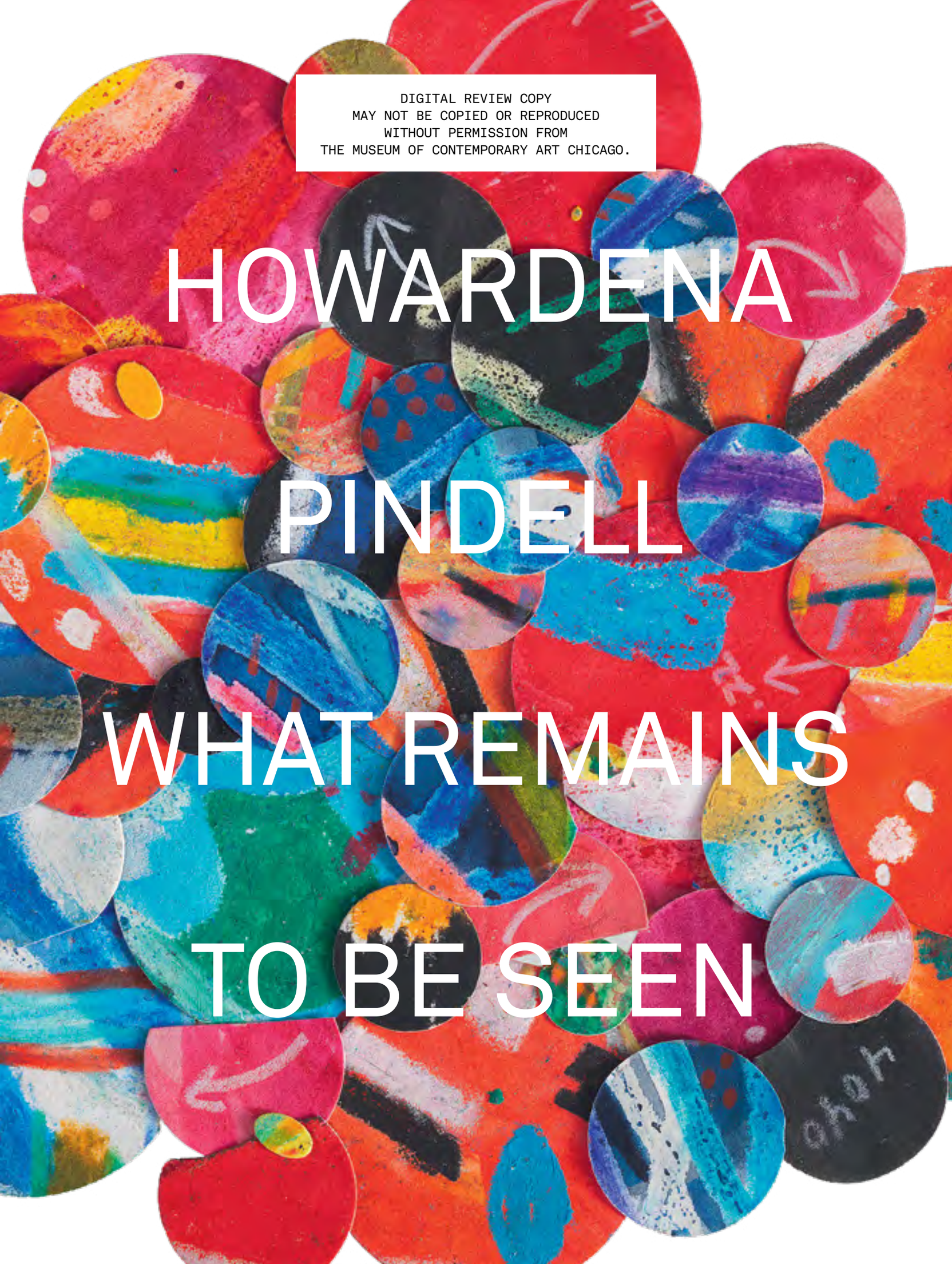

HOWARDENA PINDELL

WHAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN

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TO BE SEEN

Published by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and DelMonico Books•Prestel

NAOMI BECKWITH is Marilyn and Larry Fields Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

VALERIE CASSEL OLIVER is Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

ON THE JACKET
Front: Untitled #4D (detail), 2009. Mixed media on paper collage; 7 × 10 in.

Back: Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, Howardena Pindell from the series Art World, 1980. Gelatin silver print, edition 2/2; 13 3/4 × 10 3/8 in. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Neil E. Kelley, 2006.867. © Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, All Rights Reserved. Courtesy of Hiram Butler Gallery.

Printed in China

HOWARDENA PINDELL

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WHAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN

Edited by
Naomi Beckwith and Valerie Cassel Oliver

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

DelMonico Books • Prestel
Munich London New York

CONTENTS

It is an honor to present a major exhibition of the work of Howardena Pindell, an artist, curator, activist, and teacher. The MCA has committed itself to creating, not just reflecting, art history and course correcting the absence of a canonic discourse about deserving artists of color and women artists such as Howardena Pindell, whose tenacity both in and outside of the studio as well as her dedication to her craft have secured her enduring relevance today.

Pindell embarked on her career in the 1960s, a time when the world and the very criteria of what constituted an art object were changing, giving rise to many contemporary art museums, including the MCA. Pindell, too, adapted to these new notions of art, moving away from her academic training to explore minimal aesthetics in paintings and assemblages. She expanded her practice to tackle the nascent field's social issues—which she was keenly aware of as the first African American woman to hold a curatorial post at the Museum of Modern Art. In fact, her radical honesty helped shed light on the inequities perpetuated by the art world in that era: her 1989 essay "Art World Racism: A Documentation" exposed the discriminatory practices of cultural institutions that excluded minority artists from galleries, museums, and publications. As this book goes to press, the nation is focused on events exposing the disempowerment of women in the workplace. Pindell blazed a trail for today's artists whose politics inflect their artwork, and her oeuvre serves as a clarion call and directive for how to engage in conversations around these still-urgent issues.

I salute Naomi Beckwith and Valerie Cassel Oliver for cocurating this project with perceptiveness and passion. In presenting five decades of Pindell's work alongside the changing tides of art theory and historical rhetoric, they have placed her body of work in a rich context that bridges the transition from the modern to the postmodern. This exhibition of 144 works, including paintings, assemblages, works on paper, and video, as well as archival material, shows her artworks as both formal and narrative, personal and political, and deeply engaged in today's world.

This remarkable presentation of Howardena Pindell's work would not be possible without lead support from the Harris Family Foundation in memory of Bette and Neison Harris: Caryn and King Harris, Katherine Harris, Toni and Ron Paul, Pam and Joe Szokol, Linda and Bill Friend, and Stephanie and John Harris. We also wish to thank Kenneth C. Griffin; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; and Marilyn and Larry Fields. Additional gratitude is due to the National Endowment for the Arts, the Terra Foundation for American Art, Charlotte Cramer Wagner and Herbert S. Wagner III of the Wagner Foundation, and Liz and Eric Lefkofsky. I am also grateful for the generous support of Nathan Cummings Foundation, with the support and encouragement of Jane Saks; Mr. and Mrs. Lee Broughton; Garth Greenan Gallery; Agnes Gund; Heiji and Brian Black; Lester N. Coney and Mesirow Financial; Ashlee Jacob; Nickol and Darrel Hackett; Denise and Gary Gardner; Vicki and Bill Hood; Cheryl Mayberry McKissack and Eric McKissack, Jeanne and Kevin Poorman, Desirée and Victoria Rogers; Dr. John E. Ellis; Cathy Ross and Chris Liguori; and Lloyd A. Fry Foundation.

I extend my gratitude to the lenders, listed on page 262, who have graciously parted with works for this historic exhibition. I also thank Bill Arning for his early support and Alex Nyerges and Luis A. Croquer, directors of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Rose Art Museum respectively, where the exhibition will tour.

Finally, the MCA gives the utmost thanks to Howardena Pindell, for trusting us to exhibit her smart and beautiful work. It is a privilege and a welcome responsibility to share her story with our public.

Madeleine Grynsztejn
Pritzker Director
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

In organizing this survey of work by Howardena Pindell, we were keenly aware of the gravity of our undertaking. Pindell, now in her seventies, has certainly received recognition, but a comprehensive view of her work has never been organized. The artist made her mark as a painter, but she is also a conceptual artist who employs a variety of media, shifting between works on paper, photography, and collage, with two forays into video. Her practice encompasses activism in the field of contemporary art, in particular, astute critiques of the institutional neglect of women artists and artists of color. Moreover, Pindell has dedicated much of her adult life to teaching, and her relentless pursuit of art making in light of this is a benchmark by any standard.

As curators and women of color, this undertaking strikes a personal chord with us. In 1967, Pindell became the first African American woman to hold a curatorial position at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. This milestone, quietly acknowledged at the time, was momentous in hindsight. We owe our vocation as career curators to the trail blazed by Pindell, an example she set for shaping art history as much as she became a subject of the field. As such, we knew our curatorial task would be to shape a project around Pindell's capacious oeuvre and present the work in an equally capacious and thoughtful manner, worthy of the "correctness" Pindell requires of herself and her world. Happily, we have yet to be corrected by our subject. First and foremost, we thank Howardena Pindell for trusting us to present her visionary body of work to new audiences and for her tireless commitment to helping bring this ambitious project to fruition.

Any exhibition and book project of this scale—spanning more than fifty years of creative and social work—is a massive undertaking requiring thousands of hours of work by a small cavalry. Before we could even begin properly surveying Pindell's oeuvre, her dedicated and caring gallery had already committed countless days archiving her art and ephemera for our review. We must thank Garth Greenan, Bryan Davidson Blue, and the team at the Garth Greenan Gallery for their tireless personal care of Pindell and her legacy. They extended that same sense of care to our project throughout the planning of this exhibition. In addition, we thank those who work closely with Pindell's studio and the gallery to bring her incredible legacy to light, namely, Ko Smith, Jasmin Sian, Darragh McNicholas, and Rachel Garbade. In addition, Pindell gives her thanks to all those at the Garth Greenan Gallery, while also wanting to express her appreciation of those who have assisted her in the studio and with everyday tasks, including Ben Ortiz, Brian Nurse, and her especially good friend Athena LaTocha.

We benefited from the input of some of the best curatorial minds at our respective institutions, and thank Pritzker Director Madeleine Grynzstejn and James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator Michael Darling for recognizing the potential in this project and for greenlighting it at the MCA. Assistant Curator Grace Deveney has shepherded this project from start to finish in a manner befitting her name, while Faye Gleisser, former Marjorie Susman Curatorial Fellow, provided invaluable foundational research. Nina Wexelblatt, also a former Marjorie Susman Curatorial Fellow and now Curatorial Assistant, worked at the earliest stages of the show with current Susman Curatorial Fellow Jared Quinton to continue the deep research necessary to bring this project to fruition. We thank colleagues in the MCA Curatoial Department for their support: Manilow Senior Curator and Director of Global Initiatives Omar Kholeif, Pamela Alper Associate Curator José Esparza Chong Cuy, and Curator Lynne Warren. We were all aided by resourceful Curatorial Administrative Assistant Molly Brandt and her predecessor Sofía Retta. Many thanks to the energetic curatorial interns: Adriana Amillo, Antonia Constantine, Maral Gaeeni, Noah Hanna, Laurel Hauge, Taylor Hughes, Francesca Kielb, Alex Leasure, Khushmi Mehta, Gracie Reyes, Eliza Spogis, Ellie Tse and Claire Valdez. At the Contemporary Art Museum Houston, we received early input and support by Director Bill Arning, Deputy Director Christina Brungardt, Curator Dean Daderko, Controller Monica Hoffman, and Curatorial Associate

and Business Manager Patricia Restrepo. And we are thrilled to see this exhibition on view at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts thanks to early endorsement by Director Alex Nyerges and Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Arts and Education Michael R. Taylor. Our gratitude goes equally to Luis Croquer, Henry and Lois Foster Director at the Rose Art Museum, and all his team for giving this exhibition a home in New England.

We couldn't be more thrilled to have produced the first large-scale monograph on Pindell, which features the brilliant insights and words of our incredible contributors: Lowery Stokes Sims, Charles Gaines, Brian Wallis, Grace Deveney, Sarah Cowan, Marilyn Minter, Lorna Simpson, and Molly Zuckerman-Hartung. Putting all these words into book form is the incredible work of the publications department at the MCA led by Susan Chun, Chief Content Officer, Lisa Meyerowitz, former MCA Editor in Chief, Senior Editor Sheila Majumdar, and Design Director Dylan Fracareta. A book on this scale benefited from the extraordinary efforts of the Rights and Reproductions team: Manager of Rights and Images Bonnie Rosenberg, former Rights and Images Coordinator Jared Sheldon, and Photographer Nathan Keay. Our warmest thanks to the team at DelMonico Books•Prestel, Publisher Mary DelMonico, Production Coordinator Luke Chase, and Associate Editor/Publishing Coordinator Anne Wu, for their early and unabated support of the project.

Early on, so many people shared our enthusiasm for this project and provided thoughts, anecdotes, material support, access to historic materials, and even opened their homes and personal archives to ensure our success with the show and book. Among them, we must thank Camille Brewer, Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Huey Copeland, Romi Crawford, Shawnya Harris, Theodore Harris, Stephanie James, Janet Liscio, Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, Franklin Sirmans, and Rebecca Tilghman.

Major exhibitions happen because generous individuals and institutions part with their artworks; we thank them for trusting us with invaluable objects. A list of lenders is included on page 262; we want to acknowledge those who helped facilitate and negotiate these crucial loans: Kelly Baum, Jenny Sorkin, Thomas Lax, Kathy Curry, Emily Cushman, Lily Goldberg, Jumaane N'Namdi, Midori Yoshimoto, Katherine Bussard, Molly Epstein, Shawnya Harris, Stephanie James, and Les Coney. We especially want Diana Thompson, Director of Collections at the National Academy, to know that her exceptional effort in providing the Academy's work to the exhibition was as touching as it was necessary.

We thank all of our colleagues at the MCA and VMFA for lending their considerable talents to the physical, financial, and conceptual realization of this exhibition. At the MCA, Naomi Beckwith offers gratitude to: Assistant Registrar for Exhibitions Liz Rudnick, Chief of Exhibition Production Brad Martin, Exhibition Production Manager Erica Erdmann, Lead Preparator Matthew Byler, Assistant Preparator Colette Lehman, Chief Operating Officer Teresa Samala de Guzman, Assistant to the Director Janet Wolski, Chief Financial Officer Peggy Papaioannou, former Director of Collections and Exhibitions Anne Breckenridge Barrett, former Chief Registrar Meridith Gray, Director of Convergent Programming Claire Ruud, Director of Communications Lauren Smallwood, Director of Media Relations Karla Loring, Chief Development Officer Lisa Key, Deputy Director of Development Gwendolyn Perry Davis, Director of Major Gifts Khushboo Rami, Library Director Mary Richardson, Director of Digital Media Anna Chiaretta Lavatelli, Digital Media Associate Bridget O'Carroll, former Senior Interactive Designer Tobey Albright, Manager of Planning and Production Joe Iverson, Senior Designer Gabriel Melcher, Production Designer Dorothy Lin, former Senior Designer Mollie Edgar, Production Editor Shauna Skalitzky,former Editor Lindsey Anderson, former Dr. Robert N. Mayer Director of Learning and Public Programs Heidi Reitmaier, Polk Bros. Deputy Director of Learning Marissa Reyes, Associate Director of Interpretation and Visitor Research Rosie May, Interpretive Planning Assistant Jeanine Pollard, Director of Visitor Experience Patricia Fraser, and Director of Retail Mark Millmore.

At the VMFA, Valerie Cassel Oliver particularly thanks Shannon Petska, Traveling Exhibitions Coordinator, who has worked closely on this project, as well as Kelly Powell, Assistant to the Deputy Director. A host of individuals across departments at the VMFA have provided invaluable assistance throughout this process, including Courtney Freeman, Director of Exhibition Planning; Courtney Burkhardt, Manager of Exhibitions; Trang Nguyen, Senior Exhibition Designer, and the VMFA Exhibition Design and Production team; Stephen Bonadies, Senior Deputy Director for Conservation and Collections; Kelly Burrow, Exhibition Registrar; Jan Hatchette, Deputy Director for Communications, and the VMFA Marketing and Communications Department; Karen Getty, Docent and Tour Services Coordinator, and the VMFA Education Department.

Finally, in closing, we want to reiterate our thanks to all who shared their works for this exhibition. Their generosity should stand as a testament to their belief in the significance of this artist and this project. We hope that we have conveyed to readers of this catalogue and viewers of the exhibition this artist's enormous talent. We again thank Howardena Pindell for her trust in us and our ability to create a platform from which to share her work.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Naomi Beckwith
Marilyn and Larry Fields Curator
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

Valerie Cassel Oliver
Sydney and Frances Lewis Family
Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

OPENING THOUGHTS

Naomi Beckwith and
Valerie Cassel Oliver

In one of our first encounters with Howardena Pindell, she intimated that there ought to be a show about her practice comprised of works with skeletons and bones. We understood her desire immediately given that in our first foray into organizing Pindell's work for this major exhibition, we considered bookending the project between an early still life of a skeleton (1967; fig. 1) and a more recent installation entitled Hunger: The Color of Bones (2014; fig. 2).[1] Even for those intimately familiar with the work, "bones-as-motif" may seem a stretch; however, a quick examination of her oeuvre reveals thematic symmetries. While in graduate school at Yale University, Pindell acquired a human skeleton that became a study object for still-life paintings, color studies, and sketches. And, while her work focused on abstract forms after the completion of her MFA, we suspect that there are many other works that feature the same skeletal form and subject matter prior to graduation and in the period between Yale and the 1980s, when the figure reemerges. The human skeleton appears again in the 1990s antiwar Video Drawings as well as in Hunger: The Color of Bones, a multimedia installation protesting conflict-induced famine (indeed, the idea of Pindell as an "installation artist" may also surprise many). This time, however, the skeleton is not an object for formal study; Pindell presents it, rather, as the literal and material result of preventable death, as shock against apathy. In the twenty-first century, the artist returns to a form she first discovered fifty years earlier.

After the advent of "modernism," the story of Western art in general and of most artists' creative output has been presented as one of epiphany and rupture. Pindell's career, conversely, builds upon a series of material innovations that appear in the present, as much as past memories become the thematic of current work. In other words, things cycle back around in Pindell's work in a fashion not unlike the spiral forms seen in her recent shaped canvases (figs. 3, 4). As such, we faced a paradox: How to take Pindell's offhanded idea of an exhibition of "bones" at face value? How could we think of her decades-long career less as a linear trajectory and more as a parabolic construct with recurring devices that continue into the present? Furthermore, how could we weave into this construct of Pindell's multifaceted career the parallel strands—political and otherwise—that encompass a prolific studio practice, her life as an activist, a curatorial career, her copious writings and scholarly pursuits, as well as a long-standing teaching career?

When we first conceived of What Remains To Be Seen, we knew that we needed to traverse the eras known as the modern and the postmodern, as Pindell's education and career do. It makes for an interesting curatorial conundrum—one that compels a bifurcated approach to her career. First, we consider the early work in a chronological fashion and via formal and material experimentation and second, via the themes Pindell used as guiding concepts and concerns. Her best-known material experiments—the scintillating collaged canvases challenging the proposition that a painting must be made specifically by the action of painting, that is, by applying pigment to canvas with a brush—already presage the artist's intuitive moves past modernism. Indeed, the stages of Pindell's career mirror shifts in the US art world in the late 1960s. As the painterly New York School of her Yale professors was waning, several tendencies—each with its own geographic and psychographic home—arose in its wake: the hard-edge abstract expressionism of William T. Williams, Al Loving, and Jack Whitten as well as the postminimalism of Eva Hesse, all while Lucy Lippard was supporting feminist practices and theorizing the conceptual art movement. Pindell, whose life and work took her from the top to the bottom of Manhattan, could traverse all of these tendencies, synthesizing their innovations as she saw fit. After 1979, a self-professed watershed year for Pindell, we examine the later works via concept, content, and theme, or, rather, postmodern modes of contextualization. This is necessitated both by a shift in material and conceptual content in the work and by Pindell's own assertion that, by the late 1970s, she needed to tell her story inside the art practice. In other words, the artworks take on a narrative dimension propelled by a social and political urgency. This placed her in direct contraposition to artists such as Larry Poons and Ad Reinhardt, who Pindell admired even as they wistfully advocated a "pure" art unencumbered by either politics or academic theory. Many artists in the 1960s and later, including Reinhardt, were politically active in the social sphere but created fully abstract art that did not "reflect" their political sympathies. Pindell was among the first wave of academically trained artists to dismiss this separation and assert that the pressures, prejudices, and exclusions placed upon her—as a black artist and as a woman—played out as much in the art world as they did in the greater social world and, as such, were fair and necessary content for her art practice.

Fig. 1

Untitled, 1967. Acrylic on canvas; 66 × 71 in.

Following:
Hunger: The Color of Bones (detail), 2014. Mixed media; 71 × 140 in.

Fig.
2

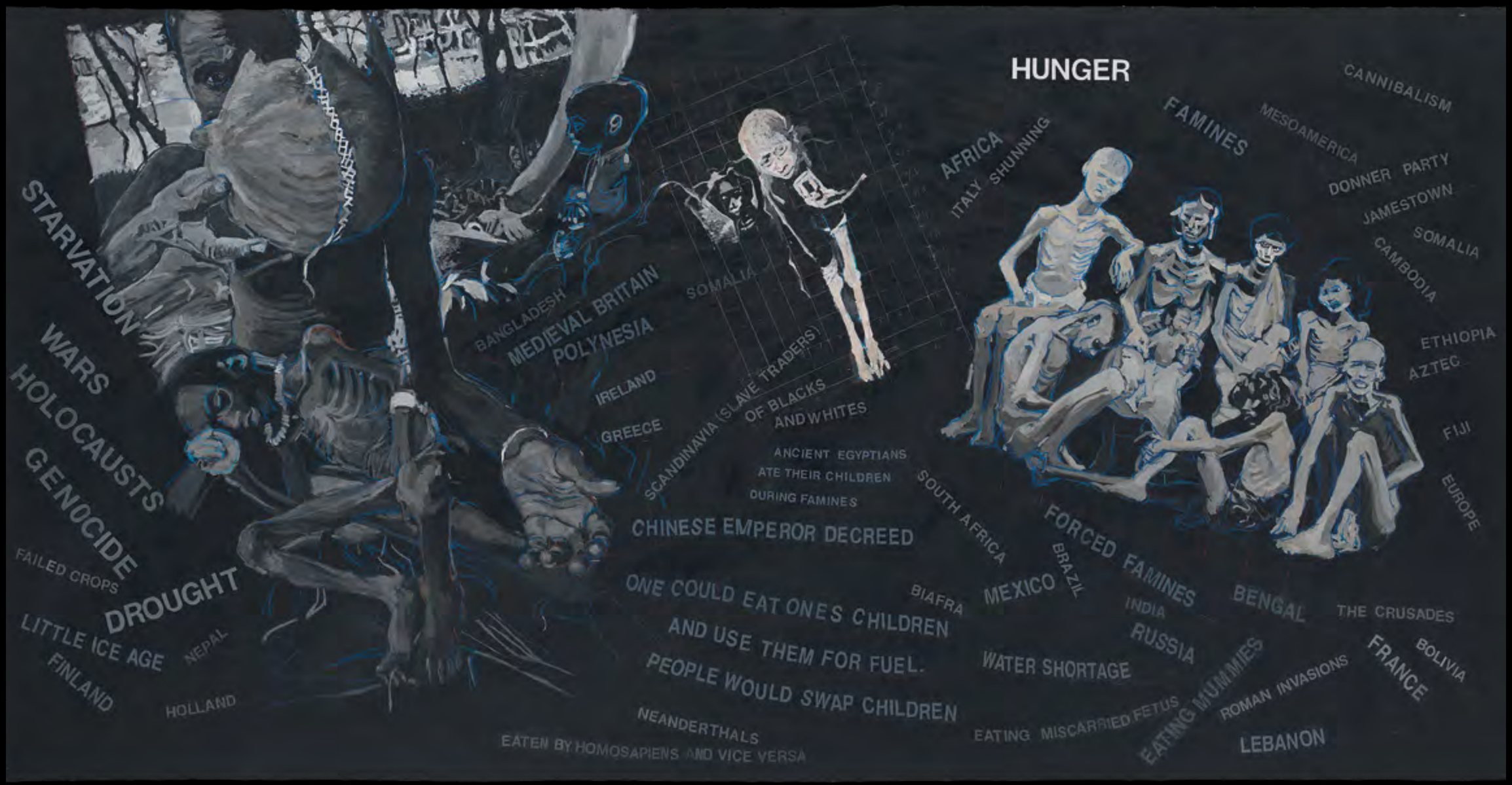
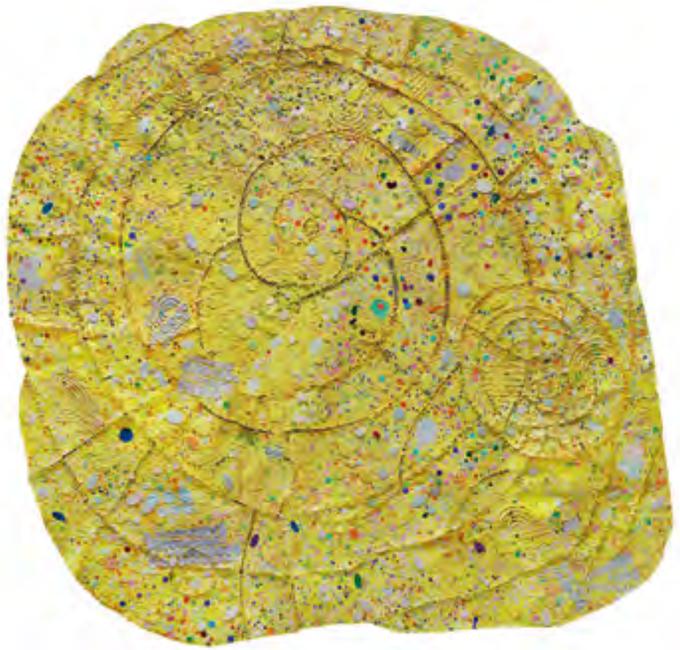
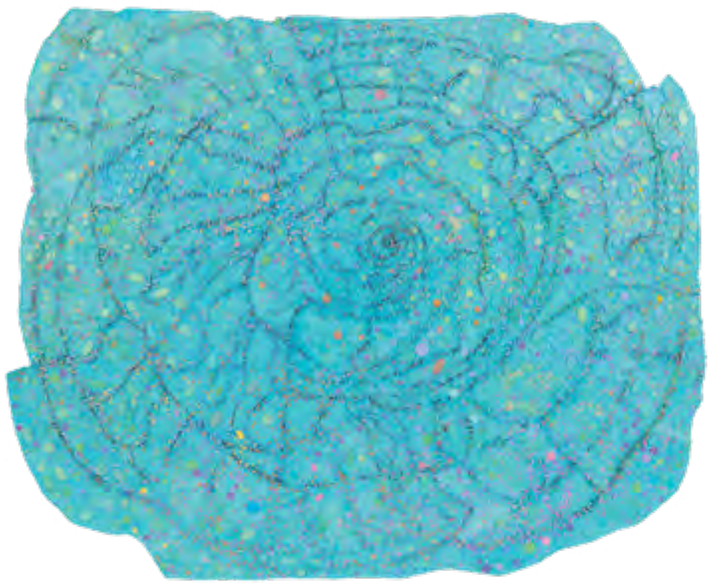

STARVATION
WARS
HOLOCAUSTS
GENOCIDE
FAILED CROPS
DROUGHT
LITTLE ICE AGE
NEPAL
FINLAND
HOLLAND
BANGLADESH
MEDIEVAL BRITAIN
POLYNESIA
IRELAND
GREECE
SOMALIA
SCANDINAVIA (SLAVE TRADERS)
OF BLACKS
AND WHITES
ANCIENT EGYPTIANS
ATE THEIR CHILDREN
DURING FAMINES
CHINESE EMPEROR DECREED
ONE COULD EAT ONES CHILDREN
AND USE THEM FOR FUEL.
PEOPLE WOULD SWAP CHILDREN
NEANDERTHALS
EATEN BY HOMOSAPIENS AND VICE VERSA
HUNGER
AFRICA
ITALY SHUNNING
FAMINES
MESOAMERICA
CANNIBALISM
DONNER PARTY
JAMESTOWN
SOMALIA
CAMBODIA
ETHIOPIA
AZTEC
FIJI
EUROPE
SOUTH AFRICA
BIAFRA
MEXICO
BRAZIL
FORCED FAMINES
INDIA
RUSSIA
BENGAL
THE CRUSADES
BOLIVIA
FRANCE
WATER SHORTAGE
EATING MISCARRIED FETUS
EATING MUMMIES
ROMAN INVASIONS
LEBANON

Fig. 3



Nautilus #1, 2014–15. Mixed media on canvas; 68 × 72 in.

Fig. 4



Night Flight, 2015–16. Mixed media on canvas; 75 × 63 in.

While her early 1970s canvases met with art-world acclaim at the time (and are having something of a renaissance now), the post-1979 work was supported primarily by feminists and African American theorists. This made for two parallel conversations around her practice, one formal and one contextual. As critical theorists attempted to think through the burgeoning conceptual frameworks of politics-as-aesthetics and vice versa, the formalist properties of her work were neglected. In that leap from formal analysis to subjectivity deconstruction, responses to Pindell's work have failed to account for the moments in which she makes the greatest leaps in innovation and where her work appears most singular. How and when new forms and unconventional materials emerge remain a mystery of sorts. There is very little by way of explanation of how paper pieces appear on the surface of a painting. There is even less discussion of the effects of other materials and formal choices such as ink, glitter, powder, perfume, jewelry, thread, nails, sequins, text, and photographs on stenciled bodily outlines and shaped canvases. While our project may not completely answer how and why these materials came to be part of a painter's practice, it still poses the question: How can we approach a fuller understanding of Pindell's formal innovations from our current vantage point? And most importantly: How do those formal innovations extend into a mode of rethinking the social and political context of their making? Rather than the opposite, which is to assume a specific causality between social and political upheavals that would necessarily produce certain art forms (though abstraction is currently being examined as a strategy toward these ends) (fig. 5).

Fig. 5

Untitled, 1977. Acrylic, paper, glitter, sequins, and string on canvas; 83 1/2 × 99 in.

Following:
Autobiography: Scapegoat, 1990. Acrylic, tempera, oil stick, and polymer photo transfer on canvas; 76 1/2 × 139 1/2 in.

The essays in this volume make an attempt to create a context for not only Pindell's body of work—which, as captivating as it is, is always somewhat off-beat or out of place or time—but also her activism. The "displacement" of scholarship and lack of recognition around her—a function of sexism and racism—excluded Pindell's work from many gallery and exhibition contexts, and this in turn continues to exclude her from certain critical conversations. Indeed, the presentation and institutional misrepresentation of certain bodies have been central to Pindell's work as a black feminist activist seeking to rectify the art world's missed opportunities. For instance, we wonder how Rosalind Krauss's work on the grid in painting and its expansion into bodily presence could have been enriched by a consideration of Pindell's pioneering work, or the discussion of contemporary art practices more broadly, had more artists of color been included historically in gallery and museum exhibitions. These absences have also been integral to Pindell's activist work, and she has chronicled such lacunae within the art world with social-science precision over decades.

Fig.
6


DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE OUR POWER
GIVE UP YOUR PERSONALITY
SERVE US
BETRAYAL
DENIAL
YOU ARE TO HAVE
NO NEEDS
NO WANTS
HARASS YOU
WE WILL NOT LISTEN TO YOU
IF YOU DON'T DO WHAT WE SAY WE WILL
CLASS
SEX
RACE
SILENCE
WE WANT YOU TO SUPPORT THE LIE
LIES
OUR LAWS AND POLICE PROTECT US NOT YOU
FASCISM WITH A FRIENDLY FACE
DIE
OBJECTIFICATION
SUB
ROSA
SERVE US
TAKE CARE OF US
WE HAVE THE RIGHT
WE OWN EVERYTHING
WE WILL HAVE OUR WAY
WE WILL IGNORE YOU
SUCCEED - WE WILL DESTROY YOU
WE WILL LIE ABOUT YOU
BABY SHACKLE

We begin this new narrative of Pindell's work with a chronology by Sarah Cowan inspired by the artist's co-authored timeline, "Howardena Pindell: Some Reminiscences and a Chronology," a writing work in direct parallel with her Autobiography series (fig. 6), which foregrounds memory as social testament. Lowery Stokes Sims, Pindell's longtime friend and collaborator, provides an overview of the artist's moves between deconstructing and reconstructing media (painting and experimental photography) inspired by her travels and political engagements. Grace Deveney's essay positions Pindell as an early media-engaged artist working against the passivity normally associated with television viewing. Charles Gaines explores Pindell's works with numbers within a philosophical argument which posits that rationality and affect can coexist within the same aesthetic object. Brian Wallis recounts the development of Pindell's politicized aesthetic voice via a deep reading of the now-iconic Free, White and 21

Fig. 7

A.I.R. members, 1972

video installation. Our own essays walk through specific bodies of work alongside Pindell's biography. And while many of these examinations are situated within the early decades of her practice, we are keenly aware of their continuing relevance as Pindell works in thematic tropes over long periods of time. As we discovered upon that initial encounter, there is thematic symmetry within the artist's practice that arcs the trajectory of her career. This project isn't pure revisionism for the sake of canonization. It aims to examine one artist's creative and social output in a way that allows us to think about contemporary practices in which object making, activism, advocacy, scholarship, and self-actualization become increasingly and inextricably intertwined. As such, Pindell becomes a model for contemporary practice as well as a signifier of conflicts within different generational understandings of modes of political address. In finding her political voice, Pindell has been equally precise in her activism. She was one of the founders of the Artists in Residence (A.I.R.) Gallery at a moment when women were virtually excluded from the art scene (fig. 7), and she was involved in the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition that arose in response to the exclusion of "authentic voices" in the creation of exhibitions about African Americans. And, just as she has chronicled the lack of representation of women and diversity in museums, she has not shied away from controversy—taking on the Artists Space presentation of Donald Newman's Nigger Drawings in 1979 and, in recent years, the postmodern strategies of work by Kara Walker.

What Remains To Be Seen demonstrates Pindell's commitment to not only shape visual language, but also to imagine new histories and possibilities of being in the world.

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1 We thank Dr. Faye Gleisser for her early insights into historical developments and recurring motifs in Pindell's work.

CLEARLY SEEN: A CHRONOLOGY

Sarah Cowan

Howardena Pindell has led many lives—as artist, curator, activist, intellectual, educator, and traveler. The following chronology traces a few intertwining threads of her richly complex biography. Its antiracist focus and feminist approach honor the commitments and expansiveness of her life's work.

1526

WORLD EVENT

The Portuguese initiate the Middle Passage—the horrific transatlantic sea voyage that transports enslaved Africans to the Americas.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell examines the haunting violence of this history in several works (fig. 1).

Fig. 1

Autobiography: Water (Ancestors/Middle Passage/ Family Ghosts) (detail), 1988. Acrylic and mixed media on canvas; 118 × 71 in.

1779

WORLD EVENT

The galaxy M64 is discovered by astronomers Edward Pigott and Johann Elert Bode. An unusual light-absorbing dust ring around its bright nucleus earns it the nickname Black Eye Galaxy (fig. 2).

Fig. 2

Dust band around the nuclear of "Black Eye Galaxy" M64, 2004

LIFE EVENT

In 1982, Pindell captures the energetic swirl of the galaxy in M64 (fig. 3).

Fig. 3

M64, 1982. Mixed media on canvas; 51 × 88 in.

1885

WORLD EVENT

John Laney of Massachusetts files one of the earliest US patents for improvements to the hole punch.

LIFE EVENT

Throughout her artistic career, Pindell uses dozens of hole punches, some of them custom made, to create templates and collage elements for her paintings.

1935

WORLD EVENT

Public school teacher Howard Pindell, who will become Howardena's father, is a prospective plaintiff for a lawsuit filed by NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall in Maryland, where teachers in segregated black schools earn less than teachers and janitors in white schools.

LIFE EVENT

This family history will set an important precedent for Pindell.

1936

WORLD EVENT

The first volume of The Negro Motorist Green Book is published by mailman Victor Hugo Green. The travel guides offer food and lodging recommendations for black travelers amid the hostility and uncertainty of Jim Crow.

LIFE EVENT

In the 1950s, the Pindells encounter the dehumanizing semiotics of segregation on a road trip:

PINDELL'S WORDS

"When I was a child, I was with my father in southern Ohio or northern Kentucky, and we went to a root beer stand and they gave us mugs with red circles on the bottom to designate that the glass was to be used by a person of color. I see that as the reason I have been obsessed with the circle, using it in a way that would be positive instead of negative."[1]

WORLD EVENT

The first Fields Medal, colloquially known as the mathematician's Nobel Prize, is awarded to Lars Ahlfors.

LIFE EVENT

Mathematical figures recur in Pindell's oeuvre, evoking administrative work and conjuring her father, who kept large ledgers of figures.

1940

CULTURAL EVENT

Elizabeth Catlett becomes one of three University of Iowa students to receive the first Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degrees in the United States. She becomes an inspiration for a generation of artists, especially fellow black women.

1942
CULTURAL EVENT
Thelma Johnson Streat becomes the first African American woman to have a painting exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

1943
LIFE EVENT
Howardena Doreen Pindell is born to Howard Douglas and Mildred Pindell on April 14 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

1945
WORLD EVENT
The US drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. At least 129,000 people, mostly civilians, die within four months.

LIFE EVENT
After a visit to the decimated city nearly forty years later, Pindell makes Autobiography: Japan (Hiroshima Disguised) (p. 76, fig. 24).

1951
LIFE EVENT
Pindell begins Saturday drawing classes at Fleisher Art Memorial in Philadelphia. She has her first exhibition in 1955, at the segregated Presbyterian Church. Throughout her childhood, she visits the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

1954
WORLD EVENT
In Brown v. Board of Education, the Supreme Court rules that state-sanctioned racial segregation of public schools is unconstitutional, overturning the "separate but equal" doctrine.

LIFE EVENT
Pindell includes the language "separate but equal" in several works in the 1980s, alluding to the persistence of de facto segregation in US society.

CULTURAL EVENT
The live-action space opera series Flash Gordon, based on the popular comic strip, airs on television.

LIFE EVENT
Twenty years later, Pindell uses stills from the series in her Video Drawings.

1957
WORLD EVENT
Septima Clark, Bernice Robinson, and Esau Jenkins open the first Citizenship School on Johns Island, South Carolina. The curriculum prepares black adults to pass the literacy tests required to vote in the Deep South in these years, and empowers students to learn their constitutional rights and collectively fight racism.

1960
LIFE EVENT
High-school student Pindell participates in the picketing of Woolworth's stores in predominantly black neighborhoods of Philadelphia, organized by the Philadelphia Youth Committee Against Segregation. The group follows the example of the Woolworth's sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, where protestors brought national attention to the department store's policy of racial segregation.

1961
LIFE EVENT
Pindell begins undergraduate studies at Boston University and focuses on painting.

1963
CULTURAL EVENT
The artists' collective Spiral forms in New York City. Romare Bearden, Charles Alston, and Norman Lewis organize the group in an effort to think collectively about the meaning and purpose of art making in light of the civil rights movement. Painter Emma Amos becomes the group's youngest and only female member in 1964, as she finishes a master's degree at New York University.

WORLD EVENT
Civil rights activist Pauli Murray coins the term "Jane Crow" in her speech, "The Negro Woman in the Quest for Equality." She acknowledges the profound contributions of black women to the civil rights movement and criticizes their "little more than token inclusion" in the historic March on Washington.[2]

1965
LIFE EVENT
Pindell graduates from Boston University as a figurative painter. In the fall, she begins the MFA program at Yale, where the undergraduate college is still all male and she is initially the only person of color in her program (fig. 4).

Fig. 4

Howardena Pindell in her studio at Yale University School of Art and Architecture, New Haven, 1966

1966
WORLD EVENT
White members are expelled from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), marking what some historians see as the birth of the Black Power movement.

CULTURAL EVENT
Lucy Lippard curates Eccentric Abstraction at Fischbach Gallery in New York City. The exhibition spurs wider art world interest in postminimalist (or antiform) art.

1967

LIFE EVENT

Pindell graduates from Yale. Her classmates include Judith Bernstein and Victor Burgin, each of whom goes on to develop influential bodies of work that are politically and conceptually oriented. Pindell moves to New York City. After a trying job search, she is hired at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) as an exhibition assistant. She meets art critic Lucy Lippard, who introduces her to feminist art circles and becomes a longtime friend and supporter. Reflecting on her artistic career years later, Pindell explains that she and other artists of color belong in the center of the art world:

PINDELL'S WORDS

"I am an artist. I am not part of a so-called 'minority,' 'new,' or 'emerging,' or 'a new audience.' These are all terms used to demean, limit, and make people of color appear to be powerless."[3]

Fig. 5 Howardena Pindell in her office at the Museum of Modern Art, 1967

1968

WORLD EVENT

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated. Riots break out in several major US cities.

CULTURAL EVENT

MoMA's exhibition In Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King prompts ire for its initial failure to include any black jurors or artists. The incident, in which artists successfully agitate for museum reform, sets the stage for artist-activism in the following years.

CULTURAL EVENT

The Studio Museum in Harlem, the first museum in the US dedicated primarily to work by artists of African descent, is founded.

WORLD EVENT

The women's liberation movement is brought to broader public attention by two nationally reported protests of the Miss America beauty pageant in Atlantic City. Hundreds of women picket on the boardwalk, and at the nearby Ritz Carlton protestors crown the first Miss Black America in defiance of white beauty standards.

1969

LIFE EVENT

Pindell is promoted to curatorial assistant at MoMA. The director of the Studio Museum in Harlem, Ed Spriggs, tells her that her abstract paintings are "not black art."

CULTURAL EVENT

The Art Workers' Coalition (AWC) forms in New York City. The group pressures art museums, especially MoMA, to implement policy reforms regarding racial and gender equality and divestment from industries sustaining the Vietnam War.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell attends several AWC meetings but finds its members are suspicious of her employment at MoMA.

CULTURAL EVENT

Harlem on My Mind opens at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, provoking heated criticism for its representation of Harlem through documentary photography rather than the artistic production of its predominantly black residents. The Black Emergency Cultural Coalition (BECC) forms and organizes protests.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell becomes involved in related work the following year.

WORLD EVENT

Following a series of airplane hijackings between Cuba and the US (in 1968, at least eighteen such incidents occurred), Pindell paints a variation of the Cuban flag in Untitled (1969; fig. 6).

Fig. 6 *Untitled*, 1969. Acrylic on canvas; 40 1/2 × 48 in.

1970

CULTURAL EVENT

In response to demands from the BECC, MoMA establishes the Byers Committee to investigate racial exclusion in museum acquisitions and exhibitions.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell joins the committee and compiles statistical information about artists' nationalities—a skill she uses again in her later activist work.

1970 (CONT.)

LIFE EVENT

Pindell sprays acrylic paint through hole-punched oak tag templates to create “veils” of multicolored dots on large, dark canvases (and saves the oak tag chads for later use). She completes her first soft sculpture, a hand-sewn stuffed grid (figs. 7, 8).

Fig. 7 Howardena Pindell in her studio, in front of hole-punched templates, c. 1972

Fig. 8 Howardena Pindell in her studio, in front of *Untitled* (1968–70), c. 1972

CULTURAL EVENT

German-born US artist Eva Hesse dies at the age of thirty-four from a brain tumor.

LIFE EVENT

Hesse’s work has been an artistic touchstone for Pindell, and her premature death provokes the younger artist to take precautions with her materials, researching their effects on the human body.

CULTURAL EVENT

Thanks to pressure applied by artist-activists Poppy Johnson, Lucy Lippard, Faith Ringgold, and others, the Whitney Museum of American Art exhibits artworks by African American women for the first time, featuring works by Barbara Chase-Riboud and Betye Saar in its Annual, the precursor to the Whitney Biennial.

WORLD EVENT

Comet Bennett (fig. 9), a brilliant long-tailed comet visible to the naked eye for several months, is scheduled to be photographed from space by Apollo 13 when a malfunction causes the spacecraft to return to Earth.

Fig. 9 Comet Bennett, 1970

1970 (CONT.)

LIFE EVENT

Pindell, who comes of age during the Cold War space race, references astronomy throughout her oeuvre (fig. 10).

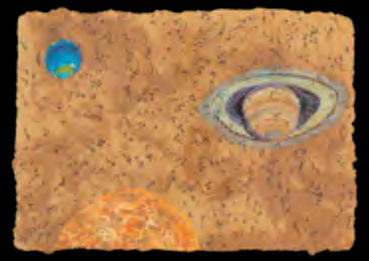


Fig. 10 *Astronomy: Saturn, Neptune*, 2006. Ink, acrylic, and gouache on paper; 9 1/4 × 11 3/4 in.

