

HAPPY!

Buddhism teaches that the pursuit of happiness is life's goal. The path to it begins with the understanding that happiness cannot exist without sorrow. This exhibition focuses on contemporary artists who follow this pursuit by addressing all emotional states in their work to reveal universal truths of the human condition. These artists' works let us know we are not unique, which in turn heightens our empathy for others. The artists included in this exhibition have developed a personal philosophy about happiness in which making art is akin to meditation and a means of achieving equilibrium.

Happy! includes works dating from the mid-twentieth century to day. Among the earliest in the exhibition is a 1956 abstraction by Mark Rothko. Rothko's thoughts about how art can evoke emotions provide the underlying theme of the exhibition. In a lecture delivered in 1958, Rothko declared that his paintings encompassed all emotions, and that he introduced "wit...play" and "hope" into his work to make the "tragic concept" of the human condition "more endurable."

WHY MAKE ART? Mark Rothko pondered this question in notes he wrote in the 1940s in response to World War II. He justified the artist's role in society by arguing that it was a sociably redeemable act. When artists produce works that they find satisfying and revealing, they have contributed to themselves as individuals. When individuals improve themselves, they automatically improve society, because society's welfare depends on the overall good of its constituents.

This exhibition looks at the use of archetypal images of happiness such as the smile, clouds, gifts, babies, and celebrations. Several artists in the exhibition convey the power of music, dance, prayer, and positive psychology in their work, while others address the implications of gift-giving, healing and play. The exhibition also explores the bliss associated with Paradise before the Fall, infancy, and spiritual or meditative states. Although the artists included here have not necessarily discovered the meaning of happiness, their works convey and thus generously share their pursuit of this elusive state with the world. Exhibition curated by Director and Chief Curator Bonnie Clearwater.

#HAPPY EXHIBITION



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LINK TO VIRTUAL TOUR
The text labels follow the virtual tour

<https://nsuartmuseum.org/exhibitions/currently-on-view/>

ATRIUM

FriendsWithYou (Art collaborative founded 2002, Miami, FL;
active in Los Angeles, CA)

Into the Clouds, 2019

Ripstop nylon

120 x 75 x 90 inches each

Courtesy of FriendsWithYou

FriendsWithYou is the fine art collaborative of Samuel Borkson and Arturo Sandoval III, working together since 2002. They aim to use their multi-media works to spread the positive message of “Magic, Luck, and Friendship.™” Their process encompasses the healing arts, modern rituals, animism, and recognizable symbols as a means “to prompt a wide spectrum of emotions from playfulness to self-reflection.” For the past 17 years, their work has focused on the contemporary art practice “relational aesthetics” that spreads positive intentions to affect culture. Their work has traveled the globe, and the artists are considered pioneers in the field of experiential art. Their fully immersive installations serve as cultural happenings that inspire compassion, joy and communal interactions. FriendsWithYou has also adapted its philosophy to a number of mass media applications, most notably their Netflix series, *True and the Rainbow Kingdom*.

NSU Art Museum commissioned this installation for the exhibition *Happy!*, consisting of three enormous inflatables of

FriendsWithYou's character Little Cloud. The artists gave Little Cloud the features of a baby to trigger the viewer's desire to protect and love an infant. Inspired by the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and its enormous balloon floats, the artists staged a parade with inflatables of icons along with a curated group of friends, on Miami Beach to coincide with the international art fair Art Basel Miami Beach in 2006. FriendsWithYou's inflatables also follow in the tradition of other works in this exhibition, including Andy Warhol's 1966 *Silver Cloud* installation of helium-filled silver Mylar pillows, and Jeff Koons's porcelain balloon sculptures. FriendsWithYou's gravity-defying inflatables contradict sculpture's traditional properties of weight and density. Consequently, viewers are more likely to associate them with children's toys and play than with conventional sculpture. However, the medium is suited to the artists' intentions, as they describe their floating Little Cloud as a symbol to move the anxious viewer to a relaxed and joyous state by offering a positive message of happiness and connectivity to all of humankind.

FriendsWithYou's icons Little Cloud and Rainbow (on view in the second-floor Introductory Gallery) made their debut as giant balloons in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in November 2018.

ARTIST MULTIPLES

https://nsuarmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/HAP_5509-1030x691.jpg

FriendsWithYou (Art collaborative founded 2002, Miami, FL; active in Los Angeles, CA)

The Boy, 2004

Artificial leather, polyester filling

12 x 6 1/4 inches

The Collection of Kathryn and Dan Mikesell

KAWS (b. 1974, Jersey City, NJ; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY)

Brown COMPANION, 2006

COMPANION: Passing Through (Gray), 2013

Pinocchio and Jiminy Cricket, 2010

Small Lie (Black), 2013

Vinyl cast resin

11 x 5 x 3 inches, 11 x 6 1/2 x 7 1/2 inches, 10 x 5 x 5 inches, 10 3/4 x 5 x 5 inches

Courtesy of the Forman Family

In 1986, New York artist Keith Haring opened the Pop Shop in downtown Manhattan. Haring considered the Pop Shop as an extension of his work, a fun boutique where his art could be accessible to everyone as affordable clothing, posters, and gift items emblazoned with his unique iconic images. Several of the artists in the *Happy!* exhibition, including FriendsWithYou, KAWS, Jeff Koons, Takashi Murakami, and Kenny Scharf, similarly aim to reach a broad audience by blurring traditional boundaries between art, commerce, and popular culture. Their work is equally at home in art museums and galleries as in the luxury brand market. Their work may appear as public graffiti, advertising on billboards, cartoons, playgrounds and even as giant balloons for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City. Displayed here is a selection of limited edition vinyl toys by KAWS and a soft sculpture by FriendsWithYou.

Takashi Murakami (b. 1962, Tokyo, Japan; lives and works in Tokyo and New York)

Louis Vuitton Bag, 2007

Canvas, leather

Private Collection, Miami

Japanese artist Takashi Murakami provocatively incorporated a luxury boutique operated by Louis Vuitton into his 2007 retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Murakami's alliance with luxury brands is another avenue to spread his message to the public. Luxury goods build his brand as an artist, while serving as a critique of consumer culture—the happiness one achieves through acquiring material goods is fleeting.

INTRODUCTORY GALLERY

https://nsuartsuemuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/HAP_5513-1-1030x508.jpg

FriendsWithYou (Art collaborative founded 2002, Miami, FL; active in Los Angeles, CA)

Rainbow Gate, 2019

Vinyl inflatable and LED lights

159 x 276 x 27 ½ inches

Courtesy of FriendsWithYou

Felix Gonzalez-Torres (b. 1957, Guáimaro, Cuba; d. 1996, Miami, FL)

“Untitled”, 1989/1990

Print on paper, endless copies

Overall dimensions: 26 x 56 x 23 inches

“Untitled” (Portrait of Dad), 1991

White candies individually wrapped in cellophane, endless supply

Both works Courtesy of The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation; Collection Rosa & Carlos de la Cruz, Key Biscayne, FL

Felix Gonzalez-Torres’s work is completed by the audience (much like the work of conceptual artist Yoko Ono and FriendsWithYou, also on view in this exhibition). His work gives viewers the choice to take a piece of the work with them, like a gift. His candy spill works can be interpreted in any number of ways and the meaning can shift each time they are considered by new audiences. While these works might be understood as a way of addressing loss; Gonzalez-Torres’s mother, father, and partner all died within a brief period and the artist, diagnosed with AIDS, was facing his own mortality, the works can also be interpreted as exploring themes of abundance and regeneration.

All art, in a sense, is concerned with death, the universal human

condition. Portraits and still lifes (*nature morte*—dead nature) keep their subjects alive, while artists live on through their work. Some of Gonzalez-Torres's candy spills can be seen as unconventional portraits, such as *"Untitled" Portrait of Dad*. The spill can slowly diminish as viewers choose to take the candy but the possibility always exists for the exhibitor to replenish the candy.

