

THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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ART INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES MAJOR CONTEMPORARY ACQUISITIONS

Works by Charles Ray, Jenny Holzer, and the Donna and Howard Stone New Media Gift Enter Permanent Collection

The Art Institute of Chicago is pleased to announce a host of acquisitions in the Department of Contemporary Art. **Charles Ray's** colossal *Hinoki* (2007), **Jenny Holzer's** *Blue Tilt* (2004), and a **leadership gift** of nearly 20 works of **video art** from the **Donna and Howard Stone** collection were all added to the museum's permanent collection of contemporary art in 2007.

"The Modern Wing of the Art Institute of Chicago affords the opportunity, for the first time, for the rich collection of contemporary art at the museum to be shown to its full advantage," said James Rondeau, Curator and Frances & Thomas Dittmer Chair of Contemporary Art at the Art Institute. "An already strong collection has been immeasurably enhanced by these recent acquisitions as we build momentum for the Modern Wing. The commitment of Donna and Howard Stone, not only in their gift of works but also in support of the Modern Wing gallery devoted to film, video, and new media, enables electronic media to assume a primary place in our new quarters. And *Hinoki* will no doubt prove to be a seminal work of the twenty-first century."

Charles Ray's Monumental *Hinoki*

Chicago-born sculptor **Charles Ray**, one of the preeminent artists of our time, has spent the past ten years creating *Hinoki*, a 38-foot-long 2100-pound rendering of a felled oak tree. This meticulously crafted, complex sculpture is assembled from six, large wooden tubular sections, which are in turn constructed from hundreds of rectangular blocks carved by master Japanese craftsmen as a direct copy of an original fallen tree. The tremendous effort and scale of *Hinoki* make it the magnum opus of Ray's oeuvre to date.

Possessed by the idea to make a sculpture of a felled tree, Ray searched for years for the perfect prototype. In 1998 he finally discovered his source material: a coastal oak in California



that had come down decades earlier. Fascinated by the complex weathered surface of the log, Ray set out to reconstruct the object in exacting detail. Ray began the process by taking silicon molds of the log to create a fiberglass model, which was then cut into five barrel-like sections and sent to Osaka, Japan, where a team of six craftsman under the direction of master woodcarver Yoboku

Mukoyshi set to work, using the model as a sort of drawing and carving from the inside out to render the tree in Japanese cypress (*hinoki*, in Japanese). The most minute attributes of the original tree—including worm holes, termite trails, even the marks of the chainsaw used to dismantle the oak—are faithfully reproduced. The result is a sculptural and philosophical conundrum: a full-sized recreation of a fallen tree, made by hand from wood.

Hinoki achieves its effects on many, at times contradictory, levels. The replication of an element of the natural world by human hand draws viewers into a meditation on the role of man's intervention in the landscape and questions about reality and replication. *Hinoki* speaks to the attempts to make permanent that which is ephemeral—one of the fundamental propositions or conventions of much of modern art. *Hinoki* also challenges and complicates our sense of time; Ray has at once prolonged and slowed the natural process of the original tree's decay by reconstructing the log outside of time, in exactly the same form, destined to decompose hundreds of years later.

While firmly rooted in the world of American contemporary sculpture, *Hinoki* also benefits from the rich contextual home offered by the Art Institute. As an object made in Japan by Japanese artisans and able to be seen alongside the museum's extensive holdings of Japanese sculpture and woodblock prints, its relationship to the history of that nation's culture and craft will be rendered highly legible. *Hinoki* joins other works by Ray in the permanent collection: a series of five marker drawings, *Untitled* (2003), and a film, *Fashions* (1996).

Jenny Holzer's *Blue Tilt* LED Installation

Employing language and late 20th-century technology, **Jenny Holzer's** work speaks directly to penetrating ideas about life and death, sex, power, and war. In line with other artists of her generation—including Barbara Kruger, Sherrie Levine, and Cindy Sherman— Holzer appropriates mass media and advertising strategies in her work. ***Blue Tilt*** (2004), comprising six 16-foot double-sided vertical LED signs, is a sort of retrospective, featuring the text from five of Holzer's most iconic series from the late seventies through the mid eighties: *Truisms* (1977-79), *Inflammatory Essays* (1979-82), *Living* (1980-82), *Survival* (1983-85), and *Under a Rock* (1986). Though the streaming texts are all generated by the artist, they do not always reflect a single viewpoint. Rather they present opposing commentaries, voices, and tones—replicating the cacophony of modern public life—to express a wide range of biases and beliefs, most fundamentally the relative nature of truth.

