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Please handle with care.

Dennis Adams
(American, b. 1948)

Patricia Hearst—A thru Z, 1979/90

Serigraphs on paper and galvanized steel box
Collection Museum of Contemporary
Art Chicago, gift of Howard and Donna Stone,
1996.29.a-ee

Dennis Adams enlarged twenty-six images of Patty Hearst, the heiress to the *San Francisco Chronicle's* fortune who was kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army and held for political ransom in 1974. Each photograph appeared in the news either during the fourteen-month-long pursuit of Hearst or in the years after her arrest, trial, and pardon. Adams's reproduction of the images, labeled and arranged from A to Z, documents the media's portrayal of Hearst: first as an upper-class, white, female kidnap victim (box A-D), then as a radicalized urban guerrilla fighter (box E and F), and later as an actress and cause célèbre (box V). The alphabet imposed on the photographs, and the grid in which they are displayed, implies that a larger framework—constituted by communication systems and social hierarchies—structures the various stories the pictures tell about one person.

Think of a recent media story that changed your point of view or affected your opinion. Why did your perspective change? Tell us @MCACChicago.

Bruce Nauman
(American, b. 1941)

Run from Fear, Fun from Rear, 1972

Neon

Collection Museum of Contemporary
Art Chicago, Gerald S. Elliot Collection,
1995.72.a-b

This work audibly buzzes due to the electric current surging through the neon lights. Bruce Nauman used the seductive glow of brightly colored lights to make visible taboo acts or desires repressed in mainstream society, linking sexuality and fear with the metaphor of being “turned on.” Though constructed in the early 1970s, this work is just as meaningful in 2016, when stories in the media about sexual desire, homophobia, or rape and consent routinely reduce complex situations to flashy headlines. By playfully swapping the *R* and *F* to form different but similar-sounding phrases, Nauman emphasized how the manipulation of language can alter meaning and interpretation.

Glenn Ligon
(American, b. 1960)

Runaways, 1993

Lithographs on paper

Collection Museum of Contemporary

Art Chicago, gift of Sandra P. and

Jack Guthman, 2000.12.a-j

During the nineteenth century, slave owners in the United States used runaway posters to track down escaped slaves under the Fugitive Slave Act. Glenn Ligon combined the typography of these ads with illustrations from the abolitionist movement to create this series of prints in the early 1990s, just after the news coverage of the Los Angeles police's assault of Rodney King catalyzed a national dialogue about institutional racism and how depictions in the media sway public opinion.

To generate text for each print, Ligon asked ten friends to describe him as if for a missing person report. Though the institution of slavery no longer exists in the United States, Ligon's work insinuates that the disproportionate policing and imprisonment of black men lives on in both media representations and the US prison system.

Michal Rovner
(Israeli, b. 1957)

Decoy #5A, 1991

Chromogenic development print
Collection Museum of Contemporary
Art Chicago, gift from the Howard
and Donna Stone Collection, 2002.56

Marlene Dumas
(South African, b. 1953)

Man Watching, 2009

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary
Art Chicago, promised gift of the Penny Pritzker
and Bryan Traubert Collection, PG2010.3

Xaviera Simmons
(American, b. 1974)

On Sculpture #2, 2011
Color photograph
Collection Museum of Contemporary
Art Chicago, restricted gift of Emerge,
in honor of Andree Stone, 2012.17

Xaviera Simmons is interested in creating images that require sustained viewing to comprehend their complex visual information. By holding up a torn-out magazine page against a seascape in *On Sculpture #2*, the artist aligned two horizon lines; the strategically layered image disrupts a singular perspective so often privileged in photography. The work suspends various times and places all at once and invites us to navigate multiple, often contradictory, stories and visual landscapes.

The narrative pictured in the interior image remains uncertain: do the people leap into the water for fun, or desperately jump to avoid capture? Like other works in this exhibition, *On Sculpture #2* depicts an intentionally ambiguous visual narrative that brings into conversation the duality of fun and fear, pursuit and play, and the acts of observing and being observed.

R. B. Kitaj
(American, 1932–2007)

The Wording of Police Charges, 1969
Screen print on paper
Collection Museum of Contemporary
Art Chicago, gift of Alvin Haimés, 1979.27.32

Hanging in Chains, 1969
Screen print on paper
Collection Museum of Contemporary
Art Chicago, gift of Alvin Haimés, 1979.27.24

City of Burbank, California, Annual Report, 1969
Screen print on paper
Collection Museum of Contemporary
Art Chicago, gift of Alvin Haimes, 1979.27.28

As the old saying goes, don't judge a book by its cover. Nevertheless, these prints from the series *In Our Time* ask that you take part in this faulty practice. To produce the series, R. B. Kitaj selected the covers of fifty publications that he felt represented the political and social climate of 1969, shaped by the escalating conflict in Southeast Asia, student protests, and civil rights movements around the world. Without prior knowledge of *The Wording of Police Charges*, for example, an instructional guide for police published in England in 1946, or *Hanging in Chains*, a late nineteenth-century study of the history and public spectacle of capital punishment, you must evaluate the texts based only on their appearance. The series highlights the politics of reading—the process of constructing knowledge based on both partial access to information and on preconceived ideas about the world shaped by a particular social and historical period.

