

SEE IT ON PBS



TM

# art:21

ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

SCREENING GUIDE: SEASON FIVE



### ABOUT THIS SCREENING GUIDE

This screening guide is designed to help you plan an event using Season Five 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 illuminate the creative process of today's visual artists by stimulating critical reflection as well as conversation in order to deepen audience's appreciation and understanding of contemporary art and ideas. Organizations and individuals are welcome to host their own Art21 events year-round. Art21 invites museums, high schools, colleges, universities, community-based organizations, libraries, art spaces and individuals to get involved and create unique screening events. These public events can include viewing parties, panel discussions, brown bag lunches, guest speakers, or hands-on art-making activities.

### ABOUT THE ART:21 SERIES ON PBS

The first and only nationally-broadcast public television series to focus exclusively on contemporary visual art and artists in the United States and around the world, *Art:21—Art in the Twenty-First Century* introduces audiences to a diverse range of established and emerging artists working today, and to the art they are producing now. 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.

Through in-depth profiles and interviews, the four-part series will reveal the inspiration, vision and techniques behind the creative works of some of today's most accomplished contemporary

artists. *Art:21* travels across the country and abroad to film contemporary artists, from painters and photographers to installation and video artists, in their own spaces and in their own words. The result is a unique opportunity to experience first-hand the complex artistic process – from inception to finished product – behind some of today's most thought-provoking art. These artists represent the breadth of artistic practice across the country and internationally and reveal the depth of intergenerational and multicultural talent.

### ABOUT ART21, INC.

Art21 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 empower viewers to articulate their own ideas and interpretations about contemporary art. Art21 seeks to achieve this goal by using diverse media to present an independent, behind-the-scenes perspective on contemporary art and artists at work and in their own words. Based in New York City but with a global reach on television and online, Art21's additional projects include workshops for teachers; public screenings and lectures; and a blog and social media initiatives.

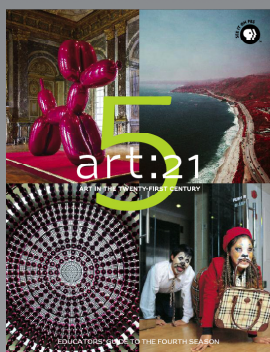
### CREDIT LINE

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](mailto: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](http://www.art21.org)



#### Learning with Art21 Guide

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

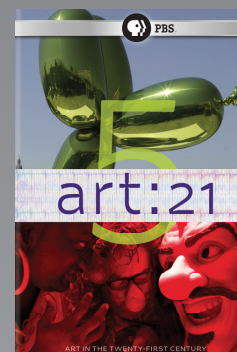
FREE | [www.art21.org](http://www.art21.org)



#### Companion Book

A 224-page book with over 370 color illustrations; features excerpts of artists' conversations with Executive Producer Susan Sollins.

\$45.00 | [www.hnabooks.com](http://www.hnabooks.com)



#### Home Video (DVD)

This DVD includes Season Five (2009) — 14 artists in four one hour-long episodes: *Compassion, Fantasy, Transformation, & Systems*.

\$34.99 | [www.shoppbs.org](http://www.shoppbs.org)

Cover, clockwise from top left: **Mary Heilmann**, *Lovejoy*, 2004. Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 inches. Courtesy the artist, 303 Gallery, New York and Hauser & Wirth Zurich London; **William Kentridge**, production still from *From I am not me, the horse is not mine (Commissariat for Enlightenment)*, 2008. Dimensions variable. Photography by John Hodgkiss. © William Kentridge, courtesy of the artist; **Cindy Sherman**, *Untitled (#424)*, 2004. Color photograph, 55.5 x 56.5 inches. Edition of six. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures; **Allan McCollum**, *The Shapes Project*, detail, 2006. Small framed monoprints, 4 1/4 x 5 1/2 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Pages 3-14: Production stills © Art21, Inc. 2009.



Might a work of art move us to temper our more destructive impulses? In what ways do artists' feelings of empathy contribute to works that tackle problematic subjects and address the human condition? This episode features artists whose works explore conscience and the possibility of reconciling past with present, while exposing injustice and expressing tolerance for others.

**William Kentridge** asks "how does one find a way of not necessarily illustrating the society that one lives in, but allowing what happens there to be part of the work?" Through the animated film *Sobriety, Obesity, and Growing Old* (1991), the segment introduces the characters Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitelbaum as a "self-portrait in the third person" that embodies, in dream-like scenarios, the complex roles of Jews in South Africa during apartheid. Filmed working in his Johannesburg studio with an opera singer and pianist, the artist is shown creating a video projection out of torn paper choreographed to a Puccini aria recorded through a cell phone. The segment follows Kentridge's interest in opera as he stages the eight channel video installation *I am not me, the horse is not mine* (2008) at the Sydney Biennial in Australia. A preparatory work for a production of Shostakovich's opera *The Nose*, to be performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in March 2010, Kentridge's Sydney installation synthesizes live-action performance with video, music, text, and archival imagery. The segment also showcases *What Will Come (has already come)* (2007), a series of anamorphic films projected onto circular tabletops, with a mirrored cylinder at the center that reconstitutes the distorted image. Viewing "looking and seeing" as metaphors for "thinking and understanding," Kentridge's works underscore "the agency we have, whether we like it or not, to make sense of the world."

"Narrative and storytelling is in the blood," declares **Carrie Mae Weems**, taking the viewer on a personal journey through her first major photo-documentary series—*Family Pictures and Stories* (1978-84)—while recounting childhood experiences of racial discrimination. Her haunting work *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried* (1995) appropriates a series of daguerreotypes owned by Harvard University to assess "how the black body had been used in photography." Instantly controversial, Harvard threatened to sue the artist, to which she responds, "I think that I don't really have a legal case, but maybe I have a moral case" that can be made about controlling archival images of black subjects by black artists today. The segment also features Weems' recent work *Constructing History: A Requiem to Mark the Moment* (2008), a video and series of photographs for which she enlisted students at the Savannah College of Art and Design to re-stage tragic events from 1968-2008, debuting the work at the 20th National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta. She decides to continue the project after the 2008 elections, ascertaining that "in one moment there was an enormous shift in the American imagination" where disenfranchised African Americans began to talk about their country with a new sense of agency and belonging. The segment ends at a hotel ballroom in Syracuse, New York, where on a film set she directs actors to "connect with a story that's larger than you" while playing the parts of President Barack Obama, Senator John McCain, Joe the Plumber, and a bevy of Miss Alaska beauty contestants in swimsuits, including Governor Sarah Palin.

