulage (pouring)—were developed with the same aim as automatism, to minimize conscious manipulation and maximize chance and free association. Other routes employed by the Surrealists to the realization of subconscious content in art include the unexpected juxtaposition of dissociated images and incongruous objects and the detailed depiction of dreamscapes.

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation's engagement with Surrealism has been shaped by the direct participation of Solomon's niece Peggy Guggenheim in the movement. In 1938, Peggy opened the Guggenheim Jeune gallery in London, beginning at age forty a career that would significantly affect the course of modern art. She was advised by Marcel Duchamp, who introduced her to abstract and Surrealist art and to the leading avant-garde figures of the day. A year later, Peggy conceived the idea of opening a museum of modern art in London but abandoned the project when World War II began. Instead, while residing in Paris, she quickly assembled a personal collection that was one of the most advanced and complete surveys of avant-garde European art, including works by artists such as Georges Braque, Salvador Dalí, Georgio de Chirico, Max Ernst (to whom Peggy would be briefly married), Fernand Léger, René Magritte, Pablo Picasso, and Yves Tanguy. During the 1940s, her involvement with Surrealism continued in New York, where she established the groundbreaking gallery-museum Art of This Century. Peggy Guggenheim later displayed her collection in the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni on the Grand Canal in Venice, where she lived from 1949 until her death in 1979. In 1976 she transferred these works and the palazzo to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation.

The palazzo, now home to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, still houses the masterpieces of Cubism, Surrealism, and early American Abstract Expressionism that Guggenheim originally assembled.

Postwar European Figuration

In the final years and aftermath of World War II, many European artists utilized an expressive style of painting that emphasized the human figure and drew on fundamental tenets of Existentialism, a philosophical investigation into the meaning of life epitomized by the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. Artists fused techniques of prewar expressive painting – heavily articulated surfaces, loose brushwork, and formal elements culled from primitive sources with a new focus on such themes as alienation, anguish, and human suffering.

The Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti joined the Surrealists in 1929 but broke with them six years later. While his work always maintained an element of the fantastic, many of his sculptures of the 1940s reflect the influence of his friend Sartre's exploration of existential angst. In *Nose* (1947), Giacometti depicts a head floating in a cagelike structure; the sculpture's open mouth suggests the subject is screaming in anguish. The British artist Francis Bacon's triptych painting Three *Studies for a Crucifixion* (March 1962) also portrays human agony. The work's visceral, distorted figures appear to be splayed, butchered carcasses, which reference both the inevitability of death and the universal scale of human suffering. The German-born, American artist Jan Mueller, active in New York at the same time as Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock, abandoned abstraction in the mid-1950s and developed an expressionist, figurative visual language similar to that of his European contemporaries. Mueller drew on mythic and literary content culled from such sources as the Bible, the theatrical work of William Shakespeare, and the poetry of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe for his subject matter.

The French artist Jean Dubuffet's sources included graffiti, children's art, and the art of the mentally ill. His heavily textured, earthy surfaces of the 1940s and '50s gave way to the series *Paris Circus* (1961–62), in which a lighter palette imparted a joyful tone to urban-themed paintings such as *Propitious Moment* (January 2–3, 1962). Dubuffet in turn influenced Jorn and Appel, two members of CoBrA, a group of avant-garde artists from Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam that was active from 1949 to 1952. CoBrA

works were generally semiabstract paintings composed of expressive, violent brushstrokes. Appel often depicted totemic personages in vivid color outlined with heavy black lines, and Jorn painted fantastical figures that were often hard to distinguish in his works' dense all-over surfaces.
Although the Guggenheim's founding mission was limited to non-objective painting, during the tenures of directors James Johnson Sweeney (1952 – 60) and Thomas Messer (1961 – 88), the museum began to collect and exhibit figurative art. Of the artists shown in this room, Bacon, Dubuffet, Jorn, and Mueller have all had important solo shows at the museum.

