

Passage

October 29 – December 12, 2015

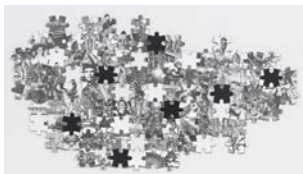
Alexander Gray Associates presents *Passage*, an exhibition featuring work by Ai Weiwei, Siah Armajani, Luis Camnitzer, Valie Export, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Mona Hatoum, Robert Longo, Ana Mendieta, Dennis Oppenheim, Regina Silveira, and Lorna Simpson. Together, the artworks trace the passage of time, collective and personal memory, histories, and diasporas.

Ground Floor Gallery



Ai Weiwei
Untitled, 2006
Mixed media
60.63h x 72.83w x 7.1d in.

Ai Weiwei's *Untitled* is comprised of two Forever brand bicycles that have been dismantled and attached to one another to create an angular form, buttressed in each corner by a bicycle wheel. Following in the tradition of Duchamp's readymades, the work repurposes existing artifacts, transforming them from functional object into a sculpture defined by its symmetry. The wheels in each corner simultaneously invite the viewer to relate with a familiar object such as a bicycle, and create an inaccessible circuit in which the object becomes obsolete as a vehicle for transportation. The particular brand of bicycles, Forever, which have been mass-manufactured in Shanghai since 1940, serve not only as means of transportation, but also become Chinese cultural artifacts. Ai has centered political dissidence at the core of his practice, as Phillip Tinari describes, to repurpose "the material produce of Chinese culture, [to comment on] the set of skills that are behind those objects."



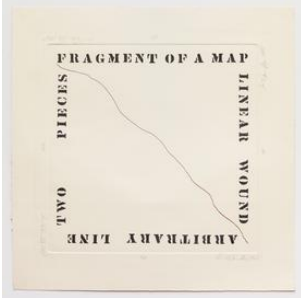
Regina Silveira
To be continued... (Latin American Puzzle), 2001
Lithography and serigraphy
on foam board
29.92h x 22.05w in.

Regina Silveira's *To be continued... (Latin American Puzzle)* constructs a map that eschews the physical geography of Latin America, and instead depicts a variety of national cultures through the reproduction of stereotypical images taken from printed media such as books, postcards, and magazines. Each of the puzzle pieces are the same shape and size, and can be fit together differently when the work is installed. The disjointed pictures on each piece form what the artist considers "a kind of mental map" that comments on "a superficial knowledge of Latin America and suggests a metaphor for the continent's problematic identity, represented visually by chaotic and unattainable connections between the different pieces."



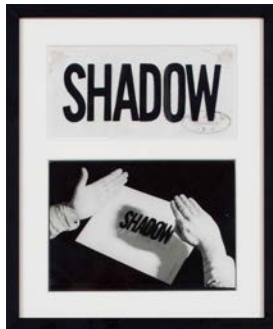
Mona Hatoum
Untitled, 1999
Mixed media
13.5h x 8.75w in.

In *Untitled*, Mona Hatoum personalizes global diaspora by tracing her flight paths between her native Beirut and her adopted London, weaving her own hair into paper to create subtle lines. The cartographic stitches illuminate the links between her own DNA and the journeys on which she and many others have embarked leaving their homeland and moving across nations, bending notions such as country and identity. Hatoum expanded upon her personal mapping in 2010, in *Interior/Exterior Landscape*, when she embroidered the flight routes between all of the countries she had ever visited with hair on a pillowcase as part of the room-sized installation.



Luis Camnitzer
Fragment of a Map, 1968
 Etching on paper
 23.8h x 23.5w in.

In Luis Camnitzer's etching *Fragment of Map*, a line divides the artwork's surface diagonally, and text runs along each of the four edges so that each border of the paper suggests different interpretations for the same line. This etching was done at a time when Camnitzer was part of The New York Graphic Workshop, a group that he co-founded with Lilliana Porter and Guillermo Castillo (b.1939 – d.1999), to expand a traditional medium such as painting into exercises in conceptual art-making. This work embodies Camnitzer's ability to use language as a primary medium, a defining characteristic of his practice, and points to the possibility of multiple meanings of a single object or phrase suggesting how reality can be defined by ambiguity.



