

EDUCATION GUIDE

MILDRED LANE KEMPER ART MUSEUM



ON THE MARGINS

February 8 - April 21, 2008

About this Guide

This guide is designed as a companion to the special exhibition *On the Margins*. Its primary aim is to provide a starting point for open discovery, facilitating the process of looking at and making meaning of the art in this exhibition.

In conjunction with the *On the Margins* exhibition, the Kemper Art Museum is offering a school and youth educational program that closely examines the visual language of contemporary artworks on display. Participants will explore a wide range of artistic strategies, including printmaking, collage, sculpture, video, and multimedia installations.

Special Art:21 Screenings

As part of this education program, the Museum is also collaborating with the PBS series *Art:21, Art in the Twenty-First Century*, to offer special screenings of episodes from the series that relate to the work of Do-Ho Suh and Laylah Ali, two of the artists in this exhibition.

Art:21: Art in the Twenty-First Century is a groundbreaking documentary television series focusing exclusively on contemporary visual art by artists working in the United States today. The series provides behind-the-scenes views of the artists in their studios, homes, and communities. The artists speak directly to the audience, in their own words, about how, why, and what they create. In conjunction with this video series, PBS offers a range of teacher resources and lesson plans to support classroom learning.

art:21
ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

This guide was prepared by Michael Murawski, coordinator of education and public programs at the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum. The exhibition overview and information on individual works of art are based on the catalog introduction by Carmon Colangelo and essays by Paul Krainak and Eleanor Heartney, unless otherwise noted. Special thanks to Elissa Weichbrodt, research assistant for this exhibition.

Cover images - clockwise from upper left:

Martha Rosler, *Gladiators*, from the series *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful*. *New Series*, 2004. Photomontage, 20 x 24 inches. Courtesy of Mitchell-Innes and Nash.

Laylah Ali, *Untitled*, 2000. Gouache on paper, 13 x 19 inches. Private collection. Image courtesy of 303 Gallery, New York, copyright of the artist.

Do-Ho Suh, detail, *Metal Jacket*, 1992/2001. 3000 dog tags on U.S. military jacket fabric liner, ed. 6, 60 x 50 x 15 inches. Collection of Danielle and David Garek. Photo courtesy of the artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York.

Enrique Chagoya, detail, *The Ghost of Liberty*, 2004. Color lithograph and chine collé, ed. 30, 11 1/2 x 85 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Shark's Ink Press.

On the Margins

Curated by Carmon Colangelo

To be “on the margins” presumes that a center exists. Traditionally, margins of society have been places of disenfranchisement and injustice, while control is consolidated in the metaphorical center. Today’s mass media appears to diffuse this concentration of power by the excess of information and images made ever more ubiquitous through new technologies.

The works in *On the Margins* question both the veracity and the effectiveness of this engorged repository, offering alternative and meaningful ways of thinking about both local and global conditions. Bringing together an international group of contemporary artists, many living as foreigners away from their countries of birth, this exhibition suggests that margins can be understood as a place of insight and regenerative power.

Through a wide range of artistic media—from prints and photomontages to videos and multimedia installations—the works in the exhibition offer an aesthetic processing of war and injustice. Many of the artists reconstitute images of conflict and violence disseminated by the media to reveal the impossibility of their presumed objectivity. Still, the works in this exhibition are not presented under any restrictive definition of “activist” art, but rather are offered for their diversity of strategies and effects, ranging from the confrontational, to the humorous, to the quietly elegiac.

On the Margins does not invert the dynamics of margin and center, but instead destabilizes this relationship. Rather than numb or enervate, as can the barrage of imagery provided by today’s media, the works collected here stimulate new ways of considering our position as frequent outsiders to disaster and upheaval, opening up possibilities of greater awareness, empathy, and action.

ON THE
MARGINS



Enrique Chagoya, detail, *The Ghost of Liberty*, 2004. Color lithograph and chine collé, ed. 30, 11 1/2 x 85 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Shark's Ink Press.