American Postwar Abstraction

The next two galleries present various approaches to abstraction developed in the United States in the decades following World War II. "Abstract Expressionism," the most common designation for art of this period, encompasses a wide variety of postwar American painting, and it is through this work that the U.S. came to establish itself as the center of the avant-garde. Critic Clement Greenberg, a major proponent of the "New York School" (another name for advanced American artists of the time), preferred the term "Painterly abstraction," which alluded to the formal qualities of the work, namely, its lack of figuration and loose brushwork. The related term "Action Painting" was coined by critic Harold Rosenberg to refer to the gestural act of painting, which he considered the artist's enactment of some subconscious personal drama.
The expressive aspect of this art has been linked to the subjective heroism of earlier forms of Expressionism as well as to the Surrealist technique of automatism. The influence of Surrealists and other artists who fled Europe for New York in the late 1930s and early '40s was integral to the development of Abstract Expressionism, as evidenced here by the painting of Hans Hofmann, a German artist who became an important teacher in New York during this time, as well as the early work of Jackson Pollock, which draws heavily on Surrealism's primitive, archetypal figures and free brushwork. In the late 1940s and early '50s, Pollock, considered the foremost Abstract Expressionist, placed his canvases on the floor and began to work in a manner far removed from the traditions of vertical easel painting. He poured, dripped, and splattered paint onto his canvases and approached them from all sides. Other painters who worked in related gestural modes yet developed their own distinctive "signature styles" were Willem de Kooning, Adolph Gottlieb, Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, and Clyfford Still.
A second subset of Abstract Expressionists used large planes of color, often to evoke invisible spiritual states. These artists, known as Color-field painters, included Mark Rothko, whose work comprises stacked rectangular fields of luminous color meant to express universal human emotions and inspire a sense of awe for a secular world. Through her gallery-museum Art of this Century, established in 1942, Peggy Guggenheim supported and promoted artists such as Pollock and Still when they were still largely unknown. Guggenheim had returned to New York in 1941, when World War II made it dangerous to remain in Europe. She commissioned the visionary architect Frederick Kiesler to convert two tailor shops on West Fifty-seventh street into a museum with a "new exhibition method," which included showing paintings unframed. From 1942 to 1947, she simultaneously displayed European moderns and new American artists in her gallery, thereby creating an environment that fostered artistic exchange and provided support to a new generation.

Robert Rauschenberg

Working with a wide range of subjects, styles, materials, and techniques, Robert Rauschenberg has been called a forerunner of nearly every postwar movement since Abstract Expressionism. He has, however, remained independent of any particular affiliation, while creating art more varied than that of most artists of the twentieth century. His use of traditional as well as nontraditional methods—applied to painting, sculpture, technology, printmaking, and photography—demonstrates his ceaseless exploration of artistic mediums. At the time that Rauschenberg began making art in the late 1940s, his belief that "painting relates to both art and life" presented a direct challenge to the prevalent modernist aesthetic. His Combines, first made in the mid-1950s, brought real-world images and objects into the realm of abstract painting and countered the traditional division between painting and sculpture.
By the late 1950s and early '60s, Rauschenberg was making use of reproductions from newspapers and magazines in his drawings, prints, and paintings as he perfected the techniques of solvent transfer, lithography, and silkscreening. In 1958, he began to explore a method by which printed source materials are transferred to paper by applying a chemical solvent to the source's surface, placing it facedown on the paper, and rubbing the back with an empty ballpoint pen. Transfer drawings such as *Religious Fluke* (1962)

and *Yellow Body* (1968) reverse the original images and bear the striated markings of the burnishing implement.

Beginning in the fall of 1962, Rauschenberg incorporated commercially produced silkscreens based on media sources and his own photographs into his paintings. By employing the silkscreen technique, the artist was able to transcribe existing images on a larger scale than the one-to-one ratio of the transfer process used in his drawings. Parallel to his investigations in other mediums, Rauschenberg's earliest silkscreened paintings are in black and white, with the largest, the mural-sized *Barge* (1962 – 63), purportedly executed in a single day. After a period of intense preoccupation with printmaking, performance, and technologybased art in the 1960s, Rauschenberg renewed his engagement with collage and assemblage. In place of urban detritus, he began to employ universally available materials such as cardboard and scrap metal, clearing his palette in favor of a largely abstract idiom. In the *Hoarfrosts* (1974–76), he used a solvent-transfer process to apply imagery to such lustrous and diaphanous fabrics as silk, chiffon, and satin, occasionally adding found elements such as pillows, paper bags, and string.

In 1997, the Guggenheim organized *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, the largest exhibition of the artist's work to date; the show traveled to Houston and Europe in 1998. Following this retrospective, a number of Rauschenberg works entered the collection through the gift of the artist and others, as well as through acquisition.

Ellsworth Kelly and Tony Smith

A reductive sensibility pervades much of the avant-garde art of the twentieth century. From the early 1900s to the turn of the millennium, a progressive aesthetics of formal clarity developed in tandem with the evolution of abstraction. This impulse was particularly strong in the United States during the 1950s as a reaction to Abstract Expressionism's painterly excesses and invocations of individual subconscious states. Ellsworth Kelly's investigations of pure color and line and Tony Smith's unadulterated geometric forms epitomize the Guggenheim's holdings from this period.

Beginning in the late 1940s, Kelly formulated a reductive visual language, which he has continued to elaborate and develop throughout his artistic career. Interested in the work of Jean (Hans) Arp, Henri Matisse, and other European artists, Kelly developed an individual style of hard-edge abstraction while working in Paris following World War II. Kelly continued to work independently of any formal school or art movement upon his return to New York in 1954, creating flatly painted geometric works at odds with Abstract Expressionism.

