

&

a puppet

a pauper

a pirate

a poet

a pawn

a king

From the
Naomi Milgrom
Art Collection

Introduction

The title of this exhibition is taken from a line in Frank Sinatra's 1966 classic, 'That's Life'. The diverse roles Sinatra mentions in this song offer an analogy for the artists whose work you see here. *A Puppet, a Pauper, a Pirate, a Poet, a Pawn and a King* brings together six leading contemporary artists to emphasise the range of approaches to art-making today. Not only are their practices evidence of the wide spectrum of artistic interests, but each artist also explores art and non-art categories. As William Kentridge has said of his deceptively simple approach, 'The drawings don't start with "a beautiful mark". It has to be a mark of something out there in the world. It doesn't have to be an accurate drawing, but it has to stand for an observation, not something that is abstract, like an emotion.'

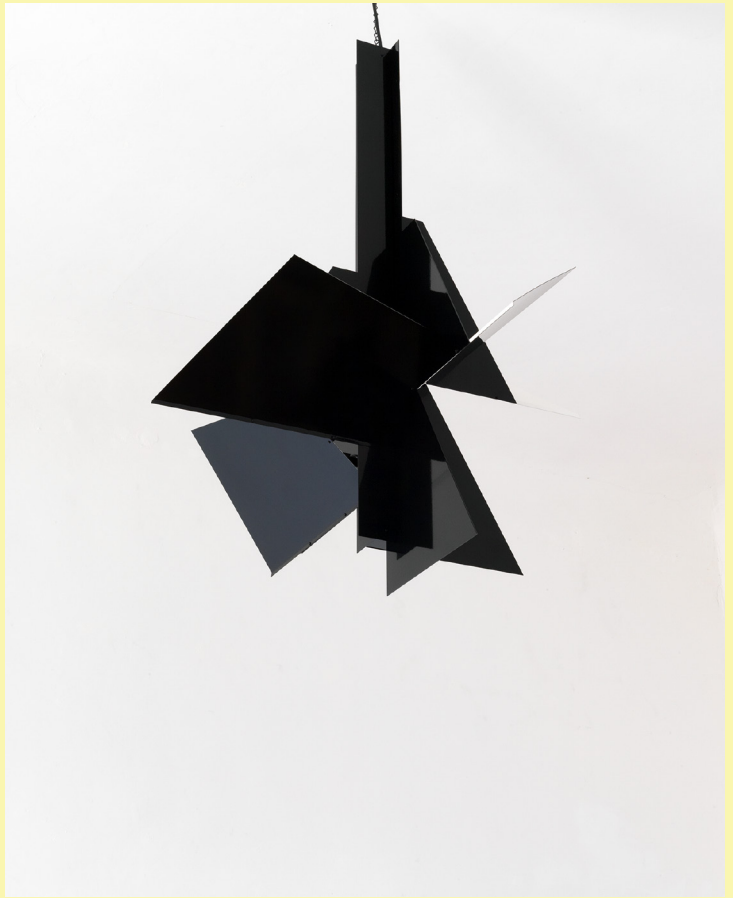
The exhibition provides a unique occasion to reflect on the rich space of creative play possible for artists. In this grouping, we see the artists transition with ease between architecture and sculpture, photography and paint, drawing and animation, theatre and film.

Of the exhibition Naomi Milgrom says, 'It is such a privilege for my family, my staff and for me to live and work with these extraordinary pieces. They are such a pleasurable and provocative disruption. The opportunity to see the works in the more public context of the beautiful Auckland Art Gallery affords me not only the pleasure of sharing the work with the public for the first time, but also presenting some of my collection in a fresh, new light. I want to thank Auckland Art Gallery for their careful approach to the exhibition.'

Natasha Conland



A Forest (II) 2009
Powder-coated aluminium, steel
chain, electrical components
1550 × 1260 × 1260 mm
Naomi Milgrom Art Collection
Image courtesy of Martin Boyce
and The Modern Institute /
Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow
Photo by Gilmar Ribeiro



Martin Boyce

Born 1967, Glasgow, Scotland
Lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland

In recent years Martin Boyce's artwork has focused on the architecture and design of public spaces, and particularly on how these construct our built environment. Using sculpture within interior spaces, Boyce explores the idea of a highly schematised landscape that mirrors modern construction. Much of the artistic vocabulary of his recent work derives from a modernist garden created by designers Joël and Jan Martel in 1925. The garden was made for the *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs* in Paris, and included concrete trees inspired by natural forms but rendered according to modern conventions

of symmetry. Boyce retraces the interest of modernism in converting natural space into geometric or stylised structures, while also incorporating elements now familiar to urban planning, such as rubbish bins, gates, street lamps and signs.

