

blue.

A Guide to Looking

This guide offers a selection of works from the exhibition.

Look at the included artwork and then use the text to help build a deeper understanding of the artists, their process, and their works.



NASSAU COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

Gallery One

Pablo Picasso (Spanish, b. 1881 - d.1973)

Buste de Femme, 1902, lithograph

Inspiration

Between 1900 and 1904 Picasso created a series of works in shades of blue that became known as his Blue Period, reflecting feelings of instability, poverty and sadness. In 1901-1902, Picasso began visiting a women's prison named St. Lazare which was guarded by nuns. He juxtaposed the daily lives of the imprisoned women with themes, colors and compositions found in Christian iconography.

In the Artist's Words

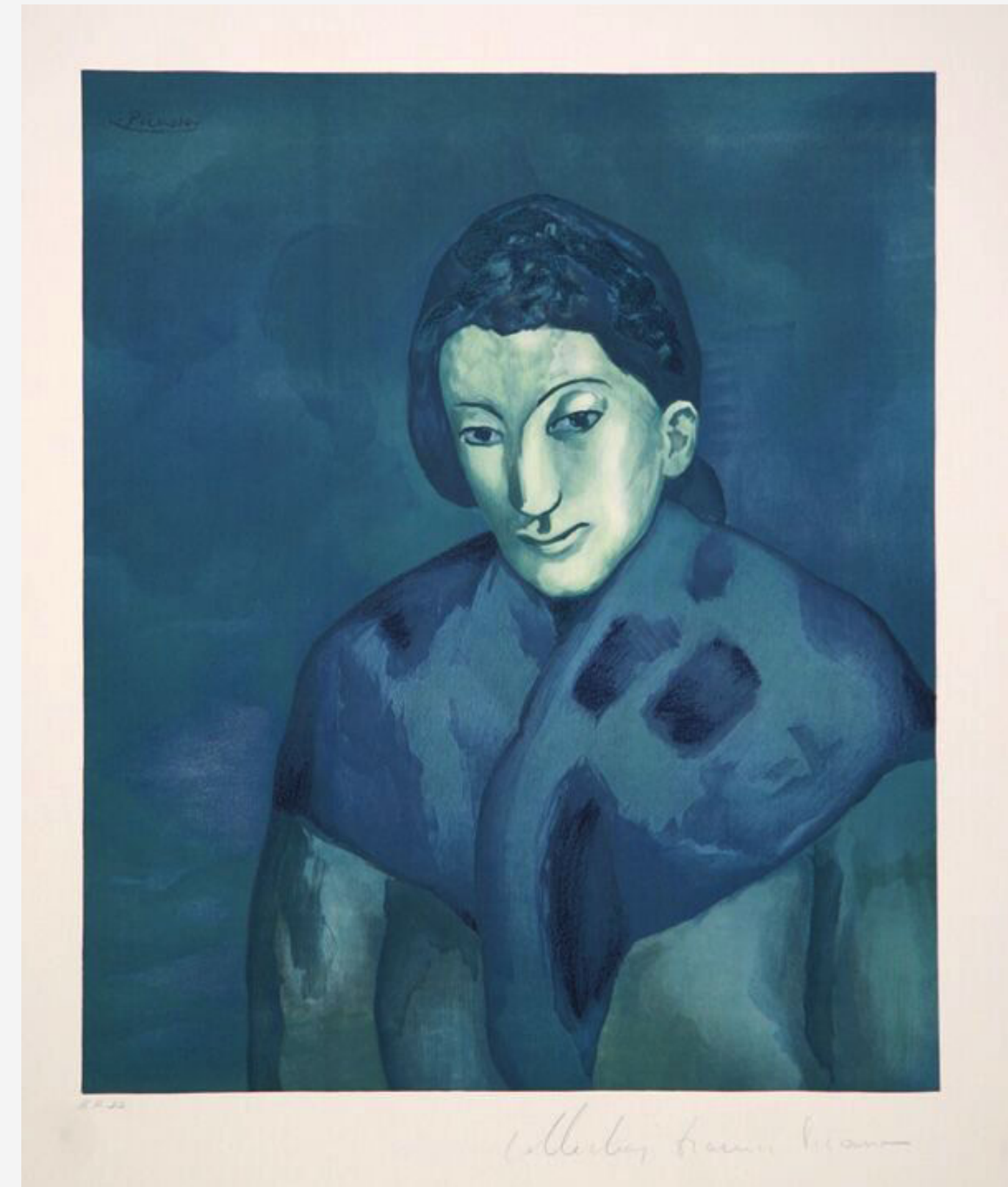
"I paint objects as I think them, not as I see them."

