EYE AND MIND
THE SHIN COLLECTION

March 18 - July 9, 2023

A Guide to Looking

This guide offers a selection of works from the exhibition.

Look at the included artwork and then use the text to help build a deeper understanding of the artists, their process, and their works.

NASSAU COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART
Eye & Mind: The Shin Collection is a selection of pieces from a private collection of known and unknown works of art assembled by Hong Gyu Shin, who began collecting when he was 13 years old. His bountiful treasures, which span the globe, include works by Elaine and Willem de Kooning, Whistler, Stella, Daumier, Carrington, and many other important names from art history juxtaposed with the painting and sculpture of our own time from all over the world. This expansive collection tells a story of humanity's artistic endeavors starting with an ancient Greek vessel dating from the 3rd century BCE, moving forward in time up to a contemporary sculpture created in the 21st century.

With over 100 works of art bridging over 30 art movements, an array of artistic practice and media including drawing, photography, painting, and textiles, this exhibition is organized into categories that blur the distinction between fine and decorative art and includes underrepresented female artists, Outsider Artists (self-taught), queer artists and some of the greats of the 20th century. Eye & Mind: The Shin Collection will take visitors on a journey through an all-embracing art historical timeline.
The groupings [in this exhibition] tend to span across disciplines and media, refusing compartmentalization into outdated categories, as such categories were utilized a hundred years ago and ossified 19th century collection paradigms. My groupings go against the perpetuation of rarefied categories like "fine artwork" and "decorative art" and conservative categorical assumptions of collections' use. My approach in groupings is heir to the philosophical approach to display by collecting institutions like the Barnes Foundation and John Dewey's pragmatist conception of art as an educational tool, the Barnes being where Dewey served as director of education in the foundation year 1922. Albert Barnes displayed his collection without rarefied art historical considerations, following the lessons of Dewey's "art as experience." Such principles of inclusion, both in bringing subaltern populations and myriad tangible objects that have unique and sometimes numinous or animist meanings into display contexts, are deeply important. These principles of inclusion are sometimes formal, sometimes thematic, and sometimes more abstract. I may group John Baldessari's "A Fix'd Inflexible Sorrow" beside Hyon Gyon's "Break My Arm," which itself is beside Leonora Carrington's "Untitled (Griffin)." The visitor may see a shared set of color palettes and recognize the grouping thusly. Or it may be because of how the works use a sweeping set of lines or forms. Always, however, it is very intuitive, only reflecting an order after the fact. My groupings are not informed by the law of chronology, national schools, and evolutionary principles as once dictated by Vivant Denon (the first director of the Museum Napoleon/Louvre) in the early 1800s, but are closer to the kind of genealogy of aesthetic influence of Alexander Dorner and his sliding panels.

-Hong Gyu Shin, 2023
Frank Robbins (1917-1994)
The *Bride*, 1954, Oil on canvas, 46 x 32 inches

**Inspiration**
Born in Boston, Frank Robbins was a teenager when he received a Rockefeller grant and a scholarship to attend classes at the Boston Museum and the National Academy of Design in Manhattan. This introductory education set the artist off on dual career paths in the arts dividing his interests and time between commercial and fine art. Working with DC and Marvel Comics, Robbins worked on many popular comics in a profession that lasted for over three decades, including the popular comic strip *Johnny Hazard*. A prominent painter, Robin's work has appeared in museums across the U.S. including the Whitney Museum of American Art. In stark contrast to the active scenes and adventures of his comic book characters captured with a bright palette and clarity of line, Robbins' paintings are permeated with a subdued palette, and a static atmosphere in which people engage with each other in claustrophobic interior spaces.

**In the Words of his Peer**
Dan Brereton, creator of *The Nocturnals*, says, "I'm not sure there's another artist who can so easily imbue the quality of life into a line, or so simply convey emotion with areas of black on a page. It all seems effortless—the work is just there. It has that impressionist's energy, that ability to transport you."