Viewers participating in this work may be motivated to meditate on the inevitability of death, associating the reduction of the spill with the way a person's time on earth diminishes daily; while the replenishment of the spill suggests how art and memory keep loved ones alive. The taste of the candy may also remind the viewer of the sweetness of life.

Also on view is Gonzalez-Torres's *"Untitled"*, 1989/1990, two stacks of paper displayed side by side. The phrase "Somewhere better than this place," is printed on the sheets of paper on one stack, while "Nowhere better than this place" is printed on the other. The viewer may choose to take individual sheets from the stacks, which, like the candy spill, can also be replenished.

Gonzalez-Torres said of his work and purpose in life:

"It might not be the best idea, but I'm still proposing the radical idea of trying to make this a better place for everyone. That's really what I'm all about. I trust that agenda."

Kathryn Andrews (b. 1973, Mobile, AL; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA)

Gift, 2011

Serigraphs

44 x 232 inches

Collection of Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz, Key Biscayne, FL

Kathryn Andrews frequently complicates the ways of looking and responding to a work of art by combining figurative and abstract

elements and referencing Pop art and minimalism. In this work, she transforms a minimalist abstract composition into gift-wrapped packages by embellishing its surface with printed metallic bows. She thereby equates minimal painting and gifts as objects that arouse desire. A gift concealed within festive wrapping heightens the recipient's anticipation and imagination, much like a newly encountered artwork stimulates the viewer visually, emotionally and intellectually. Art and gifts are enigmas waiting to be unwrapped. Both also operate within an economic framework that generates a range of emotions as their worth exceeds their intrinsic value. But gifts, unlike art, also operate within an economy of guilt as the recipient remains indebted to the gift-giver, not only for the monetary value of the gift, but also for the emotions he or she invested in it.

Kenny Scharf (b. 1958, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA)

Cosmic Cavern, 2019

Found objects, day-glo paint

144 x 192 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Enter through the black curtain behind the yellow wall

Kenny Scharf provides the viewer with a mind-altering experience in his *Cosmic Cavern*, an immersive day-glo, multi-sensory installation that mixes Pop art and Surrealism with the hedonistic 1980s club and disco culture. He assembled his first such installation in 1981 in a closet of the New York apartment he shared with artist Keith Haring (whose work is also included in this exhibition). Scharf, like Haring, brought a playful approach to "high art" that aimed to make it more widely accessible. Nevertheless, his work was swiftly embraced by the art world, with invitations to create large scale installations at the Whitney Museum of American Art for its 1985 Biennial, and other major art institutions. In this respect, Scharf's

work is a forerunner to the subsequent generation of artists in this exhibition, including KAWS and FriendsWithYou.

Samson Kambalu (b. 1975, Malawi, Africa; lives and works in Oxford, England)

Moses (Burning Bush), 2015

Video

Running time: 32 seconds

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; purchased with funds provided by Michael and Dianne Bienes by exchange, 2016.8

Malawi-born Samson Kambalu addresses the gift-giving economy of his small African country. Malawians incorporated gift-exchange into their festivals, during which gifts were distributed by masked participants, in order to avoid encumbrance of the implied expectation of reciprocity. The joy of these festive occasions extended into everyday life.

In Kambalu's youth, the masks that were essential to these festivals were moved to museums. The tradition of mask-wearing and play, observed Kambalu, was naturally transferred to the new amusement centers, the village cinema, where old films and projectors would constantly break down during screenings. In order to keep the audience entertained, the projectionists would quickly edit the film, sometimes combining more than one movie, which would disrupt the original narrative. These films generated the thrill of participating in the masked festivals, and similarly prompted audiences to be generous in everyday life.

Gift-giving, the aesthetic of experiencing the cut and spliced films of his youth, and his study of the history of cinema inspired the short films in Kambalu's *Nyau Cinema* series. Each of his films follows a set of rules that the artist established. Kambalu perceives his *Nyau Cinema* as the embodiment of his society's philosophy. As he notes,

his films are gifts to the viewer, as he believes that the “work of the artist today is to remind people what it means to give.”

Kambalu generally films himself enacting simple gestures that are presented as a continuous loop. In *Moses (Burning Bush)*, he encounters an enflamed tree, which, like the biblical burning bush from which an angel of the Lord called out to Moses, is never consumed by the fire. The intensity of this vision knocks Kambalu’s hat off his head. This film addresses the miraculous, awe-inspiring moments in the physical world or in art that bring great joy and provide meaning in life.

GALLERY TWO: ICONS OF HAPPINESS

https://nsuartsmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/HAP_5644-1030x719.jpg

Western philosophy, Buddhism, and many religions including the Judeo-Christian tradition encourage us to seek happiness from within and to forgo attachment to physical things. Nevertheless, tangible objects and images give rise to feelings of joy, happiness and the spiritual. Some of these visual stimuli are culturally constructed while others embody universal qualities that trigger pleasurable responses.

Several works in this exhibition employ tangible objects and images as icons of happiness to elicit an emotional response from the viewer. Among these stimuli are:

Yellow: The color yellow is the brightest color of the visible spectrum. As the color of radiant sunshine, it is associated with happiness, optimism and joy.

Rainbow: As a meteorological phenomenon, rainbows fill us with awe. They are symbols of peace, serenity and hope.

Pandas: These large bears symbolize peace, gentleness, good luck, and positive thoughts.

Clowns: These buffoonish entertainers symbolize fun, frivolity, and happiness.

Smile: The smile is an expression of joy, happiness, and amusement. When the brain is stimulated to release endorphins, it transmits signals to the facial muscles to trigger a smile.

Happy Face: This stylized icon, designed by American graphic artist Harvey Ross Ball in 1963, consists of a solid yellow circle with two black ovals for eyes, and a thin black arc of a grin.

Happy Face Emoji: Pictographs representing various emotions are created using basic punctuation marks; the smiling face is created with a colon for eyes and right parenthesis for the smile (a dash is also used for the nose). These pictographs have been transformed into a full range of emojis to represent emotional nuances in digital messaging.

Flowers: Although specific flowers have been assigned various symbols in different cultures, flowers have been shown to improve people's mood through their association with nature. They stimulate the brain's sense of excitement in anticipation of a special occasion.

Clouds: White clouds symbolize happiness, joy, and equilibrium. To be "on cloud nine" is to be in a state of blissful happiness, while even dark clouds are said to have "a silver lining."

Buoyancy: floating balloons, clouds, and bubbles provide a sense of euphoria.

Keith Haring (b. 1958, Reading, PA; d. 1990, New York, NY)
Untitled (Pink Smiling Face), 1981

Baked enamel on metal

48 x 48 inches

Private Collection Courtesy The Brant Foundation, Greenwich, Connecticut

Keith Haring was known for his whimsical, graffiti-infused calligraphic style of drawing and painting. Carefree cartoon imagery subversively conveyed Haring's activism and commitment to anti-nuclear proliferation, racial equality, LGBTQ causes, and AIDS awareness.

The three-eyed smiling face is one of the motifs that frequently appears in his work. He reportedly developed this image by accident as he had left too much room between two eyes, which he filled by adding a third. The quixotic face has been interpreted as suggesting the enlightenment associated with the third eye of Dharmic spiritual traditions, clairvoyance, and religious visions. It can also represent happiness or greed. Haring, however, did not share his own meaning of this or most other emblems as he felt they should remain open for interpretation.

Haring was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988 but continued making art until the end of his life in 1990. His sister shared in her brother's eulogy how this diagnosis made him appreciate the preciousness of life. He told her that "you never know when you're doing something for the last time, so you live each day like it is the last."

