

Jason S. Yi (Korean-American, b. 1963)

Legend of the White Snake, 2010

PVC tubes, connections

144 x 264 x 108 inches

Collection Museum of Wisconsin Art, West Bend, Gift of West Bend Friends of Sculpture.

Website:

Jason S. Yi merges Western European and Asian landscape traditions in his paintings, sculpture, video and drawing. Yi applies his architectural training to his works, acutely attuned to the differences between the scale of nature and that of human constructions. In his most recent sculptures, Yi uses the most fake-looking materials—plastic, metallic tape—to create his works, or to shroud common objects like chairs to create his precarious, if regal, landscape sculptures, trapped between floor and ceiling, earth and sky. Yi acknowledges the long human tradition of romanticizing the landscape while exploiting its products.

The Legend of the White Snake is an ancient Chinese folk tale dating to the Tang Dynasty (618-907 C.E.). The White Snake yearned to join human society so she took the form of a woman and married a scholar. Because snakes are considered evil in Chinese culture, a monk imprisoned Madam Snake—it is her cage that Yi evokes in his tangled construction. While Yi's work refers to an ancient story, when circling the form, however, the sinuous white PVC pipe also resembles Jackson Pollock's "overall" skeins of paint, that were thrown onto canvases laid on the ground, inspired by traditional Navajo sand paintings.

Manolo Valdes (Spanish, b. 1942)

Reina Mariana, 2005

Bronze

98 1/2 x 78 3/4 x 47 1/4 inches

Courtesy Marlborough Gallery, New York.

Website:

Spanish artist Manolo Valdés began his artistic career at age of 15, using Spain's rich history of art, influenced by European and African forms, to shape his early works. During the 1960s, he co-founded Equipo Crónica, an artistic team that used Pop Art to question the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, who suppressed his country's social and cultural life between 1939 and 1975. After the group dissolved in 1981, as Spain awoke from its enforced slumber, Valdés reinvented his work creating the figurative, expressive style centered on art historical motifs in drawing, painting, printmaking and sculpture. *Reina Mariana* (Queen Mariana) is part of Valdés's most famous series of sculptures, based on Spanish artist Diego Velázquez's *Queen Mariana* (1652-1653), a portrait of the second wife of Felipe IV. Velázquez was the chronicler of court life for the King and his family, capturing them at a time when Spain's imperial power stretched across the globe. Mariana, from the Austrian Hapsburg family, was well known to be an unhappy participant in her adopted country's life. The voluminous and starched costume of the regal Spanish aristocracy holds her upright and rigid, like a bird caught in a cage. Valdés pays homage to one of his country's most iconic painters and subjects, while commenting upon the life of those who serve subservient roles in history.

Tony Tasset (American, b. 1960)

Mood Sculpture, 2017

Fiberglass

240 x 48 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago.

Website:

Over the past decade, Chicago-based artist Tony Tasset has been making surreal sculptures that draw imagery from American popular culture. His smashed pumpkins recall a well-known Chicago band, a forced fall family trip to the pumpkin patch, or the teenage boredom that would drive a kid to toss hapless fruit into the street. Tasset's different versions of melting snowman similarly recall the letdown after a snowfall, when our scary snowmen turn into haggard, haunted mounds of snow. Like Pop artist Andy Warhol before him, Tasset looks for images or ideas that are simple and easily understood, allowing the visitor to bring their own set of meanings to each work.

In his totemic *Mood Sculpture*, Tasset draws from the cheerful smiley faces invented in 1963—the original American emoji—and shows the rainbow range of moods that afflict our days, from the sour grape face at the bottom to the Sunny Delight yellow face on top. His cheery, childlike colors remind us of how radical new ideas of the 1960s have today been packaged into consumer products.

Tony Tasset (American, b. 1960)

Arrow Sculpture, 2016

Car paint, aluminum

117 x 195 x 39 inches

Courtesy Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago.