**Take a Closer Look**
The *Bride* invites us into a wedding reception greeted first by a young child in the foreground of the painting, the betrothed couple and a multi-tiered cake prominently featured in the middle ground, wedding guests and colorful ribbons festooning the room where the celebration is taking place. Thick rich, impasto like paint strokes dance rhythmically across the canvas to ice the wedding cake and capture the draping of the bride's lavish gown.

**Something to Talk About**
The bride has an almost nervous, pensive frozen expression on her face, while the groom's state of happiness is revealed with the just a tiny slice of his white teeth. A wedding day is traditionally a joyful day for couples tying the knot. Could Robbin's work tell an alternative story?
Else Fischer-Hansen (1905-1996)
*Familien (The Family)*, 1946, oil on canvas, 36 1/5 x 27 3/5 inches

**Inspiration**
Else Fischer-Hansen, born in Copenhagen, was part of the art movement CoBrA, named for the three northern European cities that its founders originated from: Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam. The approximately thirty members of the group became known for their vigorously spontaneous, rebellious style of painting that was inspired by the art of children, people with mental health issues, and the devastation of World War II.

**In the Artist's Words**
Fischer-Hansen took inspiration from both the personal and the turbulent social and political environment in which she lived. In 1936, after she had been hospitalized for a year due to a serious illness, the artist began to paint what she called "psychological images," which were a series of abstractions based on a landscape or a piece of music.

**Take a Closer Look**
Throughout her career, Fischer-Hansen worked in other media including ceramics, weaving, and stained glass. The use of multiple shapes, lines, and colors found in *Familien* live somewhere between abstraction and figuration, and like the pieces of glass found in stained glass, the artist fills her canvas with individual colorful shapes which fit together tightly like pieces of a puzzle intimately close in proximity to each other to create a whole.

**Something to Talk About**
The title and imagery of *Familien (The Family)* denotes the depiction of a family. Family portraits have long been a way to capture a family through photographs or paintings. Often taken at festive occasions, these images have the potential to capture fleeting moments in time and to document generations of family members. If you could curate your ideal family portrait, who would be represented (including those who have passed)? What would be the setting?
Richard Hambleton (1952-2017)
*Opening*, ca. 1983, Acrylic on canvas, 85 1/5 x 54 3/5 inches

**Inspiration**
Richard Hambleton was a prominent artist living in NYC in the 1980s and an active participant in the downtown art scene working alongside his contemporaries Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Kenny Scharf. The Canadian artist used the city as his canvas painting hundreds of startling black silhouettes, which appeared mysteriously on buildings in the Lower East Side and in other parts of Manhattan. For these works famously known as the legendary *Shadowman* series, Hambleton gained the nickname "Godfather of Street Art." *Opening* is an example of how Hambleton expanded upon the theme of silhouetted figures, moving them from the urban streets in which they originated to works on canvas painted in a studio. For a time these new works fueled a lucrative business and gave the artist international recognition.

**In the Artist's Words**
"I painted the town black . . . They could represent watchmen or danger or the shadows of a human body after a nuclear holocaust or even my own shadow."

**Take a Closer Look**
The composition of *Opening* is achieved by juxtaposing black silhouetted figures framed in a doorway or architectural structure in stark contrast, using a combination of dark and light spaces. The surface quality of the canvas is attained by combining areas of thinly applied washes of paint with thick acrylic pigment that when applied enable the paint to drip down the surface of the canvas. These drips are suggestive of the gestural language and process of "tagging" used in the act of creating graffiti often done in haste to avoid the eyes of property owners and police.