Take a Closer Look

While recognizable as a portrait, the stylization of the woman's face hints at Picasso's future distancing from realism. There is a sense of elongated lines disappearing off the edge of the canvas like a waterfall, with the tilt of her head echoing this downward direction. The body language creates a sense of quiet and stillness while the limited, monochromatic palette evokes a subdued, thoughtful tone.

Something to Talk About

Picasso is known for his different styles and periods, particularly his cubist works which exemplify his quote above. Do you typically prefer artwork to be more realistic or do you prefer artworks do not have easily recognizable subject matter? Why or why not?



Gallery One

Antonio Santín (Spanish, b.1978)

Toast to Ashes, 2020, oil on canvas, 215 x 150 cm

Inspiration

Antonio Santin is a Spanish-born artist who creates meticulously layered oil and acrylic paintings that mimic the texture, colors and scale of woven rugs. This interpretation of an everyday object brings to mind the tactile experiences of our everyday lives, as well as a curiosity as to what lies beneath the surface.

In the Artist's Words

"Whether it is a face, a dress or a rug, for me, it's all about grasping what is hidden or concealed."

Take a Closer Look

To create a texture that looks like tapestry, Santin uses an air compressor and syringe filled with paint to control the precise flow of paint. Once the painting has been completed, it takes approximately two months to dry before Santin can go back in with oil paint and a final layer of varnish to complete the work.

Something to Talk About

By mingling two types of art forms, weaving and oil painting, Santin also combines the functional and aesthetic. What does it mean to create a rug that cannot be used?



Gallery Two

Jeffrey Gibson (Choctaw-Cherokee, b. 1972)

Deep Blue Day, 2014, found vinyl punching bag, recycled wool blanket, repurposed painting, leather fringe, tin jingles, beads

Inspiration

Gibson's paintings, sculptures and performances draw upon his Native heritage, popular culture, abstraction, crafts, fashion, sports, club culture and politics. His work is an example of Indigenous Futurism, an art movement that "imagines a future by looking to the past, emphasizing indigenous ways of knowing, stories, histories, and cultures."

Take a Closer Look

The aged and worn appearance of the repurposed painting on top contrasts with the geometric and organized rows of jingles and beads, just as our understanding of what a punching bag is used for contrasts with how it appears in the gallery. Gibson's use of punching bags as subject matter has its origin in his personal history. When he was going to therapy and assigned to work with a physical trainer who suggested boxing, the bag became a physical representation of anger and frustration.



Continued

In the Artist's Words

“It requires a great deal of energy to maintain binary systems that do not truly reflect the nuances of reality. Binary systems are used to provide us with some seemingly fixed points to place ourselves, but we actually all exist in between these points. The challenge is not only about creating a new system but also allowing the complications of reality to be present and to confront the current binary systems. My work acknowledges that we all exist at a crossroads of races, genders, cultures, politics, and philosophies among many other things.”

Who knew?

Gibson, when frustrated earlier in his career, removed his paintings from their stretcher bars and ran them through a washing machine on hot three times. The paintings, altered as they were through this deliberate process of distressing them, seemed to become a new type of material to work with.

