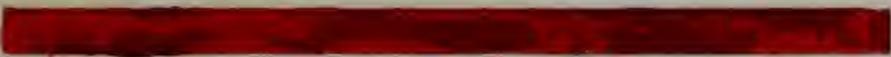
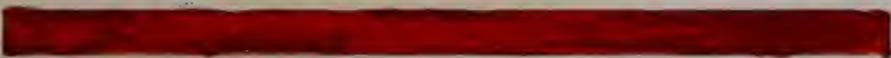


Surveying the Seventies



**1980 THE 50TH ANNIVER
SARY OF THE WHITNEY M
USEUM OF AMERICAN ART**



Surveying the Seventies

Selections from the
Permanent Collection of the
Whitney Museum of American Art

Whitney Museum of American Art
Fairfield County
February 12-March 31, 1982

Surveying the Seventies at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Fairfield County, continues the presentation of significant achievements in twentieth-century American art that began with the 1981 inaugural exhibitions, "Pioneering the Century: 1900-1940" and "A Tradition Established: 1940-1970."

The works in this exhibition were selected by Lisa Phillips, *Associate Curator, Branch Museums*, with Pamela Gruninger, *Manager, Fairfield County*. Thanks are extended to Patterson Sims, *Associate Curator, Permanent Collection*, and Sheila Schwartz, *Editor*, for their advice and suggestions. Doris Palca, *Head, Publications and Sales*, James Leggio, *Associate Editor*, Janet Satz, *Assistant Manager, Fairfield County*, and Jaye Nevid, *Secretary*, deserve special recognition for their assistance in preparing the exhibition and accompanying brochure.

Publication designed by Ronald Gordon.

All photographs, except cover, by Geoffrey Clements.

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Whitney Museum of American Art

945 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10021

Cover:

Jasper Johns, *Two Flags (Whitney Anniversary, 1980)*,

1980

Lithograph, 50 x 33 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches

50th Anniversary Gift of the artist 80.10

Surveying the Seventies

The idea of a "decade" is in some ways a historical expedient—an artificial construction which creates the illusion of coherence. In performing this function, it does exist as a cultural concept: we acknowledge the passing from one decade into the next with hope and anticipation, thereby investing it with significance. The beginning of a new decade is an occasion for declaring differences, an opportunity for renewal and rebirth.

"Surveying the Seventies" offers a view of a decade which had no typical art. Because it is so marked by the lack of clearly defined styles, the art of the period has sometimes been referred to as "post-movement." While the pluralism of the decade precludes the possibility of a "survey" in its comprehensive sense, certain aesthetic tendencies are examined here through a selection of works from the Permanent Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art. As such, the exhibition also reveals much about patterns of collecting, curatorial policies, the nature of the museum as an institution, its possibilities and limitations. For instance, earthworks, site-specific sculpture, video, film installation, and performance are conspicuously absent here. These significant developments of the decade rejected the idea of an artwork as an object to be consumed and consciously extend beyond the confines of museum walls; they resist acquisition and/or conventional exhibition. Thus, a retrospective view of the seventies is testimony to the fragmentation and dispersal from which no major figures emerged—a condition which parallels the socio-economic climate of the period.

American military supremacy came to an end in the seventies along with the myth that Communism was something that could be stamped out. Vietnam, Watergate, and widespread anti-American sentiment produced cynicism, mistrust, and disillusionment with the American dream. For Americans, it was a period of self-criticism, reevaluation and ultimately, submission. Moreover, the radical social changes of the sixties (civil rights, feminism, "youthquake") had yet to be fully absorbed: we spent much of our time in the seventies digesting their effects.

In addition, the younger generation of artists was confronted by the spectacular, monolithic achievements of the New York School and Pop Art. This new generation (art-school educated for the most part) realized that art had reached a level of quality and invention that would be difficult, if not impossible, to maintain. Their heroes, like Jasper Johns, Frank Stella, and Willem de Kooning, were living and continuing to produce commanding work.