**Something to Talk About**
Graffiti is a controversial subject. In most countries, marking or painting property without permission is considered by property owners and civic authorities as defacement and vandalism. Now considered and included in the vernacular of art history, "graffiti style" has become a populist and accepted aesthetic and approach to artistic production. What are your thoughts on graffiti? Are there times when it's acceptable or unacceptable? What is the distinction, in your opinion?
Leonora Carrington (1917-2011)
*Untitled (Griffin)*, ca. 1950, wool tapestry
47 1/2 x 70 1/8 inches

**Inspiration**
Born in Lancashire, England, Carrington spent her entire life and career as an artist rebelling against the societal expectations of her upper-class upbringing and the rigid rules of the Roman Catholic boarding schools she attended as a child. This gave birth to a lifetime of creative output as an artist in the Surrealist art movement. Carrington was primarily a painter; this work belongs to a very small group of tapestries that she created in collaboration with a family (Rosales) of serape weavers who lived with her in Mexico from 1948 to 1958. This tapestry is representative of the typical style of these weavings: a singular mythological creature appears on a neutral surface with a weavers mark on the upper left corner.

**In the Artist's Words**
"I am as mysterious to myself as I am mysterious to others."

**Take a Closer Look**
While this griffin is certainly traditional in its combination of feline and avian features, it's unique in that it's composed of floral designs; the mane is an open flower, the face features three stamen positioned between the beast's flared nostrils, the neck resembles a wreath of foliage, and on the one visible wing, two vines comprised of leaves and flowers crawl up like veins. To complete the floral imagery, Carrington includes a bright red flower, clasped in one of the griffin's talons. In addition, around the animal's shoulders appears a small serape rendered in metallic thread with strings hanging down from it, perhaps a nod to the primary occupation of the master weaver, Ricardo Rosales. The gold and silver yarn was also used to render details in the plants that make up the body of the griffin. As such, this creature is a hybrid in multiple ways—part lion, part eagle; part flora, part fauna; part organic, part synthetic—and yet seemingly at peace with these contradictions as it savors its single, red bloom.

**Something to Talk About**
Leonora Carrington's tapestry emphasizes hybridity. Do you have contradictions in your own life? Are there aspects of your personality that are at odds with one another? Is that beneficial or detrimental?
Hyon Gyon (b. 1979)
*Fire in My Brain*, 2015, acrylic, oil, melted fabric and charcoal on canvas, 96 x 70 inches

**Inspiration**
Born in 1979, contemporary Korean artist, Hyon Gyon, uses her experiences and surroundings to influence the style and materials used in her work. Hyon Gyon has lived in various parts of the world including New York City, Korea, Japan, and Poland. Before pursuing her career in art, Hyon Gyon was a designer of chima jeogori, traditional Korean clothing. She uses these satin fabrics in her work as a dedication to the energy that stems from traditional Korean shamans (who are mostly women).

**In the Artist's Words**
"It addresses negative emotions or sadness that can happen in our lives. I am into how to survive when those negative feelings or emotions arise, how to get over them, how I can touch [others'] emotions and drag them out, and how to turn [the emotions] into other energies that are acceptable in society."

**Take a Closer Look**
In 2013, Hyon Gyon moved to New York City and fully let the energy of the city into her work. She began a full investigation of abstraction incorporating the texture, surfaces, colors, and materials of her new home into her work and process. Hyon Gyon works with a wide range of materials including beads, gold leaf, pottery shards, feathers, wax, and encaustic. These materials create an amazing, unique texture that adds dimension to her work. The materiality and vibrant colors presented in Hyon Gyon's work appeal to viewers and showcase her creative process.

**Something to Talk About**
What kind of materials can you find in her work? What materials would you use from your own life? Does your environment influence you in any way?
Equipo 57 (1957-1962)

13 Maquettes, 1959-61, mixed media, dimensions variable

Inspiration
Spanish artists Juan Cuenca (1930), Ángel Duarte (1930-2007), José Duarte (1928-2017), and Agustín Ibarrola (1930) joined forces in 1957 to form the group Equipo 57. This group worked together for five years to change society by using art as a dynamic element to awaken consciousness. Together their radical geometric abstract art was influential in modernizing artistic consciousness within Spanish society. One of the group's most important contributions was the Theory of the Interactivity of Plastic Space, which highlighted the connection between mathematics and art. The group created works varying from paintings to sculptures to collages.

