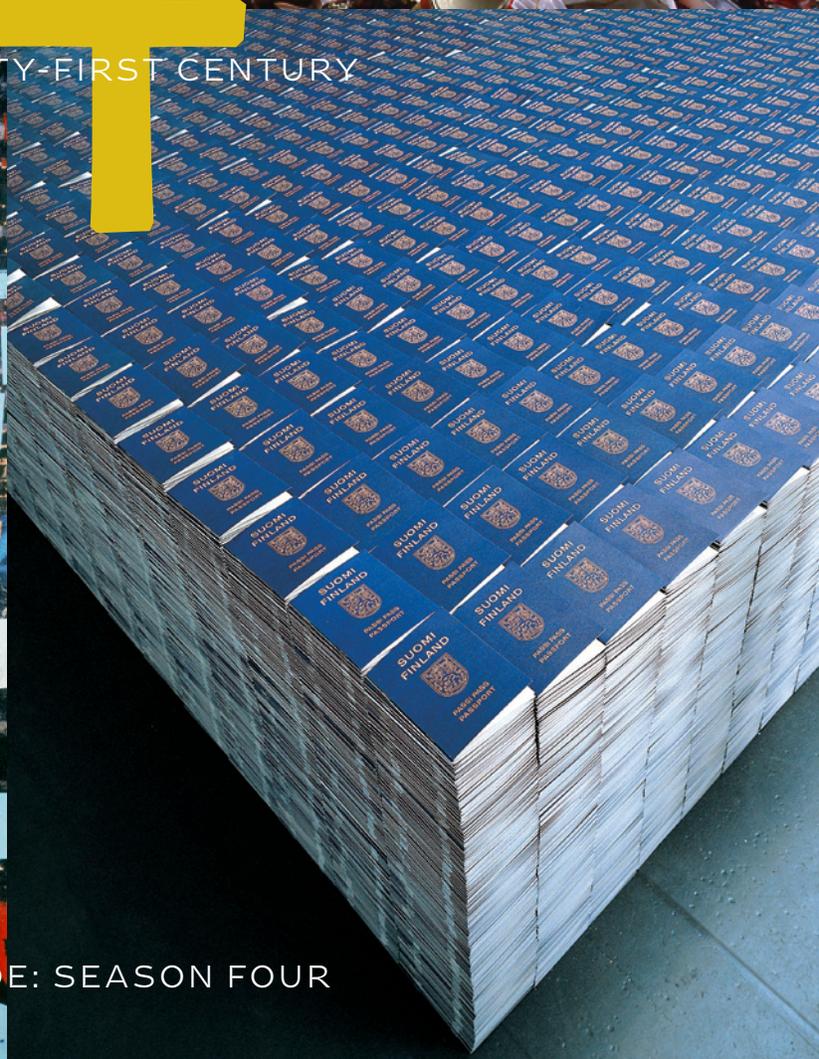


art.21

ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



SCREENING GUIDE: SEASON FOUR

ABOUT THIS SCREENING GUIDE

This screening guide is designed to help you plan an event using Season Four of *Art in the Twenty-First Century*. This guide includes a detailed episode synopsis, artist biographies, discussion questions, group activities, and links to additional resources online.

ABOUT ART21 SCREENING EVENTS

Public screenings of the *Art:21* series engage new audiences and deepen their appreciation and understanding of contemporary art and ideas. Organizations and individuals are welcome to host their own Art21 events year-round. Some sites plan their programs for broad public audiences, while others tailor their events for particular groups such as teachers, museum docents, youth groups, or scholars. Art21 strongly encourages partners to incorporate interactive or participatory components into their screenings, such as question-and-answer sessions, panel discussions, brown bag lunches, guest speakers, or hands-on art-making activities.

ABOUT THE ART:21 SERIES ON PBS

Art in the Twenty-First Century is the only broadcast series for national public television to focus exclusively on contemporary visual art and artists in the United States. A biennial event for television, Art21 produces four one-hour episodes featuring between 16 and 21 artists each season. The *Art:21* series premieres nationwide on PBS in the United States and is distributed internationally.

The *Art:21* series reflects the current landscape of visual art by featuring a dynamic range of artists who work with diverse media, materials, and subject matter. Profiled artists include painters, sculptors, printmakers, photographers, installation and video artists, and artists working with new media, environmental or public issues, and hybrid forms. These artists represent the breadth of artistic practice across the country and reveal the depth of intergenerational and multicultural talent.

ABOUT ART21, INC.

Art21, Inc. is a non-profit contemporary art organization serving students, teachers, and the general public. Art21's mission is to increase knowledge of contemporary art, ignite discussion, and inspire creative thinking by using diverse media to present contemporary artists at work and in their own words.

Art21 introduces broad public audiences to a diverse range of contemporary visual artists working in the United States today and to the art they are producing now. By making contemporary art more accessible, Art21 affords people the opportunity to discover their own innate abilities to understand contemporary art and to explore possibilities for new viewpoints and self-expression.

The ongoing goals of Art21 are to enlarge the definitions and comprehension of contemporary art, to offer the public a straightforward experience of artists and their work without interpretive mediation, and to encourage people of all ages to participate in interactive education and outreach programs designed by Art21. In addition to the Emmy-nominated, nationally broadcast PBS series *Art in the Twenty-First Century*, Art21 produces companion books, a comprehensive Web site, a wide range of education materials, and outreach programs.

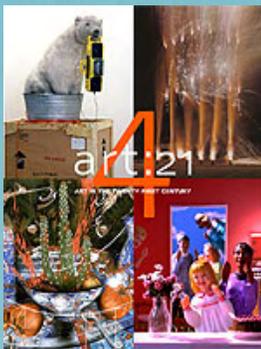
CREDIT LINE

Please use the following credit line in publications and publicity association with your event:

This event is produced in collaboration with Art21, Inc., a non-profit contemporary art organization serving artists, students, teachers, and the general public worldwide.

CONTACT

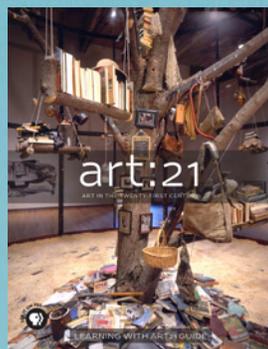
Please send inquiries to Art21 at: outreach@art21.org



Educators' Guide

The 32-page color manual includes information on the artists, before-viewing and after-viewing questions, and curriculum connections.

FREE | www.art21.org



Learning with Art21 Guide

Includes ideas about how to facilitate conversations on contemporary art, use media, and address national education standards.