Gallery Two

Callum Innes (Edinburgh, United Kingdom, b. 1962)

Exposed Painting Blue Violet, 2018, oil on linen

Inspiration

Scottish artist Callum Innes presents his viewers with investigations into landscape, light and color with his Exposed Painting Series. Innes paints his canvases and then “unpaints” them by stripping away layers with turpentine before each layer starts to dry. He paints and removes, repeating the process over and over again, as the colors beneath are revealed. Different shades of color are exposed and contrasted against white and black rectangles to draw out the essence of color. In these paintings Innes “takes the work on a journey into light.”

Take a Closer Look

Notice how the blue rectangle becomes more complex as you get close. You are seeing the effect of dissolved thin layers of paint, as Innes is constantly changing the color of the pigment. While it may seem that Innes’s rectangles are perfectly square, examine up close how the lines are slightly off kilter. This is intentional as he controls every bit of paint except for the initial release of the turpentine. Painting is usually thought of as an art of space, but Innes makes it also an exploration of time.



Continued

In the Artist's Words

"With my work in abstraction, I think about it as photography, as photography freezes moments in time, so I work with time more than anything else...There is a moment in time and space when a painting stops in much the same way that a camera's shutter closes on a moment in time. This is not a static thing."

Something to Talk About

Innes's paintings are meditative explorations of form, color, and texture, with the turpentine leaving behind memories of what was there. Try to linger in his painting as the removal brings possibilities such as shadows, sheets of rain, or falling tears. What do you see?

Gallery Three

Yves Klein (French, 1928-1962)

Venus Bleue, 1962 (executed 1982), dry blue pigment in synthetic resin on plaster

Inspiration

When French artist Yves Klein was nineteen, he sat on a beach with two of his artist friends (one of whom was the artist Arman, whose work is found in this same gallery) as they divided up the world among them. Klein chose space and from then on his work sought to find a balance between the worldly and the spiritual: to create awareness and to capture the infinite. For Klein art was a form of communication between the artist and the world. He is perhaps best known for the vivid blue pigment he created using ultramarine suspended in a clear resin, and named International Klein Blue. For Klein, blue was the ultimate color for his belief in spiritual powers and evocative of both the infinite sky and the depths of the ocean. Whether it was in the form of Anthropometry, using live models painted in blue as “living brushes,” large monochromatic paintings, or appropriated plaster casts of famous sculptures, Klein’s blue is unmistakable, nuanced and evocative.

Take a Closer Look

In Klein’s *Venus Bleue* (*Blue Venus*), the classic sculpture of the Greek goddess Aphrodite (known as Venus in Roman times) is given a pop art feel and commercial appeal. With his work in sculpture, Klein brought his monochrome style into three dimensions. Notice the texture of the paint on the cast. Klein used rolls and sponges in applying the paint in order to achieve varied surfaces and distinct textures.



Continued

In the Artist's Words

"As an adolescent, I wrote my name on the back of the sky in a fantastic realistico-imaginary journey, stretched out on a beach one day in Nice ... I have hated birds ever since for trying to make holes in my greatest and most beautiful work! Away with the birds!"

Something to Talk About

In 1958 Klein conceived of an exhibition in which he presented an almost completely empty, all-white gallery save a large white cabinet. On opening night he painted the window blue, installed a blue curtain in the lobby, and served blue cocktails. While many thought it was a joke, for Klein, it represented a way to reach "The Void" a place of heightened spiritual awareness, void of worldly influences. Over three thousand people lined up to enter. Who decides what is art?

Gallery Three

Jon Schueler (American, b. 1916- d. 1992)

Magda's Blues: II, 1979, oil on canvas

Inspiration

American painter Jon Schueler was inspired by the power of nature in all its tumultuous and subtle movements. His landscapes, a mixture of observation, abstraction and fantasy are emotionally charged responses to the feelings evoked by clouds, sky, sea and land. A World War II veteran who was hospitalized in 1944, Schuyler spent months at a time in a small fishing village in Scotland where the volatile weather and rugged terrain served as inspiration for his paintings which helped heal his unseen wounds.