Enrique Chagoya (American, b. Mexico, 1953)
***The Ghost of Liberty*, 2004**

In *The Ghost of Liberty*, Enrique Chagoya mimics the format of a pre-Columbian codex, a folding book used by the Mayans and Aztecs to record their histories. Playfully pulling together a range of imagery from disparate cultures across the world over the past five hundred years, the work presents alternative versions of accepted historical records.

Chagoya describes his artistic process as “reverse anthropology” or “reverse Western art history.” He explains:

“ Instead of a European artist appropriating artistic expressions by cultures from former colonies, ... I ask the question: What kind of art would have been created if the opposite had happened? ”

(Interview, *Reno News & Review*, Nov. 25, 2004)

We see a string of visual vignettes that incorporate images such as an astronaut, a Jesus-headed dinosaur, toppled Buddha heads, and the Lone Ranger riding in a camel-drawn cart. Presented like a storyboard, this work layers Chagoya’s own imagery with reproductions of Chinese woodblock prints, historical American engravings, and texts in various languages. Both humorous and insightful, the work presents an assemblage of political, religious, and popular culture images that are open to multiple interpretations, and offers no coherent narrative.



Enrique Chagoya, detail, *The Ghost of Liberty*, 2004. Color lithograph and chine collé, ed. 30, 11 1/2 x 85 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Shark's Ink Press.

Laylah Ali (American, b. 1968)

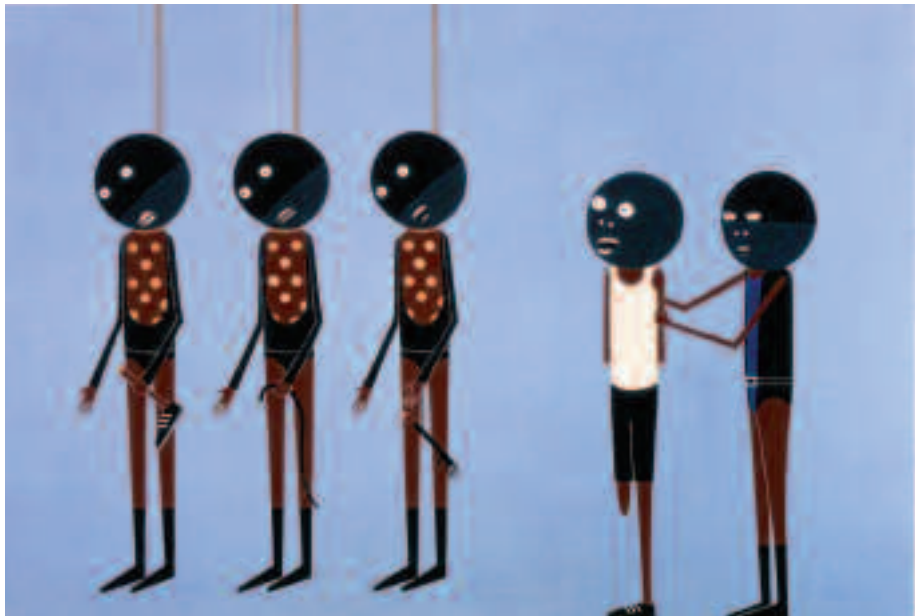
Untitled, 2000

Untitled, 2004

In her simple yet meticulously crafted gouache drawings, Laylah Ali evokes the visual languages of comics, hieroglyphics, and folk art while also exploring the tension between violence, race, and social revolution. Her works are populated by cartoonlike stick figures with oversized spherical heads, often outfitted with objects and articles of clothing that distinguish these otherwise seemingly generic figures.

With her untitled work from 2000, we see a one-legged figure held in the custody of a guard while he looks fearfully at the bodies of three other figures hanging by their necks. These hanging figures hold items in their hands, including what look like the onlooker's missing limbs—and we are aware of their fates only because their round heads have been given a three-quarter turn.

