

HAMMER

ART + PRACTICE

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Art + Practice: Sophia Belsheim, 323-337-6887, sophia@artandpractice.org

Hammer Museum: Nancy Lee, 310-443-7016, nlee@hammer.ucla.edu

**Art + Practice and the Hammer Museum Present
*A Shape That Stands Up***

On view March 19–June 18, 2016

Public opening reception: Saturday, March 19, 3-5pm



Images (L-R): Amy Sillman, *A Shape that Stands Up and Listens #31*, 2012. Ink and chalk on paper, 30 × 22 1/2 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York; Tschabalala Self, *Untitled 2*, 2014. Oil on canvas, 54 × 34 inches. Private collection; Kevin Beasley, *Untitled (Lumbar)*, 2015. Polyurethane foam, resin, backpack, 31 x 13 x 13 inches, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Gift of Agnes and Edward Lee, in memory of Leonard Nimoy.

(Los Angeles, CA)— Art + Practice and the Hammer Museum are pleased to present the group exhibition *A Shape That Stands Up*, which features 15 national and international artists examining the gray space between figuration and abstraction in recent painting, drawing, and sculpture. The exhibition reinforces Art + Practice's commitment to be an incubator for new ideas and experimentation, framed by historical dialogue and social inquiry. Curated by Hammer assistant curator Jamillah James, *A Shape That Stands Up* will be on view **March 19–June 18, 2016** at **Art + Practice** (4339 Leimert Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90008).

Participating Artists:

Math Bass (b. 1981, Long Island, NY)

Kevin Beasley (b. 1985, Lynchburg, VA)

Sadie Benning (b. 1973, Milwaukee, WI)

Robert Colescott (b. 1925, Oakland, CA; d. 2009 Tucson, AZ)

Carroll Dunham (b. 1946, New Haven, CT)

Jamian Juliano Villani (b. 1987, Newark, NJ)

Jason Meadows (b. 1972, Indianapolis, IN)

D'Metrius John Rice (b. 1981, Washington, DC)

Tschabalala Self (b. 1990, New York, NY)

Amy Sillman (b. 1955, Detroit, MI)

Henry Taylor (b. 1958, Oxnard, CA)

Torey Thornton (b. 1990, Macon, GA)

Sue Williams (b. 1954, Chicago Heights, IL)

Ulrich Wulff (b. 1975, Kempten, Germany)

Brenna Youngblood (b. 1979, Riverside, CA)

The artists in this cross-generational show treat the figure as material, and the history of representation as one, long open-ended question with many possible answers. While the exhibition concentrates specifically on works produced after 2000, it seeks to trace a historical lineage of artists and exhibitions that have questioned the role of portraiture and figure painting in art history, and the ways in which the body's representation becomes a field for projection, interpretation, and contestation. Each artist's approach presents a challenge to the orthodoxy of beauty and mimetic precision in creative production, mediated through humor, fantasy, and occasionally, the grotesque.

Influenced in part by the controversial 1978 exhibition *Bad Painting* (curated by Marcia Tucker for the New Museum in New York), which featured artists Joan Brown, William Wegman, and the late Charles Garabedian, *A Shape That Stands Up* reckons with what Tucker called "figurative distortion" in the 21st century. The figure is often depicted in the state of becoming something else, with shapes, light, and shadow taking on ambiguous forms. The exhibition's title is inspired by an ongoing series of drawings by artist **Amy Sillman** (b. 1955, Detroit, MI), which borrows from a sentence in Jayne Anne Phillips's 2009 book *Lark and Termite* that reads, "Deep inside his pictures, a shape stands up and listens."

Six drawings by **Carroll Dunham** (b. 1946, Greenwich, CT) and two later paintings by **Robert Colescott** (1923–2008) serve as guideposts for the exhibition. Dunham's drawings, featuring his "Bather" figure, demonstrate his commitment to exploring the limits of figuration, through a rigorous drawing and painting practice. Dunham's exhaustive revisiting of this character includes a deviation of some kind, with erasure and repetition becoming the tools employed to push the image towards total abstraction. Colescott is best known for his paintings which reimagined African Americans as the actors in art and American history, underscored by his trademark biting wit. In the early 2000s, he returned to the formal abstraction of his training and earlier career. While color dominates the paintings, glimpses of his familiar, gestural illustration style emerge.

Torey Thornton (b. 1990, Macon, GA) uses an index of simple images that have the potential to become loaded with viewer association. The image of a tree recurs in his work, constituting the head and neck of the figure in his painting on view. The tree is a primary symbol in semiotics, with a multiplicity of potential meanings, but within his painting, new readings through overlapping social lenses are introduced. **Tschabalala Self** (b. 1990, New York, NY)'s paintings combine printmaking techniques, collage, and sewing. The female figure in her untitled series of works (2014) is a kaleidoscopic collision of limbs, with its gaze cast towards the viewer. Her work fits alongside a number of female artists who visualize a "monstrous femininity," informed by feminist theory, science fiction, and mythology, as an alternative to canonical or traditional depictions of women in art.

Breaking apart the figure and reducing it to a barely legible state is a modernist impulse born out of a preoccupation with "otherness," be it cultural, physical, or psychological, which still informs artistic and cultural production today. While there are fewer things more charged and burdened by association in visual culture than the human form, both historically and at present, *A Shape That Stands Up* suggests, through a variety of approaches, that a move towards the center in the spectrum of objectivity can be just as generative and radical a site to work as on the margins.

A Shape That Stands Up is organized by Hammer Museum assistant curator Jamillah James.

The Hammer Museum at Art + Practice is a Public Engagement Partnership supported by a grant from The James Irvine Foundation.

ABOUT ART + PRACTICE

Conceived and founded by artist Mark Bradford, philanthropist and collector Eileen Harris Norton and social activist Allan DiCastro, Art + Practice (A+P) is an arts and education private operating foundation based in Leimert Park, Los Angeles. A+P's mandate is to create a developmental platform that provides life-skills training for foster youth as well as free, museum-curated art exhibitions and moderated art lectures to the community of Leimert Park.

A+P INFORMATION

Admission to all exhibitions and public programs are free and available to the public. To learn more visit www.artandpractice.org.

Hours: Tues-Sat: 12 pm – 6 pm. A+P is located at 4339 Leimert Boulevard Los Angeles, CA 90008. Street parking is available.

ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM

The Hammer Museum at UCLA offers exhibitions and collections that span classic to contemporary art, as well as programs that spark meaningful encounters with art and ideas. Through a wide-ranging, international exhibition program and the biennial, *Made in L.A.*, the Hammer highlights contemporary art since the 1960s, especially the work of

emerging and under recognized artists. The exhibitions, permanent collections, and nearly 300 public programs annually—including film screenings, lectures, symposia, readings, music performances, and workshops for families—are all free to the public.

HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION

Admission to all exhibitions and programs at the Hammer Museum is free, made possible through the generosity of benefactors Erika J. Glazer and Brenda R. Potter. Hours: Tuesday–Friday 11 a.m.–8 p.m., Saturday & Sunday 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Mondays and national holidays. Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Boulevard at Westwood, Los Angeles. Onsite parking \$3 (maximum 3 hours) or \$3 flat rate after 6 p.m. Visit hammer.ucla.edu for details or call 310-443-7000.