In *Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, Red* (1966), Kelly arranged five monochromatic panels in the order of the chromatic spectrum, the primary colors balanced by their intermediary values of green and orange. Color is synonymous with the shape of the canvas, calling attention to each panel as an integral unit within the series. *Dark Blue Curve* (1995) reflects Kelly's longtime interest in shaped canvases. With their anonymous, uninflected technique and absence of surface drawing, these pristine "painting-objects" established a new relationship between painting and its architectural context. By defining the structure and shape of each canvas through color – matte, uniform, and without gestural nuance – Kelly eliminated any figure-ground illusion and brought painting into the sculptural realm of objects; the painting itself became the figure, with the wall as its ground. Kelly began to make freestanding sculpture in 1959. With *White Angle* (1966) he bends a flat panel into actual space. Having first tried this with canvas, Kelly turned to more permanent and lightweight aluminum for a more elegant and less fragile solution.

Initially trained as an architect under Frank Lloyd Wright, Smith did not begin working actively in sculpture until the early 1960s. While his geometric forms, use of modular parts, and impersonal black surfaces immediately elicited comparisons with the younger generation of Minimalist sculptors, Smith's spiritual ambitions for art – his desire to create a "universal message" – position him closer to his friends Barnett Newman and Jackson Pollock. Smith actively eschewed the label of Minimalism and asserted that his intentions were personal rather than programmatic.

His cubes and polyhedron permutations are often rooted in ideas, experiences, and organic or architectural forms, and are frequently charged with an aura of mystery, romanticism, or aggression. He conceived *For W.A.* (1969) as part of a suite of modular sculptures with private dedications. A pair of identical rhomboidal forms, the shapes appear to be perfect rectangular columns from certain angles, creating an optical illusion that contrasts with the literalism and matter-of-factness of most Minimalist sculpture.

Minimalism, its Consequences, and the Panza Collection
In 1991 and 1992, the Guggenheim acquired, through purchase and gift, over 350 works of Minimalist, Post-Minimalist, and Conceptual art from the renowned Panza di Biumo collection. Amassed between 1966 and 1975 by Italian collectors Count Giuseppe Panza and his wife Giovanna, this unparaleled collection is widely acknowledged as one of the world's most important holdings of art of the 1960s and '70s. The acquisition of the Panza collection transformed the Guggenheim into one of the world's leading centers for the exhibition, preservation, and study of the art of this era, and gave the Guggenheim depth and quality in its postwar holdings to match the strength of its prewar collection. It also fulfilled the Guggenheim's founding mission to collect and promote non-objective art and provided the groundwork for the Guggenheim's contemporary collection, allowing the museum to represent the most immediate historical roots of today's expanded and richly pluralistic art field.
The selection of works from the Panza Collection exhibited here represents a cross section of the radical new modes of art making pioneered in the 1960s and '70s. While a number of artists continued to explore the possibilities of painting (as evidenced by Robert Mangold's, Agnes Martin's, and Robert Ryman's work in the adjoining gallery), many others rejected that medium as inherently illusionistic and turned to producing literal objects and structures that, while three-dimensional, refuse to conform to traditional definitions of sculpture. Minimalist works such as Carl Andre's metal floor carpets, Donald Judd's rows of metal cubes, Robert Morris's aluminum I-beams, and Dan Flavin's installations of unadorned commercial light tubes are characterized by their use of elemental forms, industrial materials, and nonhierarchical arrangements comprising repeated, modular units. Set directly on the floor without a pedestal, and scaled in relation to the human body, such works engage the viewer's perception in real space and time. Andre's floorpieces, for example, are intended to be walked upon and experienced tactilely, while Flavin's barriers of light thwart the viewer's movement through space and simultaneously transform their surrounding architectural environment.This emphasis on the viewer's experience becomes even more explicit in Bruce Nauman's claustrophobic corridors and room-sized constructions and Robert Morris's massive labyrinths of the 1970s. Less sculptures than situations, such Post-Minimalist works depend upon the viewer's perception and interaction to complete them.
Richard Long's geometric floor arrangements of rocks or twigs formally echo the vocabulary of Minimalist sculptures by Andre, but replace factory-made materials with found, natural elements. Conceptual in nature, Long's sculptures serve to index his journeys through particular landscapes. In the conceptual work of Lawrence Weiner, material presence is eliminated altogether and language itself becomes the sculptural medium. Weiner's text installations describe material processes and physical conditions and also delineate space. Responsibility for the work's realization is shifted to the audience, who can imagine for themselves the materials or actions referred to.