In the Artist's Words
"When world events lead us to common universal foundations, the crisis survives with a general character, invading all our activities both as men and as artists."

Take a Closer Look
Equipo 57's collaborations question issues such as authorship and the direct influence of art on society. When displayed, their installations are credited to Equipo 57 as a group rather than the individual artists that worked on the various parts. "Equipo" translates to "team" in English; in their few years of collective production, the four artists truly worked as one team to share their message and elevate a new age of art in Spain. In their piece, 13 Maquettes (maquettes serve as models or preliminary "sketches" for the full-size sculptures), viewers can see each of the artists' backgrounds shine through; these 13 sculptural works showcase their collective knowledge of design, various materials, and architectural influences.

Something to Talk About
Can you identify the different materials used to create these maquettes? What materials would you use if you were making the full-sized versions? Take a look through the windows opposite this display case and see if you can spot one of the outdoor sculptures. What kind of materials might you use for an outdoor sculpture? Are they the same or different from what you would use for an indoor sculpture?
Seong Moy (1921-2013)
*Untitled (Golden Abstract Composition)*, 1950, oil on canvas
50 x 40 inches

**Inspiration**
American artist Seong Moy was known primarily as a printmaker, though paintings such as *Untitled (Golden Abstract Composition)* allowed him to work on a much greater scale. Born in a small town outside Canton in China in 1921, Moy learned calligraphy when he was a child. He immigrated to the United States at the age of 10 to receive an education and to work in the restaurant industry, sending financial support to his relatives in China. When Seong arrived in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1931, he began training as an assistant chef with his uncle at a local café while still attending elementary school. In exchange for his work at the restaurant, Moy persuaded his grandfather to allow him to continue with his education through high school.

**In the Artist's Words**
"Everything around you has its basic abstract quality and the beauty of abstraction is everywhere."

**Take a Closer Look**
In 1950, he received a Whitney Fellowship, which launched his artistic and teaching career. After receiving this prestigious honor, he was given the opportunity to work as a visiting artist at the University of Minnesota, the first in a long line of academic placements. He painted *Untitled (Golden Abstract Composition)*, in that same year. This piece marks a significant moment in Moy's career, just at the beginning of his wider acceptance within the artistic community, and reflects the particular zeitgeist of the Abstract Expressionist movement that developed in New York City in the previous decade. However, his work is closer to abstraction than Abstract Expressionism—unlike Jackson Pollock's spontaneous drip paintings, Moy exhibits a level of calligraphic control in his brushstrokes, his sweeping lines creating clear delineations on the surface of the canvas. His use of a dull gold, which covers a large portion of the composition, is reminiscent of Gustav Klimt and Byzantine idols, lending the work an ethereal quality.

**Something to Talk About**
What are some of the similarities between writing (calligraphy) and visual art? In what ways are they different? Can you think of examples where writing and art are one and the same?
**Keunmin Lee (b. 1982)**

*The Portrait of Hallucination*, 2013, oil on canvas, 72 x 180 inches

**Inspiration**

Keunmin Lee is a contemporary abstract artist based in Seoul, Korea. When he was given a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder, his exceptional skill was almost eclipsed by his condition. Keunmin felt overly defined and hindered by his illness, viewing it as something to get past rather than embrace. However, as he developed in his work, he discovered new pathways to viewing his mental health as a creative force and hallucinations as sources of inspiration. He has become well-known for his renderings of unadulterated hallucinations. Through his art, Keunmin allows spectators into the most personal part of his mind. The audience is compelled to think about new perspectives by witnessing another reality; a reality in which the laws of our physical world do not apply. In this way, Keunmin Lee's work serves as a testament to the power of neurodiversity, trauma, and visual cognition.

**In the Artist's Words**

"Regardless of the subject of the work, all artistic actions themselves are a healing process for the artist. Of course, there are some for whom healing itself is a big theme and others for which it is not. I'm closer to the latter."

