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**ROSE
ART
MUSEUM**

**WORKS BY BETYE SAAR, RALPH COBURN, AND JOE OVERSTREET ENTER THE ROSE
ART MUSEUM'S PERMANENT COLLECTION**

(Waltham, MA. June, 2019) – The Rose Art Museum has announced that three major works have newly entered the museum's permanent collection. The most recent acquisitions purchased with funds from museum endowments include Betye Saar's mixed media assemblage *Supreme Quality* (1998), Ralph Coburn's multi-part painting *Random Sequence Participatory Composition* (1962), and Joe Overstreet's monumental sculptural painting *untitled* (1972) from the *Flight Patterns* series. These important works add further depth to the Rose's outstanding modern and contemporary collection and join new and significant works by Cuban artist Zilia Sánchez, and American artists, Kay Rosen, and Adam Pendleton that have been added to the permanent collection within the last two years.

Other recent notable purchases, include pieces by Cypriot artist Haris Epaminonda, who recently received the Silver Lion at the Venice Biennale, American emerging artist Martine Gutierrez, and Belgian artist Pieter Vermeersch, whose work enters a U.S. Museum's collection for the first time. Of the fifteen works added in 2019 alone, 67% were works by women and 53% were works by artists of color, in a group that includes multiple generations, ethnicities, and backgrounds.

Commenting on the recent acquisitions, Henry and Lois Foster Director and Chief Curator, Luis Croquer stated: "We are thrilled to welcome Betye Saar, Ralph Coburn, and Joe Overstreet's exceptional work to the Rose collection. These pieces add greater depth and new perspectives to our holdings, while contributing to diversify them with ideas, approaches, and experiences that make them more reflective and responsive to the world around us."

BETYE SAAR (b. 1926, Los Angeles, CA)
Supreme Quality, 1998

A pioneer of second-wave feminist and post-war black aesthetics, **Betye Saar** (b. 1926, Los Angeles, CA) began a career in design before transitioning to assemblages and installations, for which she is best known. In 1972, she created her first series of assemblages, often depicting African American women in revolt against enslavement, segregation, and servitude. With the figure of an armed woman at its center, *Supreme Quality* is part of a series of assemblages built with salvaged washboards that the artist has collected for almost 60 years. Saar uses the outmoded household tool as a symbol of the unresolved legacy of slavery and the subsequent oppressive systems facing Black Americans today, particularly the plight of women. In her work, the washboard, a humble everyday object speaks to both labor and historical trauma. Saar's

boundary-pushing practice has now served as a major influence for many generations of artists that have followed in her footsteps.

About the Artist

Born in Los Angeles, Saar moved with her family to Pasadena in the early 1930s. After graduating in 1949 from the University of California, Los Angeles where she studied interior design, she built an arts community with two recent Los Angeles transplants, jewelry designer Curtis Tann and artist William Pajaud. Inspired by the assemblage-based practice of other Los Angeles artists, Saar began the practice for which she is best known. Saar's appropriation and reuse of cultural materials and racist stereotypes transforms these images and objects into creative acts of resistance. Saar has received numerous awards of distinction, including two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships (1974, 1984), a J. Paul Getty Fund for the Visual Arts Fellowship (1990), a Flintridge Foundation Visual Artists Award (1998), and most recently, in 2013, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, presented her with the Distinguished Women in the Arts Award. Recent exhibitions include numerous solo shows and important group exhibitions, such as the Brooklyn Museum of Art's 2014 traveling exhibition *Witness: Art and Civil Rights in the Sixties*, and *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*, which continues to tour after debuting at the Tate Modern in London, England.

RALPH COBURN (b. 1923, Minneapolis, MN; d. 2018, Miami, FL)

Random Sequence Participatory Composition, 1962

Originally trained as an architect at MIT in the 1940s, **Ralph Coburn** (b. 1923, Minneapolis, MN; d. 2018, Miami, FL) worked outside the mainstream in Boston, exploring ideas of seriality, authorship, subjectivity, and participatory aesthetics. His graphic color-block paintings often derive from motifs in landscape or the urban environment. Many of Coburn's paintings feature three horizontal layers of color: a reference to his understanding of landscape as comprised of three distinct bands—land, sea, and sky. *Random Sequence Participatory Composition* is a major work from a 1962 series of multiple-part paintings meant to be rearranged in infinite ways. Coburn described these paintings as "moveable architecture": multi-panel compositions that can be hung in different sequences according to the choice of the person responsible for the works' display. Coburn was a close and lifelong friend of Ellsworth Kelly, whom he first met at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and both sought to develop an aesthetic practice that might speak to variations present in the natural world and built environments. Coburn transmuted and distilled his own artistic vision in the early 1960s adopting open-endedness and interactivity. His pioneering approach to participatory systems precedes the adoption of similar strategies by artists in different continents in the ensuing decades.

