



FOCUS

Exhibition Series 2019–20

MODERN ART MUSEUM OF FORT WORTH

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The FOCUS exhibition series is organized by the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and features three solo exhibitions each season. Started in 2005, this series spotlights artists who are making important work that has previously been under-recognized in the Southwest region of the United States. FOCUS is international in scope and presents work across all media, celebrating the art and artists of our time.

Be sure to mark your calendar today and join us at the Modern as we toast cutting-edge contemporary art in our community this season!

Top right: Curator Alison Hearst with artist Njideka Akunyili Crosby at the opening of her FOCUS exhibition in December 2018.

Lower right: Members of the Director's Council at the annual Purchase Meeting.





FOCUS: Martine Gutierrez

November 8, 2019–January 12, 2020

Martine Gutierrez's photographs and videos explore gender, race, class, and sexuality, as well as conventional ideals of beauty and identity as a social construct. Her most ambitious project to date, *Indigenous Woman*, 2018, is a glossy, 146-page publication that closely mirrors Andy Warhol's *Interview* magazine in form and production. Here, Gutierrez assumes the role of editor, writer, model, designer, ad executive, and photographer, with fictional advertising and high-fashion spreads where the artist continually reinvents herself throughout its pages. One section of the publication features her *Demons* series, in which Gutierrez assumes the role of Aztec deities—such as the goddess of beauty, Xochiquetzal—that were later referred to as “demons” after the Spanish conquest. As the artist states, “*Indigenous Woman* marries the traditional to the contemporary, the native to the post-colonial, and the marginalized to the mainstream in the pursuit of genuine selfhood, revealing cultural inequities along the way. This is a quest for identity. Of my own specifically, yes, but by digging my pretty, painted nails deeply into the dirt of my own image I am also probing the depths for some understanding of identity as a social construction.” For her FOCUS exhibition, the artist will present photographs from the *Indigenous Woman* series.

Martine Gutierrez was born in 1989 in Berkeley, California, and currently lives in Brooklyn. She earned a BFA from Rhode Island School of Design in Providence. Her work has been the focus of solo exhibitions at Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley, Massachusetts; RYAN LEE, New York; Boston University Art Galleries; Contemporary Art Museum, Raleigh; and the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, among others. She has also been included in many group exhibitions across the globe, including the 58th Venice Biennale, and at institutions such as the Hayward Gallery, London; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford; Kunstmuseum Bonn; and the New Museum, New York. Gutierrez's work is in public collections such as The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; and the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts.

Demons, Xochiquetzal 'Flower Quetzal Feather,' p95 2, 2018
C-print mounted on Sintra
36 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and RYAN LEE Gallery, NY



Top: *Final Flight*, 2018
Mixed media
10 ¹/₄ x 2 ³/₈ x 2 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

Bottom: *Execution Squares*, 2008
Archival inkjet prints
50 ³/₈ x 64 ¹/₈ inches
Courtesy of the Artist

FOCUS: Hrair Sarkissian

January 24–March 15, 2020

Hrair Sarkissian's FOCUS exhibition features three major works that explore how violence can be made invisible, histories of erasure and restitution, and the sediments of conflict. In one of the artist's most recent works, *Final Flight*, 2018–19, Sarkissian investigates the story of the endangered northern bald ibis, one of the rarest birds in the world and the living descendants of birds depicted in the oldest Egyptian hieroglyphs. Once thought extinct, a surviving colony of seven was discovered in 2002 in the Syrian Desert near Palmyra; however, the onset of the war in Syria in 2011 severely constrained the conservation program, and the birds disappeared again around the time Palmyra was destroyed in 2014. Sarkissian employed new technologies and age-old techniques to create sculptures of the birds' skulls.

Sarkissian's most iconic work, *Execution Squares*, 2008, features fourteen photographs of public squares where executions take place in three Syrian cities—Aleppo, Latakia, and Damascus. These executions are public events, where people who pass by become witnesses—willingly or not—to the extinguishment of life.

The third work in the exhibition is the two-channel video *Homesick*, 2014. On one screen, a model of a four-story apartment building slowly but violently disintegrates. In the second channel of the video, the wrecker of this destruction is made visible: the artist himself. With sledgehammer in hand and his face a mixture of anger and desolation, he bashes the scale model of the Damascus apartment building where he lived until 2008 and where his parents continue to live; they have refused to leave Syria despite the unending violence. The model serves as a source of comfort and longing but also a prison of memories that have become ensnared in the extreme trauma of the present.

