

**The Paradox of Vision in Contemporary Art Explored in Exhibition
At the Bowdoin College Museum of Art this Spring**

Works by more than 20 artists, including Terry Adkins, Sophie Calle, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Ann Hamilton, Glenn Ligon, Carmen Papalia, and Lorna Simpson explore the implications of blindness and invisibility

Brunswick, Maine, March 1, 2018 — Opening on March 1, 2018, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art will present *Second Sight: the Paradox of Vision in Contemporary Art*, an exhibition that examines themes of the nonvisual in contemporary American art. Examining blindness as a physiological and cultural construct, the exhibition encourages museumgoers to consider the primacy of visual experience, and challenge conventions of visual representation, which has contributed to the marginalization of groups throughout American history. Featuring over 35 sculptural, sound, language-based, conceptual, and immersive artworks by artists who include **Terry Adkins, William Anastasi, Sophie Calle, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Joseph Grigely, Ann Hamilton, Glenn Ligon, and Lorna Simpson**, *Second Sight* explores the notion of sight, representation, and ability as social concepts.

The Museum will also host a series of exhibition-related public programs, including an eyes-closed tour of the Bowdoin College quad led by internationally known social practice artist **Carmen Papalia**, in addition to artist talks, scholarly lectures, and musical performances.

“*Second Sight* challenges us to consider what can be grasped when we think beyond what lies in plain sight, providing a forum for conversations about difference and new scholarship in the politics of race, class, and ability in contemporary art,” said Bowdoin College Museum of Art Co-Director Anne Collins Goodyear. “Building on her own research, as well as insights from outside scholars and Bowdoin’s own students, faculty, and staff, *Second Sight* curator Ellen Y. Tani, the current Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow, prompts us to question the art world’s all-too-frequent privileging of visual perception, asking visitors to question, both literally and figuratively, what, how, and why we see,” continued Bowdoin College Museum of Art Co-Director Frank Goodyear. “This type of questioning is of critical importance, especially on college campuses today, to prompt viewers to explore and unpack implicit biases in contemporary visual culture.”

“The artworks in *Second Sight* invoke the nonvisual through numerous techniques, which may include the process of their creation, their activation of tactile or sonic experience, or their use of language rather than image to convey information,” noted Tani. “Through their pieces, the artists featured in this exhibition investigate alternative frameworks for perception, often occupying its margins—responding to conditions of invisibility as well as what cannot be represented—through radical experimentation.”

Second Sight will include a range of works by contemporary artists that point to ways of knowing beyond visual observation and consider the invisible societal, political, and cultural forces that govern our own frameworks of experience. The BCMA will pair highlights from its own collection alongside loans from artists’ studios and estates, galleries, foundations, and institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Baltimore Museum of Art. Highlights from the exhibition include:

- Multidisciplinary artist **Terry Adkins**’s sound sculpture *Off Minor* (2004), from his recital *Black Beethoven: Recital in Nine Dominions*, which explores speculation about Beethoven’s purported mixed-race heritage.

- Selections from French conceptual artist **Sophie Calle**'s series *Les Aveugles (The Blind)* (1986), which presents photo- and text-based installations based on the artist's interviews with a dozen non-sighted individuals.
- "*Untitled*" (*Water*) (1995) by **Felix Gonzalez-Torres**, an interactive work made up of strands of aquamarine plastic beads that hang from a metal rod spanning a passageway.
- A new site-specific installation by social practice artist and disability activist **Carmen Papalia**, premiering at the BCMA, which will consist of performance documentation such as text-based banners, photographs, and other ephemera reflecting the artist's collaboration with members of the campus community on the subject of nonvisual learning.
- **Lorna Simpson**'s *Cloudscape* (2004), a single-shot video that features Terry Adkins vanishing behind a curtain of fog, balancing his visual disappearance with the continued sound of his whistling voice.
- Two site-specific wall drawings by **Tony Lewis**, to be executed with the assistance of Bowdoin students. In one drawing, based on *Life's Little Instruction Book*, and another, based on the stenographic system of Gregg shorthand, Lewis addresses the forms and failures of communication.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue edited by curator Ellen Y. Tani and will serve as a significant contribution to the study of contemporary art, race theory, and disability studies, featuring contributions from Amanda Cachia, Joseph Grigely, Shaun Leonardo, Tony Lewis, Nyeema Morgan, and Gala Porras-Kim.

The BCMA is committed to designing programs, materials, and tours to make all exhibitions accessible to visitors of all abilities in accordance with best practices guidelines for museum accessibility.

Throughout the run of *Second Sight*, the Museum will host a series of exhibition-related public programs, with events ranging from special exhibition tours and artist talks to workshops and musical performances. Highlights include:

- Beckwith Artist-in-Residence **George Lopez** performs an evening of music associated with *Second Sight* on March 8.
- *Second Sight* artist **Shaun Leonardo** (Bowdoin '01) will lead a performance-based interactive lecture on April 6 on the subject of "testimony."
- April 10 film screening of *Notes on Blindness* (2016), a documentary film based on the life of writer and theologian **John M. Hull**, who recorded his experience of vision loss on audio diaries. The film is followed by a discussion with Jason Middleton, visiting associate professor of cinema studies, and exhibition curator, Ellen Y. Tani, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow.
- *Second Sight* Artist **Nyeema Morgan** discusses her work included in the exhibition and the connection between drawing, physicality, and the unseen on April 13.
- **Carmen Papalia**, internationally known social practice artist, leads a "Blind Field Shuttle Walk," an eyes-closed tour of the Bowdoin College quad, offering participants new perspectives on the accessibility of our shared spaces on May 4.

About the Bowdoin College Museum of Art

The holdings of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art are among the most comprehensive of any college museum in the United States. Collecting began over 200 years ago with a bequest from the College's

founder James Bowdoin III that included Gilbert Stuart's magnificent portraits of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

The Museum is housed in the landmark Walker Art Building, designed in 1894 by Charles Follen McKim. Located on the historic quadrangle of Bowdoin College, the building is graced by murals by John La Farge, Kenyon Cox, Elihu Vedder, and Abbott Thayer. A \$20.8-million renovation and expansion in 2007 provided a stunning setting for objects as diverse as monumental Assyrian reliefs from Nimrud, Iraq; European Old Master paintings; and works by American modernists. The Museum is the centerpiece of Bowdoin's vibrant arts and culture community and offers a wealth of academic and educational programs. The Museum is also a prominent summer venue for major exhibitions such as *Edward Hopper's Maine* (2011); *William Wegman: Hello Nature* (2012); *Maurice Prendergast: By the Sea* (2013); *Richard Tuttle: A Print Retrospective* (2014); *Night Vision: Nocturnes in American Art, 1860 – 1960* (2015); *This Is a Portrait If I Say So: Identity in American Art, 1912 to Today* (2016); and *The Ivory Mirror: The Art of Mortality in Renaissance Europe* (2017).

Fully accessible, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art is open to the public free of charge from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Saturday; 10:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday; and from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday.

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