

ELLEN PAGE WILSON/PACE WILDENSTEIN



DANNY LYON/EDWYN HOUCK GALLERY



LYNDA BENGLIS, LICENSED BY VAGA, NEW YORK

Silver Frames for Art Museums

One upside of the cratering economy for institutions like the Whitney Museum of American Art is that art that once seemed out of reach is now available because of changing fortunes. That was the case when the Altria Group gave about 150 works to the Whitney. Among the bounty, clockwise from left, a painting by Chuck Close, a portion of a photograph by Danny Lyon, and a gallery in the Whitney Museum of American Art displaying a work by Lynda Benglis. PAGE C29

Company's Fortunes Change, And the Whitney Benefits

Even in these grim economic times, institutions like the Whitney Museum of American Art are able to continue building their collections. Some are gifts from

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donors unaffected by the financial markets; others are acquisitions in the works before things grew ugly; and then there is art that seemed out of reach before but is now available because of changing fortunes.

That last category includes a new gift of about 150 works from the Altria Group (Philip Morris Companies until 2003). When it moved its headquarters to Richmond, Va., from New York last year and stopped its charitable arts financing, it donated its art collection to a number of museums including the Whitney.

Altria and the Whitney have had a long relationship. For 25 years the museum had a branch in the company's building at 120 Park Avenue, a space the museum was forced to close in 2008. But ties between the two organizations date to 1967 and included a special purchase fund as well as exhibition support.

"It is because of this long relationship that we received so much art," said Donna De Salvo, the Whitney's chief curator. "They gave us the opportunity to select the works that best complemented the collection."



WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

A self-portrait by Philip Guston, "Thoughts" (1972), is among the works donated to the Whitney Museum by the Altria Group.

Included in the latest gift is Philip Guston's self-portrait "Thoughts," a 1972 oil on paper. "It's one of the first times he showed himself smoking, a motif he went on to explore in subsequent works," Ms. De Salvo said. Altria also gave the Whitney three 1965 Warhol screenprints of Jacqueline Kennedy at different historic moments — "Jackie I," "Jackie II" and "Jackie III" — that were included in the port-

folio "11 Pop Artists," that was published a year later. "It's one of the first major Pop Art portfolios," Ms. De Salvo said. "We didn't have any of them."

Traditionally the museum cherry-picks from its biennials. Last year it bought 17 works from the 2008 edition — about the same as from past biennials — with funds from the museum's

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various acquisition committees, sometimes helped by individuals.

For many of the artists, like the Californian Daniel Joseph Martinez, this will be the first time their work has entered the museum's permanent collection. The Whitney recently acquired Mr. Martinez's "Divine Violence," a 2007 room installation consisting of 92 wooden panels painted in automotive gold flake, each bearing the name of an international organization that has links to violent or coercive tactics. "They're beautiful and minimal, and yet what lurks beneath is something which is much more sinister," Ms. De Salvo said. Mr. Martinez's work also appeared in the biennial in 1993.

The duo Amy Granat and Drew Heitzler will also be represented in the permanent collection for the first time with "T.S.O.Y.W.," a 2007 two-channel projection. The work, depicting an art road trip, is a modern-day interpretation of Goethe's romantic novel "The Sorrows of Young Werther."

Some acquisitions deepened the museum's holdings. The Whitney added to its collection of Sherrie Levine works by buying 18 inkjet prints — "Equivalents: After Stieglitz," from 2006 — based on Stieglitz's 1920s and '30s series of cloud images.