Keith Haring (b. 1958, Reading, PA; d. 1990, New York, NY)
Untitled (For Salvatore), 1984

Acrylic on glass

78 ½ x 58 ½ inches

Private Collection, Florida

Takashi Murakami (b. 1962, Tokyo, Japan; lives and works in Tokyo and New York)

Open Your Hands Wide, Embrace Happiness!, 2010

Acrylic and platinum leaf on canvas

70 7/8 x 70 13/16 inches

Private Collection, Courtesy of Sabsay Gallery Denmark

From an early age, Takashi Murakami was enamored of Japanese anime (cartoon animation) and manga (comic books). He attended Tokyo University of the Arts where he studied traditional Japanese art and techniques and mastered Japanese flower painting.

During his first trip to New York in the late 1980s, Murakami immersed himself in Western contemporary art, including visiting a retrospective of the German painter Anselm Kiefer, Jeff Koons's exhibition of kitschy objects, and Julian Schnabel's enormous paintings that vary between abstraction and figuration. He observed how these artists's works addressed Western art traditions, particularly its progression from figuration toward abstraction, and the valuing of high art over craft and popular culture. In Japan, however, all forms of artistic expression are valued equally, and pictorial space in Japanese art was rendered atmospherically or as flat patterns rather than through linear perspective that informed Western art from the 16th century to the late-19th century (see link to image below) Murakami coined the term *Superflat* to define his work, which embodies the Japanese tradition of flat pictorial space, the two-dimensional imagery of anime and manga, and the equalizing or flattening of the distinction between "high art" and popular culture.

This painting with its multitude of cartoonish smiling flowers is deceptively complex (there is one partially hidden crying flower located right of center, suggesting an underlying sadness that is masked by the smiling flowers). The title *Open Your Hands Wide,*

Embrace Happiness! reads like a positive aphorism or Buddhist teaching. But it also resonates as an authoritarian command invoking Japan's 1946 Constitution, Article 13, which stipulates, "(People's) right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness shall, to the extent that it does not interfere with the public welfare, be the supreme consideration in legislation and other government affairs."

Murakami was born in 1962, and his world view was shaped by his response to post-World War II Japan's fixation on happiness. He contends that the Japanese never fully examined their military aggression in the war, or the trauma of the atomic-bombing of two of its cities and subsequent American occupation. Their collective anxious psyche found an outlet in popular culture's fascination with monsters such as Godzilla and infantilization in which the sense of powerlessness is soothed by cute characters such as Hello Kitty. Murakami's crowded fields of happy flowers embody this critique of his nation's pursuit of happiness at the expense of self-reflection.

Katsushika Hokusai (b. 1760, Edo [now Tokyo], Japan; d. 1849, Edo [now Tokyo], Japan)
Watanabe No Gengo Tsuna and Inokuma Nyudo Eaiun, from an untitled series of Warriors in Combat, c. 1833-35
Woodblock print, ink and color on paper
Museum of Fine Arts Boston; William Sturgis Bigelow Collection

<https://collections.mfa.org/objects/209817/watanabe-no-gengo-tsuna-and-inokuma-nyudo-raiun-from-an-unt?ctx=734184a0-1d9e-48a0-ab6d-557dbf212f52&idx=175>

Ernesto Neto (b. 1964, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; lives and works in Brazil)

Matter and Figures, 2009

Plastic net, plastic pearls, and plastic toys

89 3/8 x 23 5/8 x 6 1/4 inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; gift of Rita Krauss, 2018.30

Since the mid-1990s, Ernesto Neto has produced an influential body of work that explores constructions of social space and the natural world. Drawing from biomorphism and minimalist sculpture,

Neo-concretism and other Brazilian vanguard movements of the 1960s and 1970s, Neto's core themes are gravity, sensation, nature, and the body. In this work, Neto filled the extremities of a plastic net with small plastic toys. The netting is slung over a beam so that the two pouches bulge at each end like pendulous cornucopia, thereby creating a tension between weight, gravity and balance. This work was inspired by Neto's experience of how his children filled his life in new and unexpected ways, such as the transformation of their home into a world brimming with plastic colored toys.

Jeff Koons (b. 1955, York, PA; lives and works in New York, NY)

Balloon Monkey (Blue), 2017

Balloon Rabbit (Red), 2017

Balloon Swan (Yellow), 2017

Porcelain with chromatic coating

9 13/16 × 15 7/16 × 8 ¼ inches; 11 ½ × 8 ¼ × 5 ½ inches; 9 ½ × 6 3/8 × 8 ¼ inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; purchased with funds provided by Michael and Dianne Bienes by exchange

Jeff Koons's works blur the definitions of "high art," popular culture and kitsch. They have had a significant influence on several artists in this exhibition, including Takashi Murakami, KAWS, FriendsWithYou and Alake Shilling, who similarly reference childhood toys and cartoon characters to engage the viewer's emotions. Inspired by his own happy childhood, Koons bases his masterfully produced sculptures on cute plastic inflatable toys and balloon animals. As balloon animals are among the earliest forms of sculpture encountered by children, Koons's whimsical works may trigger happy memories.

Although the works on view mimic shiny Mylar toy balloons that have been inflated with air and twisted into the shape of a monkey, swan and rabbit, they are actually finely crafted porcelain figurines

polished to a mirror-smooth patina; and while balloons are ephemeral, these figurines remain permanently flawless. Moreover, as the balloon animal sculptures look malleable and hollow, they contradict traditional properties associated with sculpture—weight and density. Brightly colored, friendly, and erotically suggestive, these sculptures seem to pose no threat to viewers except, perhaps, to their definition of the nature of art. Koons, however, discourages viewers from fretting over whether they should appreciate his work as high art or kitsch. Whatever the viewer's response, is just "fine."

Koons associates the balloons with life, stating, "I've always enjoyed balloon animals because they're like us. We're balloons. You take a breath and you inhale, it's an optimism. You exhale, and it's kind of a symbol of death."

Rob Pruitt (b. 1964, Washington, DC; lives and works in New York, NY)

Untitled, 2012

Glitter and enamel on canvas

70 7/8 x 70 13/16 inches

Courtesy of Isabel and Ricardo Ernst

Rob Pruitt has been painting giant pandas as a subject for over 18 years. He was attracted to these cuddly, universally beloved creatures, as a means of engaging the viewer emotionally. He also found the pandas' distinctive black and white markings appealing as abstract compositions. This painting can be read simultaneously as representing two pandas embracing before a sunset, or as an abstract composition of contrasting patterns of black and white, and a gradient flat colorfield. Emotions are thereby stimulated two ways: the precious depiction of two loving pandas and the excitement of an abstract painting.

Rob Pruitt (b. 1964, Washington, DC; lives and works in New York, NY)

Us, 2013

Acrylic, enamel, and flocking on linen

Each (66): 29 ½ x 23 ½ inches; Each (66): 31 ½ x 25 inches

Courtesy of Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz, Key Biscayne, FL

Rob Pruitt associates giant pandas (the stars of the National Zoo, since the early 1970s) and Mark Rothko's colorfield paintings with his youth in Washington, D.C. He especially cherishes his visits to the National Gallery of Art where he recalls being overcome with emotion standing in front of Rothko's abstract paintings and his father jokingly suggesting whether it would have been better if the artist had drawn a face over them. By painting a spectrum of gestural facial expressions onto his candy-colored gradient canvases, Pruitt transformed these tender moments with his father into a universal experience (emphasized by titling the work *Us*) to share with viewers of his work.