"Not enough people know about Coburn's work, which is spare, beautiful, witty, and uncannily satisfying," wrote Boston Globe critic Sebastian Smee. *Random Sequence Participatory Composition* is one of a few remaining and intact participatory compositions by Coburn.

About the Artist

Ralph Coburn was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1923, and grew up in Miami in a house overlooking Biscayne Bay, offering unparalleled views that Coburn perceived visually in elemental forms. In 1941 Coburn enrolled in MIT's School of Architecture and Planning, where

key connections introduced him to major figures of the avant-garde. After being rejected by the army, Coburn found employment as a draftsman for the Air Force at the Miami Air Depot. After the war, Coburn moved back to Boston, planning to return to MIT to complete his architectural degree. However—drawn by his love for art—he decided to pursue a career as a painter. During the 1970s, Coburn exhibited in Boston occasionally, but his early works remained unknown. In 2002, some of his early pieces were included in the exhibition *The Visionary Decade — New Voices in Art in 1940s Boston*, held at Boston University: the first time the work of his youth was shown publicly. To this day his work remains largely underrecognized.

JOE OVERSTREET (b. 1933, Conehatta, MS)

Untitled, 1972

With a career spanning seven decades, Joe Overstreet (b. 1933, Conehatta, MA; d. 2019, New York, NY) can only be defined as an artist committed to relentless experimentation and the investigation of both complex cultural histories and paintings' spatial possibilities. Born in rural and deeply segregated Mississippi, Overstreet grew up in the Bay Area, where he attended the California School of Fine Arts and California School of Arts and Crafts and became a fixture of the progressive Beat Generation in the North Beach section of California, he was part of an art scene that included Nathan Oliveira, Richard Diebenkorn, and Sargent Johnson. A mentor to Overstreet, Johnson advocated that African-American artists synthesize the influence of their ancestral legacy within a modern aesthetic practice. In the late 1960s, after a move to New York City, Overstreet—like other artists of this moment—began to create paintings freed from the constraints of the rectangular stretcher and frame and by the early 1970s was sewing canvases that were suspended by ropes attached to surrounding planes: ceiling, walls, floor. Architectural in scale, the paintings in Overstreet's 1970-72 *Flight Pattern* series—to which *Untitled* (1972) belongs—reference the dynamism of free Jazz while evoking the artist's own personal visual language.

About the Artist

Born in tiny Conehatta, Mississippi, Overstreet grew up in California, and studied art in the Bay Area, where he gravitated toward the Beat scene. After briefly working in Los Angeles as an animator for Walt Disney, he moved to New York's Lower East Side. In the mid-1960s, he became the art director of the Black Arts Repertory Theatre and School, founded in Harlem by Amiri Baraka. In 1974, Overstreet and his partner Corrine Jennings established Kenkeleba House, an art center in Lower Manhattan dedicated to the supporting and exhibiting the work of underrepresented and emerging artists. Overstreet's work can be found in the collections of the Brooklyn Museum, the Everson Museum, and the Menil Collection, among others. Since the 1960s, Overstreet has been part of watershed, historical museum exhibitions: most recently, *Soul of a Nation: Art in the age of Black Power*, which began its tour at the Tate Modern, London, in 2017 and will open in November, 2019 at the de Young Museum in San Francisco. Overstreet's work was also central to *Afro-American Artists: New York and Boston*, (1973) organized jointly by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the National Center of Afro American Artists.

ABOUT THE ROSE ART MUSEUM AT BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

The Rose Art Museum has been dedicated to exhibiting and collecting modern and contemporary art at Brandeis University since 1961. With its highly respected international collection of more than 9,000 objects, scholarly exhibitions, and multidisciplinary academic and public programs, the Rose affirms and advances the values of freedom of expression, global diversity, and social justice that are the hallmarks of Brandeis University. The museum is always free and open to the public, and is located 20 minutes from downtown Boston.

For more information, visit www.brandeis.edu/rose/ or call 781-736-3434. Follow the Rose Art Museum on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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