In another untitled work, from 2004, two apparently female figures stand on either side of a strange form that has sprouted a head with an expression possibly suggesting some kind of violence or torture. "This guy here is obviously extremely compromised," states Ali, describing the central figure in this work. "He's got these growths coming out of his abdominal area, which interest me a lot because it's not clear whether he's been stuck with them, or . . . if they're something that the other figures are afraid of, or that they've done to him" (Art:21).



Laylah Ali, *Untitled*, 2000. Gouache on paper, 13 x 19 inches. Private collection. Image courtesy of 303 Gallery, New York, copyright of the artist.



Laylah Ali, *Untitled*, 2004. Gouache on paper, 19¹/₂ x 27³/₄ inches. Williams College Museum of Art, Museum purchase, Kathryn Hurd Fund, in honor of Linda Shearer, Director 1989-2004. Image courtesy of 303 Gallery, New York, copyright of the artist.

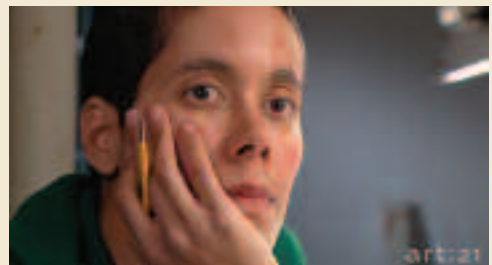
art:21 Highlight

ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

“When people say violence, oftentimes we think of the violent act. In my earlier work, it was more about the moment that somebody was getting strangled or hanged, whereas now that rarely happens. There’s very little concentration on the moment where the violence occurs. I’m more interested in what happens before and after, and examining that.”

—Laylah Ali

Learn more at: www.pbs.org/art21/artists/ali



Martha Rosler (American, b. 1943)
Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful, New Series, 2004

The photomontages by Martha Rosler in this exhibition are a continuation of her project *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful*, which was created between 1967 and 1972,



Martha Rosler, *Lounging Woman*, from *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful, New Series, 2004*. Photomontage, 24 x 20 inches. Courtesy of Mitchell-Innes and Nash.

commenting critically on the Vietnam War. The work presented here, beginning in 2004, is a revisitation of the series in which Rosler engages with the current war in Iraq.

Rosler's works visually reconnect two sides of life that have been separated

in the media—distant wars and the living rooms of America. Culled from fashion magazines and news photography, her images starkly juxtapose the domestic luxury of the American home with media photographs of war. The original Vietnam-era series consists of collaged images of burned, wounded, and napalmed children or slaughtered soldiers superimposed onto scenes of picture-perfect suburban homes. The 2004 series incorporates images from the Iraq war of amputee veterans, soldiers in desert garb, and destroyed buildings into generously appointed domestic interiors.

In *Lounging Woman*, a woman dressed in casual chic is so self-absorbed that she is unaware of soldiers roaming through a bombed-out space behind her. In *Gladiators*, an Iraqi search-and-destroy mission bursts through the walls of an upscale living room and point their weapons in our direction. Beyond the window in the background, a detail from an Associated Press photograph shows an actual incident of American soldiers in Iraq outfitted like Roman gladiators.



Martha Rosler, *Gladiators*, from *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful, New Series, 2004*. Photomontage, 20 x 24 inches. Courtesy of Mitchell-Innes and Nash.

Do-Ho Suh (Korean, b. 1962)
Metal Jacket, 1992/2001

Do-Ho Suh's *Metal Jacket* is composed of a collection of military dog tags assembled to form a hollow military uniform. A native of Korea, where military service is compulsory for all young men, Suh was struck by the depersonalization that accompanies the process of turning boys into soldiers. But he also enjoyed the bonding and sense of group solidarity that accompanies that experience.

