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Because I Say So …

The Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum

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BECAUSE I SAY SO...
When Debra and I were offered the opportunity to bring a selection of sculptural works to The Frost Art Museum I began to think about all the ways Florida International University has figured so prominently in bringing us to this moment.

As a young accounting major at FIU I remember wandering into the PC building’s first floor and, much to my surprise, finding a museum there. It was the first art museum I had ever set foot in. I saw prints by Rauschenberg, Rosenquist, Lichtenstein and others, and a whole new world opened up for me. When I graduated and became a CPA, I began to collect art and kept returning to The Museum to see the shows curated by Dahlia Morgan. Eventually I headed back to law school, met my wife Debra and we began to collect contemporary art in earnest. Once I started practicing law, we met Phil and Pat Frost, who were instrumental in making us the collectors we are. They took us under their wing and exposed us to the art world in a profound way, by letting us view their collection, putting us on the board of our first museum and allowing me to handle the negotiations of the donation of their collection to the Smithsonian Museum. As a young lawyer I found myself working for a venture capitalist named Mitch Maidique who of course eventually went on to lead this institution.

Roll forward three decades and here we are, all together at The Frost Art Museum.

We continue to find all those early points of connection inspiring as we look back on our 31 years of collecting. We want to thank Carol Damian and The Museum staff for their willingness to allow us to stretch The Museum’s boundaries with this show. We want to thank Yann Weymouth for creating such a glorious venue, Desiree Cronk for her continued commitment to the collection, Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, Frances Trombly and Miko McGinty for their efforts on the catalogue; Sid Hoeltzell for showing me that digital photography is the future and Gavin Perry, Gean Moreno and Tao Rey for their continued efforts in managing the installation of the collection.

Special thanks to Bob Nickas and Brian Antoni for a couple of out of the box essays for the catalogue.

As always, thanks to the artists who are willing to take the risks necessary to make great work.

Kori Newkirk, Untitled, 2004, Basketball hoops, braids, beads, and enamel, 24 x 19 x 175 inches

Defining “art” is a major enterprise historically and recently. It is especially significant that this inaugural year of The Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum will test the boundaries of the definition of art, sculpture in particular, with this remarkable exhibition. It will bring the museum into the most contemporary artistic arena, and dare us to consider why the new art is different. It is meant to be educational for a new generation and for those of us steeped in the traditional. Each work has been chosen because it is provocative and will evoke a strong response, challenge the senses, and encourage the viewer to do more than look, to participate. For many years, Debra and Dennis Scholl have been the ones to take chances as they compiled this cutting-edge collection. I am especially grateful to the Scholls for trusting the new museum with an exhibition of their extraordinary art, for their support of Florida International University, and for giving us an opportunity to demonstrate that this is a museum of the future. Now we can see unique works of art, question their meaning, and agree to disagree. The environment of The Museum galleries is transformed by the artists into a space for exploration and discussion that welcomes and confuses. “Why is that Art?” will certainly resonate within its spaces, “Because I Say So!” is my response.
... AND THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME

Bob Nickas

In 1961, Robert Rauschenberg participated in a portrait exhibition at his gallery of the Céret in Paris, and while he wasn’t represented by a painting or a drawing or a photograph, he is probably the only work in the show that anyone— and history— remembers. Rauschenberg sent a telegram, famously claiming: "THIS IS A PORTRAIT OF IRIS CLERT: IF I SAY SO." On the face of it, the statement is set because it has been made by an artist, and located within the context of an exhibition, but can a telegram convey a portrait? If we consider its most basic definition—the likeness of a person—and apply it to his subject, Rauschenberg has in fact rendered a mental image of Iris Clert. After all, it was in her gallery that Yves Klein presented his groundbreaking 1958 exhibition, “The Void: The Specialization of Sensitivity in the State of Prime Matter as Stabilized Pictorial Sensitivity,” for which he repainted the walls and a window pure white. This is the first instance of an empty gallery presented as an exhibition, although Klein would insist that it was not empty at all; rather, the artist had staged an invisible situation that he related to “the best definition of painting in general, radicalement.” Rauschenberg would most certainly have been aware of Klein’s exhibition, and three years after the fact when he was asked to contribute a portrait to the same gallery. It’s very likely that he realized an opportunity to acknowledge Klein’s gesture and Clert’s willingness to brave public ridicule. Today, of course, anything can be art, and anything can comprise an exhibition—even an empty space. But try to imagine the reaction to Iris Clert’s empty gallery over fifty years ago. Rauschenberg’s statement can be considered an early instance of conceptualism, and it constitutes not only a connotative but a double portrait—of Iris Clert and Yves Klein. Rauschenberg renders the likeness of neither person; he renders the spirit of both, and his as well. Rauschenberg’s statement, in its insistence on the authority of the artist, gives the artist the final word, and in teasing the imagination of the viewer, reminds us that art registers in the mind’s eye.

