

**VOM
ON**

Exhibition Information

EN



GALLERY ZERO

As We Meet

This exhibition explores the nature of coming together. It looks at the meeting of minds and of people across art history, allowing different worldviews, personal and political stances to face each other and come into conversation. A meeting can be joyful, a relief, a pleasure; it can also be forbidden, hidden and conflicted.

This is a celebration of those invisible threads that tie us together, those glances, moments of schism and renewal.

This challenging year has focussed our attention on our interconnection and the universality of human need and struggle. In this exhibition we come together; a reunion is a uniquely powerful and monumental moment.

Curated by Lee Cavaliere



Room One (clockwise from left)

Caravaggio, Michelangelo Merisi Da (1571-1610)

The Incredulity of St Thomas, 1601-1602

Oil on canvas

140x107cm

Bildergalerie (Sanssouci)/Public Domain

Caravaggio is a unique figure in Biblical art. He represented Biblical figures with gritty realism, real people with worldly woes and everyday pressures and emotions.

This piece recounts the story of when Jesus arose from the dead; full of disbelief at this miracle, Saint Thomas is invited by Jesus to investigate the fatal spear wound – by poking a finger into it. This is a characteristically down-to-earth portrayal of the Christ and the apostles, far from the idealised images of the time.

Jesus' face is in shadow, so we are drawn to the naked curiosity of Thomas. In this moment of deep and almost horrific intimacy, we see these Biblical figures as entirely human.

Rego, Paula (b. 1935)

The Dance, 1981

Acrylic paint on paper on canvas

274 x 212cm

© 2020. The Artist and Marlborough, London

Paula Rego has depicted eight figures dancing on a clifftop, under a full moon. Rego often plays with a sense of scale in her works, and some figures are notably larger than others, lending a sense of the surreal. Indeed the setting, the oddly disconnected nature of some of the figures, and the formal dress lend a dreamlike atmosphere to the scene.



Zerbini, Luiz (b. 1959)

Gemini, 2018
Acrylic on Canvas
400 x 200cm
Courtesy of the Artist © 2020.

Untitled, 2018
Monoprint / Oil on Cotton Paper
80 x 107cm
© 2020 the Artist

One of Brazil's foremost painters, Zerbini's works often speak to the vibrancy and variety of culture and landscape in his native Rio de Janeiro. Harking back to mid-century modernism in Latin America, the grid paintings are paradoxically alive with conversation and movement. He paints what he sees, and the process is at once intuitive, structured and deeply personal.

Seurat, Georges (1859-1891)

A Sunday on La Grande Jatte, 1884-1886
Oil on Canvas
308 x 208cm
Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection, The Art Institute of Chicago/Public Domain

Seurat was an impressionist painter and pioneer of the technique of 'Pointillism', where a painting is created using dots instead of brush strokes, to maximise the vibrancy of colour. It was a painstaking and scientific process which meant that an image would be indecipherable close-up, much like pixels on a screen today.

This painting depicts a sun-drenched, riverside gathering by the Seine, just outside Paris. Though there are a large number of figures in the scene, all are curiously stationary and disconnected; they do not interact and remain separated across the monumental canvas.



Room Two (clockwise from left)

Li Wei (b. 1970)

Liwei Falls to Hong Kong, 2006

Photograph

541 x 176cm

© 2020 the Artist

Li Wei makes use of fantasy and comedy to carry his ideas, often speaking politically about the situation in his native China. Flight and fantasy are often used as a way to approach more serious issues around freedom, nationhood and loss.

Bosch, Hieronymus (1450 - 1516)

Garden of Earthly Delights, 1503-1515

Oil on Wood

389 x 220cm

Museo del Prado, Madrid/Public domain

Heironymous Bosch was a Dutch/Netherlandish painter who created fantastical visions of religious subject matter. In this, his most iconic triptych, the central panel features an Earthly paradise, full of innocence, play and coy eroticism. To the left by a scene of the Garden of Eden, where the Christian God introduces Adam and Eve, the first humans. The right-hand panel is a depiction of a hellscape, where humanity has succumbed to sin and desire. The space is full of semi-organic forms that lend it a nightmarish quality.

A shocking portrayal of how human need and togetherness can be debased, it presents a religious warning against physical intimacy.