Hrair Sarkissian was born in Damascus and currently lives in London and The Hague. He earned a BFA in photography at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, in 2010. Sarkissian's work has been the subject of many solo exhibitions internationally at institutions including the Davis Museum, Wellesley College, Massachusetts; Sursock Museum, Beirut; KADIST, San Francisco; Fondazione Carispezia, La Spezia, Italy; SALT Beyğlu, Istanbul; and the Museum of Photography Thessaloniki, Greece. He has exhibited widely in group shows at Tate Modern, London; New Museum, New York; Darat Al Funun, Amman; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; Imperial War Museum, London; Sharjah Biennial; Istanbul Biennial; and Asia Pacific Triennial, Brisbane, among others. Sarkissian won the Abraaj Group Art Prize in 2013.

FOCUS: Hrair Sarkissian is organized by guest curator Dr. Omar Kholeif, Director of Collections and Senior Curator, Sharjah Art Foundation. The exhibition is presented in association with the Sharjah Art Foundation.

FOCUS: Marina Adams

March 27–May 24, 2020

For more than a decade, Marina Adams has explored the relationships between color and form. In her acrylic-on-linen paintings, biomorphic forms dovetail, each structure distinguished by a solid field of color. Each painting has its own distinct palette, with diverse and unusual color combinations. While Adams sketches out her forms in charcoal before she paints, her work has an immediacy evidenced by loose, confident swathes of paint, where drips mark the canvases and bands of color overlap, creating a balance between organization and improvisation. Though often perceived as nonreferential, her compositions are prompted by textile design and architectural forms. As she states, "One of the reasons I allow my love of pattern to be predominant in the paintings is that pattern is a language that crosses boundaries. It offers common ground. I think it's interesting that similar patterns were utilized in different places around the world, places that most likely didn't have physical contact. We can see pattern in the most basic things and I guess what I love is that it forces you to get very basic, and it's in basic truths that we can find communion. We find how we're alike, as opposed to always thinking about how we're different." Literature and poetry play a large role in Adams's work, especially in the artist's use of referential titles, which offer viewers another path of entry into her works. As Adams has said of her titles, "I think they're particularly important if you're not giving a narrative, if you're not giving a storyline, if you're just presenting an experience—particularly in a literal world, and we're in a very literal world, particularly in the West, where people want and believe in reason and ideas. I'm not giving them either. Language can exist, in the same way that color can exist; it can just be."

Marina Adams was born in Orange, New Jersey, in 1960 and lives between New York and Parma, Italy. She earned a BFA from the Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, and an MFA from Columbia University, New York. Solo exhibitions of her work have been presented at Salon 94, New York; Galerie Gris, Hudson, New York; CUE Art Foundation, New York; and Magazzino d'Arte Moderna, Rome. Her work has been included in recent group exhibitions at the Camden Arts Centre, London; Lisson Gallery, New York; American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York; and The Center for Contemporary Art, Bedminster, New Jersey. Adams received the Award of Merit Medal for Painting from the Academy of Arts and Letters and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship.



Cheops, 2018

Acrylic on linen

98 x 78 inches

Courtesy of Salon 94, New York



Artist Kehinde Wiley giving a talk to guests at the opening of his FOCUS exhibition in 2008.

FOCUS Exhibition Series: Shaping the Modern

By engaging with the FOCUS series, Museum visitors are exposed to contemporary art through world-class national and international exhibitions. No other museum in the Metroplex offers the number of shows per season that the Modern allots for emerging artists. It is a series unlike any other in the entire Southwest as FOCUS presents an unparalleled opportunity for young and mid-career artists to have a solo exhibition in a world-renowned museum. At the conclusion of the FOCUS season in the spring, one work or group of works from each exhibition is held for the annual Purchase Meeting. During this event, attendees vote to determine which work will be recommended for acquisition by the Modern, thus contributing to the Museum's permanent collection and shaping its cultural footprint.

To learn more about how to deepen your relationship with the Modern and the FOCUS program through membership and to be part of the acquisition process, please call Allie Nikolaisen, Director of Development, at 817.840.2177 or e-mail development@themodern.org.



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The 2018–19 FOCUS exhibition acquisition for the Museum’s permanent collection is *Dwell: Me, We*, 2017, by Njideka Akunyili Crosby.

Cover detail and above:

Njideka Akunyili Crosby

Dwell: Me, We, 2017

Acrylic, transfers, colored pencil, charcoal, and collage on paper

96 x 124 inches

Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth,

Gift of the Director’s Council and Museum purchase,

The Benjamin J. Tillar Memorial Trust

Photo: Mary Raap / EPW Studio

The Modern

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