In the art world, whether of 1961 or the one we inhabit today, the final word is usually had by critics, curators, collectors, dealers, the market and its aftermath—the auctions, a tragicomic theater of cruelty where most artists are concerned (German instanding). Despite the radical developments in art over the almost half century since Rauschenberg’s portrait of Iris Clert, not much has changed with respect to who or what enters art history or obscurity. Most dauntingly, the general public, people who have neither created nor studied, let alone devoted their lives to art, gets to have their say. More often than not this amounts to the predictable dismis- sive: “My child could have done that.” Or the thoroughly brilliant, always thought-provoking: “It’s not art.” In the late 90s, Seth Segal-Isaak, one of the first great champions of conceptual art, remarked: “Art is to change what you expect of it.” We shouldn’t forget that. Unless we don’t ever want to be surprised again, in a world where everything has already been done, or seems to have been done, artists can still surprise us. But maybe it’s a good thing that there are people for whom art is artifice, and wool is perpetually pulled over their eyes. What if we lived in a world where every work of art, no matter how challenging, heady or barely visible, was accepted as such, embraced, and unquestioned? What would this mean? That art had become like everything else we instantly recognize and understand, common objects we see each and every day: a snow shovel, a can of beer, styrofoam cups. What kind of world would that be?

Wolfgang Tillmans, Weald Banker, and James Welling, among many others working today, with camera-less and abstract works that extend the experiments of the historical avant-garde, make us wonder: “Beyond the carrier of an uninterrupted image; what else can a photograph be?” There is an investigation which can be traced back almost to the invention of the medium. From the moment an artist held a camera, the world would be framed in ways never imagined by the human eye of a painter standing before an easel in the meadow. Suddenly, the world could be turned sideways, or be de-focused, abstracted by this prosthetic eye. Despite the fact that today, as before, artists need not ever leave the darkroom to produce an image, photographers continue to walk in the street, point their cameras in one direction or another, and take pictures, inside of an overall spray-painted environment of Katharina Grosse, which, like an unchecked virus, overtake the museum walls, floors, ceilings, windows, columns, and doors as if it was her canvas. We can’t help but question the very status of painting. And yet some artists still go out to the meadow on a sunny day with their brushes, paint, palettes, and easels. The state in which advanced and retrograde art works coexist is one that is mutually beneficial and necessary: we can only know one by means of the other.

The invention of photography was once thought to have made painting obsolete. Painting today is very much alive and well. Maybe obsolescence is the only way for a medium to survive. Because even admitting that painting is quite possibly the least effective carrier of information, it persists, and now more than ever. There was once much talk of the “death of painting,” and yet no one ever seriously speaks about the death of photography, the death of video, or the death of sculpture. And why not? Because it would be laughable. The only peril to art now would seem to be the end of invention—keeping in mind that most inventions, whether patented or not, never reach reality. No matter what form an art form may take, the opening up of what we know—or thought we knew—about painting or sculpture or photogra- phy or drawing, is directly related to what artists have always done. We make us look at the world in ways we hadn’t, and in doing so allow us to resonate ourselves, and to see in ways we never have before. Not so much talk of the “death of painting,” and yet no one ever seriously speaks about the death of photography, the death of video, or the death of sculpture. And why not? Because it would be laughable. The only peril to art now would seem to be the end of invention—keeping in mind that most inventions, whether patented or not, never reach reality. No matter what form an art form may take, the opening up of what we know—or thought we knew—about painting or sculpture or photogra- phy or drawing, is directly related to what artists have always done. We make us look at the world in ways we hadn’t, and in doing so allow us to resonate ourselves, and to see in ways we never have before. Not so much talk of the “death of painting,” and yet no one ever seriously speaks about the death of photography, the death of video, or the death of sculpture. And why not? Because it would be laughable. The only peril to art now would seem to be the end of invention—keeping in mind that most inventions, whether patented or not, never reach reality. No matter what form an art form may take, the opening up of what we know—or thought we knew—about painting or sculpture or photogra- phy or drawing, is directly related to what artists have always done. We make us look at the world in ways we hadn’t, and in doing so allow us to resonate ourselves, and to see in ways we never have before.
been missed? Artists believe in this as well, so too should the viewer. Artists leave clues for us to follow. Puzzles for us to piece together. Art that makes us more aware of our surroundings and the people around us. Art that makes us more curious and thus more adventurous—even when the everyday and the commonplace are concerned—than we would have been otherwise.