Golding, Amartey (b. 1988)

Chainmail, 2016

Video

Duration: 15 Minutes

© 2020 the Artist

Amartey Golding's work often explores stereotypes, race and gender. This was the artist's first foray into film, and accompanied a series of photographs around the same subject. The artist says:

"The film follows Solomon Golding (the first black British male to be accepted in to the Royal Ballet Company) as he partakes in a fictional underground ceremony that has been going on since the early 90s in the Black (specifically Jamaican) Communities of London.

The chainmail culture and the narrative it follows, was made to mimic the prominent elements that have come to define the contemporary black identity, such as poverty, 'gang culture', physical strength, performance/showmanship, primal drives of masculinity and the constant threat of violence."

Guambe, Nelly (b. 1987)

Faces, 2020

Ink on Paper

14 x 30cm

Courtesy of the Artist and Ed Cross © 2020

Nelly Guambe has become known for her mass-portraits. If we take time, we can see each single story within the crowd, and find their own individual agency, and the power of their collectivity. Each individual within the scene demands the viewer's recognition and attention. As Guambe says: 'They start existing when I open their eyes. Sometimes they really look at you. They say, "I've arrived".'



Gilbert & George (born 1943, born 1942)

Gordons Makes us Drunk, 1972

Video, monitor, black and white and sound (mono)

12 minutes

© The Artists 2006, courtesy Jay Joplin/White Cube London. Courtesy Arts Council Collection.

Always immaculately dressed and always together, Gilbert and George describe themselves as living artworks. In their early work they were pioneers in performance art, and particularly in the relatively new media of video art.

This example shows the two artists sitting at a table, drinking Gordon's Gin, in a restrained and deadpan manner, while a soundtrack repeats the phrase 'Gordons Makes us Drunk'. The result is at first absurd, but the piece also links to nationalism and empire; Gin and Tonic was the drink of choice for settlers in many British colonies and the label still bears the historic Royal Crest. The artists' restrained behaviour while becoming increasingly drunk, is also a nod to British formality and etiquette.

Gustavsson, Martin (b. 1964)

Eclipses, 2019

Oil on Canvas and Wheeled Frame

180 x 180cm

Courtesy of the Artist © 2020.

Black Plums, 2016

Oil on Canvas

150 x 180cm

Courtesy of the Artist © 2020.

Martin Gustavsson is a prolific painter, working with the figure and other natural forms to create deeply sensual work. He enjoys the act of play within the process of painting, questioning when a painting is truly finished, and how the audience can be involved in its continuing life.



Here we have two paintings from the artist; Plums is an on-going, unfinished piece that is currently on show in Stockholm. Visitors can click to select which version they would like to see. The mobile piece, *Eclipses*, is from a recent series where audience members are invited to move the artwork around the space. Here, the piece has a mind of its own as it makes its way around VOMA.

The artist's playful approach is a direct challenge to the austerity and exclusivity of the gallery space, and a revelation of the artist's relationship to their work. Why should we not touch art, when art is born of touch?

Room Three

The Woman in the Background: Manet and Odedina

(Clockwise from left)

Odedina, Abe (b.1960)
Balancing Act, 2020
Acrylic on plywood
122 x 122cm
© 2020 the Artist and Ed Cross Fine Art

Manet, Édouard (1832 - 1883)
Olympia, 1863
Oil on Canvas
130 x 190cm
Courtesy of Musee d'Orsay, Paris / Public domain

Odedina, Abe (b.1960)
Rejoinder, 2020
Acrylic on plywood
80 x 122cm
© 2020 the Artist and Ed Cross Fine Art

Odedina, Abe (b.1960)
Monument, 2018
Acrylic on plywood
26 x 29cm
© 2020 the Artist and Ed Cross Fine Art



Olympia: A Text by Abe Odedina

There are two women in Edouard Manet's infamous Olympia. We know a lot about one; reclining, pert and centre stage, is Victorine Meurent. White as the driven snow, and a salon painter in her own right, she was in high demand as Manet's go-to studio model in the 1860s. We know when she was born (1844), what her parents did (laundress, bronze embellisher) and what she made. As for the second woman, a servant standing behind Meurent/Olympia to present her with flowers, we know only her first name: Laure. Laure is black.

While there's plenty I admire about Olympia, it seems as glaring an example of 19th Century European racism as we're likely to stumble across. In a world where women were second class citizens, prostitutes lower still, the black woman's status as Olympia's servant kicks her so far down the social hierarchy as to vanish (almost literally) into the shadows.