Website:

Tony Tasset satirizes contemporary American culture while never losing sight of how much he loves it himself. Like 20th century artists Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol, Tasset creates works—furniture paintings, signage, monuments—that seem so common that they hardly warrant another look. Yet it is exactly these simple things that inevitably influence the way we see the world.

Tasset's *Arrow Sculpture* points to American obsession with rankings, like the "10 Best Lists" that are sprinkled across the media landscape at the end of every year. As an artist in an enormously hierarchical, competitive art world, Tasset knows all too well that "one day you're in, next day you're out," to paraphrase Heidi Klum of *Project Runway*. Tasset gently lampoons these lists and the peril of uni-dimensional measure to sum up and account for the complexities of the humans who create and consume products. Tasset, ever the consummate midWesterner, blunts his sly critique by using a Crayola crayon palette for his arrow paintings and sculptures, delivering his medicine with a bit of sweetness. While his *Arrow Sculpture* seems simple, it acts like a mirror, reflecting back to the viewer their own predilections and prejudices.

Jessica Stockholder (America, b. 1959)

Angled Triangle, 2014

Steel, aluminum, auto paint, plastic bollards, wood chips

480 x 240 x 144 inches

Courtesy Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago.

Website:

Jessica Stockholder uses common materials, found in any hardware store, to create crazy quilt-like installations whose colorful forms and complex shapes upend our expectations about the logic of three-dimensional space. She is one of the most noted sculptors of her generation, breaking down the gendered barriers that drive much dialogue around large, muscular sculpture. Her large-scale indoor and outdoor commissions defy our expectations of controlled social space, freeing the viewer up to discover quirky tableaux as they circulate around her works. Stockholder's wall sculptures are charming, if sly, comments on how we create our own spaces, cobbling together shapes and textures the way birds build their nests.

Angled Tangle uses materials typically found in the street—the bollards and curbs that control how we navigate our channels of travel. She tops her playful maze with a tangle of bright lights, giving us a new outdoor room in which we can romp. Stockholder reclaims public spaces away from the rational calculations of urban planners, and restores a sense of cheer for adults as we navigate the demands of daily life—suggesting that play should be part of our adult world.

Joel Shapiro (American, 1941-2025)

Untitled, 1985

Bronze

168 x 145 x 130 inches

Courtesy Pace Gallery, New York.

Website:

Joel Shapiro, a second generation Minimal artist, has long played in the gap between abstraction and figuration, one of Modern art's key themes. He grew up in a progressive home in Queens amidst the great social upheavals of the 1950s. Shapiro credits his two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in India for allowing him to focus on raw materials and forms. Like artists Carl Andre and Donald Judd, Shapiro uses spare geometric forms, but he uses them to create more intimate, personal and quirky sculptures.

Shapiro's first sculptural experiments were of tiny houses, chairs and figures, perched on floors or walls, creating their own physical and psychological space. In *Untitled*, from the mid-1980s, Shapiro continues to suggest contradictory ideas, stability and collapse, of defying gravity by flying and also of falling. Shapiro combines these opposite feelings by having elements jut awkwardly beyond the normal plane of a real body. By suggesting a body suspended in air, Shapiro's figure escapes the confines of architecture. The artist rarely uses titles in his work, preferring instead that it is the forms of his sculptures, drawings and paintings that become their own language.

Alison Saar (American, b. 1956)

Summer, 2011

Bronze

96 x 28 x 30 inches

Courtesy of the artist, L.A. Louver, Venice, California

Website:

Alison Saar draws stories and myths from her diverse African American, Native American and European family history to create sculptures, prints, drawings and mixed media works. In them she merges the personal and the public, the positive and the negative of human life and spirit.

In *Summer*, a woman in a simple dress holds her round belly, which is alive with small fireflies of light. Saar's figure is every woman, bringing forth new life, as well as shaman, protecting the fragile spark of life that ensures the continuity of civilizations. *Summer* is based on Saar's interest in African traditions, like Nkisi, (or "power figure") where spirits inhabit objects.