**Take a Closer Look**

The pieces in this triptych are profoundly tactile and forcefully visual. The massive canvases nearly fill the entire wall and include a complicated mixture of textures that are both expressive and ambient. It encompasses the observer in this narrow setting, forcing them to live in the hallucination rather than taking refuge or comfort in distance. The forms appear both abstract and objective, reminding the viewer of internal and external anatomy and subverting our understanding of the body in space.

**Something to Talk About**

Think about a time when you turned to art (images, movies, books, or music) for comfort or healing. Why do you think making or consuming art can help us during difficult times?
Lili Elbe (1882 - 1931)
*Garden View*, 1910, oil on canvas, 20.1 x 15 in.

**Inspiration**
Born Einar Wegener in Vejle, Denmark in 1882, Lili Elbe became a groundbreaking artist for the LGBTQ+ community. In the early 1930s, she received one of the first gender reassignment surgeries. Elbe was known for painting Post-Impressionistic landscapes in soft, cool palettes. Elbe was also famous for posing for her wife, Gerda Wegener’s renaissance-inspired portraits of chic, fashionable women. Facing discrimination in their native Copenhagen, Elbe and Wegener settled in Paris in 1912, where the thriving bohemian scene was generally more accepting of the LGBTQ+ community. In 1930, Elbe and Wegener had to annul their marriage, since marriage equality was not yet recognized by Danish law. Elbe died in 1931 at the age of 48 from complications in her fourth gender-affirming surgery. In 2000, author David Ebershoff published his novel *The Danish Girl*, based on Elbe’s life and her posthumously published memoir *Man into Woman*. Ebershoff’s book was adapted into a 2015 movie of the same name. It is through these depictions in popular culture that Elbe and Wegener are perhaps best known, yet their legacies as revolutionary artists are also noteworthy in history.

**In the Artist’s Words**
"Each step forward to become the person we are makes it harder to go backwards, to return to the shadowy, private world of closed doors and shuttered windows. The experience, the awakening of one’s true self, after being so long suppressed, can never be adequately explained with language"

**Take a Closer Look**
This Garden View is presumably from Versailles like some of her other works in this show. Elbe’s use of soft and bright colors captures the viewer and transports them to their own serene sites in nature.

**Something to Talk About**
This painting of a garden in Versailles seems tranquil, what are some places that you would consider peaceful? Lili Elbe can be considered a hero and role model in the LGBTQ+ community. Who are some of your heroes or role models?
Barbara Levittoux-Świderska (1933-2019)

Złoty deszcz (Gold Rain), 1986, brass, wool, synthetic fabric, cotton and coins, 84 3/5 x 66 9/10 x 3 9/10 inches

Inspiration

Barbara Levittoux-Świderska, one of the most significant, but frequently underappreciated, textile artists, turned tapestries from simple decorations into avant-garde installations. Born in Poland in 1933, Levittoux-Świderska's work began to receive international recognition in the 1960s just as textile arts were beginning to enter the lexicon of contemporary art. She followed the Eastern European method of using locally acquired materials and agricultural traditions to develop new textile art-making techniques, much like her fellow Polish textile artists Magdalena Abakanowicz and Jolanta Owidzka. In addition to yarn, cotton, and cloth, she also used materials that were available to her in nature, such as pine needles or birch bark.

In the Artist's Words

"I want to show what is inside and in between. I strive for simplicity, but still have a long way to go."

Take a Closer Look

This work and its title reference the story of Danaë from ancient Greek mythology, a popular subject in the history of western art. According to the ancient accounts, Danaë's father imprisons her after learning of a prophecy that he will die at the hands of his grandson. Mortal men are unable to access Danaë, but Zeus/Jupiter, the god of sky and thunder, changes into a golden downpour, impregnating her. She later gives birth to the hero Perseus. By the time of the Roman poets, the liquid gold had transformed into coins, implying that the protagonist had sold her virtue for riches. As such, depictions of this character often feature piles of coins. Złoty, a word for the Polish currency, translates to "golden," giving the title for this piece a double meaning. Here the złote are interlaced with golden thread. By the Medieval period, Danaë was considered a kind of pre-figuration of Mary, and therefore a symbol of pre-Christian virtue. These ever-changing interpretations form a backdrop for this sweeping, delicate retelling of a mythological metamorphosis captured in the transformative alchemy of turning thread into gold.

