

March 7, 2019

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**Media website:** [americanart.si.edu/press](http://americanart.si.edu/press)  
**Media preview:** Thursday, March 14, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

## **“Artists Respond: American Art and the Vietnam War, 1965–1975” at the Smithsonian American Art Museum Examines How the Vietnam War Changed American Art**

The Vietnam War, a divisive and controversial conflict, had a profound impact on the art of its time. “[Artists Respond: American Art and the Vietnam War, 1965–1975](#)” emphasizes how American artists grappled with the dilemmas of the war as it was unfolding—from President Lyndon B. Johnson’s fateful decision to deploy U.S. ground troops to South Vietnam in 1965 to the fall of Saigon 10 years later. The exhibition makes vivid an era in which artists endeavored to respond to the turbulent times and openly questioned issues central to American civic life.

“Artists Respond” is the most comprehensive exhibition to examine the contemporary impact of the Vietnam War on American art. The exhibition is unprecedented in its historical scale and depth. It brings together 115 objects by 58 of the most visionary and provocative artists of the period. This exhibition presents both well-known and rarely discussed works and offers an expanded view of American art during the war, introducing a diversity of previously marginalized artistic voices, including women, African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans.

“Artists Respond” is organized by Melissa Ho, curator of 20th-century art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The exhibition is presented in conjunction with an installation by internationally acclaimed artist Tiffany Chung, organized by Sarah Newman, the James Dicke Curator of Contemporary Art at the museum. “Tiffany Chung: Vietnam, Past Is Prologue” probes the legacies of the Vietnam War and its aftermath through maps, paintings and videos that share the stories of former Vietnamese refugees. Both exhibitions are on view from March 15 through Aug. 18.

“At the Smithsonian American Art Museum, we are committed to creating groundbreaking exhibitions and exploring lesser-known chapters of American art to expand our understanding of American visual culture,” said Stephanie Stebich, the Margaret and Terry Stent Director at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. “This long-awaited exhibition provides a needed reevaluation of this time period and the changes in American art that are still present today.”

“Present-tense works of art from the Vietnam War era reflect the moral questioning and spiritual pain of that time,” Ho said. “Recounting the turmoil of the Vietnam War era reminds us that many of the social and political ruptures we live with today have roots in that moment. The art speaks of the past, but it is a past whose tremors still animate our present.”

Artists, galvanized by the moral urgency of the Vietnam War, reimagined the goals and uses of art, affecting developments in multiple movements and media: painting, sculpture, printmaking, performance, installation, documentary art and conceptualism. The exhibition and book include work by Carl Andre, Benny Andrews, Art Workers’ Coalition, Asco, Judith Bernstein, Chris Burden, T.C. Cannon, Mel Casas, Rosemarie Castoro, Judy Chicago, William Copley, Emile de Antonio, Mark di Suvero, James Gong Fu Dong, Dan Flavin, Terry Fox, Rupert García, Leon Golub, Philip Jones Griffiths, Guerrilla Art Action Group, Philip Guston, Hans Haacke, David Hammons, Wally Hedrick, Douglas Huebler, Carlos Irizzary, Kim Jones, Donald Judd, On Kawara, Corita Kent, Edward Kienholz, Yayoi Kusama, John Lennon and Yoko Ono, Fred Lonidier, Malaquias Montoya, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Barnett Newman, Jim Nutt, Claes Oldenburg, Yoko Ono, Dennis Oppenheim, Liliana Porter, Yvonne Rainer, Ad Reinhardt, Faith Ringgold, Martha Rosler, Peter Saul, Carolee Schneemann, Robert Smithson, Nancy Spero, May Stevens, Carol Summers, Paul Thek, Jesse Treviño, Tomi Ungerer, Timothy Washington and William Weege.

The exhibition’s presentation includes a dedicated interpretative space that offers visitors a place to reflect on the artworks on display and the era. This space contains a timeline of cultural and political events and a response wall that invites visitors to share thoughts about the material in the exhibition.

### **“Artists Respond”: A Symposium**

Friday, March 15, from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., the museum has organized a day of discussions and lectures on topics related to the exhibition “Artists Respond.” A group of distinguished scholars will provide insights into how artists of the Vietnam War era sought to

engage, and artists whose work is in the exhibition will address their varied experiences of the war period. Information about speakers and a detailed schedule for the symposium is online at [americanart.si.edu/artistsrespond](http://americanart.si.edu/artistsrespond).