In the seventies, under the catchword of "pluralism," many styles and subjects were accepted and practiced, from the most minimal, austere art to the most hedonistic and "degenerate," as past movements were subjected to an arduous process of refinement, demystification, and revision.

Some of the major currents that appeared during the seventies were: a revival of representation, rhetorically posed against abstraction and sometimes referred to as "a new humanism" (Bartlett, Hunt, True, Shapiro, Aycock, Moskowitz); neo-expressionist painterliness, just now reaching its zenith (Murray); body art; Conceptual theater (Samaras); Minimalist refinements (Andre, Held, Marden, Serra); work based on linguistic, mathematical, or philosophical models (Bochner); the introduction of new forms through crossovers of various media—i.e., painting and photography (Cottingham, Estes, Close, Samaras, Warhol), painting and sculpture (Torreano); a return to preindustrial craft and decorative sources (Samaras, Torreano); large-scale outdoor projects (Christo); and temporary installations designed for specific spaces (Irwin).

Just as there were no prescribed styles, so there were no prescribed methods for making art. Materials could be selected and placed ready-made, works could be fabricated by a set of instructions, or made by hand, from any conceivable substance, and any medium could be mixed with another. Drawings, prints, books, photographs, videotapes, and posters were elevated to high art status as attention focused on the production of "information" and its "distribution." Many ephemeral works depended on these forms of documentation for their continued existence.

This period of unbridled eclecticism has been viewed by some as one of decline, accompanied by a tendency toward excess, nostalgic revivals of every variety, and indiscriminate historical quotation. Others explain pluralism as a convergence of many different historical moments. They regard the seventies as a period of healthy, rich diversity—of democratic justice liberated from the tyranny of modernism, its confining categories and traditional hierarchies of high and low art. It is a subject of intense disagreement: there is no consensus about the quality of the decade.

Perhaps this is because "quality" ceased to be an issue. As the late Thomas Hess remarked, "Vanguard audiences could accept anything because the question of quality never arose—they were out for money, prestige and kicks, in that order."¹ Advanced art became the height of chic among New York's socially ambitious and expanding "comfort class." This mingling of art and fashion effectively erased the line between high and popular culture. Both art and fashion satisfy our desire to be shocked by something we know we can wear. As Calvin Tomkins has remarked: "For many artists there was no longer any need

1. Quoted in Calvin Tomkins, *Off the Wall: The Art World of Our Time* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1980), p. 258.

to be against popular culture—it was no longer either/or but both/and. The Beatles and Beethoven, Donald Duck and Picasso."²

Indeed, our paradoxical approbation of rule breaking has thoroughly undermined the old notion of the avant-garde. In modernism, subversive innovation was once possible. Now, the current craving for "newness" neutralizes the adversary, and the only criticism ever voiced is boredom. A change in the function of art in society has taken place. This change undoubtedly has a great deal to do with the shifting composition of audience, patrons, and practitioners. In the 1940s there were only about fifty "modern" artists in New York. Now there are thousands, turned out by art schools around the country, enheartened by the meteoric rise of some living artists and the mass recognition of art as a legitimate profession. More people than ever know about art, through the promotion of art personalities, and record-breaking auction prices are front-page news. For these reasons, among others, more people visit museums each year than attend sports events. Culture is a multi-million-dollar industry. Naturally the demand for it has intensified.

As cultural growth has become deep rooted—according to a recent Harris Poll, 89% of those interviewed felt that art is essential in maintaining the quality of life—business has become its largest sponsor. Corporations are buying more art every year than museums; 57% of the Fortune 500 companies have acquisition programs. Conversely the business of art—the internal mechanism of how and why it runs—has become the focus of attention. Much art draws on this theme for content, materializing the invisible machinations. Christo, for instance, formed his own Running Fence Corporation, which raised \$3,000,000 to finance the construction of his 24-mile-long sculpture project in Marin and Sonoma counties in 1976.