"I am a Third World artist," says **Doris Salcedo**, "from that perspective—from the perspective of the victim, from the perspective of the defeated people—it's where I'm looking at the world." Filmed in her Bogotá, Colombia studio while preparing a series of abstract *Untitled* (2008) sculptures based on antique household furniture, the artist devotes careful attention to the tormented wooden finishes and smooth concrete surfaces of her objects. "I don't work based on imagination, on fiction," she explains, characterizing her role as a "secondary witness" to the victims of violence whose testimonies she collects as research for her pieces, such as *Atrabiliarios* (1992-93) at SFMOMA. "My work is based not on my experience but on somebody else's experience," she says, prompting her long-time assistants to narrate the development of major works such as her *Unland* (1997-98) series of tables, held together with strands of human hair sewn through millions of tiny holes; the ephemeral installation *Noviembre 6 y 7* (2000) that spanned 53 hours to commemorate a bloody siege on Bogotá's Palace of Justice; and the computer modeling and engineering behind *Shibboleth* (2007), a 160 meter crack in the foundation of Tate Modern in London, for which the artist enlists a Bible story as a parable for the plight of immigrants in Western societies. Reflecting on her position as an artist in a world beset with so much horror and grief, Salcedo surmises that "the word that defines my work is 'impotence' ...but then, as a person who lacks power, I face the ones who have power and who manipulate life."





**William Kentridge** was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1955. He attended the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (1973-76), Johannesburg Art Foundation (1976-78), and studied mime and theater at L'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq, Paris (1981-82). Having witnessed first-hand one of the twentieth century's most contentious struggles – the dissolution of apartheid, Kentridge brings the ambiguity and subtlety of personal experience to public subjects most often framed in narrowly defined terms. Using film, drawing, sculpture, animation, and performance, he transmutes sobering political events into powerful poetic allegories. In a now-signature technique, he photographs his charcoal drawings and paper collages over time, recording scenes as they evolve. Working without a script or storyboard, he plots out each animated film, preserving every addition and erasure. Aware of myriad ways in which we construct the world by looking, Kentridge uses stereoscopic viewers and creates optical illusions with anamorphic projection to extend his drawings-in-time into three dimensions. He lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa.

**Carrie Mae Weems** was born in Portland, Oregon, in 1953. Weems earned a BFA from the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia (1981), and an MFA from the University of California, San Diego (1984), continuing her studies in the Graduate Program in Folklore at the University of California, Berkeley (1984-87). With the pitch and timbre of an accomplished storyteller, Carrie Mae Weems uses colloquial forms – jokes, songs, rebukes – in photographic series that scrutinize subjectivity and expose pernicious stereotypes. Weems's vibrant explorations of photography, video, and verse breathe new life into traditional narrative forms – social documentary, tableaux, self-portrait, and oral history. Eliciting epic contexts from individually framed moments, Weems debunks racist and sexist labels, examines the relationship between power and aesthetics, and uses personal biography to articulate broader truths. Whether adapting or appropriating archival images, restaging famous news photographs, or creating altogether new scenes, she traces an indirect history of the depiction of African Americans for more than a century. Carrie Mae Weems lives and works in Syracuse, New York.

**Doris Salcedo** was born in 1958 in Bogotá, Colombia. Salcedo earned a BFA at Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano (1980) and an MA from New York University (1984). Salcedo's understated sculptures and installations embody the silenced lives of the marginalized, from individual victims of violence to the disempowered of the Third World. Although elegiac in tone, her works are not memorials: Salcedo concretizes absence, oppression, and the gap between the disempowered and powerful. While abstract in form and open to interpretation, her works serve as testimonies on behalf of both victims and perpetrators. Even when monumental in scale, her installations achieve a degree of imperceptibility – receding into a wall, burrowed into the ground, or lasting for only a short time. Salcedo's work reflects a collective effort and close collaboration with a team of architects, engineers, and assistants and – as Salcedo says – with the victims of the senseless and brutal acts to which her work refers. Doris Salcedo lives and works in Bogotá, Colombia.





### EVENT IDEAS

Host a panel discussion on the theme of compassion. Invite representatives from human rights organizations, journalists, artists, historians, diplomats, and other members of the community who can offer a unique perspective on the theme and the artists featured in this episode. Make connections to both current and historic human rights struggles across the world. Discuss the ties between these struggles and the episode with the panelists.

Use a screening of the Compassion hour to initiate a discussion concerning issues of local, national, or international importance. Invite local advocates to speak and draw attention to issues from the episode (like civil rights or colonialism) or other topics, ranging from poverty to health care, currently relevant to your community or elsewhere in the world.

### SCREENING-BASED ACTIVITIES

"I'm interested in machines that make you aware of the process of seeing and aware of what you do when you construct the world by looking," says William Kentridge. Create a small exhibit of images and descriptions of machines throughout history that have transformed the sense of sight and thus influenced society's understanding of the world.

Carrie Mae Weems states when discussing *Constructing History: A Requiem to Mark the Moment*, "What came out of these photographs is this idea of constructing history." Research a historical primary document that is important to you or your community, such as a speech from Harvey Milk or a photograph from the Presidential Inauguration of Barack Obama, and create a visual response that reflects its legacy, or lack thereof, in the history of your community, city, state, or nation.

In her work *Atrabiliarios*, Doris Salcedo reflects on the meaning old shoes included in her installation, "We don't like old shoes. But nevertheless, every time we see a shoe on the street, we wonder what happened there, since it's the wrong place for that shoe to be. I wanted to make that private pain into something public because it is not a private problem." Identify something — an object, building, or even a city that has been abandoned or disregarded and seems to be in the "wrong place." Create a short documentary or write a story that investigates the object, where it came from, and its significance. Interview people who can help tell this story.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discuss the theme of compassion in relation to daily life locally, nationally, and globally. How might feelings of compassion, sympathy, and empathy help to bridge the gap between humanity and inhumanity?

William Kentridge suggests that looking and seeing can be "a broad-based metaphor for how we understand the world." How do feelings of compassion, sympathy, and empathy impact the process of looking and seeing, and how does this impact how one understands the world?

Carrie Mae Weems states, "If I didn't look at those things now, if I didn't look at all of that kind of trauma, and the mourning, and the sadness of the history of the last forty years, I really wasn't worth my salt." Do artists have a social responsibility? How does each artist in this episode view their own responsibilities in relation to the subjects they address in their work?

Discuss the different ways in which society remembers important and/or historic events through monuments, public narratives, artwork, etc. Doris Salcedo says, "The memory of anonymous victims is always being obliterated; that's why my work does not represent something; it's simply a hint of something—trying to bring into our presence something subtle that is no longer here." How do these artists in this episode expose, reveal, or rescue marginalized or hidden histories and perspectives? Why might these histories and perspectives be important?

### ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

|                   |  |  |
|-------------------|--|--|
| <i>Compassion</i> | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfive/compassion.html">www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfive/compassion.html</a> |  |
| William Kentridge | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/william-kentridge">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/william-kentridge</a>                 | <a href="http://www.williamkentridge.net">www.williamkentridge.net</a>   |
| Carrie Mae Weems  | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/carrie-mae-weems">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/carrie-mae-weems</a>                   | <a href="http://www.jackshainman.com">www.jackshainman.com</a>           |
| Doris Salcedo     | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/doris-salcedo">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/doris-salcedo</a>                         | <a href="http://www.alexanderandbonin.com">www.alexanderandbonin.com</a> |





How might desires and taboos shape our ability to imagine? What role does technology play in wish fulfillment? This episode presents artists whose works defy convention and transport us to unreal worlds and altered states of consciousness. With works at times hallucinatory, irreverent, and sublime, each of these artists pursues a vision first held in the mind's eye.

"Art should be something really powerful," says **Jeff Koons**, "but at the same time, there's morality that comes along with that." Koons views art as a vehicle for communication that "can connect you through history" and empower viewers to accept their own pasts, cultures and desires. The segment begins in the artist's busy studio, where his computer-aided, hand-made paintings and sculptures develop slowly, with a large team of dedicated assistants, in the manner of a Renaissance workshop or atelier. The segment shifts to a retrospective at the MCA Chicago (2008), where Koons discusses two carved wood sculptures—*Bear and Policeman* and *Ushering in Banality* (both 1998)—as exemplifying the ethical and spiritual dimensions of art. The segment concludes outside Paris at the Chateau de Versailles (2008-09), showcasing the mathematical planting of the giant flower topiary *Split Rocker* (2000). Koons imagines his *Self-Portrait* (1991) bust as having a conversation with King Louis XIV, and compares his own attention to detail—in the works *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* (1998), *Balloon Dog (Magenta)* (1994-2000), and *Lobster* (2003)—to the joyous decoration of the palace's period rooms and gardens.

"Every piece of abstract art that I make has a back story," says **Mary Heilmann**, who relays youthful fantasies of wanting to be a Catholic martyr, her childhood dream to become an artist, as well as the antagonism she experienced in school when transitioning from pottery to painting. Shown completing a new body of work, which includes *Two Lane Blacktop* (2008), the segment begins in the artist's Bridgehampton studio on Long Island. "There are two realities going on in the same painting," she explains, referencing the collision of deep and shallow space in a single work, the painting as both physical object and pictorial depiction, and the final abstraction and its often fanciful, poetic title. "My spiritual life is very important to me and I think the artworks are icons," says Heilmann. The segment also features scenes from Heilmann's video slideshow *Her Life* and her touring retrospective *To Be Someone* (2008) at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio, where she's designed colorful chairs on wheels that viewers can use to relax, meditate, or socialize with one another and have "a conversation through the work."

"Photography used to be like alchemy back in the nineteenth century," says **Florian Maier-Aichen**, who uses the computer to introduce imperfections and detach his photographs from reality, bringing them closer to the realm of drawing. Shown capturing his source images with a traditional large-format camera, the artist introduces painterly touches to his photographs with the aid of a digital stylus and tablet. "Illustration is just another level of abstracting," he says, "it lifts you to another layer that is not necessarily linked to realism and it opens up your own world or your own mythmaking." Inspired by the idealized quality of postcards and maps, the segment shows how the artist remakes images of landscapes, from a nostalgic nighttime scene of Stralsund in GDR times to epic vistas such as a pass in the Swiss Alps, ski slopes in the Sierras, Half Dome in Yosemite, and the failed St. Francis Dam near Santa Clarita (all works 2005-09). "Photography grew together with the discovery of the American West," explains Maier-Aichen at his home and studio in Los Angeles, anchoring his fascination with the surrounding landscape to a romantic notion in Germany of California as "the end of the world."

"Dear ladies and gentleman, I'm China Tracy—the avatar of **Cao Fei**—and I'm her interpreter." Cao Fei's digital Second Life alter ego acts as the English translator for the Chinese-speaking artist, guiding the viewer through seven multimedia projects. A day-in-the-life is captured in the sensitive *Milkman* (2005), corporate culture is critiqued in the surrealistic *Rabid Dogs* (2004), while the assimilation of American pop culture by Asians is celebrated in Cao's series of *Hip Hop* videos (2006). Through a blend of documentary and magical realism, the artist investigates aspects of role play: costumed youth and their families in *COSPlayers* (2004), workers' dreams come to life at a Siemens light factory in *Whose Utopia* (2006), and a simulated romance between avatars in *i.Mirror by China Tracy* (2007). The segment culminates in the artist's ongoing project, *RMB City*, an island built in the 3D virtual world of Second Life that resembles a postmodern collage of landmarks, urban overdevelopment, and Chinese landscape painting. The interactive work is shown behind-the-scenes on computers in her Beijing studio, as an installation at the Serpentine Gallery in London (2008), and as Internet-based machinima shot during the opening ceremony (2009). "I think this project will lead to a foundation on which to experiment with utopian practices," says Cao, who is turning management of *RMB City* over to its online community.