Will Ryman (American, 1969)

Rose #2 (Icon Red), 2011

Painted aluminum

74 1/4 x 100 x 57 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Kasmin Gallery, New York

Website:

Ryman, son of internationally renowned artists Robert Ryman and Merrill Wagner, worked as a writer and playwright for a decade before creating his first sculpture in 2001, based on a character in a play. Each of his sculptures and tableaux are cobbled together from a material grab bag and suffused with poetic meaning while grounded in the real world of contemporary American culture. He cites influences from philosophers to the writings of Eugene Ionesco and Samuel Beckett, taking away their absurdist view of the world.

Ryman's *Rose #2 (Icon Red)*, 2011, lies like Sleeping Beauty atop a pedestal on a white marble deck. The rose has ancient and contradictory associations in Western culture, representing purity as well as passion and fertility, life as well as death. The gigantic glossy flower attracts us to its pretty throne—just watch out for its huge, sharp thorns. Ryman refers to the romantic history of the rose while slyly commenting on how it is used to sell the products of romance. Ryman's Rose is part of a dispersed urban garden that includes everything else in our landscape, from cigarette butts and floating plastic bags to architecture, cars and pedestrians.

Tom Otterness (American, b. 1952)

Immigrant Family, 2007

Bronze

129 x 121 x 108 inches

Courtesy Marlborough Gallery, New York.

Website:

Tom Otterness uses his cartoonishly doughy figures to explore the haphazard nature of life, its glories and ignominies. His charming, non-threatening figures do the oddest things, however, as in his work *Life Underground*, 2004, a series of vignettes in the New York subway system's 14th street station that includes a crocodile emerging from the sewer to gobble up an unsuspecting pedestrian. While his figures are round, the ideas behind them are often sharp.

His work *Immigrant Family*, commissioned for a new development in Toronto, honors a fundamental truth about the growth in population in North America. This history is vibrantly alive in Milwaukee, with each summer's festival schedule highlighting the cultural heritage of one of the groups who found refuge in our region, escaping from economic or political conflicts at home, creating community on the shore of Lake Michigan.

Dennis Oppenheim (American, 1938-2011)

Safety Cones, 2017

Blaze orange cast fiberglass, steel, acrylic

216 x 86 x 86 inches

Courtesy Dennis Oppenheim Estate, New York

Website:

Dennis Oppenheim was an early pioneer in several art movements, from Earth Works and Conceptual art to art using the body. Like a ringmaster orchestrating the unexpected, through relentless experimentation he created experiences and performances as well as flamboyant, circus-like art works with a hint of caprice and danger. He has used wheat, salt, dirt, puppets and up-ended architecture in his works, borrowing from the world to create sometimes fearless, sometimes fearsome work.

Oppenheim's *Safety Cones* are giant beacons (or dunce caps) for the mishmash urban spaces that are always in the process of coming together or falling apart, like the rest of nature around us. At night, their spectral blue lights will draw downtown visitors to the orange pyramids, like moths to a flame. This work harkens back to Oppenheim's earliest works, made when he first moved to New York in 1966, where he simply marked off spaces in the city with engineer's stakes, creating zones of art, or curiosity, or danger.

Oppenheim's *Safety Cones* remind us that humans continually change their environment, often losing what is poetic and historical about our place on this land.

Oppenheim avoids a signature style, though he consistently riffs on known architectural styles when creating his diverse body of public art works. Oppenheim's permanent work at General Mitchell International airport, Milwaukee, *Submerged Vessels*, 2004, is a series of child-like boats floating inside a parking structure. The boats are in honor of the fishing and trade that happened along the Lake Michigan shoreline for thousands of years. *Submerged Vessels* was the replacement piece for Oppenheim's originally submitted piece *Blue Shirt*, a work in homage of the city's workers and industries of the 19th and 20th centuries

Otterness was part of the influential downtown New York group Collaborative Projects (COLAB), that in the 1970s and early 1980s used the urban environment as a site for cultural commentary through posters, performances and guerilla exhibitions.

