

CERETTO

Artists for La Piola 2005

DONALD BAECHLER

Donald Baechler was born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1956.

Critics have stated that Baechler's work "places him in the painterly tribe of Twombly, Ryman, Rauschenberg and Schwitters." Baechler works from his great inventory of worldly images, the sources for many of the compelling images in his paintings and graphic work.

The cast of characters comes from every source imaginable and is stamped, silk-screened, projected, drawn, painted, printed or collaged onto surfaces. Then the process begins: underpainting, overpainting, canceling, adding, subtracting and editing until the final work emerges. Donald Baechler has a large international following and his work can be seen in museums throughout the world.

JAMES BROWN

James Brown was born in Los Angeles, California in 1951.

He received his formal art training from Ecole Supérieure des Beaux Arts, Paris (1973-75) Immaculate Heart College, Hollywood, M.A. (1975) and Istituto Michelangelo, Firenze (1979). His work is described as primitive, yet refined and inspired by tribal arts - American Indian, African and Hawaiian.

He lives and works between New York, Paris and Oaxaca, Mexico.

ROBERT INDIANA

Robert Indiana was born in 1928 in New Castle, Indiana as Robert Clark.

His early works were inspired by traffic signs, automatic amusement machines, commercial stencils and old tradenames. In the early sixties he produced sculpture assemblages and developed his style of vivid color surfaces that involved letters, words and numbers.

Robert Indiana is generally defined as a "Pop artist" even though some of his methods set him apart from other artists in the movement. Rather than using symbols from the mass media, Indiana creates images of words that focus on identity, particularly American identity and the "American Dream." He questions the validity and goodness of a cultural identity that prizes materialism and hyper-sexuality.

Indiana manages to provide a direct and honest description of American culture. The simple familiarity of the words, and the flattened manner in which he presents them, demonstrates the Pop art accessibility of content. In fact, viewers need not read much past the surface when observing his works.

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TERRY WINTERS

Terry Winters was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1949.

Winters' paintings, which now span the course of four decades, continually explore and map natural biological processes and build a vocabulary of images culled from the many scientific sources that the artist has used in his paintings and drawings. Among these images one might find Winters' typical plant, spore and crystalline shapes, as well as his densely drawn linear and organic shapes. It is difficult to tell in looking at his images whether Winters is depicting a cluster of berries, some fanciful aquatic plant or jellyfish, or a microscopic view of cellular forms. Though reminiscent of botanical or natural history illustrations, Winters has a less than scientific interest in these images as he invents hybridized images of life and phenomena.

As is customary in Winters' work, the palette is muted, though among the subtle variations of black, grey and brown are washes of brighter and more brilliant colors. Winters often concentrates on a central image, repeating that image in sketches and loose smudgy references across the page.

PHILIP TAAFFE

Philip Taaffe was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey in 1955.

He studied at the Cooper Union in New York and it was his interest in the language of decoration and abstraction that brought him international recognition in the 1980's. A long-time admirer of Matisse's cut-outs and of Synthetic Cubism, from the mid 1980's he began borrowing images and designs directly from more recent artists. This appropriation of the work of others, and the use of it as the subject of his own work, places him alongside other contemporary "Appropriationists" such as Sherrie Levine and Mike Bidlo.

He has traveled extensively in the Middle East, India, South America and Morocco, where he collaborated with Mohammed Mrabet on the book *Chocolate Creams and Dollars* (Inanout Press, New York: 1993). Taaffe also lived and worked in Naples from 1988-1991.

His first solo exhibition was in New York in 1982, and he has since been included in numerous museum exhibitions, including the Carnegie International, two Sidney Bienniales, and three Whitney Bienniales. His work is also held in several public collections, including the MoMa, New York, the SFMoMa, San Francisco, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of Art. Taaffe currently lives and works in New York.

KIKI SMITH

Kiki Smith was born in a U.S. Army hospital in Nuremburg, West Germany in 1954.

Though she now lives and works in New York, Smith was raised in South Orange, New Jersey with her two sisters. Her mother was the opera singer and actress Jane Lawrence and her father the architect, painter and sculptor Tony Smith.