1971

LIFE EVENT

The exhibition Paintings and Drawings by Howardena Pindell and Vincent Smith opens at Spelman College, a historically black women’s college in Atlanta, Georgia. Pindell shows sprayed acrylic works on canvas and paper.

CULTURAL EVENT

Lucy Lippard organizes 26 Contemporary Women Artists at the Aldrich Museum—an exhibition comprised exclusively of women artists who have not yet received solo exhibitions in New York City. Pindell’s soft sculpture grid and two paintings are included.

CULTURAL EVENT

The Whitney comes under fire for its staging of Contemporary Black Artists in America. Sixteen artists withdraw from the exhibition as the museum, in their eyes, fails to employ black curatorial expertise and rushes its selection process.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell participates in the exhibition—her first opportunity to show in a major New York museum.

CULTURAL EVENT

The artists’ group Where We At: Black Women Artists forms in New York with members including Kay Brown, Vivian Browne, Dindga McCannon, and Faith Ringgold. In exhibitions and community events, the group creates an empowering environment for black women artists and promotes themes such as the unity of the black family.

WORLD EVENT

Major League Baseball schedules the first World Series night game in an effort to attract primetime television audiences.

LIFE EVENT

As televised night slots gain currency, Pindell is able to use MLB broadcasts in her Video Drawings.

1972

CULTURAL EVENT

The first women’s cooperative gallery in New York City, Artists in Residence (A.I.R.), is formed.

1972 (CONT.)

LIFE EVENT

Pindell is a cofounding member and helps to devise the group's name, a term firefighters use to designate artists' living quarters in old warehouses (fig. 11).

Fig. 11

A.I.R. members, 1973

LIFE EVENT

Pindell begins inking numbers onto hole-punched scraps, or chads, she has saved in garbage bags in her studio. She adheres the small dots to graph paper and mat board to make monochromatic compositions. Some incorporate sewing thread as well.

CULTURAL EVENT

The exhibition African Textiles and Decorative Arts debuts at MoMA.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell visits the show dozens of times and is inspired to further study African art.

1973

LIFE EVENT

Pindell travels to five African countries with Metropolitan Museum of Art educator Lowery Stokes Sims. They visit artists' workshops, libraries, and universities. Pindell writes to friends Lucy Lippard and Charles Simonds from Nairobi:

PINDELL'S WORDS

"I will return forever changed. We are so ignorant of Africa. Kenya is full of contradictions."[4]

LIFE EVENT

Pindell makes colorful collaged works on paper. When her eyes become strained from the detail, she purchases a color television set and starts the Video Drawings series.

WORLD EVENT

In Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court rules that the bans and restrictions that most states place on abortion are unconstitutional.

1974

LIFE EVENT

Pindell begins her first abstract, unstretched canvases. The large, lightly hued paintings are punctuated by vibrant, confetti-like chads. Pindell later sees her decision to unstretch her paintings as a direct result of her exposure to African textiles in the preceding years.

1974 (CONT.)

CULTURAL EVENT

Lowery Stokes Sims becomes the first African American curator at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

1975

LIFE EVENT

Pindell receives a grant from the French government to live and work in Cité des Arts in Paris; she also travels to India.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell withdraws from A.I.R. She later recalls feeling unsupported by her mostly white colleagues, who preferred not to discuss the relevance of racism to feminism.

CULTURAL EVENT

Linda Goode-Bryant opens Just Above Midtown (JAM), the first space in a major gallery district in Manhattan to show artists of color. JAM becomes an influential home for artistic experimentation and camaraderie. It supports artists such as David Hammons, Senga Nengudi, Lorraine O'Grady, and Pindell.

1976

CULTURAL EVENT

Ntozake Shange's first work, for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf, debuts on Broadway. In it, seven women narrate painful memories of racism and sexism, as well as empowering revelations.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell later befriends Shange.

CULTURAL EVENT

Lucy Lippard publishes From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art. The book follows her groundbreaking work on conceptual art (Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966–1972) and brings feminist art and criticism to a larger audience.

1977

LIFE EVENT

Pindell begins to make "cut and sewn" paintings—large works constructed from strips of canvas that are sewn together, collaged with chads, glitter, and cat hair, and spritzed with perfume. She is promoted to associate curator of prints and illustrated books at MoMA.

CULTURAL EVENT

The television miniseries Roots airs, garnering one of the largest audiences in broadcast history. Adapted from a 1976 novel, it dramatizes author Alex Haley's family lineage beginning with the enslavement of his ancestor Kunta Kinte.

1978

CULTURAL EVENT

Audre Lorde publishes The Black Unicorn, a book of poetry that explores the mythos of African female deities.

LIFE EVENT

Soon thereafter, Pindell makes the painting Feast Day of Iemanja (p. 62, fig. 12) in honor of an Afro-Brazilian celebration of the Yoruba water goddess.

1979

CULTURAL EVENT

Artists Space, a nonprofit gallery in Manhattan, holds an exhibition titled The Nigger Drawings, a solo show of charcoal drawings by young white artist Donald Newman.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell protests with fellow artists and writers in Action Against Racism in the Arts as the exhibition sparks heated debate around racial inequality and censorship (figs. 12, 13).

Fig. 12 Open letter to Artists Space, signed by Carl Andre, Amy Baker, Rudolf Baranik, Edit DeAk, Cliff Josephs, Kate Linker, Lucy Lippard, Howardena Pindell, Faith Ringgold, Ingrid Sischy, May Stevens, and Tony Whitfield, March 5, 1979

Fig. 13 Black Emergency Cultural Coalition flyer, 1979

PINDELL'S WORDS

"The white artists and their supporters felt they had their First Amendment right to express their racism. (We did not, on the other hand, have the right to express our outrage.) Protest was viewed as censorship, yet there was no concern that artists of color were censored out of the system."[5]

LIFE EVENT

Deeply alienated from her coworkers over the Artists Space controversy, Pindell resigns from MoMA. She becomes an associate professor in the Art Department at Stony Brook University.

LIFE EVENT

Soon thereafter, she sustains injuries and short-term amnesia in a serious automobile collision. In an attempt to regain her memory and recover from the physical and emotional trauma of the accident, she shifts her art toward the autobiographical.

1980

LIFE EVENT

Pindell makes her first video and performance work, Free, White and 21, which examines white feminists' hypocritical blindness to racial oppression. The video cuts between the artist performing two roles—as the Artist, she recounts anecdotes attesting to antiblack racism; as the White Woman, she appears in whiteface and a blond wig and denies the experiences recounted by the Artist.

PINDELL'S WORDS

In whiteface: "I hear your experiences and I think well . . . it's gotta be in your art in a way that we consider valid. . . . If your symbols aren't used in a way that we use them, then we won't acknowledge them. In fact, you won't exist until we validate you"[6] (fig. 14).

Fig. 14 Still from Howardena Pindell, *Free, White and 21*, 1980. U-matic (color, sound)

LIFE EVENT

Pindell initiates the Autobiography series, a body of work drawn from her personal and family histories with themes of spirituality, racism, multiculturalism, and travel.

CULTURAL EVENT

Artists Ana Mendieta, Kazuko Miyamoto, and Zarina curate Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States at A.I.R. Held at what was generally considered a white feminist gallery, the show marks a multicultural opening in the New York feminist art world.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell participates with Free, White and 21.

1981

LIFE EVENT

Pindell becomes a tenured professor at Stony Brook and receives a U.S./Japan Friendship Commission Fellowship to spend seven months in Japan (fig. 15).

Fig. 15 Howardena Pindell in Kamakura, Japan, 1981

1981 (CONT.)

LIFE EVENT

Pindell takes inspiration for her Autobiography series from two influential black feminist texts—bell hooks's Ain't I a Woman and Gloria I. Joseph and Jill Lewis's Common Differences: Conflicts in Black and White Feminist Perspectives.

WORLD EVENT

Amid widening income inequality, Callahan v. Carey compels New York City to provide shelter for the homeless.

LIFE EVENT

Homelessness becomes a theme in Pindell's work later in the decade, as the city struggles to comply with the court ruling (fig. 16).

Fig. 16

Rambo Real Estate: Homelessness, 1987. Acrylic, newspaper, vinyl tape, and tempera on paper; 45 × 42 in.

WORLD EVENT

The first official reports of the AIDS epidemic appear.

LIFE EVENT

Like many artists in New York, Pindell loses numerous friends to AIDS-related illnesses in subsequent years.

1982

LIFE EVENT

Pindell finishes her first shaped postcard painting, part of the ongoing Autobiography series. She paints narrow areas between cut strips of postcard, fusing her meticulous handiwork with touristic representations. The bulbous paintings (similar to a fish-eye lens) trace Pindell's circuitous itineraries through foreign lands.

CULTURAL EVENT

A special issue of Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics titled "Racism Is the Issue" addresses the persistence of racism in US culture at large and in the women's movement in particular. Black women artists, including Pindell, Emma Amos, Vivian Browne, Lorraine O'Grady, and Lorna Simpson, contribute articles and artwork to the issue.

LIFE EVENT

In her article "An American Black Woman Artist in a Japanese Garden," Pindell describes the survival strategies she developed as she encountered racism and prejudice during her fellowship period in Japan:

PINDELL'S WORDS

"What kept me alive and alert in the midst of intense stress was a determination not to cave in to other peoples' unfortunate behavior—what nourished me and gave me energy was the extraordinary beauty I found in the traditional Japanese way of organizing space, images, and color and the brief refuge of peace I found in the Japanese gardens resplendent with the changes of the seasons."[7]

1983

LIFE EVENT

Pindell receives a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in painting and travels to India.

1984

LIFE EVENT

Pindell becomes a full professor at Stony Brook University.

1985

CULTURAL EVENT

The Guerrilla Girls, an anonymous feminist artist collective, forms in response to MoMA's International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture. The artist-activists bring eye-catching graphic design and tongue-in-cheek humor to printed materials intended to educate the public about art-world gender and racial discrimination.

CULTURAL EVENT

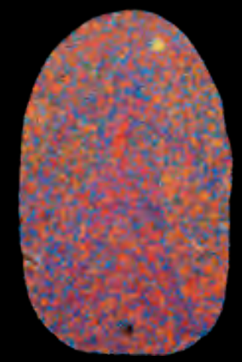
Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta dies under suspicious circumstances at the age of thirty-six. Pindell, like many friends and fellow artists, is deeply disturbed by the violent death. Mendieta's husband, artist Carl Andre, is charged with the murder but eventually acquitted by a judge.

1986

LIFE EVENT

For the first time in two decades, Pindell depicts her own likeness in a painting (fig. 17).

Fig. 17



Autobiography: Fire (Suttee), 1986–87. Mixed media on canvas; 90 × 56 in.

1986 (CONT.)

CULTURAL EVENT

A major solo exhibition of Pindell's work, Odyssey, opens at the Studio Museum in Harlem.

LIFE EVENT

In a talk at Hunter College titled "Art World Racism," Pindell uses statistics to examine the persistence of racial bias in art museums, galleries, and magazines.

PINDELL'S WORDS

> "There is a closed circle which links museums, galleries, auction houses, collectors, critics, and art magazines . . . As a result of the closed, nepotistic, interlocking network, artists of color face an industry-wide 'restraint of trade.'"[8]

CULTURAL EVENT

Inspired by Pindell's "Art World Racism," an anonymous collective of women of color splinter from Guerrilla Girls to form PESTS. They publish newsletters and create posters to highlight artists of color and racial discrimination. Emblematized by a wasp, PESTS promises to "bug the art world" (fig. 18).

Fig. 18 PESTS, *Newsletter* 1, no. 2 (1987)

1987

WORLD EVENT

The AIDS crisis is increasingly publicly visible. AZT (zidovudine) becomes the first antiretroviral drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) forms and stages its first demonstrations in New York City, and the AIDS Quilt is displayed on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

1988

LIFE EVENT

In Autobiography: Water (Ancestors/Middle Passage/Family Ghosts) (p. 179, fig. 8), Pindell uses text in a new way, attending to its specific meaning rather than its formal qualities.

1988 (CONT.)

LIFE EVENT

Pindell curates Autobiography: In Her Own Image, a traveling exhibition of contemporary art by women of color, including Emma Amos, Camille Billops, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Ana Mendieta, Lorna Simpson, and Kay WalkingStick.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell begins the War series, video drawings exploring racism and US foreign policy.

CULTURAL EVENT

Along with works by David Hammons, Adrian Piper, and Joyce Scott, Pindell's War works are censored from the exhibition Art as a Verb (Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore) at the behest of corporate sponsors—an early scuffle in the culture wars.

1989

CULTURAL EVENT

Law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw coins the term "intersectionality," giving a new name to the complexly intertwined oppressions of racism and sexism faced by black women.

1990

CULTURAL EVENT

Amid the culture wars, conservative lawmakers decry the use of taxpayer dollars to support Andres Serrano's provocative photograph Piss Christ.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell writes "De Facto Censorship: A Covenant of Silence" in response to the controversy. She had supported the work as a juror in a 1986 visual arts competition. In the article, she argues that de facto censorship of artists of color is a form of propaganda and that we must:

PINDELL'S WORDS

> "address the issue of racism and power and how they are intertwined or fused in order to reproduce and normalize oppression to maintain the power of a few."[9]

WORLD EVENT

The Gulf War begins as a thirty-five-nation coalition led by the US responds to Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell's "Till Birnam Wood Remove to Dunsinane" (Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 3) (fig. 19) meditates on the cynical compartmentalization that allows most Americans to ignore the terrible reality of war.

Fig. 19 *"Till Birnam Wood Remove to Dunsinane" (Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 3)* (detail), 1991. Mixed media on canvas; 51 × 88 in.

1992

CULTURAL EVENT

Howardena Pindell: A Retrospective, curated by Georgia Coopersmith, Director of the Longwood Fine Arts Center, and organized by ExhibitsUSA, is the artist's first traveling solo show, and is exhibited at the Rose Art Museum. It incorporates both her writing and visual artwork for the first time.

LIFE EVENT

Five hundred years after the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the "New World," Pindell finishes Columbus (fig. 20). The collaged painting memorializes the "enthusiastic pursuit of genocide" that his voyage initiated and that heroic mythology has disguised.[10]

Fig. 20

Columbus, 1991–92. Mixed media on canvas; 88 × 97 in.

CULTURAL EVENT

Camille Billops, friend and sometime-collaborator of Pindell, receives the Grand Jury Prize for documentaries at the Sundance Film Festival for her autobiographical film Finding Christa. In addition to being a filmmaker, Billops had long established herself as a pioneering visual artist, activist, and documentarian of black life and culture.

1995

WORLD EVENT

US diver Greg Louganis announces that he received an HIV diagnosis in 1988—prior to the Seoul Olympics, where he famously won two gold medals after sustaining a head injury in a preliminary round.

LIFE EVENT

Ensuing public debates around HIV/AIDS and rights to privacy bring new meaning to Pindell's Video Drawings of divers.

1996

CULTURAL EVENT

Spelman College presents Bearing Witness, a landmark exhibition of the work of twenty-five contemporary African American women.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell participates in the show.

WORLD EVENT

More cases of HIV/AIDS occur among black Americans than any other racial or ethnic group, pointing to a significant racial disparity in disease-prevention resources.

LIFE EVENT

In an earlier work, Separate But Equal Genocide: AIDS (p. 78, fig. 25), Pindell alludes to the growing gulf between white and black experiences of the epidemic.

1997

LIFE EVENT

A collection of Pindell's writings, The Heart of the Question, is published. It brings together insights gained over three decades as a curator, activist, traveler, and artist.

PINDELL'S WORDS

"The artworld does not want artists of color to be full participants; therefore, I sustain myself through sheer tenacity. The goal of my work is to share knowledge. I do not see art and life as separate."[11]

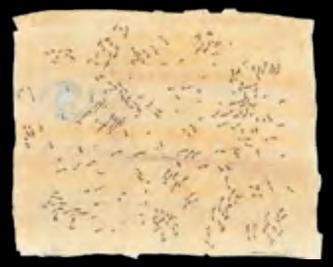
WORLD EVENT

Comet Hale-Bopp is visible to the naked eye for a record eighteen months.

LIFE EVENT

Pindell later makes Astronomy: Northern Hemisphere (May 2000) (fig. 21), which depicts the night sky as the comet recedes from visibility.

Fig. 21



Astronomy: Northern Hemisphere (May 2000), 2000–2001. Ink, acrylic, and gouache on paper; 12 3/4 × 16 3/4 in.

CULTURAL EVENT

At twenty-eight years old, artist Kara Walker becomes the youngest recipient of the MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant. Pindell, Betye Saar, and other established artists protest the attention lavished on Walker's controversial cut silhouettes, which feature racial caricatures and negative stereotypes.

PINDELL'S WORDS

"Kara Walker's work is being used as a weapon against the Black community in general to reinforce and maintain restrictions upon any visual dialogue with other artists of color and the wide range of work they produce."[12]

1999

WORLD EVENT

Unarmed twenty-three-year-old Amadou Diallo is shot and killed by four NYPD officers. Public outrage intensifies when a jury acquits the officers of second-degree murder.

LIFE EVENT

In response, Pindell paints Diallo (fig. 22); forty-one small dots of paint, nineteen of them red, represent the shots fired and the bullets that struck Diallo.

1999 (CONT.)

Fig. 22

Diallo, 2000. Mixed media on canvas; 46 × 40 in.

2000

WORLD EVENT — Unarmed twenty-six-year-old Patrick Dorismond is killed by an undercover NYPD officer.

LIFE EVENT — Pindell includes Dorismond's name in the 2000 painting Diallo.

WORLD EVENT — During the Florida recount of the 2000 US presidential election, chad becomes a household word denoting the remnant created by punching a hole in paper or other material.

LIFE EVENT — Extensive news coverage of contested ballots with "hanging" and "pregnant" chads brings new meaning to Pindell's idiosyncratic artistic material.

2004

WORLD EVENT — NASA launches the unmanned spacecraft Cassini-Huygens, which beams hundreds of thousands of images of Saturn and its satellites to Earth.

LIFE EVENT — Pindell makes several works depicting Saturn in subsequent years.

2005

WORLD EVENT — Hurricane Katrina makes landfall on the Gulf Coast. Levee breaches in New Orleans leave tens of thousands stranded without food or water as the federal government responds sluggishly to the crisis.

LIFE EVENT — Pindell's Katrina Footprints Drawn (p. 84, fig. 29) marks the swirling physical, psychic, and political motion caused by the storm.

2006

CULTURAL EVENT — Two exhibitions introduce a new generation of the art-viewing public to Pindell's work—Kellie Jones's Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction 1964–1980 and Katy Siegel's High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting 1967–1975.

WORLD EVENT — Krakatoa: Volcano of Destruction, a television drama, tells the story of the active volcanic island of Indonesia.

2006 (CONT.)

LIFE EVENT — The following year, Pindell creates a collaged mixed-media work that transforms her signature chads into red and black lava flows (p. 82, fig. 28).

2007

CULTURAL EVENT — WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution becomes the first major institutional exhibition to survey feminist art.

LIFE EVENT — Pindell appears in the show and its indispensable catalogue.

2008

WORLD EVENT — Barack Obama becomes the first black American elected President of the United States.

2012

WORLD EVENT — DNA home kits gain popularity and become more affordable.

LIFE EVENT — Pindell makes the print series Pindell/DNA (fig. 23) in response to her experience learning about her genetic ancestry.

Fig. 23

Pindell/DNA, 2012. Offset lithograph, edition 9/40; 22 × 14 1/4 in.

2014

CULTURAL EVENT — A solo show at Garth Greenan Gallery, her first in New York City in nearly a decade, renews critical interest in Pindell's paintings and drawings of the 1970s.

2016

CULTURAL EVENT — The National Museum of African American History and Culture opens after decades of activist pressure.

2016 (CONT.)

LIFE EVENT

Pindell's Separate But Equal Genocide: Apartheid (fig. 24) appears in the inaugural exhibition.

Fig. 24

Separate But Equal Genocide: Apartheid, 1990–91. Mixed media; 24 × 21 1/2 in.

2017

CULTURAL EVENT

Two exhibitions, the Brooklyn Museum's We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85 and the Tate Modern's Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power, bring together works by black artists of the black and women's liberation movements.

LIFE EVENT

Works by Pindell appear in both exhibitions.

2018

CULTURAL EVENT

The first major survey of Pindell's work, Howardena Pindell: What Remains To Be Seen, curated by Naomi Beckwith and Valerie Cassel Oliver, opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and travels to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Rose Art Museum.

1 Howardena Pindell, "Artist's Statement," in *High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting 1967–1975*, ed. Katy Siegel (New York: Independent Curators International, 2006), 105.
2 Pauli Murray, "The Negro Woman in the Quest for Equality," paper presented at the Leadership Conference, National Council of Negro Women, Washington, D.C., November 1963.
3 Howardena Pindell, "Art World Racism—A Documentation," in *The Heart of the Question: The Writings and Paintings of Howardena Pindell* (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1997), 16.
4 Howardena Pindell, postcard to Lucy Lippard and Charles Simonds from Nairobi, Kenya, July 24, 1973. Lucy R. Lippard papers, 1930s–2010, bulk 1960s–1990, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
5 Pindell, "Art World Racism," in *The Heart of the Question*, 19.
6 Pindell, "Free, White and 21," in *The Heart of the Question*, 69.
7 Howardena Pindell, "An American Black Woman in a Japanese Garden," *Heresies* 4, no. 3 (1982), 55.
8 Pindell, "Art World Racism," in *The Heart of the Question*, 7, 18.
9 Pindell, "Covenant of Silence," in *The Heart of the Question*, 35.
10 Howardena Pindell, "Columbus," in *Howardena Pindell: Paintings and Drawings* (Potsdam: Roland Gibson Gallery, Potsdam College of the State University of New York, 1992), 63.
11 Pindell, in the foreword to *The Heart of the Question*, ix.
12 Howardena Pindell, "Diaspora/Strategies/Realities," *n.paradoxa online* 7 (July 1998), at docplayer.net/25630947-N-paradoxa-online-issue-7-july-1998.html.

SYNTHESIS AND INTEGRATION IN THE WORK OF HOWARDENA PINDELL, 1972–1992: A (RE) CONSIDERATION

Lowery Stokes Sims

This essay revisits an earlier text published in the catalogue for the exhibition Howardena Pindell: Paintings and Drawings, which surveyed the artist's work between 1972 and 1992.[1] The original text referenced curator Terrie Rouse's comparison of Pindell's career with the adventures of the Homerian hero Odysseus.[2] Certainly the artist's travels within this twenty-year period to several East and West African countries (1973), Egypt (1974), France and India (1975), Brazil (1977), Japan (1982), India (1984), the former Soviet Union (1988), and England and France (1989) not only provided subject matter for her work, but also inspired different approaches to materials and techniques. As Pindell has noted, she "sought solace during these trips in studying and practicing, in some cases, universal spiritual traditions as a link to understanding the culture" and as a means to find "alternative modes of living, thinking and seeing."[3]

Howardena Pindell is one of several black artists—including Al Loving, William T. Williams, Sam Gilliam, Frank Bowling, Joe Overstreet, McArthur Binion, and Peter Bradley—who established their presence in the art world in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They found their individual expressions within the prevailing modes of geometric and coloristic abstraction, but because this was the height of the civil rights movement, they were confronted with simplistic designations of their work as "black art" and, by implication, "political art."[4] They were also pitted against their fellow African American artists—Dana Chandler, Jeff Donaldson, Nelson Stevens, Wadsworth Jarrell—who gravitated toward more polemical, culturally referential figuration and, in some circles, were seen as truly representing the black experience.

The dynamics of this era are captured by Susan Cahan in her revealing 2016 study Mounting Frustration: The Art Museum in the Age of Black Power, where she indicates the degree to which this split in the black art community was encumbered with destructive psychological connotations as museums attempted to respond to demands to open their doors to blacks and women. She records the opinion of Robert Doty—who organized the controversial 1971 exhibition Contemporary Black Artists in America at the Whitney Museum—that abstraction represented a "higher" state of intellectual achievement on the part of African Americans.[5] He thus played into racist views about the capabilities of black people by presuming to adjudicate criteria by which they would be deemed worthy of inclusion in the greater white world.

This scenario seems to be playing out again in 2017 as black artists once again question appropriate stylistic choices in light of what artist and writer Chloé Bass describes as "the major failures of social relation, resulting in an escalation of violence, that categorize the United States in the current moment."[6] As older black abstractionists of Pindell's generation—such as Binion, Loving, Stanley Whitney, Jack Whitten, and Mel Edwards—gain traction in the art world after the extended era of postmodernist identity indulgences, and a younger generation—represented by Tomashi Jackson and Jennie C. Jones—make a strong bid for attention, the viability of abstract art is once again being interrogated. Coalitions such as Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter have unequivocally affirmed their focus "on the interdependence of care and action, invisibility and visibility, self-defense and self-determination, and desire and possibility in order to highlight and disavow pervasive conditions of racism."[7] As we will see, faced with such issues four decades ago, along with feminist identity before the model of intersectionality became current, Howardena Pindell admirably found a way to deal with them by progressively narrowing the gap between herself as the creator of her subject matter and herself as the subject matter of her art.

ESTABLISHING A STYLE

In the early 1970s, Pindell was leading a double life as an artist and a curator in the Department of Drawings and Prints at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. She had completed her MFA at Yale University in 1967, and at that time one of the key references for her work was the elliptical imagery of Larry Poons. She evolved into a skilled practitioner of color-field techniques, creating paintings of subtly nuanced space and atmosphere, as seen in Untitled (1970; p. 92, fig. 4). But by the mid-1970s it was clear that she had begun to rethink her approach to her art, which now involved processes of construction/destruction/reconstruction.

Fig. 1

Untitled #20, 1974. Mixed media on board; 12 × 9 5/8 in.

Fig. 2

Video Drawings: Swimming, 1973–76. Chromogenic print; 11 × 14 in.

Fig. 3

Video Drawings: Baseball, 1973–76. Chromogenic print; 11 × 14 in.

Pindell began to move away from the stretched canvas and would often cut the canvas into strips and sew them back together. This created registers or interwoven surfaces on which she would build up the surface in elaborate stages. She would paint a sheet of paper, punch out dots from it, drop the dots onto her canvas, and finally squeegee paint through the matrix left in the paper from which she had punched the dots. She also punched and collaged dots along with talcum powder onto paper, graph paper, and other semi-translucent sheets that evoked the vellum of papyrus. As seen in Untitled #20 (1974; fig. 1), Pindell suspended threads anchored by nails that signposted the junctures of the grids across the sheets or boards they were mounted on. The gravity-defying dots were allowed to accumulate along the length of the nails to the threads. She would often hang them so that they swung free, instead of encasing them in mat board, glass, and frame. Thus a spatial dimension was evident as the seeming randomness of the dots within the individual squares of graph paper evoked chaos within order. Pindell took the grid to Oldenburgian (as in Claes) scale in Untitled (1968–70; p. 139, fig. 2), a large, slack grid constructed from stuffed and rolled canvas casing. All of these works, however, are united in concept and spirit by Pindell confronting anew the challenge that preoccupied American artists in New York in the 1940s: how to reconcile structure and automatism.

Pindell found another approach to this deconstructivist attitude in the Video Drawings that she created from photographs taken directly from the television screen. The images emphasize the graininess of the electronically transmitted image, breaking them down so that we begin to focus on the structure of matter transmitted as electronic pulses. She found a substitute for her collaged dots in the individual pixels of the video drawing images, which—as she often did with the dots—she numbered nonsequentially. She once joked that the numbers on the dots were a response to queries about how many dots there were in her work. Also, given the variety of images Pindell had at her disposal, this became a particularly effective medium for political commentary, as she added numbers, directional lines, and subtitles to the photographs.

Fig. 4

Video Drawings: Hockey, 1975. Chromogenic print; framed: 8 × 10 in.

She has worked on the Video Drawings intermittently since 1973. As seen in the selection of images in this volume, the early versions focused on sporting events—swimming, hockey, baseball (figs. 2–4); the notations took on the character of play-by-play charts here conceived of as some greater cosmic event. There are also sly images based on science fiction—Flash Gordon, Metropolis (figs. 5, 6); and images from the 1980s respond to reportage of geopolitical atrocities—torture, famine, apartheid, displacement in Cambodia, Vietnam, South Africa, and the Sudan (figs. 7–10). On these and other images of political duplicity—War: The “L” Word (George Bush) and War: A Thousand Points of Light (both 1988; fig. 11 and p. 166, fig. 14)—the numbering serves to remind us of the magnitude of suffering in the world, while the ironic labeling reinforces the pungency of Pindell’s observations.

Fig.
5

Video Drawings: Science Fiction, 1973–76.
Chromogenic print; 11 × 14 in.

Fig.
6

Video Drawings: Science Fiction (Metropolis), 1975.
Chromogenic print; 4 1/2 × 6 1/2 in.

Fig. 7

War: Cambodia (Over 5 Million Killed), 1988. Chromogenic print; 8 × 10 in.

Fig. 8

War: Starvation (Sudan #1), 1988. Chromogenic print; 18 × 24 in.

Fig. 9

War: Agent Orange (Vietnam #1), 1988.
Chromogenic print; 18 × 24 in.

Fig. 10

War: South Africa #1, 1988.
Chromogenic print; 18 × 24 in.

Fig. 11

War: The "L" Word (George Bush), 1988. Chromogenic print; 18 × 24 in.

By the later 1970s, a colorist impulse invaded Pindell's work, and brilliantly colored sequins were added as "atomizing" elements. This development may be attributed to her 1977 visit to Brazil, where she again encountered Africa, this time in the orisha culture of Candomblé. In 1981, she exhibited December 31, 1980: Brazil: Feast of Iemanja (1980) in Afro-American Abstraction: An Exhibition of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture by Nineteen Black American Artists,[8] a groundbreaking show organized by April Kingsley. The shimmering surface of this painting, like that of Feast Day of Iemanja II December 31, 1980 (1980; fig. 12) seen here, evokes the coquettish goddess of the sea, who, along with her Haitian counterpart Erzulie and the West African synthesis Mami Wata, rules the destinies of lovers.[9] The date in the title, December 31, refers to the Brazilian New Year's Eve ritual of young lovers sending lit candles on paper boats out into the ocean as a sacrifice to Iemanja.

Following:
Feast Day of Iemanja II December 31, 1980, 1980. Acrylic, dye, paper, powder, thread, glitter, and sequins on canvas; 86 × 103 in.

Fig.
12

Fig. 13

Hunter's tunic, Bamana culture, Mali, 19th–20th century. Strip cloth, various attached talismans; 33 1/2 × 50 in.

Fig. 14

Groupe Bogoloan Kasobane, *Plantes du Jardin* (Garden Plants), 2003. Vegetable dye on cotton; 69 5/8 × 35 1/2 in.

Fig. 15

West African cloth, late 20th century. Resist-dyed cotton; 65 1/2 × 44 1/2 in.

In retrospect, it seems logical to read these techniques and approaches to materials as related to the deconstruction of the language of minimalism and formalism along the lines of Miriam Schapiro's use of patterned fabric to create paintings, and the deployment of craft and domestic arts such as embroidery and crochet in the ambitious projects of Judy Chicago. But there is an important and highly personal cultural component to these changes in Pindell's work. As she recalled, during that period she realized that there was a structural connection between her loosely hung strip-constructed canvases and African textiles, which were exhibited in African Textiles and Decorative Arts at the Museum of Modern Art in 1972–73—just before she and I took a trip to West Africa.[10]

In her introduction to the catalogue of the Afro-American Abstraction exhibition, Kingsley took note of the association of Pindell's work with encrusted textile surfaces such as those of hunter's tunics (fig. 13), or the Malian quilting technique of gauffage (fig. 14). Three years later, writing about adornment and embellishment in African art, Pindell herself would provide a critical context for her own work, noting how surface tension in textures would be created through the application of beadwork "in which the clustered and rippling effect is caused by the beads' relation to the support fabric, as well as by the building up of tension in the warp and woof of the network armature of threads . . . Figure and ground relationships also scintillate and may reverse, heightening the visual surface tension as the sense of background and foreground dissolve."[11] A group of resist prints from the Ivory Coast, included in the MoMA exhibition (fig. 15), featured circular patterns/dots set in registers on the surface that were slightly askew, similar to the seemingly random positioning of those seen in Pindell's 1968 work on paper Gray Space Frame (fig. 16). Pindell also remembered being particularly attracted to the beadwork shown in the MoMA exhibition because as a young girl she had fabricated beaded pins, which she sold to her classmates in elementary school. One of the highlights of our trip to Africa was a session bargaining for trade beads on the lawn of the residence of the American ambassador to Ghana.

Fig. 16

Gray Space Frame, 1968. Ink and cray-pas on paper; 17 × 22 in.

Pindell's interest in textiles predicts the work of contemporary African artists particularly in the twenty-first century who have looked to textiles as media within which to explore postcolonial issues, identity politics, and aesthetics. As Pindell noted in 1984, "In Africa, the geometry and texture of the individual human body engages in an ever-changing dialogue with the adornment selected by the wearer. Placing the objects on zones of the body, the wearer is able to convey messages not only of beauty or sexual allure, but also of status, rank, age, tribal identification, and aesthetics, as well as of a state of mind or a desire to placate or seek protection from the environment."[12] This was amply demonstrated in the 2008 exhibition The Poetics of Cloth: African Textiles/Recent Art,[13] seen at the Grey Art Gallery at New York University, which witnessed how contemporary African art textiles have emerged from the shadow of traditional sculpture and masks: from El Anatsui's textile-inspired metal wall pieces, to Yinka Shonibare's signature use of Dutch wax-resist prints produced in Holland for West Africa since the mid-nineteenth century in sculptures and tableaux that reveal the intricate interactions between Africa and Europe, to Grace Ndiritu's videos in which she adapts the movements of contemporary dance to conceal and reveal her body as she manipulates swaths of African print fabric.

These perceptions and developments in Pindell's work occurred at a time when assertions of connections between artists' ethnicity and their work would not have been widely countenanced in the art world. But Pindell herself has always been actively involved in a process of self-reclamation and definition in both her art and her life. She has gradually peeled away the layers of obfuscation with which assimilation and acculturation have disguised her multi-ethnic background. While questions of identity and antecedence have challenged artists of African American descent for at least 150 years, in Pindell's case the question came full circle during this period of her career.

SYNTHESIS

By 1979, Pindell had left her job at the Museum of Modern Art to teach full time at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. At the time, the change was welcome because at last her artwork could become the central focus of her life. Just a few months after Pindell began her new job, however, she was involved as a passenger in an automobile accident that injured her head and left her contending with memory loss. In a situation that would have daunted a less determined soul, Pindell faced the problem head on and came up with a solution by which she would recycle postcards to reclaim her present. An inveterate collector of such ephemera, she now deployed them in an investigation that became the extensive body of Autobiography works. As seen in Autobiography: Japan (Pagoda Forest), East/West (Bamboo Forest), India (Shiva, Ganges), and India (Lakshmi) (figs. 17–21), Pindell has definitely gravitated to what she described as "more natural shapes" such as the "circle/oval [which] has become more biomorphic, less symmetrical, generated by some internal intuition of nature."[14] In these works, Pindell segments the postcard images that splay out form through the repetition of discretely progressive views of a scene (similar to the technique of Jirí Kolár). This can also be seen in her manipulation of photographs in Autobiography: Egypt (Cairo Residential, 1974) (1989; p. 132, fig. 14) and Autobiography: Switzerland (Road to Lucerne) (1989; fig. 22).

In 1982, Pindell participated in The UFO Show organized by artist and UFO researcher Budd Hopkins at the Queens Museum. She showed a work that consisted of a series of upstretched ovoid canvas shapes "adorned" with her habitual encrustations of dot forms, but now embedded in the surfaces were momentary breaks within which one could see views of various places. The ovals of canvases became floating worlds in some pre-Galilean universe, or—alternately—nebulae of solar systems. She notes that the eccentricity of these shapes was probably the result of her having navigated the asymmetrical, mazelike spaces of Japan,[15] as seen in Autobiography: Japan (Hiroshima Disguised) (1982; fig. 24). In these compositions, Pindell shifts our perspective on our world and within the universe from the vestiges of Renaissance perspective, imagining how that perspective would be affected by vehicles that would allow us to journey into space.

Fig. 17

Autobiography: India (Lakshmi), 1984.
Mixed-media collage on paper; 17 3/4 × 26 3/4 × 2 in.

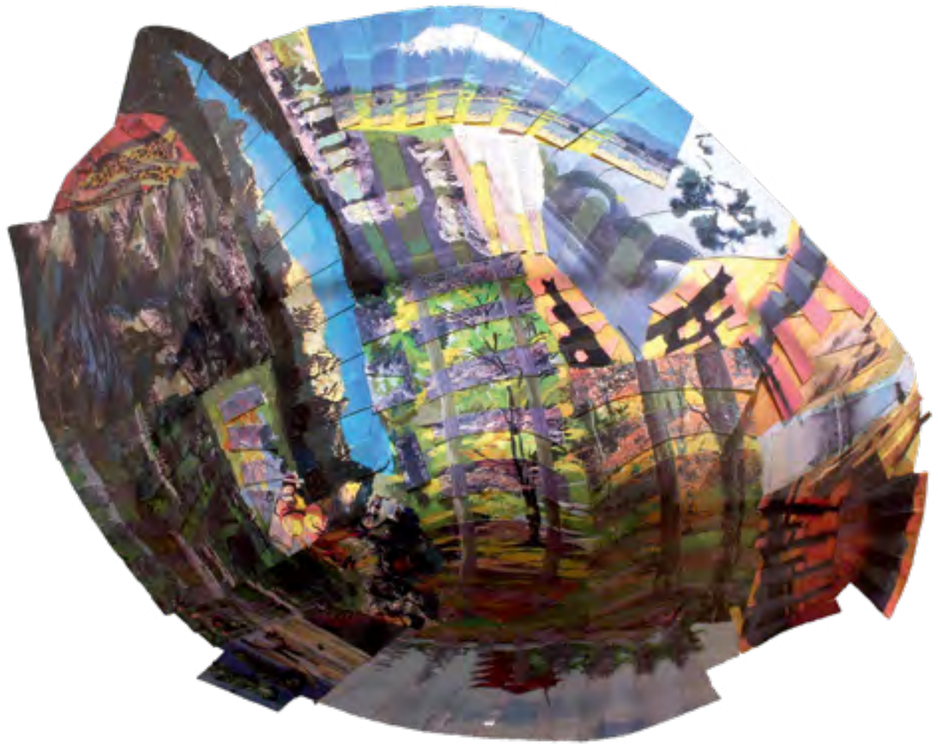
Fig. 18

Autobiography: East/West (Gardens), 1983. Acrylic, gouache, tempera, postcards, and museum board; 34 × 23 × 4 in.

Following:
Autobiography: India (Shiva, Ganges), 1985. Mixed media on canvas; 39 1/2 × 117 in.

Fig.
19

Fig.
20



Autobiography: Japan (Pagoda Forest), 1982.
Tempera, gouache, and paper collage; 17 × 20 × 5 in.

Fig.
21

Autobiography: East/West (Bamboo Forest), 1983.
Gouache, tempera, and postcards on paper; 21 × 27 × 4 in.

Fig.
22

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw another crucial development in Pindell's work, as she made herself explicitly its subject. This was first evident in her video Free, White and 21,[16] in which she alternately swathed her head in white gauze and appeared in whiteface wearing a blond wig, while reciting a litany of racial abuses—mental, emotional, and physical—that she and her mother endured. Free, White and 21 was shown as part of the exhibition Dialectics of Isolation, organized by Ana Mendieta in 1980 at A.I.R. Gallery. This milestone show of works by women of African, Native, Asian, and Latino American heritage signaled the first stirrings of new political alignments in the art world and the world at large.

Mendieta's statement for the exhibition is a pointed indictment of exclusionary tendencies in the women's movement: "as women in the United States politicized themselves and came together in the Feminist Movement with the purpose to end the domination and exploitation of the white male culture, they failed to remember us." Women of color are thus compelled to "question our own existence, our human reality" and "acquire an awareness in ourselves of who we are and how we will realize ourselves."[17] For her part, Pindell, who once saw the women's movement as the most viable route for her into the art world,[18] would subsequently relinquish her membership in A.I.R. after having been one of its founding members in 1972. It was clear even then that race and gender issues in this country were more intertwined than those of us who care about these issues are willing to admit, and that redresses with regard to one modality did not necessarily carry over to the other.

THE "STUFF" OF IT

Pindell's appreciation of, and predilection for, manipulating materials is, as we have seen, as distinct from color-field abstraction as it is from the "pattern and decoration" tendencies that emerged in the art world in the 1970s. She not only engages long-suppressed cultural retentions, but also addresses perceptual, even psychic, dimensions of the artist's relationship to the environment. Linda Goode-Bryant and Marcy Philips focused on this distinction in her work in their 1978 publication on a group of artists they dubbed "Contextualists." Among this cohort, who were involved with imbuing abstract and conceptual systems with content, Goode-Bryant and Philips observed in Pindell's work aspects of "energy, mysticism, automatism, and ritual process."[19] They also remarked on her inclusion of hair and later blood, as seen in Autobiography: Air (CS560) (1988; fig. 23),[20] a definite ritualistic maneuver. The "visual suspense . . . created as color dots blend into textural field" that they note in her work—especially paper works such as Parabia Test #4 (1974; p. 127, fig. 12)—was the influence that Pindell has attributed to Andean weavings.[21]

Autobiography: Air (CS560) demonstrates how the oval-scapes begin to engulf Pindell herself. As she sought to achieve a syncretistic relationship with her work, it seems to make perfect sense to see her enmeshed in her work, as in Autobiography: Water (Ancestors/Middle Passage/Family Ghosts) (1988; p. 179, fig. 8). This erasure of boundaries—often considered a pathology to be avoided and rectified—seemed to be the ultimate way for Pindell to come into her own. The process becomes an expiation of a sort: in Autobiography: Air (CS560), four versions of her supine silhouette are literally buffeted about by words and phrases and questions, written into the surface of the painting, which refer to her "direct personal experience with issues of abuse, some of which were brought about by encounters with racism, sexism and issues of class."[22] As we glimpse her realistically painted face peering out in Autobiography: Water, her body is barely distinguished from the painted daubs and collages and painted bits of visual memory, but she maintains a serene demeanor as if she were impervious to these "slings and arrows."

Previous:
Autobiography: Switzerland (Road to Lucerne), 1989.
Cibachrome, acrylic, and tempera on board; 9 × 17 × 2 in.

Fig. 23

Autobiography: Air (CS560), 1988. Acrylic, tempera, oil stick, blood, paper, polymer photo transfer, and vinyl on canvas; 86 × 84 in.

Following:
Autobiography: Japan (Hiroshima Disguised), 1982. Acrylic, paper, dye, and gouache on cut and sewn canvas; 60 × 132 in.