Holzer has used language almost exclusively as the basis for her art for more than 30 years, rising to prominence in 1977 with the *Truisms* series, which consisted of nearly 300 aphorisms and slogans that play on clichés and commonly held assumptions, posted as anonymous broadsheets on walls, buildings, and fences throughout Manhattan. Siting her statements in public spaces, Holzer provoked debate and questioned established ideas about art's place, audience, and meaning in modern society. In later years, she turned to the light-emitting diode (LED) sign as a medium. In *Blue Tilt*, the effect produced by the LED displays streaming a relentless string of words and bathing its audience in blue light is unique and deliberate. Says Holzer, "One reason I've stayed with LEDs so long is that part of the experience is that the light and words hit the body. This might give you vertigo; it might represent that there's always too much information and 'how do I process it?'" The experience of standing in a room with Holzer's work is visceral and unsettling, precisely as she intended. *Blue Tilt* will join 29 offset lithographs from the *Inflammatory Essays* series held by the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Art Institute.

Donna and Howard Stone Make Foundational Gift of Nearly 20 Video Works

With a single generous stroke, collectors Donna and Howard Stone have transformed the film, video, and new media holdings of the Art Institute, making the museum a leader in time-based

media among encyclopedic museums. The Stone collection—among the most impressive groupings of video works in private hands in the U.S.—includes revolutionary works by such pathbreaking artists as Doug Aitken, Pierre Huyghe, Issac Julien, Shirin Neshat, Anri Sala, and others. To recognize the Stones' commitment to moving-image work and to the Art Institute, the gallery devoted to film, video, and new media in the Modern Wing will bear their names.

Highlights from the gift include **Pierre Huyghe's *Les Grande Ensembles*** (1994/2001), a single-channel video installation featuring a pair of bleak buildings, models based on 1970s French housing projects, enacting a subtle and intimate drama. Born in Paris in 1962, Huyghe is known in part for exploring the experience of socially charged iconic architecture through film, video, sound, animation, sculpture, and design. *Les Grandes Ensembles* will be the first Pierre Huyghe to enter the permanent collection of the Art Institute.

Doug Aitken's *monsoon* (1995) and ***the moment*** (2005) join his video *thaw* (2001) in the museum's permanent collection. *Monsoon*, shot on color film and transferred to single-channel digital video, depicts the South American town of Jonestown, Guyana, where in 1978 over 900 of Revered Jim Jones's adherents followed their guru into mass suicide. Though the video "waits" for a storm to break, the monsoon never culminates, and the metaphorical act of cleansing does not occur. In *the moment*, an 11-channel video installation is shown on screens suspended from the ceiling in an S-pattern, accompanied by an audio track announcing, "I want to be every place." Despite distinct narratives of people in transitory places, Aitken unifies their identities through repeat camera movements and repetitive framing. In this sense, he reduces their individuality to one serial identity, and leaves his subjects out to dry, alone and waiting, suspended in time.

Another element of this important gift, **William Kentridge's *Ubu Tells the Truth*** (1997), is based on Alfred Jarry's 1896 play *Ubu Roi*, a satire about an archetypal character that abuses power and embodies the most negative aspects of man. Born in 1955 in South Africa, Kentridge begins his animations as large drawings on sheets of paper that are then altered after each shot. These traces of lines and erasures visible through the layers create a palimpsest, a metaphor for selective historical memory in South Africa. Kentridge interlaces narratives of daily

life with wrenching scenes of murder and cartoonish depictions of the fictional dictator, Ubu, to suggest actual experiences of collective trauma. *Ubu Tells the Truth* joins five other films by Kentridge in the Department of Contemporary Art as well as two works by the artist in the Department of Prints and Drawings.

The first work of Iranian artist **Shirin Neshat** to join the permanent collection, *Rapture* (1999) is a black and white two-channel video installation that debuted at the Art Institute as part of the museum's *focus* series of contemporary art in 1999. In *Rapture*, two channels are projected on two opposing walls, one depicting men in an architectural environment, and the other, women in a natural landscape, both filmed in Morocco in 1998. The work self-consciously addresses deeply engrained stereotypes about woman's relation to nature and man's relation to culture.

In addition to this landmark gift, Donna and Howard Stone have had a long and extraordinary history as patrons of the Art Institute, providing support for more than 50 works of art by influential artists. Howard Stone is a trustee of the Art Institute and a vice chairman of the Board of Governors of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Donna Stone is a member of the Committee on Print and Drawings. The Stones have also made a substantial pledge to the School of the Art Institute's campaign that is partially earmarked for the Howard and Donna Stone Scholarship Fund, which supports graduate students on the basis of both merit and financial need.

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The Art Institute of Chicago is a museum in Chicago's Grant Park, located across from Millennium Park.