Sol LeWitt (American, 1928-2007)

Tower (Gubbio), 1996

Concrete blocks

225 x 112 x 112 inches

Courtesy Pace Gallery, New York.

Website:

Artist, writer, philosopher and philanthropist Sol LeWitt created an enduring legacy as one of the founders of American Minimalism, a movement characterized by the use of a restricted range of mostly industrial, post-war building materials, in non-expressive shapes and muted colors. LeWitt was also an early pioneer and proponent of Conceptual Art, an ideas-based practice that used the neutral systems of science and math to generate sculptures and wall drawings that could be made by others following his directions. As his career progressed, LeWitt began to loosen his control of the production of his works, allowing for others to help shape them, particularly in his ever-larger, ever-more vibrant wall murals that used color and shape to change the architecture of their rooms. LeWitt is remembered as one of America's most inventive practitioners, supportive of younger artists while working to make his art accessible to the non-arts audience.

In *Tower (Gubbio)*, commissioned for the XXIII Biennale in Gubbio, Italy, LeWitt has removed his own artistic hand by using concrete blocks, a coarse building material that is both part of our modern urban environment but also was a materials used by the Romans to construct their cities. There is not a functional purpose to LeWitt's tower as it inches towards the sky in mathematically proscribed increments.

John Henry (American, 1943-2022)

Zach's Tower, 2007

Painted steel

312 x 168 x 144 inches

Private collection, Dallas

Website:

Throughout John Henry's career, he has pursued a rigorous formal thinking that links his 1960s Minimalism to the experiments of the Russian Constructivists of the early 20th century. His works balance delicate lines against sturdy trunks of steel, adding color as a way to stand out against the urban environments of the American landscape.

In *Zach's Tower*, Henry balances delicate forms and buoyant lines against strong, leaden anchors. As with most three-dimensional sculpture, this piece evolves as the viewer walks around it. Henry's work frames the geometries of our built environment, breaking down the outsize scale of skyscrapers and creating small vignettes. Henry's work seems vibrant and expressionistic against 100 years of architectural history found in Milwaukee's downtown, enlivening the solidity of buildings with the inventive visual experiments of the artist.

Michelle Grabner (American, b. 1962)

Untitled, 2017

Bronze

72 1/2 x 25 1/2 x 4 inches

Gift of The Greater Milwaukee Foundation to the Historic Third Ward Association 2018 Photo by Kevin J. Miyazaki / Sculpture Milwaukee.

Website:

Oshkosh-born and raised artist Michelle Grabner plays many roles in the arts in the midwest and the country, from artist, teacher and curator to parent, homeowner and gardener. Grabner draws from each of her realms of activity, life experience and work practices to produce paintings, sculpture and weavings. She uses domestic textiles (baby blankets, kitchen towels, kaftans) as the stencil for paintings, capturing their irregularities and glitches.

Grabner elevates hand-made, hand-me-down fabrics to fine art. In her process of translating soft fibers into durable material, she creates a modern-day version of the marble cloaks of classic Greek gods and goddesses. Grabner reminds us to honor the art works that populate our everyday lives.

Paul Druecke (American, b. 1964)

Shoreline Repast, 2017

Double-sided aluminum, paint, steel, recycled wood, hardware.

Collection of the artist, Courtesy The Green Gallery, Milwaukee. Collection of the artist, New York.

Website:

Milwaukee-based artist Paul Druecke explores the various forms of public inscription that exist in our landscape. From faux National Park service historical markers to poetry-infused welcome mats, his experiments replace “official” language, that fix value and identity, with alternative narratives and cultural structures that allow us to consider how our world is shaped.

Druecke is interested in all kinds of social gatherings. For example, he documents friends gathering in a kitchen to share their food, which is always at the heart of every community. In these homemade films, the casual atmosphere, low tech aesthetic, and occasional bouts of singing and laughing provide an antidote to modern cooking shows, whose high production value and sophisticated knowledge discourage all but the hearty among us.