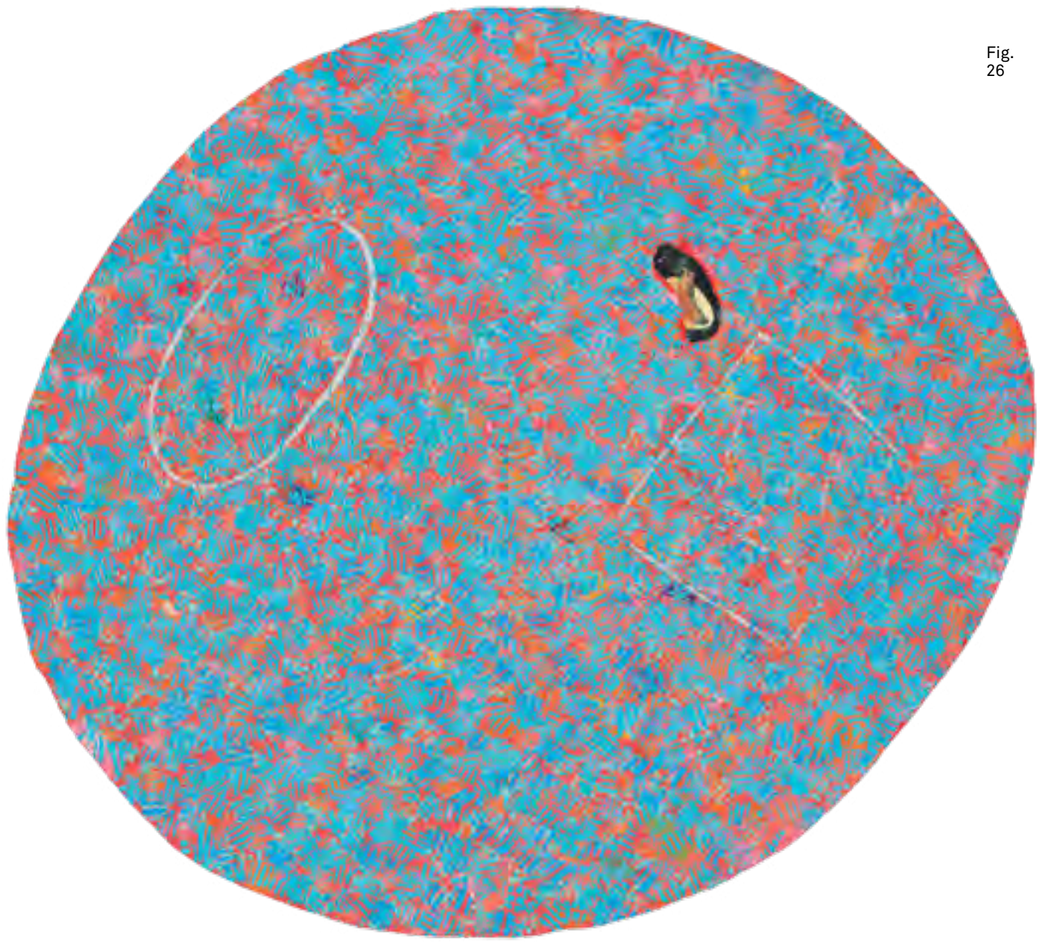
Fig.
24

As the 1990s progressed, Pindell's artwork began to exist more and more in conjunction with her political activism as she produced a prodigious number of white papers on the state of race and gender politics in the art world.[23] Undoubtedly these issues took on a new urgency in the era of burgeoning AIDS activism, as seen in Separate But Equal Genocide: AIDS (1991–92; fig. 25). Clearly the dichotomies between "black" and "white" came to connote a new matrix of exclusionary and diversionary policies and attitudes. By 2000, she again engaged deep space in the context of the revelations of the Hubble Space Telescope, as seen in Astronomy: Saturn, Mars, Disks of Orion (2004; fig. 27), in which she maps a segment of the universe, or 4C The Planets (2007; p. 134, fig. 15), where the model of the planets is submerged into a miasma of larger versions of her signature dots. Ecological concerns are reflected in Autobiography: Africa (Red Frog II) (1986; fig. 26), alluding to the dire survival warnings conveyed by a species in crisis; Untitled #5B (Krakatoa) (2007; fig. 28), in which textural effects are again in evidence; and Katrina Footprints Drawn (2007; fig. 29), which reminds us of the consequences of unpredictable natural forces. In all of these works, it is clear that Pindell has found that her signature style has almost limitless possibilities with which she can explore her technical proclivities and political interests. She also fully engages current dialogues about the relevancy of abstract art to the social turmoil and challenges that global black people continue to encounter. But as noted previously, Pindell doesn't need to rely on elaborate theoretical or critical theory to frame her practice. She has evolved in a uniquely synthetic way that allows her to meld her role as both creator and subject for her art. Therefore her work remains as energetic, cogent, and committed as it was at the beginning of her career.

Fig. 25

Separate But Equal Genocide: AIDS, 1991–92.
Mixed media on canvas; 75 1/2 × 91 in.

Fig. 26



Autobiography: Africa (Red Frog II), 1986.
Mixed media on canvas; 78 × 70 in.

Following:
Astronomy: Saturn, Mars, Disks of Orion, 2004. Ink, acrylic, and gouache on paper; 12 3/4 × 16 1/2 in.

Untitled #5B (Krakatoa), 2007. Mixed media on paper collage; 13 × 21 1/4 × 2 1/2 in.

Katrina Footprints Drawn, 2007. Lithograph; 21 1/4 × 26 in.

Fig.
27

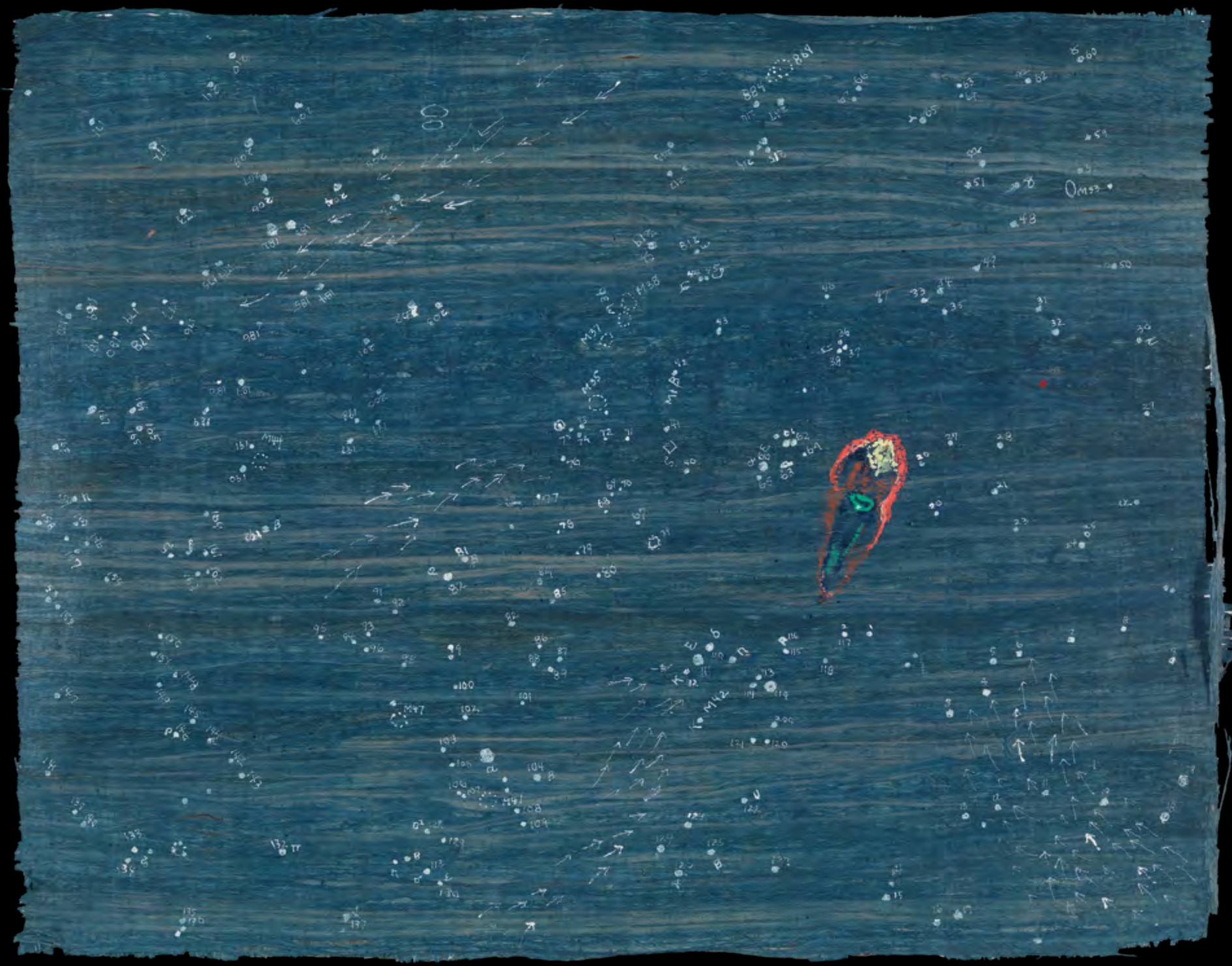


Fig.
28

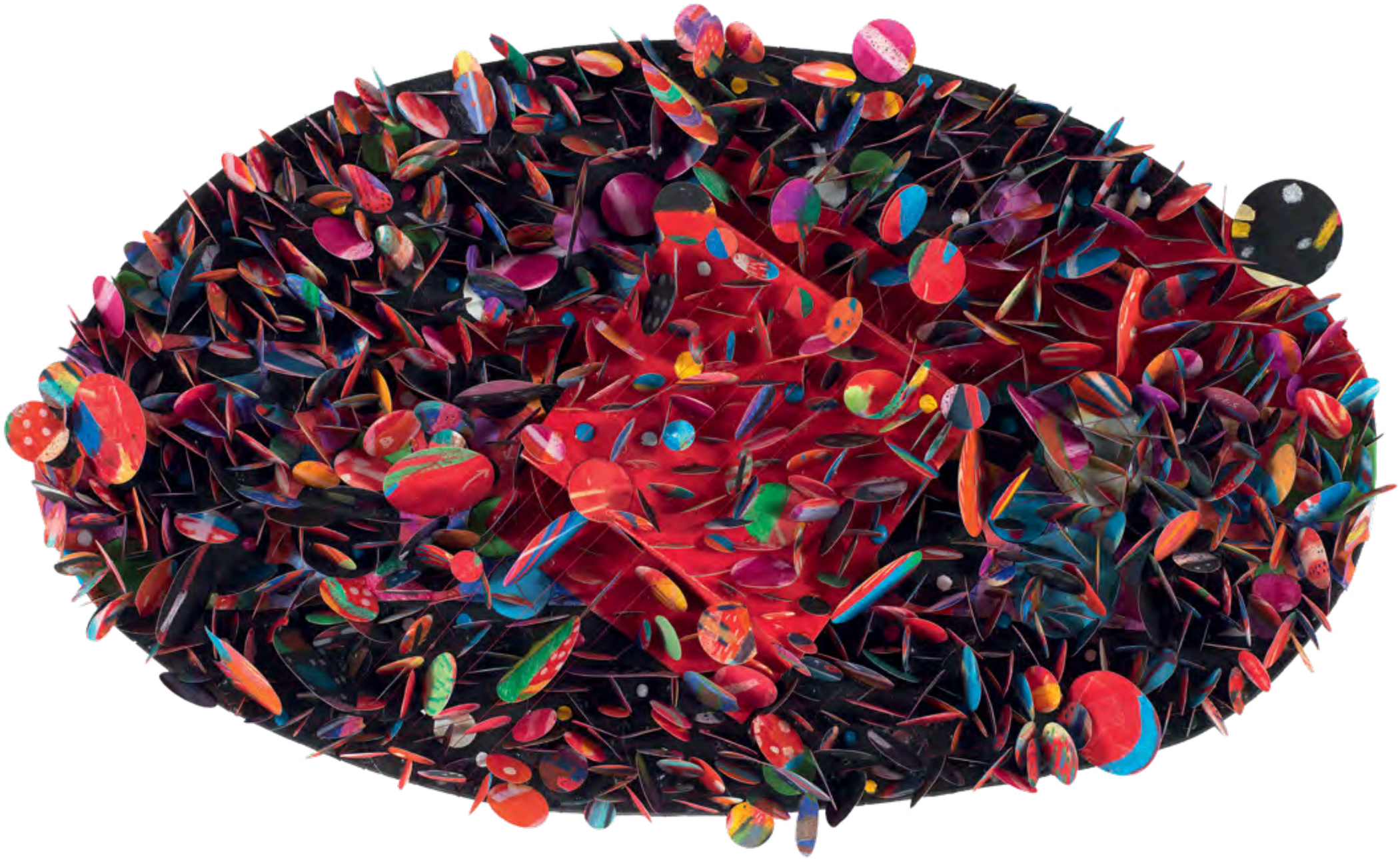


Fig.
29

1 *Howardena Pindell: Paintings and Drawings* (Potsdam: Roland Gibson Gallery, Potsdam College of the State University of New York, 1992). The specifics of the reconstructed interpretations of Pindell's art in this essay were guided by observations made over a twenty-year period, and particularly by a conversation between the author and the artist on January 5, 1992.

2 *Howardena Pindell: Odyssey*, introduction by Terrie Rouse (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1986), 5.

3 Howardena Pindell, Artist's Statement for *Howardena Pindell: Autobiography* (New York: Cyrus Gallery, 1989).

4 Frank Bowling became a particularly influential and important advocate for black abstract artists, publishing a series of articles in *Arts Magazine* and *Art News*. See Frank Bowling, "Black Art," *Arts Magazine* (Dec. 1969–Jan. 1970): 20–24; "Discussion on Black Art," *Arts Magazine* (Apr. 1969): 16–20; "Discussion on Black Art," *Arts Magazine* (May 1969); "It's Not Enough to Say 'Black Is Beautiful,'" *Art News* (Apr. 1971): 53–55, 82; "The Rupture: Ancestor Worship, Revival, Confusion or Disguise," *Arts Magazine* (Summer 1970): 31–34.

5 Susan E. Cahan, *Mounting Frustration: The Art Museum in the Age of Black Power* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016), 160.

6 Chloé Bass, "Can Abstraction Help Us Understand the Value of Black Lives?," *Hyperallergic*, July 28, 2016, at hyperallergic.com/314166/can-abstraction-help-us-understand-the-value-of-black-lives.

7 See Priscilla Frank, "An Underground Collective of Black Women Artists Are Fighting Racism in Healthcare," *Huffington Post*, Aug. 31, 2016.

8 April Kingsley, *Afro-American Abstraction: An Exhibition of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture by Nineteen Black American Artists* (New York: P.S.1, Institute for Art and Urban Resources, 1981).

9 See Henry John Drewal, *Mami Wata: Arts for Water Spirits in Africa and Its Diaspora* (Los Angeles: Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2008).

10 See Roy Sieber, *African Textiles and Decorative Arts* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972).

11 Howardena Pindell, in *Beauty by Design: The Aesthetics of African Adornment*, ed. Marie-Thérèse Brincard (New York: African-American Institute, 1984), 37, 38.

12 Ibid., 36.

13 See Lynn Gumpert, ed., *The Poetics of Cloth: African Textiles/Recent Art* (New York: Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 2008).

14 Howardena Pindell, "Japanese Series," in *Howardena Pindell: Paintings and Drawings*, p. 36.

15 Howardena Pindell, interview in *Since the Harlem Renaissance: 50 Years of Afro-American Art* (Lewisburg, Pa.: The Center Gallery, Bucknell University, 1985), 34.

16 See the essay by Brian Wallis in this volume.

17 *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States*, ed. Ana Mendieta (New York: A.I.R. Gallery, 1980), n.p. (my emphasis).

18 In her interview in the catalogue for *Since the Harlem Renaissance*, Pindell says, "I was first told that my work wasn't black because it wasn't showing a certain sort of imagery, and then I was put down a bit for being a woman. So the first place I really made an effort to show my work was a black institution, and I was told to go away. That meant I had to show in a white context, and that was a problem because they were basically saying go away as well. The only other approach was the woman's movement. This was in the late 60s and early 70s. I was approached by A.I.R., which was just forming, and that was the way I got to first show my work" (36).

19 Linda Goode-Bryant and Marcy S. Philips, *Contextures* (New York: Just Above Midtown, 1978), 66.

20 Ibid., 67.

21 Ibid., 69.

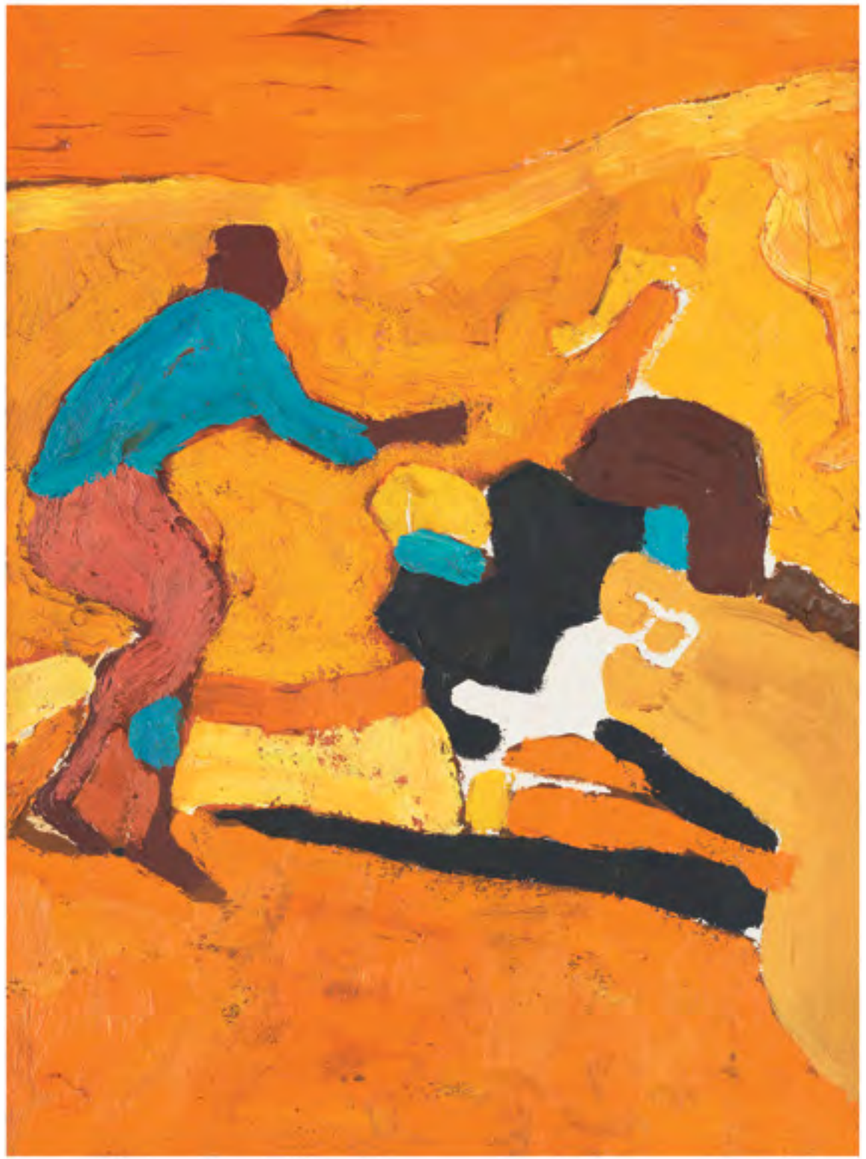
22 See Kingsley, *Afro-American Abstraction*, p. 6.

23 These were published as *The Heart of the Question: The Writings and Paintings of Howardena Pindell*, introduction by Lowery Stokes Sims (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1997).

BODY OPTICS, OR HOWARDENA PINDELL'S WAYS OF SEEING

Naomi Beckwith

Fig. 1



Untitled (Baseball), 1966. Oil on canvas; 15 1/2 × 11 3/4 in.

In 1967, Howardena Pindell receives an MFA from the prestigious painting department at Yale University. Fully ensconced in the aesthetic mode of late modernism, she graduates as a skilled figurative painter who produces canvases in a fauvist mode (fig. 1) reminiscent of the work of Bob Thompson (fig. 2). Her paintings of the time feature bold, warm colors and gestural touches, techniques she had developed as an undergrad and refined in her master's program and that were informed by the color/shape theories of Josef and Anni Albers. She dabbles in abstraction before leaving Yale and is a committed formalist above all. Her postgrad works on paper are exercises in the organization of shape in space and of the play of color tone set against its complements and opposites. Soon after graduating, she moves to New York City where a friend supportively refuses any rent payments until Pindell can find a job.[1] She continues to draw and paint even after landing a position in the Museum of Modern Art's Education Department, a job that will develop into a long-term curatorial appointment in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books. All the while, Pindell makes work in the modest, shared flat, mostly at night, without the benefit of natural light. "The figurative end of it could not be really explored simply because I didn't have natural light. I wanted natural light."[2]

Fig. 2

Bob Thompson, *Deposition*, 1963. Oil on canvas; 15 3/8 × 11 1/2 in.

This is a common originary tale: A young artist migrates to New York City, taking up a life of romantic impoverishment downtown, then a postindustrial area of cheap rents, few amenities, and a crumbling infrastructure, yet teeming with creative energy. There are, of course, some unusual aspects to this particular story: Pindell was one of a handful of African American graduate students at Yale in 1967 and the only African American MFA of her graduating year. In addition to searching for a job, she also diligently submitted her portfolio to galleries, eliciting positive responses to the work only to have it rejected when she was interviewed and "revealed" to be a black woman. Nevertheless, in this artist's tale, we look back on the early moments of a committed and continuing experimental art practice, and one that has produced a gargantuan oeuvre. An almost compulsive object maker, Pindell has meticulously and intuitively worked through her singular forms and methods, producing, to date, thousands of objects, many of them assemblages of canvas, paint, and paper.

At times, especially through the late 1960s and early 1970s, the work seemed to be keeping time with other ascendant art forms and concerns such as postminimalism, nascent conceptualism, video and moving images. Indeed, one sees traces of Eva Hesse, Jasper Johns, and Robert Rauschenberg in Pindell's use of unconventional materials and experimentation between media. But, indifferent to the dominant painting modes of her time, she quickly left behind the color field and abstract expressionist practices of her professors and predecessors (maintaining an admiration, however, for the work of Ad Reinhardt and Larry Poons) and equally eschewed the ascending neo-expressionism of her contemporaries. As such, some critics, then and now, have had trouble contextualizing her work. Pindell's works fall

into the category of what I would call “errant forms,” objects that remain partially illegible because they appear so different in form to contemporaneous art. Because these “errant” works are often abstract, some critics focus on her remarkable and novel processes, including writing (but not drawing) numbers “from 1 [sic] to infinity,”[3] hole-punching hundreds of manila folders, and spray-painting canvases through stencils. Critics have a much easier time, on the other hand, discussing Pindell’s work via social concerns, especially as it took a more thematic/political turn in the late 1970s. In this narrative context, Pindell is recognized as a pioneering artist-as-activist whose convictions act as a clarion call to the art world, her audiences, and even her fellow artists when she engages in internecine struggles for the stake of the black body and its image in contemporary art. How, then, do we reconcile these two strands of discourse—privileging either the formal devices or the sociopolitical content—around Pindell’s work?

If we return to those foundational moments in New York, to that studio which lacked natural light, we find a formalist who must create objects absent the most essential condition for making visual art. What kind of painting emerges from an artist who cannot see? Can Pindell’s work from that point on be said to operate independently of visual logic? While she may not have begun her professional career with an intention of moving away from formal and image-based works, what unfolds is a body of work wholly dependent upon repeatable, precise, physical processes and manual labor. The objects she creates are eminently tactile; the artist feels things out. Pindell, in a way, works blind.

Blindness here is a working methodology for considering a work of art beyond visuality, the attribute taken for granted when discussing works of art. Although other approaches would be useful—affect, tactility—and these have certainly influenced my thinking, I don’t presume to map them summarily onto Pindell’s work. Rather, I would begin a discussion of her work thinking through a shift from visuality to tactility because the conditions of Pindell’s production demand it. This is not to argue that her works are not to be looked at—she is still a visual artist, after all. But I do mean to say that, at some point, other qualities of her art practice take precedence over visual attributes. Since opticality, or the experience of beholding a painting as a purely formal and abstract visual field, declines in priority in Pindell’s practice, we must explore other operations that formed her work.

This essay discusses how visuality is obscured or deprivileged in Pindell’s practice in order to foreground a somatic, or bodily, register for a work of art. Crucially, this text considers how that same somatic mode is adapted to Pindell’s nonabstract objects, especially as the work moves into a more thematic, figurative, and overtly political realm in the late 1970s. Here we are now challenged to think about a racial arena whose first terms are not about seeing the black body, but rather about feeling it out. If from the late 1960s (when Pindell started her professional career) through to the present, a scopic mode of social and political engagement set the terms for thinking about bodies,[4] then we should take a retrospective look at Pindell’s oeuvre to see how her work, which deprivileges the very system of seeing, disrupts our models of how seeing, knowledge, and power operate.

I

One of Pindell’s earliest postgrad activities was to move away from manual, gestural painting and into intuitively experimental modes. The early experiments, although borne of necessity, constituted radical moves in separating out the ontological registers of “painting” as a verb, as material, and as an object (historically, all three of these registers were presumed to be one and the same). Pindell “painted” by creating stencils with which she could imprint and superimpose ready-made patterns on a primed or monochrome canvas. She made these stencils by punching even rows of holes into manila folders to make a perforated screen. Several folders were adhered together, creating stencils up to six feet in length, which Pindell then tacked to her sizable canvases and would either paint with a brush or spray paint through the screens. She would repeat this action in multiple and overlapping places on the canvas surface. The effect is diaphanous veils of atmospheric, almost impressionistic, hues, despite the work being produced by layers and layers of paint (fig. 4). The process was more akin to silk-screen printing than painting, and, crucially for later work, Pindell saved all the punched-out manila chads.

I intentionally invoke the printing press to underscore Pindell’s shift to a machinelike, process-based work mode. It is a semi-automated process, with some precedent in Jasper Johns’s stenciled paintings from the 1950s, but Pindell’s screens are neither ready-made nor store-bought but, rather, methodically handmade. If anything, her moves are more compatible with the postminimalist tendencies irrupting, mostly in sculpture, in the New York art world she entered in the late 1960s. Lucy Lippard, one of that period’s greatest champions and thinkers (and Pindell’s mentor and supervisor at MoMA), called this the moment when many artists, “unfettered by object status,” made sincere attempts to escape “the sacrosanct ivory walls and heroic, patriarchal mythologies” that social movements of that period had already discredited.[5] Pindell takes that material innovation into a much more expansive painting practice. If her stencil-making is controlled and meditative, the resulting painting is improvisatory, evading any immediate legibility, and simply registers a series of gestures and intents. Here, Pindell’s innovation is to invest the object with a sense of gesture and bodily movement sans the outsized heroic antics of expressionism. Her actions are repetitive, “small muscle movements” as Molly Zuckerman-Hartung describes them,[6] rather than large, choreography-scaled expansions into space. More a task than expressivity. There is no image to glean, no expressive drive to register; the canvases are studies between chaos and order, chance operations and skillfulness.

The overall pattern of Pindell’s stencils is a polka-dot grid, and that gridded form appears in numerous of her paintings and works on paper. At times, the grid is the fundament of the work—many drawings are executed on graph paper. In other works, she creates a grid of drawn line or cut string (fig. 3), or, rather than presuming a canvas has an underlying geometric structure, she assembles squares of canvas into a gridded pattern. Pindell’s use of gridded forms and structures are consistent with the most viable, almost clichéd, visual properties of painting at the time. Following Clement Greenberg’s arguments about the historical trajectory of modern painting, Rosalind Krauss explains:

Fig. 3

Untitled #43, 1974. Watercolor, gouache, crayon, punched papers, spray adhesive, and thread on board; 7 7/8 × 9 1/2 in.

Following:
Untitled, 1970. Acrylic on canvas; 69 × 79 1/8 in.

Fig.
4

> . . . the self-appointed task of modernist art, as the fullness and extension of illusionistic space was contracted onto the zero degree of depth of the painting's flat surface. Indeed, nothing seemed to represent this contraction to flatness more ruthlessly and completely than the grid, whose own paper-thin two-dimensionality seemed to describe nothing so perfectly as the material facts of that surface itself.[7]

In other words, the grid became shorthand for a modernist painting tradition, and to employ it was a way to announce oneself as participating in or grappling with that tradition. In Krauss's estimation, the grid is more than a simple visual device. It is also an organizing principle that metaphorically extends beyond the surface of a painting and enmeshes the viewer in a visual and intellectual experience with the object.[8] The grid makes the painting see-able and legible.

When Pindell recalls the tendency of many fellow students and artists to utilize the grid, she approaches its ubiquity with skepticism. The grid, as she sees it, was less an aesthetic tool à la Krauss and more a vehicle for signaling the desire to be taken seriously as an artist. Pindell's response, then, was to approach the grid as a game. Her reference for the string works was a cat's cradle: in Untitled #20 (1974; p. 55, fig. 1), she disassembles and reassembles a canvas into a quilted grid form; she even constructs a gridded soft sculpture of canvas and grommets whose materials make a nod to painting (p. 139, fig. 2). The soft grid is also a portable object that can fold down and be carried by hand. Like Louise Bourgeois's Fillette (1968; fig. 5), Pindell's portable art object stands in for a heroic (perhaps feral?) tradition that is now tamed and playfully apprehended by a feminist. A gesture made by a woman on the move. The grid shifts from a formal device to an actionable device, one that expands into the tactile and becomes materialized, embodied, and mutable, quite literally, in the artist's hands (fig. 6).

Pindell has stated that until 1979 her work was primarily about process.[9] By giving over to process, she devalued the optical aspects of painting—visible forms were not the goal; rather, the action of making and the treatment of canvas as material, as opposed to a mere

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Left: Robert Mapplethorpe, *Louise Bourgeois with Fillette*, 1982. Gelatin silver print; 14 3/4 × 14 3/4 in.

Right: Howardena Pindell, *Untitled*, 1968–70 (mixed media–assemblage, acrylic paint, canvas, grommets, and stuffing; 144 x 144 in.), in Pindell's studio at Westbeth Artists Housing, New York, c. 1970

surface to receive pigment, constituted the final art object. Pindell, like many of her contemporaries, pushed against the strictures that came to define and codify painting by the mid-twentieth century. Consider the way in which Agnes Martin's lines play with the fabric weave of her canvases. Al Loving, Sam Gilliam, and Faith Ringgold rejected stretched canvas and reified the unstretched material as mere fabric to be cut, draped, or quilted. Pindell, too, cut and reassembled pieces into monumentally scaled quiltlike sheets, before over-painting the new object so that the paint functions as an adhesive for her (now signature) unconventional materials: paper chads, glitter, talcum powder, and perfume, among others.

Pindell's innovations, very much in keeping with the feminist incorporation of decorative materials at that time, embodied the haptic and kinetic. To encounter a Pindell canvas in the early 1970s was to experience multiple somatic and psychological sensations—olfactory, tactile, temporal (e.g., watching a work sparkle). The move away from figuration to abstraction implies the repudiation of any narrative content we presume an image to carry in the sense that a picture is "a thousand words." But if narratives unfold over time, Pindell was able to abandon narrative yet retain a sense of time within her objects. Instead of time being embedded in the subject of the painting or the painting's narrative progression, the element of time transfers to the viewer's encounter. Pindell's paintings glisten with kinetic energy as eyes traverse the surface and bodies move past the object. Time is now motion, rather than narrative, extant to the object itself and embodied in the viewer. In an encounter such as this, the optical function of painting is "infected by the tactile," as Krauss terms it in her discussion of the grid.[10] Her smart analysis, which belies a certain suspicion of tactility, does allow that these "infections" raise questions about what, beyond the visual, can be engaged in an art object. I would offer that Pindell's propositions go even further: her works raise questions about who is viewing, the possible positions that a body can assume in relation to her objects, and the panoply of urges that a body can feel upon encountering an artwork. Whereas for Krauss, "the viewer" is reduced to a generic, universal vision, for Pindell, the viewer and the object have a specific, multivalent relationship in their engagement with each other.

The inchoate, indeterminate, nonspecific object-viewer relationship is precisely what comes into sharper focus for Pindell and many other artists in the 1960s. "Now painting and sculpture are less neutral, less containers, more defined, not undeniable and unavoidable," says Donald Judd in his groundbreaking polemic "Specific Objects." "They are particular forms circumscribed after all producing fairly definite qualities."[11] Judd argued against indistinct forms and illusionism in art, especially as these functioned in painting, where the only reason for a painting's existence was contained within the four edges of the canvas. He advocated instead for objects in which no constitutive part was incidental, objects that would call attention to, and play against, "actual space," that would be without limits. Crucially, Judd's works, which came to be known as minimalist sculptures, demanded a new engagement with their gallery space and with the bodies of the viewing audience. In unannounced sympathy, Pindell's work, too, demanded an actuality of object and an actual viewer who could see, smell, and want to satisfy their sense of touch.

II

Nineteen seventy-nine was a year of transitions for Pindell. After participating in a series of protests against Donald Newman's Nigger Drawings exhibition at Artists Space earlier in the year, Pindell left a curatorial position at MoMA for a full-time teaching position at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. Later that fall, she sustained a severe head injury in a car accident. During and after recuperating (the artist might say that, with lingering vertigo and some memory loss, she never fully recovered), Pindell's work took on a new narrative and political urgency. This is not to say that previously she had been apolitical. On the contrary, she was an ardent feminist and founding member of the women's cooperative Artists in Residence (fig. 7). She organized against racism and for inclusive policies in the art world while at the same time sidestepping the concerns of black art groups that African American artists as part of a community had a responsibility to represent said community in their art. As Lowery Stokes Sims points out in this volume, Pindell's postminimalist, abstract oeuvre sat outside the forms of art acceptable to those groups.

Fig. 7

Sylvia Sleigh, *A.I.R. Group Portrait*, 1977–78.
Oil on canvas; 75 x 82 in.

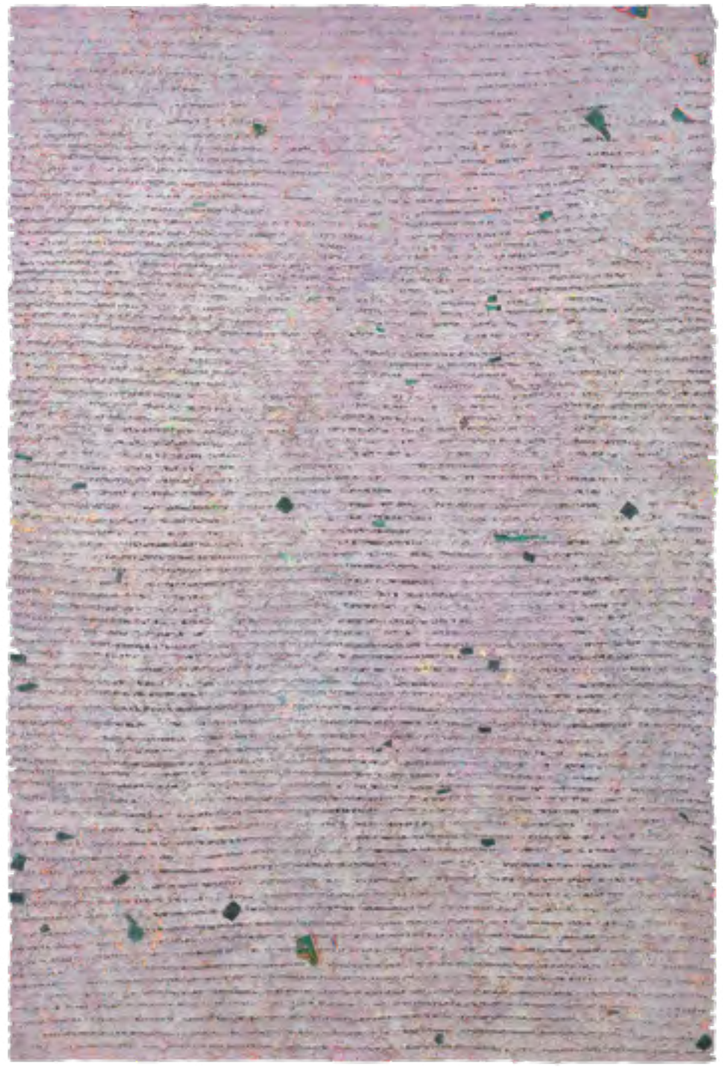
But her work clearly shifts in and after 1979. Beginning with the series Memory Test (fig. 8) and Autobiography, her art practice is not only directed toward mnemonic rehabilitation, the work also becomes explicitly political, openly asserting Pindell's contention—learned through experience—that the art world's systems of exclusion mirror the general social world's and, as such, are fair game for political action. Pindell reconstitutes her life memories in tandem with the reconstitution of her artistic identity as a political subject. The first of such works to combine these new strands is the now iconic confessional video Free, White and 21, in which she recounts offenses against and violations of her black body and that of her mother. In the video, she addresses her white feminist cohorts, who have, to this point, disallowed a serious discussion of race as part of women's rights issues.

Fig. 8

Memory Test: Free, White and Plastic #114, 1979–80. Cut and pasted and painted punched paper, acrylic, watercolor, gouache, ink, thread, nails, mat board, spray adhesive, and plastic on cardboard; 20 7/8 × 20 7/8 in.

While it is considered an outlier in her oeuvre (one of only two video works to date, and the only one in which Pindell appears in front of the camera), Free, White and 21 is congruent with the canvas-based works produced by the artist at that time. From 1980 on, the figure (and eventually Pindell's own body and image) reemerged in an oeuvre that had been without human figuration since the late 1960s. Its initial appearance was quite timid: a small cutout of an alien-like figure in Tarot: Hanged Man (1981; p. 164, fig. 13). Almost imperceptible, this figure is a tenuous blip in the encrusted surface; he is not suspended so much as falling down, head first, into an abyss, the abyss being the atmospheric fields of texture and color Pindell had developed in the mid- to late 1970s. Even before Tarot: Hanged Man (but after the 1979 accident), she began to populate her canvases with fragments of paper and photographs dispersed over the surface of the works. A good student of art history, Pindell appreciated the possibilities of montage and collage and the ability to create new meaning from the unexpected juxtaposition of disparate elements.

Fig. 9



Memory: Past, 1980–81. Synthetic polymer paint, dye, paper, thread, tempera, photographic transfer, glitter, and powder on canvas; 126 × 86 in.

In the Memory series (figs. 9, 10), the earliest objects to take on this new development, the image fragments are less juxtaposed than strewn across the plane of Pindell's textured surfaces. The images can be linked by the viewer's free-form associations, a brain game that mirrored Pindell's post-accident recuperation, as she had to stitch together bits of images, memories, and impressions to re-create episodes from her life. More than an illustration of memory reclamation, however, these floaters become graphic signatures, like blips on a field. Indeed, these blips were already present in earlier works such as Dutch Wives (1978; fig. 11), in which a red glitter stain reads like a seepage or some sort of eruption from under the surface of the work. With the introduction of found media materials, these eruptions become more visually pronounced. These new elements never disrupt Pindell's focus on the surface qualities of her works; she eschews depth perspective and stays true to the mode of seeing initiated in her early works: one's eyes scan the surface of her objects.

In the early 1980s, Pindell also began to utilize memorabilia and souvenirs from her many travels. The Memory series gives over to the Autobiography series, and here personal experiences and aesthetic processes acquire equal weight. The Autobiography works take two forms. One is a continuation of the reconstructed canvases with much bolder found materials included in the objects (fig. 12). The second is a set of photo-and-paint collages in which Pindell cuts photographs or postcards into vertical strips (much in the same way she did many canvases) and mix-matches and reassembles the strips leaving a space between each photo fragment. She then photorealistically paints the "missing" visual information in the negative space between each segment. The results are moiréed assemblages that, initially relatively linear, eventually take on complex concentric shapes. Each of these works exhibits movement across space—flattening times and places onto a single plane—mimicking Pindell's movement within and spatial memory of a particular place. For the viewer, the works appear as a blurred scene rather than a sharp document.

Pindell's synthesis (to borrow a term from Sims) of found, "documentary" images and purely imaginary reconstructions marks a key shift in her post-1979 practice: the artist finds material in her own being-in-the-world, acknowledging that the way one inhabits a set of circumstances has aesthetic implications. If the modernist avant-garde imagined art to be a radical critique of everyday life, and that, in turn, the material of "everyday" life could challenge the staid academicism of visual art, then Pindell intuitively understood that the reconstruction of her life, first as a memory test and later as an aesthetic object, could extend the possibilities of what was considered appropriate "found" material for art.[12] This "intrusion" of the everyday was part and parcel of the pop art movement, yet even for pop there was a tacit agreement that "life" could only appear as a mediated image or a commodity. (Think: Warhol's soup cans or Rauschenberg's silk-screened collages. Even the Combines, in their assemblage use of found material, were more a Dadaist argument against meaning.) If a person is socially constructed as a gendered or raced subject, could that invented subject be deconstructed, reconstructed, or recontextualized as an aestheticized object? This relatively functional shift has powerful implications, such as the brilliant use of testimony as an objet trouvé, if you will, in Free, White and 21. The aesthetic techniques of the video—collaged narratives, role play—exist on equal footing with its political protest intentions. And if it could be said that Pindell was "working blind" up to the point of her first video and her Memory and Autobiography series, in one moment of Free, White and 21 we see her, quite literally, removing her blinders.

III

By the mid-1980s, Pindell's Autobiography series shifts again with the artist's return to large-scale shaped canvases. Now, however, she is working extensively with heavy, impastoed acrylics, the found images are more defined, the human figure more apparent, and text makes its first appearance (p. 75, fig. 23). Most significantly, the works' architecture, based on characteristic linear cuts and sutures (strips and gridded squares), has changed shape. The cut lines are more lyrical, finding more freedom as a drawn line, and the canvas more circular than rectangular. This experimentation with form and materials and, above all, embrace of irregularity and entropic shapes assume greater importance as the figure reappears in Pindell's work, and the body, especially the artist's body, moves from implied to visible.

Fig. 10

Memory: Future (detail), 1980–81. Mixed media on canvas; 83 × 116 1/2 in.

Following:
Untitled #20 (Dutch Wives Circled and Squared), 1978. Mixed media on canvas; 86 × 110 in.

Fig.
11

Fig.
12

Pindell used her body as the physical and conceptual basis of this later Autobiography series (fig. 14). For instance, to create Autobiography: Water (Ancestors/Middle Passage/Family Ghosts) of 1988 (p. 179, fig. 8), she laid down on a canvas and traced her silhouette, cutting it out and suturing it to other irregularly shaped canvas fragments. In other works, her body tracing determined the basic shape or size of the canvas (p. 75, fig. 23). Instead of faithfully reproducing her body by way of photographing or simply painting the figure, Pindell took a literally handmade route, relying on the searching gestures of her hand to trace the contours of her body. In other words, she felt her way toward the artwork. The result is more a silhouetted figuration than a figurative representation.

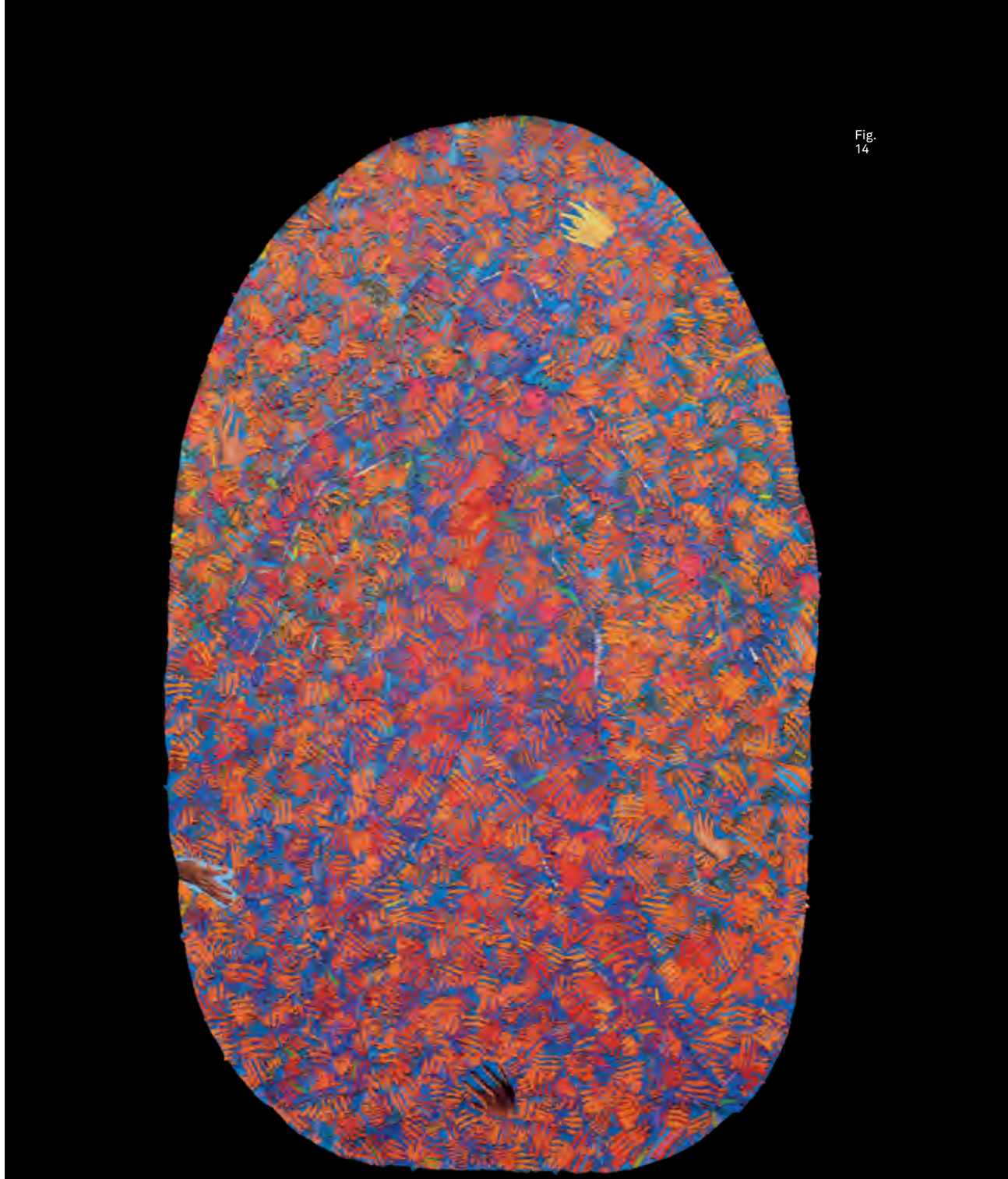
These tracings on canvas reenact the use of one's self as primary medium in the body artworks of the 1960s. Pindell has spoken of Ana Mendieta's work as particularly revelatory, especially witnessing Mendieta produce a Silueta work in the fall of 1980 (fig. 13).[13] Here the Cuban-American artist enacted a similar imprinting onto various landscapes by way of ritual-like gestures. Following this line, we can imagine Pindell's canvases are the landscape upon which she imprints her image. But Pindell is quick to clarify: it is not Mendieta's artworks per se that inspired Pindell's tracings, but rather the shape—as Pindell imagined it—of the chalk outline of Mendieta's body on the roof on which she fell to her death at the age of thirty-six.[14]

Fig. 13

Ana Mendieta, *Untitled*, from the *Silueta* series, 1973–77.
Silver dye-bleach print; 19 7/8 x 15 7/8 in.