Take a Closer Look

By the late 70s, early 80s Schueler's paintings took on a luminosity and glow of radiant light with a softer and lighter palette as his wartime memories began to fade. He is considered a second generation Abstract Expressionist painter. These painters bent the rules and created works that could evoke more specific aspects of nature. What do you see in *Magda's Blues: II*? Do you think of the sea, sky, or land or perhaps a combination of all three? What are you looking at to make you think so?



Continued

In the Artist's Words

"When I speak of nature, I speak of the sky, because the sky has become all of nature to me. But it is most particularly the brooding, storm-ridden sky over the Sound of Sleat in which I find the living image of past dreams, dreams which had emerged from memory and the swirl of paint. Here I can see the drama of nature charged and compressed. Lands form, seas disappear, worlds fragment, colors merge or give birth to burning shapes, mountain snows show emerald green. Or, for a long moment, life stops still when the gales pause and the sky clears after long days of careening sound and horizontal rain or snow."

Something to Talk About

Schueler returned to Scotland frequently over decades because it served as a constant source of inspiration and healing for him. In this challenging time for all of us, where do you turn for healing? How can art help us find a place to acknowledge our emotions and find solace?

Gallery Four

Katsushika Hokusai (Japanese, b.1760 - 1834)

Shichirigahama in Sagami Province, c. 1830 - 1834 from the series 36 Views of Mount Fuji, color woodblock print, 14.5 x 9.5 inches



Continued

Inspiration

The *Aizuri* style of printmaking in Japan, where Prussian Blue is the main color used in the composition of the work, became possible and popular during the early 19th century. Hokusai used this color to create his landscape series, *36 Views of Mount Fuji*, and this scene in particular is one of a few from the series that does not include human figures and is in a limited color palette. This series was inspired by the domestic travel boom and Hokusai's own interest in Mt. Fuji as subject matter.

Take a Closer Look

The asymmetrical composition brings our eye curving around from the bottom left to the right and backwards into the space, as Hokusai explores and experiments with perspective. Focusing on just shades of blue juxtaposed with white, Hokusai is able to capture land, sea and sky at a particular seasonal moment. A snow-covered Mount Fuji, rising cumulous clouds on the horizon and gentle waves create an image of a calm, summer day.

Something to Talk About

Hokusai changed his name approximately 30 times, and while this was a common practice among Japanese artists of that time period, Hokusai's name changes correlate with a change in artistic style or subject matter. Why do you think artists and performers change names, or take on a "stage name"?

Gallery Four

Utagawa Yoshiharu (Japanese, b. 1828-1888)

Large Elephant from a Foreign Country, 1863, color woodblock print triptych, 30 x 14.25 inches



Continued

Inspiration

During a long period of isolation when Japan limited trade, from 1641 to 1854, the Dutch East India Company was permitted a trading post named Dejima in Nagasaki, Japan. The Dutch were the only foreigners allowed to maintain a trading post and even so they were strictly regulated. Along with physical products, knowledge was also traded between the two countries in something known as *Rangaku* (Dutch learning) which allowed Japan to stay updated on knowledge and innovations developed in European countries. While this print was created nearly a decade after Japan opened up trade to others, the importance of shared knowledge is still emphasized through both subject matter and media.

Take a Closer Look

In this work, Prussian Blue fills the background and emphasizes the elephant and figures. The elephant's large scale reaches from the top to the bottom of the composition, and it seems cramped within the confines of the page. These two imported objects to Japan, an elephant and the color Prussian Blue, and their inclusion in an artwork speak to how art can be a response to socio-economic and political factors.

Something to Talk About

When these blue woodblock prints were created in Japan, they were not considered fine art and were viewed as popular culture like comic books or magazine illustrations for the masses. Following their display at Paris' International Exposition of 1867, the value of the prints shifted dramatically as French artists became heavily influenced by them. What is an artwork or art movement that holds value to you, and why?