Something to Talk About

What are some other stories, books, music, or artworks that have changed in meaning over time?
Joseph Stella (1880-1946)

Study of a Man's Head, 1898, pencil and red chalk on paper, 9 x 7 4/5 inches

Inspiration

Joseph Stella grew up in the small village of Muro Lucano in southern Italy. Stella showed an early talent for drawing and a passion for art, but under parental pressure to pursue a professional career, he moved to New York City when he was nineteen to study medicine and pharmacology. After studying for two years, Stella abandoned his plans to become a doctor. Enrolling in New York School of Art, Stella studied under American Impressionist artist William Merritt Chase. After completing his studies, Stella worked as a magazine illustrator from 1905 to 1909, creating realistic drawings of subjects for these publications including several drawings of immigrants and miners for the magazines Outlook and Survey.

In the Artist's Words

"The motto of Modern Art is freedom . . . real freedom."

Take a Closer Look

In contrast to his Precisionist approach to painting that exhibits an almost stained-glass quality, the precise academic line work employed to capture the lined, deeply pored face of the man harkens back to his work in illustration. Present in both his paintings and sketches is his study of the representational style and traditional subject matter influenced by historical European art movements, including his Italian heritage ever-present in Stella's work. Study of a Man's Head is a complex realistically rendered drawing. Throughout history, artist sketches were often judged as not finished "works of art" but were instead private acts, preparatory studies for paintings, never meant to be viewed alongside the completed works of art. But when we get a glimpse, these studies provide a window into the creative process. Artists' drawings are more than ever considered autonomous works of art.

Something to Talk About

Do you think we need to consider the artist's intentions for a work when determining its role in a museum collection? Is something art if the creator intended it to be just a preparatory study?
Gerda Wegener (1886-1940)

*Au plus doux de mes amis (To the Sweetest of my Friends)*, 1915, watercolor and pastel on paper, 13 2/5 x 9 1/10 inches

**Inspiration**
Gerda Wegener was a revolutionary artist influenced by the Art Nouveau and Art Deco movements, who challenged the way in which the feminine gaze was portrayed within art. Born Gerda Gottlieb in Denmark in 1886, Wegener was known for her illustrations of fashion and her work with Vogue. From a young age she was interested in art and began her training in the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. Her work was permeated by a unique Renaissance-inspired style portraying women in fashionable clothing participating in artistic endeavors including theatre, literature, and dance. Wegener worked to shift how women were represented in art. Wegener's fashion industry paintings featured chic women in beautiful attire with short bob haircuts, full lips, and almond-shaped eyes.

**In an Expert's Words**
Art historian, Rygg Karberg, explains, "throughout history, paintings of beautiful women were done by men. Women were typically seen through the male gaze. But Gerda changed all that because she painted strong, beautiful women with admiration and identification – as conscious subjects rather than objects."

**Take a Closer Look**
Gerda Wegener's most famous subjects to paint were Danish ballerina and actress, Ulla Poulson (1905 - 2001) and her partner, trans woman Lili Elbe (formerly Einar Wegener). Gerda and Einar Wegener were married in 1905. Gerda's husband would pose for her in women's clothing and makeup, and would go on (in the early 1930s) to receive one of the first gender reassignment surgeries. This painting differs from her others as the subject appears to be herself. Suggesting that the greatest friend a person can have is themselves.

**Something to Talk About**
What is unique about the way this portrait is framed? How do you see yourself? Who would you consider to be your sweetest friend?
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