Previous:
Autobiography: The Search (Chrysalis/Meditation, Positive/Negative), 1988–89.
Acrylic, tempera, oil stick, cattle markers, paper, vinyl, tape, and polymer photo on canvas; 72 × 112 in.

Fig. 14



Autobiography: Fire (Suttee), 1986–87.
Mixed media on canvas; 90 × 56 in.

Pindell rehearsed her travel memories and bodily trauma in the Autobiography series, later taking up larger identity issues about her family history and about a legacy of slavery that has disallowed full access to a sense of lineage. That is to say: the specific body implied in the early paintings is fully realized as the artist's own by the mid-1980s. This aspect of Pindell's oeuvre posits the questions: What does it mean to use one's body as the basis of one's art? What does her specific body signify in its appearance?

First, the work that has the artist as its subject is not literally autobiographical. Pindell may have reconstructed memories as a way to reconstitute her sense of self as a socially traumatized subject, but in transforming her bodily form into aesthetic image, she asserted that her experiences were neither singular nor particular to her historical moment and condition. Physical pain, existential crises, a sense of uprootedness as a descendant of enslaved people—these are collective memories and collective traumas. Next: thus, as chronicles of shared experiences, Pindell's forms are to be taken literally. Her social reality as a black woman is not by any means a metaphor; on the contrary, that positionality has real—let us say specific—and sometimes painful consequences. The artist's figure does become a shifting signifier at many points in art history and, in its slipperiness, is a place to play with meaning. Adrian Piper demonstrates this to great effect in the work Self-Portrait Exaggerating My Negroid Features (1981; fig. 15), which is a realist-style self-portrait that enhances any particular physical features commonly associated with black physiognomy. In direct conversation with Piper's work is Glenn Ligon's Self-Portrait Exaggerating My Black Features and Self-Portrait Exaggerating My White Features (1998; fig. 16), a photo-diptych of two almost identical images. These examples, along with Pindell's Autobiography series, insist that viewers grapple with their understanding of what constitutes a raced body both in an invisible history and in visible traits. The appearance of the black body presents a set of associations, presumptions, and misreadings but also new knowledges and possibilities.

Fig. 15

Adrian Piper, *Self-Portrait Exaggerating My Negroid Features*, 1981. Pencil on paper; 10 × 8 in.

Fig. 16

Glenn Ligon, *Self-Portrait Exaggerating My Black Features and Self-Portrait Exaggerating My White Features*, 1998. Silk screen on canvas; two panels, each 120 × 40 in.

To be seen is to be subsumed in a power dynamic that was first fully theorized by feminist film critic Laura Mulvey. In her landmark article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" of 1975, Mulvey established that the "pleasure" of looking is not shared equally by all subjects; in fact, some subjects (in her argument, female subjects) are objectified by the gaze.[15] Pindell has worked, a priori, against the gaze and visuality beginning with her earliest studio work, but only now can we theorize the significance of an instinctive refusal to work outside what Cassandra Jackson calls a "specular moment," an instance in which the gaze "mediates power relations between seers and the seen."[16] A black person is never seen in his/her individuality, Huey Copeland argues, but only as:

> a free-floating trace unmoored from individual subjects and as a concrete index of power relations . . . At once abstract and bodily, literal and metaphorical, the ultimate sign of aesthetic negation and the prime marker of the socially negated, blackness marks those historical forces that continue to differentially engender subjects and objects in the modern world, everywhere shaping a cultural unconscious in which the individual effects of racialization assume a shifting texture despite the unyielding ruthlessness of their overarching logic.[17]

As a woman and an African American, Pindell was doubly subjected to a scopic gaze. She utilizes narrative and performance in the service of understanding her social condition, insisting that the social violence against her black body is coupled inextricably with her subjugation as a woman. From her earliest works, Pindell has refuted a societal faith in seeing or the visual encounter, an encounter that Susannah Mintz calls "one of sighted culture's most sacred forms of accessing another's true self, refusing to take for granted—to take anyone's word for—what constitutes meaning, significant experience, or identity."[18] Thus, Pindell asks her audience to take her at her word by "draw[ing] on my experience as I have lived it and not as others wish to perceive my living it as fictionalized in the media and so-called 'history' books."[19] Pindell deploys her stories "to bracket the retinue of overdetermined associations unleashed whenever the black body appears . . ."[20] Neither her body nor her work can completely escape a visual order, but her work does disrupt the operations of a scopic discourse. From the earliest abstract canvases that do not adequately "represent" black life, to montages that establish a new parallel between a painted object and the body, and further to the kinetic works that keep a body on the move and blurred, Pindell's work and her body constantly evade the power discourses implied in the gaze.

1 Interview with the artist, Apr. 11, 2017.
2 Interview with the artist, Dec. 5, 2017.
3 Marina Urbach, “Howardena Pindell’s Work,” in *9e Biennale de Paris: Manifestation internationale des jeunes artistes* (Paris: La Biennale, 1975).
4 By the term “scopic mode,” I mean to posit two things: that an individual’s social identity was based on physically visible traits such as gender and racial appearance and, furthermore, that visuality itself becomes a fruitful topic of theorization, initially by film theorist Laura Mulvey (see note 15). I draw upon many theorists of black life and culture who further complicate the interrelations between sight, race, social institutions, and cultural production, especially Cassandra Jackson and Huey Copeland (see notes 16 and 17), as well as Henry Louis Gates Jr. in his work on literary theory (*Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the “Racial” Self* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1987]) and Darby English in his writings on how art criticism is affected by the race of the artist (*How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness* [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010]).
5 Lucy Lippard, “Escape Attempts,” in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (1973; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), vii.
6 See the Roundtable in this volume.
7 Rosalind E. Krauss, “The Grid, the True Cross, the Abstract Structure,” *Studies in the History of Art* 48 (1995): 304.
8 “It is in this context that the grid achieves its historical importance: as the transformer that moved painting from the subjective experience of the empirical field—what it means to see things—to the internal grounds of what could be called subjectivity as such, subjectivity now construed as a logic—that is, what it means to see anything at all.” Krauss, “The Grid,” 311.
9 “Howardena Pindell: Some Reminiscences and a Chronology,” in *Howardena Pindell: Paintings and Drawings* (Potsdam: Roland Gibson Gallery, Potsdam College of the State University of New York, 1992), 20.
10 Krauss, “The Grid,” 311.
11 Donald Judd, “Specific Objects,” *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965), reprinted in Thomas Kellein, *Donald Judd: Early Work, 1955–1968* (New York: D.A.P., 2002).
12 Here I combine prominent arguments about the historic significance of the avant-garde with theories of the “everyday” as discussed in Renato Poggioli, Peter Bürger, and Henri Lebebvre. For further reading, see Poggioli’s *Theory of the Avant Garde* (1962), Bürger’s *Theory of the Avant Garde* (1984), and Lefebvre’s *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947).
13 Silvia Kolbowski, “An Inadequate History of Conceptual Art,” *October*, no. 92 (Spring 2000): 70.
14 Interview with the artist, Apr. 4, 2017. Mendieta had offered Pindell her most significant exhibition platform, the show in which she first presented *Free, White and 21*.
15 Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6–18.
16 Cassandra Jackson, *Violence, Visual Culture, and the Black Male Body* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.
17 Huey Copeland, *Bound to Appear: Art, Slavery, and the Site of Blackness in Multicultural America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 11.
18 Susannah B. Mintz, “Invisible Disability: Georgina Kleege’s ‘Sight Unseen,’” *NWSA Journal* 14, no. 3 (2002): 165.
19 Howardena Pindell, “Artist’s Statement,” as reprinted in *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Feminism 1965–85/A Sourcebook*, ed. Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum of Art, 2017), 222.
20 Copeland, *Bound to Appear*, 10.

THE TAO OF ABSTRACTION: PINDELL’S MEDITATIONS ON DRAWING

Valerie Cassel Oliver

> It is probably true quite generally that in the history of human thinking the most fruitful developments frequently take place at those points where two different lines of thought meet. These lines may have their roots in quite different parts of human culture, in different times or different cultural environments or different religious traditions: hence if they actually meet, that is, if they are at least so much related to each other that a real interaction can take place, then one may hope that new and interesting developments may follow.
>
> —Werner Heisenberg[1]

PROLOGUE

The line is the most direct of all artistic gestures. It has a beginning—a point of origin—that leads the eye toward, across, or around a surface. Such is the line. It is the meditative point on which an artist begins her journey.

Points of origin have structured Howardena Pindell's practice for more than fifty years. Working within myriad genres that at times intersect, at other times diverge, the artist has remained steadfastly committed to a philosophical framework that was seeded in childhood. Born in 1943 in Philadelphia to a father who was a mathematician and a mother who was a homemaker, Pindell was encouraged to pursue the arts, first exhibiting her work at age eight. Had she not turned to creative pursuits, she might have followed in the footsteps of her father, whose love of numbers and statistics left an indelible impression on his daughter. So, too, did the significance he placed upon moral justice, even during times when such advocacy risked ostracism by the establishment.

Howardena Pindell has also embraced moral advocacy, which remains to this day the bedrock of her work. This essay explores her points of origin by delving deeply into, not familial imprints, but rather the liminal spaces where biography and practice collide. Fundamental to this exploration are the overarching, conceptually driven frameworks that have remained consistent in her art from the beginning. The title of this essay, "The Tao of Abstraction," alludes to the philosophical and meditative introspection inherent in Pindell's work. As with the esoteric nature of physics, the circularity of thought and time is mirrored in the ensuing discussion of the generative processes, continually revisited and elaborated, that have governed her practice. The title also refers to Fritjof Capra's 1975 book The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism (p. 162, fig. 10). Pindell has cited this book as an influence on her practice, and indeed the parallels between Capra's writings and the artist's work are striking in their stitching together of disparate elements to generate ideas/gestures that enable the transcendence of ordinary linearity/line into an extraordinary act of resistance.

The act of drawing, the immediacy of the hand making marks on a surface, is an especially direct means of engagement. It is one of the oldest modes of expression, the most basic of all gestures. Yet for Pindell, drawing is anything but simple. To explicate the various movements manifest in her works on paper—from early formalist iterations and later conceptual ideas around lines and numbers, to the use of templates and chads in performative and improvisational actions, to reconstructions of memory through collage—makes clear Pindell's rare talent for infusing not only thought but also the very embodiment of self into her work. In her art, line becomes greater than the simplicity of linear form. Rather, it takes on the mechanical form of hole punches affixed to paper or the irregularity of a grid or the hand-scoring of paper or the literal stitching of paper and photographs into collage. Labor and the hand are always present, both on and in the surface (Pindell often makes her own paper). The artist's works on paper, while rooted in formalist leanings, also function as raw probings of emotional and physical trauma, lacerating ruminations on social justice, and eccentric meditations on astronomy and science fiction.

NOT ABOVE REPROACH: PINDELL AND FORMALIST ABSTRACTION

> I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background. . . . "Beside the waters of the Hudson" I feel my race. Among the thousand white persons, I am a dark rock surged upon, and overswept, but through it all, I remain myself. When covered by the waters, I am; and the ebb but reveals me again.
>
> —Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," 1928

Having shown great artistic abilities at a young age, Pindell was encouraged by her parents to pursue formal training in the visual arts. In the early 1960s, she attended Boston University for an undergraduate degree and, in 1965, enrolled in Yale University's graduate program, receiving an MFA in the spring of 1967. Her artistic training came at a time of upheaval in not only the art world but also the world at large. In the midst of the social, political, and cultural turmoil taking place in the United States and abroad, Pindell found both her personal frameworks and overall worldview challenged.

From an early age, she embraced the tension that exists between the traditional and the avant-garde, often citing an early brush with the work of Marcel Duchamp at the Philadelphia Museum of Art as a potent moment in her life and practice.[2] While at Boston University, her work was primarily figurative in nature, but by the start of her graduate studies, her style began to shift from figuration into abstraction. She began diluting representational imagery by melding foreground, image, and background with paint and texture. Her early paintings signal this shift, as still lifes, portraits, or even baseball games visually morph into form and color. Such works play upon a slow dissolution of figuration.

The turn to abstraction was accompanied by a heightened engagement with color. While at Yale, Pindell was influenced by figures such as Josef Albers, renowned for his principles of color theory. She also became familiar with the practice of Ad Reinhardt, who explored the intensity of color values in monochromatic fields, and Larry Poons, who created fields punctuated with free forms of color. Works such as Untitled (Baseball) (1966; p. 88, fig. 1) highlight Pindell's interest in playing with color as well as the tension between figuration and abstraction. During her graduate studies, she was also exposed to the work of Yale faculty member Al Held, whose hard-edge geometric abstraction helped pave the way for the minimalist style. Proper minimalism, however—with its reputation for being "devoid" of meaning—felt like a true departure for the young Pindell, who undoubtedly felt the groundswell of change sweeping artistic and sociopolitical landscapes during the early 1960s. Pindell was no stranger to these developments with regard to the civil rights movement at home and the independence struggles throughout Africa in the 1960s. The artist herself had participated in demonstrations of civil disobedience in her hometown of Philadelphia.[3]

After graduating from Yale, Pindell moved to New York, where she pursued her ongoing interest in abstraction. Her works on paper made during this period—including untitled compositions and the Space Frame series (figs. 1, 3)—explore the interplay of the formalist grid and color through line, paint, and collage on makeshift surfaces consisting of often discarded or handmade elements. Additionally, two geometric forms—the circle and the ellipse—gained importance in her practice at this time and recur throughout her work. Pindell's use of the proverbial "circle within a square" evokes not only her stylistic de rigueur but also her unlikely presence as a black woman in the field of abstraction. (Incidentally, the "circle within a square" is also the principal mathematical formula for determining the radius of a circle that has been inscribed within a square.) For Pindell, two seemingly disparate elements are always in play.

The convergence of art and mathematics may have familial roots, but Pindell's own dialogue with abstraction and/or minimalism quickly moved from mechanical exploration into more esoteric variations upon the theme. As the precision of rectangles and squares gave way to the loose and irregular "hand-drawn" grid, so, too, did her circles morph into ellipses. Shifting between the circle and the ellipse or the square and the rectangle on sometimes irregular shapes of paper ostensibly served to undermine the rigidity and formalism of

Fig.
1

Untitled, 1968. Pastel on paper; 12 3/4 × 18 3/4 in.

minimalism. In doing so, Pindell also challenged the underlying social structures of the art world, which at the time was primarily white and male. Furthermore, in her early practice there is a certain reproach of the formalist tendencies toward concealing the hand. Pindell cultivated the imprecise nature of the hand. This resistance to the hand's effacement perhaps can be read as a metaphor for the denial of selfhood as a woman and especially a woman of color, both of which are rendered largely invisible in this style. As such, Pindell extends a visual commentary on the paradox of being a black woman pursuing success in an artistic landscape that seems willfully blind to the isolation, violence, and disaffection society imposes upon the black body. Her work explores the elasticity of form as a means to implode its internal structure, allowing it to be charged with new meaning.

In her persistent use of the circle, Pindell has often cited a particular event in her childhood that transfixed her gaze upon geometry and welded it with personal narratives that speak to racial injustice: "I always talk about when my father and I went to a root beer stand in Kentucky and were given mugs with red circles on the bottom. This was under segregation. The red circles meant, 'This is glassware to be used only by people of color.'" But Pindell is also quick to counterbalance this memory with other points of influence, in order to avoid grounding it in one experience: "But then I started thinking back to when in Philadelphia they had lotteries with scratch-off game cards. The cards had circles almost the size of punch-outs. You could peel off the circles to see if you had won a radio."[4]

Over the next forty years, Pindell continually returned to the geometric form and to the language of color. For a brief period in the early 1970s, however, she created two small series of black monochromatic drawings, a unique deviation in her oeuvre. By the time she made these series, the color black was a well-worn signifier in the realm of modernity and minimalist painting. Stephanie Rosenthal, in her book Black Paintings, examines the construct of blackness in the works of art-world luminaries such as Robert Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt (fig. 2), Frank Stella, and Mark Rothko created between 1951 and 1967. Given the social and political events of the period, these works ironically address blackness not from a perspective of race, but rather around esoteric notions of "darkness/sightedness/blindness." This is a marked shift from the overt racial and political implications of the black monochrome when it first appeared. Its notorious beginnings with Paul Bilhaud's 1882 painting Combat de nègres dans un tunnel (Negroes Fight in a Tunnel) was notoriously parodied by his friend Alphonse Allais and then, nearly three decades later, inscribed in Kazimir Malevich's iconic painting Black Square (1912).[5] Pindell as well as those featured in Rosenthal's tome were surely privy to the notoriety of the monochrome's auspicious beginnings, yet the civil rights movement and strides toward black determination in the 1970s are never mentioned in Rosenthal's book, though these issues feature prominently in Darby English's more recent publication, 1971: A Year in the Life of Color.

Fig.
2

Ad Reinhardt, *Abstract Painting No. 5*, 1962. Oil paint on canvas; support: 60 × 60 in.

Following:
Space Frame, 1968. Graphite on graph paper; sheet: 17 1/2 × 22 in.

Fig.
3

Despite its complexities, English's book captures the art world's ambivalence toward race and the social paradox of race and representation experienced by black artists with regard to the presentation of their work.[6] In particular, English takes on the use of nonrepresentational art and abstraction among black artists and the "fracturing" that occurred around a resistance to figuration. Such was the case with the 1971 exhibition Contemporary Black Artists in America, presented at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. This tension was not lost on many of the artists who were slated to be in the exhibition, including Pindell, who by that time also held a curatorial position at the Museum of Modern Art.

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Left: Agenda for Action against Racism in the Arts, 1979
Right: Letter from the Black Artists Emergency Coalition to Artists Space, 1979

Beyond the controversy surrounding questions of authorship, the very fact of an exhibition of nonrepresentational work by black artists was significant. Given the call of black political agents that art be enlisted in the service of a social/activist agenda, the occasion of such an exhibition made visible a bifurcation in black visual politics: those working chiefly in figuration and those working primarily in abstraction. The difficulty of being accepted by the black community at that time as a black abstract artist was palpable. Many artists were "turned away" from institutions such as the recently founded Studio Museum in Harlem because their work was deemed "visually illegible" and therefore irrelevant to the black community. Pindell recalled such a rejection: "When I came to New York, the head of the Studio Museum told me, and also told Bill Williams [William T. Williams], to go downtown and show with the white boys. So we were being told that we had to do didactic work."[7]

In the series Removal 3/8 (1973; figs. 6, 7, 9), Pindell used acrylic, crayon, and graphite on paper. Moving between this small body of work and the series Grid Study (1973; fig. 8), her use of the color black—at times thickly textured or scored to create three-dimensionality within the two-dimensional plane—functions as a play upon the "color" black and the textural embodiment of blackness. Pindell also made the paper for these works, and she treated, scored, and embellished its surface. It could be argued that here she reclaims the black square, black as color, cultural signifier, overt political statement, and modernist experiment, particularly in the wake of its uneasy beginnings. These works, innovative in their convergence on the tensions between formalist and social concerns, underscore the artist's commitment to free-range experimentation in abstraction and social responsibility. And while Pindell is keenly creating a vocabulary through abstraction, she is simultaneously confronting the conversations around form and theory. Naomi Beckwith, in her contribution to this volume, discusses Pindell's self-described "ocular blindness" as a catalyst to her engagement with abstraction. I would recast this as a duality of sightedness, as evidenced

Fig. 6

Removal 3/8, 1973. Paper, acrylic, and crayon on paper; 19 1/4 × 18 3/4 in.

in both her artistic and activist endeavors—ocular blindness served to enhance a new visual language that the artist would later develop and that would endure over the arc of her practice. The movement from works on paper to works on canvas and other constructs signals her fluidity of visual expression as well as her willingness to translate or mold ideas and actions into visual languages appropriate to each expression.

Following:
Removal 3/8, 1973. Mixed media on paper; 18 1/2 × 23 1/4 in.

Grid Study #1, 1973. Acrylic on board; 11 × 12 3/4 in.

Removal 3/8, 1973. Paper, acrylic, and crayon on paper; 18 1/2 × 23 1/4 in.

Fig.
7

Fig.
8

Fig. 9

Fig.
10

Untitled #4, 1973. Mixed media on board; 10 × 8 in.

TEMPLATES AND CHADS, NUMBERS AND GRIDS

Pindell's preoccupation with the grid and the circle has been continuous, and these forms have moved seamlessly between canvas and works on paper for nearly four decades. As the artist describes it, her engagement with the chad and, later, ellipses emerged organically from a painting practice that involved templates from which she could compose with paint directly onto the canvas. The labor-intensive process entailed using a hole punch to shape discarded cardstock, manila folders, and heavy watercolor paper into a variety of templates to be employed over time.

The templates allowed Pindell to create marks and gestures on a canvas, including overlapping circles through which she applied layers of sprayed paint. In the process, she amassed thousands of hole-punched chads, eventually utilizing them to make additional marks not only on canvas but also on paper in an effort to add dimension and texture to the surface, pushing two-dimensional works into the realm of sculpture. For Pindell, the laborious process of painting was also performative in nature. She embraced what she would call the "craftsmanship" of painting both on canvas and in her actions with paper, at times affixing or sewing chads to the paintings or integrating them with a host of materials such as hair, talcum powder, glitter, and sand:

> So I started turning my imagination for light and color and realized that I wanted to work with very small points of color and light. . . . Perhaps I was a bit maniacal about the tedious aspect to my work, such as the numbering and sewing for example, but I enjoyed the physical labor and the craftsmanship and the sense of abandonment or non-decision.[8]

Beyond an interest in pushing the boundaries of painting, Pindell was concerned with how her works on paper could function as an autonomous practice. One of her early assignments at the Museum of Modern Art was assisting Lucy Lippard, whose advocacy as a curator and critic left a lasting impression. Working as an assistant curator by day and an artist by night, Pindell brought into her studio many of the conversations taking place at the museum, particularly how to move beyond minimalist precepts. She began to work on paper in earnest, creating drawings integrating numbers, seriality, systems, and grids, in line with the conceptual art practices that flourished in the late 1960s and 1970s. But for Pindell, the use of numbers also had deep associations with home and childhood travel. She would later reminisce that on driving trips across the southern United States to visit her mother's family, her father would make copious notes of the odometer readings to determine mileage and gas consumption. This log, kept on simple notebook paper, provided a visual template for Pindell's early works on paper in which individual chads are numbered and pasted to sheets of notebook or watercolor paper with glue.

The catalyst for incorporating numbers came from a studio visit with Carl Solway, a gallery owner from Cincinnati. Solway noticed the piles of discarded chads and asked how many there were, prompting the artist to actually count them, assigning a number to each (fig. 10). As she began adhering the small circles to canvas and paper, the literalness of the task soon transformed into "mark-making" on paper. The linearity and familiarity of numbers enabled Pindell to maintain a conceptual framework while continuing to challenge the modernist edge of the grid. Her works on paper during this period combine the chad and the tradition of applying graphite directly onto paper recycled from the artist's studio in the creation of work. Through this, Pindell not only resisted the notion of drawing that occurs in pristine conditions, but also integrated randomness into intended drawings. This collaboration with chance in the studio injected a new dimension into the works that revolves around sequencing and form.

Early experimentations with the grid such as Space Frame (1968; fig. 3), made fresh out of graduate school, were followed by more expansive explorations in the early 1970s, including Parabia Test #4 (1974; fig. 12) and a series of untitled works. Pindell also began the long-running series Video Drawings, layered images captured with a camera that in many ways mirror the artist's other performative practice, the slow progression of affixing chads on paper

surfaces or boards.[9] The hyper-generative aspect of mark-making is apparent in all of these works. Pindell has become less preoccupied with the grid, which has given way to the movement of the hand to denote a confluence of actions, and we see a more nuanced politics of aesthetics—one that demands art be understood as performed labor as opposed to high concept.

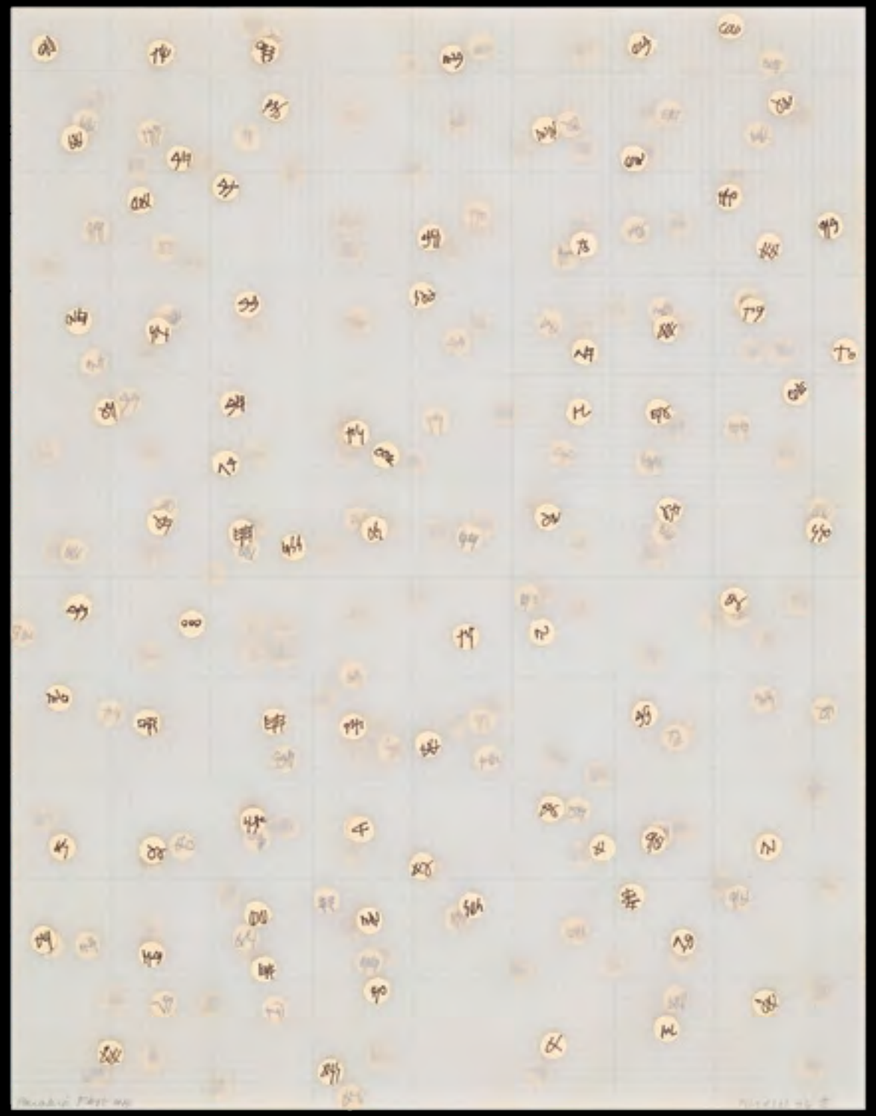
Pindell's experimentations on paper soon evolved into a series of more sculptural works affixed to board and enclosed in Plexiglas covers. Evoking Joseph Cornell's assemblages (fig. 11), these works oscillate between sculptural objects and dimensional drawings on found, appropriated, or handmade paper. Their small scale—ranging from 6 x 6 to 18 x 24 inches, the traditional framework for drawings—serves to accentuate mark-making on surface. In using the media board, Pindell deepened the accumulative effect, creating a density more akin to that of her most dense Video Drawings, as if the two series function in dialogue. This is evident in a comparison of Untitled #8 (1975; fig. 13) and Video Drawings: Baseball (1975; p. 152, fig. 1). In each, the correlation between gestural mark-making and chance becomes a signifying tool. Each employs layering—of object upon surface (as in the chad drawings) or image upon image (as in the Video Drawings). Each requires time. For the Video Drawings, Pindell creates marks upon sheets of clear acetate, attaches the sheets to a television screen, and, after selecting a program (sports, a movie, a newscast), snaps photographs at random. This back-and-forth movement between more meditative/laborious actions and a two-part process of drawing then photographing images as they align on the screen underscores the dynamism of Pindell's studio practice during this period, yielding an array of artistic modalities that the artist continues to elaborate into the present.

Fig. 11

Joseph Cornell, *Object (Soap Bubble Set)*, 1941. Box construction; 18 1/4 × 12 3/8 × 3 3/4 in.

Outside the studio, Pindell's life and work took tremendous strides during the 1970s. In addition to her curatorial position at MoMA, she cofounded the A.I.R. Gallery, a space dedicated to women artists who were politically active, creating art in direct response to events such as the Kent State shootings and the Attica prison riots. She traveled extensively, collecting ephemera and photographic material from her trips to Africa (Kenya, Egypt, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Ivory Coast), Europe (France), India, and South America

Fig. 12



Parabia Test #4, 1974. Ink and paper collage on vellum; three elements, each 11 × 8 1/2 in.

Following:
Untitled #8, 1975. Ink on paper collage; 6 1/4 × 11 in.

Fig.
13

(Brazil). As a result, her work moved beyond an understanding of blackness as a means of bifurcated sightedness and toward a more fractal or multifarious blackness in a global context. This is reflected in Pindell's thoughts around travel as nurturing a more expansive, less-truncated understanding of herself as a black person: "Travel has made the big difference for me in that I did not get isolated in the American pathology."[10]

As the decade came to a close, Pindell would draw upon her travels and the accumulations of ephemeral material—postcards, photographs, and other paper objects—to reconstruct not only an articulation of self but also the concept of memory in general. Her laborious, performative, process-based works provided a "muscle memory" on which she steadily rebuilt and restored her own image in the wake of a devastating car accident that nearly ended her life. Leaving behind the tension between formalism and an understated and nuanced politics, Pindell's work becomes a bold and unapologetic extension of her personage and selfhood and a conduit for healing both the external and internal wounds that lay at the core of her being.

FRAGMENTS OF MEMORY: COLLAGE

Travel opened up a more expansive approach to personal and communal struggles for Pindell and facilitated a more holistic understanding of herself in relation to the world, where one can either see oneself reflected or see the stark differences that exist. It disrupted her foregone expectations as a black artist and authorized a contestation with traditional racial binaries. Perhaps the greatest testament to the power and influence of travel in Pindell's life was her ability to reconstitute ideas about the self through the creation of works that focus on self and place composed of materials collected on her journeys.

Pindell would ultimately draw upon these materials in a cogent body of work made after a catalytic event. In 1979, she resigned from her position as an associate curator at MoMA to pursue a career in academia as an associate professor of art at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, where she is currently tenured. While traveling to the university from New York City, Pindell sustained serious injuries in a car accident that left her with debilitating pain and memory loss. Determined to recover from severe head trauma with her sense of self intact, she began a series of paintings under the rubric Autobiography. She simultaneously started a series of process-oriented collage works. The collages—which are made of photographs taken while traveling, postcards she purchased and even mailed to family members and friends, as well as other ephemera from her trips—became a vehicle through which she would slowly, consciously, reconstitute both memory and self.

Pindell had used postcards in her art prior to the accident, taken mostly from her mother's collection, which inspired her as a child. These postcards, however, were treated like the other found and prepared surfaces in her studio, incorporated into the raw materials she hole-punched to generate the chads used for works on canvas or paper. For Pindell, the use of such material, even if it had a specific private resonance, was more about process, craft, and labor. After the accident, however, postcards and other ephemera from her travels served a far more personal aim: "I started using images I had taken during the trips as an awakening of memories of these experiences."[11]

Pindell systematically cut photographs into strips for use in the reconstitution of real and amalgamated landscapes. Similar to the remembrances of the protagonist Marco Polo in Italo Calvino's novel Invisible Cities, these landscapes rendered in collage play upon the complexities of memory and language (in this case, visual language). Through fragmentation of the images, Pindell conveys both her own difficulty in retrieving precise memories and the multifaceted nature of perspective. Her use of the photographic image, or what she calls "photographic clarity," also serves to undermine her own compression of experiences, in which she will often collapse landscapes onto one picture plane to literally shrink geographic and cultural difference, grafting memories of one place to another. Such treatment of photographic imagery creates different effects: it can capture a sense of fractal mirroring, as in Autobiography: East/West (Bamboo Forest) (1983; p. 71, fig. 21); or it can communicate a multidimensionality of time and/or place, as in Autobiography: Egypt (Cairo Residential, 1974) (1989; fig. 14), where strips of acrylic paint are applied between images. For Pindell, these visual travelogues produced through laborious and complex actions serve as not only

tactical reawakenings of memory, but also astute insights into the cultural and social structures that she encountered. Her titles and constructions move us through her own experiences—personal, political, spiritual. And as a means to confound linear narrative and traditional chronology, Pindell essentially collapses the two-dimensionality of the frame by disrupting the traditional pictorial presentation.

Like the grids of her early Space Frame series, Pindell here shies away from expected arrangements such as sculptural spirals or undulating, irregular, rectangular planes. The echo of imagery evokes not only physical travel but also time travel and the artist's ability to "reawaken" experiences through a retelling, a reliving, a salvaging of time. It is here, again, that Pindell's work leans into the esoteric frameworks of time and, therefore, nature. The imagery represents her personal mind maps, which we are able to enter.

CODA

What initially began as a means to reconstitute self through memory eventually reignited the artist's love of science. On a whim, Pindell took an astronomy course at an adult learning center. The experience triggered new bodies of work in which she moved from the constructed landscapes of her collages to equally fantastical but plausible works encompassing stars, planets, and galaxies. True to her habit of revisiting past practices, she reintroduced the paper chads in conceptual alignment with her interest in the heavens. In the ongoing Astronomy series (2000–), now using a range of hole punches that yield chads of varying sizes, Pindell has achieved greater densities in her compositions and, in works such as 4C The Planets (2007; fig. 15), maximum sculptural effects by affixing the chads vertically rather than flush with the substrate. These works stand in stark contrast to drawings like Katrina Footprints Drawn (2007; p. 84, fig. 29), which evokes the tragedy of displacement precipitated by one of this country's most devastating natural/manmade disasters.

It is this duality in Pindell's practice that has persisted over the course of five decades. She forces us to see, beyond the apparent, beyond the normative, and with specific clarity. Her works take on questions of sightedness, tackling cultural and artistic blindness to systemic injustice. Her movements betwixt and between abstraction satisfy her own need to remain free of strictures and limitations.

Sustained by an unwavering work ethic and moral urgency, Pindell's practice has evolved within material and thematic arcs over long periods of time. While this essay focuses on her works on paper, it cannot be overestimated how intricately her conceptual practice interweaves all facets of her production inside and outside the studio, whether painting, drawing, or installation, advocacy, writing, or teaching. Structuring her explorations of process are the overarching, conceptually driven frameworks that have defined her imprint on the contemporary art landscape. Working within the rubric of abstraction—even when the practice rendered her invisible or unrecognizable to her own community—she broke through the perceived and actual limitations placed upon an emerging black female artist in the late 1960s. Howardena Pindell has rarely seen herself as a victim of racism and sexism. Rather, she has harnessed these obstacles as agency for change, interrogating histories and aesthetic legacies. She has also taken on the preconceived notions of her proper place in the contemporary art world and employed various strategies that have expanded the possibilities of that world while sustaining an ever-evolving practice. What remains true, now more than ever, is the immediacy and relevance of her work today.

Following:
Autobiography: Egypt (Cairo Residential, 1974), 1989. Cibachrome, acrylic, and tempera on board; 8 1/2 × 18 × 2 in.

4C The Planets, 2007. Mixed media–assemblage, string, paper, and pigment; 9 1/2 × 12 × 3 in.

Fig.
14

Fig.
15

1 Quoted in Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (Berkeley: Shambhala Publications, 1975), 10.
2 Howardena Pindell, telephone conversation with the author, June 19, 2017.
3 *Howardena Pindell: Paintings and Drawings* (Potsdam: Roland Gibson Gallery, Potsdam College of the State University of New York, 1992), 21.
4 Howardena Pindell, interview with the author, Dec. 5, 2016.
5 Denis Riout, *La peinture monochrome: Histoire et archéologie d'un genre*, new ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 2006).
6 See Darby English, *1971: A Year in the Life of Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
7 Howardena Pindell, interview with the author, Dec. 5, 2016.
8 Howardena Pindell, interview with Joseph Jacobs, in *Since the Harlem Renaissance: 50 Years of Afro-American Art* (Lewisburg, Pa.: The Center Gallery, Bucknell University, 1985), 35.
9 See Grace Deveney's insightful essay on the *Video Drawings* in this volume.
10 "Howardena Pindell: Some Reminiscences and a Chronology," in *Howardena Pindell: Paintings and Drawings*, 20.
11 Ibid., 64.

HOWARDENA PINDELL:
NEGOTIATING ABSTRACTION

Charles Gaines

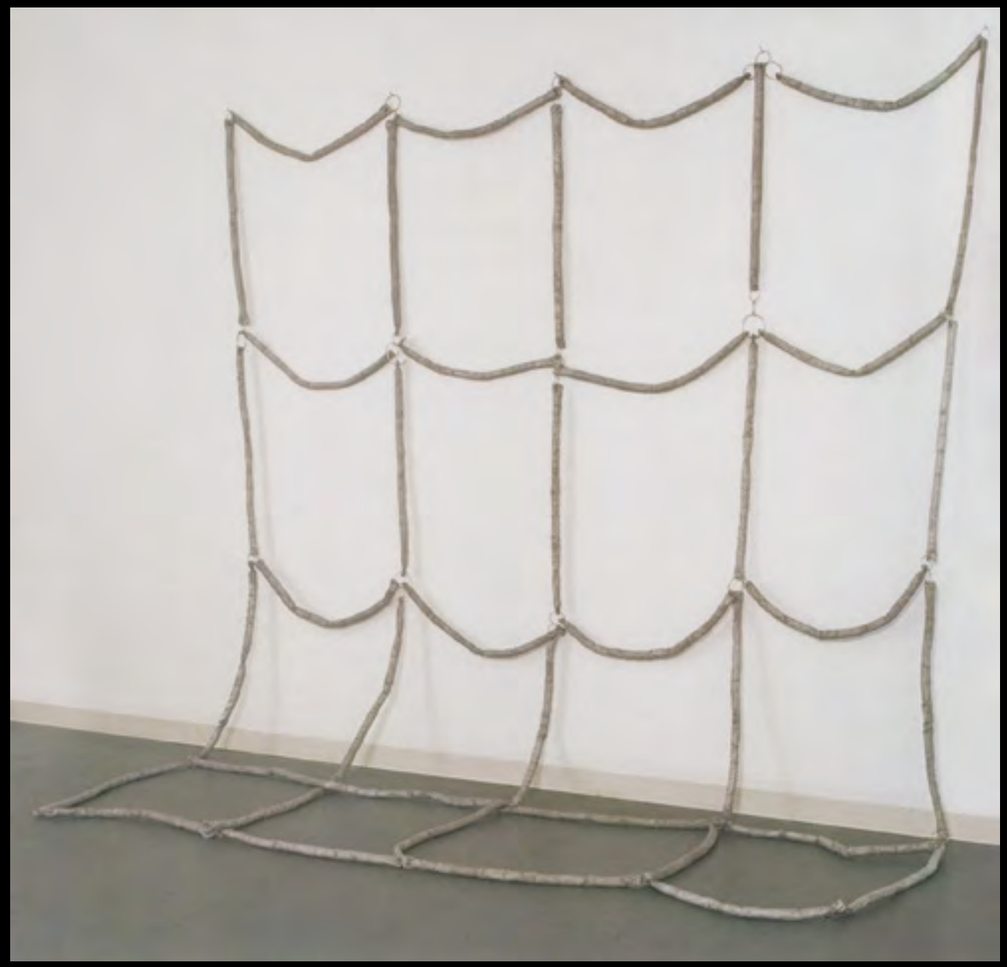
A macro view of Howardena Pindell's practice reveals what Barry Schwabsky describes as a "rich dialectic"[1] that negotiates the relationship between aesthetic and discursive experiences. As Schwabsky correctly points out, Pindell's passion and commitment to engage both sense experience and intellect (ideas) in her practice conflicted with the general notion during the 1970s that these faculties are in opposition, and even today "this rich dialectic has not been critically grasped."[2] This failure to grasp is based on a binary—that sense experience functions as a property of one's subjectivity, whereas ideas transcend the subjective into the domain of the universal, where we find concepts and ideas. In theories of art, this corresponds to a binary between aesthetic experience and criticality. Conventional thought regards the language of abstraction as aesthetic, and since Pindell is an abstract painter, this is how her work has been read. This is not a total misreading; she has expressed her commitment to the aesthetic experience. As she said in a 1980 interview, "I do work that tends to be very beautiful, very physical."[3] Pindell encourages us to read the paintings as an experience of visual pleasure (fig. 1).

Fig. 1

Installation view of *Howardena Pindell: Paintings, 1974–1980*, Garth Greenan Gallery, New York, April 10–May 17, 2014

But her definition of the aesthetic is not classically modernist and does not exclude a second component that is more critically and culturally oriented. It originates with her work in the late 1960s and 1970s that was a part of the avant-garde driven interrogation of artistic practice such as postminimalism and conceptual art. For proof, we only have to look at early experiments with the grid as a compositional tool and conceptual trope in works such as Untitled (1968–70; fig. 2), an early sculpture of a sixteen-unit grid form made of rolled canvas that is suspended on a wall at a height that allows the bottom row of cells to drape onto the floor. In this work, postminimalist reflections are present in the use of an ordinary object (canvas), and the installation implants a metaphor of intentionality to its physical characteristics, which redefines those characteristics as idiosyncratic behaviors of the grid. The standard grid is rigid and made of straight lines. We are encouraged to read the grid form as "relaxed," a metaphoric description of the gravitational effect of the rolled canvas on the form, which drapes like a clothesline in between its points of attachment to the wall. Linguistic interpretation of the rope-like material recalls other 1960s artists such as Robert Morris, Barry Le Va, and Lynda Benglis, who were also interested not just in the phenomenon of materiality or objectness, but also in the performative behavior of materials as activity as these effects marked a departure from the literal geometry of Donald Judd and Carl Andre.

Fig. 2



Untitled, 1968–70. Mixed media–assemblage, acrylic paint, canvas, grommets, and stuffing; 144 × 144 in.

Following:
Untitled, 1970. Ink on paper collage; 17 1/2 × 22 in.

Fig.
3

The minimalist and conceptualist grid is also present in Pindell's work on paper, Untitled (1970; fig. 3), in which strips of ink-stained paper à la Sam Francis are woven together to form a grid and then adhered to a sheet of commercially made grid paper. Here Pindell begins to include certain intuitive practices in the form of abstract marks and gestures within the grid itself. In addition, we can see the beginning of her use of collage as a formal and expressive technique. Collage also serves her critical interests, in that it builds on the separateness of the grid paper from the painted strips of paper. This separateness, the grid paper (found object) from the painted strips of paper, can be seen as a binary opposition between postminimal/conceptual practices (grid paper) and painting. The found object grid paper reflects her interest in discursive content, while the painted strips reflect her commitment to aesthetics. This is read as a set of oppositions that is integrated into the collage, as the painted grid seems to echo the graph paper while at the same time announces its emancipation.

The combination of these two techniques, painting and collage working together in a single work of art, is not new. What is unique is to use collage in this combination in such a way that it serves a critical and discursive purpose. In many cases, found material used to construct the collage is treated decoratively or ornamentally in order to produce the type of pictorial space that is common to pigment painting. It expands the formal language of the painting by allowing it to be expressed through materials other than paint. The result is that the cultural, social, or political meaning of the material or object is either lost or minimized. And in these cases, the collage material does not enter a binary opposition with painting as its own discrete discipline. (We are describing how collage works in a painting or in an artwork based in painting.) But it is crucial in the case of Pindell's paintings that these two techniques form a binary; the way that this is achieved is for each to connect with what each represents in art history and theory; painting and the universal language of abstraction and collage and the culturally determined localized language of ordinary objects. These techniques, as we have said, are not in themselves oppositional, but each can be linked to concepts that are. Here the history of art has provided this by advancing two theories adapted from Enlightenment philosophy, specifically the writings of Immanuel Kant; one is that a work of art is an aesthetic object, the other is that it is a critical object. These concepts derive from general theories that separate what Kant called the understanding into two categories, rational judgment and feeling judgment.[4] Under these terms, as I mentioned, the difference is not reconcilable. According to Kant, aesthetic judgments and rational (purposive) judgments are discretely different. Modern art theory has embraced Kant's aesthetic theory and framed a theory of art that makes aesthetic judgment an essential requirement for a work of art.[5] Art history and theory have formed this difference as a binary, and by doing so excludes from art purposive (critical) judgments. This is not to say criticality cannot operate in a work of art, only that it is not essential to art. I should mention that although Kant considered these faculties as discrete, they must be understood as a system.[6]

How is it that collage in Pindell's paintings and graphic works functions discursively and not only aesthetically? As Schwabsky points out, Pindell seems to have embraced both techniques on the level of theories of artistic practice and is clearly not willing to accept that they need to be binary opposites. Her embrace was a matter of her disposition and not a matter of theory. "I was very fond of Duchamp's work," she has said. "I was also very fond of landscape painting."[7] Schwabsky recognized that although these two types of practice were oppositional, for Pindell the relationship between them made sense; a personal narrative bound them, and her history with them was part of the development of her identity. Of course the question is: Are they subjectively linked, a matter of her aesthetic affinities, or discursively linked, a matter of her social experience? It's easy to say it is both, but intellectual rigor requires us to explain how this squares with the binary that defines the terms as mutually exclusive as concepts (not as experiences).