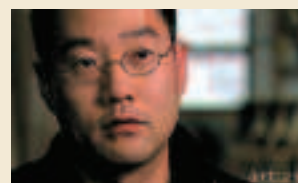


Do-Ho Suh, *Metal Jacket*, 1992/2001. 3000 dog tags on U.S. military jacket fabric liner, ed. 6, 60 x 50 x 15 inches. Collection of Danielle and David Garek. Photo courtesy of the artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York.

Suh's work, in part, translates conceptual ideas about the identity of the soldier into sculptural form. On one hand, as Eleanor Heartney writes, "the tag-covered form might be read as a shroud of the soldiers who have participated and died in military conflicts. Or, on the other hand, it can be seen as an evocation of the sense of selfless collectivity the military is designed to instill. It also embodies a reminder that war requires the assent of the communities that engage in it."

art:21 Highlight
ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

“I became interested in the idea behind the military dog tag. It's a form of identification and it's made out of stainless steel. So it's a permanent material—it will not rust. Each soldier has to carry two dog tags. And when a soldier is killed in battle, one dog tag has to remain on the dead body, and one is taken away by a surviving soldier in order to report the death of that soldier—in order to secure the identity of that soldier.”



—Do-Ho Suh
 Learn more at: www.pbs.org/art21/artists/suh

PODCAST

Check out the Museum's podcast available for this exhibition!

Exhibition Overview: Curator Carmon Colangelo provides an overview of the exhibition, highlighting selected works and providing additional context and commentary.

Subscribe to the Special Exhibitions Podcast at:

<http://kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/podcast.html>

More information about our podcast is available at the Visitor Services Desk.

SCHEDULE A FREE TOUR

To schedule a FREE tour for your group, organization, class, or friends and family, please contact Michael Murawski, coordinator of education and public programs, at murawski@wustl.edu or 314.935.7918.



Do-Ho Suh, detail, *Metal Jacket*, 1992/2001, 3000 dog tags on U.S. military jacket fabric liner, ed. 6, 60 x 50 x 15 inches. Collection of Danielle and David Garek. Photo courtesy of the artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York.

ON THE MARGINS EVENTS AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Lecture: Willie Doherty

Thursday, February 7, 6:30 pm

Steinberg Hall Auditorium

Willie Doherty is an artist from Northern Ireland working in video and photography. A two-time nominee for the Turner prize, Doherty's video piece *Ghost Story* (2007) is included in *On the Margins*.

Artists' Panel: On the Margins

Saturday, February 9, 11 am

COCA (524 Trinity)

Carmon Colangelo, dean of the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts and curator of *On the Margins*, will explore the themes of the exhibition with a panel of artists from the show. Hosted by COCA.

Art:21 Screening, "Protest"

Thursday, February 28, 6 pm

Steinberg Hall Auditorium

In conjunction with the exhibition *On the Margins*, the Museum will be hosting a special screening of the episode "Protest" from Season 4 of the PBS Series *Art:21—Art in the Twenty-first Century*. This episode examines the ways in which contemporary artists challenge war and violence, express outrage, and empathize with the suffering of victims.

New Media Workshop

Wednesday, April 16, 6:30 pm

Kemper Art Museum

The Kemper Art Museum continues its series of workshops focusing on issues in new media art with an in-depth look at Willie Doherty's video *Ghost Story* (2007), on display in the exhibition *On the Margins*.

GENERAL INFORMATION

A stimulating and unique site to experience art, culture, and education in St. Louis, the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum is located on Washington University's Danforth campus near the corner of Skinker & Forsyth Blvds.

FREE and open to the public 11-6 every day except Tuesday; open 11-8 on Friday. Visitor parking available; easy MetroLink access (one block south of Forsyth station). 314.935.4523 kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu

 Washington University in St. Louis
SAM FOX SCHOOL OF DESIGN & VISUAL ARTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Support for *On the Margins* was provided by the Charles and Bunny Burson Art Fund and individual contributors to the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum and the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts.