

# Press Release

## The Brooklyn Museum Announces New Acquisitions Across Collections and Mediums

Acquisitions include works by Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun, Xu Bing, and Al Held; a portrait given by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg; over 3,000 vernacular photographs from the Kaplan-Henes Collection; and contemporary Chinese photography

The Brooklyn Museum is pleased to announce significant new acquisitions which emphasize the institution's dedication to presenting diverse narratives through its collection. The artists represented by these acquisitions span a wide range of aesthetic styles, mediums, eras, and nationalities. Highlights include over 3,000 vernacular photographs documenting a century of women's history from the Kaplan-Henes Collection; a work by eighteenth-century French portrait painter Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun; a portrait gifted by Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg; a significant gift of over fifty photographs by experimental Chinese contemporary artists; and a painting created specifically for the Brooklyn Museum by one of China's most important living artists, Xu Bing. Works by Al Held, Chris Martin, and Joan Snyder also join the collection.

Anne Pasternak, Shelby White and Leon Levy Director, Brooklyn Museum, says, "We are so excited by these transformational works of art that add significantly to the strengths of our exceptional collections, and we are tremendously grateful to the generous donors behind them who make it possible for our institution to continue telling trailblazing stories of inclusion through art."

Recent acquisition highlights follow:

### ***Portrait of Countess Maria Theresia Czernin* by Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun**



Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun is one of the most celebrated portrait painters of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe. She secured the patronage of the French aristocracy and served as portrait painter to Marie Antoinette. Vigée Le Brun became one of only four women members of the French Royal Academy in 1783, and spent her later years enjoying fame and financial success.

This large, striking portrait by Vigée Le Brun is notable for the way it presents the sitter, Countess Maria Theresia Czernin. Vigée Le Brun paints the countess holding an open book about ancient Greece, suggesting that she was engaged in scholarship and history, qualities that were more often seen in portraits of men at the time.

The portrait allows the Brooklyn Museum to present a more inclusive narrative of European art with regard to the contributions of women, and to further explore how identity in portraiture is visually constructed and constituted along cultural, class, political, and gender lines. It will strengthen the current presentation of historical portraiture in the Museum’s European Art galleries. It also provides an important link between our historical collections and Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party*, where Vigée Le Brun is referenced on the floor of the work and in the historical timeline.

**A century of photography on women’s history from the Kaplan-Henes Collection**

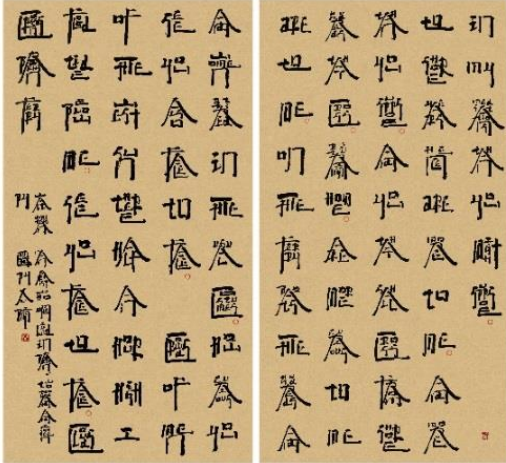


Vernacular photography encompasses photographs of everyday subjects, often taken by practitioners outside of fine art contexts. The Kaplan-Henes Collection—assembled over twenty-five years by Daile Kaplan, Vice President of Photography and Photobooks at Swann Gallery, and Brooklyn-based artist Donna Henes—features an unprecedented cross-section of vernacular photographs documenting over a century of women’s lives in the United States. Including more than 3,000 original vintage photographs taken between the 1850s and the 1980s, the collection provides views of both everyday and historic moments. The photographs capture intersecting experiences of class, race, and ability, which speak to women’s complex social, cultural, and political positioning in this country and beyond.

The Kaplan-Henes Collection will significantly enhance the historical span of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, and will support conversations around the value of vernacular art forms. These works offer further visual examples of complex and intimate narratives of feminism, intersectionality, and the significant historical experiences of groups

often left out of established fine art narratives. The photographs will also serve as an important link to the Museum’s Library and Archives, prompting new collaborative projects across departments.

**Square Word Calligraphy: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, Walt Whitman by Xu Bing**



Xu Bing’s *Square Word Calligraphy: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, Walt Whitman* (2018) was created specifically for the Brooklyn Museum in consultation with Susan L. Beningson, Assistant Curator, Asian Art. Celebrating the contemporary Chinese artist’s close relationship with Brooklyn, where he lived in the 1990s and still has a studio today, *Square Word Calligraphy: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, Walt Whitman* also pays homage to Walt Whitman, the famous American poet who served as an early librarian at the Brooklyn Apprentices’ Library Association (the Brooklyn Museum’s predecessor).

Since 2014, the Brooklyn Museum has made a conscious effort to grow its collection of Chinese art, culminating in the acquisition of nearly fifty works from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These new works, by Xu Bing and other artists including Zheng Chongbin and Tai Xiangzhou, will be highlighted in the Museum’s upcoming reinstallation of its Arts of Asia galleries.

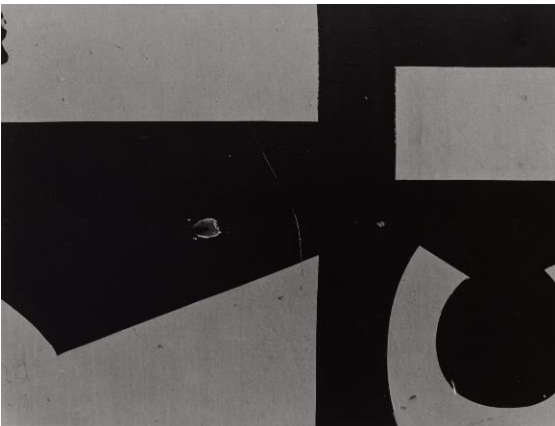
**Selection of fifty photographic works by contemporary Chinese artists**



This impressive collection of fifty works represents the range of photographic practices by avant-garde Chinese artists since the 1990s, including works by Cang Xin, Hai Bo, Hong Hao, Huang Yan, Li Tianyuan, Rong Rong, Wang Jinsong, Zhang Dali, and Zhang Huan. With the addition of these works, the Brooklyn Museum now has one of the largest collections of contemporary Chinese photography in a public U.S. institution.

The works in this collection are notable for their use of the body as raw material and their assessment of the changing built environment. By applying classical and historical imagery to contemporary issues, these artists explore China's varied political legacies and histories while also examining new and emerging forms of individual and collective identity. This transformative acquisition expands both the Brooklyn Museum's contemporary Chinese art and photography collections, allowing for a greater understanding of the influence these artists have had on both areas.

**Collection of thirty-one gelatin silver photographs by American artists Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind**



The Brooklyn Museum currently has more than fifty-five photographs by Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind in its collection; the addition of thirty-one more works by these two important photographers greatly enriches and complements this already robust collection. The

acquisition includes a sizable number of photographs from both artists' most well-known series from the late 1940s through the 1970s. Highlights include Siskind's iconic found abstractions as seen in the work *Chicago 16* (1957) and examples of Callahan's use of double exposures such as *Eleanor, Aix-en-Provence, France* (1958).

Adding these works to the Museum's substantial collection of mid-twentieth century U.S. photography allows for the opportunity to highlight more experimental and subjective approaches to photography explored during these pivotal decades for the medium.

### Gifts of Alex Katz, including works by Al Held and Chris Martin



Artist Alex Katz has gifted the Brooklyn Museum three works. Chris Martin's painting *Dark Times in America (Blonde on Blonde)* (2017) grapples with the legacies of midcentury abstraction and seeks to find new possibilities in the centuries-old tradition of painting. Al Held's *Untitled* (1958) is one of the artist's earlier paintings, serving as a compliment to Held's *Solar Wind III* (1974), which is already in the Museum's collection.

The Museum also acquired Katz's portrait of Arthur Jafa, *Arthur 1* (2017), currently on view in the American Art galleries, which portrays the contemporary artist against a vibrant yellow backdrop. Contrasted with the Museum's holdings of Katz's landscapes and portraits, including *Ann* (1956), which hangs nearby, *Arthur 1* illustrates the artist's continued experimentation and innovation as a painter.



***Buried Images* (1978) by Joan Snyder**



A large-scale abstract painting by Brooklyn-based feminist artist Joan Snyder has entered the permanent collection of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art. Born in New Jersey in 1940, Snyder has developed a signature style over more than forty years of unique experimentation with techniques and materials. Often described as an autobiographical or confessional artist, her paintings form narratives of both personal and communal experiences. *Buried Images* (1978) is characteristic of Snyder’s practice, and was made during the artist’s most critically acclaimed period known as her “stroke paintings.” These works emphasize her signature methods of paint application, including dripping, smearing, and staining, and *Buried Images* also integrates found textiles. The work was generously donated by the estate of Joann and Gifford Phillips.

**Portrait of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg**



Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, has generously given a portrait painted by Constance Peck Beaty to the Museum. Throughout her career, Justice Ginsburg has helped shape the modern era of women’s rights. She is a beloved role model, especially for young admirers, to whom she is affectionately known as “The Notorious R.B.G.” Born in Brooklyn in 1933, Justice Ginsburg often visited the Museum as a young girl. In offering this painting to the Brooklyn Museum, she wrote: “During my

grade school years, excursions to the Museum were memorable for me and my classmates.” This painting is the third portrait of Justice Ginsburg painted by Constance Peck Beaty, known as C. P. Beaty. She painted the portrait of Ginsburg at Columbia Law School as well as Ginsburg’s official portrait for the Supreme Court.

**Rob Wynne’s *EXTRA LIFE* (2018)**



*EXTRA LIFE* is one of the most dramatic of the sixteen works comprising Rob Wynne’s installation *Float*, which was on view in the Brooklyn Museum’s American Art galleries from June 6, 2018 to March 3, 2019. The recently-acquired work is composed of over 1,000 molten glass discs, which are installed in a large clockwise spiral to create an image with cosmological overtones.

**Illustrated, from top:**

Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun (French, 1755–1842). *Portrait of Countess Maria Theresia Czernin*, 1793. Oil on canvas, 54 x 39 in. (137.2 x 99.1 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Lilla Brown in memory of her husband John W. Brown, Mrs. Watson B. Dickerman, A. Augustus Healy, Helen Babbott MacDonald, Charles H. Schieren, and L.L. Thernal, by exchange, 2018.53.

Unknown. *Curtiss Aero and Motor Corp Welding and Brazing Training School*, 1918. Gelatin silver photograph. Brooklyn Museum, The Photographic Collection of Daile Kaplan and Donne Henes; purchase gift of Abigail E. Disney; the Dobkin Family Foundation, Anne H. Hoy, Sheri Sandler, the Starry Night Fund, and Jenny Warburg, 2018.62m-n. (Photo: courtesy Daile Kaplan)

Xu Bing (Chinese, born 1955). *Square Word Calligraphy: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, Walt Whitman*, 2018. Ink on paper, each panel, exclusive of mounting: 39 x 74 in. (99 x 188 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Xu Bing to the Brooklyn Museum in honor of his father, 2018.24a-b. © Xu Bing Studio. (Photo: Jonathan Dorado)

Huang Yan (Chinese, born 1966). *Tattoo Landscape*, 1999. Chromogenic photograph, 49 x 62 in. (124.5 x 157.5 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Larry Warsh, 2018.55.23. © Huang Yan. (Photo: courtesy AW Asia)

Aaron Siskind (American, 1903–1991). *Chicago 16*, 1957. Gelatin silver photograph, 11 x 14 in. (27.9 x 35.6 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Richard and Ronay Menschel, 2018.32.22. © Courtesy of the Aaron Siskind Foundation. (Photo: Jonathan Dorado)

Alex Katz (American, born 1927). *Arthur 1*, 2017. Oil on linen, 96 x 96 in. (243.8 x 243.8 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Gift of the artist, 2018.10. © 2019 Alex Katz / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. (Photo: courtesy Alex Katz)

Joan Snyder (American, born 1940). *Buried Images*, 1978. Mixed media on canvas, 48 x 96 in. (121.9 x 243.8 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Gift of the Estate of Gifford and Joann Phillips, 2019.6. © Joan Snyder. (Photo: courtesy Franklin Parrasch Gallery)

Constance P. Beaty (American). *Large Oil Sketch: Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg*, c. 2015–16. Oil on linen, 42 x 34 x 1 1/2 in. (106.7 x 86.4 x 3.8 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, 2019.2. © Constance P. Beaty (Photo: courtesy Constance P. Beaty)

Rob Wynne (American, born 1950). *EXTRA LIFE*, 2018. Glass, 160 x 300 in. (406.4 x 762 cm). Brooklyn Museum, William K. Jacobs, Jr. Fund, 2019.4. © Rob Wynne. (Photo: Jonathan Dorado)