Jim Dine (American, b. 1935)

The Heart After the Flood, 2011

Bronze

89 x 78 x 35 inches

Courtesy Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago

Website:

Jim Dine has been using images of hearts to express a range of emotional and symbolic ideas for nearly 40 years. Of the symbols that play a recurring role in his theater of life—tools from his studio, the Venus de Milo statue—the heart is perhaps the most explicit symbol. Dine puts his heart on his sleeve (or canvas), evoking in the viewer a chance to relax our always-critical minds and, instead, think with our hearts.

Dine has been part of American art history since the early 1960s. On his arrival in New York he became part of the downtown “Happenings” scene, where artists began creating inexpensive, accessible works that combined theater, performance and sculpture. Dine’s use of common, popular imagery (the “pop” in Pop Art), links him to artists such as Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. But Dine was never cynical or ironic about the images he drew from everyday culture. Instead, Dine’s earnest search for a talisman is meant to give us comfort and support as we, too, search for meaning.

Tony Cragg (Anglo-German, b. 1949)

Mixed Feelings, 2010

Bronze

216 1/2 x 92 7/8 x 88 3/16 inches

Gift of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation to the City of Milwaukee 2018, acquired from Sculpture Milwaukee 2017.

Website:

Tony Cragg is one of the world's foremost sculptors working today. He combines a scientist's inquiry into the nature of materials and a humanist's curiosity about our emotional reaction to the natural world around us. Cragg's first career in science has played an instrumental role in the way he uses materials to make visible the invisible world around us. He has experimented with materials as diverse as plaster, sandstone, bronze and wood, stretching the material capacity of each into images drawn from nature.

Mixed Feelings is an immense glowing monument, formed by two intertwining bronze towers, pushing together and pulling apart as they spiral towards the sky. The swirling masses suggest the great force of natural energy, while the human energy erupts into profiles as the viewer walks around the work.

Tony Cragg was born in Liverpool, and has lived and worked in Wuppertal, Germany since 1977.

Saint Clair Cemin (Brazilian, b. 1951)

Vortex, 2008

Hammered stainless steel

Courtesy of the artist and Kasmin Gallery, New York.

Website:

Saint Clair Cemin roots his artistic life in the two years he spent living with his family on a 5,000 acre ranch in a remote part of Brazil. The family lived like pioneers, without electricity or running water, a dream for many kids. He has lived a nomadic life as an adult, sampling from global cultures, past and present, and translating them so they are legible to our contemporary world. Cemin was part of the roiling, dynamic world of New York's East Village in the 1980s, where a new generation of Conceptual artists focused on ideas, not objects. Cemin always strayed, however, since he is grounded in making beautiful objects that live beyond ideas.

Cemin's *Vortex* is a shiny tornado of energy turned upside down. Its mirrored surfaces reflect the street life around it. Cemin began working with craftspeople in Beijing in 1999 for their ability to patiently pound out the seams of works in stainless steel, like *Vortex*. One might imagine that the artist thinks about the distance between the rancho in Brazil and the major global cities in which he has lived—Beijing, Paris, New York—and the vortex of life that exists in each place.

Santiago Calatrava (Spanish-Swiss, b. 1951)

S2, 2015

Painted, welded plate aluminum and stainless steel

197 x 179 x 18 inches

Courtesy Marlborough Gallery, New York.

Website:

It is appropriate that internationally renowned architect Santiago Calatrava presents his work *S2* close to his first major piece of architecture in the United States, the Milwaukee Art Museum's addition of 2001. Calatrava's unique vision makes visible the structures of nature, whose strengths and forms shape the human constructions of our world. Calatrava's Quadracci Pavilion has become the icon for the entire city, celebrating our region's long support of culture in its various forms.