Although the demand for art has a direct correspondence to its inflated market value, what about its symbolic value? What desires does art satisfy and what value does it therefore assume in the social field? Can these different kinds of value be separated? "If the creation of desire which is pure at the level of the painter takes on commercial value, it is because its effect has something profitable for society."³ Art is part of an interlocking, market-based system—a network which must be penetrated in order to grasp who makes art, why, and for whom. The possibilities for gratification exist on many levels. Some think of art as an extension of the entertainment industry—a spectacle; others see it as the last retreat for private and religious contemplation; for others it is a way of underwriting their social status, or a good investment; or it may effect an understanding and reacquaintance with the world and the ways we have come to represent it. One thing, however, is certain: an immense support structure

2. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

3. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1981), p. 111.

has developed around art to promote it, analyze it, show it, and sell it—a whole system of mediators who organize culture for us, including dealers, critics, curators, and auction houses.

In the end we are supplied with a seemingly endless string of terms to explain and justify the eruption of art activity: post-movement, post-minimal, post-modern, post-historical, and so on. These, we are told, characterize the art following modernism's demise in the late sixties. Through an exhibition of this sort, the identity of modernism's successor can be approached, but a precise definition will be the enterprise of the eighties.

Lisa Phillips
Associate Curator, Branch Museums

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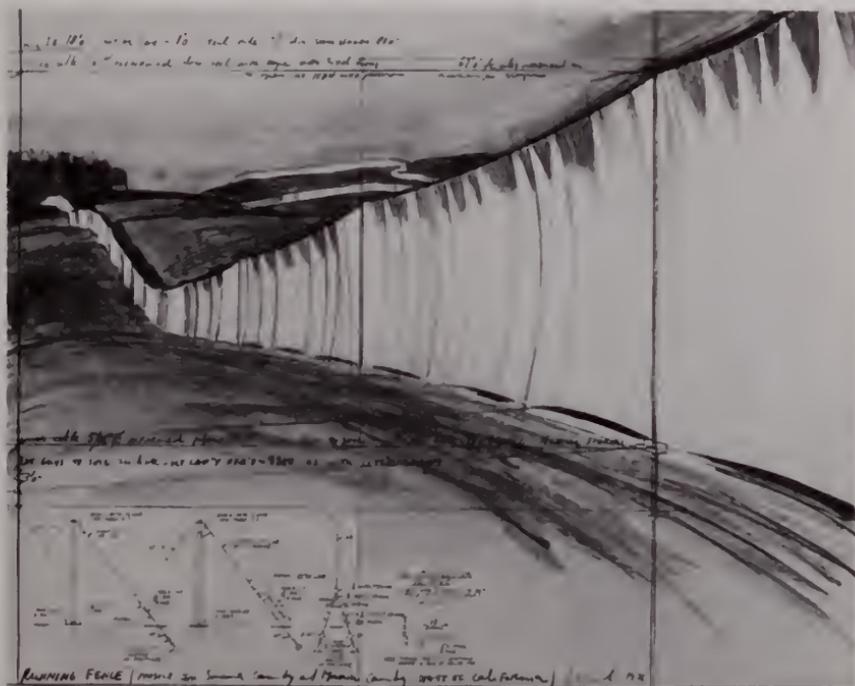
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Christo

I think we live in the most political, social, economic century of human history. It is unprecedented. . . . I think that any art that is less than political, less than social, less than economic, is certainly less than contemporary art. We cannot stop that concern, we cannot stop that dimension of art. . . .

Of course, all the activity created the momentum of the project [Running Fence]. Without that, the project would not have had its impact. The project created forces for and against. All my projects have that same character because they are built outside of the art system. The art system is anything from the National Endowment for the Arts to the private galleries to the museum collector who dictates what is avant-garde and contemporary art. Because the project was put outside of that system, it was in subversive relation to the structure of perception of what is art, what is permitted. That is the source of energy of the project.

From Carolyn Lumsden, "Christo: 'I Am a Political Artist,'" *Soho Weekly News*, April 6, 1978, p. 20.