Mark Rothko (b. 1903, Russia [now Latvia]; d. 1970, New York, NY)

Untitled, 1956

Oil on canvas

65 ¼ x 40 5/8 inches

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of The Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc., 1986.43.160

Mark Rothko's thoughts about the nature of emotion in art provide the underlying subject of this exhibition. In a lecture he delivered in 1958 to art students at the Pratt Institute in New York, he declared that he intended his abstract paintings to encompass the full range of emotions, and that he introduced "wit and play" and an element of "hope" into his work to make the "tragic concept" of the human condition "more endurable." He admitted that he was particularly playful with the edges of shapes in his paintings. Indeed, the

extremities of these rectangular forms are alive with feathery brushstrokes and the overlapping of washes of color, that produce a vibration in which the forms seem to grow and shrink before the viewer's eyes. We see this in *Untitled*, 1956, which is also distinctive for the irregular profile of the upper most rectangular form. Typically, Rothko's paintings have regular rectangular forms, but, in this painting there is a rather comical undulation at the top of the area of blue, showing that he continued to experiment—or play—with the edges of forms well into the 1950s.

The color combination of vivid red, blue and yellow of *Untitled*, 1956, is exceptional for Rothko's paintings of the early 1950s, which tend to be painted either in muted pastels or combinations of vibrant oranges, yellows, magenta, white and black. One of the few paintings that shares its palette is his 1954 *Homage to Matisse* painted following the French artist's death. Like this earlier homage to the master of wild colors, *Untitled*, 1956, is strikingly similar to the colors in Matisse's *Le bonheur de vivre (Joy of Life)*, 1905, which suggests Rothko was aiming to convey the joy of life in his painting (see link to Matisse's painting below). Also included in this exhibition is an early figurative painting by Rothko depicting a children's celebration (located in Gallery Five). Titled *The Party*, this work is likewise resplendent in the high-key palette of red, blue, and yellow, further suggesting that Rothko associated this color combination with moments of joy.

Rothko proposed that artists have the ability to produce work that is miraculous and as much of “a revelation” for the viewer as for the artist.

Henri Matisse (b. 1923, New York, NY; d. 1997, New York, NY)
Le bonheur de vivre (Joy of Life), 1906
Oil on canvas
69 1/2 x 94 3/4 inches
Barnes Foundation

<https://collection.barnesfoundation.org/objects/7199/Le-Bonheur-de-vivre-also-called-The-Joy-of-Life/>

Alma Thomas (b. 1891, Columbus, GA; d. 1978 Washington, DC)
Night Sky Mysteries, 1973

Acrylic on canvas

68 x 54 inches

Miami-Dade County Art in Public Places Trust, Public Art Collection

Alma Thomas, a contemporary of Mark Rothko, lived and worked primarily in Washington, D.C., where she was an important participant in the Capital's Color School movement. Thomas, along with Gene Davis, Sam Gilliam, Morris Louis, and Kenneth Noland, among other artists associated with the Color School, explored creating abstract paintings by soaking and staining canvas with thinned paint.

Thomas began experimenting with abstraction in the early 1920s as an art student at Howard University (she graduated in 1924 as one of the first African American women to earn an art degree). Her introduction to colorfield painting, however, occurred after she retired from teaching and enrolled in American University, Washington, D.C., at the age of 59. Thereafter, color became her essential means of expression. Her luminous palette evolved from her extensive study of color theory and from observing natural phenomena. Thomas typically would start each work by drawing shapes lightly with a pencil across the canvas, which she would subsequently fill in with thinned paint. The resulting staccato pattern of light and shadow is reminiscent of Henri Matisse's and André Derain's fauve landscapes (see link to the Derain painting below) . The Apollo Moon missions particularly filled her with wonder, as suggested by her painting *Night Sky Mysteries*. Thomas was active in the Civil Rights movement, and although her abstract

paintings did not depict racial protest, they were indicative of her right to determine her individualistic way of painting and her optimistic view of humanity. As she noted:

The use of color in my paintings is of paramount importance to me. Through color I have sought to concentrate on beauty and happiness in my painting rather than man's inhumanity to man.

André Derain (b. 1880, Paris, France; d. 1954, Paris, France)

Fishing Boats, Collioure, 1905

Oil on canvas

15 1/8 x 18 1/4 inches

Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY., The Philip L. Goodwin Collection

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78773>

Kathryn Andrews (b. 1973, Mobile, AL; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA)

Return to X, 2011

Stainless steel, rented costume

Collection of Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz, Key Biscayne, FL

Kathryn Andrews combines figurative and abstract elements in her work to trigger an emotional response from the viewer. In this work, she contrasts the vertical metal bars, which remind her of a child's crib, with a brightly patterned clown costume that she also connects with childhood. She associated both forms with the impossible return to "origins": the crib suggests a regression to infancy, while the clown costume has a 99-year rental agreement that renders its return to the store implausible. She further suggests this impossible situation through the absence of the child who would occupy the crib or the clown who would wear the costume.

Both elements in this work are linked to art history. The bars suggest a physical barrier that blocks passage, like a minimal sculpture that aggressively confronts viewers in their own space. The clown is a potent symbol with a long and almost universal

history. The clown as we know it today is derived from the medieval court jester and *Commedia dell'arte* street theater. As a subject in art from Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's 18th-century paintings of *Commedia dell'arte* performers through the modern period in works by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Pablo Picasso, clowns conjured a topsy-turvy world where repressed human emotions were hurled into the spotlight and rendered comical or pathetic.

The image of the "sad clown" was popularized by Jean-Antoine Watteau's 18th-century painting of Pierrot, a stock character from the *Commedia dell'arte*, imbued with a sense of pathos. The brightly colored patterns of clown costumes also appealed to artists as a formal element, as in Picasso's cubist painting, *Harlequin*, 1915, which, like Andrews's construction, superimposes the flat bright pattern of the clown's costume over another flat plane.

Pablo Picasso (b. 1881, Málaga, Spain; d. 1973, Mougins, France) *Harlequin*, 1915

Oil on canvas

72 1/4 x 41 3/8 inches

Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest (by exchange)

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78696>

Alake Shilling (b. 1993, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA)

Ladybug, 2018

Oil, plaster, glue paper and flour on canvas

40 x 40 inches

Courtesy of Rubell Family Collection

Alake Shilling uses cartoon characters to articulate emotions. She chooses to depict cute animals because they are relatable and provide the comfort that she wanted to achieve in her work. The cartoons she watched as a child, particularly *Pepper Ann* with her flouncy dresses, and the comics she read shaped her aesthetic.

She associates the kitsch element of her work with the crafts she constructed at camp, the popular Lisa Frank school supplies decorated with garish colors and stylized cartoon characters, and to her visits to amusement parks. Seeing Jeff Koons's and Takashi Murakami's work in a children's magazine and encountering stuffed character figurines by FriendsWithYou at a museum shop were early revelations, which gave her license to pursue her particular approach to art.

Shilling finds it stressful to start a new work because there are so many problems to solve, but it also exhilarates her, stating "The struggle and agony of trying to bring something intangible, like a vision or genuine emotion, pales in comparison to the victory I feel from solving an equation that essentially has no answer!"

Alake Shilling (b. 1993, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA)

Cheetah, 2018

Oil, plaster, glue paper and flour on canvas

40 x 50 inches

Courtesy of Rubell Family Collection

Alake Shilling (b. 1993, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA)

Did Somebody Say Wonky?, 2018

Oil, acrylic, sand, and glitter on canvas

24 x 34 inches

Courtesy of Rubell Family Collection

Alake Shilling (b. 1993, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA)

Nickey Mouse Vase, 2018

Clay and glaze

6 inches

Courtesy of Rubell Family Collection

Alake Shilling (b. 1993, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA)

Tiger, 2018

Oil, acrylic, sand, and glitter on canvas

30 x 35 inches

Courtesy of Rubell Family Collection

GALLERY THREE: INFINITY AND ETERNITY

https://nsuartsuemuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/HAP_5559-1030x567.jpg

Contemplating infinity and eternity can trigger fear and anxiety or the optimism of boundless opportunity. Never-ending time and space is almost impossible to imagine. Artists control their emotions about the unknown or unknowable by making the concept of the infinite and the eternal concrete in their work. Yayoi Kusama has produced an extensive number of paintings in her *Infinity Net* series for over 60 years, and has described them as having no beginning, end, or center. Pictorial space in Mark Rothko's abstract paintings is experienced as flat as the canvas's surface or as deep as infinity. Takashi Murakami and the artist collective FriendsWithYou use an abundance of cartoon characters to create expansive fields of color. In his modified version of the 1980s video game *Tetris*, Cory Arcangel slows down the normal rapid playing time so that each move seems to take an eternity.