Here is where Schwabsky's reference to a dialectical linkage makes sense. Responding to the earlier statement that her interest in aesthetics and concepts has not been critically grasped, making the idea of the dialectic graspable requires an ideological shift in our understanding of art, one that modernism resists because it requires the dismantling of the principle of the universal or totalizing experience that has become our normative understanding. As mentioned in the commentary on Kant, what stands in the way is a theory of modernist aesthetics where, with respect to works of art, we find not a dialectical

relationship that links opposing ideas, but, because of history and art theory, two different and separable ideas about art where one view is that art is an expressive and aesthetic practice and the other view is that it is discursive and conceptual at its core. Collage is useful to overcome this difference by allowing Pindell to introduce into her work objects like the circles produced by the paper punch and tropes like her numerals as icons that reflect her experience; the formal language of abstraction must not subsume those elements (see Untitled, 1973; figs. 4, 5). Conversely, in order to have access to the critical and discursive content built into her abstract language, these objects and signs (numerals) have to be autonomously recognizable from the aesthetic interest of abstract painting. Pindell's work to my mind achieves this latter requirement and is able to link the two concepts of art practice dialectically. This is the difference between a binary opposition and a dialectical opposition. The binary opposition never mediates the difference because each is in fact a tautology. However, in Hegelian dialectics, there is a requirement that an opposition in order to be dialectical must exist within an idea itself. So if we take the idea of a work of art, intellect and affect are dialectically related, and outside of this idea they could be pure binaries, or they may not be oppositional at all.[8] The two terms would simply be separate, like a shoe and a horse.

From this context, Pindell's use of abstraction can have a meaningful relation with content and iconography. The conditions for a dialectical linkage are expressed within the narrative of her experiences as a black person and, more specifically, as a black woman. Here lies the critique of the idea of universality that buttresses the divide between the abstract and the discursive; for part of the black experience of modernism was that historically it was an ideology that helped discriminate against minority inclusion in the art world of the 1960s and 1970s. Hence for Pindell, a gap that we find in the historical narrative between abstraction and conceptualism does not exist. Universalism could be understood as a type of experience (subjectivity) and also as an ideology (social/political). Even though she fully recognizes the difference, minimalism and conceptualism for her did not constitute a rejection of painting given the fact that both constitute a narrative of her identity. Because of the influence of African art and culture, constructs like aesthetics and criticality, abstraction and representation, etc., constituted dialectical opposites that within the narrative of African art are mediated. She has said,

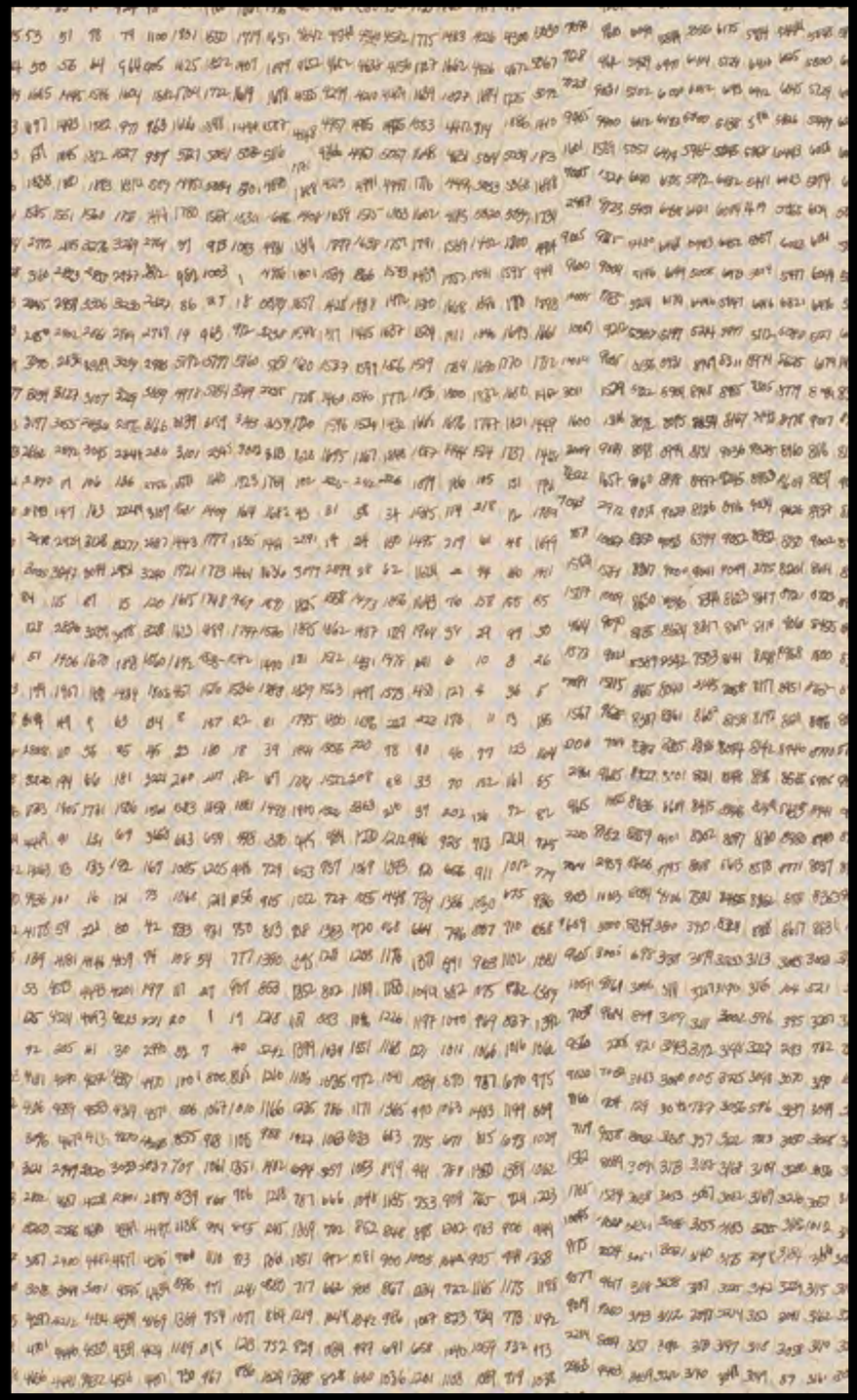
> Black aesthetics for me, means being conscious of African art. I think using aggregates is African, like mixed media putting a lot of different substances together. . . . the kind of surface that I used in the late 1970s when I was adding paper and paint [was African]. I think one can also use abstraction and have a black aesthetic because of the way abstraction has been handled in Africa through the use of geometry and patterns.[9]

The result is that in these works the dialectical posits the two experiences as oppositional, not just different, and allows them to be negotiated in the same object. The idea of abstraction can then be negotiated culturally. In contrast, the conventions of modernism define the two experiences as different phenomena; an aesthetic experience is one thing and a discursive experience is another.

Following:
Untitled, 1973. Ink on paper collage; 17 1/2 × 90 3/8 in.

Fig.
4

Fig. 5



Untitled (detail), 1973

An examination of her use of numerical figures in the 1970s provides an illustration of this. As mentioned, Pindell's professional practice had its entry during the heyday of post-minimalism and conceptual art. So as we look at works such as 1–6031 with Additions, Corrections, and Coffee Stain (1973; fig. 6) and Untitled (1973; figs. 4, 5), we see the continued use of the grid that appears in earlier work. Both of these paper works have hand-drawn numbers. In Untitled (1973), 20,000 randomly sequenced numbers[10] are written on tiny punched-out paper circles arranged and attached in a grid of horizontal rows. Numerals became a central feature of conceptual art in the 1970s. They were deployed to advance a system or as empirical articulations and measures (see Mel Bochner, Roman Opalka, and Mario Merz). But Pindell's use of numbers operates within a dialectical structure where, on the one hand, they were aesthetic markers, purely optical, pictorial, and graphic, with no conceptual or systematic intention, but on the other hand, numbers have iconic significance (her personal encounter with their relationship to African pattern). The fact that she could use tropes of her identity for their aesthetic or graphic qualities does not constitute a contradiction. The space of painting indulges both experiences.

Conceptual art developed as a critique of expressionism that evolved out of European painting and on into American abstract expressionism. Conceptualism of the 1960s and 1970s was based on the idea of interrogating the possibilities of a work of art through an investigation of the structure of art itself. The minimalists approached this by advancing the idea of the art object existing outside of representation, to consider the idea of the artwork as an object, a thing in the world. To this end, their one strategy was to critique the idea of expression by producing art based in systems. Eventually conceptualism became an empirically based practice ruled by analytical language that articulated the work as a concept. In some cases, this was also realized by utilizing analytical markers as the art itself, basically because those markers constituted the formal language of the concept being advanced.

Pindell's use of numbers in her early 1970s paintings did not have this as a goal. She did not use numbers to invoke a system or any other effort to use a language of structure and analysis, or foreground such a language as the art form itself. She does not use numbers in order to advance their use in scientific inquiry. As we have established, her work is more autobiographical, as an image source that tropes a part of her experience. Her language is not scientific, but it is discursive; collage is a formal and technical strategy that lies more within the conventions of art itself. In ways that remind us of the more recent work of Mark Bradford, Pindell's interest in the pictorial advances a traditional practice of art not just to advance an aesthetic, but also to affirm culture and identity through abstraction.

Following:
1–6031 with Additions, Corrections, and Coffee Stain, 1973. Ink on paper; 18 × 22 in.

Fig.
6

1 Barry Schwabsky, “Howardena Pindell in the 1970s: Development of the Grid,” in *Howardena Pindell: Paintings, 1974–1980* (New York: Garth Greenan Gallery, 2014), 5.
2 Ibid.
3 Ralph Rubinstein, “The Hole Truth,” *Art in America*, Oct. 30, 2014, at www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/the-hole-truth. Originally quoted in Kellie Jones, *EyeMinded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), 377. Pindell was commenting on her move from painting to her more politically oriented video and photography work.
4 This is laid out in three of Kant’s treatises: his theory of aesthetics in the *Critique of Judgment*, and with respect to reason and logic in his *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason*. See Werner S. Pluhar’s introduction in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), xxiii–xlvii.
5 See Mary J. Gregor’s foreword in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, xvi.
6 See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, xix.
7 Schwabsky, “Howardena Pindell in the 1970s,” 5. See “Howardena Pindell: Some Reminiscences and a Chronology,” in *Howardena Pindell: Paintings and Drawings* (Potsdam: Roland Gibson Gallery, Potsdam College of the State University of New York, 1992), 20.
8 See “Hegel’s Dialectics,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, June 2016, at plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-dialectics.
9 Howardena Pindell, quoted in Jessie L. Whitehead, “Theorizing Experience: Four Women Artists of Color,” *Studies in Art Education* 50, no. 1 (2008): 30. See also www.michaelrosenfeldart.com/artists/howardena-pindell-b1943.
10 Rubinstein, “The Hole Truth.”

INTERRUPTING THE BROADCAST: HOWARDENA PINDELL’S VIDEO DRAWINGS

Grace Deveney

Reality is opaque; but there are certain points—clues, signs—which allow us to decipher it.

—Carlo Ginzburg[1]

An encounter with Howardena Pindell's Video Drawings offers transparency and opacity in equal measure. Video Drawings: Baseball (1975; fig. 1) reveals the contours of a pitcher, a batter, a catcher, an umpire, and a second baseman, yet the sharp distinction between each body and the playing field is absent. Each of the figures is voluminous and diaphanous; together the scene is more like an apparition than a televised sporting event. Hand-drawn annotations enhance its unearthly quality and seamlessly blend with the surface of the image. More than a hundred arrows punctuated by minuscule dots and numbers cover the surface of the picture. The arrows suggest movement and create a tension between order and chaos—some appear to point in a predictable direction, as if corresponding to the movement of the athletes' bodies; others converge on specific spots within the blurred spectacle. The numbers offer no additional clues to the diagram—occasionally they are sequential but at other times they are random, upside down, reversed, or inscrutable. Overall, the annotated specter of a baseball game is both ethereal and opaque. The overlaid annotations offer a suggestion of a code, but upon closer inspection any particular message remains elusive.

Fig. 1

Video Drawings: Baseball, 1975. Chromogenic print; 4 5/8 x 6 7/8 in.

Howardena Pindell began this body of work in 1973. As the title implies, the works are a juxtaposition of moving image and drawing, presented as photographs that seamlessly merge images from a television set with the artist's renderings. To create these works, Pindell first drew arrows, pips, and numbers on pieces of clear acetate and used the naturally occurring static electricity to adhere them to the television screen (fig. 3). Then, with the TV on and the image adhered to its surface, she took many photographs from a distance, using a remote shutter release cable. Ultimately, for the final works, Pindell selected the ones she found had the most compelling juxtapositions between the drawings and the still image, as well as those that had a "weird" sense of movement.[2]

When Pindell started the Video Drawings in 1973, her work was in the midst of a transition. Up to this time, she had used handmade stencils to produce her large-scale paintings, which she created by systematically hole-punching oak tag paper. These paintings bear the visual texture of pointillism, yet remain abstract explorations of color and form (fig. 2) While making these works, Pindell saved the punched chads and around this time began creating works on paper covered with the chads and laced with diaphanous grids composed of thread embedded below the field of circles (fig. 4). Like the annotations on Video Drawings: Baseball (1976; fig. 5), the hole-punched chads on many of these works are numbered, and there is a translucent surface quality. Each element approaches and recedes from the surface at various intervals, the works' three-dimensionality enhanced by a dusting of talcum powder.

Fig. 2

Untitled, 1972–73. Acrylic on canvas; 90 1/4 × 87 3/4 in.

Following:
Scrap of *Video Drawing* template, 1976. Ink on acetate; 11 1/2 × 16 1/4 in.

Fig.
3

Fig.
4

Untitled #7, 1973. Ink on punched papers, talcum powder, and thread on oak tag; 10 1/8 × 8 3/8 in.

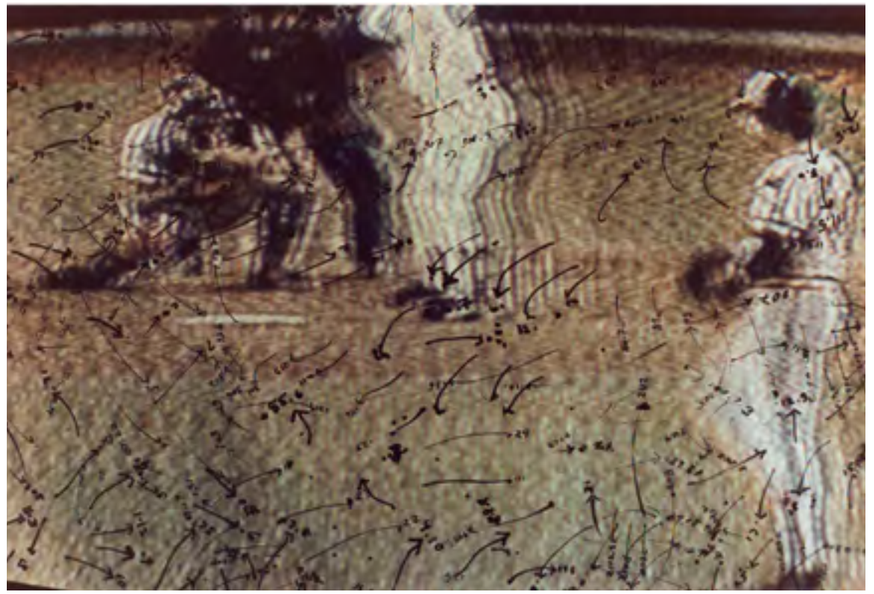


Fig.
5

Video Drawings: Baseball, 1976. Chromogenic print; 8 × 10 in.

Through the process of numbering the chads, which, at an eighth of an inch, required tiny digits, Pindell began to experience eye strain and purchased a TV so that she might glance up at it occasionally to vary her focal length. To give herself a break from the tedium of numbering, she developed the strategy of adhering acetate drawings to her television and photographing the results. As another source of inspiration, Pindell cites Etch A Sketch, the magnetic children's toy that offered a blank screen for drawing and that could be wiped away with a brisk shake to begin anew. While the intricacy and intensity of the project might suggest otherwise, this series began as a side project for Pindell, what she has described as a "kind of fluke" spurred by boredom.[3]

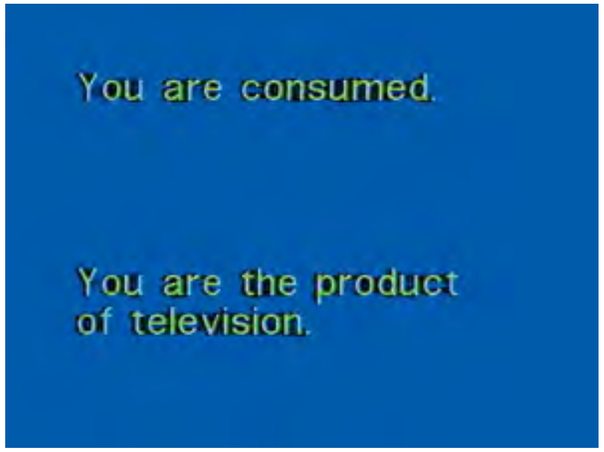
Although the video drawing process originated in a physical need for rest and relaxation, the photographs share a visual texture with Pindell's other works of the early 1970s. In these photographs, like the works on paper from this period, the relationship between foreground and background becomes ambiguous as the drawings, in combination with the disintegration of the televisual image, complicate any distinction between figure and ground (fig. 6). What began simply enough as an exercise to prevent eye strain became an extension of Pindell's overarching artistic concerns and offered a new space for exploring color, texture, and form. At the same time, precisely because of its origin in freedom and play, this body of work stages a subtle yet powerful reconsideration of the very structure of television and its role in everyday life. Through the Video Drawings, Pindell renegotiated the psychosomatic terms of engagement with television, shifting from passive consumer to participant. While her interest in them was primarily formal, the very structure and process of the photographs enacts a political gesture through the refiguring and reframing of the televisual. Although Pindell has not ascribed much meaning to the choice of subjects in her early Video Drawings, sports and science fiction are frequent subjects and are intriguing to consider together because each genre is an enactment of human bodies engaged in spectacular and, in the case of sci-fi, death-defying feats (pp. 58–59, figs. 5, 6).

Following:
Video Drawings: Swimming, 1975. Chromogenic print; framed: 14 × 16 1/8 in.

Fig. 6

The same year Pindell began photographing her television, Richard Serra and Carlota Fay Schoolman created Television Delivers People (fig. 7). The video, which consists of scrolling white text against a blue backdrop, set to Muzak, offers a public service announcement on the underlying logic of television as the ultimate form of mass media, entirely controlled by corporations in order to convert audiences into consumers of products made by those very same companies. The video drives home the homogenizing aspects of television and the insidious ways in which it convinces people that it is a product to be consumed, when in fact it renders individuals passive consumers themselves.

Fig. 7



Richard Serra, *Television Delivers People*, 1973.
Video (color, sound); 6 minutes
Produced by Carlota Fay Schoolman and Richard Serra

The sentiment conveyed in Serra and Schoolman's video is amplified, albeit through a different cultural lens, in the 1974 hit song "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" by musician and poet Gil Scott-Heron.[4]

> You will not be able to plug in, turn on and cop out . . . The revolution will not go better with Coke. The revolution will not fight the germs that may cause bad breath. The revolution will put you in the driver's seat.[5]

Scott-Heron's lyrics critique the passivity television breeds, as well as its relationship to corporate sponsors ultimately dependent on maintaining the status quo. Scott-Heron, like Serra and Schoolman, points to the political stakes of passive consumption.

Although television had been introduced widely to American consumers nearly two decades prior to the Video Drawings, few artists had depicted TVs in their work by the mid-1970s. Notably, Lee Friedlander created a body of work called The Little Screens, which was featured in Harper's Bazaar in 1963 with an introduction by Walker Evans. The photographs show rooms in middle-class homes empty but for a glowing television screen filled with the face of a television actor. In these works, the person on screen becomes a kind of surrogate body in the empty room, suggesting the persistent and uncanny presence television occupied in American homes (fig. 8).[6] In contrast to Pindell, Friedlander comments on the role of television within the domestic interior as The Little Screen series seeks to estrange the technology's presence in the home through the absence of a television viewer. In other words, in Friedlander's photographs the television is quite distinctly missing a viewer, the very thing that gives it relevance. In contrast, Pindell's close-up photographs of the television position the artist herself as the viewer, and an active one at that. Her direct and quite literal intervention in the action on screen offers an alternative to the passive-recipient dynamic.

Fig. 8

Lee Friedlander, *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*, 1961. Gelatin silver print; 6 3/8 × 9 5/8 in.

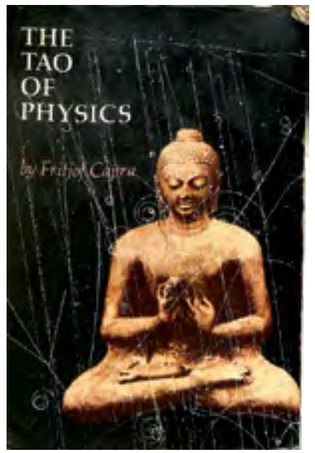
As Lowery Stokes Sims describes in her essay included in this volume, the artist's handling of materials "engages long-suppressed cultural retentions, but also addresses perceptual, even psychic, dimensions of the artist's relationship to the environment." In the Video Drawings, television comes across as a strange distortion of reality (fig. 9). The breakdown of texture suggests the instability of the medium and hints at a fragility or a cracking in the facade of the homogeneous and straightforward goals of much television programming. The Video Drawings compel viewers to think through what they are looking at, to become active in their visual engagement. This all runs counter to televisual experience, at least as articulated by its critics. Instead of building consensus and passivity, Pindell's photographs re-present the television screen as something to be engaged with, and challenged by.

Fig. 9

Video Drawings: Weightlifting, 1975. Chromogenic print; 5 × 7 in.

Of course, this quality comes not just from the televisions in the Video Drawings, but from the drawings themselves. They resemble weather-movement notations, dance notations, and particle tracks, all comparisons Pindell welcomes and acknowledges.[7] In fact, Fritjof Capra's The Tao of Physics (1975) is a book Pindell remembers from this time, and one of the first-edition covers features visual diagrams from a particle chamber juxtaposed with a Buddhist sculpture (fig. 10). These subatomic particle tracks are the visual information that allows physicists to study the makeup of the minuscule particles based on the trajectories they take after collisions drive them apart. The patterns they form reveal a tension between random

Fig. 10



Cover of Fritjof Capra's *Tao of Physics* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1975)

and predictable movement, based on the makeup of the particle. In short, there is always an element of chance in these tracks, and experimentation with the unpredictable is at the heart of Pindell's Video Drawings. Coincidence is at play in nearly every stage of the process: the freedom of the artist's hand as she makes the repetitive marks, shifting between arrows, dots, and numbers; the selection of where to place the drawing on the screen; the choice of program to photograph; and then the sporadic taking of the photographs themselves. Finally, in the taking of the photographs, the passage of time comes to bear on all of these chance operations, as from the moment the cable release is pushed, what was in Pindell's field of vision is already fleeting when the shutter has closed. Despite, or perhaps because of, all these variables, some of the Video Drawings seem impossibly aligned—such as Track (1976; fig. 11), in which a circle serendipitously encloses a man's left eye.

Systems that function at the intersection of chance and intention have appeared at other times in Pindell's work. Tarot: Hanged Man (1981; fig. 13) is a large painting that takes the name of a tarot card as its title and references the traditional suspended-man imagery of the card. Pindell collaged an upside-down figure into the center of the hole-punched, chad-filled surface, which is composed of irregular strips that she cut and then sewed back together. Although Pindell has engaged with tarot in only one major work, the ritual of pulling cards resonates with the experimental, chance-based process of the Video Drawings. Typically, a querent pulls from a tarot deck with an intention or question in mind, and then relies on chance to play a role in shaping the meaning of the cards that have been drawn. This commingling of the objective and chance is part of what makes the photographs such an intriguing intervention in the broader field of media-engaged artwork of the 1970s.

In some ways, Pindell's project is comparable to Martha Rosler's collages of the late 1960s and 1970s—each body of work brings together disparate forms of imagery as a means of commenting upon media culture. For House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home (c. 1967–72), Rosler used clippings from popular magazines to critique the relationship between US domestic ideals, the military-industrial complex, and the media machine, inserting images of the

Fig. 11

Video Drawings: Track, 1976. Chromogenic print; 4 1/2 x 6 1/2 in.

Vietnam War from Life into interiors depicted in House Beautiful (fig. 12). Although the popular media avoided connecting the atrocities of war with American individuals and their lifestyles, Rosler's handcrafted collages create a direct relationship between the two, collapsing the distance the media constructed between here and there, home and war. Writer and curator Laura Cottingham describes Rosler's ability to draw together geographically distinct but logically connected events and places as "rational realism."[8]

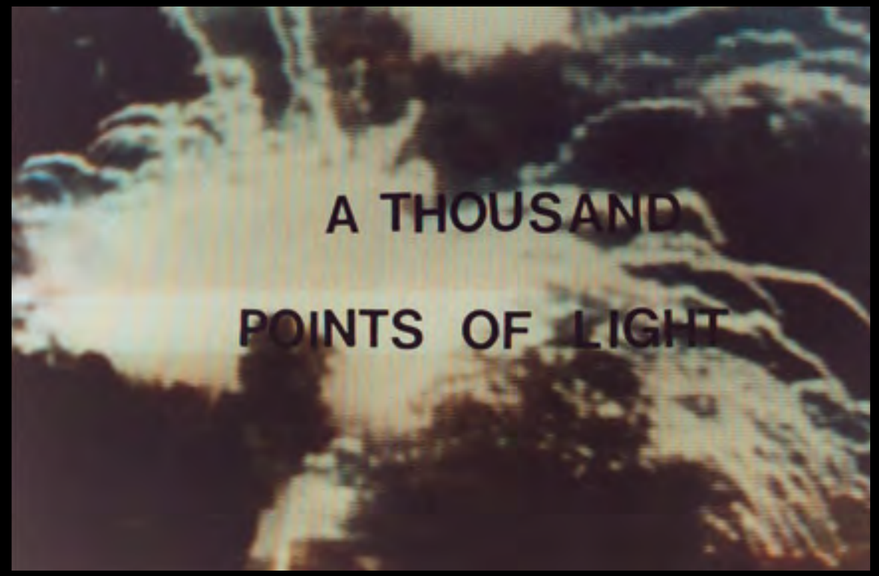
Fig. 12

Martha Rosler, *Red Stripe Kitchen*, from the series *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*, c. 1967–72. Photomontage, printed as a color photograph, edition 8/10; image: 23 1/4 x 17 3/4 in.

Following:
Tarot: Hanged Man, 1981. Mixed media on canvas; 36 × 156 in.

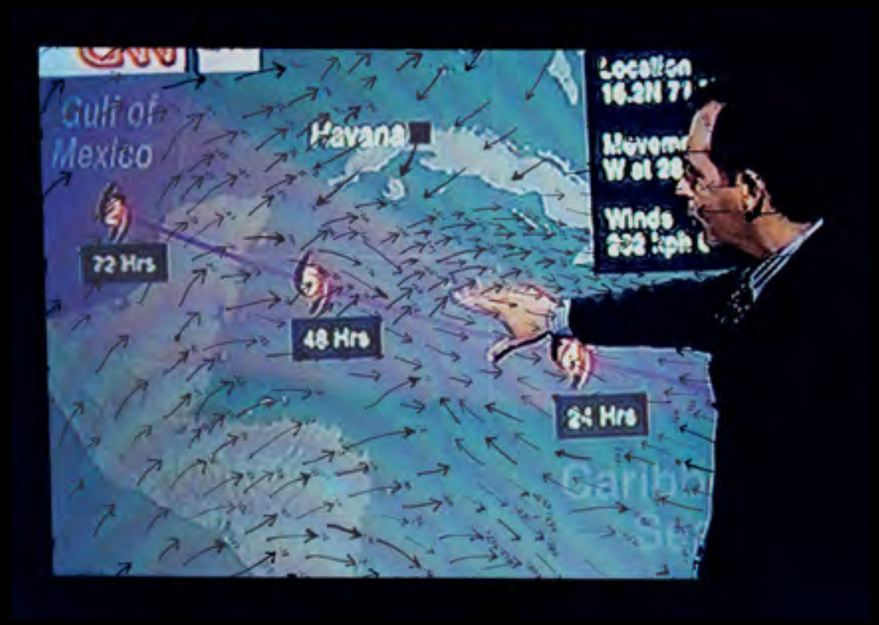
Fig.
13

Fig. 14



War: A Thousand Points of Light (White Phosphorus), 1988. Chromogenic print; 18 × 24 in.

Fig. 15



Video Drawings: News, 2007. Cibachrome; 8 × 10 in.

In contrast, Pindell's process in the Video Drawings brings together different ways of creating images through photography: the intuitive and personal hand of her drawings, and the calculated spectacles presented on the small screen. Unlike the density of Rosler's collages, Pindell's Video Drawings are essentially a form of translucent collage that in a very literal sense rely on light in their layered construction, and also illuminate aspects of our relationship to media. For this reason, her project deserves closer examination in relation to more widely analyzed feminist art practices like Rosler's that critique the relationship between technology and social and political struggle.[9]

Notably, prior to the 1980s, Pindell did not photograph televised coverage of the Vietnam War or shows that represented war and violence. Although her early Video Drawings do not represent overtly political subjects, as we often understand them, they do evince a political consciousness and challenge to what television seemed to represent at the time. By shifting the hierarchy of viewer and actor, Pindell intervened in the power structure. She simultaneously obscured the broadcast with overlays of her own representations of movement, time, and space. Merging the ambiguous temporal-spatial play of her drawings with the television, and then freezing these images, enabled her to put the televisual in dialogue with chance, conflict, and chaos.

Breaking down the dynamics of power structures was something Pindell would come to do more explicitly through another engagement with video technology in Free, White and 21. Pindell has said of the process, "Actually, video and digital technology were not . . . uppermost [in] my mind; I'm a painter, and I was more interested in painting. But this seemed the right medium for this expression, so . . . for this idea, I chose it."[10] This work, which Pindell made after a life-threatening car accident that left her with memory loss, catalogues racist experiences she had beginning in childhood and extending into her present encounters with white feminists working in the arts. The video's title adds another dimension to Pindell's engagement with television and screen culture, as "free, white, and 21" became a popular American catchphrase beginning in the 1930s, oft repeated by young white women obliviously asserting their power and agency within restrictive social structures.[11]

In 1991, Pindell showed a new body of video drawings titled War that did address politics more overtly. In these works, she photographed images from documentaries on the military conflicts in Ethiopia, Cambodia, Nicaragua, and the Persian Gulf, with a number of images taken from David Munro's film The Four Horsemen (1986). While some of these photographs are constructed with the same style of drawings of the early works, in others Pindell inserted only text over the screen, and in doing so, the project shifted from being politically minded to full-on protest art. War: A Thousand Points of Light (White Phosphorus) (1988; fig. 14) juxtaposes a white phosphorus bomb explosion and the phrase "A Thousand Points of Light," which President George H. W. Bush popularized as a metaphor for the positive work of volunteerism in US communities. While this type of weaponry has been deployed in many wars, in March 1988, the year the photograph was made, Saddam Hussein used a combination of poisonous gases including white phosphorus in an attack on the Kurdish city of Halabja in Southern Kurdistan. Bush's "thousand points of light" program, which was often satirized during his presidency, takes on a chilling new valence against the war footage, which shows the suspended white phosphorus appearing like the aftermath of a firework.

Pindell maintains that she has never been interested in technology, yet the process and outcome of the Video Drawings engage with a larger dialogue on the role of both television and photography. Pindell embeds points, signs, and clues that invite us to decipher an alternative to the prescribed relationship between viewer and screen. In these works, a philosophy on the position of the spectator emerges, one that introduces freedom, play, and chance in response to the passivity and conformity that define television viewing. The transformation of the series over the course of four decades (fig. 15) not only mirrors the arc of Pindell's larger career, but also demonstrates that her powers of perception and her responsiveness to the world around her are active and attuned, even in her moments of rest.

1 This quote is taken from Lynn Spigel's essential essay on television and the domestic sphere, "Installing the Television Set: Popular Discourses on Television and Domestic Space, 1948–1955," in *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer*, ed. Lynn Spigel and Denise Mann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

2 Howardena Pindell, interview with the author, Nov. 6, 2015.

3 Ibid.

4 Released in 1970, the song reached radio popularity in 1974.

5 Gil Scott-Heron, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," from the 1970 album *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*.

6 For more information on this body of work, see Saul Anton, *Lee Friedlander: The Little Screens* (London: Afterall Books, 2015).

7 For more on the sense of movement in Pindell's *Video Drawings*, see Camille Ann Brewer, "Moving Pictures: Video Drawings by Howardena Pindell," in *Howardena Pindell: Video Drawings, 1973–2007* (Boston: Howard Yezerski Gallery, 2013).

8 Laura Cottingham, "The War Is Always Home: Martha Rosler," Simon Watson Gallery, Oct. 1991, at martharosler.net/reviews/cottingham.html.

9 For more on this, see Christine Filippone, *Science, Technology, and Utopias: Women Artists and Cold War America* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

10 Leslie King-Hammond and Lowery Stokes Sims, "Reflections on Art as a Verb: Twenty Years Later, in the New Millenium: Interview with Maren Hassinger, Senda Nengudi, and Howardena Pindell," in *Cinema Remixed & Reloaded: Black Women Artists and the Moving Image since 1970* (Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum, 2008), 18.

11 See Andrew Heisel, "The Rise and Fall of an All-American Catchphrase: 'Free, White, and 21,'" *Jezebel Pictorial*, Sept. 10, 2015, at http://pictorial.jezebel.com/the-rise-and-fall-of-an-all-american-catchphrase-free-1729621311.

COMING TO VOICE: HOWARDENA PINDELL'S FREE, WHITE AND 21

Brian Wallis

> The white voice was the dominant voice. What the white man's voice was to the white female's voice, the white female's voice was to the woman of color's voice.
>
> —Howardena Pindell

When writer bell hooks described the unique ways that poetry and language had allowed her to gain a sense of her own identity, to speak publicly, and to move "from silence into speech as revolutionary gesture," she spoke of it as "coming to voice." For hooks, as for many African American feminists of the 1970s and 1980s, this notion of coming to voice was more than simply breaking through socially imposed silence; it was a self-conscious assertion of individuality in composing thoughts and ideas, and a public enunciation of collective ideals in speech acts meant to communicate and influence. If silence meant censorship or invisibility, a racially motivated restriction of language in white patriarchal society, coming to voice meant adopting shared speech with other women of color and participating in communal exchanges with social consequences, impertinently talking back to authority. "For women within oppressed groups who have contained so many feelings—despair, rage, anguish—who do not speak as poet Audre Lorde writes, 'for fear our words will not be heard nor welcomed,' coming to voice is an act of resistance," hooks writes. "Speaking becomes both a way to engage in active self-transformation and a rite of passage where one moves from being object to being subject."[1]

Fig. 1

Still from *Free, White and 21*, 1980. U-matic (color, sound); 12 minutes, 15 seconds

This crucial feminist passage, this coming to voice, is vividly articulated in Howardena Pindell's groundbreaking 1980 video titled Free, White and 21, a work in which language is both the critical tool for deconstructing unequal power relations and the artistic expression of her nascent activism (figs. 1, 3, 4 and pp. 181–92). For Pindell, this unique video work was the first public expression of her own experiences of racism as an African American woman and the first artwork in which she was able to adopt an overtly political point of view. Shot in the saturated pop hues and funky quality of early color video, Free, White and 21 is for the most part a twelve-minute staged conversation between two talking heads: the artist as herself describing various incidents of racial humiliation and the artist made up as a white woman who challenges and dismisses everything the artist says in a hectoring and condescending diatribe full of clichés. This discursive showdown, in which language fails to communicate, briefly encapsulates some of the strategies and dilemmas of black feminism at that time. While the artist who tells stories about her past is a testament to contemporary feminist awakenings to the voice of the political in the personal and the everyday, the rude woman in whiteface represents the litany of putdowns and unhearing hostility from white, middle-class feminists that many African American women felt left them excluded from the movement.

Pindell had a well-established career as an artist, teacher, writer, and museum curator at the time Free, White and 21 was first shown at A.I.R. Gallery in New York in September 1980. She had followed the conventional rules for success. She had studied at Boston University and had earned an MFA at Yale University. Her large abstract works made with punched-out circles slathered with monochrome colors were shown at the Whitney Annual and compared favorably to those of formalist artists like Larry Poons or Al Held. She had mid-career retrospectives. At the same time, Pindell held a prestigious curatorial position in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books at the Museum of Modern Art. She was a committed feminist and a cofounder of the women's cooperative A.I.R. Gallery, but, as she later recalled, her work as an artist was "usually devoid of personal, narrative, or autobiographical reference."[2]

Fig. 2

Art Workers' Coalition protest at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1971, showing Michele Wallace (center) and Faith Ringgold (right)

During this period, the New York art world was increasingly engaged with questions around the relationship between politics and the visual arts, challenging the dominant conservatism of American capitalist patriarchy and demonstrating its entrenchment within cultural institutions. Responding to New Left political theory, antiwar demonstrations, Black Power advocacy, and especially the cultural activism of the women's movement, many artists in the late 1970s embraced political issues and rejected the conventional stereotype of the mute and socially isolated male artist. Picking up on the engaged politics of predecessors such as the Art Workers' Coalition (fig. 2) and the Guerrilla Art Action Group, many artists and critics of the late 1970s demanded changes within the institutionalized arts community. Along with demonstrating for greater inclusion of women and African Americans in exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, artists initiated their own self-representing cultural collectives and alternative spaces, such as Women's House, Artists

Space, and Just Above Midtown. They developed new strategies for public debate and social critique, including protest exhibitions, guerrilla performances, street posters, videos, artists' books and magazines, and public art. In all these ways, artists began confronting political issues not only as subjects in their art, but also as strategic tools for engaging new audiences, unlocking exclusionary attitudes, and reconsidering their own social identities.

This new activism in art often went beyond protest and propaganda. Pindell's friend critic Lucy R. Lippard, an ardent feminist and one of the most outspoken advocates of political engagement by artists, defined the new activist art as a practice in which "some element of the art takes place in the 'outside world,' including some teaching and media practice as well as community and labor organizing, public political work, and organizing within artist's community."[3] For Lippard, activist art existed mainly outside art venues, in public spaces and in direct confrontation with political power. But for other thinkers, activism was more critical and theoretical, and the art world was a crucial platform for it. And for others still, it was precisely inside the art world—and especially within museums—that the machinations of power could best be exposed and examined. Artists like Hans Haacke, Adrian Piper, Andrea Fraser, Fred Wilson, and the collectives Group Material and Guerrilla Girls engaged in institutional critique not only to map the political and economic entanglements of museum patronage, but also to reveal the ways that the seemingly neutral space of the museum harbored coded references to class and race that shaped the experiences—and even the behavior—of visitors. Artists who engaged in institutional critique were often criticized for participating in the very art world system they purported to challenge. Yet their rigorous methodologies for researching and dramatically staging interventions in museum spaces yielded some of the most politically astute and influential artworks, ones that connected to and resonated with other activist artists and collectives. Moreover, institutional critique contributed to a nuanced understanding of the role of representation in popular culture and public space.

Free, White and 21 was for Pindell, at age thirty-seven, a deliberate break with her professional past and a demonstration of her own insurgent activism. As she later said, "Free, White and 21 was the first shot, so to speak . . . I really had my heart in it, and I really wanted to get my point across."[4] The year before, she had left her job at the Museum of Modern Art after twelve years and accepted a teaching position at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, on Long Island. During her first month on that job, in October 1979, she was in a serious automobile accident in which she suffered a head trauma and had partial amnesia. In her 1992 essay "On Making a Video—Free, White and 21," Pindell recounted her slow recovery from the accident and the political conditions that motiviated the video project. For her, the tape was largely autobiographical, an effort to reestablish her identity through a recovery of memories. But she was also clear that it was an angry and forthright assertion of her own voice and a deliberate rebuke to the de facto racism of the art world and of second-wave feminism, which largely ignored women of color. As she wrote, "I decided to make 'Free, White and 21' after yet another run-in with racism in the artworld and the white feminist. I was feeling very isolated as a token artist. I found that white women wanted me to be limited to their agenda."[5]

In Free, White and 21, Pindell plays several characters, in effect fragmenting her own persona, undercutting the notion of a unified "self" behind her self-representations and acknowledging that negotiating African American identity requires a range of disguises, or voices. As art historian Uri McMillan notes, "Pindell's body enables us to witness not Pindell per se, but rather her avatars. Thus, even though she narrates in the first person, her autobiographical encounters are spoken through performed versions of herself."[6] In the video she adopts several roles, or avatars, including the Artist, the White Woman, the Woman Who Wraps and Unwraps Her Head, and the Woman Who Removes Her Skin. These poses and gestures mock the stereotypes of binary racial segregation and pantomime the ways "others" are identified and silenced and invalidated.

The first scene in Free, White and 21, generally overlooked, sets the tone. Immediately after the simple typewritten title card, there is a very brief and startling shot of the White Woman—Pindell in whiteface makeup, wearing bright red lipstick, a blond wig, and cat's-eye sunglasses (fig. 3). She looks disturbed and disdainful; she is scowling in silence. Only after this abrupt intrusion can Pindell as the Artist speak, in a context fouled by

Fig. 3

Still from *Free, White and 21*, 1980. U-matic (color, sound)

Fig. 4

Still from *Free, White and 21*, 1980. U-matic (color, sound)

displeasure. Shot in a tight bust-length pose, the Artist politely addresses her autobiographical confessions to the viewer, recounting in a soft-spoken voice seven everyday incidents of racial abuse or humiliation (fig. 4). Each is followed by hostile rejoinders from the White Woman. In this chronological series of plainspoken vignettes, Pindell recounts how her mother was once scrubbed with lye by a white babysitter to try to remove the "dirt" from her dark skin; how a white kindergarten teacher tied young Howardena to a cot for asking to go to the bathroom; how, in college, she was deemed inappropriate for a student government position because she was black; how she and other nonwhite applicants struggled to find work in New York City; and so on.

This extraordinary personal narrative traces a multigenerational genealogy of racialization, the shaping and segregating of lives based on inherited social mythologies and the lingering dictates of embedded class privilege. What unites these confrontations with white authority figures is not only a social regime in which exclusion or punishment is determined visually, by the recognition of racial difference as a product of skin color, but also a dawning awareness that the only available response to such blatant instances of racism is silence. In the incidents Pindell recollects, neither the Artist nor her mother have agency; they experience humiliation, but, in the telling of the stories at least, they lack the capacity for speech or action, for talking back. Or, put another way, they refuse to strike back or to respond with the violence or outrage that might be warranted in such demeaning circumstances. Airing these social embarrassments was, for Pindell as the Artist, a personal coming to voice and a public repudiation of the regulatory silencing that enforces racial and gender hierarchies.

Fig. 5

Adrian Piper, Still from *Cornered*, 1988. Video installation with birth certificates, color video, monitor, table, and chairs; dimensions variable

Throughout Free, White and 21, Pindell uses her voice not only to tell stories, but also to interpellate the viewer, to draw the audience into a conversation through direct address. This rhetorical device should not be identified with the narcissism often attributed to early video works by Vito Acconci, Richard Serra, or Dan Graham, tapes that use technical properties of the medium to position viewers by pointing to or reflecting their images.[7] Pindell, instead, engages the rich participatory history of feminist performance, including the work of Adrian Piper (fig. 5), Yoko Ono, Lorraine O'Grady, Ana Mendieta, and Martha Rosler, staged events that directly confront and provoke the audience. In these intimate works, the actors "break the fourth wall" and present themselves not as female bodies, objects for contemplation, but as confessors and interlocutors.[8] In speaking confidentially to the viewer, Pindell's video also operates in the manner of certain contemporaneous postmodern photographic strategies, such as those used in Cindy Sherman's Untitled Film Stills (fig. 6) and Carrie Mae Weems's Kitchen Table series; in addressing the social construction of identity, these works re-create an intimate setting in which the viewer is directly implicated through glances or gestures as a participant in a type of "conversation piece."[9]

In Free, White and 21, the imperious White Woman in her gaudy makeup responds bitterly to each of the Artist's heartfelt memories by challenging the veracity of her stories and the legitimacy of her art. The White Woman does this through language, by repeating stock phrases grouped around three main issues: the Artist's lack of gratitude for the opportunities offered, which others would gratefully accept ("You ungrateful little . . . after all we have done for you," "We will find other tokens"); the Artist's ideas about art and her world view are invalid or irrelevant ("Your art isn't political," "We don't believe in your symbols," "You don't exist until we validate you"); and the Artist's belief in racism or prejudice is imaginary ("You know you really must be paranoid," "That never happened to me," "But I'm free white and 21").[10] The White Woman's reproachful comebacks are a form of gaslighting, a rhetorical manipulation designed to make the subject question her own memories, her own understanding of truth, and her own perceptions of reality.