Art works can be carriers of energy, which we use, maybe without knowing it, to move forward in our lives. And the art which makes the most confusion and that questions itself and its audience is the art that will compel us to keep looking.

To those somehow invested in the notion that artists are con artists, of producing nothing more than, as the fairy tale would have it, the Emperor’s new clothes, we leave you with a pure, beautiful thought, and a true vote of confidence.

A wall drawing by Robert Barry:

ALL THE THINGS I KNOW
BUT OF WHICH I AM NOT
AT THE MOMENT THINKING
1:36 PM; JUNE 15, 1969

Among Barry’s early and ardent collectors were Herbert and Dorothy Vogel, who, without any great fortune to spend—he had worked for the post office, and she as a librarian—they amassed a substantial collection, primarily between the ‘60s and the ‘80s. After donating their art to the National Gallery in Washington, they were interviewed by Mike Wallace for an episode of “60 Minutes” in 2004. Wallace toured their modest, art-filled apartment, and at one point stopped to examine a work by Richard Tuttle, one of the Vogel’s favorite artists. The piece that had caught his eye was a small length of braided rope that had been tacked to the wall at the top. With a doubtful look on his face and a puzzled expression, he asked Herb Vogel why this was a work of art. Calmly and matter-of-factly, Herb Vogel replied: “Mike, this is a piece by Richard Tuttle, and he’s an artist. . . and that’s good enough for me.”

BECAUSE I SAY SO
AN ART HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION
Carol Damian

All it started with Marcel Duchamp. Let’s blame him for the sometimes mystifying practices and experimental agendas that sparked such furious debate and passion from all who have ever walked into a super-contemporary art installation and declared the fall from grace of the old traditions and their comfort zones. Mr. Duchamp (France 1887-1968) must be amazed that his urns (Fountain, 1917) and its anti-art aesthetic meant to be a test of the will of an exhibition committee, has become so very much a part of the historical discourse, or would he be annoyed at the lack of humor that has elevated his idea to serious theoretical constructs? Has he been misrepresented and his objects given too much significance? Or is it the very nature of that misrepresentation that has paved the way for what we see today in Duchamp’s famous defense of the work: “Whether Mr. Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view — created a new thought for the object.”

We are now also encouraged to create new thoughts for the objects in this exhibition. A fan takes on new meaning; why a million pins? What is wrong with those huge birdcages? Who could wear that felt cloak form, its placement dominating an entire wall and confounds the viewer’s perception of space to make it an almost dangerous or byzantine world, a place where the viewer is “within,” rather than “looking at.” The viewer now occupies a privileged place, the center of perception and experience. Eliasson’s immersive environments demonstrate his experimentation with installations based on mechanized motion, projection, shadow, and reflection, creating complex optical phenomena using simple, makeshift technical devices. He succeeds in destabilizing the viewer’s perception of space to make it an almost dangerous or threatening place that forces one to be wary of precious objects and obscures light effects. One is forced to displace comfort zones with other objects in the exhibition as well. Leaves and twigs are placed high up on the wall; forcing the relinquishment of ordinary comfort zones based on typical eye-level arrangements. The very simplicity of natural forms makes us look again and think about materials and their sources and how they do not always need to be made into something else, but have validity in their original form.