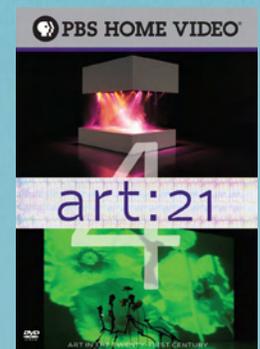
FREE | www.art21.org



Companion Book

A 224-page book with over 600 color illustrations; features excerpts of artists' conversations with Executive Producer Susan Sollins.

\$45.00 | www.hnabooks.com



Home Video (DVD)

This DVD includes Season Four (2007) — 17 artists in four one hour-long episodes: *Romance*, *Protest*, *Ecology*, and *Paradox*.

\$34.99 | www.shoppbs.org

How is our understanding of the natural world deeply cultural? Episode Three delves into the work of four artists whose segments address the impact of human activity on that world, and question scientific authority and the impact of technology on society and nature.

German-born **Ursula von Rydingsvard** uses sculpture, in part, as a means to express the memories of her childhood. "I grew up as one of seven children in the post-World War II refugee camps for Polish people in Germany... We stayed in wooden barracks... raw wooden floors, raw wooden walls and raw wooden ceilings... so somewhere in my blood I'm dipping into that source," she says. Von Rydingsvard's studio is filled with massive cedar sculptures, which she painstakingly constructs layer by layer. The end result is a complex and unpredictable surface for viewers to explore and experience. As viewers are brought into her studio, von Rydingsvard explains how her structures often depict opposites. "Nothing can exist in my head without opposites... Within a piece that has tremendous amount of agitation and agony, there can also be something very hushed and very quiet and very lyrical and very humane." Even her unfinished pieces serve an important purpose. "My whole cedar studio is loaded with pieces that are unfinished and I need all of those things in my environment to feed me, to give me always options."

"If art for me is a platform from which to speak, but not tell you something? That's good... Ultimately art for me does not reside in the object, it resides in what's said about the object," says **Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle**. Born in Madrid to a Spanish father and Colombian mother whose work lives were primarily in Chicago, Manglano-Ovalle's interest in architecture, politics, and science underscores much of his work. In this program, he describes the concepts behind his unique installations, such as restrained love portrayed in his performance piece *Le Baiser/The Kiss* (2000), which was filmed at, and is an homage to, Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois. The documentary follows Manglano-Ovalle to an exhibition of his work in New York, which includes oversized sculptures of an umbrella and jack made of indestructible military grade materials. As the artist describes the exhibition, "There are many connections between these things and I think it's just, for me, important not to make it readily apparent." Manglano-Ovalle reveals the ideas behind other works, such as his *Random Sky* (2006) façade in Chicago, for which computers process weather data at the installation site to generate a visual representation of temperature, wind speed and barometric pressure, among other climate conditions. The artist also discusses the duality of turbulence and hope portrayed in *La Tormenta/The Storm* (2007), a large-scale sculpture of two thunderstorm clouds, installed at a federal immigration services building in Chicago, which serves as a metaphor for the U.S. immigration process.

While living in Colorado Springs, **Robert Adams** began to capture black and white photographs of a burgeoning suburban strip—highways and tract houses that marred a dramatic landscape—a development that he loathed. Yet when Adams examined the images in his darkroom, he recognized for the first time the beauty within these pictures. "The final strength in really great photographs is that they suggest more than just what they show literally," says Adams. He went on to create *The New West* (1974), a collection of refined photographs that strive to capture "the contradictory nature of the western experience." Working closely with his wife, Adams created *Turning Back* (1999-2003), which illustrates deforestation in the West, a practice that Adams describes as "not just a matter of exhaustion of resources. I do think there is involved an exhaustion of spirit." Through images of his subjects—the ever-changing ocean, tree stumps within deep valleys, and others—Adams details for viewers the surprising nature of photography, his own pursuit of beauty, and the continuing deterioration of our environment.

Mark Dion is a collector and a shopper. "I am constantly out there buying things, going to flea markets and yard sales and junk stores, and I like to surround myself with things that are inspirational." Intrigued by natural history and museum procedures, Dion's collections become part of his installations and public projects that address our ideas and assumptions about nature. "I'm not one of these artists who is spending a lot of time imagining a better ecological future. I'm more the kind of artist who is holding up a mirror to the present." The program follows Dion on a journey during which he brings a "nurse log"—a fallen Hemlock tree which is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna—into the heart of Seattle. Viewers observe Dion and his team of construction workers, advisors, soil scientists, and biologists, as they create a complex shelter for the tree—a *Vivarium*—which becomes both a showcase and a living eco-system. "It really shows that despite all of our technology, despite all of our money, when we destroy a natural system, it's virtually impossible to get it back."



Ursula Von Rydingsvard was born in Deensen, Germany in 1942. She received a BA and an MA from the University of Miami, Coral Gables (1965), an MFA from Columbia University (1975), and an honorary doctorate from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore (1991). Von Rydingsvard's massive sculptures reveal the trace of the human hand and resemble wooden bowls, tools, and walls that seem to echo the artist's family heritage in pre-industrial Poland before World War II. Having spent her childhood in Nazi slave labor and post-war refugee camps, the artist's earliest recollections of displacement and subsistence through humble means infuses her work with emotional potency. Von Rydingsvard builds towering cedar structures, creating an intricate network of individual beams, shaped by sharp and lyrical cuts and glued together to form sensuous, puzzle-like surfaces. While abstract at its core, Von Rydingsvard's work takes visual cues from the landscape, the human body, and utilitarian objects—such as the artist's collection of household vessels—and demonstrates an interest in the point where the man-made meets nature. Von Rydingsvard lives and works in New York.

Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle was born in Madrid, Spain in 1961, and was raised in Bogotá, Colombia and Chicago, Illinois. He earned a BA in art and art history, and a BA in Latin American and Spanish literature, from Williams College (1983), and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1989). Manglano-Ovalle's technologically sophisticated sculptures and video installations use natural forms such as clouds, icebergs, and DNA as metaphors for understanding social issues such as immigration, gun violence, and human cloning. In collaboration with astrophysicists, meteorologists, and medical ethicists, Manglano-Ovalle harnesses extraterrestrial radio signals, weather patterns, and biological code, transforming pure data into digital video projections and sculptures realized through computer rendering. His strategy of representing nature through information leads to an investigation of the underlying forces that shape the planet as well as points of human interaction and interference with the environment. Manglano-Ovalle's work is attentive to points of intersection between local and global communities, emphasizing the intricate nature of ecosystems. Manglano-Ovalle lives and works in Chicago, Illinois.