Yayoi Kusama (b. 1929, Matsumoto, Japan; lives and works in Shinjuku, Tokyo, Japan)

INFINITY-NETS, 1999

Acrylic on canvas

15 x 17 3/4 inches

Rita Krauss Fine Art

Yayoi Kusama has been painting her *Infinity Net* series for over 60 years. As she stated, these paintings were a means by which she could “predict and measure the infinity of the unbound universe, from my own position in it, with dots—an accumulation of particles forming the negative spaces in the net.” While painting these works, Kusama contemplated “how deep was the mystery? Did infinities

exist beyond our universe?”, while examining the “little dot” that was her own life.

Art became the way Kusama counteracted the hallucinations she began experiencing at the age of 10, the trauma of World War II, and her restrictive family life in Japan. She traveled to the United States in the late 1950s where she was embraced by the New York art world.

Feeling liberated by the infinite opportunities and freedom she experienced in New York, she began painting her *Infinity Net* series. Formally, the interaction between the background and “net” in these paintings produces conflicting spatial effects; the space in the painting is as flat as the surface or as deep as infinity. This ambiguity of pictorial space is also evident in other works in the exhibition by Mark Rothko, Takashi Murakami, and FriendsWithYou.

Kusama returned to Japan in 1973, seeking medical treatment for mental exhaustion and declining health. She checked herself into the Seiwa Mental Hospital in 1977, and has continued to live and work there by choice through today. Kusama has stated, “I fight pain, anxiety and fear every day and the only method I found that relieves my illness is to keep creating art.”

FriendsWithYou (Art collaborative founded 2002, Miami, FL; active in Los Angeles, CA)

Unified Field II, 2019

Plastiline clay and plexiglass

80 x 120 x 2 inches

Courtesy of FriendsWithYou

FriendsWithYou is the fine art collaborative of Samuel Borkson and Arturo Sandoval III, working together since 2002. They aim to use their multi-media works to spread the positive message of “Magic,

Luck, and Friendship.™” Their process encompasses the healing arts, modern rituals, animism, and recognizable symbols as a means “to prompt a wide spectrum of emotions from playfulness to self-reflection.” For the past 17 years, their work has focused on the contemporary art practice “relational aesthetics” that spreads positive intentions to affect culture. Their work has traveled the globe, and the artists are considered pioneers in the field of experiential art. Their fully immersive installations serve as cultural happenings that inspire compassion, joy and communal interactions. FriendsWithYou has also adapted its philosophy to a number of mass media applications, most notably their Netflix series, *True and the Rainbow Kingdom*.

The artists acknowledge that they follow in the footsteps of Takashi Murakami and Yayoi Kusama, whose works are in this exhibition, and Arturo Herrera, whose exuberant mural is on view on the Museum’s Peck Terrace https://nsuartmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MURAL_001-1030x686.jpg . Like Murakami, they blur the line between perceived “high” and “low” art with the aim to make their work widely accessible. Play is an essential component in their work as they consider it “a tool for unstructured free association and interaction.” They often reference toys, such as the Pokémon figures in these plastiline works, because they are meant for play.

This piece, *Unified Field II*, uses the Pokémon character universe to illustrate oneness. Hundreds of characters combine to create a hypnotic, and psychedelic assemblage that brings us into a color portal where we find a joyous and loving space of conscious being.

FriendsWithYou (Art collaborative founded 2002, Miami, FL; active in Los Angeles, CA)

Of All Things, 2019

Plastiline clay, plexiglass

96 x 72 x 2 inches

Courtesy of FriendsWithYou

FriendsWithYou (Art collaborative founded 2002, Miami, FL; active in Los Angeles, CA)

A Beautiful Place, 2019

Oil stick and oil pastel on raw un-stretched canvas

97 x 121 inches

Courtesy of FriendsWithYou

Inspired by the 19th century French Impressionist Claude Monet's paintings of water lilies, this pastel hued painting conjures nature's vastness and sublime beauty.

Cory Arcangel (b. 1978, Buffalo, NY; lives and works in Stravanger, Norway)

Super Slow Tetris, 2004

Modded video game

Courtesy of the Artist

In this modified version of the 1980s video game *Tetris*, Cory Arcangel slows down the normal rapid playing time so that each move seems to take an eternity.

Cory Arcangel (b. 1978, Buffalo, NY; lives and works in Stravanger, Norway)

Totally Fucked, 2003

Modded video game

Courtesy of the Artist

Cory Arcangel uses wit and humor to denigrate technology for failing to deliver on its promise of progress. In this work, which runs on a continuous loop, Arcangel modified the video game *Super Mario Bros.* so that the cartoon character has no means of escape. Mario is stuck for eternity on a cube. Although Mario's dilemma is pathetic, its humor is cathartic, as viewers find themselves empathizing with his predicament. For Arcangel, the creation of this and other works provides a constructive means to address his own frustrations.

GALLERY FOUR: CELEBRATION

Throughout history, humankind has designated times to celebrate happiness and to reflect on what makes us happy. These events include religious ceremonies, commemorations of births, marriage and other milestones, the ringing in of the New Year, or letting loose at Happy Hour and amusement parks. Tim Noble & Sue Webster, Jorge Pantoja, Enoc Perez, and Frances Trombly capture the moments leading up to and following these fleeting moments of joy in their work.

Tim Noble and Sue Webster (b. 1966, Stroud, England; b. 1967, Leicester, England)

Happy, 1999

128 x lamp holders, lamps, coloured turbo reflector caps, foamex, electronic light sequencer (3-channel shimmer effect)

The Collection of John and Amy Phelan

British artists Tim Noble and Sue Webster work collaboratively, transforming found objects and rubbish into astonishing sculptures. Referencing the flashing marquee signs of the carnival shows and working-class British seaside attractions of their youth, *Happy* taps into joyous childhood memories tinged with a sense of nostalgia.

Enoc Perez (b. 1967, San Juan, Puerto Rico; lives and works in New York, NY)

Caviar, 2007

Oil on canvas

81 x 75 inches

Hall Collection. Courtesy Hall Art Foundation

The year 2007 began as one of the happiest times in Enoc Perez's life. His first son was born in June and his art career was quickly ascending with a one man exhibition in Paris scheduled in September and a major solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami planned to coincide with the prestigious international art fair, Art Basel Miami Beach, in December. He therefore set out to create a joyful show for Paris, but the unease he was experiencing as a result of his recent good fortune, turned the mood of his paintings gloomy. He explored these complicated emotions in the enormous painting on view here of black caviar, exquisitely nestled in an ice filled cut-crystal bowl and silver server. This delicacy looms large, displaying its tender dark morsels magnified to Herculean proportions.

This work falls within the art historical tradition of vanitas painting, which reminds viewers of the transience of life, the futility of pleasure and the inevitability of death. In this painting, the caviar simultaneously symbolizes fertility and death as the fish eggs are presented for consumption. The light refracted off the crystal bowl and silver server is offset by the dense and foreboding blackness of the caviar that weighs down the center of the composition. Although lemons are a common accompaniment to caviar, the slices in the lower right corner of this painting contribute to the overall melancholy of the work as they bring to mind the bitterness in life.