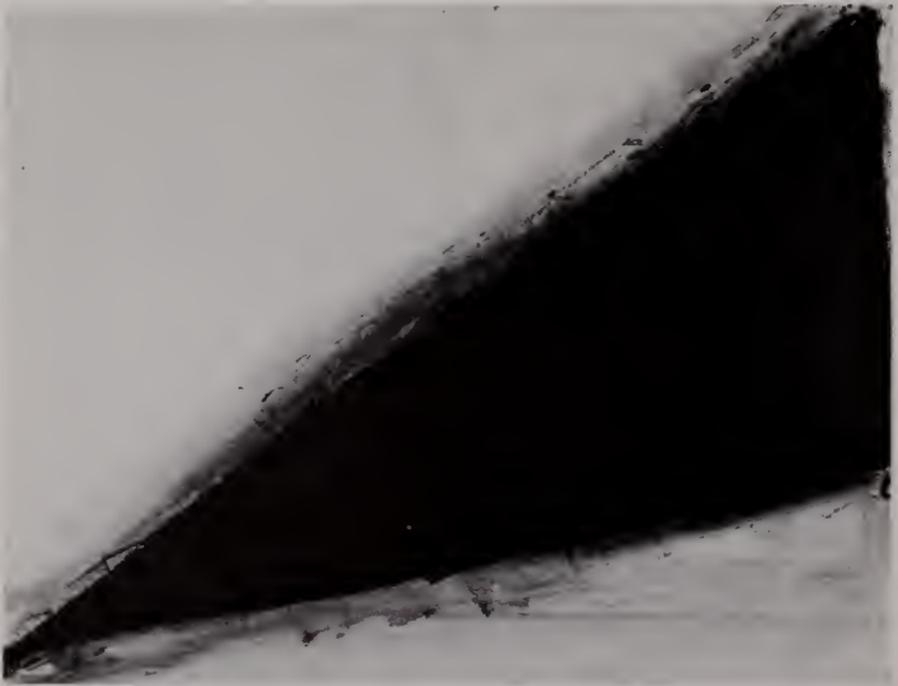


Christo. *Running Fence*, Project for Sonoma County and Marin County, State of California, 1976. Collage: pastel, charcoal, engineering data, cloth, and tape, 22 x 28 inches. Paul Rewald Memorial Fund. 77.20

Richard Serra

Thought and language are interdependent but drawing comes from another source (experience and intuition). Thinking is not the model; the experience in drawing is not obtained through language. Language does not equal experience—it points to it. Drawing creates its own ordering. To draw a line is to have an idea. More than one line is usually construction. Ideas become compounded as soon as you make the second line. Drawing is a way for me to carry on an interior monologue with the making as I'm making it.

From "'About Drawing': Richard Serra & Lizzie Borden—Interview, 1977," in Richard Serra, *Interviews, Etc., 1970–1980* (Yonkers, N.Y.: The Hudson River Museum, 1980), p. 76.