**Jeff Koons** was born in 1955 in York, Pennsylvania. He studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, and received a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore (1976), and honorary doctorates from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2008) and Corcoran College of Art + Design, Washington, D.C. (2002). Koons plucks images and objects from popular culture, framing questions about taste and pleasure. His contextual sleight-of-hand, which transforms banal items into sumptuous icons, takes on a psychological dimension through dramatic shifts in scale, spectacularly engineered surfaces, and subliminal allegories of animals, humans, and anthropomorphized objects. The subject of art history is a constant undercurrent, whether Koons elevates kitsch to the level of Classical art, produces photos in the manner of Baroque paintings, or develops public works that borrow techniques and elements of seventeenth-century French garden design. Organizing his own studio production in a manner that rivals a Renaissance workshop, Koons makes computer-assisted, handcrafted works that communicate through their meticulous attention to detail. Jeff Koons lives and works in New York.

**Mary Heilmann** was born in 1940 in San Francisco, California. She earned a BA from the University of California, Santa Barbara (1962), and an MA from the University of California, Berkeley (1967). For every piece of Heilmann's work—abstract paintings, ceramics, and furniture—there is a backstory. Imbued with recollections, stories spun from her imagination, and references to music, aesthetic influences, and dreams, her paintings are like meditations or icons. Her expert and sometimes surprising treatment of paint (alternately diaphanous and goopy) complements a keen sense of color that glories in the hues and light that emanate from her laptop, and finds inspiration in the saturated colors of TV cartoons such as *The Simpsons*. Her compositions are often hybrid spatial environments that juxtapose two- and three-dimensional renderings in a single frame, join several canvases into new works, or create diptychs of paintings and photographs in the form of prints, slideshows, and videos. Heilmann sometimes installs her paintings alongside chairs and benches that she builds by hand, an open invitation for viewers to socialize and contemplate her work communally. Mary Heilmann lives and works in New York.

**Florian Maier-Aichen** was born in 1973 in Stuttgart, Germany. He studied at Högskolan för Fotografi och Film, Göteborg, Sweden; the University of Essen, Germany; and earned an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles. Alternately romantic, cerebral, and unearthly, Florian Maier-Aichen's digitally altered photographs are closer to the realm of drawing and fiction than documentation. He embraces difficult techniques, chooses equipment that produces accidents such as light leaks and double exposures, and uses computer enhancements to introduce imperfections and illogical elements into images that paradoxically "feel" visually right, though they are factually wrong. Often employing an elevated viewpoint (the objective but haunting "God's-eye view" of aerial photography and satellite imaging), Maier-Aichen creates idealized, painterly landscapes that function like old postcards. Interested in places where landscape and cityscape meet, he chooses locations and subjects from the American West and Europe -- from his own neighborhoods to vistas of the natural world. Looking backwards for his influences, Maier-Aichen often reenacts or pays homage to the work of the pioneer photographers of the nineteenth century, sometimes even remaking their subject matter from their original standpoints. Always experimenting, he marries digital technologies with traditional processes and films (black-and-white, color, infrared, and tricolor), restoring and reinvigorating the artistry and alchemy of early photography. Florian Maier-Aichen lives and works in Cologne, Germany and Los Angeles.

**Cao Fei** was born in Guangzhou, China in 1978. She earned a BFA from Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in Guangzhou, China (2001). Cao Fei's work reflects the fluidity of a world in which cultures have mixed and diverged in rapid evolution. Her video installations and new media works explore perception and reality in places as diverse as a Chinese factory and the virtual world of Second Life. Applying strategies of sampling, role play, and documentary filmmaking to capture individuals' longings and the ways in which they imagine themselves -- as hip-hop musicians, costumed characters, or digitized alter egos -- Cao Fei reveals the discrepancy between reality and dream, and the discontent and disillusionment of China's younger generation. Depictions of Chinese architecture and landscape abound in scenes of hyper-capitalistic Pearl River Delta development, in images that echo traditional Chinese painting, and in the design of her own virtual utopia, *RMB City*. Fascinated by the world of Second Life, Cao Fei has created several works in which she is both participant and observer through her Second Life avatar, China Tracy, who acts as a guide, philosopher, and tourist. Cao Fei lives and works in Beijing.





### EVENT IDEAS

Host a panel discussion with a religious scholar, a psychiatrist, and a videogame designer. Discuss the ways fantasy inspires spirituality, myth, and utopian imaginations in the featured artists' work. Have panelists consider what role technology plays in art as well as everyday fantasies.

After watching the Fantasy hour take the audience on a tour of Cao Fei's *RMB City* in Second Life. Cao Fei suggests that this work "is precisely an acknowledgment of the belief in, and the practice of, democracy. I think this project will lead to the foundation on which to experiment with utopian practices." Facilitate a discussion about *RMB City* and its relationship to democracy and utopian ideals.

### SCREENING-BASED ACTIVITIES

Mary Heilmann reflects on her Catholic upbringing and makes a strong connection between abstract art and religion. The artist says, "An artwork can transport a person in a soulful, rich way without having any fear of punishment or hell or sin or any of those other good things." Consider this statement and have audience members write stories or share experiences about a works of art that inspired such "transportations" for them.

Jeff Koons says, "You know, art can be something which can really disempower people...or it can be a vehicle which can empower people." Work with your audience to put together or debate a slide show of artwork they consider to be either empowering or disempowering. Facilitate a discussion to consider the formal elements of these works and identify the elements that either give or take away the power from the viewer. What is the power of art?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discussing his work *Ushering in Banality*, Jeff Koons says, "I've always thought of myself as the young boy in the back pushing the pig, pushing in the belief of trying to make work that would communicate to people that their own cultural and personal history up to that moment was absolutely perfect." Discuss this quote. How does the viewers experience and perspective inspire Koons? How does perfection inspire desires and inform fantasies? In what ways do the artists in this episode reach toward unobtainable ideals, like perfection?

Mary Heilmann draws a comparison between religious icons from her Catholic upbringing and contemporary art. She states, "I think the artworks are icons. And what's great about an artwork is that you can sit there and look at it and meditate and think and make it and unmake it and remake it one's own or anyone else's." Can a work of contemporary art serve as an icon? How do the artists in the episode employ icons, stories, and myths in their work?