Valie Export
Shadow, 1970
 Silver gelatin vintage print and ink
 on paper
 2.95h x 4.13w in.

For Valie Export, whose work is dominated by Feminist concerns that initially responded to the misogyny of the art of the Viennese actionists, the inclusion of her own body is a means of expressing her autonomy. In *Shadow* the shade cast by her right hand looms over the word "SHADOW," thus performing the action expressed by the central text. Export considers the body to be "predestined as a medium of exploration of social reality," and she considers "the strength of the female body: to be able to express directly without meditation [...] without having to rely on the written word" which she notes has historically been "manipulated by men." Export also includes the transparent paper on which the words SHADOW is printed. Her artist stamp is used on the reverse side of the paper, so that it shows through, but appears backwards. The inverted echo of text, functions like an additional shadow, an action that questions the very concept represented in this work.



Hans-Peter Feldmann
Two Girls with Shadow, 2004
 Silver gelatin print
 37.19h x 25.13w in.

In *Two Girls with Shadow*, Hans-Peter Feldmann used a found photograph depicting two girls, and carefully removed the silhouette of one, leaving both of their shadows. The girl to the left reaches out as if to touch the girl on the right, but her body has been replaced by a void, suggesting an illusion based on the presence of absence. The action of removing a subject sheds sentimentality and depersonalizes intimate images, enforcing Ruth Horak's notion that "each of the photographs reproduced by Feldmann was once overflowing with life. Even the simplest of them contain any number of stories, and yet they have been made anonymous by their publication in an alien context, by the passage of time."

Second Floor Gallery



Luis Camnitzer
Left: *En este borde es 0.000041351351*, 1973
Graphite on paper
30h x 22.25w in.

Right: *Unknotted Self-Portrait*, 1978
Graphite on paper
22.38h x 25.75w in.

In the drawing *En este borde es 0.000041351351* Luis Camnitzer anchors the center of the work with a compass, and indicates to the viewer the minuscule change in time that occurs in the 22 inches of space between the West and East borders of the paper. The text on the left reads “On this border it is 0.000041351351 seconds earlier than on the opposite border,” and the other side states that it is 0.000041351351 later. Camnitzer alludes to arbitrary human construction of time zones while simultaneously pointing to the abstract relationship between time and distance.

The image in *Unknotted Self-Portrait* is constructed through repeatedly cross-hatched lines, which become denser near the center of the work to create a curved line. Near the bottom of the work, the words “Unknotted Self-Portrait” are written in negative space so that the title and the subject are reinforced by text. Camnitzer’s abstract form, ostensibly a self-portrait, comes to resemble a topographical landmass, possibly a map of the artist himself.



Lorna Simpson
The Car, 1995
Serigraph on felt in 13 parts
34h x 26w in.
Edition of 3

Lorna Simpson invokes personal memory in her work *The Car* by pairing an architectural image printed on 12 felt panels showing an arched plaza, with a narrative describing in the first-person, an unseen sexual encounter in a public space. Holland Cotter has suggested that like much of Simpson’s work, her cityscape images comment on racial disparity in the United States, and notes the importance that “the series was made at the height of the AIDS crisis, a calamity that carried off friends of Ms. Simpson’s and took a huge toll on African-American men and women in the city.” While the relationship between the experience described and the represented space is not clear, their juxtaposition points to how intimate personal memories are often associated with public consciousness and spaces, particularly when related to events that are cornerstones of collective memory.



Siah Armajani
Written Berlin, Tomb for Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Walter Benjamin
2014–2015
Graphite and ink on mylar
36h x 227.5w in.

Siah Armajani’s 19-foot drawing *Written Berlin, Tomb for Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Walter Benjamin* pays tribute to philosopher Walter Benjamin (b.1892 – d.1940) and the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (b.1906 – d.1945), both of whom died during the time of the repressive National Socialist Party’s rule of Germany. The work is part of Armajani’s “Tomb Series,” which honors twenty-five philosophers, activists, poets, and critical writers who have been foundational voices to his art and ideology. In the drawing, Armajani drafted a cityscape of early twentieth century Berlin, interweaving the artist’s own calligraphic translations into Farsi of Benjamin’s memoir, *Berlin Childhood around 1900* (posthumously published in 2006) and the biography *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* by Eric Metaxas (published 2011). Many of the buildings depicted refer to specific locations mentioned in Benjamin’s memoir, such as the Tiergarten, Victory Column, and Imperial Panorama. Others are archetypes of building types of the city around 1900 before the World Wars. Throughout the composition, Armajani draws colorful schematized trees with colored pencil, topped with geographic squares representing their leaves. In *Written Berlin*, Armajani situates the tomb for both Benjamin and Bonhoeffer within a rendition of the historic Brandenburg Gate.



