



MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM

NEWS RELEASE

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**MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM TO PRESENT FIRST MAJOR HISTORICAL SURVEY OF
ART OF THE 1990s**

*Exhibition will feature more than 60 works in a range of media by 45 artists including
Doug Aitken, Mark Dion, Ellen Gallagher, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Glenn Ligon, Sharon Lockhart,
Julie Mehretu, Prema Murthy, Shirin Neshat, Catherine Opie, Gabriel Orozco, Diana Thater,
Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Kara Walker*

*Exhibition is largest and most ambitious to date in Museum's Contemporary Art Program;
debuts at MAM before embarking on national tour*

MONTCLAIR, NJ, July 21, 2014—Beginning February 8, 2015, the Montclair Art Museum will present ***Come as You Are: Art of the 1990s***, the first major museum survey to examine the art of this pivotal decade in its historical context. The exhibition showcases approximately 65 works by 45 artists born or practicing in the United States—including Doug Aitken, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Glenn Ligon, Julie Mehretu, Prema Murthy, Shirin Neshat, Catherine Opie, Gabriel Orozco, Diana Thater, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Kara Walker—and will comprise installations, paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, photography, video, and digital art. *Come as You Are* will focus on three principal themes: the “identity politics” debates, the digital revolution, and globalization, and will explore a range of geopolitical milestones and social issues from 1989 to 2001—from the fall of the Berlin Wall to 9/11—through the perspective of artists working at that time. *Come as You Are* will be on view at MAM February 8–May 17, 2015, and will then travel to Telfair Museums in Savannah, GA; the University of Michigan Museum of Art; and the Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin.

Come as You Are is the largest and most ambitious exhibition presented by the Montclair Art Museum's Contemporary Art Program since it was established in 2010, and is organized by Alexandra Schwartz, the first curator of contemporary art at MAM. MAM is developing a fully illustrated catalogue for *Come as You Are*, co-published by the University of California Press. It will be the first comprehensive publication on the art of the 1990s to date and will lay groundwork for future research and study of both the works included in the exhibition and the period as a whole.

“The Montclair Art Museum is thrilled to present this unprecedented exhibition, which so powerfully brings into focus the role of contemporary art in reflecting the tremendous societal shifts of the 1990s,” said the Museum's director, Lora Urbanelli. “*Come as You Are* will underscore the interplay between MAM's historical and contemporary collections, and the growth of our Contemporary Art Program. That program builds on the Museum's roots established by one of MAM's founders—William T.

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Evans—who was committed to collecting early 20th-century works, which were the contemporary art of his time. We look forward to bringing to light for our audiences the tremendous impact the 1990s had on the art world and our lives today.”

“*Come as You Are* writes a history of the 90s through the lens of the visual arts,” said Alexandra Schwartz, curator of contemporary art at MAM. “Where we are today as a culture was, in many ways, defined by the 1990s, and the issues these artists confronted then are still very much in play now. We hope to ignite a conversation about the 1990s—about the art, about the social and political concerns that these artists faced and addressed, about where technology is leading us. Visitors should emerge from this exhibition with a better understanding of why this was such a watershed decade.”

Exhibition Themes and Highlights

Come as You Are refers to the 1992 song by Nirvana, which was an anthem for the decade. Each of the artists featured in the exhibition came to the fore of the contemporary art scene during the 1990s, and their work sparked intense debates—particularly concerning issues of gender, sexuality, race, and class—that continue to inform public discourse today. *Come as You Are* will explore these artists’ very different approaches and responses to the political and societal forces that pervaded this critical period.

The exhibition will also reveal the diverse ways in which the events and developments of the 1990s redefined and shaped contemporary approaches to artistic practice. *Come as You Are* will look at the dramatic changes in the nature of the art world itself, including the ongoing culture wars, issues of artistic freedom and censorship, the impact of new media and the emergence of video, sound, and digital art, the expansion of the global art market, and the explosion of art fairs and biennials. It will also investigate the art world’s increasing heterogeneity as artists of color, women artists, and LGBT artists attained increased prominence.

Highlights include:

- **Mark Dion** – *Department of Marine Animal Identification of the City of San Francisco (Chinatown Division)* (1998), an installation based on the artist’s research, conducted with a team of collaborators, on the biological and geographic origins of the fish sold in San Francisco’s Chinatown. The installation takes the form of a laboratory—featuring fish samples, research files, and furniture—and *Come as You Are* marks the first time the installation has been exhibited since it was made.
- **Felix Gonzalez-Torres** – “*Untitled*” (*Portrait of Dad*) (1991), a monumental candy spill work that explores the paradoxical strength and fragility of the human body, in both sickness and health. The piece, weighing 175 pounds—the average weight of a healthy male—invites visitors to take a piece of candy; as they do so, the sculpture gradually diminishes.