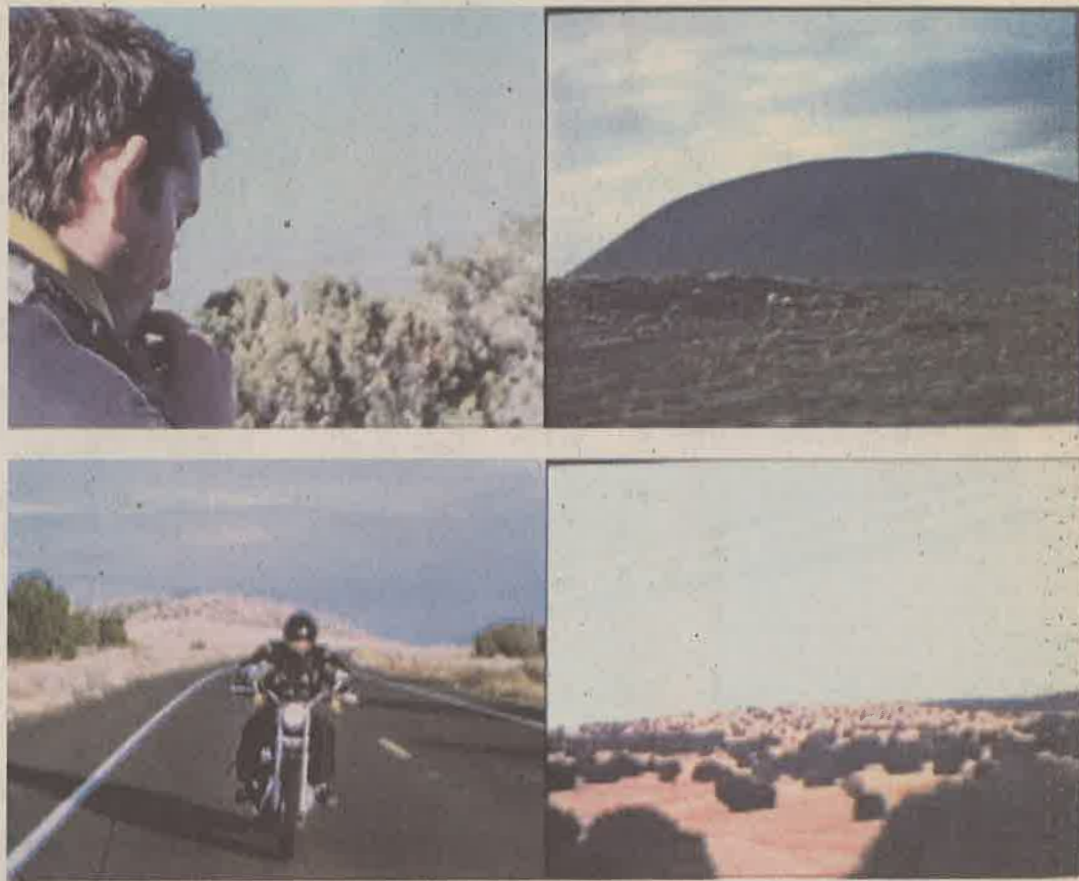
Also adding to existing holdings is a 1987-88 painting by Chuck Close of the artist Francesco Clemente. It is a gift of Leonard A. Lauder, the museum's chairman emeritus, through his American Contemporary Art Foundation.

New Use for Dia Site

In October, when business slowed, the Chelsea dealer Elizabeth Dee and some colleagues began to exchange ideas about what to do in such an unusual moment.

"I saw a need to bring people together to talk about moving forward," she said. Out of these exchanges came X, a new nonprofit space that will present a variety of initiatives, everything from traditional exhibitions and performances to site-specific installations and lectures.

Located in the former home of the Dia Art Foundation, at 548 West 22nd Street, in Chelsea, X will open on March 7. While it



WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Scenes from Amy Granat and Drew Heitzler's "T.S.O.Y.W.," a two-channel projection, depicting an art road trip. It is now part of the Whitney Museum of American Art's permanent collection.

plans to hold weekly lectures and other events, the space will change programs four times a year. A group of international arts professionals — museum directors, curators, dealers and art historians — will have their hands in the offerings, Ms. Dee said. Cecilia Alemani, an independent curator, will be its curatorial director.

First up are installations by artists whose work questions today's shifting economic climate. On the building's ground floor, Mika Tajima, who is part of a collaborative called New Humans, will create an installation that is part film set, stage, green room and editing room. It will also include 35 sculptures and two streaming videos. Other members of New Humans will put on a performance too, but the date has not been set, Ms. Dee said.

The second, third and fourth floors will be devoted to 18 rarely shown films by Derek Jarman, the filmmaker who died in 1994 at 52. And on the roof will be the art-

ist Christian Holstad's "Leather Beach," a remake of a 2006 site-specific installation that was originally seen in a former delicatessen at East 43rd Street and Third Avenue. The piece is a meditation on urban gay culture.

Meanwhile a familiar work will be reinstalled in the building's stairwells: the 1996 site-specific fluorescent light installation that Dan Flavin created for the space in 1996. It is on loan from Dia.

Young Artists' Outlet

Young is cool. But in the art world, young generally means unknown. So when the New Museum of Contemporary Art releases on Friday the list of artists included in its first triennial, "The Generational: Younger Than Jesus," the 50 names — all under the age of 33 — will probably conjure few images.

The show — running April 8 through June 14 and taking up the museum's entire home, on the

Lower East Side — includes an international group of artists from Algeria, Lebanon, Turkey, Venezuela, Poland and elsewhere.

While many have never been seen in a museum context before, a handful have. Last year Loris Gréaud, for instance, became the youngest artist to show a project at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris; Cory Arcangel, a New York computer artist, was included in the 2004 Whitney Biennial; and the Beijing artist Cao Fei's work has been seen in several international biennials. Ms. Cao currently has an exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery in London, as well as work in Prospect.1, the survey show in New Orleans.

Although the Whitney has its biennial and P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center has "Greater New York," Lisa Phillips, the New Museum's director, said this survey would be different. "It's international and it's focused on a generation," she said. "Something like this was lacking in the city."