Gallery Five

James Casebere (American, b. 1953)

Blue House on Water # 2, 2018, Edition 3/5 with 2 AP, 60.5 x 47 inches

Inspiration

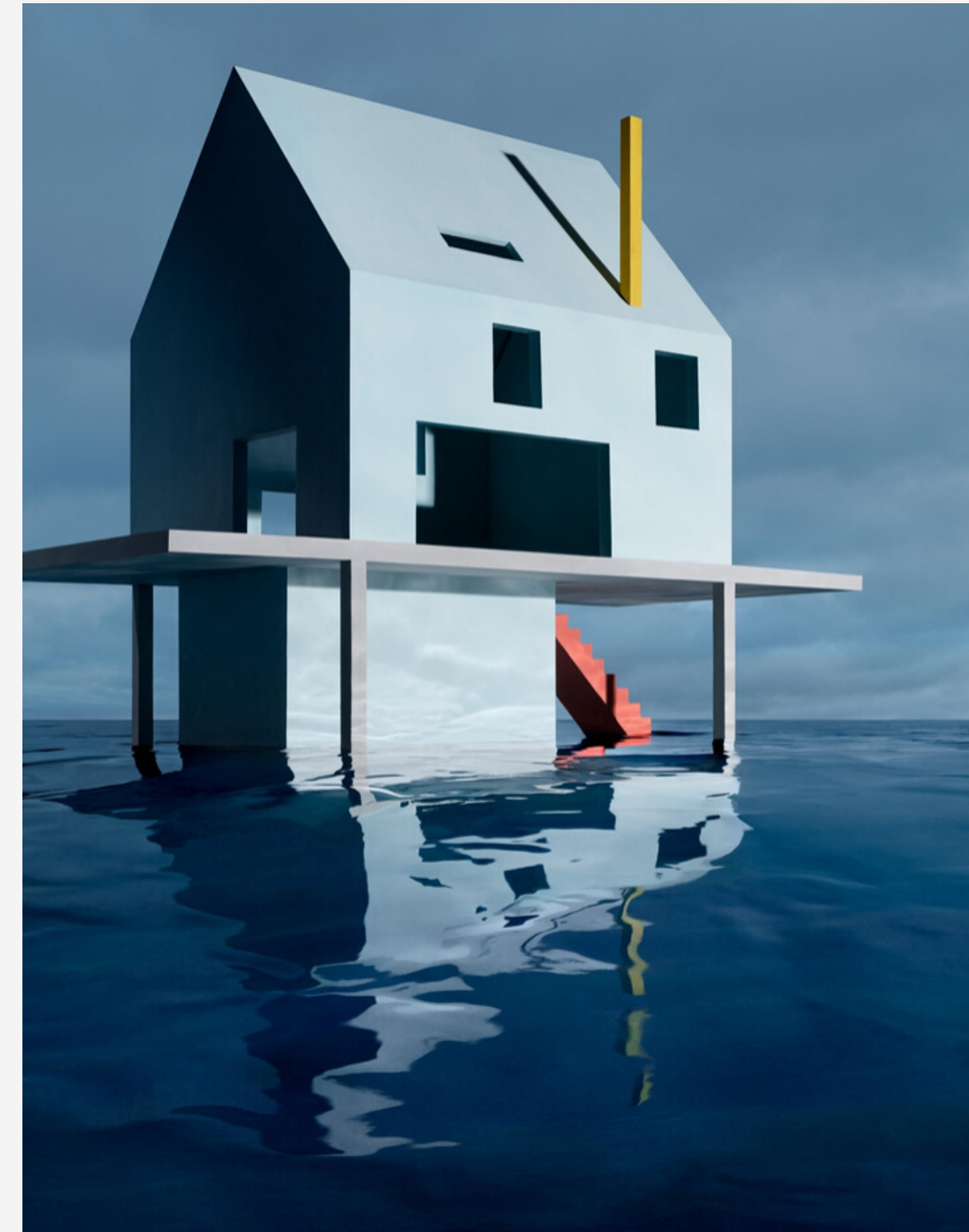
James Casebere is a Detroit-born artist who currently resides in Manhattan. Casebere is considered the pioneer of "staged photography" with his constructed environments and staged realities. For over 40 years Casebere has built and photographed architecturally based models, which explore the relationship between sculpture, photography, architecture, and film. Casebere often depicts his models in flooded landscapes which reflect on climate change, the looming threat of environmental disaster and the forces of nature.