Richard Serra
Richard Serra's challenging and innovative sculpture emphasizes the process of its fabrication, the characteristics of its materials, and an engagement with the viewer and site. In the mid-1960s, Serra, like the Minimalist artists of his generation, turned to unconventional, industrial materials and began to accentuate the physical properties of his work.
In his early sculptures, Serra exploited unusual materials such as rubber and molten lead to emphasize the processes by which materials are formed, as well as the way they react to external conditions such as gravity and temperature. In 1969, he began his series of prop pieces, in which he leaned plates of lead or steel in precarious positions, as seen in *Right Angle Prop* and *Shovel Plate Prop* (both 1969). Manifesting the fundamental role of balance and gravity in sculptural production, these works exist in a constant state of tension, fully integrated into the gallery space that contains and supports them. Like the prop pieces, *Strike* (1969–71) uses the gallery walls as its structuring support, but moves toward the monumentality for which Serra's later work has come to be known. *Strike* is a single sheet of steel wedged into a corner; according to the artist, it "declared the whole space in dividing it." As one moves around the piece, perception continually shifts, highlighting the room's relationship to the sculpture. In *Shafrazi* (1974), Serra translated the terms of his sculpture into two dimensions, using an oil stick to create a massive dark form that dissolves into the gallery wall.
Relieved of its symbolic role, freed from the traditional pedestal or base, and introduced into the real space of the viewer, Serra's sculptural oeuvre takes on a new relationship to the spectator. Viewers are encouraged to move around—and sometimes on, in, and through – the sculpture and encounter it from multiple perspectives. Over the years, Serra has expounded further on the spatial field between subject and object. For the past two decades, he has focused primarily on large-scale, site-specific works that create

dialogues with particular architectural, urban, or landscape settings and in doing so redefine that space and the viewer's perception of it.
Serra's most recent work consists of site-specific installations of monumental steel sculptures, such as *Snake* (1994–97) and *The Matter of Time* (2005), a suite of sculptures commissioned for the main gallery of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. The Guggenheim's Serra holdings, which also include 14 works in the Panza Collection, constitute one of the most important collections of the artist's work.

Minimal Painting
In the increasingly theoretical New York art world of the 1960s and '70s, painting was displaced in favor of sculpture and concept was privileged over material, idea over sensory quality. When painting did appear, the prevailing aesthetic called for pristine, monochromatic surfaces that appeared untouched by the artist's hand and announced their status as self-referential objects.
Agnes Martin, a member of the same generation as the Abstract Expressionists, charted a highly individual path for herself, rejecting the gestural brushstrokes of artists like Willem de Kooning in favor of paintings rendered in her signature grid pattern. The compositional structure of these monochromatic works consists of a simple system of interlocking horizontal and vertical lines generally done in a six-foot-square format. The titles of Martin's pictures, for example *White Flower* (1960), attest to her persistent engagement with the organic world, albeit in an abstract manner. Unlike the more rigidly formulaic, systematic nature of much Minimalist work, Martin's freely drawn grids, fragile, almost dissolving lines, and hushed tones invite quiet contemplation; the subtleties of her compositions reveal themselves slowly. Throughout his career, Robert Ryman has attempted to eliminate illusionism and outside references from his work, focusing instead on the fundamental properties of the materials he employs. Confining himself to the color white, he has exposed elements of painting such as varieties of pigment (oil and acrylic) and support (canvas, paper, and metals), as well as the process of binding them. The artist's *Surface Veil* works were named for the brand of fiberglass upon which the smaller pieces in this group were painted. But four works drawn from this series, including *Surface Veil*, *II* and *III* (1971), are twelve-foot-square paintings executed not on fiberglass but on cotton or linen. In each of these works, the pigment appears to form a membrane over the support due to the differing degrees of opacity and translucence in the white paint, which was applied unevenly to the canvas, leaving areas of the fabric exposed. Robert Mangold's first multipanel paintings on shaped supports from the mid-1960s were inspired by the fragmented visual architecture of lower Manhattan. The notched, rectilinear contours of works such as *Neutral Pink Area* (1966) obliquely allude to windows and rooftops, but the monochrome paint surfaces, sprayed on with only the subtlest of gradations, are decidedly nonreferential. Using thin Masonite panels, Mangold emphasized the flat, frontal, "all surface" nature of painting and called attention to the physical presence of the works.
The Rymans and Mangold in this room are part of a selection of minimal painting of the 1960s and '70s acquired as part of the Panza Collection. This work greatly enriched the Guggenheim's holdings of postwar abstract painting and was in keeping with the initial mission of the Museum of Non-Objective Painting.