For his 2009 Venice Biennale installation *No Reflections*, where the large black chandelier in the Milgrom Collection was first seen, Boyce evoked the atmosphere of Venice's labyrinthine streets in an interior landscape, thereby conflating inside and outside spaces. In his installations he has used a gate-like structure to

intervene in the architecture while creating a highly decorative object that could be either wall or painting. Boyce appears to consider how an urban designer might rethink a given structure—those functional items we see and use on a regular basis—and thereby treat something such as the street lamp as if it included the detail and complexity of a natural tree form. In the end Boyce's works respond to the emotional and poetic condition of living in an urban space, rather than a need to find practical solutions within highly regulated environments.

Thomas Demand

Born 1964, Munich, Germany
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

German photographer and filmmaker Thomas Demand fabricates locations using paper and cardboard. In the images he then creates of these, it is rarely immediately obvious that you are looking at a small model. Demand's photographs often carry dark or sordid historical referents—his rendition of a domestic space belonging to serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer being one example. What interests Demand is less the voyeurism of entering a dwelling such as Dahmer's than the shadowy spaces and half-imagined lives that the media manufactures for us. His photographs give a realisation to these imaginings in contrast to the role of photojournalism. We are left with images of uncanny stillness, something to contemplate alongside the overwhelming tide of media information.

The mood of Demand's photographs in this exhibition is one of anonymous, neutral bureaucracy. We see the fax machine that forged documents proving the existence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction in *Detail XI*, 2007. In *Vault*, 2012 we enter the storage facilities of a museum where pictures lean randomly against walls, shelves and crates. Certainly not an authorised view of art museum storage facilities, this is nevertheless a reality for many such storehouses in which artworks purchased can no longer be accommodated by existing systems. This is a poignant work from the artist, one that points to the excess of contemporary art production and its unseen fate.



Detail XI 2007
C-type print/Diasec
940 x 900 mm
Naomi Milgrom Art Collection
© Thomas Demand,
VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn / Viscopy
Courtesy of Sprueth Magers
Berlin London



Andreas Gursky

Born 1955, Leipzig, Germany
Lives and works in Düsseldorf, Germany

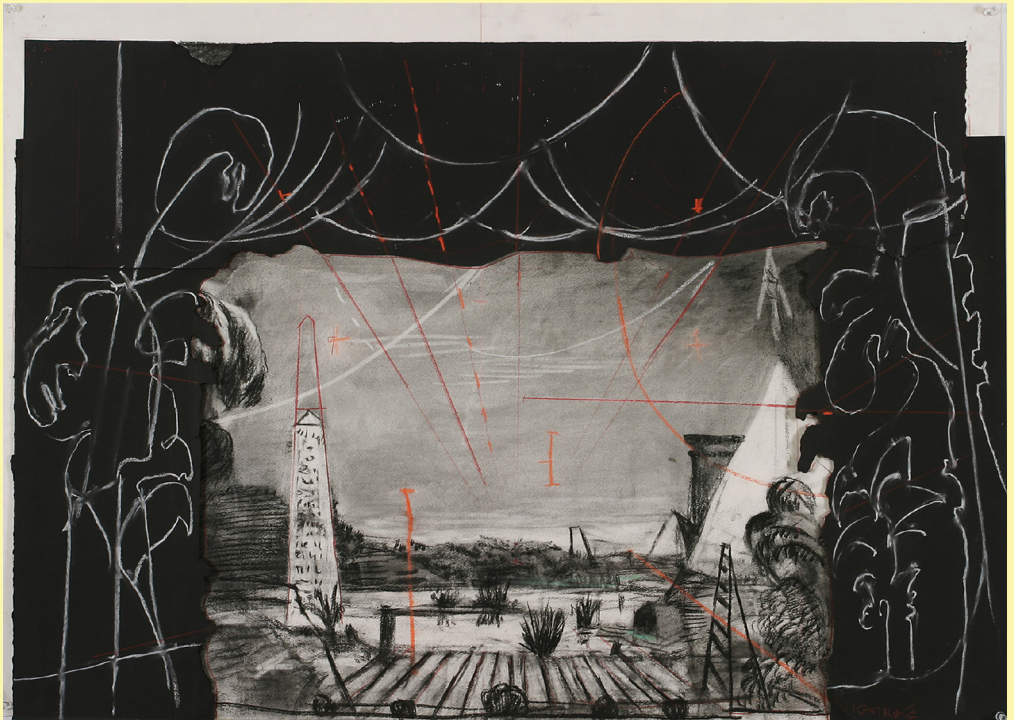
Andreas Gursky, the son of a commercial photographer, attended art school in Essen. From there he went on to study at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf during its heyday, where his teachers included photographers Hilla and Bernd Becher, renowned for the objective, cool lens through which they viewed scenes of Germany's industrial and architectural landscapes.