Robert Adams was born in Orange, New Jersey in 1937. His refined black-and-white photographs document scenes of the American West of the past four decades, revealing the impact of human activity on the last vestiges of wilderness and open space. Although often devoid of human subjects, or sparsely populated, Adams's photographs capture the physical traces of human life: a garbage-strewn roadside, a clear-cut forest, a half-built house. An underlying tension in Adams's body of work is the contradiction between landscapes visibly transformed or scarred by human presence and the inherent beauty of light and land rendered by the camera. Adams's complex photographs expose the hollowness of the 19th Century American doctrine of Manifest Destiny, expressing somber indignation at the idea (still alive in the 21st Century) that the West represents an unlimited natural resource for human consumption. But his work also conveys hope that change can be effected, and it speaks with joy of what remains glorious in the West. Adams received a BA from the University of Redlands in California and a PhD in English from the University of Southern California. Adams lives and works in northwestern Oregon.

Mark Dion was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1961. He received a BFA (1986) and an honorary doctorate (2003) from the University of Hartford School of Art, Connecticut. Dion's work examines the ways in which dominant ideologies and public institutions shape our understanding of history, knowledge, and the natural world. The job of the artist, he says, is to go against the grain of dominant culture, to challenge perception and convention. Appropriating archaeological and other scientific methods of collecting, ordering, and exhibiting objects, Dion creates works that question the distinctions between 'objective' ('rational') scientific methods and 'subjective' ('irrational') influences. The artist's spectacular and often fantastical curiosity cabinets, modeled on *Wunderkabinetts* of the 16th Century, exalt atypical orderings of objects and specimens. By locating the roots of environmental politics and public policy in the construction of knowledge about nature, Mark Dion questions the authoritative role of the scientific voice in contemporary society. Dion lives and works in Pennsylvania.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Begin by exploring definitions of the word “ecology.” How do the artists in this segment relate to the *Ecology* theme? How does the term apply to the manmade environment as well as to the natural world? How does it relate to issues that are currently in the news?

Mark Dion states, “I think for myself and for a number of artists, science really functions as our worldview. I mean our relationship to science is very much like a Renaissance artist’s relationship to theology.” How does science inform these featured artists’ working processes, media choices, and subject matter?

Discuss Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle’s statement, “Art does not reside in the object. It resides in what is said about the object.” How can a conversation about a work of art be more powerful than the work itself?

In Ursula von Rydingsvard’s view, “the surface is a kind of landscape...My definition of a landscape could also have to do with the kind of psychological landscape or an emotional landscape.” In what other ways does each artist in this episode explore the interplay of physical and emotional territories? What are some of the different ways they describe or create landscapes?

Dion states, “I’m not one of these artists who is spending a lot of time imagining a better ecological future. I’m more the kind of artist who is holding up a mirror to the present.” How does this view compare to Robert Adams’ goal to capture both “what remains glorious in the West” as well as “what is disturbing and needs correction”?

GROUP ACTIVITIES & ACTIONS

Host a screening event and panel discussion on the theme of *Ecology*. Invite scientists, local writers, artists, naturalists, journalists, historians, archaeologists, environmental advocates, and other members of the community who can offer a unique perspective on the theme and the artists featured in this episode.

Create a visual web or diagram that illustrates the different elements or participants within an “ecosystem” of your choice. Consider selecting a real thing (a school or neighborhood or a biological or political entity) or an invented thing (a novel, film, or television series).

Consider Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle’s statement, “Capturing ephemera is an impossibility. And in the end you really haven’t captured ephemera, you’ve made a sculpture.” Working in small groups, use simple materials—clay, string, water, etc.—to make an ephemeral or intangible state visible. How might you visualize a fluctuation in temperature, the passage of time, or the negative space between two objects? Discuss your creations.

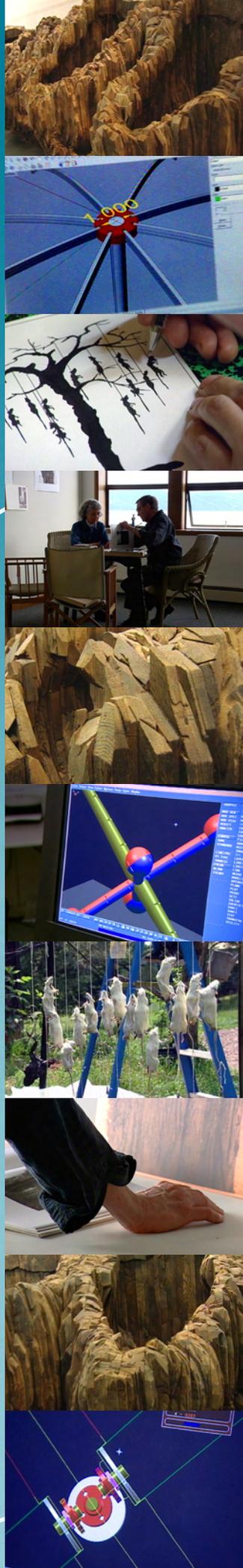
Working within the framework of “landscape,” create a self-portrait. Your landscape might take the form of a figurative body map or an abstract narrative sketch of your personal memories. Consider how you would like to convey emotional or psychological states. Will your portrait be a snapshot of your present state or a map of the experiences of your past?

After screening *Ecology*, initiate a discussion and advocacy campaign that draws attention to the ecological challenges facing local, national, or global communities. Consider partnering with a local, regional, or national advocacy group or use the Internet to reach a wide audience.

Working in a group, create a map of your community’s “public green spaces.” Consider such issues as public vs. private space, permanence vs. the temporal, and visual vs. physical accessibility. Determine what additional information to include with your map, and what visual language you will use—markers of distance, for instance, or icons to identify flora and fauna. Use your local library, historical society, or botanical garden as resources for research. Possible green spaces include community gardens, city or state parks, abandoned lots, highway and freeway green spaces, indoor mall gardens, and farmer’s markets.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

<i>Ecology</i>	www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfour/ecology.html	
Robert Adams	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/adams	www.matthewmarks.com
Mark Dion	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/dion	www.tanyabonakdargallery.com
Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/manglanoovalle	www.maxprotetch.com
Ursula von Rydingsvard	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/vonrydingsvard	www.galerie-lelong.com



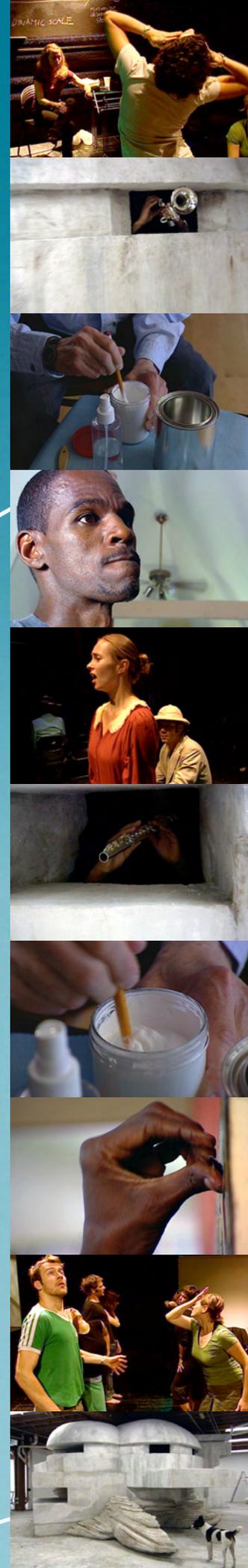
How do contemporary artists address contradiction, ambiguity, and truth? The artists in this episode blur the boundaries between abstraction and representation, fact and fiction, order and chaos. Creating juxtapositions that are at times disorienting, playful, and unexpected, these artists engage with uncertainty and plumb the relationship between mystery and meaning in art.