Florian Maier-Aichen says, "I like the idea of using the computer to actually bring in imperfections or to turn a photograph, a finished image into a more open-ended image so that it's not too precise or so over determined." How do Maier-Aichen's photographs avoid being overly determined and precise? Discuss the different ways the artists in this episode use computers as a tool and address ideas of precision and perfection.

Cao Fei's avatar explains the artist's work *iMirror*, "Everything is much more intense than the real world. It's much more unbridled and wild. That's why so many people get hooked on Second Life. In it, they try to find a kind of life with emotions that they want for themselves in real life. But in the end, you will find that in this documentary, that is something beyond reach." What role does technology play in our ability to fantasize? How might fantasy be a strategy to cope with something that is beyond one's reach?

### ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

|                      |  |  |
|----------------------|--|--|
| <i>Fantasy</i>       | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfive/fantasy.html">www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfive/fantasy.html</a> |  |
| Jeff Koons           | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/jeff-koons">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/jeff-koons</a>                         | <a href="http://www.jeffkoons.com">www.jeffkoons.com</a>         |
| Mary Heilmann        | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/mary-heilmann">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/mary-heilmann</a>                   | <a href="http://www.303gallery.com">www.303gallery.com</a>       |
| Florian Maier-Aichen | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/florian-maier-aichen">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/florian-maier-aichen</a>     | <a href="http://www.303gallery.com">www.303gallery.com</a>       |
| Cao Fei              | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/cao-fei">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/cao-fei</a>                               | <a href="http://www.lombard-freid.com">www.lombard-freid.com</a> |





Costumes and masks, makeup and style, dolls & mannequins, stage and cinema—what strategies do we use to refashion identity? Do we seek out excess and extremes in order to see ourselves more clearly? Whether observing and satirizing society or reinventing icons of literature, art history, and popular culture, these artists inhabit the characters they create and capture the sensibilities of our age.

"My work, all along, has been a critique of Empire," says **Yinka Shonibare MBE**, adopting the honorific title of Member of the Order of the British Empire, with willful irony. "I like the idea of parodying or mimicking the notion of class." Shown in his London studio, Shonibare is working on his first series of drawings in twelve years, taking as his subject climate change—political, economic, environmental—and dedicating a work to "the architects of the present economic disaster." The artist is on hand for the installation of a retrospective of sculptures—headless, "post-racial," mannequins dressed in vibrant costumes—at the MCA Sydney. "The fabrics are multi-layered...things are not always what they seem," he says about his use of industrially produced Dutch wax print cloth, which has a complex colonial history stretching from Indonesia to the artist's native Nigeria. "I've always enjoyed using beauty and seduction as a way of engaging people with the work," he says, pointing out the underlying dark themes in works such as *Scramble for Africa* (2003) and *Black Gold II* (2006). Acting as the protagonist in two photographic series, in *Diary of a Victorian Dandy* (1998) Shonibare re-imagines a series of paintings by William Hogarth while in the Oscar Wilde inspired *Dorian Gray* (2001) he explores themes of mortality, vanity and physical disability. The final work in the segment, the film *Un Ballo in Maschera* (2004), is a masked ballet that recounts the assassination of King Gustav III of Sweden. "Power creates excess," he asserts, while playfully admitting, "I also, actually, would like to have the trappings of wealth myself, even though I may be criticizing it."

"It's kind of an interesting thing to see yourself," says **Cindy Sherman** about discovering her uncanny childhood photo album *A Cindy Book* (c. 1964–75) as an adult. Sherman decided to update the book by adding circled photos of herself and writing 'that's me' under each. "It's interesting to see your evolution...to think that that's really the same person now." Projects done in college—the animated film *Doll Clothes* (1975) and the photo-collaged cut outs in *A Play of Selves* and *Murder Mystery People* (both 1976)—culminate in the character-driven work she's best known for today. "I didn't want to make what looked like art," she says about her series *Untitled Film Stills* (1977-80), explaining that "film has always kind of been more influential to me than the art world." The segment surveys thirty years of untitled works in which the artist photographs herself in various scenes and guises, grouped into informally-named series such as fairy tales, centerfolds, history portraits, Hollywood/Hampton types, and clowns. Sherman used a digital camera and green screen for her most recent series of society portraits, modifying each image's background. Sorting through test shots at the computer, Sherman leads the viewer through her iterative process of creating the matronly woman in *Untitled (# 468)* (2008). "It was such a change for me to see them really big...because suddenly they seemed much more tragic," she says about life-size photographs on view at Metro Pictures gallery in New York (2008). The segment later following her to a thrift store where, upon finding several "wacky pants" she wonders if this shopping trip "might be inspiring a whole new series."

"My work seems to be about tearing down and opening up conventions," says **Paul McCarthy**, who bristles when asked what his responsibility is to the audience for his work. "My responsibility is to the ideas," he explains, "that's the difference between making art and making entertainment." The segment begins with a series of motorized architectural works, including *Spinning Room* (1970/2008), *Bang Bang Room* (1992) and *Mad House* (1999/2008). McCarthy's interest in performance is introduced through the *Black and White Tapes* (1970-75), a series of minimal videos in which the artist uses his body as a tool, such as painting a white line on the floor with his face or whipping a storefront window with a mixture of paint and motor oil. Later works such as *Bossy Burger* (1991) and *Painter* (1995) show the artist performing similarly absurd tasks, only this time adopting a character on a sound stage. Shot in a community television studio, *Family Tyranny (Modeling and Molding)* (1987) shows McCarthy and fellow artist Mike Kelley improvising a scene together as father and son. "We're conditioned into our reality," says McCarthy, who reflects on how personal family dynamics turn into vicious patterns and how he views his art as a way of "breaking out of a conditioned attitude." The artist's own son Damon McCarthy talks about working collaboratively to create the raucous *Caribbean Pirates* (2005), a non-linear parody of the Disney ride and movie franchise. The segment concludes in McCarthy's Los Angeles studio where he and his assistants are shown working on a series of drawings and sculptures that include elements from Snow White, Hummel figurines, and a bust of President George W. Bush.