In his early years Gursky gained widespread attention in Europe for his large-scale images of landscape, architecture and places of commerce, which often utilised a disorienting point of view. But it was in the 1990s with the arrival of digital technologies and enhancements that Gursky really established his career, and in many works his subject matter moved into the global field. The three photographs by Gursky in this exhibition are examples of his finest work from this period, and they orientate viewers towards a perspective in which the eye and frame might capture whole world views.

Scale is not the only element which gives these photographs their potency — clarity, precision and a sense of totalism also contribute to this effect. When Gursky photographs a Nike shoe display, it becomes a scene of sublime perfection; when he constructs an image of the Los Angeles sky, the photograph turns the city into a complete world of its own. However, as Peter Galassi, curator of Gursky's MoMA retrospective noted in 2001, for all their 'knock-your-socks-off' qualities, the panache that sits behind these photographs is a careful process of scrutinising the subject, coupled with experiment and a great diversity of photographic methods employed to achieve the final image — at once magnificent and banal in its contemporaneity.



→ **New York Mercantile Exchange** 1999
C-type print
2057 x 2565 mm
Naomi Milgrom Art Collection
© Andreas Gursky / Viscopy 2013
Courtesy of Sprüth Magers Berlin London



Drawing from 'Preparing the Flute' (Stage with Black Curtains) 2005
Charcoal on paper
1200 x 1500 mm
Naomi Milgrom Art Collection
Image courtesy of William Kentridge and Marian Goodman Gallery

William Kentridge

Born 1955, Johannesburg, South Africa
Lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa

William Kentridge studied politics and African studies in Johannesburg before embarking on fine arts tuition. South Africa's politics and the apartheid era's social unrest provide a context for Kentridge's work, from which he draws a set of often fictional characters that allegorise the nature of personal and social conflict. At a formal level his involvement in Johannesburg's theatre scene, as an actor and director, inform the dramatic composition and setting of his art. His animated films came to international attention in the early 1990s for their striking use of hand-drawn imagery. Kentridge employs a process in which successive charcoal drawings are made on the same sheet of paper (as opposed to

separate sheets, which is more typical in animation) and then turned into film frames. One result of this process is that each drawing carries the shadow or trace of a previous image.

The centrepiece of Kentridge's works in this exhibition, *What Will Come*, 2007, is an anamorphic film that evokes the 'picture puzzles' of the pre-photographic era. The drawings are distorted by a mirror then reflected back into another, cylindrical mirror which 'straightens' the images. Kentridge has commented, 'I'm interested in machines that make you aware of the process of seeing and aware of what you do when you construct the world by looking.

This is interesting in itself, but more as a broad-based metaphor for how we understand the world.' In a sophisticated play on projection, reflection and transformation, Kentridge presents scenes from the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935–6 and an accompanying soundtrack that uses an Italian marching song from the fascist era. The artist has also included his own portrait intertwined with the image of a black man, extending and subverting ideas of individual subjectivity.



←
Untitled 2007
Oil on canvas
1600 × 2000 mm
Naomi Milgrom Art Collection
© Wilhelm Sasnal
Courtesy of Sadie Coles HQ,
London

Wilhelm Sasnal

Born 1972, Tarnów, Poland
Lives and works in Kraków, Poland

Wilhelm Sasnal uses imagery from photographic and film sources to create paintings that appear like stills taken from a longer narrative. In doing so he continues a practice first explored by painters of modern life in the late 19th century, whose photography-inspired compositions sought to capture a fleeting moment. Sasnal's paintings frequently focus on his native Poland, and the images — both real and imagined — reflect a post-communist, crumbling utopian state.

In the selection of works in this exhibition, dating from 2007–12,

we see a broad spectrum of subjects rendered monochromatically; from aeroplanes — a popular subject for Sasnal — to portraits rendered in quick and often abbreviated form. Sasnal's paintings evoke the past in part through their subtly conveyed nostalgia. Elements of an implied story, which are key to sense making, are kept 'off-canvas', and the painter's titles often provide nothing more than a clue to this larger narrative.

This group of paintings has a starting point in the Poland of Sasnal's childhood set among a global environment of profound change.