"My practice is both collage and décollage at the same time," says **Mark Bradford**. "Décollage, I take it away; collage, I immediately add it right back." Using a combination of signage from the city streets, including business advertisements and merchant posters, twine, and glue, Bradford produces wall-sized paintings and installations that are a reflection of "the conditions that are going on at that particular moment at that particular location," he says. In one installation, Bradford uses video to juxtapose two events—a celebratory Martin Luther King Day parade in Los Angeles, and a busy Muslim marketplace in Cairo. Though worlds apart, Bradford points out how both spaces simultaneously portray a celebration yet also present an undeniable political condition, as the African American and Muslim communities have become "politically charged." Likewise, through his video *Practice* (2003), Bradford "wanted to create a condition, a struggle." For the film, Bradford attempts to dribble and shoot a basketball while wearing a Los Angeles Lakers uniform to which he has added a make-shift antebellum hoop skirt. "It was about roadblocks on every level, cultural, gender, racial, regardless that they're there," he says. "It is important to continue. You keep going...And I made the hoop...Sometimes it takes me a little longer to get there. But I always make the shot."

Despite a family background in the visual arts (her mother worked at the famous Los Angeles-based Gemini G.E.L. print studio), **Catherine Sullivan** was drawn to acting and the theater. "I was always interested in the body's capacity for signification," she says. "What was this kind of potential for infinite transformation?" Her interests turned to stagecraft, and eventually evolved into the merging of live theater and filmmaking. "I really enjoyed the pleasure of the eyes to look where they wanted to look," says Sullivan. "In an installation context, there's actually opportunity for different kinds of content to be present in different ways. At some point it's a direct engagement with one single image. Other times, it's an engagement with a lot of different images all competing for your attention." Viewers follow Sullivan from a workshop with actors and students in Poland, to an exhibition space in Avignon, to a Polish-American social hall in Chicago to observe her performance-based films, many of which are influenced by popular film, real-life conflict, or ritual. The actors and performers in Sullivan's works create behavioral and emotional states through quick transitions between gestures. As Sullivan describes, "the content itself suggests other kinds of oppressive cultural regimes that I would like the movement to be analogous to. It really is in this kind of calculation of character, action, setting, context that the work ultimately happens."

Growing up in Nashville, **Robert Ryman** had a strong interest in music, particularly jazz. A bebop musician in his youth, Ryman's musical knowledge influenced his work as a painter. His approach to learning an instrument was applied to painting, and, like music, "I thought the painting should just be about what it's about..." He says. "In all of my paintings, I discover things. Sometimes I'm surprised at the result, but I know what I'm doing." Ryman does not use assistants and prefers to work alone. Using white paint on square forms, he creates works such as *Philadelphia Prototype* (2002)—which he makes on camera—highlighting the subtle nuances of a surface and exploring the role that context and perception play in a visual experience. "I think of my painting as not really as abstract because I don't abstract from anything," he says. "It's involved with real visual aspects of what you really are looking at...and how it's put together and how it works with the wall and how it works with the light...I don't use any illusion. It's the real thing that you see. It's a real experience."

"It's kind of an excuse to research something," says **Jennifer Allora** of the work with her collaborator since 1995, **Guillermo Calzadilla**. "It's this chance to learn more about something in the world and be able to formulate some kind of response." In their segment, the pair, often arguing and questioning each other's ideas in order to reach common ground, explain two projects that took place on the island of Vieques, previously used as a bombing range by US military forces and only recently returned to the jurisdiction of Puerto Rico. For *Returning a Sound* (2004), Allora and Calzadilla used a horn attached to a motorcycle exhaust pipe to create a unique "anthem" for Vieques. In *Under Discussion* (2005), the pair created a new meaning for the discussion table to represent the islanders' disagreement about how the island should be run and the "re-patriated" lands used. "For us it's very important, the idea of having a work that has all these contradictions in itself. How can you put all these things that have nothing to do with the other one?...You use an ideological glue. This frustration with absurdity, this nonsense, this paradox, all these things constitute part of the meaning of the work."



Mark Bradford was born in Los Angeles, California in 1961. He received a BFA (1995) and MFA (1997) from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia. Bradford transforms materials scavenged from the street into wall-sized collages and installations that respond to the impromptu networks—underground economies, migrant communities, or popular appropriation of abandoned public space—that emerge within a city. Drawing from the diverse cultural and geographic makeup of his southern Californian community, Bradford’s work is as informed by his personal background as a third-generation merchant there as it is by the tradition of abstract painting developed worldwide in the 20th Century. Bradford’s videos and map-like, multilayered paper collages refer not only to the organization of streets and buildings in downtown Los Angeles, but also to images of crowds, ranging from civil rights demonstrations of the 1960s to contemporary protests concerning immigration issues. Bradford lives and works in Los Angeles.

Catherine Sullivan was born in Los Angeles, California in 1968. She earned a BFA from the California Institute of Arts, Valencia (1992) and an MFA from the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, California (1997). Sullivan’s anxiety inducing films and live performances reveal the degree to which everyday gestures and emotional states are scripted and performed, probing the border between innate and learned behavior. Under Sullivan’s direction, actors perform seemingly erratic, seizure-like jumps between gestures and emotional states, all while following a well-rehearsed, numerically derived script. Unsettling and disorienting, Sullivan’s work oscillates between the uncanny and camp, eliciting a profound critique of “acceptable” behavior in today’s media-saturated society. A maelstrom of references and influences—from vaudeville to film noir to modern dance—Sullivan’s appropriation of classic filming styles, period costumes, and contemporary spaces such as corporate offices draws the viewer’s attention away from traditional narratives and towards an examination of performance itself. Sullivan lives and works in Chicago, Illinois.