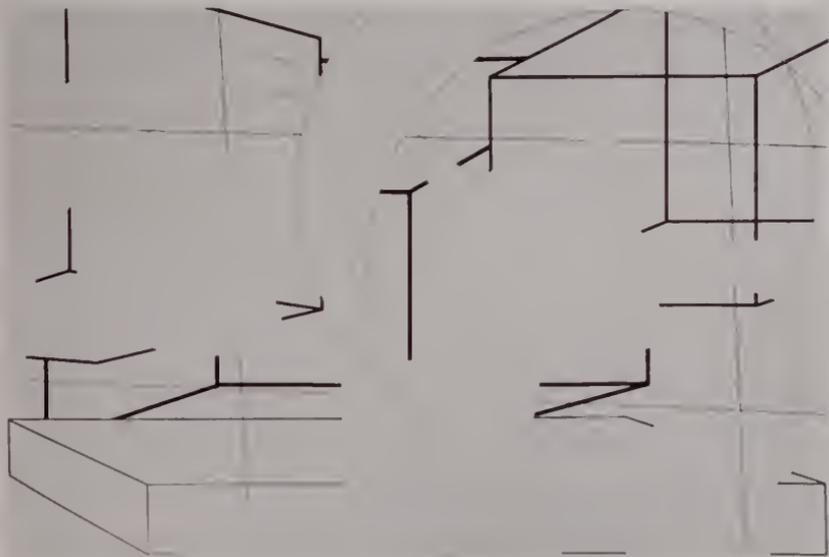


Richard Serra. *Untitled*, 1972–73. Lithographic crayon on paper, 37¾ x 49¾ inches.
Gift of Susan Morse Hilles. 74.10

Al Held

I started trying to create structures. To give some meaning to the insanity around me, to what I would consider insanity. Then it started with just straight drawing. I was just going to draw and give information and just articulate the situation in terms of paradox of situations, the ins and outs, and gravity and no gravity, and where you are. . . . There is no such thing as space. Space is really a set of relationships between things or objects or incidents or forces. There's nothing out there—nothingness. There's no space. There's no space that's measurable except measurable between either energies or incidents or objects. There's no environment, there's no room or landscape. Things are not ordered the way they are in Renaissance perspective. There's nothing there except those relationships and those structures. Otherwise there's nothing. The reason for the black and white was that I wanted to not have any kind of seductive material interfering with the mental trip between you and that painting. There are no seductive qualities included. The analogy is between mapping, charting, blueprinting, writing: a black line on a white ground—it's written. So they are images in terms of pictorial, written language.

From "Al Held on His Work," in *Al Held: Recent Paintings and Drawings*, exhibition catalogue (Zurich: Galerie André Emmerich, 1977), unpaginated.



Al Held. *South Southwest*, 1973. Synthetic polymer on canvas, 96 x 144 inches.
Purchase. 73.65

Chuck Close

I am trying to make it very clear that I am making paintings from photographs and that this is not the way the human eye sees it. If I stare at this it's sharp, and if I stare at that it's sharp too. The eye is very flexible, but the camera is a one-eye view of the world, and I think we know what a blur looks like only because of photography. It really nailed down blur. It's this elusive thing, and the camera gives you information that was too difficult to deal with otherwise.

From "Statements by the Artist: Chuck Close" (1972), in Barbara Rose, ed., *Readings in American Art, 1900-1975* (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1975), p. 226.



Chuck Close. *Phil*, 1973. Ink and graphite on graph paper, 21 7/8 x 17 inches. Gift of Lily Auchincloss in honor of John I. H. Baur. 74.16

Andy Warhol

In the 60s everybody got interested in everybody.

In the 70s everybody started dropping everybody.

The 60s were Clutter.

The 70s are very empty.

Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975), p. 26.



Andy Warhol. *Chairman Mao*, 1975. Oil on canvas, 26 x 22 inches. Gift of Peter M. Brant. 76.44 (Not in exhibition).

A Chronology of the Whitney Museum of American Art in the Seventies

- 1970** The New American Filmmakers Series is launched as a "showcase for films which would not otherwise be shown theatrically in New York."
The Museum receives the entire artistic estate of Edward Hopper, bequeathed by his widow. Consisting of about 2,000 oils, watercolors, drawings, and prints, ranging from Hopper's student days to his later years, it is the largest gift in the history of the Museum.
- 1973** The Downtown Branch Museum opens at 55 Water Street in New York City's financial district. Supported by the lower Manhattan business community and staffed by Helena Rubinstein Fellows in Art History and Museum Studies, it offers free exhibitions and lunchtime performances.
- 1974** John I. H. Baur retires; Tom Armstrong appointed Director.
- 1976** The Drawing Committee, chaired by Trustees, is formed to advise and support the Museum in its acquisition and exhibition of drawings. Today, the drawing collection, containing more than 1,000 works, is one of the major public collections of twentieth-century American drawings.
The Lawrence H. Bloedel Bequest is received; includes works by Milton Avery, Charles Demuth, Georgia O'Keeffe, Larry Rivers, and Charles Sheeler, among others.
- 1977** Flora Miller Biddle—granddaughter of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, founder of the Museum—is elected President of the Whitney Museum.
- 1978** The Museum announces plans to open a midtown branch in the proposed new Philip Morris headquarters at Park Avenue and Forty-second Street, designed by Ulrich Franzen. The plans include a covered pedestrian plaza, located at street level, which will incorporate a large exhibition facility for the permanent installation of twentieth-century American sculpture and a gallery for changing exhibitions.