Robert Morris has long created a versatile range of works that examine the relationship between the viewer and the object; his large felt work, with its not-so-visible folds and gigantic scale, becomes problematic at many levels: identity, usefulness, historicism, material objectivity, and pervasive aestheticism. Certainly based on a utilitarian view; it is also dangerous and fragile, built on site, with each tiny touch a test of the will of an exhibition committee. The play on words that “inverted retrograde” implies as a title and point of view — created a new thought for the object. We are now also encouraged to create new thoughts for the objects in this exhibition. A fan takes on new meaning; why a million pins? What is wrong with those huge birdcages? Who could wear that felt cloak form, its placement dominating an entire wall and confounds the viewer’s perception of space to make it an almost dangerous or byzantine world, a place where the viewer is “within,” rather than “looking at.” The viewer now occupies a privileged place, the center of perception and experience. Eliasson’s immersive environments demonstrate his experimentation with installations based on mechanized motion, projection, shadow, and reflection, creating complex optical phenomena using simple, makeshift technical devices. He succeeds in destabilizing the viewer’s perception of space to make it an almost dangerous or threatening place that forces one to be wary of precious objects and obscures light effects. One is forced to displace comfort zones with other objects in the exhibition as well. Leaves and twigs are placed high up on the wall; forcing the relinquishment of ordinary comfort zones based on typical eye-level arrangements. The very simplicity of natural forms makes us look again and think about materials and their sources and how they do not always need to be made into something else, but have validity in their original form.

All of these works are more than mere exercises in perception and art experience for the viewer. Each artist questions how space, objects and perception interrelate to form a unique aesthetic environment that demands new behavior—in the space, looking at the objects in that space, and contemplating their meaning for a ground-breaking museum exhibition.

3. ibid. 30.
FIND WALDO

Brian Antoni

He stood in front of the urinal—come on champ, you can do it because big boys don’t cry—thinking how when he was a kid so many years ago he dreamed of having his own urinal, so he wouldn’t have to worry about peeing on the seat and nose that he was an old man, he only dreamed of a steady stream, so much of his life consumed both ways, because that was the only time he felt the face of god, the only time he knew art was not a lie you chose, his new endlessly faceted broken cone as if some bitch took two bricks and smashed it between them and the Princess that was God behind an open door leading to nowhere and what the hell would Jesus do and he might as well ask what the hell would Neil Young do or was there such a thing as the possibility of romantic love? One tiny drop of piss dropped out like an elephant defecating a man—the inverted caged yellow song bird did not sing but stung like a billion pins formed into a cube, and he had to touch the drop because it was so beautiful, pins and needles and pins, a happy man is a man that grins and sticks and stones may break my bones and architecture is not art but a twisted Bauhaus chair can be because Dennis and Debra say so and a billion dollars seemed like a lot of money before the bailout and he now dreamed of his own bail out as he tries to stop the pain with revised negotiation as he thought of better times and he remembers his first time ever with the girl and her long braids punctuated with enamel beads and florescent hair pins and how she took him to the for in the woods, which was more like a liaison platform or a large shelf cabinet and he was himself grasping onto those braids so he wouldn’t slip and fall as she guided him, a reverse Rapunzel, her head bouncing above him like a burned out sun, like a b-ball, hoop on the top and bottom because she never seemed to end, and he looked up through the pine leaves hanging down from above like gigantic green armpit hair like he was in a cave below the surface of the earth and they were roots and he took a deep breath because he had forgotten how to breathe and she smelled the bay rum smell of his grandmother and as the inside-out spider web of light danced in the shadow like a sun bulb eclipse of multiple twisted lamps and the breeze like puffs from an oscillating fan and she wore a golden chain with her initials hanging on the end, and there was something so venerable and small about the chain dancing in the hollow sundial space below her neck with her initials CNN like the television station even though everyone called her Black Betty, Feltdk, Gina X or Linda Blair, so he imagined the chain and the charm gigantic so he wouldn’t start to cry out of gratitude and please and pain as her long painted green-blue-yellow-black-white nails dug deep into his adolescent zit-covered back as they moved like a vintage sepa ocean liner and she stared down at him like a sailor’s wife bidding farewell on her widow’s walk and he felt as if he was wearing a pleasure filled folded vagina coat, pink in the middle because everything good was pink in the middle—Joseph’s technical coat with a red velvet center, a jelly filled donut, like his favorite chocolatecake with the cherry floating in the white liquid and he wore the coat with pride, a hard body marble man holding a marble gun until he felt it start to shoot from the center of his brain, a gigantic sling shot of new understanding, pleasure feedback that turned the urinal into a fountain and he was ejaculating into art itself. He started to piss a numb endless stream, enough to fill a caryatidal column of Styrofoam cups.