But it is the White Woman's reality that is demonstrably false. Her clumsy costume and chalky skin tone identify her as a deliberate parody of whiteness, and a challenge to the remarkably persistent belief in race as a biological fact of nature. In this instance, whiteness is inverted. It is no longer the invisible cultural dominant, the standard whose values are so taken for granted that they are unacknowledged, but rather an imperfect and debased caricature. In lampooning whiteness, Pindell demonstrates that the only way race has any coherence is as a social construct, a fiction, a stereotype, a comic ideal. Other artists of the time experimented with whiteface, including Suzy Lake, Cindy Sherman, Renate Eisenegger, and Lynn Hershman Leeson, though these were generally white feminist artists examining the construction of identity.[11] Historically, the use of whiteface, in which an African American performer employed white stage makeup to play a white character for humorous effect, was fairly uncommon, in large part because audiences for such nineteenth-century minstrel entertainments were predominantly white. But in this video, the whitefaced woman is not simply a comic reversal of blackfaced minstrelsy; she is a harsh demonstration of the verbal abuse African American feminists often experienced from white feminists and, more generally, a glib commentary on the unthinking pastiche of elements that form white social identification.[12]

At one point early in Free, White and 21, Pindell stops speaking and begins to wrap her head in long white gauze bandages, both covering her dark skin and silencing her voice; toward the end of the video, this bandage is slowly removed. At another moment toward the end, Pindell peels a transparent "skin" from her face and holds it up like a mask. Even the White Woman

Fig. 6

Cindy Sherman, *Untitled (Secretary)*, 1978/93. Sepia-toned photograph; 14 × 11 in.

makes a final gesture in the video, pulling a white stocking over her head as she says, "I'm free, white and 21." For Pindell, these gestures of veiling and transparency, drawn from the history of black feminist performance, signal the ways that women of color are censored and made invisible. Just as the white gauze obscures the dark skin of the Artist, the white stocking is a cover-up. As Pindell said, "I felt that it was symbolic of the women's auxiliary of the KKK. Instead of a white sheet, like a bank robber, the white character covers her face with a 'polite' white stocking."[13] What was the White Woman covering up? Pindell wrote, "The white feminist who wishes equality for herself too often remains a racist in her 'equality,' her racism unnoticed by colleagues who may carry the same poison."[14]

The White Woman's defiant refrain, "I'm free, white, and 21," retains that poison. Appropriating for the title of her video a once-popular catchphrase, one that by 1980 was pretty obscure, Pindell draws attention to the damaging history of stereotypical language. The phrase was once a staple of American popular culture, uttered in literally dozens of movies in the 1930s and 1940s, generally by young women as a proud assertion of their own newfound emancipation. In Hollywood's so-called fallen-woman movies, in which outspoken or overconfident females get their comeuppance, the catchphrase "I'm free, white, and 21" was enunciated flippantly, without regard for its racial connotations, to assert freedom and privilege, often just before the woman's tragic downfall. But, as culture critic Andrew Heisel has noted, at the same time, the triple boast was inevitably an assertion of racial superiority, and it "positioned white privilege as the ultimate argument-stopper."[15] This not-so-subtle racial prerogative was not lost on African American filmgoers. Under the headline "Free, White and 21," critic Walter L. Lowe wrote in the African American weekly The Chicago Defender in 1935: "To the average person of color, the phrase: 'free, white and twenty-one,' as it is employed in moving picture dialogues, conveys the following suggestions or ideas: 'You are not white; you are, therefore, an inferior person; You are not white; you are not, therefore, entitled to social and industrial freedom.'"[16]

Given Pindell's crude stereotype of the white feminist, it is tempting to view her Free, White and 21 video as reinforcing a binary black versus white racial antagonism. But Pindell's understanding of racial and ethnic identity, including her own, was more nuanced at the time, and evolving. The video was created specifically for the women's cooperative A.I.R. Gallery in SoHo, for a September 1980 group exhibition titled Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States, organized by A.I.R. member artists Ana Mendieta, Zarina, and Kazuko Miyamoto. Their goal was to counter the domination of their organization—and the American women's art movement in general—by white, middle-class feminists and to encourage a more global perspective on women's rights and creativity. Mendieta, who had come to New York only six months before the exhibition, wrote in the catalogue introduction, "American feminism as it stands is basically a white middle-class movement. This exhibition points not necessarily to the injustice or incapacity of a society that has not been willing to include us, but more toward a personal will to continue being 'other.'"[17]

In this context, Pindell was making her own particularly pointed intervention about the hypocrisies of white feminist artists, but she was also redefining her own shifting identity. She proudly acknowledged that she came from a "very racially mixed family," and that her lineage included European, Seminole, Central American, African, and Afro-Caribbean ancestors. She identified herself as a "third world woman." In October 1978, she had spoken at a panel on "Third World Feminist Artists" at the SOHO20 Gallery.[18] And the following year she contributed to a special issue of Heresies titled "Third World Women: The Politics of Being Other," which was a critical preview of the A.I.R. Gallery show. The Heresies guest editors used the phrase "third world women" expansively, saying, "We use it knowing it implies people of color, non-white and, most of all, 'other.' Third World Women are other than the majority and the power-holding class, and we have concerns other than those of white feminists, white artists and men."[19]

Pindell's two contributions to the "Third World Women" issue of Heresies focused not only on racial prejudice in general but also on the more specific issue of the institutionalized racism of the art world. In her essay "Criticism/or/Between the Lines," she examined point by point the structures and motivations of art criticism, the language that often shapes the careers of artists and excludes those who are deemed different. In particular, she focused on the economic basis of the art-world system, with critics serving as a promoter of the work of

art, or product, "ripening it for sale." But, more importantly, Pindell pointed to a much larger, clanlike system of gender- and race-based segregation through which the art-world system maintains its hegemony and discourages analysis, including criticism itself. "Somehow," Pindell wrote, "the examination of any activity in the art community, criticism being only one, is taboo, 'tasteless and crude.'"[20]

Fig. 7
Black Artists Emergency Coalition demonstration at Artists Space, New York, April 14, 1979

Pindell also participated in a second piece in the same issue of Heresies, a four-page project titled "Action Against Racism in the Arts."[21] The "Action" documented a protest by the Black Artists Emergency Coalition against an exhibition at Artists Space (fig. 7), an alternative art space in Lower Manhattan. In February 1979, Artists Space, noted for launching the postmodernist Pictures exhibition in 1977, had opened a show of black-and-white charcoal and photographic triptychs by a young white artist named Donald Newman. Inexplicably, the title he had chosen, and the Artists Space staff had accepted, was The Nigger Drawings.[22] This title bore no relation to the works or their subject matter, and was apparently meant by the artist as a provocation. Incensed by this thoughtless racism, three black feminist artists—Pindell, Janet Henry, and Linda Goode-Bryant—formed the Emergency Coalition with other artists and critics to protest the exhibition. Pindell and the members of the coalition cited two specific issues: first, the curatorial failure to restrict the wanton deployment of a demeaning racial epithet that was a form of hate speech against African Americans; and second, the contrast between the white artist's unabridged freedom of speech and the censorship by exclusion of nonwhite artists in government-funded arts institutions. This otherwise minor protest assumed far greater significance in the ensuing debate as it exposed the ways that language and institutional privilege perpetuated art-world discrimination. As Pindell stated at the time: "It is appalling to think that the staffs of institutions, alternative spaces, and some artists, have grown so smug and secure as to think that a racial slur used under the guise of aesthetic freedom would pass unnoticed."[23]

In the project published in Heresies, quotations from Artists Space supporters, particularly from writers for the influential leftist art journal October, dismissed the charges of racism and focused on the postmodern indeterminacy of language. Speaking of the offensive title, Artists Space director Helene Winer said, "People are neutralizing language. These words don't have quite the power they used to—and that seems like a healthy thing."[24] Critic Craig Owens, editor of Skyline and a writer for October, wrote, "The cry went up 'Racism!'—as if the mere use of a word, and not the context in which it occurs, determines meaning."[25] And critic Douglas Crimp, curator of the Pictures exhibition at Artists Space and managing editor at October, added, "They seem to be telling us that we must suspend everything we know about how art and language function, and in this case accept it as simply true that any use of the

word ‘nigger’ is categorically racist.”[26] When the protesters appealed to the financial supporters of Artists Space, Crimp even circulated a petition condemning the coalition’s attempts “to use government funding agencies as organs of censorship, their prolonged harassment of an extremely valuable and ethical arts organization, and their insensitivity to the complexities of both esthetics and politics.”[27]

Critic Lucy Lippard, one of the leaders of the Emergency Coalition protest, later recalled that the Artists Space controversy was the event that forced Pindell to “come of age politically.”[28] The issues involved in the fracas and the animosity she faced clearly shaped Pindell’s ideas in making Free, White and 21 the following year and for years to come. In June 1987, at the Agendas for Survival conference at Hunter College in New York, Pindell cited the Artists Space controversy as an example of how even progressive alternative spaces could perpetuate the racial bias endemic to the art world. To further litigate her point, she presented methodically compiled data from published sources covering the period from 1980 to 1987 showing the appallingly small percentage of nonwhite artists included in New York art museum exhibitions and gallery representation. This information overwhelmingly supported her claims that “artists of color face an industry-wide ‘restraint of trade,’ limiting their ability to show and sell their work,” and that “black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American artists are . . . with a few, very few exceptions systematically excluded.”[29]

In her subsequent work, including her painting, teaching, organizing, and writing, Pindell was no longer silent. The liberatory effect of Free, White and 21 inaugurated an abrupt change in her approach to painting. Turning away from her abstract and formalist works of the 1970s, she focused increasingly on representational imagery and collaged content related to current political issues and to her own heritage. In the Autobiography series, Pindell’s multicultural identity and antiracist politics are as emphatically foregrounded as are her innovative aesthetic choices. In such key work as Autobiography: Water (Ancestors/Middle Passage/Family Ghosts) (1988; fig. 8), Pindell arrayed a huge cut and sewn canvas around a lifesize outline of her own body on a bright blue field amid collaged images from her own family history: a diagram of a slave ship, a document of the slave owners, an image of a male model.

This series of paintings led Pindell to organize, in 1988, an important traveling exhibition titled Autobiography: In Her Own Image, for which she selected eighteen women of color. The goal of the exhibition was to challenge the silencing by exclusion of these artists. Pindell stated, “Being a woman of color, I have experienced directly the omission and underrepresentation of works by women of color. I have also noted how people of color, and their history and culture are being appropriated, distorted, and used as images and points of focus by white artists while artists of color are excluded from ‘speaking’ visually.”[30] She elaborated this view in a 1990 essay titled “Covenant of Silence: De Facto Censorship in the Visual Arts,” in which she offered her own take on the so-called culture wars over arts censorship then consuming the art world. Rather than rehash the First Amendment rights of artists Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano, Pindell exposes the real silencing that takes place in the art-world censoring of artists of color. “The willful omission of artists of color is skillfully manipulated to appear to be benign,” Pindell wrote, “like some kindly mercy-killing of that which the powers-that-be feel simply not to measure up to their yardstick of ‘quality.’”[31]

Pindell’s incendiary video Free, White and 21 was both a personal coming to voice and a wake-up call for the art world, a harbinger of things to come. Along with other black and third world feminist critics and artists, Pindell has challenged the conventions of, on the one hand, white middle-class feminism and, on the other hand, the rules and hierarchies of a white patriarchal art world. A central goal of her work is to expose the carefully concealed machinations of white racism and privilege, and to decenter, interrogate, and displace whiteness itself. Carefully examining the prejudicial language and social patterns of art-world systems and institutions that she and other artists inhabit, Pindell acknowledges that the constitution of identity takes place in the specific, the local, and the everyday. Her work celebrates multi-ethnic and multicultural identity while challenging the idea of otherness and racial exceptionalism, and she encourages the critical practices of fragmentation and reconnection in exploring individual cultural self-representations. For her, coming to voice means speaking up, talking back, telling stories, and engaging in an interpersonal dialogue that overcomes difference.

Fig. 8

Autobiography: Water (Ancestors/Middle Passage/Family Ghosts), 1988
Acrylic and mixed media on canvas; 118 × 71 in.

1 bell hooks, *Talking Back: thinking feminism, thinking black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 12.

2 Howardena Pindell, "On Making a Video—Free, White and 21," in *The Heart of the Question: The Writings and Paintings of Howardena Pindell* (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1997), 65–69 (this text includes a transcript of the video); repr. in *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Feminism 1965–85/A Sourcebook*, ed. Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum of Art, 2017), 224–29.

3 Lucy R. Lippard, "Give and Take: Ideology in the Art of Suzanne Lacy and Jerry Kearns," in *Art & Ideology* (New York: New Museum, 1984), 29.

4 Howardena Pindell, "No Apology for My Heart," in "WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution," *P.S.1 Newspaper* (Winter–Spring 2008): 3.

5 Pindell, "On Making a Video," 65. She notes, "My work in the studio after the accident helped me to reconstruct missing fragments from the past. My parents lived with me for several months as I was not strong on my own. I was very grateful for this. Eight months after the accident I made 'Free, White and 21' in my top floor loft during one of the hottest summers in New York."

6 Uri McMillan, *Embodied Avatars: Genealogies of Black Feminist Art and Performance* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 171.

7 The classic text is Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism," *October*, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 50–64. See also the rejoinder by Anne M. Wagner, "Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence," *October*, no. 91 (Winter 2000): 59–80.

8 See Mechtild Widrich, "The Fourth Wall Turns Pensive: Feminist Experiments with the Camera," in *Feminist Avant-Garde: Art of the 1970s*, ed. Gabriele Schor (Munich: Prestel, 2016), 73–77.

9 This type of dramatic staging can be likened to the popular genre of eighteenth-century painting called the "conversation piece," an informal group portrait in which the family scene appears to be interrupted by the intrusion of the viewer as spectator. See Mario Praz, *Conversation Pieces: A Survey of the Informal Group Portrait in Europe and America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971).

10 Pindell, "On Making a Video," 67–69.

11 See Gabriele Schor, "The Feminist Avant-Garde: A Radical Revaluation of Values," in *Feminist Avant-Garde: Art of the 1970s*, especially the brief section "Whiteface," 59.

12 Pindell summarized the social situation of the white feminist art world succinctly when she wrote: "Unfortunately, many white feminists, artists and critics often are patronizing and condescending towards women of color and will make statements such as 'sexism predates racism,' or 'racism is not their concern.'" Howardena Pindell, "Art (World) & Racism: Testimony, Documentation and Statistics," *Third Text* 2, nos. 3–4 (1988); original text repr. in *We Wanted a Revolution*, 261.

13 Pindell, "On Making a Video," 65.

14 Howardena Pindell, [Statement], in *Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States*, ed. Ana Mendieta (New York: A.I.R. Gallery, 1980), n.p.; repr. in *We Wanted a Revolution*, 222.

15 Andrew Heisel, "The Rise and Fall of an All-American Catchphrase: 'Free, White, and 21,'" *Jezebel Pictorial*, Sept. 10, 2015, at pictorial.jezebel.com/the-rise-and-fall-of-an-all-american-catchphrase-free-1729621311.

16 Quoted in ibid.

17 On *Dialectics of Isolation*, see *We Wanted a Revolution*, 210–29. The most useful contemporary review is Carrie Rickey, "The Passion of Ana," *The Village Voice*, Sept. 10–16, 1980, 75; she states, "No one can watch Pindell's tape without sharing her anger, being tripped by the guilt she stirs, perforated with wounds, shrapnel from her considerable artillery of rage. More than anyone else in this exhibition, Pindell typifies the dialectics of isolation." See also Kat Griefen, "Ana Mendieta at A.I.R. Gallery, 1977–82," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 21, no. 2 (2011): 171–81.

18 The panel discussion, moderated by Lula Mae Blocton, included Tomie Arai, Camille Billops, Vivian Browne, Howardena Pindell, Faith Ringgold, and Selena Whitefeather. For a summary, see Lowery Stokes Sims, "Third World Women Speak," *Women Artists News* 4, no. 6 (Dec. 1978): 1; repr. in *We Wanted a Revolution*, 190–93.

19 Editorial Statement, "Third World Women: The Politics of Being Other," *Heresies*, no. 8 (1979): 1.

20 Pindell, "Criticism/or/Between the Lines," *Heresies* 2, no. 4 (1979): 2.

21 "Action Against Racism in the Arts," *Heresies* 2, no. 4 (1979): 108–11.

22 The exhibition *The Nigger Drawings* was presented at Artists Space February 16 through March 10, 1979. For a comprehensive overview of the controversy, see Jeff Chang, "Color Theory: Race Trouble in the Avant-Garde," in *Who We Be: The Colorization of America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014), 79–97; see also Lowery Stokes Sims, "Fighting Words," in *Mutiny and the Mainstream: Talk That Changed Art, 1975–1990*, ed. Judy Seigel (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1992), 122–24. Key contemporary coverage includes: Richard Goldstein, "Romance of Racism," *The Village Voice*, Apr. 2, 1979; Grace Glueck, "'Racism' Protest Slated Over Title of Art Show," *The New York Times*, Apr. 14, 1979, 15; Craig Owens, "Black and White," *Skyline* (Apr. 1979): 16; Elizabeth Hess, "Art-World Apartheid," *Seven Days* 3, no. 6 (1979); and Douglas Crimp, "Commentaries on Artists Space's Exhibit of 'Nigger Drawings,'" *Art Workers News* 8, no. 10 (June 1979): 12. Many of the primary documents are collected in *We Wanted a Revolution*, 229–34. For a recent treatment of the subject, in light of subsequent racial controversies in the art world, see Joseph Henry, "Sources of Harm: Notes on the Alternative Artworld," *Hyperallergic*, Sept. 11, 2014, at hyperallergic.com/147841/sources-of-harm-notes-on-the-alternative-artworld.

23 Pindell, quoted in Hess, "Art-World Apartheid," 27.

24 Winer, quoted in Goldstein, "Romance of Racism."

25 Owens, "Black and White," 16.

26 Crimp, "Commentaries," 12.

27 Ibid. Singling out Pindell specifically, Crimp wrote: "A particularly telling example of the kind of activity involved was the work of Museum of Modern Art curator Howardena Pindell, who has kept the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Press, and various individuals apprised of the minutest details of this controversy. When an article expressing concerns about the means of protest appeared in Skyline, Ms. Pindell, presumably thinking the article a self-evident display of racism, circled the author's name and the statement 'Skyline is published with partial support from the New York State Council on the Arts' and sent it to her ad hoc mailing list, including, of course, the Council."

28 Lucy R. Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America* (New York: Pantheon, 1990), 39.

29 Pindell, "Art (World) & Racism," *Third Text* 2, nos. 3–4 (1988); repr. in *We Wanted a Revolution*, 257–90. For other critics who picked up on this theme, see Patricia Failing, "Black Artists Today: A Case of Exclusion?," *Art News* 88 (Mar. 1989): 124–31; and Maurice Berger, "Are Art Museums Racist?," *Art in America* 78 (Sept. 1990): 69–77.

30 Pindell, "Covenant of Silence: De Facto Censorship in the Visual Arts," in *The Heart of the Question*, 33.

31 Pindell, "Autobiography: In Her Own Image," in *The Heart of the Question*, 72–73.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON
THE WORK OF HOWARDENA PINDELL

Before it was art world de rigueur, Howardena Pindell was one of an extraordinary group of artists who used their artwork to challenge the systemic race and gender bias afflicting US society. By blurring the line between her political and professional life, Pindell served as a model for artists who would do the same in the decades following the start of her career. This roundtable, organized and moderated by Naomi Beckwith and Valerie Cassel Oliver, was inspired by Pindell's unwavering commitment to equality and her lasting influence on modern and contemporary art. Marilyn Minter, Lorna Simpson, and Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, three prominent women artists working today, explore their own lives and work, using Pindell's contributions as an artist, curator, educator, and activist as a springboard for the discussions.

MATRILINEAL MEMORY

In the opening scene of the film Free, White and 21 (1980), Howardena Pindell recounts a harrowing story about the racism her mother experienced as a young woman. The work's themes of ancestral legacies and intergenerational knowledge surface often in Pindell's work. In this conversation, Zuckerman-Hartung, Simpson, and Minter use the video as a talking point for a discussion about inherited notions about race, gender, oppression, and freedom.

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung: Since beginning to look at Howardena's work intensely, I've been thinking about anger as form: how anger takes form rather than breaks form. We understand anger to break form, but in Howardena's work it's the modulation and it's the even tone and it's the careful, specific articulation that's incredibly unnerving.

Lorna Simpson: I see Free, White and 21 as an interesting parody. In some ways, it's about recollection, knowing something about her accident and amnesia and bits and pieces of her memory failing her. But at the same time having intact this control over one's ability to speak to that which might be slipping away, to me seemed purposeful, an attempt to reclaim one's memory. But also these are events that were hard for her not to remember, right?

I've always seen the video in relation to works of that same time, like Cindy Sherman's blackface work. Sherman's ability to make that work unconsciously and then say, "Well, I was young," is the legacy of being "free, white, and 21": you don't have to understand American culture or history, you can separate yourself from the American landscape and legacy of slavery and social injustice, based on privilege.

At some point in everybody's family, one is touched by either slavery or injustice. It's not just the black body, although that is the way that it is enacted in a very public way. And also privately. And also in a small, daily kind of way, the way that Howardena chronicles. But I think within American culture, there is a belief that: "I don't really need to speak to that," or, "That doesn't really involve me." There's a kind of distancing from racism.

MZH: Black history is somehow black history rather than American history. Pindell has internalized the voice of the white person, right? She can perform the white person very well. I think about this in terms of sexism in my experience of men. I can tell men a hell of a lot about what they know, right? They can't tell me about what I know and how I talk and how I think. But I can tell them. Because I understand how their power has been exercised over me. To me, being able to articulate that in terms of racism, in terms of white people being able to be ignorant evokes Franz Fanon's idea of double consciousness, and who's carrying around the consciousness of the violence.

Naomi Beckwith: Let's go back to one notion that I think you brought up, Lorna, which was the necessity to reiterate a history. The video doesn't start with Howardena's history. It starts with her mother's history. And you sort of parallel that with post-accident amnesia. But there are certain things that you remember even if they don't happen to you. And I was wondering if you could talk about a sense of received history or inherited history—inherited memory, more specifically.

LS: In terms of translating experience from mother to child or parents to child, this is where I think "Beware." You talk about understanding the world that you live in, so therefore you have to understand both: the black world that you live in and its history, and also white culture. Because you have to go out and get a job and survive in it. So therefore you are keen, just as she was: "I'm not gonna get up; I'm gonna watch to see how this goes. 'Cause I realize I have the ability to." She has the ability to sit and observe. So therefore she is watching as an observer and a participant. She's doing two things at the same time.

Fig. 1

Howardena Pindell at her first exhibition, Faith Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, January 1958

In my own family, things were said to me growing up, in terms of "Beware." Black people, while under the thumb of oppression, are keen observers of their condition and can then speak to that in a very intimate family way. Because this is the way that you convey how to interpret the world to children, to young people, over the course of their lives.

NB: What about as a woman? Can we all speak to that?

Marilyn Minter: Well, I grew up in a totally racist, sexist, homophobic, anti-everything household in the Deep South. I remember my mother saying "Cleanliness is next to godliness." And I thought, "Cleanliness? What's that got do with anything? That's a measure of worth?"

I saw it all the time: racism. I never went to school with any black kids. Ever. I just looked at everything from a distance. When I saw those Gordon Parks pictures, I thought "Everyone's gotta see these." Because that's all I can do: talk about the pictures. I can't speak from it. Only as an outsider.

MZH: I definitely carry my mother's feelings and memories. It's the weight that she carries around, the sadness that she carries around because of her experiences. She lives in Olympia, Washington. She's a very liberal activist environmentalist. And she's in a major stage of grief, denial about world politics at the moment. She was glued to the television throughout the Syria bombing. But her responses to the world are almost too much. She started raging about her experiences as a woman. Like she suddenly has rage against men that she never had when I was growing up. She was a very docile, good wife for years. She's always been a big, intense, powerful woman, but somehow she managed to domesticate herself in relation to her husband, my stepfather, for many years.

Anyway, that inability to begin telling your story without starting with your mother's story makes a lot of sense to me.

VCO: I'm trying to understand where the pathology of oppression comes from. And how it gets internalized in bodies and then gets expressed within work, whether consciously or unconsciously. It's almost like an imprint.

LS: Everyone has to take a stand. There is no invitation to change. Even in your personal life, in advocating for your own child, standing up to the way that you're being treated, which means saying "Maybe I can't fight the system, but I can fucking quit." There are all these different ways in which I either witnessed or was instructed that my own agency is the most important thing. And if I was deprived of that agency, I would be lost.

THE ONE AND THE MANY

Throughout her fifty-year career, Howardena Pindell has engaged with the legacies of the civil rights and feminist movements. A member of several creative collectives, she understood that a group of committed artists, working together toward a shared goal, could accomplish more than any single person. Below, the artists consider how personal and political activism plays out in their lives, revealing the friction between larger social movements and the experience of individuals who take part in them.

VCO: There is this moment when things shift. And it is due partly to Pindell's car accident, but I think there were all the things that preceded it, too. There was the protest against Artists Space and the Nigger Drawings series.

MM: That was so offensive . . . Donald Newman was just trying to be provocative.

NB: There is a moment when . . . blackness becomes a metaphor for a lot of white artists.

VCO: Blackness is being co-opted. The women's movements are being hijacked. How does an artist push back against that?

LS: I see Free, White and 21 as a response to white feminism.

MM: Feminism's a work in progress. We have to reinvent it. We have to include trans people, men, all people of color.

LS: I'm reminded of Audre Lorde's idea that it's not by academic dissertations or lawyers or politicians that we transcribe what's going on now or the details of people's lives. It's really the poets and the artists that give us a clear view. Everyone takes a different direction . . . in terms of things that they do and the way that they approach their work.

VCO: Advocacy is important. And I think Howardena has taken it to all sorts of levels, from the founding of A.I.R. to being involved in the Pests.

MZH: I don't know. I think I'm a failure at activism these days. Obviously I'm thinking about what's going on and I participate in things that students are doing at school. But I feel like I'm just moving through lots of grief and anger and trying to think about patience and problems of patience, and alliances, and how to keep building alliance during times that feel so divisive.

NB: Do you think about collectives that have come beforehand, or other institutions, organizations?

MZH: I was part of riot grrrl, and then also we organized other things such as Ladyfest. We were definitely mostly white. And the community was always reading—we were obsessively reading Audre Lorde and Cherrie Moraga and bell hooks and trying to figure out how to work on our racism and deconstruct it. We were in the Pacific Northwest, which was not particularly racially integrated, even now, and also has a very different relationship to American history. Like the American history of slavery and the South is not physically, structurally apparent . . . And then a decade in Chicago really changed my understanding. It's actually really confusing and hard to go back to the West Coast now.

NB: Though you also point out an important difference: the group that you were working with was actively trying to address some blind spots.

MZH: I feel that it was unsuccessful, but yes: there was a lot of work around it, a lot of

discussion, a lot of conversation. Like white girls sitting down asking, “What are you doing about your racism?” It’s interesting that now we have a social network call-out culture that is exactly like the call-out culture of our collective . . . Watching those intensities happen online is both terrifying and fascinating to me, because bodies aren’t even in rooms with each other . . . There’s a repressed history in this country that we don’t talk about and that we instead turn against ourselves and blame ourselves.

Fig. 2

Howardena Pindell with her class at the Stockholm Institute, Sweden, 1946

LS: I grew up going to art school, so I had friends who were gay, friends who were bisexual. It wasn’t a normal go-to-your-neighborhood-school existence. I was going to clubs. I was going to Studio 54. I had this bespoke playground of New York. And at a moment where you could see the tail end of the Sexual Revolution. So to go to a Heresies meeting and see women at odds about sexuality, I felt like I had been dropped into another century. I said, “I can’t sign on to any of this, because this is not my generation. This is not me. This is not how I grew up.” But it gave me an understanding of Howardena’s work, because it is reactive to this idea that black women—and their sexuality, and their sense of self, in a construction of race—occupy an ambivalent position and there is no solution to what that should be or what it is.

Consequently, there is this necessity to define what one’s experience is, and there’s magic and beauty in that. Which is part of the Brooklyn Museum thing, it’s Rodeo Caldonia, it’s this collective of black performance artists and actors and writers and poets and playwrights . . . And this is at the same time as Spike Lee doing She’s Gotta Have It. This is all New York. This is Run-D.M.C. There’s a lot happening in rap. But I think it’s a generation that perceives: “No, you build up from your own experience. There is no relying.” You had to create your own camaraderie and group and network of support and understanding and conversations about the work in order to move forward.

When I think of this particular period, it was very fragmented in terms of gender. So that all the male artists were in support of one another and engaged in conversation with one another. There wasn’t this kind of openness to women being part of that conversation. I would say it’s very segregated. Which lends itself to a certain level of isolation as well.

THE MIND/BODY PROBLEM

Howardena Pindell is perhaps best known for her abstract multimedia works, which she created by painstakingly layering unexpected materials—including paper cutouts, postcards, bits of string, and glitter—on top of large-scale canvases. These works not only demonstrate the physicality of her work, but also inspire a deeply intellectual viewing experience as the viewer’s eye and mind try to trace Pindell’s steps. In this excerpt, the artists explore their physical, emotional, and intellectual responses to the materials and processes Pindell developed and the ways craft and technique come to bear on their own work.

NB: Howardena’s work is encased in a subjectivity that isn’t so much about political identity, but about being in a body, and trying to have a view from above, or from outer space, of that body. I want to talk about the process of making some of these things, these large dot works, these incredible works on paper where she’s handmaking the paper, which she’s cutting and hole-punching, and writing and graphing and assembling pieces together. Can we talk about what it means to be in a body making these accumulations?

LS: I always read these as activity about the fragmentation of memory. To a certain extent, it’s like the notations that choreographers make in terms of steps. And I see an obsession with having to capture and remember moments, and reorganizing and reassembling something that is fragmented and lost. And these bits and pieces come and go.

MZH: I have thought about the arrows and numbers in terms of choreography, but I’ve also thought about them in terms of directional marks. What strikes me about them is that the movement is kind of an intense vibration but staying still, which is an interesting way to think about watching television or taking in things that are indigestible. So much of the work involves stilling the body and then making small muscle movements to create something.

It’s interesting what you said about fragmentation of memory. I keep using this word pulverize. I keep thinking about pigments and various things in the process of painting that are pulverized: charcoals, graphite powder, pigments. But also that Howardena traveled through Hiroshima and Nagasaki and thought a lot about violence all over the world. I think about being in an airplane, looking down at the world, trying to get some kind of distance. So how did she get to a place where she could understand distance?

MM: I look at all of the work that I’ve seen, and I go just from the handmaking and the process, this cutting up of things and making systems and adding new systems—layering and process. Like cutting up that circle and then resewing it. And then adding and making these shapes. And there’s a kind of pleasure that one gets from creating surfaces. It’s very therapeutic. And punching these holes and putting them down and charting the eye with color. Howardena has these bands of grayish blue ellipses that chart the eye. And I look at how strictly, formally an artist creates that surface and the cutout paper pieces.

First of all, she cut everything up to put it back together again. Almost like weaving it. Time passes and then all of a sudden I have to come back from it, look at it, and then I see that she’s cut out some things or let things fall apart. And the arrows, same thing: charting the eye and working with words and language. And it’s creating another system.

I’ve never been able to look at a white surface and fill it up. I have to have some kind of source material. And Howardena obviously had either a photograph or a skeleton or something to work from. To go from that to pure abstraction. And I think

that the most interesting artists are the ones that can go back and forth. Howardena goes from pure abstraction—"pure" being made-up space—to working from things we can recognize. And she's always going back and forth. And then she puts these little recognizable things in the middle of this pure abstraction. And that's what speaks to me. It's boring to tell people what to think with imagery you can recognize. You have to work in metaphor to be an interesting artist. And you have to work in layers.

VCO: And I think that comes through particularly with these travelogue pieces: there are paintings in them. They're embedded. And we were talking earlier about this tension that exists between the figure and then abstraction, that one never really quite lets go. Even with the Autobiography series, there are punctuations of imagery within these spaces of abstraction, and then this notion of the body, sewing things together.

MZH: Well, I really got excited about the two-sidedness of the little disks. I keep thinking about the coin, a coin toss. But also, they're sort of suspended, kind of freezing time through different methods. Where the fall, the gravity is not completed. It hasn't been neutralized and flattened back out. It's still in this suspended moment.

And, to me, Howardena's gestures open up conceptual practices, open up linguistic practices. Like these grid-based practices. There's a kind of suspension of the grid that allows an investigation of what's going on and slows down the investigation and raises questions about legibility: how something becomes legible, and how an interior gesture that may be using the social structure of a grid but also pulling it away from the direction it was going in, getting it to mean something different I think, like the circles. The circles don't necessarily mean purity or wholeness in some cultures. I think she's definitely working on spiritual models.

NB: And you're talking about basically taking these things out of their own symbolic order.

MZH: Right. And reasserting them in a different symbolic register.

VCO: It was also her retelling of the story about having lived in the North, in Philadelphia, going south to visit family, and noticing that whenever they'd stop at certain places, there would be dots on the bottoms of cups, which indicated that they were specifically for colored people. There is this expectation that you can obscure narrative through form and color. But if you know the legend and know what these stories mean, then that narrative becomes ever more present in these abstract works.

Fig. 3

Howardena Pindell in her loft at 322 Seventh Avenue, New York, c. 1970–71

NB: One of the things that I love about all your works and Howardena's is that kind of attention to surface. There are some beautiful things that happen on all your

surfaces, depth and image and layers and so forth. It's lush and it's pretty and it's also grimy at the same time.

MM: Well, in my case it's a device to bring you in. If you make it so mesmerizing and alluring, you'll be able to have a dialogue; people won't run out of the room. For me to work with glamour, it's such a hated, despised thing to work with. It's trivial. It gives people so much pleasure, yet we have so much contempt for it.

LS: Whenever someone says "beauty" to me, I remember the early '80s, talking to a girlfriend about this person who was dying of AIDS whose refrain was: "My eyes are only built for beauty." And that has stuck with me: that comment to me defies all the ugliness of the way people were dismissed and ignored and allowed to die, to maintain that one's eyes are only built for beauty.

Fig. 4

Howardena Pindell at Garth Greenan Gallery, New York, September 2017

MZH: I have lots and lots to say about glitter. There's so much shame around it. And I was thinking about the perfume question, which is related to the glitter question.

NB: Yes, because Howardena would add powder, perfume, scented things to works, especially in the '70s and '80s.

MZH: An early vivid memory of mine was being maybe eighteen years old, and thinking that these cheap slips that I would wear as dresses were sexy, and being shamed by guys around me and realizing that they were trashy. And I was thinking about various moments in my life where I started recognizing that I had a different understanding of taste than the people around me, and then increasingly as I moved into more and more wealthy environments.

So I was thinking about class and cheapness and the kind of materials that Howardena uses a lot. And I think about those materials in my own work all the time. There's always this effort to produce a surface that feels sumptuous, seductive, desirable. And at the same time realizing that my idea of desire might not be translating, especially not in the environments that I'm in. And so there's this sort of negotiation of pleasure that I think is in relation to shame.

Glitter functions as a kind of diffraction. It sends the light right back to you. The other thing I've been thinking about her surfaces is sound, and how texture is sound; texture is noise . . . I've been reading Fred Moten lately and thinking about sound . . like anti-visibility, anti-aesthetics. Her work points to and speaks to those things in different ways.

MM: The whole thing is like a universe that she's created.

NB: That's exactly it. But yes: there is a real nonconformity in this work as well.

MM: I like that she makes mistakes and she leaves them.

MZH: I was thinking about the edges. They're great. They're not specific. They're not a shape. They're not Elizabeth Murray, for example. They don't announce themselves so clearly. And I think there's something about that, and the relationship to centering and how they function. And how they're not about circles in one way, and then they are all about these little circles, this sense of being built from the inside.

MM: It's like the work tells her what to do. She's listening to that voice; the work's telling her what to do.

MZH: Yes, the work has a feedback system.

LS: You get in the zone and then the work just tells you what to do, and if you're lucky, you hear.

MZH: It's so cerebral: this movement from gesture to language. And I think the feedback for me is very much about making gestures, finding them intuitively, and then overanalyzing them, and then trying to step really far away, and then coming back to them. And trying to figure out: is there a logic that I found that was mine? How did Howardena Pindell figure out how to make her own work in the context obviously of other black artists, but also against a really strong context of white male artists? And how did she find a language that she knew was her language?

LS: What other language would that be? Unless one's activities are in reaction to the outside world—meaning that she, as a black woman, felt that she needed to find herself in a contrary position to white artists. She's in conversation with herself as well. It is clearly stated that, because of the way that you look, you can't even gain access to have a conversation about getting a job. If you look to any gallery, to any art institution, for acknowledgment and you can't even get a job, how would that be that you're gonna define yourself vis-à-vis that institution? It can either tear you apart or it can make clear that you are in charge of your own destiny. But you have to take that step, because you're going to be denied. You proceed in the most intimate manner that speaks to your own personal experience.

HISTORICAL AMNESIA

Working at a time when black artists were even more sorely underrepresented in the art world than they are now, Howardena Pindell created works that defied easy categorization. She often incorporated subtle political and historical messaging into even her most abstract works, but critics often chose to ignore or reject this aspect of her practice. Here, the artists consider the uneasy relationship between race and gender, and the interpretation and reception—and, often, invisibility—of the work of women and artists of color.

NB: Let's talk a little bit about Howardena's student experience. She's at Yale studying painting. She's interested in color theory, studying with abstractionists. And right after school she starts doing something that's deeply process-oriented, deeply invested in the hand. She's quite politically active as a feminist, and she's thinking a lot about black form. This goes back to a question that Lowery Sims has raised: "When did Howardena's work become 'black'?"

Fig. 5

Howardena Pindell in her studio at Westbeth Artists Housing, New York, c. 1970–71

MZH: One of the things I'm noticing with students lately is white students being addressed as and making work as individuals, and black students making work as an identity, as a politics, as an understanding of a larger history, whether in terms of obligation, or in terms of a relationship to market, or in terms of memory or history.

LS: When you look at the demographics of students of color within a graduate school, they're always in the minority. And therefore whenever they speak there isn't any subjectivity. There's always a sociological approach read through the work. So that students of color are not afforded the opportunity for their work to be read from a multifaceted position. And it falls into its own cyclical track: "Oh, you're black, so this must mean something sociological." And white students are allowed a kind of universalism and a kind of idiosyncratic approach to the reading of their work.

And so the level playing field, to me, is that a black student should not be required to articulate his or her own history or political position in talking about their work. At the same time, there shouldn't be an assumption that the work is political. Black students have an intimate understanding of who they are as people in the world. So it is no shock to them that they are in a minority in a white institution—they know who they are in that situation. Black students also understand that that is an opportunity to explore whatever they need to explore in their work. But most often they are relegated to boundaries in terms of what is considered the correct way to talk about this work, and this operates to their detriment.

MM: I think so, too. I've known students who've been told they have to talk about who they are. Other students have told them that, and teachers have told them that. And I find that really offensive. Because the best art is your vision, and it's multileveled and multilayered. Howardena was a visionary. She just made her work.

LS: But it's also this thing of separation, so that the conversation of whiteness does not come up.

When I think of Howardena's contemporaries, like Lorraine O'Grady or Adrian Piper, these are women whose relationship to their work was direct from the outset. I see the evolution of their work as broad but self-directed, as in: "I'm gonna make my own choices." And so, as a young woman looking at that work and seeing women working in that fashion, I realized that I could make whatever I wanted to make. But of course I also had the advantage of sitting down with an African American curator like Kellie Jones, and the fact that black intellectual thought had by that time acquired a place within the academy and within art history, in other words a context that made it possible for me to do whatever I wanted. I wouldn't be making work in the dark. There was also an awareness that: "This is how you make history. This is how you shift the canon. This is how, in real time, through conversations, intimate conversations with artists, things get changed."

MM: When I was in art school—I'm older than everybody here—I studied Mary Cassatt, and I told myself Joan Miró was a woman. I swear I did that. I said, "Joan Miró—that's a woman." And then I studied Barbara Hepworth. My art school's position was, "There are no great women artists. Women are never as good as men." I was told that to my face all the time. What do you do with that? You find a way to negotiate it.

MZH: This goes back to the question of individuality versus connectivity. I think it's important for the market to isolate the figure and to make them seem like a free-floating individual without a context, without an ecosystem, without critical dialogue, without a community, without other artists. I'm doing what I can as a teacher to work against that, building communities and creating more and more diversity to combat that kind of isolation. But on the other side, the inability to produce an idea of "group"—to me, the emergence of politics is the emergence of group identity. That's part of what politics means. When work becomes "black," as you say, part of what we're doing is understanding it as part of a larger community.

And, yes, one's ability to be a visionary as an artist, one's ability to speak one's own subjectivity is incredibly important. But also one's ability to connect it to politics, language, communities, one's understanding of oneself as being representative. Howardena does really interesting work around this: around trying to think through what it is to be inside of a body and what it is to be looking at a body from space or whatever. From different vantage points. And what it means to understand larger politics.

VCO: There's a very interesting conundrum. Because in a way, there's a whole generation of artists who have been passed over in the market. And suddenly they're back in vogue.

LS: If the idea is to resurrect and to create a new foundation by which to look at this work, I'd like to see it happen right. Let's not ignore all the work that was already done twenty years ago. There has to be this kind of internal acknowledgment of the history that is "absent."

Interview with Howardena Pindell
by Kellie Jones (2011)
Excerpted from Kellie Jones, EyeMinded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011).

Kellie Jones: You started out with figurative work. Can you tell us about that because I don't think people know that work very well?

Howardena Pindell: Boston U had a very strong figurative focus: if you couldn't paint what you saw, you were not a good painter, and if you used bright and high surface color, you were an even worse painter. My early training at Fleisher Art Memorial and Tyler in Philadelphia was all very academic, so I could do figurative work. Being solely figurative was a very limited form of expression for me. Just being able to render form was not enough. I wanted to learn about the physicality of paint. BU gave me the technical side of it but not the plastic side, which I got more or less in graduate school. I also learned about color in graduate school through an Albers color course taught by S. Sillman.

KJ: And you did some soft sculpture also which I have seen pictures of in books.

HP: That was strange. I always play when I hit a hard spot in the work. If I can't go beyond it, I play. When I first came to New York I was really displaced from the figurative thing which I was still doing at Yale. Necessity caused me to change. I wasn't making very much money at the Modern, one hundred dollars a week in 1967. I could only paint at night without natural light. I found if I cut the canvas to a certain size l would have all these scraps. I figured l couldn't throw them out. I took the scraps and sewed them together. I couldn't afford clothes on my salary. I would also sew my clothes. I knew the craft of sewing. I preferred hand sewing to sewing with a machine. As a result I would make these soft sculptures out of scraps I would hand sew and stuff. One of them was a soft, portable grid. I just took canvas and I sewed it and stuffed it with foam and put it together with grommets and rings. It was about twelve by twelve feet and you could fold it up into a little thing and you could carry it around. I did some other sculptural pieces as well. Also in the late '70s I started cutting the canvas and sewing it.

KJ: The pieces right after that were the stencils. You cut little paper-cutter holes out of metal and sprayed through them.

HP: Actually, those were not metal. It was a very heavy oak tag. In the '60s I would use either architectural stencils or a hole punch and take strips of paper, punch them, then glue them together into these huge constructs. Then I would surround them with plastic, I'd pin them up and spray through them and make fields of dots. This meant that I had bags of holes. I would take those and reconstitute them in those other pieces that I did later in the early '70s. The grid which was folded became a grid of sewing thread that I had used for my clothing in small, paper pieces with numbered dots.

KJ: So you switched from figuration to abstraction working mainly at night because you had a day job. Did the pieces become very monochromatic at this time because you were working without natural light?

HP: Those things just happen to have no color. The ones that you mentioned were the dots punched with the numbers, but they eventually did take on color.

KJ: You mentioned earlier that BU didn't like color. Do you think that influenced you?