Robert Ryman was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1930. Ryman studied at the Tennessee Polytechnic Institute and the George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, before serving in the United States Army (1950-52). Ryman’s work explodes the classical distinctions between art as object and art as surface, sculpture and painting, structure and ornament—emphasizing instead the role that perception and context play in creating an aesthetic experience. Ryman isolates the most basic of components—material, scale, and support—enforcing limitations that allow the viewer to focus on the physical presence of the work in space. Since the 1950s, Ryman has used primarily white paint on a square surface, whether canvas, paper, metal, plastic, or wood, while harnessing the nuanced effects of light and shadow to animate his work. In Ryman’s oeuvre, wall fasteners and tape serve both practical and aesthetic purposes. Neither abstract nor entirely monochromatic, Ryman’s paintings are paradoxically ‘realist’ in the artist’s own lexicon. Ryman lives and works in New York and Pennsylvania.

Jennifer Allora was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1974. **Guillermo Calzadilla** was born in 1972 in Havana, Cuba. Allora received a BA from the University of Richmond in Virginia (1996) and an MS from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2003); Calzadilla received a BFA from Escuela de Artes Plásticas, San Juan, Puerto Rico (1996) and an MFA from Bard College (2001). They have collaborated since 1995; approaching visual art as a set of experiments that test whether concepts such as authorship, nationality, borders, and democracy adequately describe today’s increasingly global and consumerist society. Believing that art can function as a catalyst for social change, the artists solicit active participation and critical responses from their viewers. The artists’ emphasis on cooperation and activism have led them to develop hybrid art forms—sculptures presented solely through video documentation, digitally manipulated photographs, and public artworks generated by pedestrians. They live and work in San Juan, Puerto Rico.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discuss and define the term “paradox” by consulting a variety of sources. What are examples of a paradox? Citing examples from current events, advertising, or popular culture, where do we see paradox at play in the world? Now that you are familiar with the artists included in this episode, how has your understanding of paradox changed?

Each of the featured artists in *Paradox* refers to an aspect of their creative process that involves experimentation or research. In addition, all cite specific sources as influential to their work. Is the act of research typically associated with creativity? Discuss these sources and how each artist transforms their research and analytic processes into art.

Jennifer Allora says, “the nature of making art...is to turn something upside down. Then you start to see it completely differently and new meanings come out.” In what ways do the artists in this episode disrupt expectations? How do they give objects, materials, or histories new meaning?

Consider Catherine Sullivan’s interest in paradoxical social rituals, such as the cruel/comedic games played in Ireland in the 17th and 18th centuries, along with Guillermo Calzadilla’s statement that “humor can be beautiful, can be horrific, can be political...can be poetic, can be transformative.” To what end do the artists in this episode explore contradiction and incongruity in relation to humor? What larger ideas can humor be used to address?

Initiate a conversation about public spaces and the concept of “community,” exploring your local environment for cues if possible. How do constructed spaces such as city streets, parks, and marketplaces both shape and reflect the identities of the people who live there? In what ways has technology changed our concept of public space, geography, and community? How do the artists in this episode approach these issues?

Robert Ryman says, “I think of my painting as not really abstract because I don’t abstract from anything.” Elsewhere in his segment, he explains that he chooses not to invest a narrative into his work. Discuss the implications of a work being neither abstract nor narrative. Debate Ryman’s claim that a painting exists solely “to give pleasure.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES & ACTIONS

Use a screening of *Paradox* to initiate a public art project in collaboration with a local art organization or museum. Have participants come up with ideas for temporarily altering spaces in ways that play against or defy expectations.

Collaborate with a local library to curate a display of books related to the *Paradox* theme and the various influences discussed by the featured artists, such as jazz, humor, ritual, and theater.

Many of Bradford’s paintings include nontraditional collage elements, such as hair salon end papers and billboard remnants. Bradford describes these elements as “materials that have memory.” Select a material that evokes a specific time or a place for you, or one that symbolizes an aspect of your identity. Use this material to create an abstract multimedia self-portrait.

Select an everyday object and consider how your perception of it could be altered by color, context, lighting, and framing. Paint or cover the object in a single color and display it in a neutral context. Photograph the object in several different locations, changing lighting, framing, and perspective. Create a book with your images or display them as a series. How does repetition and juxtaposition affect the impact of the individual images?

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

<i>Paradox</i>	www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfour/paradox.html
Allora & Calzadilla	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/alloracalzadilla www.gladstonegallery.com
Mark Bradford	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/bradford www.sikkemajenkinsco.com
Robert Ryman	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/ryman www.pacewildenstein.com
Catherine Sullivan	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/sullivan www.metropicturesgallery.com



How do contemporary artists engage politics, inequality, and the many conflicts that besiege the world today? How do artists use their work to discuss or oppose misery, turmoil, and injustice? This episode examines the ways in which contemporary artists picture and question war, express outrage, and empathize with the suffering of others. Whether bearing witness to tragic events, presenting alternative histories, or engaging in activism, the artists interviewed in this episode use visual art as a means to provoke personal transformations and question social revolutions.

For decades, **Nancy Spero** has drawn from the political to create compelling works of art that make a statement against war, the abuse of power and our male-dominated society. Regarding her paintings made during the Vietnam War, Spero says: "I guess maybe my art can be said to be a protest...The War paintings are certainly a protest because it was done with indignation." Spero further explains how the politically-inspired work of her late husband, Leon Golub, not only stimulated, but also posed a challenge for her own work. "It was pretty damned difficult contending with someone who was so...brilliant," she says. In contrast to Golub's large-scale paintings, Spero began to work with small, almost microscopic figures, which she describes as "a retort to the large works of the mostly male New York artists." Viewers observe Spero as she modifies pieces from her previous paintings and prints—including images of severed heads from her War paintings—to produce such works as *Cri du Coeur* (2005), for which she employs repetition of the image of an ancient Egyptian woman to create a funeral-like procession along the walls rimming her New York gallery.

Landscape photographer **An-My Lê** is fascinated by military war exercises. Traveling around the world, she uses a wooden Deardorff camera to capture black and white images of various military exercises, and explores their connection to the surrounding landscape. "I think my main goal is to try to photograph landscape in such a way so that history could be suggested through the landscape, whether industrial history or my personal history," she says. Lê discusses her return to Vietnam, where she grew up amid the violence of the Vietnam War, to photograph people's activities, revisit childhood memories, and reconnect with her homeland, as well as her experience photographing military re-enactors, whom she found on the Internet. Unable to travel to Iraq to document current U.S. incursions in the Middle East, Lê worked with marines training at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in California photographing the end stages of preparatory war activities. "I think I've always tried to understand what is the meaning of war and what does it really mean to live through times of turbulence," says Lê. "I think a lot of those questions sort of fuel my work."