Frances Trombly (b. 1976, Miami, FL; lives and works in Miami, FL)

Confetti, 2005

Crocheted fabric

Dimensions variable

Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami; Museum

Purchase with funds provided by POP Love

Is there anything more forlorn than confetti swept up in a pile after a celebration? Frances Trombly captures the moment following a festivity with her scattering of confetti that she crocheted from rainbow-colored yarn.

Jorge Pantoja (b. 1963, Havana, Cuba; lives and works in Miami, FL)

Alley, 2010

Vinyl

Courtesy of the Artist

Jorge Pantoja has been recording his responses to his life in Miami since arriving in the city in the early 1990s, filling over 200 sketchbooks with his calligraphic impressions. More recently, he has been using a smart phone camera to capture these unique moments as in this enlarged photograph of a garbage bag printed with the Happy Face logo discarded in garbage dumpster.

GALLERIES FIVE: BLISS

https://nsuartmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/HAP_5701-1030x682.jpg

Several artists in this exhibition express the sense of boundless joy and ecstasy in their work or aim to produce these experiences for the viewer. Some imagine an existence in which sorrow and pain do not exist, such as Fernand Pierre's depiction of Paradise or the oblivious state of infants before their self-aware awakening to the tribulations of the human condition as represented in Christina Forrer's tapestry *Baby*. Other artists attempt to reclaim the freedom of art-making that they experienced as a child by rejecting lessons acquired in art school or by emulating children's art, such as the postwar experimental Cobra artists Eugène Brands and Asger Jorn, abstract expressionist Mark Rothko, Esther Phillips, and Richard Prince. KAWS, Susan Te Kahurangi King, FriendsWithYou, and Alake Shilling reclaim their emotional connection to cartoon characters from their childhood in their work as a means to grapple with adult anxieties and emotional situations. Ecstatic states induced through spirituality, dance, chanting, and play, infuse the work of Robert Saint-Brice who was a *houngan* (Voudou priest), Tracey Emin Samson KambaluRagnar Kjartansson, Rothko, Kenny Scharf, and Andy Warhol.

Christina Forrer (b. 1978, Zurich, Switzerland; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA)

Baby, 2019

Cotton and ink

28 x 24 inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; purchased with funds provided by Michael and Dianne Bienes by exchange, 2019.20

Christina Forrer's woven textiles are at once fantastic and brutally honest, cartoonish and harrowing. Rooted in folkloric traditions, they yield raw emotion and essential truths. This tapestry of a chubby pink infant conveys a blissful moment that is abruptly disrupted by the long white arm that plucks it from the void.

Gesner Abelard (b. 1922, Port au Prince, Haiti)

Paradis terrestre (Heaven on Earth), n.d.

Acrylic on board

24 1/8 x 40 inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jack N. Holcomb, 84.38

Fernand Pierre (b. 1919, Carrefour, Haiti; d. 2002, Haiti)

Arbre miraculeux (Miraculous Tree), c. 1960s

Acrylic on board

24 x 10 inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jack N. Holcomb, 84.73

Bountiful miracle trees are a common theme in Haitian art. They are considered metaphors for the syncretic roots and divergent practices of Haitian religion, as a symbol of nature's bounty, and as representative of the richness of Haitian culture and life. They make the impossible possible, sprouting a variety of fruit from their branches, sometimes including fruits that cannot grow in Haiti's tropical environment. This painting by Fernand Pierre depicts the miracle tree with large and bulbous fruit swirling across the foreground and taking up the majority of the composition. Pierre, who joined the Centre d'Art, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 1949, frequently depicted images of human, animal, and plant life that convey a sense of the divine.

COBRA ART AND THE ART OF CHILDREN

Although children's art has existed throughout time, its characteristics gained recognition in the late-19th century with the emergence of progressive ideas about education and new directions in art. Influential

Viennese art educator Franz Cižec began the Child Art Movement in Vienna, opening his Juvenile Art Class in 1897, where imagination and free expression were encouraged. He identified commonalities among his young students: children tend to draw figures at right angles to the picture's surface, they do not use perspective, which is a learned skill, they often choose strong colors, and little children like to draw in symbols. Cižec shared his observations with artists of the late-19th century Viennese "Succession" movement, including Gustav Klimt and Koloman Moser, who aimed to break away from traditional art and considered children's art as an important new source for them.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Modern artists, such as Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso, turned to children's art as a means to liberate their work from tradition. Similarly, the avant-garde Cobra artists group gravitated to children's art. The Cobra artists' appropriation of the expressive and playful qualities of children's imagery perpetuated their opposition to modern bourgeois society. Cobra artists considered children the embodiment of a free and independent individual, as they were not yet part of society.

Several Cobra artists collected children's art, including the influential co-founder of the group, Asger Jorn (trained as an elementary school teacher) and Eugène Brands, who based many of his works from the 1950s on his young daughter Eugénie's drawings and paintings. Cobra artists recognized how the art of children could aid them in their goal to create a universal art that

would be understood by everyone.

NSU Art Museum houses the largest collection of Cobra art in the United States (over 1,700 works), generously donated by Miami collectors Dr. Meyer and Golda Marks. Cobra is an acronym for the three capital cities in which its founding members lived and worked: Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam.

Eugène Brands (b. 1913, Amsterdam, Netherlands; d. 2002, Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Portrait of Daughter with a Fish, 1957

Oil on canvas

21 ½ x 25 inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; Cobra Collection; gift of Dr. and Mrs. Jacob Glassman, 80.79

Eugène Brands (b. 1913, Amsterdam, Netherlands; d. 2002, Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Child, Go into Ecstasies, 1951

Oil on paper on canvas

12 ¾ x 11 ½ inches

Free Butterfly, 1952

Oil on paper

12 x 18 inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; Cobra Collection; gift of Golda and Meyer Marks, M-79.12, M-207

Eugène Brands (b. 1913, Amsterdam, Netherlands; d. 2002, Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Het Samenkomen, 1956

Oil on paper

11 x 12 inches

Child in Fantasy, March 1956

Oil on paper on canvas

11 x 12 inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; Cobra Collection; gift of Golda and Meyer Marks, M-74, M-79.15

Asger Jorn (b. 1914, Vejrum, Denmark; d. 1973 Aarhus, Denmark)

Væddeløbshest (Racing Horse), 1964

Mixed media on paper

8 ¼ x 13 ¼ inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; Cobra Collection; gift of Golda and Meyer Marks, M-27

Robert Saint-Brice (b. 1893, Pétion-Ville, Haiti; d. 1973, Port-au-Prince, Haiti)

Colorful Bird Holding a Flower, c. 1960s

Bust of a Figure Wearing Green, 1960

Oil on board

28 x 24 inches, 20 ¾ x 19 ½ inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; gift of Miles and Adelaide Zisson, 91.70, 91.65

Robert Saint-Brice's works contain a powerful spiritual and intuitive energy. Many of his paintings are inspired by his time as a *houngan* or Vodou priest. In *Bust of a Figure Wearing Green*, Saint-Brice depicts the figure as a contained, rounded entity floating in the foreground. A halo of white distinguishes it from the background, providing a rhythmic energy. A member of Centre d'Art, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, since 1949, Saint-Brice claimed his works were the products of his dreams, which he believed were messages from the loa, or Vodou deity. In this painting, the figure's spiritual force or vibration is expressed in the radiating painted auras surrounding it.

Richard Prince (b. 1949, Canal Zone, Panama; lives and works in New York)

Untitled (Hippie Drawing), 1997

Marker on paper

11 x 8 ½ inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; purchased with funds provided by Michael and Dianne Bienes by exchange, 2018.34

Untitled (Hippie Drawing), 1997

Marker on paper

11 x 8 ½ inches

Courtesy of Laurie K. Silverman, N.Y.C.