Share a photo or screenshot of a publication, website, or other media source that symbolizes our current moment and tell us why you chose it @MCAChicago.

At the end of the exhibition, the curator will select twenty-five submissions to feature on the MCA DNA blog (mcachicago.org/blog).

Carrie Schneider
(American, b. 1979)

Abigail reading Angela Davis (An Autobiography, 1974), from the series Reading Women, 2014

Chromogenic development print

Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche
Gallery, Chicago

In this photograph, New York-based artist Abigail DeVille reads the autobiography of Angela Davis. In the book, Davis reflects on her experiences as a fugitive, prison inmate, and political activist during the 1960s and 1970s. The image is part of a series, *Reading Women*, that Carrie Schneider created by inviting friends to choose a favorite text written by a woman author and pose for portraits in their own apartment or studio. As such, Schneider's series depicts reading as an active, rather than passive, act through which cultural knowledge and histories of resistance are produced and passed on to subsequent generations.

Just to the right of DeVille, another barely visible sitter hints that there is more to the story on view. Framing is a central component of creating a composition in painting or photography. However, to "be framed" is also language that appears in criminal court when an individual is named guilty because of false evidence.

Think of an image in the media or take a photo of one. Who is the intended audience? How does the framing shape the picture's meaning? If you crop the image differently, how does the message change? Share your thoughts @MCAChicago.

Huong Ngo
(American, b. 1979)

Escape Survival Manual, 2004

Photocopy on paper, saddle-stitched; soft cover

Exhibition copy

Collection Museum of Contemporary

Art Chicago, gift of the artist, 2014.255.a-b

Interdisciplinary artist Huong Ngo printed *Escape Survival Manual* on a scale so small that it could be carried at all times. Inside, tiny barely legible instructions illustrate how an insulated textile can be used in order to survive. One drawing, which shows this sheet transformed into an “escape cube,” references the history of art, specifically artists who work in a minimalist style and employ geometric shapes on a large scale. But the manual, in essence, is a portrait of futility: even with the versatile escape pod, the tips for survival prove to be grossly inadequate. Ngo’s book demands close looking and careful handling and prompts us to confront both art and escape plans with a critical eye and sense of humor.

Please handle with care.

Barbara Kruger
(American, b. 1945)

*Untitled (We construct the chorus
of missing persons), 1983*

Gelatin silver mural prints with
painted artist's frame

Collection Museum of Contemporary
Art Chicago, restricted gift of Paul and
Camille Oliver-Hoffman, 1984.22.a-c

Chris Burden
(American, 1946–2015)

Spy Kit, 1979

Radios, magnifying glass, lighter, tin box,
razor blade, wood, and glass vitrine

Collection Museum of Contemporary
Art Chicago, gift of the Lannan Foundation,
1997.26.a–k

Observing others and being watched in return is part of the tacit agreement of sharing public space. In effect, we each become agents of surveillance, as well as subjects of observation. Chris Burden was interested in the relationship between sculpture, the construction of live events, and the impact of social encounters on the body. In *Spy Kit*, he gathered objects and displayed them together as if for a still life. The work invites you to consider how the same act of observation that informs painting and sculpture is central to surveillance and spying.

If you were to create your own spy kit, what would be in it and why? Would it contain rudimentary tools or technologically advanced gadgets? What factors contribute to these decisions? Share your thoughts and photos of your spy kit @MCAChicago.

David Hammons
(American, b. 1943)

Praying to Safety, 1997

Thai bronze statues, string, and safety pin

Collection Museum of Contemporary

Art Chicago, restricted gift of Mr. and Mrs. J. Paul

Beitler, Lindy Bergman, Carol and Douglas Cohen,

Robert and Sylvie Fitzpatrick, Penny Pritzker and

Bryan Traubert, Nancy A. Lauter and Alfred L.

McDougal Charitable Fund, Ed and Jackie Rabin,

Majorie and Louis Susman, and Helyn D.

Goldenberg, 2000.5.a-d

These two Thai Buddhist bronze sculptures bridge artist David Hammons's travels to Asia with his personal interest in the history of African fetish objects known as *minkisi*, which are believed to heal and protect communities. The safety pin that dangles between the sculptures on a fishing line also provides a significant visual metaphor for precariousness: increasingly in this political climate, we live with security measures that shape our personal experiences, often causing us to worship safety, which, much like a god, can't be pinned down. Alternatively, two figures facing one another during an act of prayer provide a powerful symbol of vulnerability. *Praying to Safety* thereby raises several philosophical questions about accountability: for whose safety do we collectively or individually pray and to what end?