HP: I think it was the color of the oak tag. I was focusing on process using the natural colors of the materials. The spray adhesive and the ink, the oak tag and the thread were their natural colors. I started doing the video drawings to change my focal length because my eyes were bothering me so badly from doing the numbering on the oak tag pieces. My eyes were getting damaged from the detailed work. The eye doctor said to concentrate on something moving in the distance. I felt that it was a good excuse to get a color TV. It was a moving image, but I got bored with the poor quality of the programs. I then took clear acetate and made drawings on the acetate using the vectors and numbers I used on the oak tag pieces and put them over the TV. Since I had studied photography in graduate school and had a camera, using a tripod I took photos of TV through the acetate. The works had political implications too. They were shown in Europe more than here,

where they were read as political statements about the US. They were first shown when P.S.1 opened in Queens in the early 1970s. My work evaporated when it came to reviews. No one even mentioned me in the write-ups. The color punched drawings started right after that, I feel, because I was seeing the color in the TV. I made drawings in gouache and tempera and acrylic, destroying them by punching holes in them. I also used powdered pigments. The thread came back as well as the grids, but I would also paint the mounts. I would draw and paint on them and sprinkle them with everything from cat hair to glitter.

KJ: You were also using canvas, all sorts of stuff?

HP: I would go through stages. I stopped painting while I was doing the number pieces. Then I started doing white paintings with embedded paper which I showed—one at the Rosa Esman Gallery. I stopped completely doing the punch-out pieces and started cutting canvas and embedding paper and using more extended surfaces.

KJ: Do you want to talk about your idea of using technology, photography, video, and then making your own video, Free, White and 21?

HP: That was really in response to the women's movement. Also in response to what had happened at Artists Space and the whole punk craze and the fact that people of color, people in poverty, were being attacked by these young white artists who thought it was cool to wear swastikas. It is happening again, now, in the late '80s. I bought a blond wig at Woolworth's. My mother had given me clothes because she would hear me complain about having no money for clothes. She would send me clothes from Sears Roebuck, which I hated. I kept bags of these things. I used some of the clothes for the tape. If you've seen the tape, you see I change my clothes for each segment. Well, those were all the clothes that my mother sent me. It's just a very strange image, the image of me in a blond wig. I bought stage makeup. I put white makeup on, lipstick, and the dark glasses from my teenage years. So I had the black glasses and the blond wig. A photographer friend gave me backdrop paper . . . seamless paper in different colors. The stories I tell are all true stories from my life. They are autobiographical. The hybrid blond wig person spouts back to me, "Well, that's never happened to me. After all, I'm free, white, and 21. You really must be paranoid." These were things I'd heard year after year from babyhood on up. I was able to synthesize them into this kind of cartoon creature. At the end she pulls a white stocking over her head. l did that because . . . you know, in bank robberies people who want to disguise and hide themselves do that. In a way I think I was trying to make a political statement about how in this culture, a dominant culture which represents a tiny percent of the globe, is in a sense robbing

us blind. As she is pulling this thing over her head she says, "You really must be paranoid, but after all I am free, white, and 21."

In the early '8os, when I made it, it was hard to get it shown. But now it's like a cult tape and everyone wants to show it. What infuriates me is when "we" do something, "everyone" scrambles around trying to find out where we got the idea from, what Euro-American we took it from. I'm just waiting to hear someone say I stole the idea from Cindy Sherman.

KJ: You mentioned when you started doing canvas again, the surfaces started getting extended. Then you were involved in a car accident where you had partial memory loss. After that, you started working with postcards, using them to jog your memory.

HP: Well, my mother had collected postcards for years, and some of them I had collected from trips. I had been sent postcards over the years. The accident was in October 1979. I wasn't driving, I was sitting in the back seat of the car. I had started teaching at Stony Brook in September, and the accident was a month later. I had insurance from the school, but I had no disability. The school was very generous and paid me a salary. I had a brain injury and memory loss. If you called me up, I wouldn't recognize your voice. Even now if I meet people from my past, from my distant past, I don't have the depth of memory that I had before. Well, the postcards function as a memory stimulant. I had a show in April coming up after the accident and I could cancel it or do it. I forced myself to finish the work because I didn't want to lose the chance to show on account of some motor problems. I didn't want to lose all my skills. I used the postcards to get my memory back and also to force myself to do work so I wouldn't lose my dexterity. I used the postcards because they reminded me of people and my past. I'd read the message and I'd think, "God, do I remember this person?" Did I pick this postcard up on a trip? I'd remember a little bit and I'd try to piece it together. It was therapeutic.

KJ: These postcard pieces shown at the Studio Museum were largely of your trips to India and Japan?

HP: Yes. When I went to Japan, the work really changed radically. I totally immersed myself in the culture. The trip itself was very difficult. I traveled for about seven months. I had been to Japan once before, but this was an extended stay. I had studied the language for two years, but I am terrible with languages. It gave me a certain amount of mobility. I really tried to see as much of Japan as I could by not traveling as an American looking for a Howard Johnson's. When I came back (I didn't work at all in Japan except to do little figurative

things), I started doing oval shapes that were conical. When I would go to the dry gardens in Kyoto, I noticed there were mounds of sand that would reflect symbolically the shape of the mountain. Somehow that shape stuck with me. Mount Fuji is one of the most beautiful mountains.

I also incorporated the maze pattern I found as a concept of fortification in Japan. I remember in Tokyo I would get very lost because the streets were not on a grid. Also the addresses are not by chronological placement on the street. They are by chronology of building. So if you go to Camille's house, 491 means she was the 491st house built on Broadway. I felt like I was drowning in this labyrinth of information. The only way I could find my way around was if I knew very, very well the person who I was going to visit—she could give me the right cue. You could take the subway and that was fine until you would get above ground and hey, what do you do? Anyway, when I got back, that "maze" energy and the experience came out of my hands. Everything I created had a conical maze pattern.

India was very different. The internal pattern was flatter and maybe rounded at the edge. It had a snakelike or sinuous pattern within the imagery. I did not force it. The only analogy I can think of is when you listen to Indian music and it just coils in on itself. It was a natural shape which it took itself. Also the postcards were different. In India, the light was so hot that the photographs got very bleached out. So the quality of the colors was very different from the Japanese imagery, where there is a lot of humidity and very intense, lush color on the postcards.

KJ: You have traveled to many other places. Kenya, Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Uganda, Ivory Coast, Egypt, and also to Mexico, Brazil, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, England, and the USSR. Has traveling to these other places come out in the work as well?

HP: The only other place that seems to be in the work is Norway. It is a fantastically beautiful country. It probably also has to do with who produces good postcards. I have strong feelings about many of the places. I would love to return to Kenya and Egypt. Right now I don't want to go anywhere. I have a twelve-hour-plus roundtrip every week to Stony Brook. I'm relatively phobic about traveling. I hate flying. I have been in very strange situations in planes and they are all kind of coalescing now as I get older. I'll take the train. I find that my travel to Africa has influenced me in subtle ways, possibly because of my own ancestral family memories. My paintings were always unstretched. I loved the feeling of the flow of material. I was very aware of that in Africa. I can't think of any other place I've been to other than India where I have been aware of that. The way Kente cloth is woven and pieced together has stayed with me. The shape of the sculptural adornments also stayed with me. The African influence has remained firm.

KJ: You are currently working on the Autobiography series. The first painting in that series is actually called African Buddha 1986.

HP: The Autobiography paintings start in 1986 with African Buddha. I was very interested for years in many different religions. Since I was in Asia frequently, I was fascinated by Buddhism and Hinduism. Somehow in that painting (African Buddha), the shape of the painting is the shape of an adornment that I had written about for a catalogue. It was an ivory bangle of an incredibly beautiful shape. I referred to Buddha because I had been a practicing Buddhist for a while. Somehow I was trying to pull all these images from my experiences. I wanted to do autobiographical paintings because I was starting to get to the guts of my own past. It really started in a nonpainting way in Free, White and 21. I guess the strongest painting of the group is called Water (Ancestors/Middle Passage/Family Ghosts). I deal with my family and multicultural ancestry. I deal with as many taboos as I can face putting out in public. I deal with American history as it is not told. Right now it's up at Hartford, at the Wadsworth Atheneum. I lie down on the painting and I trace my body. In a way it reminds me sadly of Ana Mendieta. I started doing this work after she died. I cut out my body like a tracing of her body on the roof. I cut out the shape of myself and then I resew it back in. I also put multiple images of myself in the work. I make photo transfer images, coating magazine images to make a film. It's a complex process. What the painting has are various images referring to family history. My cousin, a male fashion model, is there. I include words.

Part of my ancestry is Native American (Seminole). The word "Seminole" and a hand holding a radioactive tablet are included because some Native Americans are dying from exposure to radioactivity in the uranium mines. I have also included a text from a book which was published by The New York Times, an abolitionist text which refers to the laws which permitted a slave owner to murder a slave who tried to prevent the master from raping his wife. If the slave moved an eyelash indicating that he disagreed, the enslaver had the right to murder the slave. This is not in our public school history books. So I've done a tremendous amount of reading to try to uncover the taboo and nonpublicized information. I tried to put the public and private history and all its pain into the painting.

On Making a Video: Free, White and 21 (1992)
From The Heart of the Question:
The Writings and Paintings of Howardena
Pindell (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1997).

I decided to make Free, White and 21 after yet another run-in with racism in the art world and the white feminists. I was feeling very isolated as a token artist. I found that white women wanted me to be limited to their agenda. When they were beginning to be represented by galleries and shown in exhibitions, women of color were rarely considered. Their omission was rarely noticed except by a few. I was told I was jealous because I noticed and talked about it. Racism, as a constant assault in the daily lives of all people of color, was not a high priority for them. It was seen as "a cause," "a special interest group," "political"—something for their temporary concern if their attention was engaged. Some of the women of color who spoke out were considered "belligerent." I remember hearing that the feminists wished I had been "cooperative."

The white voice was the dominant voice. What the white male's voice was to the white female's voice, the white female's voice was to the woman of color's voice. The dominant voice was usually limited to the middle- and upper-class white women, but all classes of white women participated consciously or unconsciously in racism. (Several years after I made the tape, when I saw the ending, I felt that it was symbolic of the women's auxiliary of the KKK. Instead of a white sheet, like a bank robber, the white character covers her face with a "polite" white stocking.) I remember hearing racism explained as a distraction from the real issues offered by the system which needed a scapegoat. The white voice was to be the dominant voice; its goals were to be the dominant goals. The collectives in the 1970s were often predominantly white. If they were not in charge, then business was not to be conducted.

It was about domination and the erasure of experience, canceling and rewriting history in a way that made one group feel safe and not threatened. I call it the "Hatshepsut maneuver." The pharaohs who followed Hatshepsut's reign removed the cartouche in an attempt to cancel out her place in history. In this case the white women were removing the cartouches of women of color.

I quit my job at the Museum of Modern Art in 1979 and started teaching. Although I was beginning to be outspoken about issues of de facto censorship and racism in the art world, my work as an artist was usually devoid of

personal, narrative, or autobiographical reference. I considered myself fairly voiceless in those days. Several months after I started teaching, I was in a freak accident as a passenger in the back seat of a car on the way to my job. One minute I was fine, the next I was in an ambulance. I had amnesia—a temporary loss of some of my long- and short-term memory. I was also aware that there were those who were pleased: because of my injuries there was the possibility of my voice being muted. I know now that the desire to keep me silent, and to be pleased that I might be by default forced into silence, was an extension of the legacy of slavery and racism. I remember the day, almost within the first hour that I returned from two weeks in the hospital, when I received a call from one of the white feminists who asked me for a recommendation. I tried to explain that I had been injured. She was insistent that I should write it for her as soon as possible. I never did write it, but was enraged by her need for me to provide a "service" with full knowledge that I was injured and would need time to recover. I have found the need for service to be a common trait of "liberal" racists, even those who call themselves progressive—the expectation that they must be served constantly no matter how inconvenient it is to others. Whites often find this funny, but they do not know what it is like to always be expected to be grateful, to be taken advantage of, and to be considered needless and wantless. The women's movement often talks about this relative to men's expectations of them, but they rarely talk about their expectations of women of color and all people of color, who frankly represent 85 percent of the planet

My work in the studio after the accident helped me to reconstruct missing fragments from the past. My parents lived with me for several months as I was not strong enough to be on my own. I was very grateful for this. Eight months after the accident, I made Free, White and 21 in my top floor loft during one of the hottest summers in New York. The tape was autobiographical and pertained to a wide range of experiences, focusing on gender issues and race bias. I had faced de facto censorship issues throughout my life as part of the system of apartheid in the United States. In the tape I was bristling at the women's movement as well as at the art world and some of the usual offensive encounters that were heaped on top of the racism of my profession. The tape was first shown in an exhibition directed by Ana Mendieta at A.LR. Gallery when it was located on Wooster Street in Manhattan. The exhibition was called Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States (September 2–20, 1980). The artists included Judith Baca, Beverly Buchanan, Janet Olivia Henry, Zarina Hashmi, Senga Nengudi, Lydia Okumura, Selena Whitefeather, and myself. I understand that when my tape was entered in a video competition, in 1980, the jury felt that it was too divisive.

In the late 1980s it became a kind of underground cult tape and was shown mainly in universities. Later, when it was to be included in one of my one-person exhibitions, a person who had written an essay for the catalogue asked me to remove it from the show. I, of course, refused. When the complaint was taken to the exhibition's curator, he too refused to remove it. I have encountered various other reactions, including outrage from a white female critic as if I had some nerve talking about my experiences and upsetting her. I also heard that some of the white female students who saw it felt the same.

When I showed it to a New England university audience, a white woman student asked sarcastically if it made me feel better to have made the tape. When it

was first shown in Dialectics of Isolation, a white male, an alumnus of one of the schools I attended mentioned in the tape, said that he did not believe my experiences. Other artists of color have said that they felt it was not forceful enough or felt my experiences were in environments of privilege. When it was shown in a New Jersey museum, some of the older black security guards refused to turn on the video because they felt it was offensive to people of color. The tape officially begins my Autobiography series, which includes Scapegoat.

My mother passed away in the summer of 1991, and in the painful sifting through of her things I have found pictures of her from the 1920s and discovered information about my family history, which has expanded my knowledge about who she was and how it affected my own experience. I found that she had attended white schools as the only black student because her birth certificate said she was white, as did the birth certificates of her brothers and sisters. I cannot imagine the pain that she went through, the harassments and the taunts. She was deeply affected and scarred by it. I remember her stories about being the only black student in her class at Ohio State University and it being illegal for her to live in the dorm. It was illegal for people of color to use public facilities as well as public libraries. People would become impatient and aggressive if you even brought this issue up. It was always for their comfort to keep others down. Her harsh experiences reflected the tragedy that many families suffered in the aftermath of slavery. Many families were of very mixed race as a result of the massive sexual assault (as well torture and lynching) of the men, women, and children by the Europeans and their ancestors who had kidnapped Africans and held them hostage as slaves. I found on my father's side that one of my relatives had been blinded by the lash of one of the enslaver's whips. The history behind the rainbow of faces in my family on both sides led to many confusions. My mother's face—a deep, rich brown, is my face—coffee with cream which was my aunt's face which looked white. We would enter stores in Ohio in the 1950s and everyone would stare at us and I would panic. For years I could not bear to look into a mirror. There were no positive images of my people in the media or magazines unless we favored European features; we were portrayed stereotypically to make others laugh, to make them comfortable and safe. Parts of the family passed and disappeared in Oklahoma. I recently found that my grandfather's people were from Honduras. (I discovered this only after my mother passed away.) I have so many ancestral roots that l do not know where to start. Some of the family is very, very conservative, and I am the outspoken one. Fear, I feel, motivates their silence, as the climate has become increasingly hostile, like the days when I grew up in a segregated city.

The following is the transcription of Howardena Pindell's video work, Free, White and 21, 1980, 12 minutes, 15 seconds, U-matic.

The Artist: When my mother grew up in Ohio, her mother would bring in various babysitters. There were about ten children in the family, and one of the babysitters happened to be white. My mother happened to be the darkest of ten children so that when this woman saw my mother's skin she thought that she was dirty and washed her in lye. As a result of this, my mother has burn marks on her arm.

White Woman: Hmmm.

The Artist: When I was in kindergarten, I had a teacher who was not very fond of black children. There were very few of us, possibly two in a class of perhaps forty. During the afternoon hours we were given time to sleep. Each of us had our own cot, and we were told that if we had to go to the bathroom we should raise our hands and one of the teachers would take us to the bathroom. I raised my hand and my teacher flew into a rage, yelling, "I can't stand these people." She took out sheets and tied me to the bed. She left me there for a couple of hours and then she finally released me. One of the students filed a complaint, perhaps to a parent who did not know I was black. Perhaps the child did not know, or had not learned to differentiate between race at that time. I later found out that the teacher was fired for bothering a student. Perhaps I was not the first one.

I went to a high school in Philadelphia which was for girls and emphasized academic achievement. Everyone was very competitive with one another for grades. I did very well in history classes and asked that my history teacher put me in the accelerated class. She told me that she would be happy, with my grades, to put me in the accelerated level. However, she felt that a white student with lower grades would go further; therefore she would not put me in the accelerated course.

White Woman: You know you really must be paranoid. Those things never happened to me. I don't know anyone who's had those things happen to them. But then, of course, they are free, white, and 21, so they wouldn't have had that kind of experience.

The Artist: I went to Boston University, and for my first year I lived in a dormitory. I was entered as a freshman student in January. I had been active in high school running for various offices, so I decided to run for an office in Boston University within my dormitory. The office that they had available was one where you would act as a liaison with other universities, with M.I.T. or with Harvard. I did whatever was necessary to get my name on the ballot, and just before the vote was to be taken, my house mother brought me into

a meeting with other officers of the house and members of the Boston University student community. I was informed that my name was being removed from the ballot because they felt that my being black—and if I, of course, won—I would be highly inappropriate for that office.

White Woman: You ungrateful little . . . after all we have done for you.

The Artist: When I graduated from graduate school, I proceeded to look for a job. I was not able to find a job, although I had applied to over fifty schools for teaching positions. I received approximately fifty rejections. So I decided to come to New York and go door-to-door looking for any kind of job. Someone suggested that I try Time-Life and to apply for a job as a picture researcher. I went to the Time Life building and the personnel office was willing to see me because they saw on my application that I had graduated from Yale University. While sitting in the front office waiting to be interviewed, a number of women came in looking for secretarial positions. The white women were told to fill out an application, and when they turned in the application were told they were interested in their qualifications and would notify them if a position became available. Any nonwhite women, Hispanic or black (I did not see any Asian women coming in looking for jobs at that time), were told that there were no positions available. They were not given applications, they were just told point blank that there were no positions available, and then they would leave. Eventually I was interviewed, and I was told that I would not be considered unless I came in with a slide projector.

White Woman: Don’t worry, we will find other tokens! Don’t worry!

The Artist: I was invited to be in a wedding in Maine. I was the only nonwhite at the wedding. One of the [bride’s] friends owned an old house that had been built in the early 1800s. She wanted to invite all the members of the wedding party to her home for lunch—that included the five bridesmaids and the five ushers. When we entered the house, she gave us a tour and finished the afternoon by giving us lunch. She seemed quite unnerved that I was a member of the wedding party, and had her place changed from another table to my table where she could sit and watch me eat. At the end of the afternoon, as we were leaving, the men stood on one side of the door and the women stood on the other side of the door. She shook hands with all the white women, skipped over me, shook hands with all the white men, and then came to me last.

White Woman: You really must be paranoid. Your art really isn’t political either, you know. I hear your experiences and I think, well, it’s gotta be in her art, that’s the only way we’ll validate you. It’s gotta be in your art in a way that we consider valid. If it isn’t used in a way—if the symbols are not used in a way—that we use them, then we won’t acknowledge them.

In fact, you don’t exist until we validate you. And, you know, if you don’t want to do what we tell you to do then we will find other tokens.

The Artist: After the wedding ceremony there was a party held for the bride and groom and for members of the wedding and their guests. They had a live band and dancing. Of course, no one asked me to dance until near the end of the party. The minister, who was a man in his mid-sixties, came over to me, winked, and asked me to dance. Then he whispered into my ear, “I come to New York often, why don’t we get together, we can have some fun.”

White Woman: You ungrateful little . . . after all we have done for you. You know we don’t believe in your symbols, they are not valid unless we validate them. And you really must be paranoid. I have never had experiences like that. But, of course, I am free, white, and 21.

Artist's Statement (1989)
From Howardena Pindell: Autobiography
(New York: Cyrus Gallery, 1989).

Autobiography, a selection of works on paper and canvas from a larger body of work, addresses multifaceted aspects of my being and experience. I chose not to focus solely on that which has brought me distress, such as my direct personal experience with issues of abuse some of which were brought about by encounters with racism, sexism, and issues of class, but expanded it to include my inner spiritual as well as outer journey. This journey extended over twenty years and has taken me to remote parts of Africa, the Caribbean, India, Japan, Brazil, northern and central Europe.

I sought solace during these trips in studying and practicing, in some cases, universal spiritual traditions as a link to understanding the culture. I was also searching for alternative modes of living, thinking, and seeing. The unifying factor I found in each spiritual tradition, Western and non-Western (predominantly evident in the non-Western), was a concern for the visual expression of the "divine" through beauty, often misread by those with a Euro-American bias as a pursuit of vacant decorative frills.

> "Beauty as a concept in Mende (Sierra Leone) thought operates on three planes of existence—in the world of spirit, in the world of nature, and in the life of humans. The spiritual and the natural are seen to establish the standards and values of the human experience. Tingoi, the spiritual notion, is the mystical ideal to be yearned for but never attained." (Sylvia Ardyn Boone, Radiance from the Waters [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986], 129)

Autobiography was initiated in 1980 with the videotape performance work Free, White and 21. The six key paintings shown in the exhibition, chosen from eight, represent markers for me, peak experiences, some of which were not altogether pleasant. Fire (Suttee) is symbolic of my four trips to India during which time I became aware of the use of fire to cruelly censure brides who present to their grooms an insufficient dowry. Suttee was an ancient rite in which a wife was placed alive on her husband's funeral pyre. Now banned, it is still practiced in remote villages. Numerous women's organizations in India have been trying to address the problem through various political action groups. Earth (Eyes/Injuries) represents my experience as a passenger

in a car accident in 1979 and the ways in which it affected and changed my life, work, perceptions, and memories of other traumas. Air (CS560) and Separate But Equal symbolize my feelings about universal struggles for dignity, civil and human rights as well as some of my personal agonies. To emphasize this, I have put my own blood on the canvas (Air [CS560]) prior to gessoing it.

Water (Ancestors/Middle Passage/Family Ghosts) represents my family's multicultural heritage as well as hidden American history. The Search (Chrysalis/Meditation, Positive/Negative) focuses on the uplifting as well as deleterious aspects of deep meditation. It additionally deals with my disillusionment with Western and non-Western charismatic "religious" figures who deceive their followers, demanding blind faith, obedience, noncritical thinking, and an open purse.

The thick paint strokes in the large paintings represent both notes and sounds of a mantra as well as scarring echoing both a rupture and a healing. The strokes are also symbolic of ritual scarification in Africa for beauty, knitting together keloids, fusing into a whole fabric, skin, or canvas. In this series, I wanted to reflect the horror of some of my experiences and my struggles to overcome their effects by traditional spiritual as well as nontraditional means.

My photographs, visual records documenting each journey, provided for me a quiet outlet and a form of meditation "space" necessary in order to execute the larger works. The sheer pleasure of mixing the values and colors as well as unifying the images brought me the kind of serenity that I had experienced in deep meditation without the negative side effects. Paradoxically, in many of the countries that I visited, where the beauty and serenity of the spiritual practice were uplifting, they were in stark contrast to often harsh and brutal daily realities for the majority of the people. I feel that the interface of beauty and cruelty has become more evident in my work after my car accident (1979) and more pronounced since my extended stay in Japan in 1981–82.

On Planning an Exhibition:
Autobiography: In Her Own Image (1988)
From Autobiography: In Her Own Image
(New York: INTAR Latin American Gallery, 1988).

The idea for the exhibition Autobiography grew out of a series of paintings I had been developing since late 1986 in an attempt to probe more deeply some of the issues that I had touched upon in my videotape Free, White and 21. As a result of this ongoing work, I decided to organize an exhibition of work by women artists of color and invited eighteen artists to create a private view of themselves through visual statement.

Being a woman of color, I have experienced directly the omission and under-representation of works by woman of color. I have also noted how people of color and their history and culture are being appropriated, distorted, and used as images and points of focus by white artists while artists of color are excluded from "speaking" visually, interpreting themselves on the same platform. "Women's" exhibitions organized by white feminists or "concerned" curators are often 95–100 percent white. Most white women sensitive to their own plight are curiously silent and insensitive to the omission.

The artists in my exhibition are from multiracial and in some cases over-lapping and interwoven heritages. Their vision and tools of visual expression are not always bound to paint on canvas, nor do they reflect autobiographical themes punched from the Euro-ethnic male template of the "academy."

The initial selection of artists for the exhibition was difficult, as there were too many who would be excluded. I did not wish to focus on a particular medium such as photography or sculpture, although patterns and synchronicity of expression emerged. I also did not wish to focus on artists whose work would reassure the "art world" that we want to emulate them, mirror or reinforce their stereotypes. Autobiography, therefore, presents a view of artists of color interpreting themselves in the context of their choice, which may not be particularly pleasing to the dominant culture. The work is neither neutered nor devoid of personal references to gender, race, and class or paradox, conflict, and celebration.

The artists met in my studio to share ideas about the exhibition and decided as a group to present the title on the cover of a catalogue in the language of our various ancestors. Some felt strongly about "political" issues while others did not. It was my hope that discussions would generate further

contact between the artists to counteract some of the isolation and competition that the "art establishment" has fostered. During the first meeting, I shared excerpts from my journal notes, which reflected my thought process while grappling with my own autobiographical series. Excerpts from my notes included some of the following thoughts:

1. Definition of self in a siege, Euro-ethnically-biased culture.
2. Miscegenation: hidden United States history.
3. The legacy of my mixed heritage: African, Native American, European: enslaver and enslaved.
4. Which women of color I identify with for my standard of appearance: women of color from the United States; European identified women of color; women of color from other cultures?

4a. As I grew up, what were the pressures concerning hair, skin, eye color, texture of hair, body type, and conformity?

5. Hierarchy and the use of images of people of color in the media and their placement on the page.

5a. What kind of social interaction are they portrayed as having with other people of color and people of European descent?

5b. Are they placed at the top of the page, behind a crowd, in the center (but alone), near the edges, at the bottom?

5c. Are they portrayed as exceedingly small or large? What role is being played? Is it a stereotype?

6. The brutality of omission and appropriation.
7. Use of omission as a form of censorship; First Amendment rights for whom?
8. Critique of criticism: when and if our work is written about, what type of words are selected to describe our work?

8a. Psychological assault and stereotyping through language and visual juxtapositions in the news.

The following is a booklist which helped to clarify some of my thinking about the ideas for each work.

Rasheed Araeen, Making Myself Visible (London: Kala Press, 1984).

Angela Y. Davis, Women, Race and Class (New York: Vintage Books, 1983).

bell hooks, Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

Gloria I. Joseph and Jill Lewis, Common Differences: Conflicts in Black and White Feminist Perspectives (Boston: South End Press, 1981).

Asiba Tupahache, Taking Another Look (New York: Spirit of January Publications, 1986).

Review of an Exhibition
The Aesthetics of Texture in African Adornment (1984)
From The Heart of the Question: The Writings and Paintings of Howardena Pindell (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1997).

When I was asked to write about the objects in The Aesthetics of Adornment in African Art from an artist's perspective, I realized that heretofore I had not "experienced" adornment as a "serious" art form, perhaps owing to my correlating adornment with the vagaries of fashion-world sensibilities. Western objects of adornment, when viewed within the context of an exhibition, seemed to me to be detached, even when imagined within a living context, as if they belonged to a remote, prosperous, yet "archaic" recent or distant past, rather than to a vivid living culture in which the adornment-enhanced body interacted with the flow of nature.

The best approach to the challenge, I believed, was to choose a sensibility in the construction and appearance of the objects to which I fell closest in my own work—that of the textured accumulated surface. The comments that follow are therefore to be understood as the subjective reactions of a practicing artist, rather than as the outcome of scholarly research.

In Africa, the geometry and texture of the individual human body engages in an ever-changing dialogue with the adornment selected by the wearer. Placing the objects on zones of the body, the wearer is able to convey messages not only of beauty or sexual allure, but also of status, rank, age, tribal identification, and aesthetics, as well as of a state of mind or a desire to placate or seek protection from the environment. This intricate interaction between inner thoughts and outer body reality—hair texture, tone of skin, proportion, height, angularity, and flexibility—is further augmented by sculptural hair arrangements or permanent alterations of the body's surface, such as scarification. Permanent or temporary modifications of the teeth, lips, earlobes, and nose, as well as tattooing and skin painting or tinting, further complement the adornment. The placement of weighty accessories such as heavy metal belts, bracelets, or anklets affects or restricts gesture, modifying the movements of the body as well as adding the possibility of creating sound.

Materials such as beads, shells, metals, raffia, and feathers, when used to create everyday and ceremonial adornment, can produce a rich textural surface meshing the physical with personal, cultural, and "supernatural" components.

In African Accumulative Sculpture (Pace Gallery, 1974), Arnold Rubin discusses the concepts of "power" and "display," which may also be applied to objects of adornment. "Display" elements include beads and cowrie shells used as currency in trade, as well as bells, fibers, and reflective surfaces. "Power" elements, their efficacy often acquired over a period of time through incantations, include, for example, horns, claws, skulls, hair, etc., thus creating charged surfaces and structures endowed with "special" powers, as well as with the survival life force of the animal part included. The Bamana hunter's tunic from Mali, for example, with its densely textured surface of protective amulets, fiber, leather, and claws, was "accumulated" over a period of time to maintain its harnessed "power."

The accumulation and aggregation of elements is a distinctive characteristic of African aesthetic. The Fon cosmetic container from Benin . . . with its elaborate combination of shells, beads, nuts, and seeds, is a perfect example of a more genteel form of this sensibility. The components of this assemblage can be rearranged so that its visual textural drama is altered by both light and motion. A direct antecedent of this aesthetic is the surface tension that is built up by the aggregated elements.

Surface tension is also manifested in flatter, more planar, less aggregated forms, such as beadwork objects, in which the clustered and rippling effect is caused by the beads' relation to the support fabric, as well as by the building up of tension in the warp and woof of the network armature of threads. As a result, geometric images do not adhere to a rigid mathematical boundary, as perhaps is the case in the beadwork of other cultures, such as North American Indian.

Once the basic geometric formula has been established, the design may expand or contract, inhale or exhale, according to the will of the artisan or the demands of the object's irregular shape. Figure-and-ground relationships also scintillate and may reverse, heightening the visual surface tension as the sense of background and foreground dissolve. One set of geometric forms will seem to shift position through contrasts of light and dark or color, augmented by occasional unexpected shifts of color or a slight variation in pattern.

The textural surfaces of African objects of adornment add variety, excitement, and drama to the cultural codes that they convey from the wearer to the environment. The body with its pattern of movement is enhanced and given the dimension of a living canvas, on which each individual constructs his or her own image.

Who Do You Think You Are? One of Us? (1992)
From Howardena Pindell: Paintings and Drawings, 1972–1992
(Kansas City, Mo.: Exhibits USA, 1992).

As a teenager one summer, I was working for an advertising agency in Philadelphia. One day, out of the blue, I was told on the phone by one of the relatives of a white employee, “Who do you think you are? One of us?” I was stunned. Although mild compared to outright acts of brutality, it was one of many experiences that propelled me to do the work that I do now analyzing and understanding the dynamics of racism. The constant daily insults from Euro-Americans always expecting service and constant attention from people of color is infuriating, but more easy to respond to appropriately when analyzed. The publications that have helped me the most are Asiba Tupahache’s Taking Another Look (New York: Spirit of January Publications, 1986) and Dr. Frances Cress Welsing’s The Isis Papers: The Keys to the Colors (Chicago: Third World Press, 1991).

Apartheid is not confined to South Africa. It is used as a tactic by groups of persons who repress and minimize. Asiba Tupahache refers to “vertical hierarchies” that consider deviant anyone who does not physically look like the marketed image of the person or group at the top of the “vertical.” Privilege, “reciprocity,” and “social proof” are used to bind together an inner circle with vertical hiearchies within a reciprocity network. (See Robert B. Cialdini’s Influence [New York: Quill, 1984]). Members of the inner circle define and decide who is where on the vertical, who will be at the top of the vertical, and therefore who will be the standard for the image projected as the ideal.

> “One way abusers ensure domination is by what I call the vertical structure. It is a thought process that put powerful over powerless. Co-existence is not possible. There are only superior and inferiors. The source of domination assumes the highest position as the most superior. An entity or idea that is different from the abuser must be owned, controlled, or dominated.” (Asiba Tupahache, Taking Another Look)

I see this as a clear description for the European and Euro-American culture. This could also be applied to a caste system focusing on nationality, race, class, gender, age, sexual preference, and physical challenge. In apartheid

systems, everyone outside or on the margins of the reciprocity network is considered useful only if they serve without any expectation or hope of reciprocity. (The person on the phone who made the comment to me, saw me as someone who should serve in silence without the expectation of even the smallest courtesy. I have noticed that when a woman of color becomes, for example, Miss America, that some white women suddenly demand service of women of color trying to state by implication that they must stay “in their place” and serve. In 1991, with the Clarence Thomas–Anita Hill hearings, as well as the early 1992 disclosure that one of the presidential candidates had extra-marital affairs with white as well as black women, I found that some white women were extremely agitated asking for service of black women, expecting doors to be opened, garbage to be carried . . . people out of the blue making requests . . . who were indignant when one responded with surprise at such an inappropriate request from anyone, let alone a total stranger.)

Some considered on the margin, having internalized the shame and abuse, may maintain and perpetuate the vertical pecking order of the collective system, creating the people of color who are neoconservatives and who receive as favors limited acceptance in the wings of the reciprocity network. They may receive perks in exchange for supressing and damaging their own people and keeping a firm grip on maintaining the status quo. This does not exonerate those people on the vertical for the enforcing aspects of the vertical that create, as Tupahache says, the terror that causes people to hurt themselves as well as others in order to survive. Apartheid systems therefore are Vampire empires. As in the classic horror films, once bitten, a new vampire (a person emulating the warped system of beliefs which lives off of and degrades other people) is created either as children of those on the vertical with privileges or as some of the most terrorized victims desperate to survive. Fear becomes a basic component in an aparthied system in order to keep in line all those who threaten the vertical—supressed or in a stupor from malnutrition, lack of truthful and accurate education (which applies to all sides), just plain terror from brutality of the vertical as one can witness in the history of lynching, police brutality, aggression against smaller countries for control of their region and their resources, such as the Gulf War . . . etc. . . . or addictions encouraged or secretly supported such as alchohol, perscription and illegal drugs. (Additional addictions encouraged to stop critical thinking on all positions on and off of the vertical include religion and religiosity, food, sex. Racism is also a mood-altering addiction which blocks intelligence and critical thinking. See “Socialization and Racism” by Rutledge M. Dennis in Benjamin P. Bowser and Raymond G. Hunt’s Impacts of Racism on White Americans (London: Sage Publications, 1981, 72–73).

> “So disclosing oppression in a system where oppression is normalized, celebrated and sometimes worshipped results in cognitive dissonance. The self-esteem involved in the system heavily depend on oppression staying intact. Exposure threatens this esteem by bringing out the need for change. This can be like taking crack away from a crack addict (which might be easier than taking white supremacy away from America).” (Asiba Tupahache, “Disclosing Oppression and Cognitive Dissonance,” The Spirit of January Monthly [December 1991], 3)

The following are a number of paradoxes and double standards that I have witnessed in the apartheid system. I have used the American system of apartheid for my examples. Our apartheid attitudes fan out and are reflected in how we use and treat the rest of the world. (The U.S. consumes over 40 percent of the world's resources although it is only 5 percent of the world's population.)

1. People of color throughout the world are almost always negatively stereotyped as "dirty and lazy" by those in the vertical, inner circle, reciprocity network (this attitude is internalized by people of color as part of the pattern of victimization which is enforced by the mythmaking apparatus of the vertical through the reproduction of and repetition of negative stereotype images) . . . Yet people of color are expected to clean the homes and take care of those on the vertical. We are supposed be the servants who clean up what you have dirtied and do not wish to clean up yourselves. We are supposed to prepare your food even if we barely have food to prepare for ourselves. Yet your mythology about us states we are too dirty to be in your company. If we do not serve freely at low wages and welcome being taken advantage of, we are considered lazy, ungrateful and are punished.

2. We are called militants if we protest, and are brutalized. Those on your side are called founding fathers and freedom fighters. We are called illegal aliens, but those who you want to vote for the most conservative aspects of your vertical are called immigrants. We are left to drown at sea, and you are rescued. When we drown, it is a few lines in the newspaper. When you are rescued, it is pages of human interest stories. When our women are raped by your men, we are called liars. If our men are accused, anyone will do as long as they come close to the description which may not be questioned. We are arrested without question and convicted. We are set up to hide your crimes. We are described as barbaric, heinous, savage. You have the mildest words for your own. When your own are rehabilitated from drugs, it is a worthy human interest story, maybe a movie or two. If we are on any substance, we are considered hopelessly and forever criminal.

3. Our culture can be shamelessly appropriated, and you will say you originated it or are doing us a favor. You flood us with personal questions about our lives and how we do things without our having the reciprocity of the same privilege with you. You make lots of money from using us. If we have a twinge of your culture in anything we do, we are called thieves, plagiarists. You may even laugh at us. If Paul Simon were a backup musician for a Brazilian or black South African group, or if Brazilian groups or black South African musicians suddenly started imitating Paul Simon, you would be outraged . . . you would be stunned. Our cultures are labeled "primitive" unless you take them as your own, such as the ancient Egyptian culture. Although Egypt is on the continent of Africa, you deny we had anything to do with Egypt, except perhaps as slaves. Slavery is seen as our eternal condition, while you portray yourselves as the masters of the universe. The world must revolve around you or there is no world unless it is defined by you in your voice. You must interpret us. We are not permitted to speak for ourselves without incurring hostility, jealousy, or distrust.

4. We are expected to take care of your elderly even if we are more elderly than you. You expect us to stand so that you can sit. You expect us to starve so that you can eat. You expect us to work long hours at low pay for you so that you can rest and save money.

5. You are allowed access to employment (during more prosperous times) and access to certain unions. We will roundly be called lazy for being unemployed even though you know that you work in segregated, restricted trades and professions. You push the glass ceiling lower and lower and say that we are not good enough. Your lies are easily covered up. Our truth is called a lie.

6. Our success will be criminalized. You will dwell on our failures, and if you cannot find any, you will make some up. You try to make us fail by putting obstacles in our way. As we continue to suceeed, we will be the object of scrutiny and suspicion. (We are expected to be tactful about the dynamics of your sabotage.)

7. Teflon will be applied to people on the vertical who commit questionable acts, whereas those on the margins will be forever Velcro, with everything negative projected and sticking on to them.

8. What is considered eternally criminal and pathological for us will be considered something to be romanticized, or your infractions will be treated as a minor slip off of the eternally allocated place of grace. One slip by us damns all of us. One slip by you is an individual mistake.

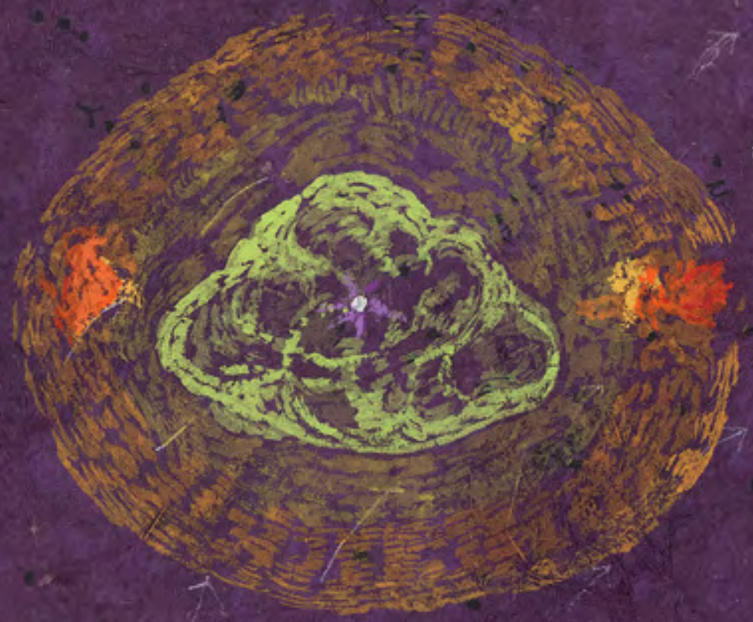
9. Negative mythologies will be created about those not blessed enough to be on the vertical. Page layouts in newspapers will present a contrast through comparison of word and image of you and of us. Crimes against us by you will be over-looked, covered up, denied, or prettied up with soothing words. People not on the vertical are usually juxtaposed in a reference (text or image) to something criminal or a negative occurrence directly or juxtaposed by association.

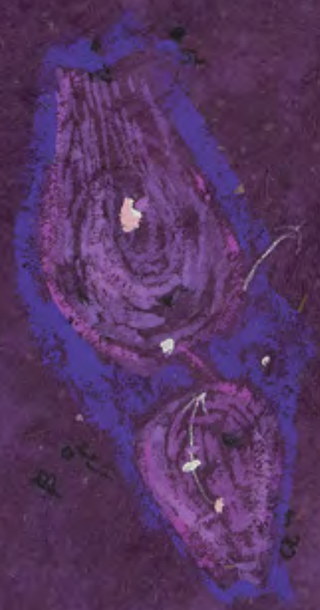
10. Interest in cultural contributions other than the European, currently called multiculturalism and nastily referred to as "politically correct," is further contorted by the colonization of multiculturalism by those who wish to limit the voice of authority of the primary source to people of

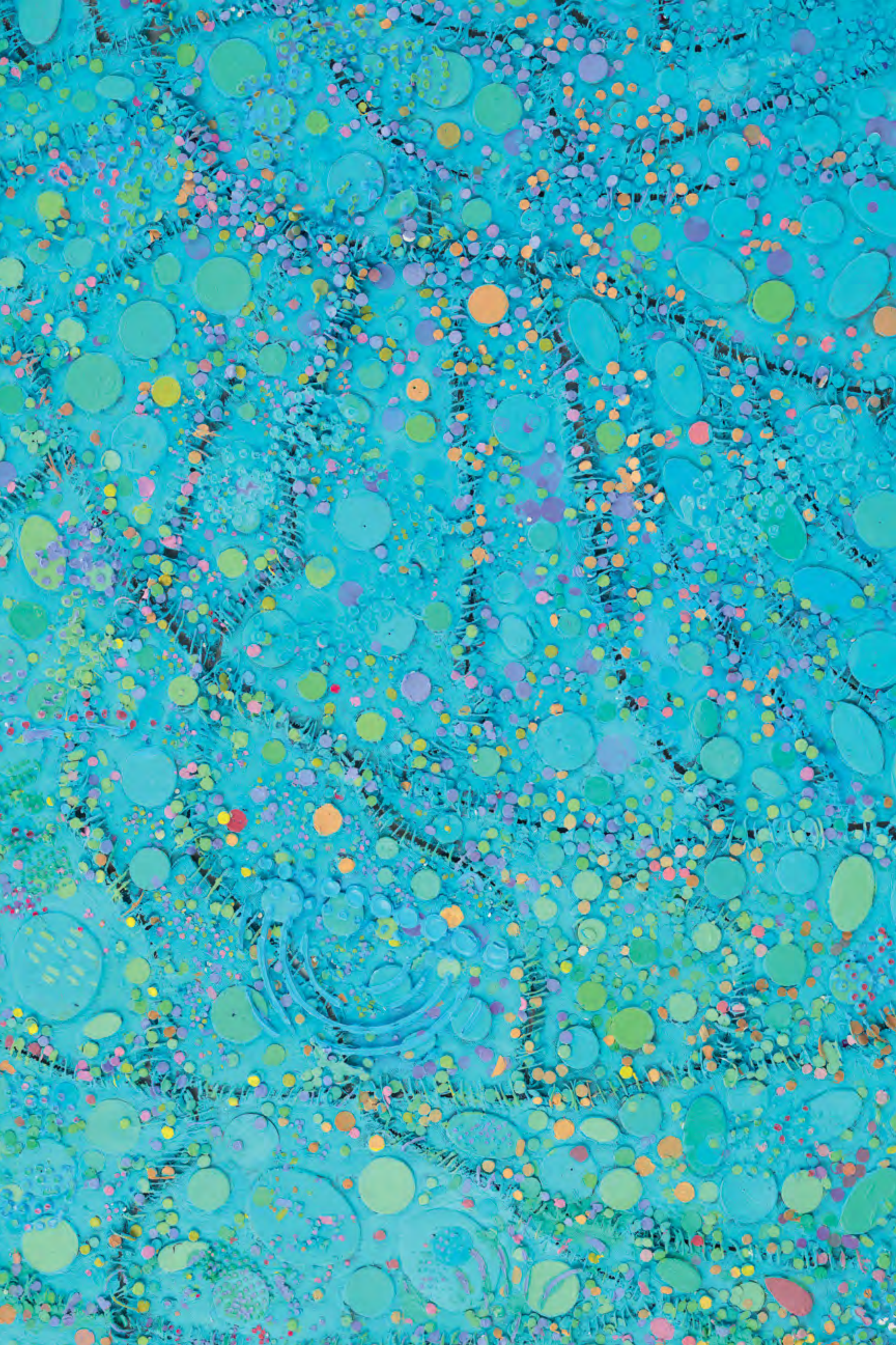
European descent who interpret and appropriate, subverting the original and ongoing original voices. As a result of what appeared to be good intentions, vast resources of rich and diverse cultural contributions are open for one group only to use and exploit.

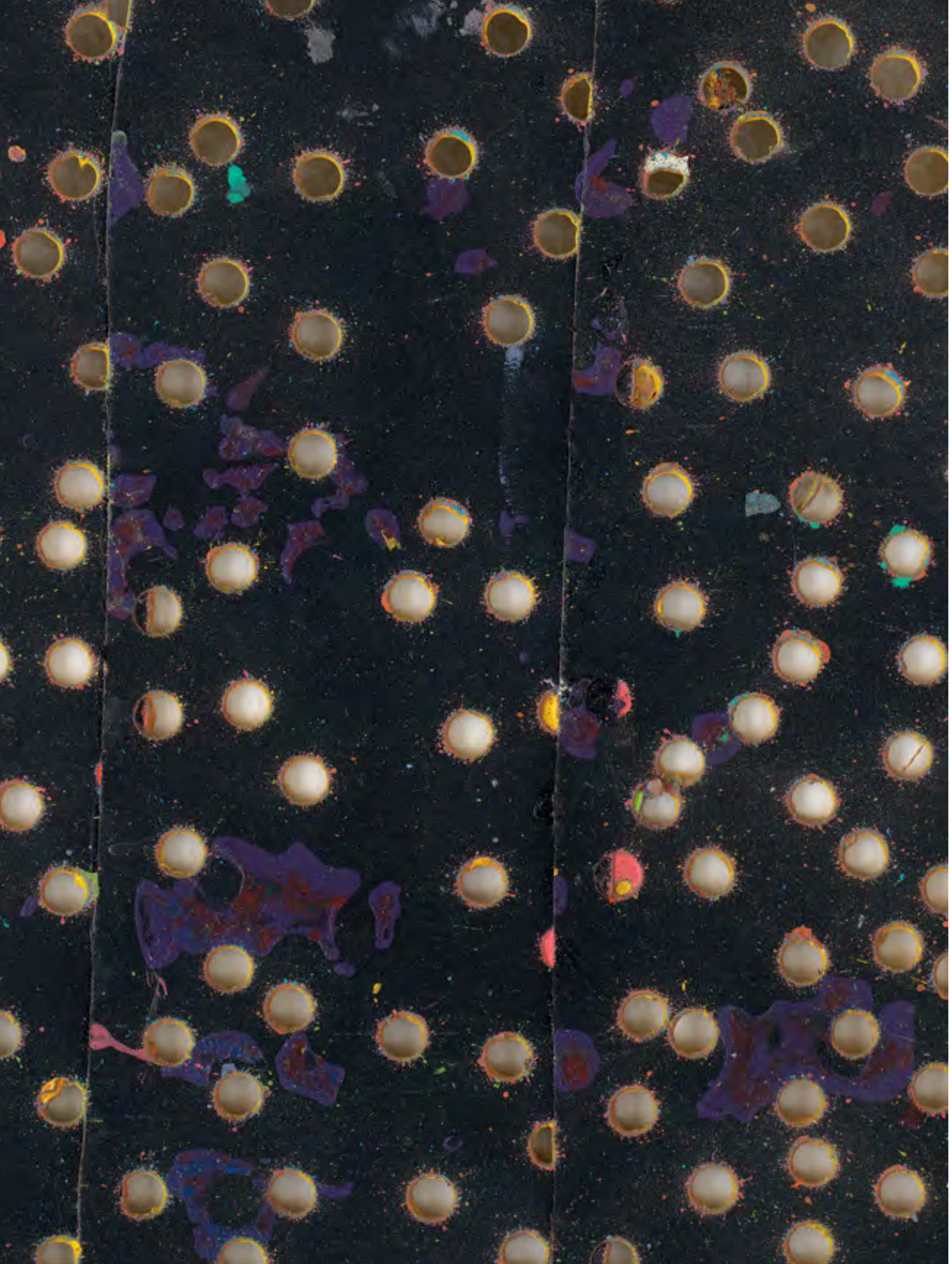
11. The propaganda put out by the top of the vertical creates an illusion, such as the only ones left in the future in science fiction movies are white with one or two people of color. This is further reflected in advertising. Free speech is considered that speech which adheres to the boundaries of discourse set by the vertical. Questioning is a threat if the question and the answer expose the paradoxes and "inconsistencies" of the vertical. (See Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent [New York: Pantheon, 1988], 302.)

Although my examples focus directly on my experience with racism in the United States, aspects of them can be applied to apartheid anywhere based on race, gender, class, age, sexual preference, nationality, the physical challenge of disability, as well as location on the vertical hierarchy.









Born in Philadelphia in 1943, Howardena Pindell studied painting at Boston University and Yale University. After graduating, she accepted a job in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books at the Museum of Modern Art, where she remained for twelve years (1967–79). In 1979, she began teaching at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, where she is now a full professor. Throughout her career, Pindell has exhibited extensively. Notable solo exhibitions include: Spelman College, Atlanta (1971), A.I.R. Gallery, New York (1973, 1983), Just Above Midtown, New York (1977), Lerner-Heller Gallery, New York (1980, 1981), The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (1986), Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford (1989), Cyrus Gallery, New York (1989), G. R. N'Namdi Gallery, Chicago/Detroit/New York (1992, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2006), Garth Greenan Gallery, New York (2014), and Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta (2015).

Howardena Pindell's work has been featured in many landmark museum exhibitions, including: Contemporary Black Artists in America (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1971), Rooms (P.S.1, Flushing, N.Y., 1976), Another Generation (The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1979), Afro-American Abstraction (P.S.1, 1980), The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s (New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1990), and Bearing Witness: Contemporary Works by African American Women Artists (Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, 1996).

Most recently, Pindell's work appeared in: We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965–85 (Brooklyn Museum, 2017), Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction, 1964–1980 (The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2006), High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting 1967–1975 (Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, 2006), WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2007), Target Practice: Painting Under Attack 1949–78 (Seattle Art Museum, 2009), Black in the Abstract: Part I: Epistrophy (Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 2013), and Painting 2.0: Expression in the Information Age (Museum Brandhorst and Museum Moderner Kunst, 2015–16).

Pindell's work is in the permanent collections of major museums internationally, including: Brooklyn Museum of Art; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Fogg Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; Philadelphia Museum of Art; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.

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ARTWORKS

Untitled, 1967
Acrylic on canvas; 66 × 71 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 1

Self-Portrait, 1963–64
Oil on canvas; 29 3/4 × 26 3/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Untitled, c. 1967
Acrylic on canvas; 14 × 16 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Still Life with Banana, 1965
Oil on canvas; 9 1/4 × 7 1/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Untitled, 1967
Collage on cardboard; 6 1/2 × 6 1/2 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 1

Untitled (Baseball), 1966
Oil on canvas; 15 1/2 × 11 3/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Gray Space Frame, 1968
Ink and cray-pas on paper; 17 × 22 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 16

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Fig. 3

Space Frame, 1968
Graphite on graph paper; sheet: 17 1/2 × 22 in.
RISD Museum, Providence, Rhode Island, Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2004.56.

Untitled, 1968–70
Mixed media–assemblage, acrylic paint, canvas, grommets, and stuffing; 144 × 144 in.
Mott-Warsh Collection, Flint, Michigan.

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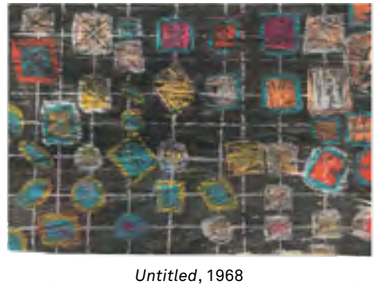
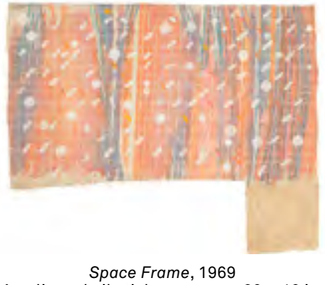
Fig. 1



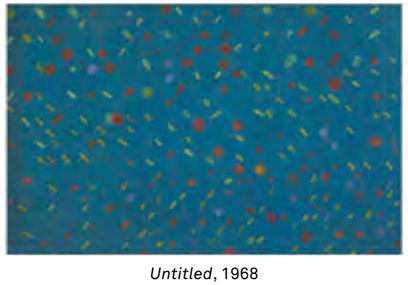
Untitled, 1968
Pastel on paper; 12 3/4 × 18 3/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.



Space Frame, 1969
Acrylic and oil stick on canvas; 32 × 40 in.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Untitled, c. 1968
Acrylic and cray-pas on canvas; 46 × 42 in.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Space Frame #3, 1969
Acrylic, crayon, and graphite on canvas; 36 × 53 in.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)



Untitled, 1968
Acrylic on canvas; 42 1/2 × 66 1/4 in.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Untitled, 1969
Ink, crayon, and cray-pas on graph paper; 17 × 21 1/2 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 2

Untitled, 1969
Acrylic on canvas; 32 1/4 × 30 1/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Untitled, 1971
Acrylic on canvas; 71 × 95 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

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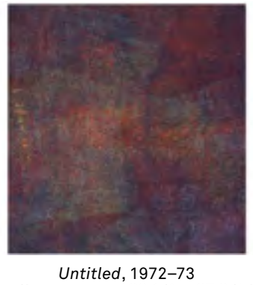
Fig. 4

Untitled, 1970
Acrylic on canvas; 69 × 79 1/8 in. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Purchase, with funds from the Albert A. List Family 71.173.



Untitled, 1972–73
Acrylic on canvas; 90 1/4 × 87 3/4 in.
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Endowment, 2017.8.

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Fig. 2

Untitled, 1970
Graphite, colored pencil, pastel, and acrylic on paper; 19 × 23 3/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

1–6031 with Additions, Corrections, and Coffee Stain, 1973
Ink on paper; 18 × 22 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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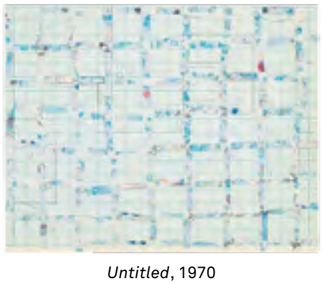
Fig. 6

P. 140

Fig. 3



Untitled, 1970
Ink on paper collage; 17 1/2 × 22 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Five, 1973
Ink on paper; 18 × 22 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Untitled #2, 1973
Ink on paper collage; 11 × 16 1/2 in.
Private collection, New York.

Untitled #4, 1973
Mixed media on board; 10 × 8 in. Collection Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, Deaccession Funds, 2014 2014-14.1.

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Fig. 10

Untitled #2, 1973
Ink and punched paper, graphite on paper; 22 1/2 × 17 1/2 in. Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Friends of the Department Gifts and matching funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, 1978 (1978.185.2).
(Chicago only)

Untitled #7, 1973
Ink on punched papers, talcum powder, and thread on oak tag; 10 1/8 × 8 3/8 in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Lily Auchincloss, 1974.
(Chicago only)

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Fig. 4

Untitled #3, 1973
Ink on paper collage; 22 1/4 × 17 1/2 in.
Collection of James Keith Brown and Eric Diefenbach, New York.

Grid Study #1, 1973
Acrylic on board; 11 × 12 3/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 8

Untitled, 1973
Graphite, ink, and collage on paper; 17 3/4 × 22 1/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Grid Study #4, 1973
Acrylic on cardstock; 9 1/4 × 10 1/2 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Removal 3/8, 1973
Paper, acrylic, and crayon on paper; 19 1/4 × 18 3/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Video Drawings: Baseball, 1973–76
Chromogenic print; 11 × 14 in. Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Gift of the Peter Norton Family Foundation, 1993 1993.49.

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Fig. 6

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Fig. 3

Removal 3/8, 1973
Mixed media on paper; 18 1/2 × 23 1/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Video Drawings: Science Fiction, 1973–76
Chromogenic print; 11 x 14 in. Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Gift of the Peter Norton Family Foundation, 1993 1993.48.

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Fig. 9

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Fig. 5

Untitled (Talcum Powder), 1973
Mixed media on board; 7 1/2 × 9 1/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Video Drawings: Swimming, 1973–76
Chromogenic print; 11 × 14 in. Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Gift of the Peter Norton Family Foundation, 1993 1993.50.

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Fig. 2

Untitled, 1973–74
Sculpt metal, wire, and paper on collage board; 20 × 16 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Video Drawings: Swimming, 1973–76
Chromogenic print; 11 × 14 in. Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Gift of the Peter Norton Family Foundation, 1993 1993.51.

Untitled #69, 1974
Watercolor, crayon, and paper collage; 8 × 6 in.
High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Purchase; 1983.78.

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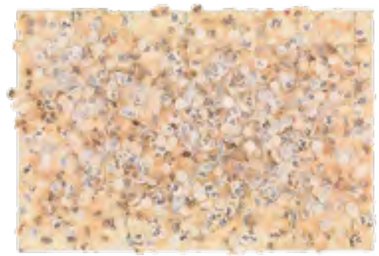
Fig. 12

Parabia Test #4, 1974
Ink and paper collage on vellum; three elements, each 11 × 8 1/2 in. Collection of Garth Greenan and Bryan Davidson Blue, New York.



Untitled #58, 1974
Mixed media on board; 5 × 8 in. Collection of James Keith Brown and Eric Diefenbach, New York.

Untitled, 1974–75
Mixed media on canvas; 69 3/4 x 94 in.
Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody.

Untitled #27, 1974
Mixed media on board; 13 3/4 × 12 in.
Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Gift of Donald Droll, 1983.
(Chicago and Virginia only)

Video Drawings: Tokyo TV, 1974–75
Chromogenic print; 5 × 7 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

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Fig. 3

Untitled #43, 1974
Watercolor, gouache, crayon, punched papers, spray adhesive, and thread on board; 7 7/8 × 9 1/2 in.
Collection of Steven L. Jones, Philadelphia and Chicago.

Video Drawings: Tokyo TV, 1974–75
Chromogenic print; 5 × 7 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Untitled, 1975
Ink on paper collage; 6 1/2 × 6 1/4 in.
Keswin Family Collection.
(Chicago only)

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Fig. 4

Video Drawings: Hockey, 1975
Chromogenic print; framed: 8 × 10 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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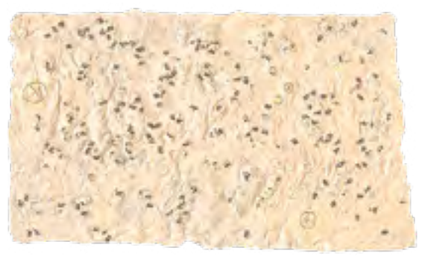
Fig. 13



Untitled #8, 1975
Ink on paper collage; 6 1/4 × 11 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Gift of Anne Wilkes Tucker.
(Chicago and Virginia only)

Video Drawings: Hockey, 1975
Chromogenic print; framed: 14 × 16 1/8 in.
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Anixter Art Acquisition Fund 2016.7.

Untitled #3, 1975
Ink on paper collage; 6 1/2 × 6 3/4 in. Princeton University Art Museum, Museum purchase, Laura P. Hall Memorial Fund 2015-6688.
(Chicago and Virginia only)

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Fig. 6

Video Drawings: Swimming, 1975
Chromogenic print; framed: 14 × 16 1/8 in.
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Anixter Art Acquisition Fund 2016.6.

Untitled #73, 1975
Watercolor, gouache, crayon, ink, punched papers, spray adhesive, and thread on board;
7 1/2 × 9 1/2 in. Collection of Steven L. Jones, Philadelphia and Chicago.

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Fig. 1

Video Drawings: Baseball, 1975
Chromogenic print; 4 5/8 × 6 7/8 in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase 276.1976.
(Chicago only)

Untitled #16, 1976
Mixed media on canvas; 66 1/2 × 83 1/2 in.
Courtesy of Jeanne Greenberg Rohaytn.

Video Drawings: Science Fiction (Metropolis), 1975
Chromogenic print; 4 1/2 × 6 1/2 in. Courtesy
the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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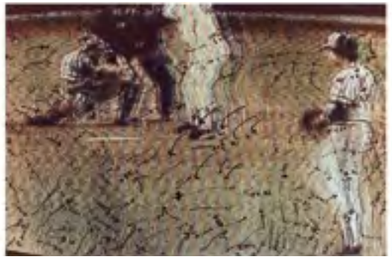
Fig.
6

Prism #3, 1976
Ink on paper collage; 6 3/4 × 7 3/4 in.
Private collection.
(Chicago only)



Video Drawings: Baseball, 1976
Chromogenic print; 8 × 10 in. Private collection,
courtesy of Honor Fraser Gallery, Los Angeles.

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Fig.
5

Video Drawings: Science Fiction (Flash Gordon), 1975
Chromogenic print; 4 1/2 × 6 1/2 in. Courtesy
the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Video Drawings: Hockey, 1976
Chromogenic print; 4 1/2 × 6 1/2 in. Courtesy the
artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Video Drawings: Science Fiction (Flash Gordon), 1976
Chromogenic print; 4 1/2 × 6 1/2 in. Courtesy
the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Video Drawings: Track, 1976
Chromogenic print; 4 1/2 × 6 1/2 in. Courtesy the
artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig.
11

Video Drawings: Abstract, 1976
Chromogenic print; framed: 13 1/4 × 16 in.
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago,
Anixter Art Acquisition Fund 2016.8.
(Chicago only)

Untitled, 1977
Acrylic, paper, glitter, sequins, and string on canvas;
83 1/2 × 99 in. Princeton University Art Museum,
Museum purchase, Carl Otto von Kienbusch, Jr.
Memorial Collection Fund.
(Chicago only)

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Fig.
5

Untitled #18, 1977
Mixed media on canvas; 83 x 87 in. Rose Art Museum,
Rose Art Special Fund 2014.24.

Untitled #80, 1977
Acrylic on paper, powder, and pigment; 14 × 17 in.
Private collection.

Untitled #84, 1977
Mixed media on board; 12 1/2 × 18 in. Collection of
Mr. and Mrs. Lee Broughton.
(Chicago only)

Untitled, 1978
Mixed media on canvas; 83 × 113 in.
Private collection, London.

New York: Night Light, 1977
Mixed media on canvas; 82 1/2 × 96 3/4 in. Collection
of Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York,
Bequest of Arthur B. Michael, by exchange, 2014
2014:14.2.
(Chicago only)

Untitled #98, 1978
Mixed media on board; 10 × 9 in.
Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody.

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Fig. 11

Untitled #20 (Dutch Wives Circled and Squared), 1978
Mixed media on canvas; 86 × 110 in.
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago,
Gift of Albert A. Robin by exchange 2014.15.

Untitled (Peace), c. 1980
Acrylic and paper collage; 23 × 29 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Untitled, 1978
Acetate graph paper, ink, and paper mounted on paper; 9 × 7 in. Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Gift of N.A.M.E. Gallery 1978.39.176.

Free, White and 21, 1980
U-matic (color, sound); 12 minutes, 15 seconds.
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago,
Gift of Garth Greenan and Bryan Davidson Blue 2014.22.

P. 170
Fig. 1

#108 Memory Series: Sorry, It Was an Accident, 1979.
Mixed media; 14 × 17 in. Georgia Museum of Art,
University of Georgia, The Larry D. and Brenda A. Thompson Collection of African American Art GMOA 2012.144.
(Chicago and Virginia only)

Feast Day of Iemanja II December 31, 1980, 1980
Acrylic, dye, paper, powder, thread, glitter, and sequins on canvas; 86 × 103 in.
The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York,
Gift of Diane and Steven Jacobson, New York.

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Fig. 12

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Fig. 8

Memory Test: Free, White and Plastic #114, 1979–80.
Cut and pasted and painted punched paper, acrylic, watercolor, gouache, ink, thread, nails, mat board, spray adhesive, and plastic on cardboard;
20 7/8 × 20 7/8 in. Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1980 (1980.150).
(Chicago only)

Memory: Past, 1980–81
Synthetic polymer paint, dye, paper, thread, tempera, photographic transfer, glitter, and powder on canvas; 126 × 86 in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Committee on Painting and Sculpture Funds and Gift of The Friends of Education of The Museum of Modern Art 2014.
(Chicago only)

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Fig. 9

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Fig. 10

Memory: Future, 1980–81
Mixed media on canvas; 83 × 116 1/2 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Museum purchase with funds donated by Barbara L. and Theodore B. Alfond through the Acorn Foundation in honor of Ann and Graham Gund Director, Matthew D. Teitelbaum 2015.2836.
(Chicago only)

Miajima, 1982.
Mixed media–assemblage, canvas, acrylic paint, glitter, and paper; 72 × 50 in.
Mott-Warsh Collection, Flint, Michigan.
(Chicago only)

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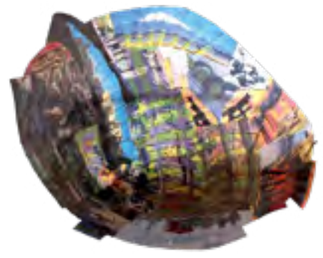
Fig. 13

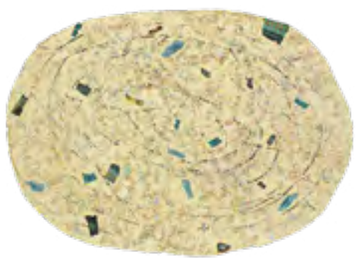
Tarot: Hanged Man, 1981
Mixed media on canvas; 36 × 156 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.



Autobiography: Japan (Pagoda Forest), 1982
Tempera, gouache, and paper collage; 17 × 20 × 5 in.
Collection Everson Museum of Art, Gift of the Academy of Arts and Letters.
(Chicago only)

P. 70
Fig. 20

P. 32
Fig. 3



M64, 1982
Mixed media on canvas; 51 × 88 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Autobiography: East/West (Bamboo Forest), 1983
Gouache, tempera, and postcards on paper;
21 × 27 × 4 in. Collection of Newark Museum, Purchase 1985, Felix Fuld Bequest Fund.

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Fig. 21

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Fig. 24

Autobiography: Japan (Hiroshima Disguised), 1982
Acrylic, paper, dye, and gouache on cut and sewn canvas; 60 × 132 in. National Academy Museum, New York, Gift of Howardena Pindell, 2009.
(Chicago only)

Autobiography: East/West (Gardens), 1983
Acrylic, gouache, tempera, postcards, and museum board; 34 × 23 × 4 in. Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, Gift of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters; Hassam, Speicher, Betts, and Symons Funds, 1992.
(Chicago only)

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Fig. 18

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Fig. 17

Autobiography: India (Lakshmi), 1984
Mixed-media collage on paper; 17 3/4 × 26 3/4 × 2 in.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Autobiography: Art/East, 1986–89
Acrylic, gouache, tempera, and postcards on museum board; 38 1/2 × 26 3/4 × 2 in. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. The Harold A. and Ann R. Sorgenti Collection of Contemporary African-American Art.
© 1989 Howardena Pindell.

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Fig. 19

Autobiography: India (Shiva, Ganges), 1985
Mixed media on canvas; 39 1/2 × 117 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Autobiography: Earth (Eyes, Injuries), 1987
Mixed media on canvas; 88 × 78 in.
Collection of George and Carmen N'Namdi.

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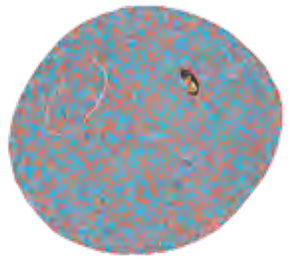
Fig. 26



Autobiography: Africa (Red Frog II), 1986
Mixed media on canvas; 78 × 70 in.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Autobiography: Earth (Undersea Tolland), 1987
Mixed media on canvas; 70 × 105 in.
Collection of Mary and James Bell, courtesy of N'Namdi Contemporary Fine Art.
(Chicago only)

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Fig. 14

Autobiography: Fire (Suttee), 1986–87
Mixed media on canvas; 90 × 56 in.
Collection of Nancy and Peter Huber.

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Fig. 16

Rambo Real Estate: Homelessness, 1987
Acrylic, newspaper, vinyl tape, and tempera on paper; 45 × 42 in. Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Bernice and Kenneth Newberger Fund 1997.80.

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Fig. 8

Autobiography: Water (Ancestors/Middle Passage/ Family Ghosts), 1988
Acrylic and mixed media on canvas; 118 × 71 in.
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund.

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Fig. 11

War: The "L" Word (George Bush), 1988
Chromogenic print; 18 × 24 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 23

Autobiography: Air (CS560), 1988
Acrylic, tempera, oil stick, blood, paper, polymer photo transfer, and vinyl on canvas; 86 × 84 in.
Detroit Institute of Arts, Founders Society Purchase, W. Hawkins Ferry Fund, with funds from Joan and Armando Ortiz Foundation, Friends of Modern Art, Avery K. Williams, Lynn E. Weaver, Ronald Maurice Ollie, and Kimberly Moore.

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Fig. 14

War: A Thousand Points of Light (White Phosphorus), 1988
Chromogenic print; 18 × 24 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

ART CROW/JIM CROW, 1988
Artist's book: photoetching and letterpress; object (book): 7 1/4 × 7 in.; exterior case (sleeve): 9 × 10 1/4 in. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, A. Conger Goodyear, B.A. 1899, Fund.

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Fig. 9

War: Agent Orange (Vietnam #1), 1988
Chromogenic print; 18 × 24 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 7

War: Cambodia (Over 5 Million Killed), 1988
Chromogenic print; 8 × 10 in. Private collection, courtesy of Honor Fraser Gallery, Los Angeles.

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Fig. 10

War: South Africa #1, 1988.
Chromogenic print; 18 × 24 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 8

War: Starvation (Sudan #1), 1988
Chromogenic print; 18 × 24 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 22

Autobiography: Switzerland (Road to Lucerne), 1989
Cibachrome, acrylic, and tempera on board; 9 × 17 × 2 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 12

Autobiography: The Search (Chrysalis/Meditation, Positive/Negative), 1988–89
Acrylic, tempera, oil stick, cattle markers, paper, vinyl, tape, and polymer photo on canvas; 72 × 112 in. Collection of Steven L. Jones, Philadelphia and Chicago.

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Fig. 6

Autobiography: Scapegoat, 1990
Acrylic, tempera, oil stick, and polymer photo transfer on canvas; 76 1/2 × 139 1/2 in. The Studio Museum in Harlem, Museum Purchase.

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Fig. 19

"Till Birnam Wood Remove to Dunsinane" (Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 3), 1991
Mixed media on canvas; 51 × 88 in. Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody.

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Fig. 13

Autobiography: Egypt (Cairo Residential, 1974), 1989
Cibachrome, acrylic, and tempera on board; 8 1/2 × 18 × 2 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 25

Separate But Equal Genocide: AIDS, 1991–92
Mixed media on canvas; 75 1/2 × 91 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Untitled, 1995
Acrylic, vinyl, and paper collage on canvas; 30 × 24 1/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Astronomy: Northern Hemisphere (August–September 1997), 2000–2001
Ink, acrylic, and gouache on paper; 12 3/4 × 16 3/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Owo-Eru, 1999
Etching, edition of 2; 15 1/4 × 24 3/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Untitled #22, 2003
Mixed media on board; 7 1/8 × 8 3/4 × 1/2 in. Private collection, courtesy of Honor Fraser Gallery, Los Angeles.

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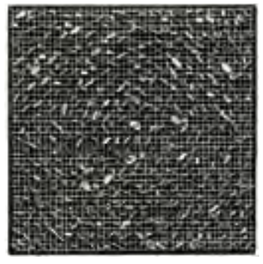
Fig. 22

Diallo, 2000
Mixed media on canvas; 46 × 40 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.



Untitled #26, 2003
Mixed media–assemblage, thread, paper, and pigment; 7 7/8 × 7 7/8 in. Mott-Warsh Collection, Flint, Michigan.

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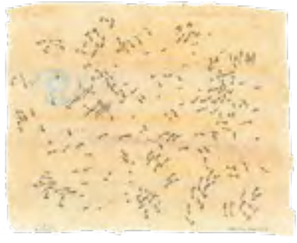
Fig. 21



Astronomy: Northern Hemisphere (May 2000), 2000–2001
Ink, acrylic, and gouache on paper; 12 3/4 × 16 3/4 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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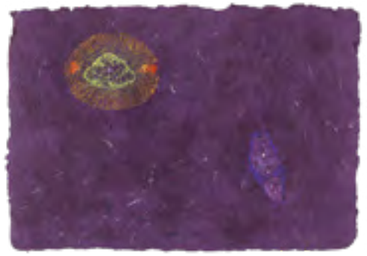
Fig. 27

Astronomy: Saturn, Mars, Disks of Orion, 2004
Ink, acrylic, and gouache on paper; 12 3/4 × 16 1/2 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.



Astronomy: Nebula NGC6826, 2005
Ink, acrylic, and gouache on paper; 8 5/8 × 11 3/4 in.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Katrina Footprints Drawn, 2007
Lithograph; 21 1/4 × 26 in. Collection of James Blue and Florence Davidson, Australia.
(Chicago only)

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Fig. 29

Autobiography: Past and Present II, 2005
Lithograph, edition of 58; 21 1/4 × 57 1/2 in.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Untitled #5B (Krakatoa), 2007
Mixed media on paper collage; 13 × 21 1/4 × 2 1/2 in.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

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Fig. 28

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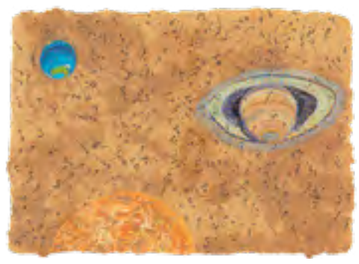
Fig. 10



Astronomy: Saturn, Neptune, 2006
Ink, acrylic, and gouache on paper; 9 1/4 × 11 3/4 in.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

4C The Planets, 2007
Mixed media–assemblage, string, paper, and pigment; 9 1/2 × 12 × 3 in. Mott-Warsh Collection, Flint, Michigan.

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Fig. 15

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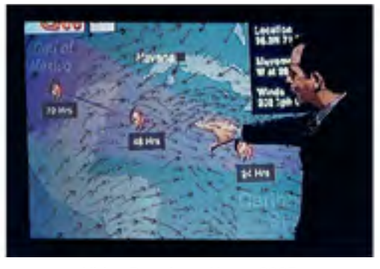
Fig. 15



Video Drawings: News, 2007
Cibachrome; 8 × 10 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Untitled #88 (Dragon), 2007
Mixed media on paper collage; 15 1/2 × 9 1/2 × 3 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Astronomy: Saturn, Nebula, 2008
Ink, acrylic, and gouache on paper; 16 in. diameter.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Pindell/DNA, 2012
Offset lithograph, edition 9/40; 22 × 14 1/4 in.
Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Art by Women Collection, Gift of Linda Lee Alter. © 2012 Howardena Pindell.

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Fig. 23

Untitled #4D, 2009
Mixed media on paper collage; 7 × 10 in.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Globular Cluster, 2014
Mixed media on paper; 9 × 11 3/8 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Astronomy: Mars, Perseus, Whirlpool Galaxy, 2009
Ink, acrylic, and gouache on paper; 9 × 12 1/2 in.
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

Hunger: The Color of Bones, 2014
Mixed media; 71 × 140 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.
(Chicago only)

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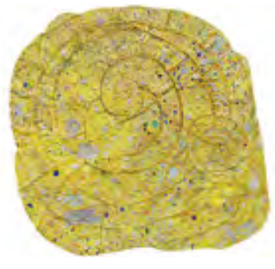
Fig. 2

Untitled #49, 2010
Mixed media on board; 12 1/2 × 10 3/4 in. Spelman College Museum of Fine Art. Purchased with support from Elynor A. Williams C'1966, in honor of her mother, Naomi Douglas Williams.



Nautilus #1, 2014–15
Mixed media on canvas; 68 × 72 in.
Collection of Jacqueline Bradley and Clarence Otis, Windermere, Florida.

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Fig. 3

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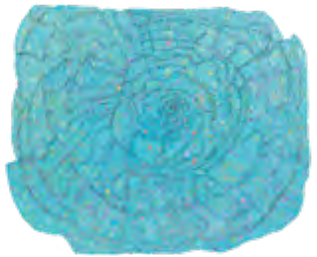
Fig. 4



Night Flight, 2015–16
Mixed media on canvas; 75 × 63 in.
Collection of Philip Holzer,
Frankfurt am Main.

Untitled stencil, 1970. Acrylic on paper; 35 × 81 in.
Courtesy the artist.

Untitled, n.d.
Ink and collage on paper; 11 × 8 1/2 in. Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Untitled stencil, 1970. Mixed media; 43 × 67 1/2 in.
Courtesy the artist.

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

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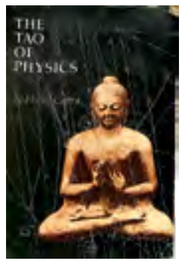
Fig. 10



Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*. Boulder: Shambala Publications, 1975.
Book; 9 × 6 × 3/4 in. Museum of Contemporary Art Library and Archives.

Numbered hole punches, early 1970s. Ink on paper; each 1/8 in. diameter. Collection of Garth Greenan and Bryan Davidson Blue, New York.

Scrap of *Video Drawing* template, 1976.
Ink on acetate; 6 1/4 × 9 in. Courtesy the artist.

Scrap of *Video Drawing* template, 1976.
Ink on acetate; 5 × 7 1/4 in. Courtesy the artist.

Scrap of *Video Drawing* template, 1976.
Ink on acetate; 7 × 7 in. Courtesy the artist.

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Fig. 3

Scrap of *Video Drawing* template, 1976.
Ink on acetate; 11 1/2 × 16 1/4 in. Courtesy the artist.

The exhibition checklist is accurate as of 12/1/17.

Albright-Knox Art Gallery
Buffalo, New York
Beth Rudin DeWoody
Cheryl Mayberry McKissack and
Eric McKissack
Detroit Institute of Arts
Everson Museum of Art
Garth Greenan and Bryan Davidson Blue,
New York
Garth Greenan Gallery, New York
George and Carmen N'Namdi
Georgia Museum of Art,
University of Georgia
High Museum of Art, Atlanta
Howardena Pindell
Jacqueline Bradley and Clarence Otis,
Windermere, Florida
James Blue and Florence Davidson,
Australia
James Keith Brown and Eric Diefenbach,
New York
Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn
Keswin Family Collection
Mary and James Bell, courtesy of
N'Namdi Contemporary Fine Art
Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina
Mott-Warsh Collection, Flint, Michigan
Mr. and Mrs. Lee Broughton
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Museum of Fine Arts Boston
Nancy and Peter Huber
National Academy Museum, New York
Newark Museum, New Jersey
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts,
Philadelphia
Philip Holzer, Frankfurt am Main
Princeton University Art Museum,
New Jersey
Private Collection, courtesy of
Honor Fraser Gallery, Los Angeles
Private Collection, London
Private Collection, New York
Private Collections
RISD Museum, Providence, Rhode Island
Rose Art Museum
Spelman College Museum of Fine Art
Steven L. Jones, Philadelphia and Chicago
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
The Museum of Modern Art
The Studio Museum in Harlem
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art,
Hartford, Connecticut
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of
North Carolina
Yale University Art Gallery

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NAOMI BECKWITH

is the Marilyn and Larry Fields Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Central to her curatorial practice are themes of identity and conceptual practices in contemporary art, the work of artists of African descent, and artists' professional development. She has curated several projects with artists who work in the United States and internationally, including The Propeller Group, Martin Creed, Keren Cytter, Jimmy Robert, and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye. In addition, she has authored dozens of essays in major publications and art books, has edited several exhibition catalogues, and frequently lectures on contemporary art. Beckwith received an MA with Distinction from the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, completing her master's thesis on Adrian Piper and Carrie Mae Weems. She is a grantee of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and was presented with the 2015 New Leadership Award by ArtTable.

VALERIE CASSEL OLIVER

is the Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Prior to this position, she spent sixteen years at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, where she was senior curator. She was director of the Visiting Artist Program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a program specialist at the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2000, she was one of six curators selected to organize the Biennial for the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Cassel Oliver has organized numerous exhibitions, including the acclaimed Double Consciousness: Black Conceptual Art Since 1970 (2005); Cinema Remixed and Reloaded: Black Women Artists and the Moving Image with Dr. Andrea Barnwell Brownlee (2009); Hand + Made: The Performative Impulse in Art and Craft (2010); and Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art (2012), which toured through 2015. Cassel Oliver has mounted numerous solo exhibitions, including a major retrospective on Benjamin Patterson as well as surveys for Donald Moffett, Jennie C. Jones, Angel Otero, and, most recently, Annabeth Rosen. She is the 2011 recipient of the prestigious David C. Driskell Prize.

SARAH COWAN

is a doctoral candidate in the History of Art Department at the University of California, Berkeley, with a focus on modern and contemporary art of the Americas. She is writing her dissertation on Howardena Pindell's abstract art from 1967 through 1986. More broadly, Cowan's research concerns black feminist art histories, cross-cultural histories of modernism and abstraction, and histories and theories of photography. She earned her BA from the University of California, Berkeley, in 2011 and her MA in 2015. Currently she is a pre-doctoral fellow at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (2017–18).

GRACE DEVENEY — is assistant curator and previously the Marjorie Susman Curatorial Fellow at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, where she has curated Chicago Works: Amanda Williams, Out of Office, and BMO Harris Bank Chicago Works: Ania Jaworska. She is currently a doctoral candidate in art history at Northwestern University.

CHARLES GAINES — is highly regarded as both a leading practitioner of conceptualism and an influential educator at the California Institute of the Arts. The Los Angeles–based artist is celebrated for his photographs, drawings, musical compositions, installations, and works on paper that investigate how rule-based procedures construct order and meaning. Working serially in progressive and densely layered bodies of works, Gaines explores the interplay between objectivity and interpretation, the systematic and the poetic.

LOWERY STOKES SIMS — is a specialist in modern and contemporary art with a particular interest in a diverse and inclusive global art world and has supported a variety of artists whose identities and work reflect those values. A curator and scholar in contemporary art, craft, and design, her expertise lies in the work of African, Latino, Native, and Asian American artists. She recently retired as Curator Emerita from the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, where she served as the Charles Bronfman International Curator and the William and Mildred Ladson Chief Curator. Sims served on the education and curatorial staff of The Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1972 to 1999 and as executive director, president, and adjunct curator for the permanent collection at The Studio Museum in Harlem from 2000 to 2007.

BRIAN WALLIS — is a writer, curator, and historian of photography. He is Curator for The Walther Collection, New York / Ulm, and was formerly Deputy Director and Chief Curator at the International Center of Photography, New York (2000–2015). He previously worked at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art. Wallis is the author or editor of numerous books, including The Order of Things: Photography from The Walther Collection (2015), Weegee: Murder Is My Business (2012), and Miroslav Tichy (2010). He writes for Aperture and Artforum and is currently organizing a retrospective exhibition of the documentary photographs of Mary Ellen Mark.

Artworks by Howardena Pindell are indexed alphabetically by title. Page numbers in italics refer to illustrations.

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REPRODUCTION CREDITS

Endpaper front: Scrap of Video Drawing template (detail), 1976. Ink on acetate; 4 1/2 × 7 1/2 in.

Page 1: Amy Stromson, Howardena Pindell in her loft at 322 Seventh Ave, New York, c. 1970–71

Page 20: Dawoud Bey, Howardena Pindell, c. 1985

The title of additional details of works by Howardena Pindell are listed here with checklist page numbers.

Front image sequence: Untitled, 246; Space Frame, 1969, 244; Untitled #3, 246; Untitled #2, 1973; 22 1/2 × 17 1/2 in., 246; Untitled, 1970; 19 × 23 3/4 in., 245; Untitled #20 (Dutch Wives Circled and Squared), 252.

Back image sequence: Autobiography: Past and Present II, 258; Astronomy: Nebula NGC6826, 258; Globular Cluster, 259; Miajima, 253; Night Flight, 260; Untitled stencil, 260.

Endpaper back: Scrap of Video Drawing template (detail), 1976. Ink on acetate; 3 1/4 × 6 in.

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Senior Editor: Sheila Majumdar
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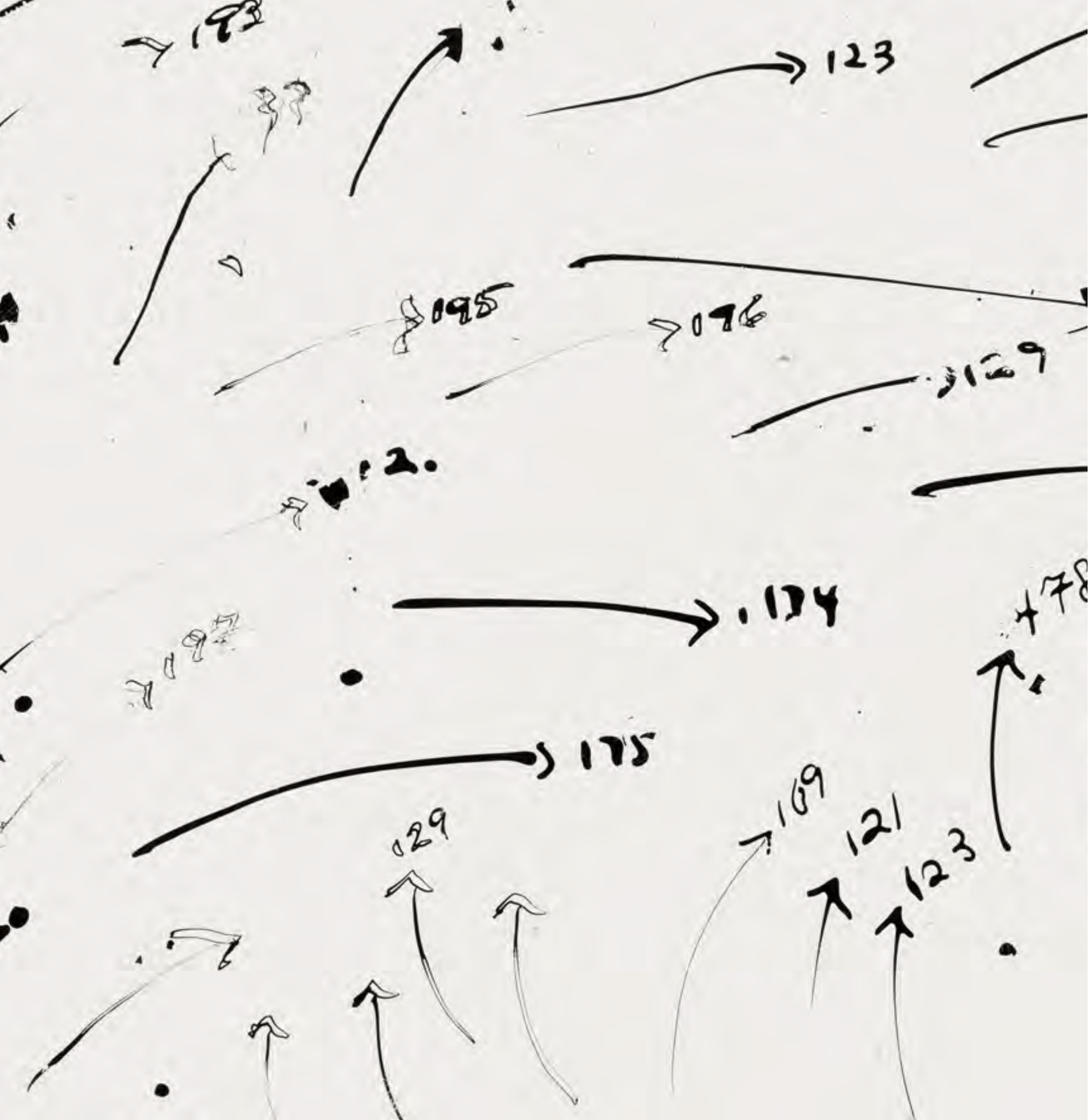

HOWARDENA PINDELL
WHAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN

Edited by
Naomi Beckwith and
Valerie Cassel Oliver

Howardena Pindell: What Remains To Be Seen is the definitive monograph on the work of groundbreaking, multidisciplinary artist Howardena Pindell (American, b. 1943). Over the past fifty years, the New York–based artist, activist, and educator has not only stretched the boundaries of traditional canvas painting—using unconventional materials such as glitter, talcum powder, and perfume and violating the sanctity of the square canvas—but also asserted her place in the contemporary art world, inflecting her artwork with her experiences as an African American woman and paving the way for generations of politically engaged artists.

This beautifully illustrated monograph highlights Pindell's work in painting, photography, film, and performance, revealing the artist's hand in numerous detailed reproductions. It also examines every facet of the artist's impressive career both in and outside of the studio. The volume includes essays by luminaries in the field, interviews with the foremost artists of the day, and excerpts of the artist's writing, in particular her critique of the art world and her responses to feminism and racial politics, providing prescient commentary in light of conversations around equity and inclusion today.