S2 recalls both the unfurling, dangerous tail of a scorpion and the internal chamber of a nautilus shell in an expressive, gravity-defying work. Wands of steel are held in compression by threads of metal. The energy of this work is palpable—as anyone who has ever held an elastic band in tension knows, that energy has to be used wisely

Deborah Butterfield (American, b. 1949)

Big Piney, 2016

Cast bronze with patina

93 x 112 x 50 inches

Collection Saint Kate – The Arts Hotel, Milwaukee WI

Website:

Montana-based artist Deborah Butterfield has been making art depicting horses since the 1980s. She has observed that horses were historically used for war, the machines that helped win empires. Butterfield is interested in horses' calm dignity and power. The artist readily acknowledges that many of her mares are self-portraits, drawing out the nature in human nature.

The presence of this animal, *Big Piney*, in the urban environment of downtown Milwaukee throws into relief the rub between nature and culture. While we have done our utmost to control the hard surfaces in our cities, nature is always present. Butterfield mirrors the temporality of life when using sticks and branches to create her works; but in her bronze statues, like *Big Piney*, she is able to preserve the majesty of these animals, and creates a permanent, and more peaceful, memorial for horses and their influence in the development of civilizations.

Deborah Butterfield's horses have been presented in museums across the country and outdoor parks and sculpture gardens, where the proximity to nature casts new readings on the work.

Chakaia Booker (American, b. 1953)

Holla, 2008

Rubber tires, stainless steel

2017

96 x 54 x 36 inches

Collection of the artist, New York.

Website:

For nearly three decades, Chakaia Booker has recycled rubber tires, manhandling them into fierce totems that suggest African objects while also referring to issues of contemporary African American identity and culture, gender and environmentalism. Booker chose tires because of their presence in the landscape, not only when in use, but when abandoned, congregating in mounds like tumbleweeds driven together by the wind. Using the raw but recognizable materials, Booker is able to make her works look like the skin of animals, or evoke the ancient objects of war or healing.

In *Holla*, a proud “figure” struts the street, her swirling layers of plumage catching the wind as it ruffles her skirt. *Holla* is shorthand for “holler,” or calling out, as if Booker’s bird woman is starting a parade.

Lynda Benglis (American, b. 1941)

Pink Lady (for Asha), 2013

Cast pigmented polyurethane

95 x 30 x 27 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Cheim & Read, New York.

Website:

Lynda Benglis began her career in the late 1960s, experimenting with a wide range of materials—pigmented latex, beeswax, polyurethane foam—to evoke different surfaces and textures to create new forms. She became a central figure in the 1970s Feminist movement, where exploration of themes such as body, identity and place helped bring the processes and materials of “women’s work” into the fine art world, breaking down the hierarchy between “high” and “low” culture. Benglis resisted the “masculine” gestures and materials of Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism, using events from her own life and formal interests in a career marked by constant radical experimentation.

Benglis’s sensual pink fountain honors Asha Sarabhai, sister-in-law of Benglis’ deceased partner Anand Sarabhai. It was Anand Sarabhai who first invited the artist to work at the Sarabhai’s family home in India in 1979, where Benglis has continued to work ever since. Benglis, who grew up in southern Louisiana in a Greek family, has long explored the importance of water to human life and our creative imagination, and of the landscape that sustains us. Her fountain fills a small urban oasis with the life-affirming calm of water, its translucent form in a languid stretch toward the sun.

Donald Baechler (American, 1956-2022)

Plant, 2003

Bronze

85 x 67 1/2 x 12 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Cheim & Read, New York.

Website:

Donald Baechler's works are influenced by American folk art, Pop artists of the 1960s like Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, the built-up surfaces of American painter Cy Twombly and German figurative artists like Walter Dahn. Baechler began showing in New York in the 1980s when his peers were taking graffiti to the street. Baechler instead saw painting as a conceptual, not political, practice informed by ideas and history. Baechler's works vibrate with expressive lines, bringing a nervous energy to his often-absurd tableaux.

Plant, 2003, is cast with Baechler's familiar jumpy lines and roughed up surface, as if the petals are trembling in the wind. Yet there is a dark side to this cheery little work. Baechler calls his series of black tulip paintings "funereal." Indeed, as any gardener knows, we must kill a flower to capture and contain it. As in his other work, Baechler creates a cheerful smile for a somber topic.