Sol LeWitt
One of the foremost pioneers of Conceptual art, Sol LeWitt first came to maturity as a Minimalist sculptor in the mid-1960s, establishing a spare formal vocabulary of white gridlike structures composed of modular cubic forms, which he ordered according to preestablished systems. With the publication of his essay "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (1967), LeWitt outlined a new direction in art, in which the systems shaping the object became the work itself and the object became an optional by-product. This privileging of concept over form – most memorably summed up in LeWitt's dictum
"The idea becomes a machine that makes the art" – resulted in a reconception of the status of the unique art object and a radical devaluing of the individual artist's mark.
For his wall drawings, the first of which he made in 1968, LeWitt limits himself to conceiving and planning the drawing, providing a certificate with written instructions and an accompanying diagram; the actual execution is left up to assistants. The wall drawings exist only on paper until they are executed. Once fabricated, they are transplantable; they also may be painted out and redone elsewhere. Thus, several versions of the work may exist simultaneously, yet none will be identical. The architecture, the size of the wall, and the individual or individuals executing the drawing all determine how the final work appears. Although realized according to an impersonal and rigorous conceptual system, the wall drawings nevertheless have the capacity to result in visually sensuous images. First executed in 1975 at the residence

of Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo in Varese, Italy, *Wall Drawing #264* is one of six wall drawings that Panza donated to the Guggenheim.

Pop Art

The 1960s was one of the most provocative decades – culturally, politically, and philosophically – of the twentieth century. The United States had become an industrialized society poised on the brink of the information age. The remarkable economic growth that transpired in America from the end of World War II through the Cold War period of the 1950s resulted in a newly invigorated consumer culture. A number of emerging artists responded to and embraced this new commercialism as a fitting subject of their art. Expression and gesture – hallmarks of Abstract Expressionism, which preceded Pop in the late 1940s and early '50s – were replaced with cool, detached, mechanical illustrations of common objects, often appropriated from advertisements and other images drawn from pulp magazines, billboards, movies, television, comic strips, and shop-window displays. Pop art was a significant sociological phenomenon and a mirror of society, encompassing the fields of music, consumer design, and fashion, and corresponding to an entire way of life among young people in the 1960s.

The concise overview in this gallery features a few of Pop's key participants, including artists the Guggenheim has collected in depth such as Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, and Andy Warhol. Conceptually this presentation takes as its point of departure the seminal Pop exhibition *Six Painters and the Object*, organized by art historian, critic, and Guggenheim curator Lawrence Alloway for the museum in 1963. It was Alloway who coined the term "Pop art" in the late 1950s in London, where the movement had its beginnings with the work of British artists such as Richard Hamilton. *Six Painters and the Object* provided institutional validation for Pop at a critical juncture, and demonstrated the Guggenheim's leadership in identifying new trends in art.

By the end of the 1960s, Pop art had dissipated as a self-contained movement. The later works of many of its practitioners – for example, Lichtenstein's *Interior with Mirrored Wall* (1991) and Rosenquist's *The Swimmer in the Econo-mist* (1997–1998), a series of paintings commissioned for Deutsche Guggenheim – move away from pure Pop but continue to provide lively commentary on contemporary culture. In recent years, the important history of the movement, as well as the ongoing vitality of the work of its principal artists, was underscored by major monographic exhibitions of Lichtenstein and Rosenquist at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 1993 and 2003, respectively.

Contemporary Art from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

From its inception in 1937, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation has been dedicated to collecting the art of the present. Hilla Rebay, Solomon Guggenheim's influential advisor and the first director of what would become the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, envisioned the institution as an active and dynamic champion of living artists. For Rebay, however, contemporary art of interest was limited almost exclusively to non-objective painting–epitomized by the work of Vasily Kandinsky–which she viewed not as one among a variety of modern styles or movements, but a world-historic achievement, heralding the arrival of a new spiritual epoch. Under Rebay's successors, this focus on non-objective painting was abandoned in favor of a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to collecting, which embraced multiple mediums, styles, and forms. The commitment to representing the new, however, has remained one of the core missions of the Guggenheim.

The past decade and a half has witnessed an unprecedented growth in the Guggenheim's holdings of contemporary art. Since 1990, the permanent collection has nearly doubled in size, with the majority of new acquisitions dating from 1970 or later. Many of these works were produced in the past fifteen years, including critical pieces by established as well as emerging artists. As befits an international institution like the Guggenheim, these acquisitions represent artists from all over the globe and encompass all mediums, from painting and sculpture to photography and media-based works, including film, video, and digital, and Internet art. The Guggenheim does not attempt to form an encyclopedic collection. Instead, it seeks to collect certain artists in depth, while maintaining a breadth that reflects the state of contemporary art.

Accordingly, rather than presenting a survey of the Guggenheim's contemporary holdings, this exhibition highlights the unique strengths of the collection by presenting, in a nonlinear manner, the work of nine artists whom the Guggenheim has either collected in depth or represents through important singular installations: David Altmejd, Matthew Barney, Anna Gaskell, Douglas Gordon, Roni Horn, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, Matthew Ritchie, Kara Walker, and Rachel Whiteread. While representing a diverse array of strategies and aims–from the exploration of identity, to the investigation of architectural forms, to

the construction of fictional narratives and entire mythologies–the work of these artists is unified by the ambition, conceptual richness, and resonance that define the greatest art of our era.