I paint black women too; I paint them very differently. In Balancing Act, for instance, the black female body is front and centre – crucially, she's subject rather than object à la poor Laure. While Edouard and I might agree on an appreciation of the female form, I'd like to think that Balancing Act's contortionist is in control to an extent that Olympia (let alone her servant) could only dream of. Her body is strong, agile, and at her disposal rather than ours.

Performing, rather than exposed to us, our gaze is acknowledged implicitly – an inversion of Olympia's openly meeting the viewer's eye as if to say "here we go again". Turning to Rejoinder, we see a girl with a gun. She's shooting something from the sky – clay pigeons? On the contrary: her targets are drones. Taking aim at agents of unsolicited viewing, this is another woman not only aware of eyes on her but in control of them.

I've learnt a lot from Manet's bold compositions. Symbolism, too, is a mutual interest; take Rejoinder's staffie dog representing fidelity, or Balancing Act's empty heart-shaped box. Likewise, Olympia is accompanied by a host of clues (beyond her nudity) as to how she ought to be read: a cat arching its back in the painting's corner, for instance, was associated with prostitution. So was the name Olympia itself. Radiating from that futon, Love For Sale is legible at the most cursory of glances; while I'm also keen on clarity, I'd rather frame the women in my paintings as protagonists than props.



**Room Four
(Clockwise from left)**

Breitner, George Hendrik (1857-1923)

Marie Breitner and a girl waking up in bed, 1889-1915
Photographic Paper
50 x 40cm
The Hague, RKD - Netherlands Institute for Art History

Portrait of a female nude with Breitner photographed in the mirror, c.
1890 - c. 1910
Photographic Paper
27 x 40cm
The Hague, RKD - Netherlands Institute for Art History

Marie Jordan Nude, Seen from the Back, 1889
Photographic Paper
8 x 9cm
The Hague, RKD - Netherlands Institute for Art History

Naked Study with Two Women, 1889-1915
Photographic Paper
50 x 40cm
The Hague, RKD - Netherlands Institute for Art History / Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam

Women on a Bed, 1890
Photographic Paper
50 x 40cm
The Hague, RKD - Netherlands Institute for Art History

George Henrik Breitner was a prolific photographer, taking thousands of photos of daily life in the Netherlands from the 1890s onwards. His work gives us a rare informal look at daily life and particularly, a look at domesticity. Breitner embraced the flaws and issues of this new art form, and the images we have are insightful and thought-provoking.



Here we've gathered a number of his portraits of women; in these early photographic portraits, formality and intimacy can often cross over and intertwine. His works were often hated by critics, for their brutal and honest depiction of daily life, which was quite against the fashion of the time.

Toulouse Lautrec, Henri de (1864-1901)

At the Moulin Rouge (La Gouloue and her Sister);
Au Moulin Rouge (La Goulue et la Mome Fromage). 1892
Lithograph printed in colours
34 x 44cm
Christie's Images Limited. @2020. Christie's Images, London/Scala, Florence

The Dance at Moulin Rouge, 1897
Litografia a matita, pennello, spruzzo e raschietto
34 x 41cm
Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale @2020. Photo Scala, Florence

At the Moulin Rouge, 1892/95
Oil on Canvas
123 x 142
Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection, 1928.610.
Chicago (IL), Art Institute of Chicago. © 2020.
The Art Institute of Chicago / Art Resource, NY/ Scala, Florence

The Englishman (William Tom Warrener, 1861-1934) at the Moulin Rouge, 1892
Oil on cardboard
66 x 85
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot (1876-1967), 1967.
Photo: Malcolm Varon @ 2020. Image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala Florence

The Clownesse at Moulin Rouge, 1897
Lithograph
32 x 40cm
Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale.@ 2020. Photo Scala, Florence



Cha U Kao dressed in a tutu is resting in his dressing room 1895
Lithograph printed in colours
49 x 64cm

Paris, Musee d'Orsay @2020. Photo Josse/Scala, Florence

At the Moulin Rouge: The Dance, 1890
Oil on canvas
149 x 115cm

The Henry P. McIlhenny Collection in memory of Frances P. McIlhenny,
1986.© 2020. Photo The Philadelphia Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala,
Florence

For many years, the artist frequented the Moulin Rouge, a famous club in Paris, documenting the activity within its walls in hundreds of drawings and paintings. The collection gives us a great insight and allows us to become swept up in the creative and sexual liberation, and seediness, of this now-legendary Dance Hall.