1979 A gift of Morgan Russell's works and papers, including paintings, drawings, notebooks, and correspondence, is presented to the Museum by Mr. and Mrs. Henry M. Reed.

Reginald Marsh's widow bequeaths more than 850 paintings, oil studies, drawings, and sketches, making the Museum the owner of the most significant collection of work by the artist.

1980 The yearlong celebration of the Museum's 50th Anniversary includes a series of exhibitions entitled "Concentrations," featuring the work of important artists represented in depth in the Museum's Permanent Collection and sponsored by Champion International Corporation.

More than 90 important works are donated especially as 50th Anniversary Gifts to commemorate the occasion, including works by Alexander Calder, Arshile Gorky, Marsden Hartley, Edward Hopper, Gaston Lachaise, Louise Nevelson, Georgia O'Keeffe, Maurice Prendergast, Robert Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt, and John Sloan, among others.

"Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist" opens, one of the most popular exhibitions ever presented at the Museum; sponsored by Philip Morris Incorporated and National Endowment for the Arts.

The National Committee, comprised of outstanding patrons of American art from throughout the country, is established to emphasize and formalize the Museum's role as the most active museum of American art.

Jasper Johns' celebrated *Three Flags* is acquired for \$1,000,000.

The Museum announces plans to open a suburban branch in the new headquarters building of Champion International Corporation, designed by Ulrich Franzen and located in downtown Stamford, Connecticut. Plans are to present six exhibitions a year, as well as performances, lectures, films, and other special programs.

Today Museum attendance for 1981 was over 650,000, having grown from an average of 260,000 at the West Fifty-fourth Street building and an average of 70,000 at the original building on West Eighth Street.

The Permanent Collection has increased from 600 works in 1931, when the Museum opened, to over 6,500 works today.

Membership has grown dramatically: income from all personal membership categories has reached \$500,000 per year, and the number of Corporate Members rose to a new high of 175 in 1981.

Works in the Exhibition

All dimensions are in inches; height precedes width, precedes depth. Unless otherwise noted, dimensions of works on paper refer to sheet size; dimensions of sculpture do not include base unless it is an integral part of the work. The accession number of a work refers to the year of acquisition and, after a decimal point, to the sequence of its addition to the Permanent Collection during that year. For example, 79.4 means the work was the fourth work acquired in 1979. Promised gifts are noted with the letter P and the order of the two figures is reversed.

Carl Andre (b. 1935)

Twenty-Ninth Copper Cardinal, 1975
Twenty copper plates, 20 x 20 each
Gift of the Gilman Foundation, Inc.,
and the National Endowment for the
Arts 75.55

Alice Aycock (b. 1946)

Untitled (Shanty), 1978
Wood: shanty, 54 x 30 x 30; base, 45 x 36
x 42; wheel, 107½ (diameter) x 12
Promised gift of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond
J. Leary P.70.78

Jennifer Bartlett (b. 1941)

*Falcon Avenue, Seaside Walk, Dwight
Street, Jarvis Street, Greene Street*,
1976

Enamel on steel, baked enamel, and
silkscreen grid, 51 x 259 overall
Gift of the Louis and Bessie Adler
Foundation, Inc., Seymour M. Klein,
President, and the National Endow-
ment for the Arts 77.22

Mel Bochner (b. 1941)

Ten to 10, 1972
Stones, 120 diameter
Gift of the Gilman Foundation, Inc.
77.28

Robert Cottingham (b. 1938)

