

Exhibitions & Publications

EXHIBITIONS

Furniture at the Yale Center for British Art: A Selection

JULY 22, 2021 – JUNE 12, 2022

The Yale Center for British Art strives to retain the vision of its creator, the renowned architect Louis I. Kahn (1901–1974), through the conservation of the building’s architecture, lighting fixtures, and original furnishings. Since the museum opened to the public in 1977, much of the original furniture has remained in use. This exhibition offered an opportunity to view and consider the YCBA’s furnishings as primary objects – even as works of art. The selection of furniture was displayed in the museum’s Lower Court, where it could be seen by visitors outside the building even when the museum was closed. By taking these objects out of their functional role in the museum and displaying them surrounded by concrete and glass, the exhibition highlighted their modernist design, construction, and beauty.

Furniture at the Yale Center for British Art: A Selection was curated by Rachel Hellerich, Senior Museum Preparator.

The View From Here

AUGUST 16 – OCTOBER 10, 2021

This exhibition highlighted the work of twelve student-photographers from greater New Haven who participated in “The View From Here: Accessing Art Through Photography,” an inaugural four-month photography program offered by the Yale Center for British Art and the Lens Media Lab at the Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, Yale University, in spring 2021.

The images created by the program participants included cityscapes, landscapes, and portraits that offered a unique view of individual experience while also weaving together a story of collective isolation. Reflecting on the experience of the pandemic and other challenges, their photographs and personal statements spoke to community, family, and a shared sense of place.

The exhibition was the first to feature art on the museum facade. A video display in the High Street windows was visible every evening from sunset to midnight, making the closed museum a space that opened a new view onto the city.

The program “The View From Here: Accessing Art Through Photography” was developed, organized, and taught by Martina Droth, Deputy Director and Chief Curator; Paul Messier, Pritzker Director of the Lens Media Lab and chair of the Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, Yale University; and James Vanderberg, Educator, High School, College, University, and Community Outreach; with Robert Hixon, Senior Imaging Systems Specialist; and YCBA photographers Richard Caspole and Bernie Staggers.

The exhibition *The View From Here* was developed by the program organizers and Dylan Vitale, Museum Technician; with graphic design by Melissa Leone (Yale BA 2021) and projection design by Christopher Evans (Yale MFA 2020).

Bridget Riley: Perceptual Abstraction

MARCH 3–JULY 24, 2022

Over a seven-decade career, Bridget Riley (b. 1931) has used color, line, and geometric pattern to explore the dynamic nature of visual perception in paintings, drawings, and screen prints. She first achieved international prominence in the early 1960s with her distinctive black-and-white paintings, their rhythmic lines and curves appearing to vibrate across the canvas. Since then, Riley has relied on deceptively simple shapes to startling effect. Working in series, the artist gradually expanded her palette, introducing gray tonal variations before shifting to vivid color juxtapositions. Riley’s arresting paintings harness the disruptive and harmonious relationships among color, line, and form with compositions of remarkable complexity and vibrancy.

For the largest survey of Riley’s work in the United States in twenty years, the artist selected more than fifty works, which were displayed on two floors of the museum. Assembling Riley’s most iconic paintings alongside rarely seen works, the exhibition traced the evolution of her deep engagement with the fundamentals of visual perception. Riley also selected two sketches from Yale’s collections to hang alongside her work: an oil study by John Constable (1776–1837) from the YCBA and a watercolor by Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) from the Yale University Art Gallery.

Bridget Riley: Perceptual Abstraction was conceived by the artist in collaboration with Courtney J. Martin (Yale PhD 2009), Paul Mellon Director, working with Maryam Ohadi-Hamadani, former Postdoctoral Research Associate, with the assistance of Martina Droth, Deputy Director and Chief Curator; Charlotte Lefland, Senior Curatorial Assistant, Prints and Drawings; and Rachel Stratton, former Postdoctoral Research Associate.

Marc Quinn: History Painting +

MAY 20 – OCTOBER 16, 2022

Working across a range of media and materials, artist Marc Quinn (b. 1964) describes himself as a “chronicler” who confronts “what it means to be living now.” The exhibition *Marc Quinn: History Painting +* interspersed Quinn’s works among the museum’s spaces and collections to introduce a visual dialogue that brings history into the present.

Visitors to the museum encountered Quinn’s groundbreaking sculpture *Self 1991* (1991) on view in the Entrance Court. This arresting sculpture, made from ten pints of the artist’s frozen blood, relies on constant refrigeration to maintain its form. While the traditional portrait bust depicts the sitter as timeless or immortal, Quinn’s sculptural self-portrait evokes human fragility and physical deterioration.

In the museum's galleries, four large-scale paintings from Quinn's "History Painting" series were displayed among historical works by Thomas Gainsborough, Joshua Reynolds, and J. M. W. Turner. In this series, Quinn creates photorealist canvases that reimagine news photographs obtained from wire services. Each canvas is finished with gestural overpainting using the same colors with which the picture was made. In contrast to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history paintings and grand manner portraits in the YCBA collection, Quinn's history paintings foreground civilians engaged in protest around the world.

The exhibition also featured *Thames River Water Atlas* (2017), which Quinn conceived as an artist's book. The work considers humanity's relationship with and impact on the environment. It incorporates traces of detritus found at the edges of the Thames and impressions of water drains in London's streets, creating a vivid contrast with the land and seascapes on display at the YCBA.

Marc Quinn: History Painting + was organized in collaboration with the artist and curated by Martina Droth, Deputy Director and Chief Curator.

PUBLICATIONS

Bridget Riley: Perceptual Abstraction

To accompany the exhibition *Bridget Riley: Perceptual Abstraction*, the YCBA published its first born-digital catalogue. This publication is available online at bridget-riley.publications.britishart.yale.edu.

The exhibition and catalogue both explore Riley's long and prolific career – her early, energetic black-and-white work, her experimentation with gray, and her signature innovations with color and arresting patterns. The British artist's influential presence in the United States began in 1965 with the inclusion of her works in the Museum of Modern Art's pivotal exhibition *The Responsive Eye*, and it continues to this day.

Essays by artist Bridget Riley and former Postdoctoral Research Associates Maryam Ohadi-Hamadani and Rachel Stratton. Foreword by Courtney J. Martin (Yale PhD 2009), Paul Mellon Director. Published March 2022.

The Notebooks and Drawings of Louis I. Kahn

The Notebooks and Drawings of Louis I. Kahn, originally published in 1962 and long out of print, was the first book on the architect to feature Kahn's images and words – and it was Kahn's favorite book on his work. It includes his early sketches, reproduced at full size, from his European travels in the 1950s as well as renderings of the designs for several of his notable buildings, along with unpublished speeches and excerpts from lectures, radio broadcasts, and other sources.

In this magnificent sleeve-encased two-book set, a facsimile of the original publication is accompanied by an illustrated Reader's Guide that features essays and commentary by writers including Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Paul Goldberger; scholars Mark Gunderson and William Whitaker; Courtney J. Martin (Yale PhD 2009), Paul Mellon Director of the YCBA; fellow architects such as Tadao Ando, Frank Gehry, and Denise Scott Brown; and Louis Kahn's three children: Nathaniel Kahn, Sue Ann Kahn, and Alexandra Tyng. These contributions contextualize the enormous impact and continuing legacy of one of the twentieth century's most influential architects.

Created by Richard Saul Wurman. Published by the Yale Center for British Art in association with Yale University Press, in collaboration with Designers & Books, April 2022.