We meet performers and prominent visitors up close, but momentarily, the meetings are fleeting and the vibrancy and colour creates an unblinking portrayal of a location that was at once intoxicating and dangerous.

Clark, Lygia (1920-1988)

Planes in Modulated Surface 4, 1957
Formica and industrial paint on wood
99 x 99cm

New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros through the Latin American and Caribbean Fund in honor of Kathy Fuld. @2020. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

Lygia Clark was a painter, sculptor, and performance artist. She begun her career as a figurative painter but was influenced by abstract artwork she encountered during her time in Paris. On her return to her native Brazil, she began making a series of geometric paintings.



The artist made a series of Modulated Surface paintings between 1954 and 1958, and these are examples of her first experiments in abstraction. The meeting points in these works are pivotal, as they create movement, collision, spin; the forms in the painting move around and avoid each other, almost dancing together across the canvas.

Stieglitz, Alfred (1864–1946)

Georgia O’Keeffe—Hands and Thimble, 1919

Palladium Print

24.4 19.4 0

The Art Institute of Chicago / Alfred Stieglitz Collection ©2020

Georgia O’Keeffe - Feet, 1918

Stieglitz, Alfred (1864–1946)

Palladium Print

24 x 19cm

The Art Institute of Chicago / Alfred Stieglitz Collection ©2020

Georgia O’Keeffe—Neck, 1921

Gelatin silver print

19 x 24cm

The Art Institute of Chicago / Alfred Stieglitz Collection ©2020

Alfred Stieglitz was a pioneer in promoting photography as a legitimate art form. He took hundreds of photos of the artist Georgia O’Keeffe. In search of a new approach to representation, the works became a “composite portrait”, not restricted to traditional representations of a person by their face or full body; these show moments, fragments, almost like a memory of the subject.

The intensity of the project also reveals a deep physical and intellectual intimacy; indeed Stieglitz and O’Keeffe were married in 1924.



GALLERY ONE

Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art)

In 1937, Germany's Nazi government held an exhibition in Munich entitled "Entartete Kunst", or Degenerate Art.

Artwork that was not purely figurative or decorative was seen by the Nazis as a threat to German traditionalist values, to the future of the country and the way of life of its people. As a result they held this exhibition, to publicly denounce the works of artists such as Matisse, Dix and Beckmann, who have come to be seen as some of the most mesmerising and influential artists of the past century. Some of these artists' seminal works are brought together here.

It is perhaps ironic that many of these works rose to prominence through their seizure by the Nazis, and eventual resale through the opaque channels of the art market. Many of these pieces remain in public museum collections, far from the families from which they were stolen.

This gallery is here to look transparently at history's more challenging moments, where art, and its destruction, were used as a means of oppression, or submission, and the ways in which these moments were, or were not, overcome.

Quotes on the walls are drawn from the original "Entartete Kunst" exhibition catalogue, and are recreated here to give recognition to how far we have, and have not progressed, since this dark moment in our recent history.

Artworks
(Clockwise from left)

Grosz, George (1893-1959)

Blood is the Best Sauce, Kommunisten fallen - und die Devisen steigen) from the portfolio \r\nGod with Us (Gott mit uns) 1919 (published 1920).

Photolithograph

48 x 38cm

New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Publisher: Malik-Verlag, Berlin. Printer: Hermann Birkholz, Berlin. Edition: 125. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund. @2020. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

Dix, Otto (1891-1969)

Der Krieg (Triptychon), 1929-1931

Gemaelde / Mischtechnik auf Sperrholz

408 x 264cm

Dresden, Galerie Neue Meister - State Art Collections. @2020. Photo Scala, Florence / bpk, picture agency for art, culture and history, Berlin

Derain, André (1880-1954)

Valley of the Lot at Vers, 1912

Oil on canvas

73 x 92cm

New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund. @2020. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

Matisse, Henri (1869-1954)

Red Room (Harmony in Red), 1908

Oil on canvas

180 x 220cm

The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin. © Succession H. Matisse



Beckmann, Max (1884-1950)

The Descent from the Cross. 1917

Oil on canvas,
151,2x128,9 cm

New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Valentin Bequest.
328.1955© 2020. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New
York/Scala, Florence

Matisse, Henri (1869-1954)

The Blue Window. Issy-les Moulineaux, summer 1913

Oil on canvas
130 x 90cm

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund.