## **Public Programs**

The museum has planned a robust series of public programs in conjunction with the museum's spring exhibitions. Ho will give a gallery talk in the exhibition Thursday, March 28, at 5:30 p.m. Ho and Harry Rubenstein, curator emeritus of political history at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, explore the influence of mass media on American art and politics during the Vietnam War era Tuesday, April 9, at 6 p.m. Newman and Lawrence-Minh Bùi Davis, curator and historian at the Smithsonian's Asian Pacific American Center, discuss the lasting impact of the Vietnam War on Southeast Asian Americans Thursday, May 9, at 6 p.m. Both gallery talks are part of the museum's series "Double Take: One Artwork Two Viewpoints."

"The Women Directors Film Festival: Visionaries Then and Now" Saturday, March 30, from noon to 9 p.m. features screenings of Chung's recent video work and Trinh T. Minh-ha's documentary *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989).

Chung will give the museum's annual James Dicke Contemporary Artist Lecture Thursday, May 2, at 6 p.m. She will discuss her new installation that probes the legacies of the Vietnam War and its aftermath through maps, videos and paintings that highlight the voices and stories of former Vietnamese refugees.

Artist and writer Việt Lê offers his perspective on contemporary art and the legacy of the Vietnam War in a talk titled "Returns, Refugees and Refusal: Art, War Memory and the Politics of Representation" Thursday, May 23, at 6 p.m.

Film screenings include *The Anderson Platoon* (1967, 65 minutes), directed by Pierre Schoendoerffer, Wednesday, April 17, at 7 p.m. followed by a post-film conversation with the film's subject Lt. Joseph B. Anderson. *In the Year of the Pig* (1968, 104 minutes), directed by Emile de Antonio, will be presented Friday, May 10, at 7 p.m. and Saturday, July 27, at 7 p.m.; the May screening includes an introduction and discussion with Erica Levin, assistant professor of the history of art at The Ohio State University. *North Star: Mark di Suvero* (1978, 54 minutes), directed by François de Menil and Barbara Rose, will be screened Saturday, July 13, at 3 p.m.

Saturday, April 13, the 21st Century Consort, the museum's contemporary classic ensemble-in residence, performs a musical corollary to the exhibition; pre-concert lecture at 4 p.m., followed by the concert titled "Black Angels" at 5 p.m.

### **Book**

The exhibition catalog features essays by Ho; Thomas Crow, the Rosalie Solow Professor of Modern Art at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University; Erica Levin, assistant professor of the history of art at The Ohio State University; Katherine Markoski, independent scholar; Mignon Nixon, professor of modern and contemporary art at University College London; and Martha Rosler, artist and author. It is published by the Smithsonian American Art Museum in association with Princeton University Press. The book is available for purchase in the museum store and [online](#) (\$65, hardcover).

### **Tour**

Following the presentation in Washington, D.C., the exhibition will travel to the Minneapolis Institute of Art where it will be on display from Sept. 28 through Jan. 5, 2020.

### **Credit**

"Artists Respond: American Art and the Vietnam War, 1965–1975" is organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum with support from Anonymous, the Diane and Norman Bernstein Foundation, Sheri and Joe Boulos, the Gene Davis Memorial Fund, the Glenstone Foundation, Norbert Hornstein and Amy Weinberg, the Henry Luce Foundation, Nion McEvoy and Leslie Berriman, Cindy Miscikowski, Daniel C. and Teresa Moran Schwartz, the Smithsonian Scholarly Studies Awards and the Terra Foundation for American Art.

### **About the Smithsonian American Art Museum**

The Smithsonian American Art Museum is the home to one of the largest and most inclusive collections of American art in the world. Its artworks reveal America's rich artistic and cultural history from the colonial period to today. The museum's main building is located at Eighth and F streets N.W., above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station. Museum hours are 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily (closed Dec. 25). Admission is free. Follow the museum on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#). Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Smithsonian information: (202) 633-1000. Website: [americanart.si.edu](http://americanart.si.edu).

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**Note to editors:** Selected high-resolution images for publicity only are available through the museum's Dropbox account. Email [AmericanArtPressOffice@si.edu](mailto:AmericanArtPressOffice@si.edu) to request the link.