**Paul McCarthy** was born in 1945 in Salt Lake City. He studied at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City (1968-69); earned a BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute (1969) and an MFA from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles (1972); and was a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles (1984-2003). Paul McCarthy's video-taped performances and provocative multimedia installations lampoon polite society, ridicule authority, and bombard the viewer with a sensory overload of often sexually-tinged, violent imagery. With irreverent wit, McCarthy often takes aim at cherished American myths and icons—Walt Disney, the Western, and even the Modern Artist—adding a touch of malice to subjects that have been traditionally revered for their innocence or purity. Absent or present, the human figure is a constant element in his work, whether in the form of bodies in action, satirical caricatures, or animistic sculptures; as the residue of a private ritual; or as architectural space left uninhabited for the viewer to occupy. Whether conflating real-world political figures with fantastical characters such as Santa Claus, or treating erotic and abject content with frivolity and charm, McCarthy's work confuses codes, mixes high and low culture, and provokes an analysis of fundamental beliefs. Paul McCarthy lives and works in Altadena, California.

**Cindy Sherman** was born in 1954 in Glen Ridge, New Jersey. Sherman earned a BA from State University College, Buffalo, New York (1976). In self-reflexive photographs and films, Cindy Sherman invents myriad guises, metamorphosing from Hollywood starlet to clown to society matron. Often with the simplest of means—a camera, a wig, makeup, an outfit—Sherman fashions ambiguous but memorable characters that suggest complex lives lived out of frame. Leaving her works untitled, Sherman refuses to impose descriptive language on her images, relying instead on the viewer's ability to develop narratives as an essential component of appreciating the work. While rarely revealing her private intentions, Sherman's investigations have a compelling relationship to public images, from kitsch (film stills and centerfolds) to art history (Old Masters and Surrealism) to green-screen technology and the latest advances in digital photography. Sherman's exhaustive study of portraiture and self-portraiture—often a playful mixture of camp and horror, heightened by gritty realism—provides a new lens through which to examine societal assumptions surrounding gender and the valuation of concept over style. Sherman lives and works in New York.

**Yinka Shonibare MBE** was born in 1962 in London, England. After growing up in Lagos, Nigeria, Shonibare studied at Byam Shaw School of Art, London (1984-89) and earned an MA from Goldsmiths College, London University (1991). Known for using batik in costumed dioramas that explore race and colonialism, Yinka Shonibare MBE also employs painting, sculpture, photography, and film in work that disrupts and challenges our notions of cultural identity. Taking on the honorific MBE as part of his name in everyday use, Shonibare plays with the ambiguities and contradictions of his attitude toward the Establishment and its legacies of colonialism and class. In multimedia projects that reveal his passion for art history, literature, and philosophy, Shonibare provides a critical tour of Western civilization and its achievements and failures. At the same time, his sensitive use of his own foibles (vanity, for one) and challenges (physical disability) provide an autobiographical perspective through which to navigate the contradictory emotions and paradoxes of his examination of individual and political power. Yinka Shonibare MBE lives and works in London.





## EVENT IDEAS

Host a panel discussion that investigates the notion of performance and how each artist employs his or her body in the artistic process. Invite a performing arts scholar, a choreographer, a theater director, a fashion photographer, or a sociologist to discuss the episode and the different implications and meanings of the body in the context of the artists featured in the *Transformation* hour.

Invite a local actor and artist to have a conversation about how each prepares for a new project. Consider how ideas of performance or physical gesture enter into each of their practices, both mentally and physically.

When talking about his sculptures, Yinka Shonibare MBE states, "My figures, actually, are of mixed race. They are neither white nor black, and they don't have any facial features that identify them racially. It's also a device that manages to make the pieces post-racial." Host a discussion about the idea of "post-racial," in regards to both the artist's work and the time in which we live. Discuss the meaning of this term and facilitate a forum on how ideas about race and race-relations have evolved and transformed both in the United States and abroad.

## SCREENING-BASED ACTIVITIES

Discuss the different ways each artist deals with narrative in his or her work. Cindy Sherman expresses her desire to figure out "how to imply narrative" in a single frame in her series *Untitled Film Stills*. Consider the ways technology has changed our relationship to video and photography. Using cell phone cameras, have the audience take on the challenge of trying to tell a story with one photo. Share each of the digital photographs and discuss which are the most successful and why.

Ask participants to create a character profile of an alter ego through drawing, writing, Photoshop, or even Facebook. Create a picture of yourself as someone else. Extend this activity by creating a network of characters, places, and scenarios that your alter ego may have experienced.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Define and discuss the idea of transformation in relationship to the artists in the episode. What are the different types of transformation, whether physical, emotional, or intellectual, that transpire on a personal, local, national, or international scale? What are the major events in your neighborhood, city, or country that have served as transformational moments?

Describing the fabrics he uses in his sculptures, artist Yinka Shonibare MBE says, "I like the fact that the fabrics are multilayered. They have this interesting history that goes back to Indonesia. And then they're appropriated by Africa and now represent African identities. Things are not always what they seem." How might this statement change the viewer's understand of the work? How does each artist in the episode play with appearances to challenge the audience's assumptions?

Cindy Sherman discusses growing up and experimenting with makeup: "So I think I would play in my room and see what makeup could do. Sometimes I'd become a character." What strategies do the artists employ to transform a material, an idea, or themselves within their work and to what effect? How do individuals fashion a character? How might clothing, accessories, or an overall image inspire certain actions or behaviors? Do these elements affect identity or does identity affect the choices we make about how we present ourselves?

Discussing his work *Family Tyranny (Modeling and Molding)* Paul McCarthy says, "We are conditioned into our reality. It was kind of like struggling, thinking about those things. And then just sort of extrapolating that into who I am and breaking out of a conditioned attitude." In what ways does each artist consider the idea of conditioning? How does each artist's work and process address, in McCarthy's words, "tearing down, opening up conventions?"

## ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

|                       |  |  |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| <i>Transformation</i> | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfive/transformation.html">www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfive/transformation.html</a> |  |
| Paul McCarthy         | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/paul-mccarthy">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/paul-mccarthy</a>                                 | <a href="http://www.hauservirth.com">www.hauservirth.com</a> |
| Cindy Sherman         | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/cindy-sherman">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/cindy-sherman</a>                                 | <a href="http://www.gagosian.com">www.gagosian.com</a>       |
| Yinka Shonibare MBE   | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/yinka-shonibare-mbe">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/yinka-shonibare-mbe</a>                     | <a href="http://www.jamescohan.com">www.jamescohan.com</a>   |





What new grammars and logics do artists invent in today's supercharged, information-based society? Why do we find comfort in some systems while rebelling against others? Whether through acts of appropriation, repetition, or accumulation, the artists in this episode realize projects both vast in scope and beyond comprehension.