"I strongly believe in the power of a single idea," says **Alfredo Jaar**. "My imagination starts working based on research, based on a real life event, most of the time a tragedy that I'm just starting to analyze, to reflect on...this real life event to which I'm trying to respond." Through his work, Jaar explores both the public's desensitization to images and the limits of art to represent events such as genocide. For his longest project to date, Jaar spent six years creating 21 different pieces about Rwanda's horrific realities. Art21 follows and films Jaar in his native Chile during a major retrospective of his work, which he shares for the first time with the Chilean public—a triumphant and moving homage in his homeland after leaving to live abroad shortly after the Pinochet regime's military coup. Viewers learn about the stories behind such works as *The Silence of Nduwayezu* (1997), an installation that tells the tragic story of one young boy from a Rwanda refugee camp who witnessed the murder of both of his parents, and *Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom* (2005), based on a Chinese poem used by Chairman Mao. Fed by his background in magic, theater and architecture, Jaar's works create connections that enlarge comprehension of events that are often hidden from the public. "For me, the heart of an exhibition is really the spirit of the artist. The spirit of what he's trying to communicate."

Using high-powered projectors, **Jenny Holzer** projects text (often poetry) onto surfaces ranging from the canals of Venice to the ceiling of the Mies van der Rohe New National Gallery building in Berlin, illustrating the power of language to evoke deep emotion. Holzer discusses the concepts behind some of her most well-known projects, including one for 7 World Trade Center, for which she projected text onto a glass wall of the lobby. Holzer chose words—which appeared to float across the wall—about the joys of living in New York City as opposed to "memorial text" in response to 9/11. However, much of Holzer's work focuses on devastation and cruelty, and uses the words of others. "I stopped writing my own text in 2001," she explains. "I found that I couldn't say enough adequately and so it was with great pleasure that I went to the text of others." Viewers observe Holzer creating new work as she prepares an exhibition of paintings and prints of declassified, redacted government documents, some of which are letter-size, while others are blown-up to an overwhelming scale "...in hopes that people will recoil," she says. "I want to be able to continue to work, to pull from good and ghastly text, to offer these to people and to present them in ways that are lovely and exacting."



Nancy Spero was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1926. She received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1949), and honorary doctorates from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1991) and Williams College (2001). Spero is a pioneer of feminist art. Her work since the 1960s is an unapologetic statement against the pervasive abuse of power, Western privilege, and male dominance. Executed with a raw intensity on paper and in ephemeral installations, her work often draws its imagery and subject matter from current and historical events such as the torture of women in Nicaragua, the extermination of Jews in the Holocaust, and the atrocities of the Vietnam War. Spero samples from a rich range of visual sources of women as protagonists—from Egyptian hieroglyphics, 17th Century French history painting, and Frederick's of Hollywood lingerie advertisements. Her figures, in full command of their bodies, co-existing in nonhierarchical compositions on monumental scrolls, visually reinforce principles of equality and tolerance. Spero lives and works in New York.

An-My Lê was born in Saigon, Vietnam in 1960. Lê fled Vietnam with her family as a teenager in 1975, the final year of the war, eventually settling in the United States as a political refugee. Lê received BAS and MS degrees in biology from Stanford University (1981, 1985) and an MFA from Yale University (1993). Her photographs and films examine the impact, consequences, and representation of war. Whether in color or black-and-white, her pictures frame a tension between the natural landscape and its violent transformation into battlefields. Projects include *Viêt Nam* (1994-98), in which Lê's memories of a war-torn countryside are reconciled with the contemporary landscape; *Small Wars* (1999-2002), in which Lê photographed and participated in Vietnam War reenactments in South Carolina; and *29 Palms* (2003-04) in which United States Marines preparing for deployment play-act scenarios in a virtual Middle East in the California desert. Suspended between the formal traditions of documentary and staged photography, Lê's work explores the disjunction between wars as historical events and the ubiquitous representation of war in contemporary entertainment, politics, and collective consciousness. Lê lives and works in New York.

Alfredo Jaar was born in Santiago, Chile in 1956. He received degrees from Instituto Chileno-Norteamericano de Cultura, Santiago (1979) and Universidad de Chile, Santiago (1981). In installations, photographs, film, and community-based projects, Jaar explores the public's desensitization to images and the limitations of art to represent events such as genocides, epidemics, and famines. Jaar's work bears witness to military conflicts, political corruption, and imbalances of power between industrialized and developing nations. Subjects addressed in his work include the holocaust in Rwanda, gold mining in Brazil, toxic pollution in Nigeria, and issues related to the border between Mexico and the United States. Many of Jaar's works are extended meditations or elegies, including *Muxima* (2006)—a video that portrays and contrasts the oil economy and extreme poverty of Angola—and *The Gramsci Trilogy* (2004-05)—a series of installations dedicated to the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, who was imprisoned under Mussolini's Fascist regime. Jaar emigrated from Chile in 1981, at the height of Pinochet's military dictatorship. His exhibition at Fundación Telefonica Chile, Santiago (2006) is his first in his native country in twenty-five years. Jaar lives and works in New York.

Jenny Holzer was born in Gallipolis, Ohio in 1950. She received a BA from Ohio University in Athens (1972); an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (1977); and honorary doctorates from the University of Ohio (1993), the Rhode Island School of Design (2003), and New School University, New York (2005). Whether questioning consumerist impulses, describing torture, or lamenting death and disease, Jenny Holzer's use of language provokes a response in the viewer. While her subversive work often blends in among advertisements in public space, its arresting content violates expectations. Holzer's texts—such as the aphorisms "abuse of power comes as no surprise" and "protect me from what I want"—have appeared on posters and condoms, and as electronic LED signs and projections of xenon light. Holzer's recent use of text ranges from silk-screened paintings of declassified government memoranda detailing prisoner abuse, to poetry and prose in a 65-footwide wall of light in the lobby of 7 World Trade Center, New York. Holzer lives and works in Hoosick Falls, New York.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discuss the theme of *Protest* in relation to personal experiences as well as local, national, and global events. What forms can protest take? What current events and historical issues have been protested? In what ways have protests of the past affected contemporary forms of protest?

"It's horrific, trying to show the insanity and brutality of war. I couldn't do it in a realistic fashion so it got kind of surreal," explains Nancy Spero. Discuss historic works of art, including literature, theater, and film, that address political or controversial subjects. What role or responsibility do artists have in times of conflict or violence?

What are the similarities and differences between photojournalism and art photography? How do they overlap in the work of the featured artists? Compare Alfredo Jaar's treatment of the atrocities in Rwanda or An-My Lê's images of soon-to-be-deployed troops to images of these events in the popular media.