Smith worked with her hands from a young age, quilting, knitting and sewing, as well as helping her father with models for his sculptures. She was attracted early on to the materials she works with now. Her childhood was rich with myth. Raised Catholic, Smith was also exposed to many cultures' stories and rituals. She read fairy tales and was encouraged to explore her interests.

She is best known for her sculptures; however, she creates pieces in a variety of media including print-making. Smith began sculpting in the late 1970's and her print collection is particularly extensive beginning in the 1980's. Smith has stated that, "Prints mimic what we are as humans: we are all the same and yet every one is different. I think there's a spiritual power in repetition, a devotional quality, like saying rosaries."

Smith's first works were screen prints on dresses, scarves and shirts, often with images of body parts. In association with artist group Colab, Smith printed an array of posters in the early 1980's containing political statements or announcing upcoming events.

Smith has also created an extensive collection of self-portraits, nature-themed works, and many pieces that depict scenes from fairy tales, often in unconventional ways.

Her Body Art is imbued with political significance, undermining the traditional erotic representations of women by male artists, and often exposes the inner biological systems of females as a metaphor for hidden social issues.

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ADAM FUSS

Adam Fuss was born in England in 1961. Based in New York, Adam Fuss began exhibiting in 1985 receiving immediate acclaim. He has created contemporary photograms in color as well as in black and white, showing moving light, live creatures and organic objects. His series featuring newborns lolling on their backs in shallow baths is particularly well known. Seen as if from below, the infants look safe yet precarious, levitating in rings of water, haloed by saturated color coming from the chemical properties of cibachrome paper .

Fuss's work is usually compared to early 19th century "sun print" photograms rather than cameraless darkroom techniques that evolved under the influence of Bauhaus innovators in the early 20th century. It's easy to see how his affinity for the natural world places him close in spirit to 19th century practitioners that exposed sensitized paper holding plants and laces to the sun. Technically, however, his darkroom photograms have more in common with Moholy-Nagy and Man Ray than William Henry Fox Talbot and Anna Atkins.

Art critics often describe his work as speaking to the ephemerality of a moment in time and life itself.

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Francesco Clemente for Ristorante Piazza Duomo 2007

Reviving its interest in the contemporary arts, the Ceretto family commissioned Francesco Clemente to paint the fresco adorning the walls of Ristorante Piazza Duomo, the creative space of the talented Michelin-starred chef and partner Enrico Crippa. The pictorial inspiration is developed around the dominant idea of the tree, of the vine and of life, a plant of abundance, a gift to the family. The grape leaf positioned in the central space embraces a map of the world with 5 continents, while the shoots of the vine branch off in a series of metaphoric images: decorative objects, a basket holding a duo of self-portraits of the artist, a boat and stars and a couple resembling Adam and Eve. The fresco is realized with soft colors reminiscent of the landscape of the Langhe, the palette tending towards greens, grays and reds suggestive of the colors of Pompei.

Francesco Clemente, a native of Naples, graduating class of 1952, began producing a rich and expressive group of works in the 1970's. An ardent traveller, he distinguished his own language of illustration, drawing from the cultural traditions and stylistic origins he encountered through numerous travels in Italy, India, the United States, both New York and the Southwest, and in the Caribbean. In 1970, he moved to Rome to study architecture. His mentors at the time were Alighiero Boetti and Luigi Ontani as well as Joseph Beuys and Cy Twombly. In 1973 he began to cultivate his interest and knowledge of India, absorbing inspiration from the mystic heritage of the country and from its contemporary art. In 1979 he joins the "Transavantgarde" movement, the Italian version of Neo-expressionism conceived by the art critic Achille Bonito Oliva, becoming one of the most important representatives of the movement along with Cucchi, Chia, De Maria and Paladino.

Clemente moved to New York permanently in 1981, fascinated by the cultural diversity and the commotion of the city. It is here that he was "transformed" to important dimensions in the art world collaborating on numerous projects with various artists including Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol and progressive poets such as Robert Creeley, Allen Ginsberg and John Wieners. In his journey, he has experimented with and interchanged various different techniques and materials, from oil paints to watercolors, from ink to pastels, and finally working with sculpture.