Richard Prince is best known for work that questions issues of authorship and ownership in which he re-photographs, copies, scans, and manipulates the work of others. Drawing his subjects from subcultures and cultural clichés, Prince demonstrates how easily we accept marketing messages and stereotypes without questioning them. Unlike his works based on appropriated sources, his *Hippie Drawings* were inspired by the honesty he saw in the drawings made by his children. Prince found that by following the example of children's art he could introduce a new sense of freedom into his work. He remarked that drawing these works made him feel happy. Prince recently appropriated his own *Hippie Drawings* in large expressive paintings.

Mark Rothko (b. 1903, Russia [now Latvia]; d. 1970, New York, NY)

The Party, 1938

Oil on canvas

23 5/8 x 31 3/4 inches

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of The Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc., 1986.43.54

Mark Rothko taught art to children at the Center Academy of the Brooklyn Jewish Center from 1929 to 1952. Teaching required that he organize his ideas to convey them to students and other faculty

members. His approach was influenced by the teaching method of the Viennese art educator Franz Cižec (published in English, 1936) and his own observations. He noted how his students created art intuitively, whereas adults consciously order the elements in their work. He also observed how children may “limit space arbitrarily,” making objects in their pictures seem gigantic in proportion, or dwarfing the scale of objects so that the space appears infinite.

Rothko’s reflections on the arbitrary nature of scale in children’s painting correspond to his own approach to space and forms in his figurative paintings in the 1930s. In *The Party*, Rothko crammed the small room with children participating in a celebration. As in children’s art, he flattened figures and rendered their heads larger in proportion to their bodies. Instead of using perspective to suggest illusionistic space, he tilted the table, to make its top visible, and he overlapped figures to suggest depth. Using the vivid palette associated with children’s art, he rendered some of the faces in bright yellow and red. Rothko’s study of children’s art contributed to the development of his abstract paintings in the 1950s, such as *Untitled*, 1956, on view in this exhibition.

Susan Te Kahurangi King (b. 1951, Te Aroha, New Zealand; lives and works in Hamilton, New Zealand)

Untitled, c. 1978

Graphite, crayon, and oil pastel on paper

23 x 9 ¼ inches

Collection of KAWS

Susan Te Kahurangi King, a self-taught artist from New Zealand, has been creating extraordinary drawings prolifically and skillfully since her childhood in the mid 1950s. She lost her speech around the age of five nor can she read or write. In the absence of being able to communicate directly with others, she has expressed her thoughts, feelings, understandings, observations, fears and

fascinations through her wonderfully varied and unique drawings.

In the early 1990s, at a time when she was evidently feeling very low, Susan's love and practice of drawing came to a complete stop. More than 15 years passed, then in 2008, much to the family's surprise and Susan's own delight, she picked up a pen and returned to her long-lost love of drawing. Regardless of the lengthy hiatus, a seamless continuation is evident between her late 1980s/early 1990s abstract works and her "post-pause" works.

King demonstrates a range of approaches when creating a drawing, as described by her sister Petita Cole:

Sometimes she creates a number of starting points around the edge of the page. Building from each one in turn, often interchanging the pencils or pens used at each of the starting points, working from the outer edge inward, the drawing closing in on itself, not unlike the shutter of a camera.

King's underlying impulse to fill up the void in the picture field, is seen in the work of other artists in this exhibition, including FriendsWithYou, Yoyoi Kusama, Takashi Murakami, Mark Rothko, and Kenny Scharf. One may conclude that these artists find this mode of working satisfying and appealing. Kusama, for instance, has stated how it helps her cope with imagining herself in the universe, and Rothko identified his compositions as having tapped into a universal image that would trigger an emotional response from the viewer.

Susan Te Kahurangi King (b. 1951, Te Aroha, New Zealand; lives and works in Hamilton, New Zealand)

Untitled, c. 1963

Graphite and colored pencil on paper

11 x 9 inches

Untitled, c. 1967-1969

Graphite on paper

13 3/8 x 10 inches

Collection of KAWS

Susan Te Kahurangi King (b. 1951, Te Aroha, New Zealand; lives and works in Hamilton, New Zealand)

Untitled, c. 1968

Graphite on paper

10 x 7 3/4 inches

Untitled, c. 1978

Graphite, ebony, and crayon on paper

14 x 10 inches

Collection of KAWS

Esther Phillips (b. 1902, Russia; d. 1983, New York, NY)

Jungle Gym, late 1940s - early 1950s

Merry Go Round, late 1940s - early 1950s

Casein and watercolor on paper

16 x 17 inches, 20 x 22 inches

Private Collection of Renée and Richard Goldman

Russian-born Esther Phillips immigrated to the U.S. with her family in 1903, where they settled in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She showed an early interest in art, which she studied as a child at the Irene Kaufmann Settlement, an educational and community center for Pittsburgh's Jewish community. The Kaufmann Settlement's school adhered to a progressive education philosophy, which aimed to preserve the student's unique imagination.

Phillips's progressive art education combined with her first-hand knowledge of modern art influenced the development of her work. She arrived at her expressive painting style, with its flat animated figures, urban locales, and bright colors, even before enrolling in

college studio classes at the Carnegie Institute Department of Fine Art. She achieved significant early local acclaim, including receiving a mural commission, group and solo exhibitions, and positive critical reviews.

Buoyed by her passion for art, she moved to New York in her mid-thirties, quickly immersing herself in Greenwich Village's bustling art scene. The poverty she experienced there during the Great Depression coupled with disappointing relationships, led to her declining mental health. She wrote to a friend of the "stark reality of trying to exist on nothing." This trauma was too much for her to bear, and in 1942 she was admitted to a New York State psychiatric institution, where she remained for nine years. The institution's librarian recognized Phillips's interest in art and provided her with materials and encouragement. With the support and security of the institution, Phillips worked prolifically, and exhibited and sold her work with the assistance of friends. After her release, she returned to New York, where she continued to struggle to support herself as an artist until she lost her eyesight towards the end of her life.

Esther Phillips (b. 1902, Russia; d. 1983, New York, NY)

Happy Face House, late 1940s - early 1950s

Casein and watercolor on paper

21 x 21 inches

Slide, late 1940s - early 1950s

Casein and watercolor on paper

22 ½ x 20 inches

Private Collection of Renée and Richard Goldman

**GALLERY SIX:
SORROW CONQUERS HAPPINESS
HAPPINESS CONQUERS SORROW**

https://nsuartmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/HAP_5744-C-1030x802.jpg

This section includes works that were produced by artists in response to their own emotional turmoil, grief, or distress. Art, music, dance, spirituality, and love are among the means by which they triumphed over sorrow. Their success, in turn, offers viewers potential paths by which they may achieve a sense of happiness and well-being.

KAWS (b. 1974, Jersey City, NJ; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY)
COMPANION (PASSING THROUGH), 2011

Bronze, paint
48 x 25 inches
Collection of the Artist

In this bronze sculpture, KAWS transformed a universal pop icon of happiness into his alter ego COMPANION character to express his own feelings of mortification and remorse. This heightened emotional content distinguishes KAWS's work from the paintings of Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein (see link to image below), who also used images from popular culture and comic strips. For Lichtenstein the subject matter was incidental in that his selection of images was determined by whether he felt he could use the comic strips as ready-made compositions for his paintings. KAWS, however, selects cartoon characters that resonate for him emotionally. These cartoon characters were in effect his childhood companions, and they were the first "art works" in which he invested his emotions. KAWS modifies these characters by crossing out their eyes and

mouths, two features that typically convey emotions in day-to-day relationships as well as in art. He instead employs the familiarity of the iconic cartoon character and the figure's pose to trigger the viewer's emotional response. A search for images of remorse on the internet, for instance, displays a myriad of photographs of individuals posed like KAWS's slumped COMPANION with its bowed head shielded by its hands.