An-My Lê says, "I'm fascinated by the military structure, by strategy, the idea of a battle, the gear. But at the same time, how do you resolve the impact of it? What it is meant to do is just horrible. But war can be beautiful." How do these featured artists describe both the beauty and horror of conflict?

Jenny Holzer says, "The poetics come from the poetry by others, not from myself. But what I can contribute is something like a visual poetics that have to do with the color and the pauses [and] the omissions." Initiate a discussion about the role of language in visual art. How is visual art related to spoken and written language? How do artists and writers reveal their authorship in their work? When might authors or artists choose to remain anonymous? In what instances are written and visual information censored, and by whom?

GROUP ACTIVITIES & ACTIONS

Host a screening event and panel discussion on the theme of *Protest*. Invite local writers, artists, political analysts, journalists, historians, social justice advocates, and other members of the community who can offer a unique perspective on the theme and the artists featured in this episode.

Collect images that represent a particular aspect of war, such as uniforms, equipment, or explosions. Present the images with an accompanying text that describes changes over time and across conflicts.

Research and restage an event significant to your community's history or identity. The event could be one that is celebrated and honored, or it could be a source of ongoing conflict. Consider the subjectivity of the sources you consult as you conduct your research. From whose perspective will you position your retelling? Consult your local historical society and public library for firsthand accounts of the event. Will you attempt to hew closely to the historical "facts" in your retelling? Consider the casting, staging, and the actual performance of the reenactment. Could your event be seen as a political act or an act of protest? Why or why not?

Research Jenny Holzer's *Truisms* series and use her work as a starting point for exploring the relationships between political propaganda, commercial marketing, and visual art. Describe the techniques used to address the public in each area.

Choose a current topic from the news and divide your audience into three groups: one to visually represent the topic as propaganda, one to represent it as marketing, and one to represent it as art. Discuss the results and compare the strategies used to convey different intentions.

Photo-blog: select a topic or current event of particular interest or unrest to you. Shoot candid images or scenes in your community in response to this subject. Post the images on a personal blog or as a stand-alone photo essay.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

<i>Protest</i>	www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonthree/protest.html	
Jenny Holzer	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/holzer	www.heimread.com
Alfredo Jaar	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/jaar	www.galerie-lelong.com
An-My Lê	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/le	www.murrayguy.com
Nancy Spero	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/spero	www.galerie-lelong.com



What role do intuition, emotion, fantasy, and escapism play in contemporary art? How do contemporary artists respond to traditionally romantic ideals such as sentimentality, pathos, and the philosophy of art for art's sake? This episode poses questions about the value of pleasure in art and features artists whose works are extended meditations on mortality, love, reality, and make-believe.

Early in her career, **Laurie Simmons** used photography as a tool to create a still and pristine reality in contrast to the chaos of everyday life. Simmons explains how she was able to bring her still photographs to life in her recent and first feature film, *The Music of Regret* (2006). "My inner life about my own work was very theatrical and very narrative, but that's something I was always afraid to express," says Simmons. "I had music in my head that was sort of playing while I was shooting." Inspired by three different stages of Simmons's photographic work, the film features hand puppets, ventriloquist dummies and objects that come to life and enact scenes that resemble real life. In the first Act, "The Green Tie," Simmons employs puppets to explore love and conflict among family and suburban neighbors. In Act Two, "The Music of Regret," Academy Award-winning actress Meryl Streep portrays a "live" puppet, whose interaction with a ventriloquist dummy depicts a bittersweet relationship through their love song duets. In the film's third and final Act, "The Audition," Simmons works with members of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to produce a stage performance that features everyday objects—a pocket watch, a camera, a birthday cake—dancing tango, tap and ballet at an audition before an unseen judge. "Regret is the prevailing emotion...that brings the three Acts together," she says, "...it ends on a note of...what might have been, if I just had a chance."

Lari Pittman was born and works in Los Angeles. His references and background which inspire his work include the freedom and chaos of the city, his memories of growing up in Colombia and his "very, very strong Mediterranean core." "I want to offer a painting that somehow...the viewer has to stand in front of it and almost not believe it," says Pittman. "But in the act of not believing it, what they're actually seeing, they get swept away in it." As the documentary follows Pittman, he recounts a fond childhood memory from his early life in South America, and the encouragement and love he received as a young boy from his family, both of which he credits with his ability to grow, mature, and develop as a visual artist. "I think that that's why the decorative aspect of the work comes systemically, organically, naturally to me because it was really allowed to bloom and blossom and wasn't curtailed or curbed when I was a child." Despite a charmed childhood, Pittman explains that what keeps him "radicalized" is an awareness of this country's attitude towards the gay community. "I can lead quite a pretty life," he says, "but it's always quickly clarified by those very aggressive strains in American culture, which in a way...wonderfully puts me in my place." He also explains how he draws inspiration from religious images and retablos as well as gardening and landscaping. "I don't respond to the idea of nature at large. I prefer landscaping," says Pittman, "...landscaping as a way to push back, a little bit, the chaos of nature...the kind of violence of it."

Born in England, **Judy Pfaff** came to America when she was twelve and later attended Yale University School of Art. Although she started out as a painter, Pfaff was drawn to materials and sculpture. As she explains, "I found when I was a painter I couldn't stop and until it was finished another thought didn't enter. With the sculpture, they go on for months. It tells different kinds of stories. They're sort of sequence moments. It worked better for the way I am put together." Balancing intense planning with improvisational decision-making on site, Pfaff creates exuberant, sprawling sculptures and installations that blend landscape, architecture, and synthetic color into a tense yet organic whole. The documentary follows Pfaff through the installation of a recent exhibition, one which is driven by sadness and loss, using tree roots, neon tubes, and plaster forms, among others, to explore the worlds of black and white. Pfaff describes how the show came into being after the deaths of several close friends, her mother, and her former teacher and mentor, Al Held. "Last year, everyone I knew died," she says. "I just thought, this show...I just want it to be emotional. So I was basing this sort of on images of...I don't think hell, but darkness and kind of a wilder characteristic than other stuff"

"As I start a project, I always need to create a world. Then I want to enter this world, and my walk through this world is the work," says **Pierre Huyghe**, who lives in both Paris and New York. Cultivating folly, leisure, and celebration as the means for creating art, Huyghe's films, installations, and public events range from a small-town parade to a puppet theater, from a model amusement park to an expedition in Antarctica. "I'm trying to be less narrative, it's more an emotional landscape that I'm trying to reach here," he explains. Huyghe describes how, through the documentation of his scripted realities, he is "building a kind of mythology," and using humor to "break even the possibility of critical judgment." Huyghe believes that his exhibitions are not the endpoint, but rather "the starting point to go somewhere else."