Dennis Oppenheim
Rocked Hand, 1970
Collaged photographs in 9 parts
39.38h x 118.13w in.

Dennis Oppenheim’s *Rocked Hand* exemplifies the artist’s use of his own body in earth art and performance. The stills, from a film of the same name, document the action described in an accompanying text that reads, “One hand slowly covers the other with rocks weighing it down. The body splits in two, as the right hand renders the left invisible - blending it into the surroundings.” Oppenheim used his right hand to place rocks on his left until the latter is completely covered, virtually indistinguishable from the rocky ground on which it lays. The eight individual moments trace the passage of time through actions, as well as the physical movement of earth as a form of erasure and disappearance.



Robert Longo
Study for Ozymandias
(Reclining Head), 2004
Ink and charcoal on vellum
11.5h x 12w in.

In his charcoal drawing *Head*, Robert Longo depicts the fragmented statue of the ancient Egyptian king Ozymandias. The drawing makes reference to the sonnet, *Ozymandias* (c.1817) by the English romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (b.1792 – d.1822). In the poem, Shelley describes hearing from a traveller about an old fragmented statue in the desert accompanied by an inscription that reads “My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: / Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!” While the epitaph on the statue boasts of great accomplishments, the land around the statue is now desolate. The reference to this canonical poem, conflated with a sculpture depicted as a ruin embodies the erosion of history and memory in the midst of a changing world. For Longo, who trained as a sculptor, drawing is a sculptural process. In his words, “I always feel like I’m carving the image out rather than painting the image.”



Ana Mendieta
Encantación a Olokún-Yemayá
(Incantation to Olokun-Yemaya)
1977
Lifetime color photograph
20h x 13.25w in.

Ana Mendieta excavated her human form into earth to create one of her most well-known performance and photo-documentation series, “Silueta Series” (1973–80), including *Encantación a Olokún-Yemayá (Incantation to Olokun-Yemaya)*. The work is an emblematic example of her attempt to search for identity. The Cuban-born Mendieta stated that her “exploration through my art of the relationship between myself and nature has been a clear result of my having been torn from my homeland during my adolescence. The making of my silueta in nature keeps (make) the transition between my homeland and my new home. [...] Although the culture in which I live is part of me, my roots and cultural identity are a result of my Cuban heritage.” The “Siluetas,” which were all executed between Iowa and Mexico, make ceremonial reference to the gods and goddesses of the religious practice Santería, including the great mother of the sea, *Yemayá*, and her mother, *Olokún*.

About the Artists

Ai Weiwei (b.1957) is Chinese born and lives and works in Beijing. **Siah Armajani** (b.1939) was born in Iran and moved to the United States in 1960 to attend Macalester College in Minnesota, where he continues to live and work. **Luis Camnitzer** (b.1937) is a German-born Uruguayan artist and writer who has lived and works in New York since 1964. **Valie Export** (b.1940) born Waltraud Lehner in Linz, Austria, and adopting the name Valie Export, in 1967, lives and works in Austria. **Hans-Peter Feldmann** (b.1941) is German-born and lives and works in Dusseldorf, Germany. **Mona Hatoum** (b.1952) born into a Palestinian family in Beirut, Lebanon, lives and works in London and Berlin. **Robert Longo** (b.1953) was born in Brooklyn, NY, and lives and works in New York. **Ana Mendieta** (b.1948 – d.1985) was born in Havana, Cuba, and moved to Iowa at age 12. She lived and worked in New York until her death. **Dennis Oppenheim** (b.1938 – d.2011) was born in Washington, and lived and worked in New York from 1968 until his death. **Regina Silveira** (b.1939) was born in Porto Alegre, Brazil and is currently based in São Paulo. **Lorna Simpson** (b.1960) was born, and continues to live and work in, Brooklyn, NY.