"Trying to figure out who I am and my work is trying to understand systems," says **Julie Mehretu**, shown working with her assistants in Berlin on seven large canvases for a show at Deutsche Guggenheim (Fall 2009). "The thing that keeps me going is the painting," she says, "and in getting lost in doing that a language is invented." Mehretu's abstract compositions reference modernist architecture, Google Maps, Coliseum-like buildings like those found in *Stadia II* (2004), and defaced structures—like the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan—which became the inspiration for *Vanescere* (2007). The segment captures the artist at a moment of upheaval, both in her life and in current events, working on the biggest project of her young career: a 21 by 85 foot long mural commissioned by a major financial institution in Lower Manhattan, to be completed during the most severe financial crisis since the Great Depression. Characterizing the task before her as "absurd," she wonders "can you actually make a picture...of the history of capitalist development," from the early maps of the Silk Road to the evolution of the marketplace as it exists today?

"I'm always interested in things that we don't call art, and I say why not?" asks **John Baldessari**. Filmed in his Venice, California studio, the artist consults with his assistant on a color-coded group of maquettes for *Raised Eyebrows / Furrowed Foreheads* (2008), a series of photographic bas-reliefs. "One of the reasons I gave up painting is because it's all about being tasteful," he explains, "I just decided to be very systematic about it and use the color wheel." Throughout the segment, Baldessari assails conventional wisdom about art and meaning. "Words are just a way we communicate. Images are a way we communicate," he asserts, "I couldn't figure out why they had to be in different baskets." In the installation *Brick Bldg, Lg Windows w/ Xlent Views, Partially Furnished, Renowned Architect* (2009) at Museum Haus Lange in Krefeld, Germany, Baldessari humorously reconfigures an entire brick building by noted architect Mies van der Rohe. "Aesthetically, I always look for the weak link in the chain," he says, comparing his method to "a corral around your idea...limited movement that promotes creativity."

**Kimsooja's** segment opens with a series of videotaped performances in crowded cities around the world, titled *A Needle Woman* (1999-2001). In the videos, the artist is shown from behind, her form acting as an unmoving axis on the horizon. Comparing her body to a needle that threads through space and time, she explains that her conceptual "system is very much rooted to the practice of sewing" and that she discovers "artistic questions and answers from our daily life activities." Discovering that bottari—a traditional Korean bundle—could be used as minimalist sculpture, the artist later explored autobiographical and cultural aspects of the form in works such as a tour of South Korea in *Cities On The Move—2727 km Bottari Truck* (1997) and an installation of hanging bedsheets belonging to newlyweds in *A Laundry Woman* (2004). The segment focuses in depth on two recent site-specific works. *Lotus: Zone of Zero* (2008) in Brussels consists of 2,000 fuchsia lotus lanterns with a soundtrack of Tibetan, Gregorian, and Islamic chants. *To Breathe—A Mirror Woman* (2006) is an intervention at the Crystal Palace in Madrid in which rainbow-colored sunlight, diffused through diffraction grating film applied to windows, is reflected in a mirrored surface applied to the floor while a pre-recorded performance of the artist's rhythmic breathing—*A Weaving Factory* (2005)—fills the space. Says the artist on her ethereal and genre-bending work: "My intention is to reach to the totality of our life in art."

**Allan McCollum's** segment begins with his uncle Jon Gnagy's 1950s television program *Learn to Draw*. Crediting his uncle's demonstrations as an early influence, McCollum says "whenever I design a project it's in my head...that I would be able to show someone else how to do it." Describing his aesthetic motivation with the paradox of "wanting to try to work in quantities...and make things that are singular and unique at the same time," the viewer travels with the artist and his team of studio assistants to the 28th São Paulo Bienal (2008) for the installation of *Drawings* (1988)—1,800 hand-stenciled, graphite pencil works. McCollum describes devising "a system that would produce a shape for everybody on the planet." To make *The Shapes Project* (2005), the artist developed a set of unique forms that, when fully combined, results in 60 billion individual shapes. McCollum later collaborated with four remote home businesses in Maine, whom he only talked to via email and phone, to produce collections of silhouettes, rubber stamps, wood ornaments, and copper cookie cutters. The resulting *Shapes from Maine* (2009) consists of over 2,200 individual hand-crafted objects, each its own one-of-a-kind shape.





**Julie Mehretu** was born in 1970 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She studied at University Cheik Anta Diop, Dakar (1990-91), earning a BA from Kalamazoo College, Michigan (1992), and an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (1997). She was a resident of the CORE Program, Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (1997-98) and the AIR Program at the Studio Museum in Harlem (2001). Mehretu's paintings and drawings refer to elements of mapping and architecture, achieving a calligraphic complexity that resembles turbulent atmospheres and dense social networks. Architectural renderings and aerial views of urban grids enter the work as fragments, losing their real-world specificity and challenging narrow geographic and cultural readings. The paintings' wax-like surfaces—built up over weeks and months in thin translucent layers—have a luminous warmth and spatial depth, with formal qualities of light and space made all the more complex by Mehretu's delicate depictions of fire, explosions, and perspectives in both two and three dimensions. Her works engage the history of nonobjective art—from Constructivism to Futurism—posing contemporary questions about the relationship between utopian impulses and abstraction. Julie Mehretu lives and works in Berlin.

**John Baldessari** was born in National City, California in 1931. He received a BA (1953) and MA (1957) from San Diego State College, continuing his studies at Otis Art Institute (1957-59) and Chouinard Art Institute. Synthesizing photomontage, painting, and language, Baldessari's deadpan visual juxtapositions equate images with words and illuminate, confound, and challenge meaning. He upends commonly held expectations of how images function, often by drawing the viewer's attention to minor details, absences, or the spaces between things. By placing colorful dots over faces, obscuring portions of scenes, or juxtaposing stock photographs with quixotic phrases, he injects humor and dissonance into vernacular imagery. For most of his career John Baldessari has also been a teacher. While some of the strategies he deploys in his work—experimentation, rule-based systems, and working within and against arbitrarily imposed limits to find new solutions to problems—share similarities with pedagogical methods, they are also intrinsic to his particular world view and philosophy. He lives and works in Santa Monica, California.