Top: Hans Peter Feldman, Kinetic Sculpture 1, 2001, Photograph, cardboard, and magnetic motor, 6 x 5 inches
Above: Hans Peter Feldman, Kinetic Sculpture 2, 2001, Photograph, cardboard, and magnetic motor, 6 x 5 inches
Right: Tom Friedman, Untitled (Styrofoam Cups), 2002, Styrofoam cups, acrylic paint, and glue, 40 x 3 x 3 inches

Liam Gillick, Revised Negotiation Screen, 2007, Anodized aluminum and transparent light blue and orange Plexiglas. 82 x 60 x 12 inches.
Gedi Sibony, Held Made to the Road, 2004, Sticks, 44 x 30 x 6 inches

Wade Guyton, Brewer Chair 1, 2005, Sculpture, 31 x 47 x 21 inches

Opposite: Thomas Hirschhorn, Necklace CNN, 2002, Cardboard, foil, plastic, and gold wrapping paper, 98 x 31 x 4 inches
Robert Morris, *Veil V*, 1982, Felt, 96 x 127 x 29 inches
Terence Koh, Untitled II (Slingshot), 2003, Plastic slingshot, acrylic paint, rabbit fur, and bandage gauze, 56 x 6 x 1 inches

Jim Lambie, Gina X, 2004, Glue, bamboo canes, duct tape, and paint, 47 x 23 x 24 inches

Brian Jungen, Prototype for New Understanding #23, 2005, Nike Air Jordans, 20 x 21 x 9 inches
Martin Oppel, Flacid Cone and Bricks, 2005, Sculpture, Dimensions variable

Jim Lambie, *Black Betty*, 2006, Wood and black t-shirt, 37 x 59 x 5/8 inches

Daniel J. Martinez, *A Meditation on the Possibility of Romantic Love or Where Are You Going with that Gun in your Hand, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton Discuss the Relationship between Expressionism and Social Reality Present in Hitler's Paintings*, 2007, Marble, 72 x 76 x 11 inches
Adam Putnam, *Sundial (Eclipse)*, 2007, Sculpture, Dimensions variable
Janet Cardiff, *Feedback*, 2004, Installation, Dimensions variable

Tom Otterness, * Untitled 1984, Sculpture, Dimensions variable
Olafur Eliasson, Light Ventilator Mobile, 2002. Fan, hose, pipe, cords, and rope, 17 x 105 x 20 inches

Sean Duffy, *Burn Out Sun*, 2003, Twenty LPs, metal tripod, wood, and glue, 42 x 23 x 33 inches


Paul Pfeiffer, *Caryatid*, 2003, Chrome monitor/DVD player, Plexiglas case, and video installation, 18 x 24 x 24 inches
BECAUSE I SAY SO . . .
An exhibition from the collection of Debra and Dennis Scholl, Miami Beach, Florida
Carol Damian
Director
Bob Nickas
Curator + Essayist
Brian Antons
Essayist
Fufrano, Inc. with Miko McGinty, Inc.
Catalogue Design
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Printer
The Frost Art Museum at Florida International University is an AAM accredited museum and Smithsonian affiliate, recognized for its growing collection of 20th and 21st century American and Latin American art, innovative exhibitions, outstanding lecture series and unparalleled programs. The museum is the repository of over 6,000 works of art including the Metropolitan Collection and the Cintas Fellows Collection.

PATRICIA & PHILLIP FROST ART MUSEUM
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Courtesy Sonnabend Gallery: 16 and 17
Courtesy Tanya Bonakdar Gallery: 26, Back Cover

Opposite: Nathan Carter, Aero Dolomiti Flight 3MTA3 Calling All Non-Stop Cali-Marys, Linda Blair and Give Your Blowers Some Go—Juice It’s a Furball, 2005, Plywood, acrylic, and enamel paint, 50 x 15 x 56 inches.