Radios, 1977
Oil on canvas, 78 x 78
Gift of Frances and Sydney Lewis 77.36

Chuck Close (b. 1940)

Phil, 1973
Ink and graphite on graph paper,
21¾ x 17
Gift of Lily Auchincloss in honor of
John I. H. Baur 74.16

Christo (b. 1935)

*Running Fence, Project for Sonoma
County and Marin County, State of
California*, 1976
Collage: pastel, charcoal, engineering
data, cloth and tape, 22 x 28
Paul Rewald Memorial Fund 77.20

Richard Estes (b. 1935)

Untitled, 1974-75
Screenprint, 33¼ x 46¾
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin S.
Marks 78.112

Al Held (b. 1928)

South Southwest, 1973
Synthetic polymer on canvas, 96 x 144
Purchase 73.65

Bryan Hunt (b. 1947)

Step Falls, 1978
Bronze, 114 x 12 x 12
Gift of Edward R. Downe, Jr. 78.68

Robert Irwin (b. 1928)

Scrim Veil/Black Rectangle, Whitney
Museum of American Art, 1977
Ink and press type on paper, 27¾ x 34
Gift of the artist 77.48

Jasper Johns (b. 1930)

Savarin Can with Brushes, 1977
Lithograph, 53½ x 31¾
Gift of the artist 77.109

Usuyuki, 1979

Lithograph, 34¼ x 50¼
50th Anniversary Gift of Philip Morris
Incorporated 80.19

Two Flags (Whitney Anniversary), 1980,

1980
Lithograph, 50 x 33¾
50th Anniversary Gift of the artist 80.10

Roy Lichtenstein (b. 1923)
Gold Fish Bowl, 1977
Painted bronze with patina,
77½ x 25½ x 18¼
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman
Foundation, Inc. 77.66

The Reclining Nude, 1980
Woodcut, 34¾ x 40
Print Purchase Fund 80.43

Brice Marden (b. 1938)
Summer Table, 1972
Oil and wax on canvas; three panels,
60 x 35 each, 60 x 105 overall
Purchased with the aid of funds from the
National Endowment for the Arts
73.30

Elizabeth Murray (b. 1940)
Children Meeting, 1978
Oil on canvas, 101 x 127
Gift of the Louis and Bessie Adler
Foundation, Inc., Seymour M. Klein,
President 78.34

Lucas Samaras (b. 1936)
Photo-Transformation 11/3/73, 1973
Auto-polaroid, 3¾ x 3¾
Gift of Fred Mueller 78.97

Photo-Transformation 11/6/73, 1973
Auto-polaroid, 3¾ x 3¾
Gift of Fred Mueller 78.96

Reconstruction #12, 1977
Sewn fabrics, 103 x 120
Gift of the Wilfred P. Cohen
Foundation 78.22

Richard Serra (b. 1939)
Untitled, 1972-73
Lithographic crayon on paper, 37¾ x 49¾
Gift of Susan Morse Hilles 74.10

Joel Shapiro (b. 1941)
Untitled (House on Field), 1975-76
Bronze, 3½ x 28¾ x 21½
Gift of Mrs. Oscar Kolin 76.22

Pat Steir (b. 1938)
Line Lima, 1973
Oil and pencil on canvas, 84 x 84
Anonymous gift 74.44

John Torreano (b. 1941)
Red Column, 1974
Oil, acrylic, and glass jewels on wood,
96 x 8
Gift of the Larry Aldrich Foundation
(by exchange) 78.7

David True (b. 1942)
Chinese Sea, 1977
Oil on canvas, 44 x 66
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William A.
Marsteller and the National Endow-
ment for the Arts 77.43

Andy Warhol (b. 1925)
Mao Tse-Tung, 1972
Portfolio of ten serigraphs (six in
exhibition), 36 x 36 each
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Peter M.
Brant 74.96

Jackie Winsor (b. 1941)
Bound Logs, 1972-73
Wood and hemp, 114 x 29 x 18
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman
Foundation, Inc. 74.53

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Fairfield County

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