Laurie Simmons was born on Long Island, New York, in 1949. She received a BFA from the Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia (1971). Simmons stages photographs and films with paper dolls, finger puppets, ventriloquist dummies, and costumed dancers as “living objects,” animating a dollhouse world suffused with nostalgia and colored by an adult’s memories, longings, and regrets. Simmons’s work blends psychological, political and conceptual approaches to art making, transforming photography’s propensity to objectify people, especially women, into a sustained critique of the medium. Mining childhood memories and media constructions of gender roles, her photographs are charged with an eerie, dreamlike quality. On first glance her works often appear whimsical, but there is a disquieting aspect to Simmons’s child’s play as her characters struggle over identity in an environment in which the value placed on consumption, designer objects, and domestic space is inflated to absurd proportions. Simmons’s first film, *The Music of Regret* (2006), extends her photographic practice to performance, incorporating musicians, professional puppeteers, Alvin Ailey dancers, Hollywood cinematographer Ed Lachman, and actress Meryl Streep. Simmons lives and works in New York.

Lari Pittman was born in Los Angeles, California in 1952. Pittman received both a BFA (1974) and an MFA (1976) from California Institute of the Arts, Valencia. Inspired by commercial advertising, folk art, and decorative traditions, his meticulously layered paintings transform pattern and signage into luxurious scenes fraught with complexity, difference, and desire. In a manner both visually gripping and psychologically strange, Pittman’s hallucinatory works reference myriad aesthetic styles, from Victorian silhouettes to social realist murals to Mexican retablos. Pittman uses anthropomorphic depictions of furniture, weapons, and animals, loaded with symbolism, to convey themes of romantic love, violence, and mortality. His paintings and drawings are a personal rebellion against rigid, puritanical dichotomies. They demonstrate the complementary nature of beauty and suffering, pain and pleasure, and direct the viewer’s attention to bittersweet experiences and the value of sentimentality in art. Despite subject matter that changes from series to series, Pittman’s deployment of simultaneously occurring narratives and opulent imagery reflects the rich heterogeneity of American society, the artist’s Colombian heritage, and the distorting effects of hyper-capitalism on everyday life. Pittman lives and works in Los Angeles.

Judy Pfaff was born in London, England in 1946. She received a BFA from Washington University, Saint Louis (1971) and an MFA from Yale University (1973). Balancing intense planning with improvisational decision-making, Pfaff creates exuberant, sprawling sculptures and installations that weave landscape, architecture, and color into a tense yet organic whole. A pioneer of installation art in the 1970s, Pfaff synthesizes sculpture, painting, and architecture into dynamic environments in which space seems to expand and collapse, fluctuating between the two- and three-dimensional. Pfaff’s site-specific installations pierce through walls and careen through the air, achieving lightness and explosive energy. Pfaff’s work is a complex ordering of visual information composed of steel, fiberglass, and plaster as well as salvaged signage and natural elements such as tree roots. She has extended her interest in natural motifs in a series of prints integrating vegetation, maps, and medical illustrations, and has developed her dramatic sculptural materials into set designs for several theatrical stage productions. Pfaff lives and works in Kingston and Tivoli, New York.

Pierre Huyghe was born in 1962 in Paris, France. He attended the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (1982-85). Employing folly, leisure, adventure, and celebration in creating art, Huyghe’s films, installations, and public events range from a small town parade to a puppet theater, from a model amusement park to an expedition to Antarctica. By filming staged scenarios—such as a re-creation of the true-life bank robbery featured in the movie *Dog Day Afternoon*—Huyghe probes the capacity of cinema to distort and ultimately shape memory. While blurring the traditional distinction between fiction and reality, and revealing the experience of fiction to be as palpable as anything in daily life, Huyghe’s playful work often addresses complex social topics such as the yearning for utopia, the lure of spectacle in mass media, and the impact of Modernism on contemporary values and belief systems. Huyghe lives and works in Paris and New York.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Make a list of personal and cultural associations with the word “romance.” Where do ideas about romance come from? Compare and contrast historic and contemporary ideas about the nature of romance. Does your definition invoke certain images or symbols? What other words do you associate with the idea of romance? Is romance real, invented, personal, or universal?

In what ways do the artists in this episode include elements of nostalgia, heroism, cynicism, fantasy, and melodrama in their work? How do these ideas relate to the theme of *Romance*?

Pierre Huyghe describes the initiation of a new project as “creating a world” and that his “walk through this world is the work.” In describing the motivation for her earlier work, Laurie Simmons says she was “conscious of creating another kind of reality” and that she “expected the viewer to believe that they were entering a real place that really existed.” How do the artists in this episode explore imaginary or artificial worlds? How does the viewer enter into these worlds and what is the viewer’s role upon entry?

Lari Pittman says, “as chaotic as American culture is...I thrive on that.” How is this sentiment reflected in his work? What is the relationship between stability and chaos in the work of the featured artists? In what ways do the artists attempt to impose order and structure, and conversely how do they work against the framework of control?

Judy Pfaff remarks “Romance? It’s one of those bad words, like ‘diary’ and that kind of personal thing.” Why would “romance” be considered a “bad” word? Describe how each of the featured artists both embrace and resist overt sentimentality in their work.

GROUP ACTIVITIES & ACTIONS

Host a screening event followed by a discussion on the theme of *Romance*. Invite curators, visual artists, local writers, poets, filmmakers, journalists, historians, musicians, philosophers, and others who can contribute to an exploration of the ideas presented in the *Romance* episode. Encourage them to discuss traditional and historical notions of romance and have them compare this to the work of the featured artists.

Create a collage, sculpture, or installation incorporating images from popular media that express different aspects of romance: fantasy and reality, sentimentality and cynicism, nostalgia and melodrama.

Select an iconic scene from a romantic film. Like the artists in *Romance*, experiment with different perspectives of time and narrative. Create a journal entry from the perspective of one of the film’s characters that reflects what happened five minutes before and five minutes after the scene. Alternatively, follow one of the characters back in time from the moment depicted and then forward.

Referencing Judy Pfaff’s work, visualize an abstract idea—sadness, loss, joy, or excitement—as a physical form. You may want to work from a personal experience or memory. Consider the images, sounds, or smells you might use to invoke feeling or emotion. Share a visual or written sketch with the group.

Create a myth or story that explains the origin of a local heroic figure in your community. Invent your own *Streamside Day Follies* inspired celebration honoring the figure, including elements like reenactments, parades, costumes, songs, and decorations. Set a date and host the celebration. Document the results with photography or video.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

<i>Romance</i>	www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfour/romance.html	
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Judy Pfaff	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/pfaff	www.ameringer-yohe.com
Lari Pittman	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/pittman	www.regenprojects.com
Laurie Simmons	www.pbs.org/art21/artists/simmons	www.speronewestwater.com