In the simple and austere landscape *Untitled*, 2010 tracks in the snow create a strong vanishing line. The leaf-bare trees are interwoven with what appear to be defunct telephone poles, which symbolise a now weakened industrialism. Beside this, in *R. Oppenheimer and his Brother*, 2008, is a hastily sketched portrait containing two figures, one of J Robert Oppenheimer (1904–1967), the Jewish-American theoretical physicist who is famous for his role in the development of the atomic bomb.

Kara Walker

Born 1969, California, United States of America
Lives and works in New York, United States of America

Kara Walker first came to prominence for her cut-paper murals of silhouetted figures portraying tough scenes from American history. These panoramic installations included unsettling imagery of racial and sexual violence alongside stereotypical depictions of American southern life as seen in popular culture. Walker's silhouetted black figures set against white walls are strong graphic symbols, spare and simple, yet as powerful as Goya's *The Disasters of War*, 1810–20 in their mode of address.

Walker has incorporated elements from theatre, projected colour and light into her installations, and in 2004 she transitioned into film production. Her film figures behave like puppets with the artist herself operating their actions on set. Walker is interested in how time and narrative sequence increase suspense and build a sense

of impending doom while offering a mode of entertainment, which has an historical setting in genteel parlour rooms. Her filmic investigations were magnificently realised in *...calling to me from the angry surface of some grey and threatening sea*, the multi-channel video installation she made for the 2007 Venice Biennale. Each of the five channels in this work uses a brilliant colour backdrop, enlivening and offsetting the black figures. For Walker, delving into America's history, albeit through popular culture, poses fundamental questions about our own moment in time, such as: What is it like to be here now?; and How do today's evocations of race and gender sit against those of the past?



...calling to me from the angry surface of some grey and threatening sea, I was transported
2007 (still)
Single-channel video, colour,
9:10min
Naomi Milgrom Art Collection
© Kara Walker
Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co.,
New York



List of Works

All works from the Naomi Milgrom Art Collection

Martin Boyce

A Forest (II) 2009
powder-coated
aluminium, steel
chain, electrical
components
1550 × 1260 ×
1260 mm

Of Kisses 2009
Jesmonite and steel
2250 × 1600 mm

Untitled 2008
steel
2200 × 1300 ×
70 mm

Untitled (Phone Booth) 2007
powder coated
aluminium, steel
acrylic paint, spray
paint, electrical light
components
1120 × 1040 ×
740 mm

Thomas Demand

Detail XI 2007
c-type print/ Diasec
940 × 900 mm

Parliament 2009
c-type print
1800 × 2230 mm

Vault 2012
c-type print
2200 × 2770 mm

Andreas Gursky

Los Angeles 1999
c-type print
1580 × 3200 mm

New York Mercantile Exchange 1999
c-type print
2057 × 2565 mm

Untitled V 1997
c-type print
1854 × 4426 mm

William Kentridge

Drawing from 'Preparing the Flute' (Stage with Black Curtains) 2005
charcoal on paper
1200 × 1500 mm

Drawing from 'Woyzeck on the Highveld' 1992
charcoal on paper
1200 × 1500 mm

What Will Come 2007
cold-rolled steel,
digibeta tape
transferred to DVD,
and mirrored cylinder,
9:04min
table: 787 × 1219
mm (diam); cylinder:
292 × 165 mm

Wilhelm Sasnal

Untitled (Anka's Head) 2010
oil on canvas
550 × 700 mm

Concorde 2007
oil on canvas
1600 × 1600 mm

Face 2011
oil on canvas
1600 × 2000 mm

R. Oppenheim and His Brother 2008
oil on canvas
400 × 500 mm

Untitled 2007
oil on canvas
1600 × 2000 mm

Untitled 2010
oil on canvas
1600 × 2000 mm

Untitled 2012
oil on canvas
1600 × 1200 mm

Kara Walker

Calling to me from the angry surface of some grey and threatening sea, I was transported... 2007
single-channel video,
colour, 9:10min

Published by Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki on the occasion
of *A Puppet, a Pauper, a Pirate,
a Poet, a Pawn and a King*
31 August 2013 — 27 January 2014

Curator: Natasha Conland
Editor: Clare McIntosh
All text by Natasha Conland
Catalogue design:
www.inhousedesign.co.nz
Printers: Crucial Colour

ISBN 978-0-86463-292-0

This publication is copyright. Except for reasonable purposes of fair review, no part may be stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including recording or storage in any information retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publishers. No reproductions may be made, whether by photocopying or other means, unless a licence has been obtained from the publisher or their agent.

© 2013 Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki and the artists

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
Cnr Kitchener and Wellesley Streets
PO Box 5449
Auckland 1141
New Zealand