Tracey Emin (b. 1963, London, England; lives and works in London, England)

I Can Feel your Smile, 2005

White neon, glass

25 x 60 inches

Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

Tracey Emin uses words to define her world. All of her works start with an internal dialogue; the titles typically come before she begins new works; her written works and films build narratives drawn from her life. Emin's neon works, with their cryptic messages, are like private notes, to be discovered, read, and understood. The origin of the neon *I Can Feel your Smile* was a text message Emin sent a friend who had revealed that she could finally feel herself recovering from the death of her husband. Emin imagined the "I" in this work as her friend's late husband, communicating his relief that joy had returned to his wife's life.

Francesco Clemente (b. 1952, Naples, Italy; lives and works in Madras, India, and New York, NY)

A Little Higher, 2015

Watercolor, miniature painting on paper

18 x 24 inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; purchased with funds provided by Michael and Dianne Bienes by exchange, 2017.2

Francesco Clemente painted this watercolor on paper embellished by illustrations of tiny lotus blossoms made by Indian miniaturists. His painted elements dissolve and blend with the underlying pattern. The work depicts a black head in profile floating on the water staring up at a large fluffy cloud. The artist associates this image with the sensation of emerging from depression.

Jorge Pantoja (b.1963, Havana, Cuba; lives and works in Miami, FL))

Over the Hills and Far Away, 2018

Oil on canvas

15 ¾ x 35 5/8 inches

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale; purchased with funds provided by Michael and Dianne Bienes by exchange, 2019.21

Jorge Pantoja creates drawings and paintings that read like haiku poems in their delicacy, simplicity, directness and intensity. He painted *Over the Hills and Far Away* after emerging from a long period of lethargy, in which he was incapable of working. The painting takes its title from Pantoja's favorite song by the British rock band Led Zeppelin, which he connects to the sensation he experiences when making art—of flying away into another space and time narrative. For Pantoja, the painting is about dreaming and being in the moment; its leaping Spider-Man embodies the exhilaration the artist feels as he jumps into the unknown. The narrative quality and horizontal format of this painting reflects his fascination with comic strips, Japanese scrolls, and movies.

Adler Guerrier (b. 1975, Port-au-Prince, Haiti; lives and works in Miami, FL)

LEFT TO RIGHT:

Untitled (Place marked with an impulse, livid peach), 2017

Pigment print on vinyl

Untitled (Enveloped in newly deployed conditions), 2017

Untitled (Scene from a verdant place), 2002-2019

Untitled (We find moments in the landscape, ripe for replenishment, and in positions conducive to imagine anew), 2019

Untitled (Enveloped in newly deployed conditions), 2017

Archival pigment prints

60 x 40 inches, 12 x 21 inches, 7 x 10 inches, 21 x 14 inches, 14 x 21 inches

Courtesy of the Artist and David Castillo Gallery

Miami artist Adler Guerrier's photographic series *Scenes from a Verdant Place* addresses everyday experiences and utopia. He associates the pursuit of happiness with a utopian quest. Most of Guerrier's work is concerned with landscape and places that present conditions that are conducive to achieving happiness. He counts nature's lush verdancy as one of these conditions. As he notes, "verdancy" is informed by "paradisiacal images, religious purity, formal gardens, and natural (undisturbed, and far-off) places." For an artist who grew up in the tropics, Guerrier appreciates verdancy as representing "plenitude, depth, and a richness even beyond what can be perceived."

Guerrier, who is of Haitian descent, acknowledges his interest in the tradition of Haitian painting with its representations of an earthly paradise as suggested in this exhibition by works by Gesner Abelard and Fernand Pierre. For Guerrier, "the forest camouflages in its greatness all that we desire".

Keith Haring (b. 1958, Reading, PA; d. 1990, New York, NY)
Untitled (3 Eye Smiley Face), 1982

Enamel on sheet metal

9 ¼ x 35 7/8 inches

Private Collection, Florida

Yoko Ono (b. 1933, Tokyo, Japan; lives and works in New York, NY)

A Box of Smile, 1971

Small leaf *Clusia guttifera*

Plastic and mirror

Yoko Ono Studio

Yoko Ono initiated her conceptual piece *A Box of Smile* in 1971. It is a small box that reveals a mirror at the bottom when open. The viewer completes the work by providing a smile that is reflected in the mirror. According to Ono, she wanted to create a box that people could look into, so that when they are sad or angry, they could see how they look smiling. After the shooting death of her husband, rock legend John Lennon, in 1980, smiling was a means for Ono to overcome her grief. She remarked that she started to force herself to smile, and gradually, over a period of two months, she realized “my whole body was smiling.” Four years after Lennon’s death, Ono authorized a continuation of the edition of *A Box of Smile* as she considers smiling “the simplest thing to make yourself healthy and make others feel good.”

Tracey Emin (b. 1963, London, England; lives and works in London, England)

Why I Never Became a Dancer, 1995

Film

6 minutes 32 seconds

Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

Tracey Emin finds it impossible to work from happiness, yet her art is her means for healing her psychic pain and making herself feel whole. Her early film, *Why I Never Became a Dancer*, is a story of her triumph through art over personal trauma and humiliation. The film ends with the artist dancing alone in an empty studio like a whirling dervish to the disco beat of Sylvester's "You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)."

Ragnar Kjartansson (b. 1976, Reykjavík, Iceland; lives and works in Reykjavík, Iceland)

God, 2007

Single channel video, color, sound, and fabric

30 minutes 7 seconds

Music by Davð Þór Jónsson and Ragnar Kjartansson

Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami; Museum

Purchase with funds provided by POP Bollywood

In Ragnar Kjartansson's 2007 film installation *God*, the artist appears onscreen suavely attired in a tuxedo, crooning repetitively "sorrow conquers happiness," accompanied by an orchestra. The moment Kjartansson's cyclical song builds to a crescendo, the film cuts to the beginning of the loop. Sad, soulful and meditative, the performance induces moments of euphoria as words dissolve into a heavenly chant. Kjartansson's use of repetition in his work is informed by the recitation of prayers in church rituals and pageantry as a means for achieving transcendence. The phrase "sorrow conquers happiness" freed and comforted Kjartansson in its acknowledgement of pain and suffering as part of life and that ultimately we die, but "it's all right, it's all fine."

Andy Warhol (b. 1928, Pittsburgh, PA; d. 1987, New York, NY)

Silver Clouds, 1966

Facsimile reproductions, foil, air, and helium

Pop artist Andy Warhol worked with engineer Billy Klüver (founder of E.A.T.—Experiments in Art and Technology), to create an installation of floating Mylar silver clouds for an exhibition at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in 1966. Choreographer Merce Cunningham subsequently used them as part of the set for his dance “RainForest,” 1968. The silver clouds suggest the proverbial “silver lining” of dark clouds—the reminder that even difficult times or situations have the potential of producing something positive. Warhol intended visitors to interact with his *Silver Clouds* installation of buoyant helium-filled reflective pillows. He thought of these inflatables as paintings that could “float away.” As the viewer walks through the space, the pillows rise and fall, creating an atmosphere of blissful enjoyment.

**BREEZEWAY:
HOPE**

(not included in virtual tour)

Yoko Ono (b. 1933, Tokyo, Japan; lives and works in New York, NY)

Wish Tree, 1981-2019

Small leaf *Clusia guttifera*

Yoko Ono Studio

Trees provided by Jones Landscaping

Yoko Ono's *Wish Tree* is an expression of hope. The work encourages the audience's participation to follow Ono's simple instructions:

Make a wish. Write it down on a piece of paper.

Fold it and tie it around a branch of a Wish Tree.

Ask your friends to do the same. Keep wishing until the branches are covered with wishes.