Roni Horn

Roni Horn moves freely between sculpture, photography, and writing to explore questions of difference and identity. She has often worked in sets of pairs, exploiting the principle of duplication in order to explore the concept of unity. Throughout her work, Horn elicits close, deliberate observation in a way that activates the viewer's memory.

Since 1975, she has traveled frequently to Iceland. Her interaction with its climate, topography, wildlife, and residents has resulted in a series of published photographic essays entitled *To Place*. Each volume engages a distinct system of knowing, a way of recording perception that reveals as much about Iceland as it does Horn's own insights into her identification with this island nation.

Horn's ambitious photographic installation *PI* (1997–98) emerged from a volume in *To Place* entitled *Arctic Circles*. The title of *PI* refers to the mathematical constant , the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. In the context of the work, it alludes to the imaginary mapping line of the Arctic Circle, and to a host of other real and metaphoric circles that are chronicled in forty-five photographs: the life cycle of a flock of birds, the rhythms of the harvest and tide, the daily pattern of an elderly Icelandic couple, and the cycle of a serial television show that the couple watches (the American soap opera *Guiding Light*).

The form of the physical installation itself, which wraps around the perimeter of the gallery and is hung above eye-level, extends the circular references in PI to the notion of a surrounding horizon. Further unifying the individual components are horizon shots of the ocean that have been cut in two and placed in different positions in the room. As with Horn's "Pair Objects," these mirrored halves invite the viewer to carry along an image in his or her head and to perceive a collective whole.

Rachel Whiteread

Using industrial materials such as plaster, concrete, rubber, and polystyrene, Rachel Whiteread typically casts the space underneath, around, or inside objects and structures, to capture their negative impressions. Each familiar yet strange form functions like a death mask, often evoking feelings of absence and loss and conjuring personal memories and associations. Formally, her sculptures emphasize materials and geometric forms, evoking early-twentieth-century Russian Constructivism as well as 1960s Minimalism.

Whiteread began by making casts from household items–beds, sinks, bathtubs, and wardrobes–to emphasize the private aspects of home life and to reflect the human body in symbolic terms. Subsequently, she has also made large-scale architectonic sculptures, recording traces of the forms from which they derive, while at the same time indicating their absence; as interior becomes exterior, and air is transformed to a solid form, the logic of architecture is inverted.

Untitled (Apartment) and *Untitled (Basement)*–both commissioned for Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, in 2001–address the aesthetic and socioeconomic issues related to postwar architecture. In searching for a space for her home and studio, Whiteread discovered a London building that had been destroyed in 1941 and entirely reconstructed by 1957. Created out of exigency, the austere geometric structure has assumed various identities over time, serving first as a synagogue, later as a textile merchant's warehouse, and finally as the artist's home and studio. Whiteread's casts of the structure, taken from an upstairs apartment and a basement staircase, allow viewers to contemplate the rebuilding of postwar Europe in an architectural style devoid of sentiment or flourish. Her sculptures reveal a generic, neutral structure, a space of transience, where the realms of public and private – as well as the religious, industrial, and domestic – lose distinction.

Matthew Barney

Matthew Barney's ambitious *Cremaster Cycle* (1994–2002) is a self-enclosed aesthetic system consisting of five feature-length films that explore processes of creation. Produced out of sequence, the cycle unfolds both cinematically and through the photographs, drawings, sculptures, and installations the artist created in conjunction with each episode. Its conceptual departure point is the male cremaster muscle, which controls testicular contractions in response to external stimuli. The project is rife with anatomical allusions to the position of the reproductive organs during the embryonic process of sexual differentiation: *Cremaster 1* (1995) represents the most "ascended" or undifferentiated state, *Cremaster 5* (1997), the most "descended" or differentiated. The cycle repeatedly returns to those moments during early sexual development in which

the outcome of the process is still unknown–in Barney's metaphoric universe, these moments represent a condition of pure potentiality.

In *Cremaster 1*, chorus girls form outlines of reproductive organs on a football field in Idaho, their movements determined from above by a starlet, who inhabits two blimps simultaneously and creates anatomical diagrams by lining up rows of grapes. *Cremaster 2* (1999) is a gothic Western premised loosely on the life of Gary Gilmore, a murderer executed in Utah in 1977. Gilmore's biography is conveyed through a series of fantastic sequences, including a séance to signify his conception and a prison rodeo staged in a cast-salt arena to represent his death by firing squad. As the installment in the cycle that was produced last, *Cremaster 3* (2002) is a distillation of Barney's major themes, filtered through a symbolic matrix involving Freemasonry, Celtic lore (with a section filmed at the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland), and coded references to the *Cremaster Cycle* itself. Its New York settings include the Chrysler Building and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. *Cremaster 4* (1994) takes place on the Isle of Man, where a motorbike race traverses the landscape, a tap-dancing satyr writhes his way through an underwater canal, and three fairies picnic on a grassy knoll. Set in Budapest, *Cremaster 5* is performed as an opera whose narrative flows from the Hungarian State Opera House to the Secession-style Gellért Baths. As the cycle's concluding chapter, the film traces a story of final release, a physical transcendence that is misunderstood and mourned as loss.