Take a Closer Look

Casebere creates tabletop models using plaster, styrofoam, and cardboard in his studio before carefully lighting and photographing his assemblages. His structures are pared down to the simplest forms and shapes with the geometric forms of his architectural constructions transforming into organic curves in the rippling water of the flooded structure.

In the Artist's Words

"I began making these buildings on the water's edge that are a combination of a lifeguard stand, bathhouses, changing rooms. They are structures that could be occupied or not. It's a fantasy about the future. The work is about climate change and rising sea levels, but they are also about a certain kind of courage."



Continued

Something to Talk About

Casebere often reflects on the role of art in its ability to bring pleasure to the viewer while also addressing larger societal issues. What do you think? Should art be primarily focused on bringing pleasure to viewers or should artists use their work as a platform to confront difficult issues?

Gallery Five

Deborah Turbeville (American, 1932 -2013)

Unseen Versailles: Aurelia Weingarten, 1980, C- Print, 9 x 13 inches

Inspiration

Deborah Turbeville started out as a fashion editor at *Harper's Bazaar* but changed careers when she began taking photographs in the 1960s. Having had no previous instruction, she enrolled in a six-month workshop taught by photographer Richard Avedon. Turbeville is credited with transforming fashion photography into avant-garde art with her photographs created in response to the industry norm of exploitative imagery of woman taken predominately by male photographers. Her work attempted to redefine the representation of woman in fashion photography from a clean, well-lighted thing into something dark, brooding and suffused with sensual strangeness. Ms. Turbeville won an American Book Award in 1982 for *Unseen Versailles*, a project for which she had been signed by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, then an editor at Doubleday.

Take a Closer Look

When looking at Turbeville's photos you are aware of her hand in the construction and of an image. Acting as a physical manifestation of fashion's manipulation of women, Turbeville literally scratches, tears, and scatters dust on her negatives. Her final images are suggestive of decay and the passage of time. "I like to hear a clock ticking in my pictures."



Continued

In the Artist's Words

"I can't deny that I design the background. A woman in my pictures doesn't just sit there. I go into a woman's private world, where you never go. The view is left to question ... Who are they? Why are they so sad? — hanging unanswered in the air."

Something to Talk About

To heighten the autumnal aspect, and to create a sense of mystery and tension in her photograph, the artist smuggled in armfuls of dead leaves in to unused rooms in the Palace of Versailles. The story she presents is unclear and the viewer is left with questions about who this woman is and what kind of place she inhabits. As the onlooker, would you prefer to know the "real" story or are you comfortable with creating your own interpretation?

Gallery Six

Han Qin (Chinese, b. 1988)

Ethereal Evolving, I, 2018, cyanotype on paper, 82 x 47 inches,

Inspiration

Han Qin is a digital artist and printmaker whose work is inspired by the themes of home and relocation. Moving from China at age twenty four, the artist tells her own story as well as the stories of other immigrants and the fraught social phenomenon of groups and individuals moving from place to place.

Take a Closer Look

Han Qin's works are created using the printing process of cyanotype, a photographic technique of exposing objects to light sensitive, chemically treated paper. Inviting fellow artists and friends to perform and assume dance-like poses, the artist documents a physical manifestation of immigration stories. These movements are then documented on large pre-coated paper exposing their body to light to create silhouettes. Notice the sense of rhythm of bodies moving across the composition with discernable overlapping forms of body parts and hands reaching in all directions.

In the Artist's Words

My work focused on the definition of home, related to my own experience of transition and relocation as well as curiosity about migrants' lives. I interview people and draw sketches and these then turn into my material.



Continued

Something to Talk About

Han Qin's move from China compelled her to create art that expresses the universal emotions of uncertainty and transience. Interested in the social phenomenon of groups and individuals who move from place to place, she translates the moments of passing through, gathering, migrating and even conflicting. Have you ever had to move and adjust to a new living situation? How did that transition to a new "home" feel?