**Kimsooja** was born in 1957 in Taegu, South Korea. She earned a BFA (1980) and MA (1984) from Hong-Ik University, Seoul. Kimsooja's videos and installations blur the boundaries between aesthetics and transcendent experience through their use of repetitive actions, meditative practices, and serial forms. In many pieces, everyday actions—such as sewing or doing laundry—become two- and three-dimensional or performative activities. Central to her work is the bottari, a traditional Korean bed cover used to wrap and protect personal belongings, which Kimsooja transforms into a philosophical metaphor for structure and connection. In videos that feature her in various personas (Needle Woman, Beggar Woman, Homeless Woman), she leads us to reflect on the human condition, offering open-ended perspectives through which she presents and questions reality. Using her own body, facing away from the camera, Kimsooja becomes a void; we literally see and respond through her. While striking for their vibrant color and density of imagery, Kimsooja's works emphasize metaphysical changes within the artist-as-performer as well as the viewer. Kimsooja lives and works in New York.

**Allan McCollum** was born in Los Angeles in 1944. In his twenties, McCollum briefly considered a career in theater, then attended trade school to study restaurant management and industrial kitchen work. In the late 1960s, he began to educate himself as an artist. Applying strategies of mass production to hand-made objects, McCollum's labor-intensive practice questions the intrinsic value of the unique work of art. McCollum's installations—fields of vast numbers of small-scale works, systematically arranged—are the product of many tiny gestures, built up over time. Viewing his work often produces a sublime effect as one slowly realizes that the dizzying array of thousands of identical-looking shapes is, in fact, comprised of subtly different, distinct things. Engaging assistants, scientists, and local craftspeople in his process, McCollum embraces a collaborative and democratic form of creativity. His drawings and sculptures often serve a symbolic purpose—as surrogates, faithful copies, or stand-ins for people—and are presented theatrically, transforming the exhibition space into a laboratory where artifice and context are scrutinized. Economical in form, yet curious in function, his work and mechanical-looking processes are infused with humor and humility. Allan McCollum lives and works in New York.





## EVENT IDEAS

Consider John Baldessari's statement, "Words are just a way we communicate, images are a way we communicate, and I couldn't figure out why they had to be in different baskets." Host a discussion between a writer or poet and a visual artist that explores their work and investigates John Baldessari's interest in merging the language of words and images.

Invite a curator, artist, and sociologist to discuss and identify the core elements of what might constitute a "system" and discuss the impact of systems on our everyday lives. How do the artists in this episode use systems to help understand the world around them? How do they employ a specific logic or set of rules to help communicate a complex idea? Which systems do these artists accept and which ones do they rebel against?

Julie Mehretu asks herself, "Can you actually make a picture that in some way maps and gives a picture of this history of capitalist development and the economic system?" while explaining her process for an artwork commissioned for lower Manhattan near the New York Stock Exchange. Allan McCollum discusses his *Shapes from Maine* project and says, "And I started becoming interested in people who had businesses in their homes and also kind of very independent. And contrary to our obsession with globalism there are people locally, all around us, working in their homes, making thousands of things." Invite an economist to discuss different systems that help explain the rules of local economies and the global economy in relation to the artists' work in the episode.

## SCREENING-BASED ACTIVITIES

"Whenever I design a project, it's in my head while I'm designing it that I would be able to show someone else how to do it," states artist Allan McCollum. Have participants create a set of instructions for a work of art and ask two or more people to carry them out. Compare the results and discuss how and why the interpretation of the instructions varied.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In the episode, John Baldessari describes his system of working and says, "I guess it's like a corral around your idea, a corral that you can move—but not too much. And it's that limited movement that promotes creativity." Discuss the quote. How do the artists in this episode use systems to approach ideas in their work? How do these systematic approaches help make sense of their ideas?

Julie Mehretu describes the process of making a series of paintings. She states, "Many parts of the drawing will also be erased. So the paintings will build up, and then a big portion of them somehow or another will disappear. So then hopefully, the paintings will also just interact to talk about disintegration." How do artists use strategies of erasure, covering, and concealment in their work and to what effect? Can absence be as compelling as presence? How?

"The most important thing I'm interested in, in performative video, is my experience while doing it. I'm not really that interested in video as a result. It's really a secondary thing for me. The most important thing is the moment when my contemplation goes on and has a certain inner evolution," says Kimsooja. Consider both inner evolution and transcendence as discussed by the artist. What systems does Kimsooja rely on in order to achieve that particular moment of contemplation? How does experience also inspire the artistic process of the other artists in this episode?

Allan McCollum recounts the ideas behind *The Shapes Project*. The artist explains, "I was thinking about symbols, and I was thinking, 'Well, okay, we typically create singular symbols so that we can all feel we belong.' Like, we look at the American flag, and we say, 'Oh, we're all Americans.' It occurred to me that if one used a certain kind of logic and really worked at it, one could come up with a system that would produce a shape for everybody on the planet." How does McCollum create a system that produces symbols that are unique while still cultivating a sense of 'belonging'?

## ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

|                 |  |   |
|-----------------|--|---|
| <i>Systems</i>  | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfive/systems.html">www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfive/systems.html</a> |   |
| Julie Mehretu   | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/julie-mehretu">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/julie-mehretu</a>                   | <a href="http://www.whitecube.com">www.whitecube.com</a>                      |
| John Baldessari | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/john-baldessari">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/john-baldessari</a>               | <a href="http://www.baldessari.org">www.baldessari.org</a>                    |
| Kimsooja        | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/kimsooja">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/kimsooja</a>                             | <a href="http://www.kimsooja.com">www.kimsooja.com</a>                        |
| Allan McCollum  | <a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/allan-mccollum">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/allan-mccollum</a>                 | <a href="http://home.att.net/~allanmcnyc">http://home.att.net/~allanmcnyc</a> |