The Guggenheim Museum owns editions of *Cremasters 1, 2, 3,* and *5,* but the installation of the films presented here was specially designed by Matthew Barney for this exhibition.

Matthew Ritchie

In the mid-1990s, Matthew Ritchie devised his own alphabet of forty-nine essential properties or characteristics. From this code, the artist has constructed ever more elaborate, sprawling installations that serve as chapters in an unfolding narrative. His aim is no less ambitious than to develop a visual metaphor for the creation and history of the universe.

Ritchie is interested in finding analogies between different descriptive systems and perceptual models, such as science, myth, history, and language. In particular, he is drawn to situations in which a descriptive system confronts a problem that it is unable to resolve. The title of *The Hierarchy Problem* (2003) derives from one such problem in theoretical physics relating to the contingent position of the viewer. In the installation, the viewer is surrounded by a set of diverse surfaces and objects: a wall mural, a painting, a maplike carpet, an image illuminated in a light box, and an intermediate freestanding sculpture, *The Fine Constant* (2003), whose name refers to a numerical constant that is related to the hierarchy problem. These separate components visually interact in such a way that implies that the empty space of the gallery could be filled with lines connecting the points between the sculpture and the wall drawing. According to the artist, the installation references the scalar relationship of gravity to the other forces that combine to produce what we see as reality. The work also alludes to the t heory that the universe we see is actually a projection of a higherdimensional reality.

Here, as in all of his work, Ritchie seeks to articulate the complex order of our world and to render visible the invisible. The artist explains, "We can only see 5% of the universe. We've called another 25% 'dark energy' and the remaining 70% 'dark matter.' We're working from a model with 95% of the information missing–so no wonder everybody's acting like they're in the dark. So the big question for me is: how do you visually represent that absence?"

Douglas Gordon

The work of Douglas Gordon revolves around a constellation of dualities and dialectics. Mistaken identities, doubles, split personalities, and opposites – such as good and evil, self and other – are thematized as inseparable. Gordon's films, video installations, photographs, and texts transform differences into uncanny, nuanced pairs.

Gordon approaches film as readymade or found object, mining the potential collective memory that exists in cinematic fragments, and in the process, disclosing unseen or overlooked details and associations. His installation *through a looking glass* (1999) features the well-known scene from Martin Scorsese's 1976 film *Taxi Driver* in which Travis Bickle, played by Robert De Niro, asks, "You talkin' to me?" while gazing at himself in a mirror. In Gordon's piece, the scene is projected onto dual screens placed on opposite walls of a gallery space. The original episode from the movie, filmed as a reflection in the mirror, is shown on one wall. The other screen displays the same episode with the image reversed, flipped left to right.

The two facing images, which begin in sync, progressively fall out of step, echoing the character's loss of control and his mental breakdown. These discordant projected images seem to respond to one another, thus trapping the viewer in the crossfire. In its almost dizzying play of dualities, *through a looking glass* perfectly articulates the dialectical inversions, doublings, and repetitions that are the central concerns of Gordon's work.

David Altmejd

David Altmejd has created his own elaborate and densely layered mythology, one which centers upon cyclical energy, transformation, and regeneration. At the heart of his cryptic iconography lies the werewolf, a potent symbol of metamorphosis with a long lineage, from ancient Greek myth to Victorian gothic tales and Hollywood B-movies. Altmejd represents not living werewolves, but their dead and decomposing carcasses. Rendered in fake hair and plaster, these ghoulish specimens are frequently placed in labyrinthine mirrored sets, which simultaneously recall the 1960s mirrored geometric sculptures of Robert Smithson, modernist architectural models, and department store displays, all of which are recalled in the large-scale *University 2* (2004).

Rather than simply rot, Altmejd's carcasses sprout crystals and jewels. Along with the handmade plastic flowers and birds that are scattered throughout the piece, the overall effect is one of beauty. Despite its dark content, Altmejd's work offers a hopeful vision: With decay comes the promise of rebirth. The artist conceives of his installations as living organisms pulsing with potential energy, and he has described the labyrinthine structures that house his creatures as the systems that both trigger and circulate this energy.

Altmejd will represent Canada at the 2007 Venice Biennale.

Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle

Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle has created a diverse body of work that comprises installation-based practices, photography, sculpture, and community-based projects. Filtering his subject matter through the lens of modernity, he explores a broad range of issues–such as representation and identity, new technologies, and structures of power–and simultaneously reexamines modernist theories and strategies. Manglano-Ovalle mines the often detached, cool logic of modernism and abstract formalism in order to achieve a more expansive and inclusive treatment of social and individual realities.

In an ambitious series of video installations, Manglano-Ovalle has taken the iconic Internationalstyle architecture of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe as his setting. Staging social and political allegories that play on the architect's utopian goals, Manglano-Ovalle has paid homage to Mies's spaces and simultaneously critiqued them.

Climate (2000), filmed in Mies's Lake Shore Drive Apartments (1949–51) in Chicago, presents an ominous future in which national borders have ceased to exist and global weather patterns are directly linked to changes in world financial markets. The piece comprises three seemingly disconnected narratives: a woman waiting nervously in the lobby of the building; weather and market forecasters in an apartment monitoring patterns and listening intently to incoming reports; and an anonymous man dismantling, cleaning, and reassembling a machine gun. These scenes are variously projected onto three double-sided screens surrounded by a hanging aluminum framework that echoes the architecture of the site. Mies's precise and transparent mid-century architecture is turned into the icy landscape of a future utopia, or dystopia – a "new state of world transparency" as the artist calls it – where everything is interconnected and even weather patterns are manipulated by those in power.

Kara Walker

Kara Walker arranges life-sized silhouetted figures into raucous tableaux that recount the brutal, and often repressed, history of American race relations. Her unique use of the paper cut-out technique derives from the eighteenth-century craft of silhouetting. The artist likens this representational method to the nature of stereotypes themselves, in which the complexities of individual identities, situations, and personalities are simplified and distorted into easily readable, caricatured forms. Walker derives her imagery from the visual language of the antebellum South and from the tradition of the minstrel show and redeploys them to subversive ends. Performed by white actors in blackface, the minstrel theater parodied the lives of African-Americans and allowed whites to vicariously break their own cultural taboos by portraying unbridled sexuality, unstructured time, and puerile behavior. In her work, Walker inverts the roles of these characters.

Her stylized figures enact the violence that attends oppression and embodies scenes of bestiality, castration, murder, and cannibalism.
In Insurrection! (Our Tools Were Rudimentary, Yet We Pressed On) (2000), a series of grisly scenes unfold: a plantation owner propositions a naked slave behind a tree, a woman with a tiny baby on her head escapes a lynching, and a group of slaves disembowls a slave master with a ladle. For this piece, Walker expanded the vocabulary of her shadowy forms to include projected silhouettes and colored lights. When viewers walk in front of these projections, their shadows are introduced into the scene, denying them the comfortable position of spectator and implicating them in the depicted events.

Anna Gaskell
Anna Gaskell crafts foreboding photographic tableaux of preadolescent girls that derive from the fictional worlds of such writers as the Brothers Grimm and Lewis Carroll, whose *Alice in Wonderland* the artist recalls in her series *wonder* (1996). In wonder, Gaskell retells the story of Alice through a series of carefully staged and isolated mise-en-scènes. The enigmatic scenes are not tied together as a linear narrative, but presented simultaneously in a way that allows possible interpretations to multiply. Besides echoing Alice's fabled growth and shrinking by varying the size of the photographs themselves, Gaskell complicates Carroll's story by representing Alice as a set of twins, not as a single individual.
Gaskell's work may be seen as part of an artistic tradition that uses photography, which by nature indexes real objects placed before the camera, to enact scenes that are artificial and exist only to be photographed – a tradition that ranges from Cindy Sherman's film stills and portraits employing prosthetic body parts to Gregory Crewdson's uncanny transformations of suburbia.

Anna Gaskell
Anna Gaskell is best known for her fantastic photographic tableaux in which preadolescent girls enact foreboding scenes derived from literary sources. Her *wonder series* (1996), which reinterprets Lewis Carroll's
story of Alice in Wonderland, is presented in a nearby gallery.
Gaskell's video *Erasers* (2005) takes a very different approach. In contrast to her richly chromatic photographs, with their irregular, baroque compositions, Erasers was shot in black-and-white and with the subjects all positioned in the same head-on format, lending it the appearance of a documentary. In preparation for the work, Gaskell conveyed the true story of a car accident she experienced in her childhood to a group of young teenage girls; a week later, she filmed each of the girls individually as they candidly recounted the story as best they could recall it. Through careful editing and shifts in voice, perspective, and time between the girls' retellings, Gaskell's video fragments the memory of the original event to create a new dramatic version of the story. The Guggenheim's recent acquisition of Erasers reflects its ongoing commitment to Gaskell's work.