Gallery Seven

Andrew Sendor, (American, b. 1977)

Saturday's hallucinations on December 2, 2018, 46 x 39 x 2 inches

Inspiration

Andrew Sendor's paintings result from performances he writes, produces and directs about his fictional cast of eccentric characters. His paintings act as "film stills" and are a blend of realism and invented narrative. He wants the images to operate as a vessel for a story, as viewers add their own perspectives and understanding. Sendor's precise process of assigning specific, numbered paints to tonal areas that he diagrams and studies, seems in sharp contrast with the abstract, ambiguous human behaviors and feelings he explores in his subject matter. These "film stills" are meant to be absorbed in numerous viewings, as a non-linear story line and as images taken out of context.

Take a Closer Look

One of the first things to notice in *Saturday's hallucinations on December 2* (Saturday being the name of Sendor's character in this particular story) is the point of view of the viewer. Saturday is situated higher above us on the back of her horse, whose face is foreshortened to seem as if it is looming over ours. The landscape behind her is fragmented into two separate layers, one a clear blue sky and the other a diagonal slice of clouds and land. The paint application is smooth without discernible brush marks, and Saturday's face is cast in shadow as she turns away from the viewer. How do all these elements create emotions and moods in the work?



Continued

In the Artist's Words

"There is a seemingly endless flow of images in our daily lives, and the way in which images are often rapidly and casually consumed is a rather recent development, considering how long we've been surrounded by them. Since the creation and distribution of images has largely been democratized since the advent of the smartphone and the ubiquitousness of social media, how does this influence the role of the painter?"

Something to Talk About

A painting is a visual image that we read as viewers; noticing mood, character, setting, and style. Additional context from the artist, personal background knowledge or a curatorial label can add to or alter our reading of the work. Andrew Sendor prefers to show his paintings out of context so that the viewers have to add their own story to it. Would you prefer to know the trajectory of Saturday's story from the artist, or do you prefer creating an interpretation of your own?

Gallery Seven

Makoto Ofune (Japanese, b. 1977)

Eternal #6, 2009, Powdered mineral pigment on hemp paper mounted on board, 30 1/2 by 104 3/8 inches

Inspiration

Makoto Ofune takes multitudes of sensory and atmospheric information, such as the sounds and smells carried by wind, and depicts this energy found within an environment in his work. Inspired by contemplation of nature, a sense of spirituality, and the presence of art in daily life, Ofune uses a traditional Japanese painting method known as *nihonga*. While the term *nihonga* was originally created during the Meiji period of Japan to differentiate Japanese artworks and traditions from Western ones, in Ofune's case it specifically applies to his materials and application. Ofune creates his layers of color by pounding mineral ore and gemstones into pigment, which are then applied using natural animal gelatin glue to hemp paper affixed on board. This process adds another atmospheric element to his work, as the manipulated minerals and stones reference the physicality of an environment.



Continued

Take A Closer Look

As your eye moves across the artwork, notice the shifts and undulations of pigment from light to dark. The focus is on layers of nuanced pigment without the use of outlines and form, and yet there is one dark line running the length of the artwork. Centrally situated, it brings to mind the horizon line where sky and sea meet. Light seems to emanate and focus in the middle, as if emerging from darkness. The entire composition seems suspended in time, as it waits for the viewer's gaze. Ofune encourages viewers to get lost in their observations, for he considers the artwork and viewer as two parts of a whole.

In the Artist's Words

"People and artworks, people and people, people and light, sound and air, and even light and painting, artworks and space, artwork and artwork... All the 'particules' begin to talk to each other and make connection to develop one splendid symphony."

Something to Talk About

Just as his powdered pigments work together to create a singular ethereal work, Ofune considers how people in a particular environment at a particular time are all parts forming a unique, site-specific moment in time. Does this work bring to mind any specific memories of places or moments of time?