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- **Julie Mehretu** – *Untitled* (2000), a set of layered, dizzyingly complex images of contemporary urbanism that evoke cities and cultures around the globe and combine elements of geometric abstraction with references to maps, landscapes, and aspects of popular culture. These drawings are some of the artist’s earliest such works, and serve as prime examples of how, at the turn of the 21st century, artists began integrating new media technologies—in Mehretu’s case, digital rendering technologies—into traditional fine art practices.
- **Prema Murthy** – *Bindi Girl* (1999), an Internet-based work critiquing stereotypes of South Asian women in the mass media. The piece juxtaposes the Bindi Girl—an avatar of a South Asian woman—against Indian music as the girl enacts a series of provocative poses, playing on the inherent and perceived eroticism of South Asian fashion and beauty traditions.
- **Diana Thater** – *Ginger Kittens* (1994), a digital video work that presents scenes of a lush field of sunflowers and celebrates the natural landscape through the lens of digital technologies. One of an influential group of artists to emerge in Los Angeles in the late 1980s, Thater became an innovator in the use of digital video, often within unconventional spaces. This work is installed differently each time it is exhibited.
- **Kara Walker** – *Untitled* (1993–94), a cut paper-on-canvas work that draws upon 18th-century silhouette portraits and scrutinizes the horrific acts of violence to which enslaved African Americans were regularly subjected. This early work reflects a pivotal moment in the artist’s career, when she began creating mural-like compositions cut from black paper and affixed to canvas or directly to a white wall.

The Artists

Doug Aitken (born 1968, USA)
Laylah Ali (born 1968, USA)
Janine Antoni (born 1964, Bahamas)
Aziz + Cucher (Anthony Aziz, b. 1961 USA and Sammy Cucher, b. 1958 Peru)
Alex Bag (born 1969, USA)
Matthew Barney (born 1967, USA)
Michael Ray Charles (born 1967, USA)
Mark Dion (born 1961, USA)
Jeanne Dunning (born 1960, USA)
Andrea Fraser (born 1965, USA)
Ellen Gallagher (born 1965, USA)
Felix Gonzalez-Torres (born 1957 Cuba - died 1996 USA)
JODI (Joan Heemskerck, b. 1968 Netherlands and Dirk Paesmans, b. 1965 Belgium)

Glenn Kaino (born 1972, USA)
Karen Kilimnik (born 1955, USA)
Byron Kim (born 1961, USA)
Nikki S. Lee (born 1970, South Korea)
Glenn Ligon (born 1960, USA)
Sharon Lockhart (born 1964, USA)
Daniel Joseph Martinez (born 1957, USA)
Julie Mehretu (born 1970, Ethiopia)
Mariko Mori (born 1967, Japan)
Vik Muniz (born 1961, Brazil)
Prema Murthy (born 1969, USA)
Mark Napier (born 1961, USA)
Shirin Neshat (born 1957, Iran)
Keith + Mendi Obadike (born 1973, USA)
Manuel Ocampo (born 1965, Philippines)
Catherine Opie (born 1961, USA)

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Gabriel Orozco (born 1962, Mexico)
Pepón Osorio (born 1955, Puerto Rico)
Laura Owens (born 1970, USA)
Jorge Pardo (born 1963, Cuba)
Jennifer Pastor (born 1965, USA)
Elizabeth Peyton (born 1965, USA)
Jason Rhoades (1965-2006, USA)
Beverly Semmes (born 1958, USA)
Shahzia Sikander (born 1969, Pakistan)

Gary Simmons (born 1964, USA)
Frances Stark (born 1967, USA)
Diana Thater (born 1962, USA)
Rirkrit Tiravanija (born 1961, Argentina)
Mark Tribe (born 1966, USA)
Kara Walker (born 1969, USA)
Fred Wilson (born 1954, USA)
Andrea Zittel (born 1965, USA)
Marina Zurkow (born 1962, USA)

Exhibition Catalogue and Programming

The exhibition will be accompanied by the definitive catalogue on the art of the 1990s to date. Co-published by the University of California Press and the Montclair Art Museum, it will include four overview essays by exhibition curator Alexandra Schwartz and seven short, thematic essays by some of today's foremost contemporary art historians. Additionally, the catalogue will contain a comprehensive chronology of the decade's key artistic, political, and cultural events and an extensive bibliography. It will be available in The Store at MAM for \$39.95. Hardcover: 8 x 10 inches, 246 pages, 94 color illustrations.

MAM will offer a wide variety of public and family programs for all ages in connection with the exhibition. More information on public programs will become available in the coming months. For updates, please visit the MAM website at montclairartmuseum.org.

The Museum is open the first Thursday of the month (October –June) from 5 to 9 p.m., with free admission, a full-service bar with special First Thursday Night prices, and a variety of dynamic art activities. Offerings change on a monthly basis, providing something new to see and do at every First Thursday Night. February–May will include programs and activities specifically geared to *Come as You Are*. Free First Thursday Nights are offered in partnership with Pig & Prince Restaurant and Gastro-Lounge. See montclairartmuseum.org for more details.