Acc. n.: 273.1939. © 2020. Digital image, The Museum of Modern
Art, New York/Scala, Florence © Succession H. Matisse



From the introduction to the “Degenerate Art” catalogue, 1937

What are the aims of the “Degenerate Art” Exhibition?

It aims to start a new era for the German People, by providing through the display of original artworks, an insight into the harrowing cultural decay which took place during the decades which preceded the Great Change.

It aims to put an end to the endless chattering by some writers and cliques who, still today, deny that there was any degeneration in art forms.

It aims to make clear that this degeneration of art was more than just a passing rush of a few fools, follies, and experiments, which only died out with the coming of the National Socialist Revolution.

It aims to show that this was not a “cultural progression” of culture, but a planned attack on the essence and continued existence of art in general.

It aims to show the common root of political anarchy and cultural anarchy, which exposes degenerate art as Bolshevist in every sense of the word.

It aims to show the ideological, political, racial intentions and moral goals which were the driving forces behind the degeneration.

It will also demonstrate the extent to which this deliberately driven degeneracy attracted imitators, who, despite the latter’s earlier and sometimes later proven certain talent, character, joined in with this overall Jewish and Bolshevist nonsense.

It will show how some of the more dangerous Jewish and political leaders were able to attract a person, who might have rejected party political Bolshevism out of hand, into the service of that ideology through cultural anarchy.



CHARITY PARTNER

Human Dignity Trust

The Human Dignity Trust is the only organisation working globally to support strategic litigation to challenge laws that persecute people on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. We provide technical legal, communications and security assistance to lawyers and activists who are defending human rights in countries where private consensual sexual activity between adults of the same sex is criminalised.

‘The Human Dignity Trust is thrilled to be chosen as the first charity partner of the Virtual Online Museum of Art. Our organisational goal to eradicate discriminatory colonial-era laws, which criminalise LGBT people in over 70 countries around the world simply for who they are or who they love, intimately chimes with VOMA’s aim to decolonise cultural history through the power of art. We enthusiastically look forward to a fruitful and enlightening collaboration within this innovative new space.’

Téa Braun, Director, Human Dignity Trust
www.humandignitytrust.org



Kewpie (1942–2012) was a South African drag queen and hairdresser. She was a gender fluid individual whose salon in the inner-city District Six of Cape Town became the centre of the queer and drag community. Kewpie's photographs document queer life during apartheid and span the period from 1950 until the 1980s.

The photographs, taken when homosexuality was a crime punishable by up to seven years in prison and the law was used to harass and outlaw South African gay community events and political activists, are valuable and unique as they depict the carefully crafted public personas of drag queens when their very identity was illegal, as well as their private 'off-duty' selves. They are especially important as they also document queer, working class, coloured lives, which were all too often invisible during the apartheid regime.

South Africa decriminalised same-sex activity in 1998, whilst its post-apartheid Constitution was the first in the world to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation. Today, this key constitutional protection is used by the Human Dignity Trust and local lawyers and activists in the courtrooms around the world where strategic litigation to decriminalise adult consensual same sex activity is ongoing.

The country was the fifth country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage and to date the only country in Africa to have done so. LGBT people enjoy constitutional and statutory protections from discrimination in employment, the provision of goods and services and many other areas.

Nevertheless, LGBT South Africans, particularly those outside of the major cities, continue to face challenges, including homophobic violence (particularly corrective rape), and high rates of HIV/AIDS infection.

Emma Eastwood
Head of Strategic Communications
The Human Dignity Trust



Images (Left to Right)

Group Picture Outside the Ambassador Club
Mitzy, Brigitte, Patti, Sue, Kewpie, Miss Vi, and Gaya Outside the Ambassador Club
circa 1955 to circa 1980
Photograph
60 x 57cm
Courtesy of Gay & Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA)

Amy, Kewpie, and Stella at a Go-go Party
circa 1960 to circa 1985
Photograph 88 x 60cm
Courtesy of Gay & Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA)

Kewpie and Brian Kiss
circa 1960 to circa 1985
Photograph 60 x 57cm
Courtesy of Gay & Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA)

Kewpie at the Roaring '20s Night at the Ambassador Club
circa 1960 to circa 1985
Photograph
43.8 x 60cm
Courtesy of Gay & Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA)

Kewpie Outside of Salon Kewpie
circa 1960 to circa 1985
Photograph
42.3 x 60cm
Courtesy of Gay & Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA)

WOMAN