Exhibition Website

The Museum will maintain a site dedicated to the exhibition for journalists seeking further information, including a checklist, images, and related events and programs. Please visit montclairartmuseum.org.

Group Tours

Group tours may be booked by calling 973-259-5136 or by emailing tours@montclairartmuseum.org.

Exhibition Support

Come as You Are: Art of the 1990s is made possible with generous grants from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund.

Major funding provided by the Susan V. Bershada Charitable Fund, Inc., Holly English and Fred Smagorinsky, Tracy Higgins and James Leitner, Karen G. Mandelbaum, Sarah Peter, Ann and Mel Schaffer, Denise and Ira Wagner, Margo and Frank Walter, and the Judith Targan Endowment Fund for Museum Publications.

Additional support is provided by the Exhibition Leadership Committee: James Cohan Gallery, New York/Shanghai; Eileen and Michael Cohen; the Barbara Lee Family Foundation; Metro Pictures, New York; and Andrea Rosen Gallery.

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Travel Schedule

Montclair Art Museum

Montclair, NJ
February 8–May 17, 2015

Telfair Museums

Savannah, GA
June 12–September 20, 2015

University of Michigan Museum of Art

Ann Arbor, MI
October 17, 2015–January 31, 2016

Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin

Austin, TX
February 21–May 15, 2016

About the Curator

Alexandra Schwartz is the first curator of contemporary art at the Montclair Art Museum, where her exhibitions have included the annual New Directions exhibition series of solo artists (established 2011), *New Media/New Forms* (2012), *Come as You Are: Art of the 1990s* (2015), and the forthcoming *New Century Modern: Contemporary Artists Examine Design* (2017). Previously she was on the curatorial staff of the Museum of Modern Art, where her exhibitions included *Mind and Matter: Alternative Abstractions, 1940s to Now* and *Modern Women: Single Channel* at MoMA PS1. She is the author of *Ed Ruscha's Los Angeles* (MIT Press, 2010), the co-editor of *Modern Women: Women Artists at The Museum of Modern Art* (MoMA, 2010), and the editor of *Leave Any Information at the Signal: Writings, Interviews, Bits, Pages* by Ed Ruscha (MIT Press, 2002). Schwartz has taught at Columbia University, the University of Michigan, Montclair State University, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and MoMA; she received a B.A. from Harvard University and an M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan.

The MAM Contemporary Art Program

From its beginning, in 1914, the Montclair Art Museum has offered exhibitions and programs that explore a deep and wide-ranging view of American and Native American art, from the past to the present day. The launch of the Museum's Contemporary Art Program, in 2010, with the hiring of the Museum's first curator of contemporary art, Alexandra Schwartz, provides MAM an opportunity to showcase dynamic contemporary work and expand the Museum's contemporary art holdings. A main feature of the MAM program is to explore the interplay between historical and contemporary art to enrich our understanding of the larger historical context in which art is created, presenting work that is both challenging and accessible. The program also builds on the Museum's roots of collecting contemporary art, which began when one of MAM's founders, William T. Evans, donated a large portion of his collection—at the time one of the world's largest private collections of American art—to the Museum when it opened 100 years ago.

A key component of the Museum's Contemporary Art Program is its New Directions exhibition series of solo artists, established in 2011. Artists featured in this series include Marina Zurkow, Saya Woolfalk, Jean Shin, and Spencer Finch.

About the Museum

The Montclair Art Museum, a notable, community-based institution with an international reputation, boasts a renowned collection of American and Native American art that uniquely highlights art making in the United States over the last three hundred years. The collection includes more than 12,000 objects: paintings, prints, original works on paper, photographs, and sculpture by American artists from the 18th century to the present, as well as traditional and contemporary Native American art and artifacts representing the cultural developments of peoples from all of the major American Indian regions. The Museum's education programs serve a wide public and bring artists, performers, and scholars to the Museum on a regular basis.

MAM's Yard School of Art is the leading regional art school, offering a multitude of comprehensive courses for children, teens, adults, seniors, and professional artists. The Yard School was recently recognized in the Discover Jersey Arts People's Choice Awards 2012 as the Favorite Place to Take a Kid's and Adult Art Class.

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The Montclair Art Museum is located at 3 South Mountain Avenue in Montclair, N.J. Information and directions are available on the Museum website, montclairartmuseum.org, or by calling 973-746-5555. MAM is open Wednesdays through Sundays, Noon – 5 p.m., and on the first Thursday night of the month (October–June), from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. It is closed on Mondays, Tuesdays, and major holidays. Museum admission is \$12 for nonmember adults, \$10 for senior citizens and students with I.D., and free for members and children under 12. Free First Thursday Nights and Free First Fridays are free for everyone. The Store at MAM is open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and has extended hours until 9 p.m. on Free First Thursday Nights.

All Museum programs are made possible, in part, by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, and by funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, Carol and Terry Wall/The Vance Wall Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and Museum members.

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